

11. THE GOOD GIRL

Candy was going wild. Her arms were swinging in the air and she was tossing insults all around, “Bitch, what is your complaint? I took you to a fun party and you acted like some kind of ho”

Daphne had a comeback, “Don’t call me bitch, bitch!” Daphne’s dress was already ripped and was falling off her. “I can’t help it if you took me to the fucking zoo, and I got attacked by one of the animals.” And she was carrying her shoes in her hands. She didn’t need anyone else messing with her tonight. I didn’t want this to escalate into World War IV. I was doing that all that I could to separate the two girls.

This was supposed to be my initiation into the adult world of partying. I was getting an earful from both of them. I wondered how things got this far.

Both girls were eighteen. I was still in high school while my new teachers were college girls. I met Candy when I was doing some work with the drama society. She was the star of the Spring play. I worked as her production assistant. I even helped do her hair. Now she was going to Georgia State.

I tried to figure out what had happened at the party. How did everything get out of control?

Cliff Beaudenne was going out with Maddy Clark while he attended Roswell High. When Maddy left to go to Clemson, Cliff told her that they were still together. But he had been hanging out with Daphne for the past few months. Word got back to Maddy that Cliff was sleeping with Daphne. And when she saw Daphne at the party, she saw red. Maddy had to be pulled off Daphne by a couple of football players.

Daphne screamed at Candy, “He never told me about Maddy.”

“Are you some kind of dumb-ass, Daphne? Everyone in the senior class knew that they were an item.”

“I never knew that. I thought that Cliff was a free man. That’s what he told me. And you knew that I hooked up with him. Then you have the utter stupidity to take me to a welcome home party for Daphne”

Candy kept the vodka in the freezer in her apartment. She invited me over before we went to the party. I had learned how to drink scotch slowly with Mr. Robbins. But I was zonked out of my mind. Candy was almost falling over. This was before we even left for the party.

Candy was mumbling, “I’m going to get a man tonight.”

So Daphne was supposed to be the designated driver. “At least they taught us something at Roswell High.”

Once Maddy started swinging at Daphne, she got all freaked out. So she started drinking too. So here we were, all three girls sitting in a bloody parking lot zoned out of our minds. And we needed to get home.

“It’s already 3:30 in the morning,” said Candy.

I was really losing it. I still was in high school. I lived with Bill and Hazel, the über-cops. And we were no closer to leaving this place.

Rich Nelson pulls up in his convertible, “I’m going to another party. One of you girls can ride shotgun with me in the front. And the other two can sit in the back.”

I thought this was a stupid idea. But we were at least twenty miles from home, and one of us needed to sober up before we could drive home.

I had never felt anything like this. Now was the time to pull myself out of my daze. We drove by Daphne's car as we headed to the party.

The party was a sprawling affair. It was already quite late. However things were just starting to hit their stride. The party overflowed onto the lawn. It was the kind of things to tempt the police. Before we knew it, Daphne had disappeared. She continued to believe that Candy had ruined her life. She no longer wanted to do battle. She just had a new goal; she wanted to meet a new man to make up for her escapade with Cliff.

I wanted to sober up. Before I knew it Candy wanted me to do tequila shots with her. I was way beyond my limit. But that didn't stop her.

"Is this something that you're used to?"

"Not often. But no one yells at me like that. I was just trying to have fun. No one told me that party was for Maddy."

Candy seemed to get a secret pleasure from embarrassing Daphne. And Daphne was in a tailspin. Even though I knew Candy better, I was a little sympathetic to Daphne.

"Candy, I'm going to look for her."

I wasn't sure how good an idea this was. Candy was indulging herself. The last thing that I wanted was a passed out girl in the back of her own car. I needed to think fast.

One of the bedrooms had been commandeered by the serious revelers. I knew what was going on in there. And I didn't want to put myself in the middle of things. But if Daphne was in there, I had to get her out.

I opened the door. They were cutting lines on the table. One guy gave me the once over, "Hey, pretty lady, have a seat."

Everyone in the room looked so much older than I was. They were all older than Daphne and Candy. This wasn't my scene.

"Just looking for my friend."

He added, "When you find her, you know where we'll be. And we have a lot more of what you need, sweet thing."

I finally found Daphne out back.

"What do you want, squirt?" She was making fun of the fact that I was still in high school. I was actually taller than her, and, in heels, towered over her.

"Are you having fun?"

"I'm trying to. Some guy tried to pull me in some room to do some blow."

"I can't believe that they're still doing cocaine," I told her.

"Believe it. It's part of this scene."

I guess that she was right. "You don't use it."

"I'm already depressed enough when I wake up after drinking."

We better find Candy. She's inside doing tequila shots."

"I'd prefer never to find Candy again if I can help it."

"She didn't know Maddy would be at that party."

"Haley, who are you kidding. I just met you. But I've known Candy since we were in the

first grade. And there is nothing that she doesn't know."

"Maybe she doesn't realize that you can't mix vodka and tequila."

"She's a big girl. Let's have some fun."

I don't know how I got distracted from my mission. The next thing that I knew some guy had his arm around me and was trying to kiss me. I had again lost Daphne. This guy was part of a package deal so that she could get some guy who interested her. What made it worse is that they just took off somewhere.

"I'll be right back," were her last words.

My guy was tripping over his words, "So you're in high school. And you're friends of Diane."

So it was all part of the college experience to be nice to creeps like this. I pulled his arm from around my shoulder, "I know that your buddy is with Daphne."

He interrupted me, "Daphne, I didn't realize that your name was Daphne."

"My name's Haley. I'm going to find Daphne and you friend Scott."

"You got his name right. What's mine?"

"Yours is Mitch.

He tried to lecture me, "If you leave now, you're not going to have a man to take home, It's really lonely to go to bed on your own."

"I have a lot of stuffed animals, Mitch. And none of them are going to get sick on me." These were words to remember. I would have liked Mitch's help in finding Scott. But I couldn't take him hitting on me. There was no way that I would ever hook up with a guy like that. I also realized that if I found Daphne and Candy that there was no way to get back to the car. We were sinking deeper and deeper into party oblivion.

I felt like the mother. Candy was in the living room with a bunch of guys around her. For the time being she was the party. At least, she wasn't going anywhere. I yelled to her, "Candy, stay put. I'm looking for Daphne."

She didn't quite hear me, "Of course, I'll do a shot for you."

I could sense trouble. I went outside and sat on the steps. There was nothing more to do.

Scott and Daphne returned about an hour later. He had nothing to say. She was laughing. Scott went looking for Mitch.

"That guys's a dud! Have I got a story for you." Daphne's make up was a mess. She had attempted to pin her dress, but it had come undone.

"What happened to you?"

"I don't want to think about it. But you have to hear the story."

"We have to get out of here, or we're going to be carting Candy off in a body bag."

That was only a slight exaggeration.

Candy wanted to resist us, "I'm having too much fun to leave the party." She was falling over. I was just waiting for her to pass out.

"It's five in the morning, girl. We are no closer to our car. And we're never going to make it back to Roswell."

I had a brilliant idea. We needed to find Rich.

"Rich left the party long ago. I think that he found his high school sweetheart."

I turned to the girls, "We should have never left Roswell!"

Candy was barely conscious, "Atlanta parties are fun."

"Whatever you say, my dear."

Daphne was in her own trance as if she had been beat up.

"We are fucked, fucked, fucked!"

Candy stared at me, "I've got an idea."

I waited for her to say more. She just giggled.

"Daphne, I know those guys were dicks, but we need to ask Scott for a ride.

"You don't know the half of it. He told me that we were going to get some booze at his place. We're in his car. We're parked. And he's staring at my cleavage. I figure why not just go for it. So I'm trying to get him hard. I just pull up my dress and let him in."

It was all sounding so mechanical.

"Daphne, this is not the time to hear about one of your conquests."

"Oh, it is. Let me finish. He just goes all soft inside me. He tells me that this never happens. That it's the alcohol or the coke. I'm freaked. He's embarrassed. And he starts to blame me."

Daphne became even more animated, "'You're one ugly bitch,' he told me."

"I was ready to beat the shit out of him. But I needed to get back to the party."

"Daphne, I'm glad that you were thinking about me."

She didn't appreciate my aside. But here we were with a brain-dead Candy and a down-trodden Daphne. I felt like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*. I just wanted to get back to Roswell!

The party was emptying out. My boy from the coke room stopped by to say his good byes.

"There's an after hours party. You've got to come, pretty girl."

After this. How long did these people party?

"I just want to get back to our car.

"I'll give you a ride. But you have to give me your number."

It seemed like a fair trade since we were already at the ninth ring of hell. He made sure that I didn't give him a bum number because he rung it right away with his cell phone. Now, I was stuck with a junkie. At least, we had enough characters for the *Wizard of Oz*. Even if she was out of commission, Candy was the heartless one. Daphne was trying to get her brain in working order. And super stud was the one who needed a little artificial courage. We even had our witch. We just needed Toto the dog.

Things were coming together. We were going to escape. If we could just find our car.

"You girls are going to come to the party," said Henry.

"I'm still in high school," I informed him, "Bill and Hazel are going to shit all over me."

"Who are Bill and Hazel?"

"These two people who say that I am their daughter. Although I'm pretty sure that they kidnaped me at a young age."

"This is your chance to make your break."

"I first have to get these girls home.

Candy was making rumbling noises in the back, "Where the hell am I?"

I had to laugh, "You're not in Roswell any more.

I pointed in front of us. "Is that her car?" asked Henry.

“Yeah,” I nodded.

Henry dropped us off, “I’m going to call you.”

We could already see the sun peeking in.

“We have got to get home as fast as we can.”

Daphne was philosophical, “At least we won’t hit any traffic.”

“I don’t think that we have much to worry about. It’s a Sunday.”

My one salvation would be if Bill and Hazel were already on their way to church. What was I thinking. It was only 6:30 in the morning. Shit, shit, shit.

“Did you say something, Haley?” Daphne asked

“I was just muttering to myself. “

We were finally on our way home. I did not want to look back, but the adventure was still not over. I drove. Daphne sat next to me. And we stuffed Candy in the back seat. I put the pedal to the metal and headed out of this place.

We were driving on 85 when our of the blue, Candy screeches. “I’m going to puke.”

For Daphne, this was adding injury to insult. “Quick, Haley, pull over.”

I pulled over to the emergency lane. Daphne opened the back door, and pushed Candy’s head out. She just vomited everywhere.

“At least, you saved the car,” I told Daphne.

“I’ve got it in my hair,” said Candy. Her dress looked clean. But I wasn’t sure.

I got out of the car to see if things were OK.

“Let’s stay her for a few minutes until I feel better.”

“Candy’s right. I don’t want her to get sick again in my car.”

“Yeah, let’s just hang out here until the police show up. And they can haul three under-age drinkers down to jail. I don’ want to call Bill and Hazel from the downtown lock-up.”

“You’re right. Let’s get out of here!”

We rolled away as Daphne moved to the back seat to keep an eye on Candy. She actually tried to comfort her in her arms. They were friends again. They had both been through some serious skirmishes.

I was just hoping nothing else was going to go wrong. It had been only a few hours ago when I was trashed. I still had a buzz. I needed to take a shower and get into bed.

Daphne was finally clear-headed enough to drive the rest of the way. I offered quick good byes to my collaborators and headed off to the home front. I was ready for a battle royal.

Bill and Hazel were out. They had gone to an early church service. Since my car was there, they didn’t even look in on me. This was more than perfect. I was sure that they knew that I was out for the night. Perhaps, they had been so absorbed in TV that they didn’t notice a thing. I felt cheated. I needed a little confrontation to know that I was actually part of this house.

When they finally looked in on me, I was fast asleep. I was their little angel. If they only knew the story that I could tell.

I had dodged a bullet. And I had lived through a nightmare. But I was primed for more. The long week made me forget the worst of the night. By Friday, I was back at Candy’s for some drinks. One of her friends from Tech was going to drive us around this time. She promised that none of the craziness would occur.

“You left Daphne at home?”

“Daphne has had a little too much fun for one month.”

“You were the one puking on tequila shots.”

“I know my limit.”

She said that as she pulled the vodka bottle from the freezer. I wondered if we could get any crazier tonight.

“Haley, you’re not gay, are you?”

“Why did you ask?”

“I’ve just never seen you with a guy.”

“I’ve been with some guys. I just don’t like most high school guys.”

“I could set you up with someone at State.”

“After what I saw last weekend, I’m not sure that a college guy is going to do it.”

We sat on the couch as we sipped on another drink.

Candy confided, “I wasn’t implying anything when I asked. It’s not that I have anything against gay people. I just wanted to know.”

I couldn’t tell if Candy wanted to say something more to me. She didn’t feel all that comfortable about the subject. I felt that I was a little more open on the subject of sexual orientation.

She spoke on, “I’ve always thought that people are more than just one thing. I’ve had feelings that I’ve explored a little. It’s just hard thinking about it that way. I don’t really like girls that way. Let’s just say that I’m curious.”

I wonder how Bill and Hazel would have reacted to this discussion. Of course, it would have no bearing on my actual behavior. I took a more scientific attitude to it all. Biology never defined sexuality in strict terms. It was humans who tried to force their own moral restrictions on our personalities. Being gay seemed a natural part of development, just as much as being creative. If biology mapped a path, circumstances could enhance that path in many different ways.

Candy didn’t make me feel uncomfortable. She hardly made me question anything about myself. She really wasn’t talking about her own sexuality. She was just dealing with fitting in.

Candy was a really normal girl. She had been a star of the school plays. She was mega-popular. She had long blonde hair and a model’s looks. But she had a dark side. She never related to all the gossip and in-fighting of Roswell High. That was probably the reason that she had made the mistake about Maddy’s party. She couldn’t keep up with the silliness of high school confidential. Now that she was in college, she felt as if she had left all that shit behind.

Her looks were her destiny. She still had a need to live up to her popularity. She could walk into a room and command everyone’s attention. College hadn’t been the answer that she needed. There was an anonymity that she felt at school. She didn’t want to hang out with same old crowd. And she had difficulty trusting new people that she met.

She knew how vulnerable she was becoming. She was afraid of how the wind blew, because she might get caught up in one of its currents. Her curiosity was getting the better of her.

“I don’t want to think about depressing stuff tonight. Let’s party.”

She was on her third vodka, and already flying. I felt like my training with Mr. Robbin was holding me in good stead.

I turned to Candy, "I think that our ride is here."

Ben was a guy that Candy had dated while she was in high school. He went to Chattahoochee. He drove a Lexis, and he seemed very professional. Way out of my league!

"You're still at Roswell?" he asked me.

"I'm only a junior."

"I would have thought that you were a junior in college."

"Quit flirting with me."

He had a great smile. I didn't want to get into this. I saw how angry Candy became last weekend. I didn't want to add a little jealousy to the mix.

Candy ignored our banter. She was out to have a good time. Besides, she and Ben were friends now.

At first, the party seemed like such a contrast to the last weekend. However, it became clear pretty quickly that there was a coke room. And I stumbled in on a couple going at it in one of the bedrooms.

"Haley, do you want a shot?" asked Candy.

"No, I'll pass. I'm pretty crazy from the vodka."

I was drinking water. I didn't want to have to deal with a puking Candy again. But she seemed well on the way to the same condition. Ben was trying to take care of her. She just was on the fast lane to trouble.

Ben realized that things could progress too quickly for the both of them. Candy was drinking so much tonight because she wanted to deny that she still felt something for him. He wanted to settle down. He wanted a family. He was pushing things too fast. She was only eighteen, She didn't want thing to get that serious.

Candy had no idea where here career was going to go. She wasn't even sure about a major. She didn't need a guy directing her life.

I just wanted to slow Candy down. She just didn't want me to stand in the way of her good time.

"I know that you have to deal with all that shit and Bill and Hazel, but don't lay a guilt trip on me."

Ben and I decided to leave her alone.

Ben wasn't at all what I expected. Sure his family had money, but he was more the creative type. He read books. He was a photographer. He loved the theater. One of his cousins was in a play at Roswell. He came by to see her, and he met Candy at an after party.

"I took one look at her, and I was sure that she was the one. You know how you have that feeling?"

"Yeah, I sure do." I had read enough to fill in what details I lacked in my own experience. Anyway, what can I faith could I ever put in these kinds of feelings when those involved will put out in the backseat of a car when their feelings get hurt.

"I don't think that way now. The way Candy tell it is that I just want to get married after college and have a family. I know that's what my parents expect. But I just think that it was something else that caused us to breakup."

I didn't want to get attached to him. But we were the only sober ones in the group. At least, mostly sober. From watching the girls, I had learned my lesson. I'd start out all

gangbusters. But I'd quickly reach my limit and back off. For his part, Ben was driving. He didn't want to mess up any more with Candy. Moreover, he didn't want to say something to her that he would later regret.

On the other hand, even sober, he spared nothing on me. I'd been in this situation too many times. I needed to face the matter head on, "You're coming on to me, Ben!"

"What are you talking about?"

"You're so obvious."

"I know that Candy, and I aren't going out. But that would be wrong to try to hit on one of her friends."

"I know what's going on! Don't blame it on me."

"I'm not. I'm sorry if I seem too forward. It's just that you're such a stunning girl." He was trying to seem like a charming guy from the fifties. These were fast times.

"You're doing it again."

He stared in my eyes, then he turned away.

"Would you think me forward if I tried to kiss you."

I stared him down with a mean glare, "I'd slap you in front of everyone here."

"That would be worth it."

"Why are you doing this?"

"You think that you're some kind of good girl. Candy's the good girl. That's why she's so trashed. It just eats her up. She can't admit. You, Haley, you're in it for every ounce of pleasure. I know because we're exactly alike. We could both be falling down drunk, but there's that one part of us that still sees and knows everything that is going on around us. That's why we're so attracted to each other."

"Ben, you are one pompous fool! I've only known you for a couple of hours. And you're trying to tell me my life story."

I really did want him to kiss me. I wanted him to vanquish me in front of all the party goers. I needed to catch my wits. The vodka was in my system, and I was burning up. I went to the kitchen for a water. As I did, I planned our rendezvous. I needed to snap out of it.

"Ben, let's get Candy, and get out of here. It's almost 3."

He looked at his watch, "You're right."

Bill was up when I got home. "I needed to go to the bathroom. I saw that you hadn't come in."

"I'm OK!"

"That's all that I need to know."

He went back to sleep. I was sure that he wouldn't say a thing to Hazel about it.

Ben called me the next day, "You want to go to a party."

"I haven't heard from Candy."

"I didn't ask her."

"Ben, I don't think this is a good idea."

"No strings. Just a party. You can get to know me better."

"You're in college. I'm still in high school."

"You're pretty mature for your age."

And I was way over my head. I thought that the right thing to do would be to call Candy.

They weren't going out, but she still burned a torch for him.

"Hey, Candy, what are you doing tonight?"

"Believe it or not, I'm staying in. Ben told me about some party. But I don't think that it would be a good idea to see too much of him. He might think that we were an item again."

I felt as if she was giving me a green light. But if she were a cop, she'd be hauling my ass to jail right this minute.

This was getting crazy. I knew what was going to happen. I was going to sleep with him, and fall head over heels. I couldn't go through with it.

I had on a short skirt and heels. Ben tried to not look at me. He wanted to play it all above board. Instead of complementing how I look, he said, "I'm really excited that you agreed to come along."

This party seemed a lot more sedate than the others. The music was blaring, but there was no one puking in the pool. And upstairs was off limits to the party-goers. It all gave Ben more time to pay attention to me.

"Aren't you afraid that the word will get back to Candy?"

"All these people are at Tech. None are from Roswell High. No one knows who Candy is. But they all seem to have their eyes on you. No one is going to forget who you are."

"Quit that, Ben!"

"That skirt makes you look ravished. You have gorgeous legs."

"I thought that you were trying hard not to notice."

He smiled. I smiled back. We gazed into each other's eyes. Then he caressed my neck.

"Ben, we have to take this slowly. We all know where it's going to end up if we don't pay attention."

"I'm not with Candy. She's not even here."

"I know. It's making me feel guilty."

I thought about my experiences with Cathy and John. Was I just repeating the same kind of thing. I ended up cutting the evening short. The memories were catching up to me.

"What happened? We were having a great time. Then things became weird."

"When I was fourteen, my best friend's guy started to come on to me. I really loved him in secret. But I fell hard. And he finally told me how he felt, too. Right after that he died."

"You're not kidding?"

"Ben, it really happened like that. It was a bike accident. And I blamed myself for it. I thought that it would always be difficult to get close to someone. I can't do this. This isn't right."

He moved closer and held me. I couldn't help myself. I just let go.

Ben invited me up to his place. I needed to refuse. It was one thing to have kissed him. But I just couldn't sleep with him. Not like this.

Sunday, I went to see Candy. I needed to tell Candy what had happened.

"You did what?" she hit the roof.

"I never slept with him. I only kissed him."

"You ungrateful little whore. You were nothing. Just some high school pup. I took you under my wing. I treated you like family. And you did this to me."

"He was so charming. And you and he weren't going out any more."

“Really, so that gives you permission to fuck him. He was mine!”

I needed a friend more than I needed a lover. Candy was flipped out and flighty. But she was my friend. I felt overwhelmed about my feeling for Ben. But there would be other Bens. It wasn't as if this was about honor. Ben had taken advantage of me. I was much younger than he was. He reduced it all to the physical level, then he just ran over me like a steam roller. I was still sixteen. I was dealing with all these contradictory emotions.

I recognized that he didn't just want to sleep with me. But he knew how easily I would give in. He didn't give me the chance to step back and see what was going on. Most of all he hid it from Candy.

I didn't want to see him again. I knew what would happen. He called me.

“I'm not going to say that what we did was wrong. It wasn't. But I don't think that I could keep Candy as a friend if we kept this going.”

I made sure that we never met again.

Candy and I met for coffee later in the week.

“I talked to Ben. He told me everything that happened.”

I was ready for her to tell me that they were going out again.

“You know what I realized. Ben wasn't all that mature. He pretended that he wanted to get married. He just wanted security. We were great friends. We weren't meant to be lovers.”

I just listened.

“On the other hand, you did a really big thing. You could have told me to fuck off. But you didn't. Even after I called you a whore, you still told Ben good bye.”

I felt the tears fill my eyes. I didn't want to show them to Candy. We still hardly knew each other. But I knew her a lot better than Ben

“Next weekend, I promise that I won't drink so much.”

We both laughed.

The next weekend she was the one who was driving. She was stone cold sober. I felt as if she was giving me a chance to fuck up. We never started with freezer vodka. We just headed for the big time.

I felt very similar to the time when I was recovering from my illness. We had such a good time that night, that I lost track of the time.

When I arrived home, Hazel was waiting for me.

“So did you nail him!”

“What are you talking about?”

“You come in here at 7 in the morning smelling of gin. So did you nail the boy that you were with?”

“I wasn't with a boy.”

“Are you telling me that you don't like boys. You're a lesbian.”

“I'm not saying that. I didn't do anything wrong.”

How was I going to escape this stand off? It wasn't as if I could move out.

I confessed, “I was with a boy, but we didn't have sex.”

She was stunned that I would be so direct. If she only could understand the truth.

“Just make sure that you don't get pregnant.”

That was her one bit of wisdom. I headed off to bed.

“I’m going to call you at 10 in the morning. I’ve got some chores.”

Fortunately, she forgot about my punishment, and I rushed off to work before she could remember.

I was glad that Hazel thought that I was growing up because I had no idea what was going on.

Brad was at work, “I thought that you quit this job.”

“No, I’ve just cut back to less hours. I thought that you quit.”

“No. Just taking more time for classes. But nothing’s changed. You want to go to a party sometime.”

“I’ve had it with parties for a little while.”

Like maybe ten hours.

I watched the clock for every second of my shift. Then I rushed home. Hazel ignored me. She wasn’t mad. She was just going about her business.

Candy and I took it easy that night. I also made sure that I wasn’t home too late. Too many of my friends had midnight curfews, I didn’t want to be reduced to that. Besides, I was always one of those kids who ate all her vegetables.

Saturday night, Candy ended up going home with some guy that she just met. So much for Ben. I needed to find a ride home on my own. It wasn’t a big drama.

The next day she explained herself on the phone, “When you’re a little older, you’ll understand a little better. Sometimes you just want someone to hold you close and whisper in your ear. It really doesn’t make any difference who it is. While you’re still young, try to resist that feeling as long as possible. You’ll hate yourself if you don’t!”