

## Uncovering Ecstasy

My stomach quivered with anticipation. The call had been made, the order had been placed, and tonight was the night. All that was left to do was wait. I had seen my friends roll once before. I chickened out at the last minute and decided to be a spectator instead. I watched Lucy swallow a tiny green pill in the shape of four leaf clover. She paced around in her apartment rambling away, straightening the rugs on the floor, organizing books on her shelf, and checking her watch every couple of minutes like it was some kind of timed science experiment. I guess it was in a way. What if she turned into the color of the pill and grew large rippling muscles that tore through her dress? What then? Just as I was pondering this absurd scenario, it was like watching her get hit by a tidal wave, her eyes glossed over and she was slammed in a matter of seconds. She floated over to me and began massaging my arm. Her head lolled as if it weighed a hundred pounds and then she let out a very loud moan. Just think Meg Ryan in *When Harry met Sally* and you get the picture.

“Oh Linnie, you’ve gotta try this, it is fucking brilliant, brilliant,” she said in that great Brit accent of hers. I was very curious to say the least.

The buzzer rang and brought me back to the present moment. I pressed the intercom to let the dealer in. He was nothing like I expected. I remember in 8<sup>th</sup> grade health class there was a special day when our teacher taught us about drugs. Mrs. Turner was her name and she read out of a book the names of the killers and their effects. She could have been reading down her grocery list for all I knew, that was the level of emotion she evoked. She also stated that when a big scary man cornered us in a dark alley and offered us drugs that we should just say no and run the other way. She must have been reading straight out of the Nancy Reagan handbook. But what really stuck with me was that she pronounced marijuana wrong, actually emphasizing the J.

So here he was the big scary drug dealer. Justin was his name. He shook each of our hands and actually introduced himself like he was about to sell us a refrigerator. He had boy next door good looks and couldn’t have been that much older than we were, 25

at most. He was wearing a red winter coat, nice denim jeans and a pair of Adidas Shell Toes. His slick hair was short, black and wavy and his eyes were a dark shade of green. If I hadn't already known his occupation, I would have guessed he was either a J Crew model or a member of a boy band. He stepped into Lucy's tiny living room. It was so much nicer now that she had her own apartment in the village, it was small but nothing compared to the cramped quarters I was still living in. I was here more often than not, so it worked out great. He sat down on the futon, opened his black North Face book bag, and pulled out a large Ziploc full of what looked like hundreds of pills.

"I don't know what kind of roll you guys are looking for but the Mitsubishis are what's hot right now. Not too speedy, not too mellow, a nice high. I also have Nikes, smurfs, supermans, tellatubbies, you know the usual mix," he said nonchalantly.

*Umm.. No I don't know about the usual mix.* I had no idea that ecstasy came in so many different names, shapes, and colors. But I felt surprisingly excited and delighted to have so many choices in front of me, *it's about fucking time.* I could pick the kind of pill and high I wanted, it was like shopping for a pair of jeans, the kind that fit just right and made your ass look small. *I love shopping.*

"We will take the Mitsubishis."

Lucy had seniority, so it seemed only right to let her make the decisions. Oh yeah, and she was paying. She offered to pay pretty much for everything. She didn't have a job but her Daddy clearly did. She showed me a picture of her house when she was talking about her mum and dad one night. I had to pick my jaw up from the floor. Her house as she called it, looked like Cinderella's castle at Disney World, maybe a little bigger. I barely had enough money to get on the subway let alone pay for drugs so I had no trouble graciously accepting her hand outs.

"How many would you like to have for the evening?" asked Justin.

"They're going to be four of us, so two each should do it. This is Lynn's first time so she might just need to take a lick of one, I will finish hers," she said laughing.

“Ok. I usually charge 30 bucks a pill but I will give them to you ladies for 25 a pop tonight. It’s a good deal,” he said assuring us.

She handed him two crisp one hundred dollar bills out of her black leather Coach wallet without batting an eyelash. Justin gave her a tiny little bag with the eight pills and patted me on the head and said “Congrats this will be the best night of your life.”

“Thanks.” *I guess.* The pressure was on now.

Lucy and I planned on meeting Manny and Brian at McSwiggan’s pub on Second Avenue. It was a little hole in the wall that we frequented because like Desmond’s they never carded. I was beginning to like Irish pubs. Lucy and I hopped in a cab on Sixth Avenue to waste no time getting there. I was nervous, excited, scared and happy knowing that I would be with Lucy, Brian, and Manny for my first time. It was like knowing you’re going to lose your virginity with someone you really loved, someone that really cared. The cab ride seemed to take forever.

We walked into the bar and found Brian and Manny playing pool in the back room. Lucy whispered to Brian that she had their pills and handed him one of the tiny baggies while planting a kiss on his mouth. Speaking of virginity, Lucy had just given hers to Brian the week before. Brian looked a bit like Ewan McGregor in *Trainspotting*, but with a little more meat on his bones. He had nice eyes, but never seemed to look in any one else’s when he talked. I hadn’t figured him out yet, nor would I ever.

“Follow me to the bathroom.” said Lucy.

I asked no questions and followed her. It must have looked odd that the two of us were going in there together, but I was sure we weren’t the first to do so. The bathroom was so tiny, obviously made for one person. Once inside she put the toilet seat down and reached into her wallet. She pulled out the baggie with the other four pills inside it. The bathroom smelled of urine and stale beer but I didn’t mind. Lucy handed me a white pill and we tapped them against each other to make a toast.

“Cheers,” we quietly said in unison.

“I love you Linnie, here’s to a good night.”

We put the pills on our tongues, scooped water into our mouths from the faucet and swallowed. I had no idea what to expect. We walked out of the bathroom and were met by a fat lady rolling her eyes at us.

“It’s about fucking time,” she said.

Once again, this wasn’t a classy joint, we didn’t come here for the ambiance. The crowd could get a bit rough at times. It seemed to be the perfect atmosphere for a little bit of criminal behavior. Brian and Manny waited at the bar with a beer for each of us, smiling like two Cheshire cats. Lucy asked them if they had dropped but we already knew the answer.

I sat on a bar stool while Manny rubbed my back. I had a crush on Manny since the first night that we met at Desmonds. He’d asked what my favorite band was. I told him I liked Radiohead and wanted to marry Tom Yorke. He shook my hand saying that I impressed him. It took a very small compliment from a guy to make a very big impact on me. Manny was nothing like the guys I usually dated, he was skinny as all hell and not terribly good looking. He had sharp features, small brown eyes, and a slight space between his front teeth. He wore a beard which I loved because it made him look like a cowboy. Sometimes he bleached his hair blond which was awful because it made him look like Dennis the Menace.

He always had the same damn shirt on too. It was a long sleeved baseball tee, with yellow arms, a white body, and *You’ve got a friend in California* written across the front of it. Showers weren’t much of a priority for him either. But we both shared the same dry sense of humor and he made me laugh. He also had nicknames for me like Lyndon B Johnson, or just Lyndon B for short. He made fun of me in a loving kind of way. Similar to when you get your hair pulled by a boy in the third grade that has a crush

on you. He was complicated, but I was positive he liked me in some twisted way. *I was such a sucker for emotionally retarded guys.*

As Manny was rubbing my back, my toes began to tingle. I was analyzing every feeling that I had in my body, anxiously awaiting my dinner guest. I started rubbing my legs. There was a knot in my stomach, maybe from the nerves or the pill, I was not sure which. I began peeling the label off of my cold Bud. We were all silently looking at each other, waiting for someone to make the first move.

I went to take a drink of my beer and as the coldness trickled down my throat, I was standing underneath a waterfall. A beautiful air passed through my entire body. My eyes slowly closed and I was in slow motion. Like I was actually in a beer commercial where they zoom in and slow down when the person takes a swig. Then suddenly I was being shot out of a cannon. My limbs were light and heavy at the same time. I forced myself to stand up because I thought I was going to fall off the bar stool. My body was Jell-o. They all begin to laugh and nod their heads, like they knew exactly what was going to happen, like they had seen this movie before and this was their favorite part.

Lucy grabbed my arm, “Lynnie, are you alright?”

Her touch was fucking amazing. I grabbed her hand and started squeezing.

“Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god.” Even talking felt good.

I was Dorothy stepping into Oz for the first time. My life was in Technicolor. Only I was not trying to find my way home or was I? The bottles of liquor behind the bar shimmered like lights on a Christmas tree. I pushed my hair out of my face. It was silk and I wrapped it around my finger. I began to sigh, I had never felt so good in all of my life. I was overwhelmed. I knew that I couldn't stay in the bar for much longer or I would explode. I wanted to rip my clothes off and run down Second Avenue. I was free and liberated, oozing with love for all of mankind. While I was rubbing the bar down like it was a puppy, they made the decision that we should get a cab back to Lucy's place immediately.

Lucy held my hand, “We are going to go back to my place so we can chill.”

We walked outside and the wind wrapped around my body, like sex but only better. Manny put me into the cab first, Lucy and Brian sat in the back with me and Manny took the seat next to the driver. I began rubbing my legs and touching the leather of the seat. My feet were dancing. I rolled down the window and let the cool air blanket my face. My eyes were closed. I was surrounded by good energy. Lucy began to rub my leg and I looked over at her and she was beaming. She had finally joined my party and suddenly looked like a Playboy centerfold to me.

“Oh Linnie, I told you this would be fucking BRILLIANT. This is fucking BRILLIANT.”

We didn't say much to each other after that, we just stared. I didn't see her as my best friend or even a girl but as a fellow soul.

By this time, everyone was feeling it. Manny had struck up a conversation about religion with the driver and I was expecting them to hug any minute. Brian's eyes were closed, his head was resting on the back of the seat and he was mumbling. I could feel everyone, each of their highs were merged with mine. Like we all swallowed the same pill, one cohesive unit. The drive could have taken three minutes or three hours. All I knew was that we all spilled out of the cab onto Bedford Street like hot gooey liquid. Lucy paid the cabbie with a fifty and told him to keep the change. We all had our arms around each other, letting out sighs and laughter with few words.

Lucy fumbled with her keys, stopped, took a deep breath, and tried to obtain a moment of focus so that we could enter her apartment building. We filed in one by one. The hallway leading to her apartment was narrow. Thank God she was on the ground floor. The yellow walls were like spun gold, glistening like the morning sun. I never recalled her hallway being so beautiful. We got into her apartment, shut the door quickly, and kicked off our shoes. Lucy went right to the stereo and put on something mellow, like Sinead O'Connor. She lit a stick of incense and let her coat drop to the floor. It was

an emergency drill but instead of hurrying to leave, we were hurrying to stay. As if we were racing to see who could get comfortable the fastest.

I went into the bathroom, sat down on the cold toilet, and lay my head in my lap. No words could describe this feeling, no worries, no anxieties, I was surrounded by love. I felt every breath that came in and out of my body, every breeze that passed was a part of me. I began to cry. I wished that I could scream or sing at the top of my lungs but all I could do was cry. Lucy walked through the door into the bathroom, shutting it quickly behind her. She sat down on the edge of the bathtub and lit a cigarette. I started to pee. The warm stream was heavenly. A huge release. I felt an outpouring of emotion.

“I love you Linnie,” she said as smoke danced out of her mouth.

“I love you too. Oh my god Lucy, I can’t fucking believe this. I don’t even know what to say. This is fucking amazing.”

“Here, take a drag,” she said, passing the cigarette to me.

I put it to my lips and inhaled. Boom! I was being shot out of a cannon again. The smoke coated every inch of my lungs with what felt like a layer of ice.

I pulled up my pants and washed my hands. The cold water running over them ignited waves of pleasure inside me. I had just been given the sense of touch for the very first time. I imagined this was how a baby must feel. Everything was new and just now opening itself up to me. I ran my wet hands through my hair drenching it in water.

“Can I wear one of your tank tops? I need something that will let my body breathe.”

“Don’t leave, I will be right back.”

My heart was as light as a feather. Lucy came back into the bathroom with two black tank tops, one for each of us. They were from Marks & Spencer in London. Soft and supple, I couldn’t wait to get it on my body. I ripped my sweater off and Lucy

followed. For once, I viewed my body as a friend, a beautiful extension of myself. Lucy's breasts were fucking amazing. Round and perfect. Her flesh was glowing like a star. I was staring at her like I was staring into the sun. I was stimulated but not in a sexual way. I didn't want to get my brains fucked out. That was actually the furthest thing from my mind. I wanted to rub my body against Lucy's and merge our souls. I wanted to mix with her like hot wax, melt and come together. We were not saying much at that point, just communicating with moans and smiles. She told me that this was one of the best rolls shed ever had, and shed had a lot.

We put our lacy tanks on like we were about to stroll down a catwalk. I was a goddess. Like the queen of fucking Sheba. Sexy, confident, and full of power. We went into the dark living room and I saw Manny and Brian sitting on the floor talking intensely to each other. The music was massaging my ears. I looked around and realized they were my family. I would know and be friends with them for the rest of my life. We would celebrate birthdays, weddings, births, and thank each other in our Oscar speeches. We were all so beautiful. The stream of smoke billowing from the incense was as comforting as a thousand chocolate chip cookies right out of the oven. I crouched next to Manny and he wrapped his arms around me.

“Lynn, Lynn, Lynn.”

He called me by name so I knew he was definitely feeling it. His hug was warm honey drizzled all over my body. This was how a hug should feel. All I could do was sit there, dumbfounded, with every mixed emotion. I didn't know life could be like this.

Rain began falling outside and tapping against Lucy's windows. I crawled outside into the tiny courtyard and stood in the center with my head thrown back, letting the rain coat my tongue. This must be heaven. I was the only person in the world. I peeled my shirt off and leaned against the brick wall on the side of the building. I spread my wings out like I was about to take flight. This was the stuff of dreams. My life had greater meaning and I was part of something much bigger than myself. I was finally one with the world.

The rain was kissing my body over and over. I was pure and innocent. I was a pink sunset, ice cream sundae, curtain call, rainbow, waterfall, and roller coaster ride all rolled into one. All alone yet connected, I had just stumbled into the center of the universe and found the hidden treasure. The prize at the bottom of the cereal box was all mine.

When I was five or six years old I asked my mom what heaven was. I had heard the word at school and I was curious. She told me that it was a beautiful place where all of life's questions were answered. I now knew what she was talking about. For once I was speechless, free of questions, and full of answers. One pill and my whole life had changed.