

## “Kindness is Permanent”

By Anonymous

Decision day was an easy day for me. All my friends were nervously trying to decide where they wanted to spend their next four years, but I knew. I had known for a while. The college I chose was going to be the perfect fit for me, I just knew it. I was the good girl, the kind, sweet, innocent girl that could do no wrong.

My transcript said it all: Valedictorian, three sport athlete MVP, community service organizer, student council president, you name it. I followed all the rules, and never got in trouble.

But eventually, I hated having to be perfect all the time. I wanted to be able to fail and make mistakes without so many eyes of disappointment. So, I chose a school far away. A bigger school that was the complete opposite of my high school experience. A chance to reinvent myself, let loose, and have a little fun. Little did I know, this would be one of the worst decisions I could make. My young, naïve mindset would soon lead me astray and it would take an emotional hurricane to lead me back to myself.

Move in day was a little scary, but nothing that I couldn't handle. I was ready to start my new chapter with all my new friends. I was a little sad to leave my parents, but not sad to be having a fresh start. I met a whole bunch of new people and I spent a ton of late nights hanging and laughing with all of them.

The weekend hit and all my new friends were excited to go party. I was a little hesitant to go out and experience college parties, because it was a whole new idea for me. I was not an

experienced partier at all, and it was definitely scary at first. I eventually found them fun and this started becoming a very common activity for me and my friends. A cycle of stressing all week to do my assignments and study for my exams was then followed by a fun, party-filled weekend to blow off steam. A vicious cycle. This very cycle would soon become the scariest experience of my life.

It was a Friday afternoon and I was loaded with assignments and studying that I needed to get done. I was swamped with work, stressed to the max, and planning on a relaxed study night at the library filled with all the ice coffee I could buy from the café. But my friends had other ideas. Friday night was party night and they were not taking no for an answer. I decided to go to an off-campus party with my friends despite my better judgement; it was one of the biggest parties of the year, they said when they begged me to go with them. I knew I had a paper to write, but still decided to go, because, I mean, I deserved to have fun, right?

The night started off as any other night, with lots of alcohol being passed back and forth in the dorm before we left for the party. We left at the usual time of eleven o'clock with a big group of my friends. Once we arrived at the party, it was already packed with people. Drinks were passed around and later in the night I found myself not feeling too good. I must have drunk too much, or mixed too many different things, because I just really wasn't feeling well at all.

I decided that I needed to go back to my room. I went to try to find my friends, but they were all busy having fun and not ready to leave yet. I was insistent on leaving, because I knew something was wrong. I had never felt like this before. I asked my friends again if we could leave, but they weren't ready to go. I finally decided that I needed to get out of there right away.

I started out for the door, scared to walk back alone, especially in the condition I was in, but what other choice did I have? As I went to leave, a boy I didn't know asked me where I was

going. I explained the situation and that I needed to just get back to my dorm. He was insistent on me not walking back alone in the dark, so he offered to walk me back. He introduced himself and walked with me all the way back to my dorm.

We talked the whole way about his major, career goals, life, etc., and I learned that we had much in common and that we both were only at the party in the first place because of our friends. When we got to my dorm building, I thanked him for his kindness. He said that he knows how it feels to be stuck in a bad situation and that he wouldn't wish it on anyone. I thanked him again and headed into the building. I walked through the lobby, past the RA, around the corner, and headed up the stairs.

"HELP! HELP!" The resident advisor that was on desk duty that night started screaming for someone to come help. I hurried back down the stairs to see what was going on. My new friend had collapsed on the sidewalk outside the building. The boy that was just upright and talking to me about his dreams and aspirations was now face down on the concrete. He had overdosed.

I never attended another party at that college. I transferred out after that first semester and never looked back. My friend was taken by ambulance to the hospital and was said to be okay, but I never saw him again. He never returned to that college. I don't know what I would say now to the kind boy that walked me home, but I do know that we shared a path that crossed at the wrong time. I wish I had the chance to talk to him again, because a kind heart like his deserved more. Deserved better.

Now almost a year later, I don't even recognize the scared girl trying to fit in with her friends. I lost myself trying to become someone that I wasn't. I am now unapologetically myself and have learned what real friendship is. I have grown a sense of independence and confidence

that I had always lacked. I learned that it wasn't a reinvention that I needed. But most importantly, I learned that kindness is a choice that you can make over and over again. I will forever choose to be the girl with the kind heart, because everything else is temporary. And maybe one day, I will be the new friend that showed just a little bit of kindness to a stranger...and changed them forever.