

Period

Kristine Wagner

She leaves work early because there isn't much to do and she is cramping badly. Stupid Advil isn't working, or if it is, she would hate to see what it would feel like without Advil. Sitting hurts. Lying down hurts. Walking to the car was absolute torture. She is supposed to go to this thing at her friend's later, but she really doesn't want to. Well, it is either that or going back home and having to put up with her mom's constant questions and no private space. Her friend's house it is.

She drives to her friend's, trying to keep her eyes focused on the road. She wonders how much a car crash would hurt. Could the pain be magnified anymore at this point? She figures it might be, so she makes an effort not to crash. A car honks at her for not responding to a green light quickly enough. Little car, she could kill you and all the other little cars if she felt like putting the effort into it. She is a gracious driver—you be thankful, little car.

When she gets to her friend's house, she parks behind the old shed and slips in through the back porch and into the guest bathroom. She doesn't want to see anyone or talk to anyone or answer any questions. "How do you feel?" "Like crap on toast, thanks." It just wouldn't be a good idea. She quick, grabs a blanket from the guest closet, hands shaking. She locks the door to the bathroom and collapses onto the ground. The effort of driving made her sweat profusely, and now chills engulf her body and the sweat stands on her arms in weird, gelatinous droplets. She drinks water from the tiny paper cups they have for guests to use while brushing their teeth, because honestly she doesn't know what else to do beyond curling up in the blanket like a fetal burrito. What was this pain like? Being stabbed in the stomach? No, not quite that sort of sharp pain. Sharp pains are intense, quickly subsiding. Aches are duller, staying constant for long amounts of time. Period cramps are like the foul child of both, having both the intensity and staying power.

As she contemplates her pain and fantasizes about her impending death, she hears voices in the guest room. She hopes no one tries to open the door or see who's in there. She has left all the lights off except the nightlight which is always plugged in next to the light switch, so it shouldn't look like anyone is there. She stays very still and listens.

"Just put your coats on the bed, Kacey should be here in about half an hour." she heard her friend say, and a couple of other familiar voices responded and faded away as the group left and the room returned again to silence.

Faye had invited Sarah and Tom over? Faye doesn't even like Sarah, probably because she used to like Tom. "Used to," ha, she would've laughed if it wasn't such a pathetic story and if it didn't feel like tiny dwarves were mining their way out of her uterus using tiny pickaxes. So instead she stays quiet and reads the back of the Advil container.

"Warnings:

Ask your doctor before use if you are pregnant, under a doctor's care for a serious, condition age 60 or over, taking any other drug or have stomach problems."

Well she definitely wasn't pregnant. Allergic reactions, blah blah blah, oh look, stomach bleeding.

"Stomach bleeding warning: This product contains a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) which may cause severe stomach bleeding."

Drat! Probably shouldn't take any more, but really, could sever stomach bleeding hurt any more than this? Would it kill a person? Would it get her to the hospital? Would the doctors knock her out? That wouldn't be too bad. She contemplates this until voices reenter the room.

"Coats on the bed! Kacey should be here in about twenty minutes!" she hears Faye say again.

"Oh my gosh, it's so exciting!" a voice that could only be Tiffany's squeals.



“That is if she says yes, you know.” a nasally voice replies. Katherine. That would be Katherine. Ever since Katherine’s breakup, Katherine has avoided her. Probably because she told Katherine to grow a pair and move on. It had been 10 months at that point, in her defense, and he was already engaged to someone else. *Oh well*, she thinks, sniffing the disinfectant wipes from under the counter, *that’s your loss, Katherine*. She wonders if she can kill enough brain cells by sniffing this stuff to stop the pain. She probably is killing too many already to be considering that as a plausible solution. But hey, the pain must have lessened for her to be thinking this creatively at least!

She also begins wondering why on earth Faye was telling everyone what time she would be arriving. She probably ought to make some effort to go out and join the rest. She stands up wobbly, holding onto the edge of the countertop. She sits on the toilet and checks her tampon. Bled straight through and left a lovely stain on the back of her pants. Fudgesicle frickety-frack. Were there any tampons under the sink? Of course not. And that was the last in her purse. She stuffs her underwear full of toilet paper and gingerly takes off her jeans and rinses them under cold water to get the stain out. That’ll take a while to dry. But it is just supposed to be a movie night or something. Maybe Faye’s not letting anyone start watching until she got there. That’s so sweet, but there’s no way she’s leaving this bathroom for at least another hour. Sorry punks, y’all can just gossip and postpone starting the movie until that time anyway, because that’s what you always do. She reaches over to text Faye that she’ll be late, but her phone is dead. Oh well.

“You can just throw your coats on there, and hurry back! She should be getting here anytime.” Faye calls.

“Do you think she’ll be surprised?” Tony asks.

“Definitely! I can’t wait to see the look on her face!” Kelsey replies.

Kelsey? What on earth is Kelsey doing here? Kelsey is her older sister, not one of Faye’s friends. And Tony is her brother-in-law, Faye’s probably only seen him like, twice.

“Mr. Phillips, we’re putting the coats in here. Mrs. Phillips, I think my mom has the appetizers in the basement.” Faye calls again. She hears her parents thank Faye and leave the room. She is now thoroughly confused. Her parents are not here for a movie night. Everyone is there for her. But her birthday isn’t for another two months, and birthdays aren’t that big of a thing. She would be turning twenty-two, not sweet sixteen.

“Sorry Jeremy, it’s pretty loud out there, could you repeat that?” She hears Faye shut the door. Must be on the phone. “What do you mean she’s not at work? Does anyone know where she is?” Oh sweet tea and biscuits, she was going to be found out. “45 minutes ago? Oh my gosh. No, she didn’t tell me anything. Let me see if anyone here knows where she is.”

She sits in the bathroom, pantsless and wearing a bloody toilet paper diaper, unsure what to do. If it was just Faye, she’d be fine. But with all those other people here, she can’t just march out like she is. Her pants are still soaked, and it still feels like rodents were gnawing away at her uterine lining, although not as bad as before. Maybe small rodents now. She braces herself and makes a decision. The next time Faye or one of her family members comes through that door, she will try to get one of their attentions, and hopefully a new pair of pants.

But alas, it is not Faye that reenters; it is Sarah and Tom who come back in.

“I guess we just wait now. It sucks that she wasn’t there for Jeremy.” Sarah says.

“Well she didn’t know he would be coming.” says Tom.

“Well she should’ve come here then. Now Mr. Phillips is driving back to their house to see if she’s there. All this trouble for nothing.”

“Getting engaged isn’t exactly nothing, Sarah.”

“She might not have even said yes! They’ve only been dating 11 months.”

“Some people get engaged after less.”

“After *fewer*, dear. It just seems like a bad idea after such a short amount of time.”



“Guess that means I have more time, then, eh?”

She can almost hear Sarah glaring at Tom in the silence that followed.

“We’re different.” Sarah says, pointedly. “We’re more mature.”

“Yeah, Jeremy and Kacey definitely have their issues. Jeremy is still working at Macaroni Grill, you know. Not a great way to start a marriage.”

“She’s probably twisting his arm into it. If it weren’t for the fact she wasn’t even there for him to pick her up for the proposal, I would’ve thought she was the one planning it. Kacey is so overbearing. I just feel sorry for Jeremy. I can’t see what he sees in her, she’s not even that pretty.”

“Now Sarah, that’s not nice.”

“It’s true! He’s out of her league. Oh shoot, is my mascara smearing? Why don’t you ever tell me these things?”

“Uh…”

“Never mind. I’m going to clean up.”

“Alright, I’m going back out to see if there’s any news.”

Kacey hears Tom leave and Sarah approach the bathroom. Kacey has the blanket wrapped around her waist, and unlocks the door. Sarah gasps when she opens it, but Kacey puts a finger to her lips and ushers Sarah in and shut the door again.

“Oh my gosh!” Sarah exclaims.

“Shush!”

“Oh my gosh,” Sarah whispers. “Have you been here the whole time?”

“Yes. I need you to get me some pants.”

“Did, did you hear Tom and I?” Sarah looks nervous. Kacey doesn’t even bother raising a judgmental eyebrow at her. She is in pain, tired, angry, and doesn’t have time for this floozle flazzle.

“Yes. I am very disappointed, but we haven’t been close in years, so I guess it makes sense. All that doesn’t matter right now. I need a pair of pants.”

“Kacey! You need to go out there! People are worried! What on earth have you even been doing in here?”

“I’m planning to get out there, as soon as I have pants. Can you get me some pants?”

“You’ll need to ask Faye.” Sarah doesn’t seem to realize the situation. Kacey takes a deep breath.

“I’m having cramps, and have no pants. Can you go ask Faye?”

“Cramps? You’re in here just because of cramps? Couldn’t you just suck it up? That is so selfish!”

“Sarah! You do not understand. Right now my shredded uterus lining is coming out of my vagina and I just missed my proposal apparently, and you were talking smack about me just a minute ago. Do us all a favor, stop being a horrible person, and just find me a pair of pants.”

“You could just put on the wet ones.”

“Yes, and I could also just go tell Tom about Chad.”

Sarah’s eyes widen in horror. “You wouldn’t.”

“That depends on if you can find me a pair of paints.”

“I thought we were friends.”

“Well so did I, but that display I just heard out there proves otherwise,” Kacey hisses, pointing out the bathroom door. “I’m happy to put all of this behind us; just right now I need pants.”

“You won’t tell Tom about Chad?”

“Sarah, however you choose to screw up your life is up to you, unlike some people I don’t go spreading my opinions about like manure on a field. Now, pants.”

“You do, too! You are one of the most headstrong, overbearing people I have ever met!”



“Sarah, PANTS!”

“First you have to promise not to tell Tom about Chad.”

“Who’s Chad?” Tom’s concerned face appears at the door. “You know this thing isn’t soundproof, right?”

“Tom!” Sarah gasps. Both of them begin bickering, and Kacey sinks back into the corner of the bathroom and starts crying quietly. Standing so long had caused a new wave of cramps, and she is angry and miserable. Jeremy rushes into the bathroom, pushing Sarah and Tom out of the way.

“Kacey! Have you been here the whole time?” Jeremy asks, quickly taking in the whole situation; pants in the sink next to a bottle of Advil, small smears of blood on the floor. Kacey nods, sniffing. Jeremy puts his arms around her, drawing her into a little bundle. Instantly her anger fades away and her whole body relaxes into him. “Your period started?” Kacey nodded again. “You know, I’ve always wanted to get you out of your pants, but this is not what I had in mind.” Kacey half-laughs, half cries, and Jeremy smooths her hair. “Guess you heard what this whole shindig was about, huh?”

“Were you really going to propose at my job?” Kacey asks.

“Yeah,” Jeremy chuckles, embarrassed.

“Well that’s a stupid place to propose.” A grin sneaks back onto Kacey’s face. Jeremy throws back his head and laughs.

“You’re right, it’s not the most glamorous, but marriage isn’t exactly the most glamorous either, or life in general. Look at us now.”

“I’m plenty glamorous. Blood-stained jeans, it’s the trend women have been waiting for since they were allowed to wear pants.”

“You are the most glamorous.” Jeremy laughs. “Will you make my life a little more glamorous and marry me?”

“Once I get a pair of pants. Yes, duh Jeremy. Yes, yes!”

