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“And Say My Glory Was I Had Such Friends”

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And Say My Glory Was I Had Such Friends

Being of Irish descent, and a connoisseur of cocktails, Saint Patrick's Day has always been my most anticipated holiday. It's the only one that I will specifically ask off of work for, and I generally tend to nerd out over the entire celebration more than any of my friends. My friends are often way too good for me.

I'm the first to admit that I'm clumsy, though thankfully my friends have decided this is one of my more endearing qualities. We have all lost count of the times that I have fallen sideways off the curb into the street, narrowly missing a car; or landing directly on my ass as I bounced down each step in glorious, painful stupor. I once tried to use my friend Stacy as a pole that I had decided I was going to twirl around. That did not end well—a torn meniscus in my right knee—but still hilarious in the fact that through my plummet, I was determined not to spill a drop of my refreshing Cape Cod. I didn't, but I sure fucked up my knee. It felt like I was laying on the dirty floor of that bar for hours, holding my drink directly up above my head, so careful not to lose it, before Stacy's boyfriend Scott helped me to my feet (Stacy, being as drunk as he was, didn't seem to notice me eating shit).

I will never forget Scott, finding me on the ground, asking Stacy in a harsh tone, “Why the *fuck* is Ian on the *floor*?”

With a shrug, he replied, “I dunno.”

In 2010, I found myself single for the first time in my adult life and I was learning how to make friends on my own. I had a few holdovers from my relationship, but my closest friends at

this time were those whom I had developed relationships with on my own. I had known Charlie for about a year, and we were inseparable. In the weeks leading up to the Saturday Dallas puts on their festivities, I had blasted Charlie with my excitement and obsession of the coming holiday. As someone who traveled often, he had made sure to be in town for the weekend, so that we could attend the city's parade and then join a house party nearby.

We spent the entire morning together with a few other friends, drinking crappy green beer at the parade for hours. By the time we arrived at the house party, we were all bubbling over with obnoxious laughter and were ready to continue the celebrations with the delicious ciders and ales that awaited us. The party was wild by the time we arrived, which encouraged us to keep drinking at a heavy pace. As the party drew to a close in the early evening, we had all made plans to meet at one of our favorite bars around ten. Charlie and I hopped in a taxi cab to return to my place for a quick nap. When I awoke around eight, still drunk off of Guinness and Strongbow, I realized that I had not eaten anything all day.

Charlie was still passed out on my sofa, so I decided to go downstairs and get some carbs from my building's deli—bread fixes everything. Unfortunately, it was closed, but right across the breezeway was a frozen yogurt shop. A fruit parfait would have to satisfy my hunger. The flavor of the day was pineapple, and I had devoured the entire thing by the time I was off the elevator, rushing back to wake up Charlie so that we could continue drinking with friends at the bar.

We arrived via cab and stumbled into the crowded bar. Apparently some people had continued the day's festivities without taking a break to nap. How dare they outdrink us during *my* celebration? Charlie darted through the crowd, heading to his usual bartender to get us more drinks. He came back with two beers and two Irish Car Bombs. I knew that shots

typically didn't end well for me, but I downed it as if I had spent the day walking in a desert without water. My beer didn't last much longer.

At some point after midnight, I decided that Charlie and I had not had nearly enough to drink. This was probably due to boredom, as I'm sure by that time no one could hold a decent conversation with my slurry self and I needed something to do.

I ran up to him: "Charlie!"

"What?"

"Wurr not *nurrly* drunk enough for thish bein' *Shaint Patrick'sh Day!*"

"We're not?"

"*No!*"

I flew back to the bar, bumping into people like the drunken asshole I had become, and ordered two beers and four shots of Jägermeister. Typically, I find anise to be unbearable, but I knew it was Charlie's favorite (former frat boy that he is). I was more excited in pleasing Charlie with his drink of choice than anything, and I reluctantly downed both shots back to back, trying to hide my tears from the disgusting taste. Social anxiety began to cloud my mind and I just followed my friend around for the rest of the night. I always hated doing this, as I figured most people assumed I was Charlie's pissed off boyfriend who was jealous and ready to leave.

I don't know how much time had passed since the shots, but I realized I couldn't even finish the beer in my hand. I felt like I was turning as green as my shirt. I knew better than to try and keep up with Charlie, but again I had tried. It was time to go—Charlie practically had to carry me to the cab outside. This one was a van with the sliding back door. The driver wasn't friendly, but I can't imagine any of them being in good spirits after spending the

entire day driving amateur drinkers around Uptown. My apartment building was only a five minute drive away. As soon as the van began moving I felt my stomach begin to churn.

At the final block before my address, we hit a red light. I was miserable, but the last thing I wanted to do was puke inside the taxi. I was trying my damndest to keep a straight face and play it cool, but it seemed as though the red light would never turn green. I turned to Charlie, worry plastered across my face, and said, “I’m gonna be shick.”

“Now?”

“Yesh.”

The driver started screaming at us, as he expected me to be able to wait one more block. Charlie looked at my face and knew that I couldn’t.

“We have to get out here.”

The driver argued, “He can wait!”

“No, dude! He can’t. I’ll pay you here!”

By then it was too late: I was going to vomit. The light had turned green and the driver was adamant that he wasn’t going to stop until we had reached the destination and he could collect his entire fare. As soon as I felt the wheels turn, my stomach boiled over. I threw my hand up to my mouth, trying hard to prevent anything from getting in the car. Charlie reached over me and swung the van door open, and instinctually I tried to exit the moving vehicle as partially digested pineapple exploded from my mouth, ricocheting off my hand and back onto my face—he would later explain the visual akin to looking at the back of Cher’s head with her 1986 Academy Awards feather headdress on. He grabbed a belt loop in my shorts with his finger and held on to me so that I wouldn’t fall out of the vehicle. With his other hand he paid the angry driver with his credit card while I continued to hurl.

The taxi had stopped. I had bolted from the van and found a tree to lean against as I continued to upchuck. Charlie signed the receipt and hopped out, hurrying to see if I was even alive. I imagined myself dead on the sidewalk, all of my insides splattered across the concrete.

“*Buddy!* Are you okay?”

My vanity kicked in and I responded, holding my hand to my face. I could feel the pineapple chunks in between my fingers. “...it’s not in my *beard*, is it?”

“No! You look flawless. Let’s get you home.”

But it was. How could it not be? It was everywhere. It was all over my face, caked into my beard, probably in the hair on my head, and all over my clothes. Nothing but *pineapple*. But Charlie, knowing how to handle any manic situation that’s presented to him, lied to get me moving towards home.

The last thing I remembered was plowing through my front door and stripping my clothes off to get into the shower. I couldn’t even think about how awkward and gross this all was to Charlie. He offered to take my dog, Baxter, downstairs to pee while I showered. When he returned, I think I was laying in the shower with the water running over me—a pathetic display that I wouldn’t wish upon anyone. He turned off the water and heroically lifted me out the tub, dried me off, and put to me bed. When I woke up the next morning, I could barely move. My dog was visibly upset with me and I slid into the living room: Charlie was gone. He had left a note on my kitchen counter.

“Thank you so much for the fun day! I had a BLAST! Charlie.”

What the fuck had happened? I felt like death and lumbered Baxter downstairs to do his morning business. I barely made it back upstairs and fell onto my couch. It was unbelievably bright inside. I wanted to turn on the television, but decided if I moved, I was going to be sick. I

laid there with my agitated dog (an English bulldog—they're known to pout) at my feet. Then I noticed it. Sitting on the coffee table was an empty carton of Jack in the Box French fries. Where did that come from?

“Oh, my *God*,” I thought. I had remembered that days before, I had went through the drive-thru, came home, ate a burger, but couldn't finish the fries. I threw them in the garbage can.

“Holy shit...Charlie was so desperate for food last night that he dug through my trash and found the French fries.” I could totally picture it in my head. I'm an asshole and I immediately pulled myself together long enough to grab my cell phone and text everyone that knew us about the nasty shit that Charlie had pulled. Why recognize what a mess I was, when I could deflect my flaws onto him?

This went on behind Charlie's back for a few weeks. Everyone thought that it was hysterical and I was so proud of myself for having an attention-grabbing story to tell people. Of course, I didn't mention what *I* had done that night. It was much funnier to throw him under the bus than me. Eventually the story was told in front of Charlie, and he just laughed while we all continued to tease him. He took it like a champ: self-deprecation is hilarious, right?

Sometime in mid-April, I can remember sitting at my computer desk, reading a comic book script that I was editing for work. For some reason, a memory came back to me...an appalling, unspeakable memory. I was remembering Charlie putting my naked ass to bed that night. I was *refusing* to go to sleep, but he kept fighting me, trying to keep me in the bed so that I would fall asleep. But I wanted to get up—I couldn't sleep. I had heaved my demons out on that sidewalk and a second wind had overcome me. We could stay up and watch movies!

Charlie had gone into the living room and I could hear the TV (my bedroom was loft-style...there was no way to drown out sounds from other rooms). I suddenly remembered getting up out of bed, not putting on clothes and walking into the living/kitchen area. I could see myself, naked, and *digging through the trash*. Somehow, I had reminded myself that there were French fries in the trash, and I was *hungry*. I grabbed the fries, walked into the living room, crossing Charlie's view of the TV as I chowed down on the days-old, discarded food, and then sat next to him, as close as I physically could.

“Whatcha watching?”

Back in the present, I sat wide-eyed at the revelation that had appeared before me. Even though I was completely alone in my apartment, my face turned into a radish with embarrassment. I sent Charlie a text message:

“Umm...I ate those French fries, didn't I?”

He responded with a smiley-faced “Yup.”

“I talked all that shit and it was me! OMG.”

Another “Yup” that ended with a smiley face.

I burst into laughter. What type of person can participate in a conversation in which their best friend is telling an untrue story that totally makes fun of them? I recognized that Charlie was letting me have my moment in the spotlight, and he wasn't going to ruin it by turning it back on me. He stood there and took it all.

This just made my story all the more ridiculous. Charlie was a gallant knight, and I was a dick. But, self-deprecation is the best form of humor, right? That's when I had that realization about myself: that I was a mess and it could be funny. Perhaps, I was drinking too much—most likely due to a combination of my recent break-up, my desire to fit in, and most assuredly,

my mother's suicide that had occurred six months earlier. It was a rough time—I had forgotten how to laugh.

Charlie lives in San Diego now. We're still the best of friends. I've overcome most of my obstacles stemming from that time in my life. I'm happier. I've come to terms with what happened to my mom, I've been in a relationship for over six years, and I have an amazing close-knit group of friends who have become my family. I rarely drink at all anymore, other than at the mandatory, authentic pub on Saint Patrick's Day. I've found a way to talk about my mistakes and sadness in comedic ways and I'm often able to tell other people's stories in the same approach. I think it helps them feel better about themselves. We aren't perfect, so let's laugh about it.