

I am standing in a sippy puddle along the freeway shoulder, holding my bike, rain pouring all around me. I have a 9 hour road trip in front of me and already, before even exiting San Diego County, my bike rack, along with my attached bike, has slipped off the trunk of my car. Twice. And this is how I find myself one Saturday morning; having run a sloshy 14 miles before departing on said trip, - standing in the pouring rain, exhausted and feeling like a drowned rat. Zapped of any remaining upper body strength after a failed attempt to stuff my bike into my Civic backseat, I stand in the rain a moment, look back at the freeway from where I came and consider turning back and going straight home. Instead, I make one last heave, shove the bike fully into the back seat, tilt the wheel up and push the door shut. I realize that, given the light is still on, that the door is not fully closed. I stand, hands on my hips. It rains. I shift my weight back and forth between my feet, weighing the risk of driving all day in the rain with the back door not fully shut. And so, lacking any appropriate lesbian road trip gear, I take off my scarf and weave it through the door handle, knotting it to the ceiling handle. The metaphor of a door neither open nor closed doesn't escape my notice.

As I drive mile after mile along I-5, occasionally glancing out the window and watching the wet landscape pass by, it occurs to me that the first half of the past year has felt much like my soggy attempt to close the door: with me wildly unprepared, tired beyond reason, and highly motivated to move forward and get on with it. I wonder: when life throws you a curve ball, like when a long term relationship ends, how do we move forward? How do we take all we learned in the relationship and move on without regret? Without judgment? When it comes to breakups, I want to be the Jackie Kennedy of graceful moving on. I want to be the kind of person who always remembers the canvas bags and knows with 100% certainty that the meat I buy comes from animals that were treated humanely. The person who reads my bookshelf full of books on equity in education instead of watching the *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*. The girl who goes to the gym before going out to happy hour. The truth is, sometimes I just choose the least complicated thing.

And so I find myself getting talked into meeting a friend out at a lesbian event for my first time since my Facebook status changed. I'm uneasy and don't really want to go but it was easier to agree than to create an excuse. I feel like I don't know what I'm doing. After all, the last time I was single, girls were wearing pagers, not carrying iPhones. I feel like I have been through the P90X of dating – hard, vomit-inducing stressful work, leaving me highly tired, yet better and stronger than before.

I tell myself not to bail on my friend and to have just 1 drink.

As I stand in front of the mirror getting ready, I picture a sea of women at the event high atop a swanky hotel downtown and feel a knot of regret in the pit of my stomach. *One drink and then I can leave.* I assure myself I won't even need to talk to anyone. As I pull up in front of the hotel, a car pulls away from a spot in front of the hotel. "Rock star parking," I mumble, silently thanking the universe for what is sure to be the easiest part of the evening. I ride the elevator to the top and take deep breaths the whole way, full of nervous-what-am-I-doing-here-energy. I hear music pumping and the sounds of chatter as the elevator continues up. I breathe in, suddenly catching my eye in the mirrored wall of the elevator as it comes to a stop. I mumble, "You got this." The doors begin to open. "One. Drink."

20 minutes later, having successfully broken the awkward, walk-alone-into-the-party-ice, I find myself sitting next to my friend and a drunken woman sitting to her left. I stand, smooth my dress and motion my head toward the bar. "Another mojito," my friend requests, the drunk woman holds up 2 fingers to indicate another for herself. I surprise myself and fold down one of her fingers and giving her the "no no" motion, followed by "No more for you drunk pants". This makes everyone around the circle laugh and I suddenly feel more at ease. Drunky fake pouts and then winks at me.

In line, there is a tap on my shoulder and I turn, making eye contact with the dark haired beauty behind me. I hesitate for a moment, thinking maybe I cut in line in front of her. I offer, "Sorry, did I cut you?"

She laughs, looks down, then back up and says "Nah, you're fine here."

Nervous, awkwardly, I turn back around and mumble, "Oh ok, ok, good, good. Good. ..." Suddenly I seem to have lost all my social skills.

I think I hear her say something in return but I can't hear over the sounds of cheers from the festive crowd at something the DJ has said.

I return to my friend, 2 mojitos in hand, nudging drunk pants with my hip to move over and make room. I sit down, careful not to spill the lime filled glasses. "Ahhh you're back," from drunk.

My friend and I cheers and take a drink. She says something to me and I lean forward, unable to hear. "What?" I yell, over the music and drunk talking aimlessly to herself.

"You look hot mama!" She looks me up and down and I finally comprehend her compliment.

I look away and take a sip of my drink. "Awww thanks."

Turning back to her I confess, "I was super nervous and almost wanted to bail."
"I'm so glad you didn't," and we toast again.

And then, I look up, and there is dark haired beauty holding a mojito my way.
"I'm so glad you didn't too," she offers, and smiles. I'm so out of touch with talking to girls that for a moment I'm confused, and look around and behind me, assuming she's talking to someone else.

3 hours later I am atop a bar stool in Hillcrest, surrounded by beauty and her friends. My feet hurt from dancing on the rooftop. As I look around and take in the past 3 hours, it occurs to me that while I still feel silly and uncertain, for the first time in a very long time, I can feel the light return to my eyes. I shake my head, resting my face in my hands, smile and remember. There were photos taken. There were shots. There were hugs with my friend, and "I'm soooooo glad you came out!". There were more mojitos, dancing with reckless abandon, phone numbers exchanged. There may have been some making out with beauty in the elevator, and again in the cab on the ride from downtown to Hillcrest. And this is how I find myself, soberly remembering my car sitting lonesome in my rockstar parking spot downtown. I shake my head and mumble, "one drink."

The next day, after retrieving my car and loading up on coffee, I cozy up on my sofa and realize that I feel proud of myself for braving the trenches the night before. No matter what happened, I stepped outside my comfort zone a bit. And then, like the dedicated type A-over achiever I am, I begin to worry. What now? So I had a fun night out. That's escaping, isn't it? Not really moving on. As my head begins to swim with confusion at the uncertainty of it all, I find myself reaching for the remote and scrolling through my highly unfeminist, uneducated, stereotype-filled television program listings. Don't judge.