

The Party

Short story by Allison Fine
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He moved through the room in his self-contained manner. The walls were lined with people engaged in earnest conversation, corners were filled with the present sound of laughter, conversation bits, presence of human flesh perfumed, the smell of sweat musk and bravado, flesh pressed against expensive cloth, covered with stockings, socks, shirts, dresses, blouses, jewelry of the expensive and less expensive kind, adorned with tattoos seen and unseen; stretch hoes, panty hose; trouser socks in navy, black and deep swamp green.

Everywhere were the signs of success, intellectuality properly clothed in social nuances, subliminal emotions suppressed. The artificiality was ethical, derivative, smooth, self-effacing, witty, a clever lift of the eyes, shifting stances, make-up subtle, the right hair sheen, a construction of narrative that had a rhythmic, paced quality devoid of understanding.

It was a party operating through the musicality of manipulations as it moved through time. There was nothing interesting said, although much that was said had ambivalence clothed with the semblance of significance. Everyone was busy borrowing from the other; no one had a conscience to wrestle with, at least, not a conscience that they were consciously aware of.

Footsteps moved as live bodies danced and flirted upstairs in the rooms above the main reception area. Creaking the ceiling, one heard a sudden burst of glass crashing against glass—the house filled with people like advancing troops ambushing a sleeping village. Deeply, each one wished to tear off his or her clothes and stand naked in front of

the social group. None did. Or, none did under the watchful eyes of the rulers of the social order.

He did, in the privacy of the bathroom, accompanied by the wife of a friend. She tore off the silk blouse, colored sage, and threw it onto the toilet seat. He was perturbed about everything in life until he saw the dramatic white left breast escape from the powder blue lace bra.

“Hurry up,” he said drinking from an old-fashioned glass.

“It’s silk,” she said. “I don’t want to ruin it.”

He was naked and perched on the edge of the bathtub.

“Is the door locked?”

He checked.

“Yes.”

“Where’s the condom?”

He flipped the condom in his left hand.

She was naked. He wasted no time plunging deep into her, the folds parting for him with some reluctance. She was soft but not too compliant, lubricated (thank God), not sloppy and wet, sweet to the touch, smelling of “Joy.”

His breathing quickened, hers matched. He touched a spot inside her that sent waves of energetic liquid up her spine. Her neck creaked, she leaned her head on his shoulder; they both came together. He backed out of her, peeled the condom off his penis and tossed it into the mauve-colored wastebasket.

“Don’t leave that there, Doug.”

“Oh, yes.”

He fished the condom out, one finger, filled with his semen; the dead seed of his unborn children, wrapped it in long wads of toilet paper.

“You can’t flush that,” she said twisting her skirt around to the front and zipping the zipper.

“I know.”

“So, what—“

He threw the wad of toilet papered condom into the toilet and flushed.

“There.”

“I hope we haven’t clogged the toilet,” she said fastening her powder blue lace bra.

He washed his hands in the sink; she freshened her lipstick and straightened the stray strands of light brown hair.

They both finished dressing and checked for clothing details. He left the bathroom first; she followed some moments later leaving the door open and the fan on.

The sounds of the party drifted into her ears filtered, like sunlight streaming through lace curtains. There were moments and lives to be won; she contemplated the possibility, moving out into the room with the silk skirt swishing around her breasts.

He regained his heart rate and breathing, tucked his shirt tightly into his pants and rejoined his wife out by the pool; a wife whose long flowered skirt caught reflections and sent them out over the liquid blue. Water in the pool bounced off the impossible sapphire of her eyes.

“Great party, huh?”

She looked at his shirt and looked away.

