



# **Our Cars**

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There were six of us in my car so Hailey sat on Baylee's lap. Baylee was one of the least liked people at Sportsman's, but because he could so easily keep a conversation, women that didn't know him would unwittingly allow themselves to be strangled by his company for sometimes the entire night. Incidentally, this ended up being the exact reason people didn't like him at the bar; he would linger and when he spoke to you, you could tell that he was being too amenable and would agree with anything you said. His unkempt beard, and neurotic need to wear beanies in any weather also didn't help his case.

Everyone in the car had just met Hailey, who was by all accounts very pretty, aside from her friend Madalyn, who was the mutual friend between us. Madalyn was just a couple months past turning twenty-one, at which point she left her parents house and had been relying on the kindness of bar patrons to give her a couch to sleep on and a shower in the morning. Recently she had taken to wearing the same outfit every night, and, though she always made a point to not spend much time beautifying herself, she had taken the vow to a new extreme, and would ask people to feel the stubble under her chin, or point out a stain on her shirt amongst twenty and give you it's backstory. For the last week she had been staying at Zube's house, because the last man whose house she was staying at started getting the wrong idea about their relationship. He would post on Facebook about her subliminally, and, as he would buy her food and drinks and clothes, he felt that this entitled him to be considered romantically. He was a thirty year old bald man, named Joe. Zube was forty years old and bald, but until a day or two later, their situation had not yet gotten confusing. Hailey also just turned twenty-one.

"I wanted to sit up front," Max said, infantlike in his disappointment, from the backseat. He was squished between Madalyn and the rear, passenger side door. Baylee and Hailey took up more room than anybody would have wished to allot them under any circumstance, anywhere.

“Max, shut up, just let Thurston have the seat,” Thurston looked up at me and shook his head without saying anything then returned his attention to the bag of cocaine he was stirring and poking and breaking around. He seemed to be busy at work, and you would think it was hard work, because everyone in the car was beginning to get agitated by how long it was taking for him to dole out everyone a piece of his supplies. It was now at least ten-until-three a.m., and a couple hours earlier in the night, by way of striking up conversation with the newly introduced Hailey, Max and I implored her to find, and flirt with, someone that was lonely enough to get her, and us, high. She was hard at work for the rest of the night with Thurston, at that point ignoring Baylee like one does a fly that won’t swat. By the time she got Thurston, who gave the impression that he was too uncomfortable with himself to talk and walk authentically, to quit talking loudly and with his body for the benefit of strangers, Madalyn had also joined our procession, and, since Baylee could not be wagged, six of us walked out to my car behind the bar. It had to have been at least 2:30 by the time we got through to Thurston, he was incorrigible, anytime you tried to mention doing coke, he would shake his head and assure you he had a lot, two bags, at least, and that we were going to do all of it, and we would all be so high and would go to the after party, then he would go back to looking around him sharply or laughing at something artificially.

After we got to the car, it had taken Thurston at least ten minutes to produce one of the bags, only after being reminded twice by Madalyn, who didn’t feel ashamed to mention the thing everyone was thinking. He pulled the bag out and started stabbing into it lazily with a key, while engaged in a conversation with Baylee about the purpose of life or something of the like. Baylee was famous for starting conversations about something “spiritual” with little-to-no-depth, to the complete disgust of many, yet the delight of others.

Now it was ten til’ three, and still, no one got so much as a bump.

“Hey, Thurston, is it still cool if I get some of that?” Hailey said flirtily from the backseat, atop another person’s lap.

“Yeah, oh yeah, don’t worry, I have like, seriously too much of this stuff, we’re all gonna get *hiiiiIIIIIIgggggggh*,” he sang.

“Here, Thurston, if you want I can like, give you some money, if I can get a little bit,” I offered shallowly, knowing he would say no to save face in front of the women.

“No man, noooo, we’re gonna do ALL of this!”

“Here,” Hailey said, leaning forward and offering her nostril so that Thurston would feel inclined to finally give her the hit she was promised. Thurston quickly started digging in the bag with purpose, and pulled his key out with a little pile on the end, he haphazardly stuck it above her lip. He started back on the bag and pulled one out for Baylee, then another for Hailey, then one for Madalyn, and one for Max. Madalyn and Max thanked him in turn, Baylee and Hailey just spoke their satisfaction with how it felt in their noses. Then Thurston took one, and made sure to make a big show of it, he yelped, and convulsed the way one would in a coughing fit.

“Wheew!” He rubbed his nose and shook his head, “It’s good huh?” He closed his eyes and laid his head back. I turned to give Max, the only actual friend I had in the car, a look that communicated my disappointment in not getting a bump. Max and I would back each other up when the situation needed two people to manipulate an outcome. Sometimes, when someone felt Max didn’t deserve to get high for free, seeing as he never threw in for a bag, I would come in as his advocate, arguing that, no, he doesn’t deserve it, but that you should give the poor guy some anyway. He now did the same for me.

“Hey Thurston, Kobe didn’t get one,”

“Who-who’s Kobe?” Thurston asked, pretending to jerk himself out of slumber.

“Uh, I’m Kobe,”

“My bad, man, it’s just that we’ve never actually been introduced to each other,” Again, making an obvious show.

“It’s all good, man, it’s good to meet you,” I feigned amiability for the sake of getting high. “So, is it cool if I get one?”

“Oh yeah man, yeah, of course, I have so much, I have another bag around here somewhere, let’s see..” He started rummaging through his pockets, trying to find a second bag, while the first sat open and forgotten on his lap.

“Oh, god, here comes Zube,” Max sighed from behind us.

Zube was already standing next to my car door by the time Max noticed him. I shrugged as I rolled my window down to greet him.

“What are you guys doing out here?” He asked rhetorically through a shit-eating grin.

“Oh, you know, enjoying each other’s company,” I answered unconvincingly.

“There’s no room in here Zube, just go inside, I’ll be in there soon,” Max assured him, as he was Zube’s ride.

“Nah, man, Ima just stand out here,” He moved from my window to Baylee and Hailey’s window, and peered in. He started talking through them, indistinctly, to Madalyn. I looked at Thurston, he had gone back to resting with his eyes closed.

“Thurston, man, is it cool if I get a bump?” I pleaded.

“Oh yeah, let’s see here...” he started searching his pockets again.

“Your bag’s on the dash, bro,”

“Oh, cool, yeah that works,” He grabbed the bag of cocaine and picked up a copy of ‘The Lost City of Z’ I had abandoned in the inside of my car. He poured the bag onto the book and started thoughtfully sifting through it with a debit card.

“Yeah and that’s something about being Italian and coming from an Italian family, we’re all about loyalty,” Baylee’s voice suddenly began to carry through to the front seat.

“You’re Italian?” Thurston turned to face Baylee.

“I hate italians,” I inserted; ironic in the sentiment, but I hoped Baylee had noticed the derisiveness of my tone. I hoped, more than anything in the world, that I wouldn’t have to be subjected to yet another twenty minute roisterous explanation as to how someone could be a fourth-generation Italian immigrant inside of America.

“Me too,” Max countered.

“Fucking mongrels.”

“I’m Italian too bro,” Thurston ignored us, “Sicilian Mafia.”

“Fuck yeah, Sicilian, yeah, we’re from like, northern, we’re like northern Italy.”

“Weren’t you guys Nazis?” I asked, unwilling to be unheard.

“Fuck that dude, my family fled the war bro, we didn’t want to be there because it wasn’t safe for us, what does that say?” Baylee was flailing his arms.

“That they didn’t want to get strung up like Mussolini,” I said with a hiss.

Nobody responded, Thurston had gone back to staring at a pile of cocaine.

“Hey Thurston,” Hailey leaned forward, “can I get another one of those?”

“Yeah yeah of course, here, let me..” He made a line and put the book under Hailey’s nose but instead of just doing the line, she took the book. Thurston didn’t seem to mind either way. Hailey took a line then made one for Baylee. She passed the book to Madalyn and Madalyn passed it to Max.

“Here, Thurston.”

Thurston grabbed the book and gave himself a line, then exaggeratedly shook his head and leaned back in the seat.

“What’s up Zube?”

“Shit, same old shit, what’s up Thurston?”

“Shit, man.”

“Thurston, Kobe still didn’t get a line,” Max insisted.

“Oh fuck, man, my bad,” Thurston made a line on Lost City of Z. “Here, man.”

I took the line and used my finger to wipe up some of the excess dust around it and use it to numb my mouth which would mix with the numbness in my nostril. “Oh god, thanks Thurston, like I said I’ll give you some cash or whatever.”

“Man, fuck that, I got so much coke, we’re gonna do it all. You and me, we’re gonna get high as fuck tonight, here,” he gave me another. As I was

recovering, Thurston said, speaking quietly beneath Zube, “We’re friends now though, right?”

“Yeah, man, of course we’re friends, Thurston,” I offered laboriously, knowing that if I showed any sign of being embarrassed for Thurston, that it would only add to our collective embarrassment.

“Like we’re gonna hangout after this?” Thurston asked, revealing himself.

“Yeah, of course we’ll hang out,” I was developing a stomach ache from suppressing all facial expressions, “but, like, you can have this ten,” he shook his head and held his hand up at me, not looking me in the eyes.

Zube had walked over to the other side of the car to talk to Max through the back window and Thurston started playing music on his phone, “Zube!” Thurston blurted out and got out of the car, leaving the door open. He started talking to Zube indiscernibly and they walked away from the car together. After a couple of minutes, through the rearview window, I could just barely see the top half of Thurston; he was dancing. He had tried to teach me how to foot dance one night at sportsmans a few months ago, so I figured that’s what was happening. It was cold and Max and I began feeling the breeze from the open door.

“What are they doing?” Max asked exhaustedly.

“Dancing,” I responded. I looked down at the empty seat next to me, “He left his coke.”

“Where?” Bailey asked and shifted.

“It’s right here.”

“Where?” Hailey asked moving forward, when she saw the book she looked out the open door towards Thurston, who had his back turned to us, and bent down to wipe some up with her finger. When Baylee saw her do this, he also stooped over the front seat and started running his finger around the pile of coke. Hailey dipped her finger in again, then Baylee, then they began fighting over it and taking directly from the pile. They acted like children that had been deprived of food for a week at a buffet. Their display of junkie gluttony disgusted even Max and myself, who were no strangers to taking hand-outs or acquiring things through underhanded means.

“Hey, hey!” I yelled, too demeaningly for talking to two people my age.

“Quit it, that’s Thurstons,” Max said, sounding disappointed against my outrage. I swatted them away and moved the book to the dash.

“Fucking animals,” I moved the book again for emphasis. Hailey and Bailey sniffled and rubbed their gums. Everyone in the car was using Thurston for his drugs, a fact that even Thurston himself was aware of, but doing someone’s stuff while they turned their head was frowned upon by everyone that has a history of drug use. Thurston walked back to the car and stuck his head in.

“Hey, who’s going to Zubes?”

“Well, I told them I’d take them home, Madalyn is staying at Zube’s I think,” Max said, more of a question pointed towards Madalyn.

“Yeah and Hailey’s with me.”

“Do you want to go to Zube’s?” Hailey asked Baylee.

“Uhhh, sure, I can drive my car there or whatever,” Baylee sat with his mouth opened.

“Okay, sweet, I’m going too,” Thurston walked back to Zube.

“Okay, yeah let’s go then,” Max got out of the car then the rest followed. I had the urge to drive off, except Thurston left his coke in the car and my passenger door was still open. I got out of the car and walked over to Max’s, which was already running and filled with people.

“What are you guys doing?” I asked, getting in the backseat.

“Zube’s if he ever stops talking,” Max sighed. “Zube! Let’s go!” He yelled out the window. Zube waved Max away with his hand and went on with his conversation. I got out of the car.

“Thurston, your shit’s still in my car man, I gotta go home.”

“You leaving man?” Baylee asked me.

“Nah, man, don’t leave, we’re gonna go to my house, we’re gonna smoke some weed, we’ll jam out, we’ll have a good old time.”

“Man, I don’t know, it’s 4 a.m.”

“C’mon man, I got some *good* ass weed.”

“Yeah, c’mon man, I’ll drive, Thurston’s got some more shit, c’mon Kobe.”

At this point I had begun to suspect that Thurston’s elusive second bag of coke never existed, but the urge to do more was so great that any doubts I had were dulled by the physical necessity to keep my high going.

“Whatever, man, I’m gonna drive, though,” I walked back to Max’s car for a temporary reprieve from the cold, disappointed in my lack of discipline.

“Are you coming to Zube’s?” Max asked when I got into his car.

“Yeah,” we exchanged a look and both laughed defeatedly.

“Alright, well, we should go.”

“Yeah,” I said, and left his car again. Zube, Thurston, and Baylee were huddled together near a dumpster. “C’mon, c’mon, let’s go, c’mon, everyone get in a car,” I clapped my hands and made the motion to wrap-it-up with my index finger. “C’mon. Let’s go.”

“You’re going?” Baylee asked.

“Yeah.”

“Are you driving?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay. Do you know where to go?”

“No.”

“Okay, yeah, you can follow me, I know where the jam room is.”

“Okay.”

“We’re not going to the jam room,” Zube said,

“Where are we going?” Baylee asked.

“My house.”

“Where’s your house at?”

“It’s right next to the jam room.”

“Okay. And Max is taking you?”

“Yeah he’s gonna take me and Madalyn and Madalyn’s friend.”

“Okay. Can I just follow you guys then?”

“Yeah man, c’mon, let’s do it.”

“Okay,” Baylee turned to me, as if I hadn’t been present for their conversation, “You can just follow me, bro, I know where to go.”

“Okay,” We all stood in silence. I shook my head, “Okay then. Let’s go. Autobots, roll out,” I clapped my hands again.

“Oh shit!” Thurston leaned back with his head in his hands, “Did you guys watch Autobots?”

“Dude Autobots we’re-”

“Man I remember when Autobots fir-”

“Oh my fucking god,” I laughed hysterically, “let’s fucking gooooooo.”

“Okay, yeah, I’ll see you guys there,” We disbanded. When I got to my car I saw Thurston make a move to enter his car, then stop and shut the door. He walked up to my window.

“You’re going to Zube’s right?”

“Yes.”

“Do you care if I ride with you? I’m drunk as fuck.”

I sighed, “Sure, man, your shit’s in here anyway.”

Baylee walked up to my window. “Hey man, I like, don’t really have any gas, is it cool if I ride with you guys?”

“Man, do I have to take you back here?”

“Yeah but you have to take Thurston back anyway.”

“Whatever Baylee, let’s just go.”

“Fuck yes, thank you Kobe, you are the dude, man.”

“Your shit’s up there, Thurston,” I pointed to the dash.

“Alright, thanks man, yeah, we’re gonna get high as fuck. So where are we actually going?”

“Zube’s, Thurston.”

“But are we *actually* going to Zube’s?”

“Uh, yeah, man.”

“Okay. Okay.” He nodded his head and looked down the bridge of his nose at me. I reversed and followed Max out of the parking lot. I took a sharp right turn and the book with the coke on it slid from one side of the dash to the

next. Thurston made a quick, exaggerated motion to keep the book from falling and placed it on his lap. Then he grabbed the ten dollar bill that I had offered him thirty minutes ago and put it in his pocket. ‘*Fuck*’ I thought.

We took a left onto Franklin and Thurston began searching for something in his pockets, he held the book up above his head and put his chin on his chest. We passed another bar and Thurston saw the flash of police lights down a side street out of the corner of his eye, he yelled “Oh, fuck!” And quickly sat on the book. The entire sequence of events happened in slow motion right before my eyes, I stifled my sharp inhale and clenched my jaw shut, internally screaming at Thurston.

With one quick motion, Thurston had dashed all of my hopes for the rest of the night. I knew that there would be nothing left of the cocaine on the book, and that even the dust I could scavenge would probably have been no good by the time we reached Zube’s. For hours that night, doing coke was all I thought about; from the moment one of us first mentioned cocaine, the urge to snort some had snowballed inside the problem-solving part of my brain and the anxiety-producing part of my stomach. I had begun to feel it in my sinus and taste it in my throat. My palms sweat at the mere thought of it. And then, after hours of suspense, I’d finally done two lines, and I felt like the best person in the world. My chest was no longer tight, my stomach was open and accepting air so I spoke with more confidence. And then none of us had done any for a half hour, and the feeling went away, but the hint of excited anxiety in my stomach from knowing there was more almost filled the emptiness in my gut. And then Thurston sat on it, and it made me wake up from my trance, and I knew that there was no other bag. I was starting to think that Thurston sat on the coke on purpose, to spite all of us or to prove to himself that he didn’t need it to make friends.

We merged onto the highway and I started feeling the shame one feels after having spent hours on a quick-burning, temporary escape. I was ashamed at having used Thurston and at even letting myself be swept up in another of these episodes, surrounded by people I didn’t really like, or at the least was entirely indifferent towards, staying up until the sun rises, only to come home penniless

with a pit in my stomach. I felt controlled and weak-willed, it was pathetic how I let myself go along with anything as long as there was even the slightest promise of drugs at the end of it all. I laughed to myself, at the hilarity of the circumstance, and I reasoned that I deserve this, to be forced to sit around with these people I pretended to tolerate.

We pulled up to Zube's house and Baylee said, "Hey, Thurston, so before we go in, you guys wanna do some blow?"

"I mean, we'll do some, man, we'll go do some with all of them, don't worry."

"No, I mean like, just us, and then we can go inside and do some with them."

"Oh! Yeah! That's cool, man. Let me see here..." Thurston started patting down his pockets for the tenth time tonight and I turned away so as to not have to share in his shame. He went on like this for a few minutes then said, "I don't- I don't know where my bag is..." He kept searching and squirming in his seat to check his back pockets.

"Don't you have two bags?" Baylee asked.

"Yeah, I'm trying to find my second one."

"Well what happened to the first one?"

Thurston stopped for a second, then shifted again, as if he started searching for the first bag instead of searching for the second bag.

"What happened to the first bag, Thurston?"

"I- I think I- I think I sat on it..." he kept searching to avoid feeling the need to look ashamed.

"You sat on it? What do you mean you sat on it?"

Thurston got out of the car and started searching around his seat, and when Baylee also got out of the car, Thurston hurriedly picked up the Lost City of Z and pretended to be disappointed about its lack of cocaine for Baylee's sake. When Baylee saw the book cover, clean, he put his face in his hands and turned around in frustration then jumped in the air.

“FUCK Thurston! What the FUCK bro!” Baylee yelled, being sure to keep his tone mild enough to not provoke Thurston, yet just ridiculous enough for me to find the outburst very funny. “Let me check,” he dove head first into the passenger side and began flipping through paper and plastic scraps hoping one would be filled with cocaine. I heard him rustling pieces of cardboard and I was again disgusted in all of us. “Fine,” he stood up, back straight, and his face was red from blood. “Whatever. I guess there’s no more coke. No, yeah that’s fine,” he started walking towards Zube’s, flailing his arms exaggeratedly and mumbling to himself as he went away. I hopped out of the car because I was dangerously close to being left alone with Thurston, who was still looking for his nonexistent bags of cocaine.

“Thurston, man, c’mon, Baylee’s gonna leave us and I don’t know which one’s Zube’s house.”

“I know it was in....” he was nearly talking to himself.

“Man, c’mon Thurston, it doesn’t matter.”

“Yes it does, man,” he became aware of my existence again. “I can’t believe I just lost the...”

“Man, who cares, no one cares about the coke, let’s go.”

“You promise, man?”

“What?”

“You promise that no one cares if I have coke or not?”

“Man, no,” I lied. “No one cares, let’s just go,” he stood up with his shoulders slunk. “C’mon,” We walked slowly to the backdoor and let ourselves in. Zube lived in a house in the middle of our city, probably made in the forties or fifties, the lighting was harsh and it gave the impression of filth even though nothing necessarily stuck out as nasty. The backdoor led us into the kitchen and when we walked in Max and Madalyn came from the living room to meet us. I decided to sit in the kitchen instead of joining the others, because I was in such a visibly awful mood and I didn’t want to chance them asking me any questions about it. I sat on a stool and leaned over the kitchen sink.

“What’s wrong?” Madalyn asked, so on cue it could’ve been taught at comedic timing workshops.

“Nothing, dude, I’m just tired,” I sunk further into the kitchen sink.

“Yeah,” she gave me a look of pity. Max and I exchanged looks of exhaustion.

“Thurston spilled all of his coke,” I said, “He sat on it.” Max chuckled sadly.

“It’s getting late anyway,” he was trying to convince himself he didn’t want any coke anyway.

“Is Zube gonna smoke us out?”

“Yeah, I guess so,” Max didn’t smoke weed, so he didn’t pay attention to it.

“Yeah, he’s in there rolling up two blunts right now,” Madalyn knew.

Zube walked into the kitchen and looked at me, I gave him my most convincing smile because I didn’t want him to be insecure about his house.

“I know it’s not much, but this is the pad, man,” He said, also right on cue.

“Nah, it’s not bad, I live in an old house too.”

“You wanna get high?”

“On what?”

“Ah, just some weed man, I bought a half the other day of some good shit.”

“I want coke.”

“Man, I don’t have none of that shit. Who cares, though. We’ll get high and you’ll forget about it.”

“Yeah,” My stomach was starting to tear its way out of my throat and I stooped further into the kitchen sink, nearly standing at a ninety-degree angle.

“Alright, let’s do it, I’m tired as fuck,” we walked into Zube’s living room. Hailey sat between Zube and Madalyn and Baylee sat next to Thurston on the love seat in the corner. Max sat in a recliner and I sat on the floor in front of them.

“We can make room on the couch.” Madalyn suggested.

“No it’s fine, I like sitting on the floor,” Zube’s floor was covered in stains but I was too tired and sobered to care at that moment. Baylee sat perched away from Thurston and kept stealing glances at Hailey. Thurston was slumped into his seat, nearly lying with his back on the cushion, scrolling on his phone. Max messaged me on Facebook.

“Hey.”

“What’s up” I responded.

“Are you taking Baylee home?”

“Yeah.”

“Alright cool.” “I was just checking.”

“Yeah.” “This sucks.”

“I know. I’m so fucking tired.”

“I’m about to just leave.”

“Alright, man.”

I stood up and stretched. “Guys, if you’re coming, I’m leaving now.”

“You don’t wanna smoke?” Madalyn shook the paper plate she was breaking down the weed on at me.

“Yeah, we’re about to smoke,” Baylee said, not willing to leave Hailey here for Max to potentially swoop down upon.

“Man I don’t care, I’m tired, let’s go.”

“Here, wait, let’s just smoke these-”

“Baylee, no, man, I want to go home.”

“Okay, wait, one second, Kobe,” Baylee turned. “Max, would you be able to-”

“Nooo, Baylee,” Max almost chuckled at Baylee, who had evidently asked right on Max’s cue, “I’m tired, I’m about to go home too.”

“Fuck, well, one second,” Baylee started discussing something indiscernibly with Hailey and Zube, I turned to Max and he raised his eyebrows at me to indicate that Baylee was annoying.

“Okay, Kobe,” Baylee turned to me, “So I think we figured something out. So what’s going to happen, is; we’re going to let them roll up, we’re going to smoke two blunts-”

“No, Baylee!” I insisted. “I’m leaving in one minute.”

“Fuck, god damnit, okay, will you guys wait for me?”

“How long will you be?”

“Like ten minutes, tops, I just have to get my car from sports and I’ll come back here. Are you coming Thurston?” He jabbed Thurston, who made a show about his coming to attention.

“Yeah, where are we going?”

“Sportsmans, so I can grab my car.”

“Ahh, yeah, I need to get my car too.”

“Are you sure Thurston? You’re drunk, though,” I assumed because he had been acting drunk all night.

“Ahhh, I’m not drunk, man, I’ll be fine.”

“Okay then.

“Let’s go, then.

“Let’s go *right now*. Let’s go. C’mon both of you. Baylee. C’mon,” I kept talking so that I kept their attention, much like one would do when scolding a dog. “I’m sorry guys, really, but I’m so tired, I don’t mean to be shitty. Thanks for having us over, Zube, you know how much I love smoking your weed,” I rushed us out the door so quickly I didn’t hear Zube’s reply.

On the highway back to Sportsmans, I played music loudly and for a while no one spoke.

“I’m sorry guys,” Thurston said with his head back against the headrest.

“Why are you sorry man?” I asked, uninterested.

“Because, I ruined the night, I know I ruined it, man, I know it was me, because I spilled the coke, man.”

“No, Thurston, seriously-”

“I can’t believe I spilled it. I’m so sorry, man, I’m so drunk, man, I can’t help it, I’m so sorry now, you probably hate me now, I’m sorry, man, I’m

normally not like this, I'm sorry I didn't mean to, and you probably hate me now,  
and I don't-

“Thurston, dude, I don't care, just let me get you to your car.”