

From The Only One in the Room
By Don Zolidis

JESSICA 16, a drunk girl at a party.
DARRIN, 16, shy and awkward.

(DARRIN's friends have pushed him into a room where JESSICA was passed out, locking the door, and pressuring him to lose his virginity. JESSICA has a reputation at the school for being loose, but the truth is complicated. In this scene, DARRIN has just accused her of having an affair with a teacher.)

JESSICA

Would you just shut up! You are just proving my point, okay? You find whatever shred of ugliness you can, and you love it, you love it, you're so fucking happy you can drag someone else down. And everyone was thrilled to see Mr. Walsh go cause he was a good teacher, and the rest of those teachers, the rest of those teachers were jealous... cause the kids liked him so much more than them—and don't make any snide comments about that, you know what I mean! Those teachers... those other teachers hated us, and you know it. Those people hate their jobs, they hate their lives, and they're more than ready to attack anyone who actually tries for something better in life. He was a good man, okay? I know you find that hard to believe. And I had a huge crush on him, sure, but it was more than that.

<DARRIN>

What was it then?

JESSICA

I don't know, I just felt better when I was in the room with him—and like, you know that voice you have in your head and that's you? You know, when you're alone? Everything I thought... every little thought in my head was addressed to him. So much... I thought about him all the time... and one day in the summer I just stopped by his house... and I hadn't, I had never even kissed anyone, okay? It wasn't like that. I was just... I just wanted to see him. And I had this stupid poem that I had written cause I thought it would make him think I was different than the other kids... you know, I would go home every day after school and read all these books, just so that I could have something to talk to him about... and anyway, this poem, it was really bad, and it wasn't a love poem or anything, just... I asked him to read it, and he liked it, and... and it was just sweet, and I felt so stupid, cause here I was in the room with him and I had all these things I wanted to say, and and...

<DARRIN>

What happened?

JESSICA

It was dumb... I just asked him if he had any suggestions for stuff for me to read... and I thought that... it would be nice to discuss over dinner, you know, and I said I'd come

back later... And it was stupid cause... he made dinner for us... and there was rice—and I had braces at the time, and I was eating the food, and I knew that the rice was getting caught in my braces, and I could feel it up there, and I'd try to pick it out with my tongue, but I couldn't get it... so I spent the whole dinner trying to hold my hand in front of my mouth, and not smiling or anything, so he wouldn't see; I was just making such a fool out of myself, and I felt like an idiot cause he didn't even know what was wrong, and then right there at the table I started crying, because of this fucking... rice... and he was all confused and he didn't know what was wrong and I couldn't tell him because it was so ridiculous and I felt like such a little girl and here this man... I mean, here I was, pretending to be all adult, and sobbing like a baby. But he came over, and he held me; I think that he thought that I was crying over him, and he said that it was all right. And it was just so nice right there—I had never had anyone hold me like that before. The next thing I knew I kissed him. And it was innocent, there wasn't anything sordid about it... but I couldn't kiss him long because of my fucking teeth, so I ran into the bathroom... to try and pick all the rice out of my teeth, you know? And here he was thinking that he had crossed the line and I was gonna call the cops or something, and he was all nervous, but then I just... I kissed him again. And it was okay.

<DARRIN>

That's it, one kiss?

JESSICA

No there was more. That was just the start. Every night in the summer, I'd stop by after work. I'd park down the street and sneak in his back door so no one would see me, and we would spend like a half an hour together each night. And it was beautiful. It was like the whole world flowered one night. All these secrets came tumbling down from the sky, and everything was stormclouds, and the rain fell in a rage like it does in the summer, and everything was just...

(short pause)

I can't even really remember what it was like. Any more. I wish I could. I had this secret life, you know? I'd tell my Mom I was sleeping over at a friend's house, and I'd just feel him against me all night long, and I guess I just wondered why people thought that that was so terrible.

(short pause)

Cause when they found out... we became criminals. He got fired, I got shipped out to some other school... they didn't even let me say goodbye to him... they just tore him out of my life—everyone got their fingers in it—they turned it ugly, they turned me ugly, they wouldn't even tell me where he went... It's funny, life can begin and end in three months.