

Everything Seemed Perfectly Normal

By Danielle Nelson

WHEN I was in middle school, I had a very close friend named Emily. Emily was a smart student who applied herself and had a lot of friends. However, I noticed as our friendship progressed, that I would always be the one inviting her over to my house and she would never reciprocate. One day I decided to ask her about her reasoning. When I brought it up at lunch that day, she shrugged off the question and pretended like she didn't know what I was talking about. But in the back of my head I could tell that something was wrong. However, I didn't want to push it so I just let it go and forgot about it for a while. Later that year we were partners on a project and my parents were out of town. Seeing that neither of us could drive yet, we ruled out working on our project at a coffee shop or any other local establishment. She reluctantly agreed to allow me to come over to her house and I was very curious to find out what the big secret was.

When I arrived at her house everything seemed perfectly normal. Her dog greeted us at the door and I could smell something baking in the kitchen. She quickly rushed past me to lead the way down to her bedroom. As we

neared the room, we walked by her older brother's room. I had heard of John before around school. He was a well-known and well-liked senior at the high school. I was almost in awe that I was in the same house as him! I couldn't wait to tell everyone! We got to Emily's room and she shut the door behind her, almost relieved that we had made it there without an interruption. I asked what was wrong and what was she hiding. She looked at me blankly and disregarded the question. We began to work on our project. Before long I could hear faint arguing from upstairs. I looked at Emily and she quickly left the room to address the situation. She returned shortly after and I did not feel the need to ask for an explanation.

Suddenly, John stormed into Emily's room, looked at me, and then turned back to Emily. Before I knew it, he was yelling at her about something she was not supposed to tell her parents. "Emily you weren't supposed to say anything! Why do you have to ruin everything?!" I was very confused and starting to feel very uncomfortable. He left after a little more arguing and Emily began to cry. I told her that in

order to comfort her, I needed to know what was going on. She looked at me and contemplated the positives and negatives. She reluctantly told me that she had seen John come home drunk recently and was not supposed to tell her parents or John would be in a lot of trouble. When she went upstairs to see what was going on, she cracked and accidentally told her parents. She confided in me and said that it was an ongoing problem. I was so young and naive at the time and I had thought that teen drinking was very rare. She explained to me that at the high school, teen drinking is actually very common, especially around John's group of friends. She had seen John come home under the influence many times and she was scared that if it continued, he could hurt himself or someone else. I was by her side for many weeks to come. Helping her cope with the reality that John was a teenage alcoholic. Ever since that day at Emily's, I have sworn to myself that I would never partake in underage drinking. Now that I am at the high school, I notice underage drinking almost every day. Most of the kids involved are in the "popular" clique and they think that they need to drink in order to fit in.

Teen drinking is a major health hazard. It can have a major effect on the brain by delaying development, and causing short and long-term memory loss. If not used in moderation, it can also have long lasting impairment. Underage drinking can also damage the liver and cause substantial weight gain. Not to mention the dangers that drinking and driving may have. All of these reasons, as well as seeing first-hand how alcohol made John act, have convinced me to never drink underage, if ever. 🚫

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Danielle Nelson is a high school senior from Omaha, NE. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.