

*This is a story about the day I learned that people don't always truly believe in what they seem to stand for, or actually stand for what they say they believe...*

I've always been confused by the college dorm dynamic, probably because I never lived in one. You're supposed to live in close quarters with people you barely know, probably don't altogether like, and yet still learn, study, and stay sane. They should give a degree just for making it through that with a full head of non-grey hair.

The girlfriend of an associate of mine went to college outside Rochester in the exact environment described, and for some fucking reason, we would go hang out there fairly often. It was that or the mall, and there's just so many times you can look at the same shitty selection of records.

Going there was like a sociology experiment. We didn't mesh with what was happening at the school, and were greeted with either pleasant curiosity or unpleasant ferocity- no surprise, the line between interested and hostile was largely gender-based. Insecure, unoriginal college boys don't want anyone honing in on their turf; I've got another story about that later.

We'd sit around, walk around, I fell asleep a few times on the comfy couches in the lounge- but mostly we'd chat with whoever was on study break, and usually it was the girlfriends' roommate. For the sake of discussion, we'll call her Jodi. Jodi was (*I say "was" because she was a wishy-washy pseudo-intellectual snob who is now, I'm sure, whatever her rich husband wants her to be...*) into Amnesty International, being vegetarian, and most adamantly, not drinking. In hindsight, her staunch and vocal "non-drinker" campaign was probably just a way for her to feel unique and different in an environment that was decidedly neither.

Drinking was the word of the day for most of the other people on campus. Two or three nights a week the girls would traipse off to some Caribbean-themed nightclub to hang around with college types and in Jodi's case, vocally not-drink. To each his own, but I'd have to be sedated to hang around in a place like that with a bunch of pretentious college kids. But I guess when you ARE a pretentious college kid, it's hard to see the forest for the trees.

Anyway.

My friend and I were on our standard weekend route through the college expecting to hang around with our usual suspects, only to find out that it was some sort of college holiday and there was to be a mass-exodus to a bar on the other side of town. We sure as fuck weren't going, and just as surely didn't have anything else to do besides play Sega hockey at his cold apartment or get into trouble somewhere, so we resolved to go read magazines at the grocery store and come back around the time of their expected return. Exciting, right? When not traveling for BMX or hardcore... welcome to most of my young adult life. And the girls we were coming back to see weren't even cool.

We read magazines, had thorough and highly intellectual discussions about their content, watched people come in and out of the video store for a while, and then made our way back to college. We came up on a herd of girls surrounding Jodi, who was sobbing uncontrollably, and another girl that looked upset but not quite so unhinged... not a usual scene after a night of carefree college debauchery.

In between hysterics, it was discovered that a guy (*I think his name was Mark, or Mike, who fuckin' cares*) got behind the wheel of the car the girls were riding home in, completely fucking obliterated. Their story was that he couldn't even keep his head up, but somehow thought it wise to drive 25 minutes home from college asshole night at the bar. The girls continued the story, which included him yelling at them for implying he couldn't handle himself behind the wheel, him laughing at their sobbing pleas to pull over, veering into lawns, and finished with him running over some sort of small animal on one of the rural roads surrounding the campus.

As the story continued to unfold, the other girl began to cry, which made Jodi cry harder and eventually hyperventilate. Obvious questions were asked, such as why the fuck they didn't get out of the car when he stopped at a light, etc. but like many situations, unless you're there it is impossible to pass judgment.

I'm not winning any humanitarian awards, but this case felt too close to home to not do something. Those girls were completely traumatized by an inconsiderate college "friend" willing to risk their lives for the sake of a drunken ego. My friend and I were pissed. We too were non-drinkers, I still am, and so the thought of being put in danger by something you don't even yourself take part in is maddening. Looking back, I'm glad the people in the dorms refused our requests for his room number. It was better to have some time to let emotions cool down.

We were told by the girlfriend that Jodi was fairly distraught for the days following the incident. I was upset about it as well. It didn't happen to me, but I couldn't and still can't understand how someone could think for a second (*even in an intoxicated state*) that it is OK to put someone in such a situation, especially in spite of strong protest.

As per usual, Wednesday we ended up back at college. There was a small lounge area right in front of the girls' room where we frequently hung out. It was drab: Off-white walls, dirty tan couches, and used-to-be burgundy carpet. There was also an odd fake fire fireplace like you'd see in a model home. We were hanging out talking and two kids we didn't recognize walked up. One immediately went in to talk to Jodi; The body language and mannerisms she exhibited when he entered the room made me immediately aware that he was the one driving the other night. She all but refused to converse with him, so he came out into the lounge to enlist us as sympathizers.

In addition to my friend and me, his girlfriend and another girl from the floor were sitting on the couches. The driver began talking shit about how people freak out over nothing, he's done that a million times and nothing has happened, and the closer- "*It's like when a girl says no to sex: she really doesn't mind, she just doesn't want to admit it.*"

Too much. I'm curious what he ended up with a degree in. I'm sure it has something to do with combining large dough circles, big metal ovens, and tomato paste.

I've had many occasions to, but I am proud to say that I have only COMPLETELY lost my temper a very few times... this being one of them. The kid was my size, but soft from being a lush and a computer geek. As soon as I grabbed him I felt him tense up and make fists, and as I started shaking him I could feel him panic. I had a hold of his lapel and the back of his head. I was more or less shaking him to keep him from getting a good shot at me, all the while explaining to him the finer points of why I disagreed with his choices the previous weekend. My friend made damn sure his friend didn't have any wild notions to intervene, and the girls jumped up on the couches as if there was some sort of rodent on the ground. The kid got slapped a few times, not really hit at all, but I was really fucking upset. I still to this day don't know why this instance struck such a nerve, but it sure did.

As I mentioned, he was my size, and I'm not sure physically how it happened, but I threw him completely over one of the couches hard enough that his back and arm cracked an imprint in the wall where he hit. Just like 90% of the times I've been in physical altercations I didn't feel any better afterwards.

I don't think I expected the girls to be happy that I had gone after the kid, but I definitely did not expect the response I got: They were appalled- Jodi especially. They were swearing at me, telling me never to come back, etc. and I couldn't believe it. We went and sat downstairs while the girls composed themselves... we should have just left.

They came down to talk to us a little while later and were still pissed. I explained that I was as upset by his attitude regarding the situation as the situation itself. I said that if people like that think what is said to them is a joke, they are going to take advantage of people their whole life, and I wanted to show him that there can be real-life repercussions to taking advantage.

Yeah... that didn't make any sense to Jodi, who then confoundingly proceeded to prove his girls/ sex point: Now that the situation is over, she said, she realized that she could have done things differently and that he was just trying to get her attention.

Holy mother of shit; He's the victim, and all of a sudden they are thinking that I just beat up the victim! Is that what college does to people? Critical thinking is so over-emphasized yet so misunderstood that what she came up with seemed to them like a sane, sensible rationalization.

*To synopsize:*

An adamant non-drinker gets essentially forced into a car ride with a severely intoxicated man who is driving very dangerously. He will not let them out even though they are crying and pleading with him. The result is a very upset girl and very concerned friends of the girl.

The driver is a complete fucking idiot scumbag and can't even admit his wrongdoing and move on. In addition, he says classic frat-boy date rape shit that seals his fate. I slap him and toss him around the room, fairly diplomatically and with very little damage to anything but his ego, which needed a bit of damaging.

All of it somehow equates to me being an asshole that is completely out of line, and the girl feeling sorry that she didn't hear his cries of social distress masked by blatant disregard for the safety and well-being of others. This also leaves the girl contemplating how SHE could have handled the situation differently, and the worthless loser that caused the whole thing learning no lesson other than the fact that he should learn how to fight.

Ugh.

I don't understand being complacently "*against*" something. The girl had ranted and raved on many occasions prior to this whole debacle about how bad drinking was, how it was messing her friends up, they were failing out of school, etc. Then when the time comes to ACTUALLY BE AGAINST IT and to make a statement, she instead makes excuses and blames herself for being closed-minded.

I am of the other persuasion. If something is worth being against, it's worth fighting for, physically or otherwise. I thought this was a situation where that mentality would be embraced, since this involved total disrespect and potentially serious harm to a friend. I guess I overestimate peoples' dedication to the words they speak and the ideas they convey. It's a mistake I had made before this happened, and certainly one I've made since.

I guess now is as good a time as any to start doubting the sincerity of what people say; It's probably long overdue.

You know, maybe I AM the idiot. I've just always wanted to support what my friends believe in, trust what they say, and fight for them when I need to. I guess it's a character flaw.