

## A LOT LIKE THE ONES BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL

Written by Christian A. Dumais

Victoria was talking now, the rest of them at the party listening with interest, standing there in Mark's living room holding their drinks. There was music coming from a computer in the bedroom and the sound of Stephen mixing drinks in the kitchen. Victoria said, "It's a lot like the ones back in high school, you know, the ones you have before an exam or something. Or before a big date with Tom March." She grinned.

Laura sighed. "Tom March? I haven't thought of him in years. God, he was beautiful."

Victoria was smiling, not at what Laura said, but at a memory. "Wasn't he though?"

"Whatever happened to him?"

Victoria shrugged her shoulders theatrically. Everyone paying attention wondered why she lied. Mark stood in the corner wondering why you had to say Tom March's full name when you talked about him.

Victoria said, "I was supposed to be in surgery. I've been working for more than twenty hours; I was so tired I wanted to cry. I knew that when I was finished, I would be going to a party to get smashed." She raised her glass. "I don't know how I know this, of course, but that's what I'm starting with."

"Can you even do surgery yet?" Mark asked.

"Not yet, no. I'm a few years away from that sort of thing."

Stephen came from the kitchen with drinks on a large tray. "Round four, ladies and gentlemen," he said. Everyone took a drink with a stifled laugh, some people now holding two drinks. "What did I miss?"

Mark said, "Vick was telling us a dream she had."

"Not another Tom March sex-isode, I hope."

Mark shook his head, the full name thing starting to bother him now.

Victoria said, "When I made it to the operating room, I see that there's a unicorn on the table. I'm told I need to turn the unicorn into a horse by removing the horn."

Laura said, "Is that all it takes? I always assumed there was more to a unicorn than its horn, like powers or something."

Stephen said, "I think the powers are in the horn. Once the horn's gone, no powers, and it's just a horse."

"I just figured it was more complicated than that. Like the difference between a man and monkey being more than the capacity for guilt."

Most of the room had nothing to say to that; they either looked at their drinks or at Stephen.

Victoria continued, "So there I am, sawing it, cutting it, even hitting it with a baseball bat. The stupid thing wouldn't come off. The unicorn wakes up all the sudden and is getting crazy, trying to get up and off the table, making all this noise. The doctors are freaking out and looking at me to do something. I take the bat and hit it on the head right below the horn. I'm hitting it with everything I got. It takes a couple of hits, but it finally stops moving, blood all over. The doctors start congratulating me. And I'm just crying, just feeling horrible for what I've done, not knowing if it was dead or alive."

Laura again with her questions, she said, "Didn't you feel bad about you trying to take its horn?"

"Oh, no," Victoria said. "I figured it was for science or something." She took out a cigarette, her fingers trembling a little. "Now here's the *really* horrible part, right. While I'm standing there, crying like I've never cried before in my life, the horn just falls off and lands on the ground with this heavy sound. I reach down to get it, and as I do, I realize I don't have anything on. I'm completely naked. Nothing. No shirt, no underwear, no –" She stopped suddenly, her face turning red. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you, Stephen."

"It's nothing," Stephen said, a confused look on his face. He started to sip his drink and stopped. He looked down at himself. He turned to the mirror across the room. His reflection confirmed his fears. This wasn't the first time he had forgotten to wear pants, nor – sadly – would it be the last; his friends weren't seeing anything they hadn't seen before. He wished his penis wasn't inclined to hang so sharply to the left, which had to mean something terrible. He casually pushed his penis to the right and it returned back to its original position with scary ease. Somebody giggled, but Stephen wasn't paying attention anymore.

Stephen remembered the khakis lying on the bed where he left them. He remembered the way he looked at them before exiting the bedroom, thinking about how lonely they seemed, how they looked like a giant V from where he stood, how V was the first letter of her name, how he'd

dreamt of tasting the curve of her back, brushing her hair to the side to kiss her neck, waking up with what he hoped she tasted like dancing on his tongue, wishing he'd stop starting his day with those tears chasing each other down his face, collecting at his ears, clinging desperately before finally giving into the inevitable.

Thanks for reading.

This story was originally published in [Empty Rooms Lonely Countries](#).

“Gorgeous . . . a writer with  
a voice and a world view.”  
– Nick Pendleton

“It's a treasure . . . fantastic!”  
– Radio Wroclove

ORDER YOUR COPY  
**TODAY!**

CHRISTIAN A.  
DUMAIS

EMPTY ROOMS LONELY COUNTRIES