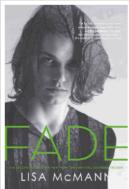
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Fade
Lisa McMann.

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Using her ability to tap into other people's dreams, eighteen-year-old Janie investigates an alleged sex ring at her high school that involves teachers using the date rape drug on students.

Title

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And then Coach Crater grabs her by the shoulders and turns her toward him. He plants a big wet kiss on her mouth. And moves on.

He's tripping as he walks to get more punch.

She remembers that she doesn't think she likes him. But maybe that's not really true.

It's so hard to decide what is true.

She smells more cigarette smoke, and she has an urge to go outside to have a cigarette. So she goes to the door.

Outside on the deck, it's dark. Mr. Wang follows her out there, in his Calvin Klein briefs. Janie breathes in the cold air. She holds on tightly to the railing when Mr. Wang starts touching her. "I smelled smoke," she explains, but she doesn't see anyone smoking.

And then Coach Crater comes out too. Mr. Wang is kissing her neck, and Coach is telling her how hot she is and feeling her up, and he says something about bench pressing.

Finally she remembers why she hates him.

And she remembers that she smelled smoke, but no one is smoking.

Then, in her mind, while the two men kiss and touch her, is Miss Stubin. Telling her something.

Janie struggles to listen. She remembers liking that old lady for some reason.

Cigarette, Miss Stubin says in Janie's mind.

"I need a cigarette," Janie whispers.

Use your lighter, Miss Stubin says. In your pocket.

"I need a cigarette," Janie says louder. "Now."

Coach Crater goes inside and comes back with a joint, "How's this, Buffy?"

"Okay." Janie takes the joint with a shrug and reaches into her pocket. She didn't know she had a lighter. Maybe the old maid put it there.

And then the words register, from what Coach Crater just said.

Janie.

Does not like.

To be called.

Buffy.

Janie reels back against the deck's handrail, stumbling, grabs Coach's arm off her breast, wrenches his elbow around so he twirls and faces the other way, and she kicks him, hard, in the kidneys. "Don't call me 'Buffy," she says mildly. "Ever again."

His feet splay sideways and he lands with a thud on the wet deck, moaning.

Janie pulls the lighter from her pocket as Mr. Wang stares. She examines it, puts the joint in her mouth, and pulls back the lid.

She tries lighting it.

No fire comes out.

She tries it again.

Mr. Wang is confused, looking at Coach Crater, who is groaning and barely moving on the deck.

"Get me a fucking lighter that works, or I'll beat the shit out of you, too," she says to Mr. Wang, and sinks to the deck, exhausted. When her hip starts buzzing, she just figures it's one of those weird things that have been happening all night.

She looks at Coach Crater. He's sprawled every which way. His hands are reaching. Reaching for her leg. She watches them, like it's not happening to her. She focuses on his fingers, thinking how weird fingers are. Like little animals, all their own.

He's wearing a strange, square ring. She wants it, sort of. It looks cool, like he belongs to something.

Mr. Wang returns with a lighter just as Janie's hip buzzes again. Maybe she'll have to have her whole leg amputated, she thinks sadly. That would really suck.

She lights the joint and inhales the smoke. Holds it in. Lets it out slowly. Mr. Wang falls to the deck next to her and starts kissing her cleavage. She doesn't like that, she decides. He's in her way. She's trying to smoke a joint here.

She strying She strying She makes a peace sign with her fingers, marveling over them. Then, when Mr. Wang grabs her nipple in his mouth, she stabs him in the eyeballs.

She learned that somewhere. She doesn't know where.

Mr. Wang swings his fist wildly, crying out in pain. He catches her on the jaw, her head flies back and his the deck's rail, and she blacks out. The joint burns down between her fingers.