12 Berkley Street

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Eva awoke early on moving day. She would be moving her bedroom's belongings, along with some hand-me-down cooking tools and cutlery; the other 95 percent of the items in her family's home would remain there. Moving for school would be the last step in having status as an independent individual. Eva was excited, but soon-to-be obligations occupied her more, taking away her emotions and leaving her with a bored, but busy, morning. She passed the boxes labelled with her name that read everything from "blankets" to "picture frames." She needed to ensure that she was completely organized. It was important that she became independent, not mostly for freedom, but mostly because it was expected of her, it was a mature act, and it was what independent people did. She needed to be independent because she had come to that point in her life. She had had all of her childhood and some of her teenage hood to be immature, and now was the time to act grown-up. She microwaved her usual oatmeal breakfast, ate it with the upmost of cleanliness and manners, and eliminated her mess promptly and neatly. She then began loading her boxes, one or two at a time, into her ten-year-old Mazda.

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"Okay," Abdul had a giant flippable whiteboard behind him, which had clusters of small-written names on it. "If we throw a party every Friday and Saturday, and invite a different

group each time, by the end of the year we'll have invited every freshman at least once. Then we'll be popular. We'll be appreciated by people who don't normally get invited to parties, and we'll be thought of as the cool party house by others. I mean, it's not foolproof, people who get invited once will want to come back. We just have to have someone standing at the door to make sure we control how many people are entering the house."

"What about if too many people show up, or if people want to come back?"

"We'll cap it at a certain number of people."

"What about the cops?" Justice asked.

"I was thinking we could give our neighbours closest to us \$5 each time not to call the cops."

"We can try. And if it doesn't, at least we'll have had one party." He paused. "And we can bring the leftover bottles back to the liquor store and use the money to pay our fees."

"Good idea. Free money. I didn't think of that."

"Yeah. We could use it to pay the neighbours so we're not losing money," Justice added.

"Ok, cool. Wait what about that other girl?"

They only saw Eva when she was moving her stuff.

"Don't worry about her. It doesn't seem like she'll be around much anyway. She seems like she'll keep to herself," Justice offered.

Based on what she'd seen of Eva earlier that day, she seemed like she didn't want to bother anyone and would only be seen when passing through the hallway.

And she'd disappear through a small opening in her door and be gone again.

They actually all felt a little awkward for planning this and assuming she'd be fine with it, but she wasn't there to ask, and like with the cops, they'd try it and know. Plus, they were all uncomfortable with each other anyways, not knowing each other.

"Maybe we should ask her," Alex suggested. Seeming to be someone without much regard for others, his roommates were surprised that he was insistent on this. He went over to the stairs in the centre of the house, and looked up.

"Hey... sorry, what's your name again?"

She emerged. "Eva."

"Do you care if we have a party?" Better to start off easy before asking too much.

"No, it should be fine," she said, two steps inside her room with the door open, thinking, not wanting to be a fun killer.

"Okay, thanks," he receded.

"We need this motto: A day only matters if it's a Friday or Saturday. Forget about school, forget about rationality. We need this mindset if this is going to work."

Simultaneously, Justice and Alex said “Okay” and “Yeah,” with Justice meeting the boy’s gaze. She was all in.

Later that week, Eva was having a quick talk with Justice outside of the former’s bedroom. Her door was open. Alex randomly appeared.

“I need to go in your room.” He said urgently but also as if it were a perfectly reasonable thing to ask.

“Why?” she asked accusingly.

“I need to show you something.”

“No way.” She wasn’t putting herself or her stuff in danger like this. She didn’t know him.

“What could you possibly need to see in *my* room?”

“Nothing in your room. Outside on the roof.”

“Then go outside and check.”

“I can’t. Yours is the only room that leads to the roof.”

She looked at Justice and firmly asked, “If I’m not down in 10 minutes, call the cops.” The latter agreed.

Eva ushered Alex inside. He immediately strode to the window, opposite the door.

She was relieved he had told the truth, but didn’t know what he could be looking for.

He slid up the pane and climbed out while she stood watching him cautiously.

“Come on,” he invited. “Don’t worry, it’s safe. It’s not that angled,” he said as he lowered himself onto the mud-coloured shingles.

She was reluctant to follow him – she didn't wish to subject herself to injury.

After a second, she decided to be very careful and only be out for a second before heading back in.

She climbed out and immediately sat down so she could scootch over. She joined him mid-roof and looked ahead, where his gaze was. Impatient, she asked what he needed to look at out here.

“The view. It's awesome.”

Eva had to admit it was peaceful. They could see blended layers of suburban rooftops, with some taller trees mixed in. The height of the man-made material from this height reached the blue sky that could put a smile on someone's face, reassuring them the world was all right.

“Yeah, it is. Maybe, next time, just *explain* what you're going to do before you ask a stranger to go into their room.”

“Yeah, true. Are you in first year?”

“Yeah, you?”

His answer was affirmative, and they discussed their majors and what they would pursue. Neither of them knew what their education would amount to.

“Our landlord seems like a scary guy, though,” Alex chuckled.

Following Eva's laugh was the shock of a police siren.

“Oh, no!” She hastily returned to the window, tripping on her right leg and falling with the front half of her body

landing on her bed. She didn't look back as she exited the room calling, "Justice, it's okay!"

Alex followed and joined Eva, who was trying to stand comfortably and nonchalantly at the bottom of the staircase. She was apologetically and embarrassingly attempting to reassure the authorities that everything was fine.

When they left the house, and with a fee for a false call to 9-1-1, Eva exhaled and returned upstairs, shutting her door.