

Three Degrees of Separation from the Same Thing We Were Still Supposed to be Thinking About

by Chris Vola

Katie stood in the back of the student center, near the coat closet with its dull polyurethane hooks, hands clasped over her stick-jaw pelvis, eyes on the blue sky and bluer smoke being projected through the TV. I thought about us in ten years: I would ask if I could buy her an appletini. There would be functions to attend, pills to swallow, clubs, nipple slips and brunches. Probiotic baby food, *His* and *Her* bidets, nurses at four in the morning, IV needles. I shifted my weight and pressed my face into the crook of her shoulder. She shoved me away. "My uncle was in bonds," she sobbed. "Well, hopefully somebody unlocked him," I said. Katie gave me this *death-by-airstrike* look. No one else laughed except for Carl, who kept laughing until the crossing guard dragged him off campus. That night, Katie waited in her bedroom, smoking and checking her inbox. Her mother had been on the phone since the lines opened back up. It was hard to believe that, even very recently, there had been first days of school where nothing happened.

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