

Weather

by Chanel Dubofsky

I liked E first because she knew all the words to "Alice's Restaurant." Everybody knows "American Pie," but "Alice's," that's impressive. We used to cut class in high school and drive around listening to it, and I'd try to pretend I knew the words, but I never did, so I just waited for the refrain and then we'd sing it together, loudly, with the windows down, and people in the cars beside us would stare at us and frown, or curse, or smile, sometimes.

We spend most days now on E's couch, getting stoned and watching the Disney Channel. You would not believe the shit that's on there; girls with huge breasts and tight jeans jumping around, pretending to be virgins. We think it's hilarious.

It's not unlike high school, only in a different city, instead of E's basement. It's even the same food—Easy Mac, salt and vinegar potato chips, hummus, fudge ice cream. We have to be careful so we don't shit our brains out, but when you're high, it's hard to keep track.

Tonight as E's rolling the joint, it's raining, crazily, like someone in the sky is shaking a snow globe, hard, like they don't care if it breaks.

It's a big joint, fat, and E takes a huge hit off of it, closing her eyes and sucking in.

"I don't think you should come over tomorrow night," she says, her voice husky as she tries to hold in the smoke and talk. This is exactly what they said would happen tonight, the weather guys. I can't remember the last time they were so correct.

"Why?" My fingers reach out, expectantly, groping for the joint. "Are you busy?" Sometimes she has a date, and he'll spend the night, and

the next day we'll laugh about it.

"Well," E hands the roach to me, her eyes still closed. "I'm running out of pot."

"There's a guy in my building who can hook us up."

"I can't," she says, her voice and expression deadpan. "I'm saving for a baby hippo."

Once in her backyard, E took the kiddie pool out of her garage, filled it up, and sat in it with Byron, her dog. There were clumps of dog hair floating around her, sticking to her feet and her legs, but she just laughed, it was like she didn't notice.

On TV now, we watch a show about a family of aliens who look normal. The oldest daughter has flat, ironed hair and wears too much denim. She walks around shaking her ass and flirting with ugly guys and making adults laugh when she doesn't get references to books.

"Fuck this," says E, turning it off. She always thinks she's talking too loudly when she's stoned, but there's no way she's stoned yet. "Let's do something else." She puts on her shoes, bending over to lace them, her hair hanging around her face. "Something must be happening."

Lately I've noticed that E says "happening," the way you're supposed to say it. I say "happuning," like I'm from some crappy podunk town. I've been trying to change it, watching my mouth in the mirror, trying to pull the right inflection from deep within my throat. It's not working.

"I'm okay with doing this," I say, taking another hit, attempting to exhale slowly, but it comes out in a clumsy gust instead.

E looks up at me, her eyes red rimmed, watery. "Someday we're going to be old," she says. "Do you even know that?"

"Not today," I tell her. I turn the tv back on. It's one of those lawyer/cop shows. I'm never interested in them unless there's a serial killer, and there rarely is. There's a crack of lightning outside, and inside, the lights dim, then go back to normal. E rummages around on the table, comes up with a candle and a match.

There's no blackout that night. We finish a bag of salt and vinegar chips, smoke another joint. I change the channel. Towards dawn, it stops raining. E sighs, moves around on the couch, the fake leather squeaking as she shifts. Staring at the TV, her eyes are vacant. Never mind, she's probably thinking, I liked you better years ago, when I thought you could be someone else.

