

No Adjectives

by Mark Reep

In the bathroom a redhaired girl sat hunched on the toilet with her face in her hands. She stirred and said you get it? I said sorry, no. You okay? She looked up, blinked. Fuck are you? I shook my head. Nobody you'll remember, I said. I was closing the door when she said hey, something's wrong with my legs. She stood swaying, trying to button her jeans. Lean on the sink, I said, it'll pass. No, she said, my *legs*. Her eyes glazed. She crumpled. I caught her, picked her up. She wasn't heavy. Don't throw up on me, kid, I said. Her head rolled and she didn't hear me. I turned sideways so her feet wouldn't hit the doorframe and carried her down the hall. Her arm dangled. A tattoo said No Adjectives. In a bedroom where I'd stayed once I propped her up against the headboard. No one should die choking on their own puke. The lamp on the nightstand didn't work anymore but yellow streetlight shone in the window. When my eyes adjusted I watched her breathing. Sometimes she'd stop, sometimes you couldn't tell. The room was stuffy and the window wouldn't open and I needed to piss but I didn't want to leave her. Across the alley a boy sat on a fire escape talking on a cellphone and smoking. Downstairs a door slammed. Cars started. Basslines thumped. When they faded the house was quieter but sometimes you could still hear someone laughing. I wondered whose room this was now, who slept here. The girl whimpered. She'd slumped sideways. I sat beside her and straightened her up again. She turned her face into my shoulder. You want to call somebody? I said. She might have shaken her head. She was crying. I put my arms around her and patted her. Across the alley the boy's cigarette flared. He flicked it away and closed his phone and rose and climbed in the window. The light went out. The girl made a choked sound and sat up and vomited. Sour whiskey puke stink filled the room. She fell back groaning. It's okay, I said. I'll get some water, we'll get you cleaned up. She moaned, flung an arm across me. Kid, I said, I gotta piss. She murmured something. What? I said. She

was snoring. I moved her arm aside and got up. The bathroom door was shut. I knocked. *Occupied*, a boy said. A girl giggled. I went downstairs. No one was in the kitchen. The back door was open and I pissed off the stoop. When I was done I dabbed puke from my pants and rinsed my shirt out in the sink. A cellphone on the table played Crazy Train. No one came to answer. It stopped. I wrung out my shirt and hung it from my belt and took a Molson's from the fridge. Upstairs somebody said what the *fuck*. The phone was almost fully charged. I put it in my pocket and went out.

