

Le Baiser Français

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I finally came to the realization I was twenty-one years old and never kissed a boy. Meanwhile, everyone else is probably getting laid each weekend. These thoughts plagued my mind, as I watched strobe lights dart off swarms of grinding college kids. I stood against the wall of the basement, desperately impatient. I wanted alcohol, but was too polite to ask anyone for it. I eyed a couple of sorority sisters who promoted their stash of boxed wine like kids at a lemonade stand.

“You want some?” Rachel offered, extending a blue solo cup my way. I accepted, then poured Franzia into my cup. I took a confident swig, feeling secure that I was no longer alone. But as I looked up from my cup, I watched them disappear into the crowd.

After one of the most stressful weeks of junior year, I wanted to find thrill in a Friday night out. But I just couldn't shake the fretful look off my face. The flashing, colored lights reminded me of the scene in *Dumbo* where Dumbo's insecurities tormented him in the form of pink elephants. But in my case, they were all sorority girls. Two months into panhellenic life, and I was already in jeopardy of getting kicked out because I couldn't afford it.

Now I know why sororities got a bad rep. I literally have to *pay* to have a social life. What made it worse—this newfound social life happened to be my only housing option for the year. I took another swig of Franzia as I watched the girls grind with the frat boys. I scoped the room trying to look for Paige. We came to the party together, but I lost her after an eager freshman scooped her from my sight. I couldn't tell whether she was into him or not. She was generally too nice to say anything, if she wasn't. And I was certainly too nice to do anything about it. I didn't want to be a cock block.

Suddenly, a pang of urgency racked my brain like an old school bell.

What kind of friend am I? I have to save her, I thought. Plus, I dreaded playing the wallflower at a college party.

I maneuvered my way through the crowd all while trying to conceal the hole in my leggings. I could feel the tiny hairs on my legs brush against the fabric, dampened with sweat. The weather was getting warmer, but there was no way I was wearing shorts. Nothing felt uglier than exposing my pudding thighs which would chafe and wiggle at every move, especially after gaining the freshman thirty (and yes, I mean *thirty*). I also knew one thing to be certain—I could sense my period ascending like the overcast before a dreadful storm. The dull ache of menstrual cramps turned in my uterus like low rumbling sounds of thunder.

I was *not* feeling my best self.

I circled the room, feeling the loud bass shake the walls.

The sound was sexy, and it had me feeling some type of way.

I thrived off the beat and the dank stench in the frat house basement.

It was *exhilarating*.

Glow bulbs dangled from the ceiling, lighting every person up like a glow stick—well, except for me. I chose to wear the most quiet color ever: navy blue and black. I was practically invisible; running into people like a ghost on campus, including the French exchange students. Despite my invisible ensemble, I managed to make awkward eye contact with one of the French boys. *At least he seemed nice*, I thought. *But why is he smiling at me? Do I have something on my face? Have we met before?*

I was too far gone to think about it. Franzia was starting to take over my body. I made my way around the room again, hoping to run into Paige.

Then once again... *I see London, I see France.*

This French kid was giving me a side grin that made my blood rush. All I could do was politely wave, with a crinkle of worry marking my forehead. All I could think about was the hole in the crotch of my leggings, and an unprotected period brewing below. Yet, amid the dark maze of partiers, this French kid seemed like a light at the end of the tunnel. My eyeballs nearly popped out of my sockets when he started speaking to me.

“Would you like to dance?” His voice was delightful. He was so... French!
I shrugged my shoulders.

What else was I to do?

My roommate was nowhere to be found. Yet, this suave Frenchman was asking me to dance to Jeremih’s “Don’t Tell ‘Em.” I nervously accepted and smiled coyly, mouthing “sure.” He took my hand and led me to the middle of the room. My heart began to race as he started grinding on me. My mind flashed to the hole in my leggings. It was now taunting me, laughing in my face, psychotically. I dreaded the idea of his boner grazing it.

I’ve never grinded with a boy before. Much less a cute one.

I didn’t know what I was doing. He then paused and motioned me to follow him. His silhouette guided my hand to the back of the room. I didn’t want to stand awkwardly in the middle of the floor, but I panicked as I found myself pinned against the wall.

Do I go along with it? Be cool, I breathed. Be cool.

As I relaxed a bit more, I noticed he smelled incredible; he wreaked of spiced bergamot, fresh linen and tobacco.

I could feel his chiseled cheek brush up against my baby face. I had never been this close to a boy before, let alone a *foreign* boy.

In the past, I heard girls talk about their first kiss. Most of them were twelve or thirteen years when they did the deed, and usually with some brace-faced kid on the playground.

That memory flickered away by one swift move.

Just like that, I had caught up with all those girls.

I was finally getting kissed.

My Franzia frenzy came with a sudden rage as I bit his lip and tugged it like I was trying to take it home with me. It was obvious this bad boy liked his cigarettes. The subtle aroma of mint and tobacco on his tongue had me on a second-hand high. He pulled away from me with a sly grin on his face, speaking in that adorable accent again.

“You are a good kisser,” he uttered, seemingly impressed.

Moi? Un bon kisser? I was only a beginner! Une debutante!

Frenchie and I resumed the kiss until my paradise was quaked by an abrupt switch of the lights. The loud bass had been replaced by the frantic cry of a frat boy, yelling at the crowd to scatter. The party had been shut down.

“Where are you sleeping?” Frenchie whispered in my ear.
The high I was experiencing suddenly collapsed like a falling dumbbell. I panicked.

Well...not at my sorority house, I thought.

But I couldn’t have my first kiss and lose my virginity in one night.

I wasn't ready to end it all with granny panties and a kotex pad.

I told him my friend must be worried sick about me, and that I had to go stay with her tonight. Which was true. After all, I had to find Paige.

He nodded, while a grin crept along his jaw. I watched him walk away slowly, my heart pounding.

I flew out of the room—not just out of urgency to find Paige, but because I was floating on air. I was flooded with mixed emotions. Luckily, Paige was standing in the grass with the freshman, her eyes searching and sick with worry. Once she spotted me, her eyes lit up. She ran into my arms, and began to ramble in her sweet, high-pitched voice:

“I saw you kiss that boy!” she cried.

“Did you want to kiss that boy? I was so scared when I saw you! I didn’t want you to waste your first kiss on a boy you didn’t want to kiss!”

The moony look on my face faded when I realized how worried Paige was about me. I assured her not to worry, and that the kiss was very much consented.

How could it not be? I felt so good.

I was blinded by naivety, but I didn’t mind. With a sigh of relief, Paige took me back with her to the freshman’s dorm to “watch a movie...”

Thankfully, it was just a movie that night. I watched the two of them sleep like an astute guard dog till I found myself dreamily dozing off amid the blare and brightness of the television.

I awoke the next morning, sprawled on the floor. I turned my head to see Paige and her freshman still fast asleep. My eyes circled the room, trying to make sense of everything. I tested all my senses. I wanted to know I was alive, and that everything around me was real. Once I received that affirmation, I smiled my cheshire-cat smile.

I was kissed. I was *french-kissed*.

I texted Paige telling her I was going back to the sorority house to sleep, feeling secure that no funny business would ensue. I tiptoed past Paige and her freshman asleep on the twin bed and ran down the stairs. I leapt from the doors and out into the rain. I then sprinted across campus; my boots hitting the ground at every stride, splashing every puddle. My thunder feet grew faint as the chilly air rushed past my ears. Somewhere in the distance, I swear I could hear the school symphony play in honor of me and the sensational start of my love life.
