I never used much attention to what anyone else thought. There’s this story about an egg I read a while back, and the writer had a theory that there only is one conscious person in the universe, and everyone else around that person is just a shadow of that consciousness reborn into a different life. I liked to think that theory was true; it’s my life, so why should I bother concerning myself with what other people feel, right? Like I said, that is how I used to think. I sort of disproved that theory when I woke up one day and could feel almost everyone’s emotions but my own.

It was a Monday morning, and I had been out all weekend with some friends from the rowing team, so I woke up with the lingering pangs that came with numbers of empty shot glasses. I remember dreading waking up, knowing that the high keening that was my Political Thought professor’s voice would only serve to amplify my already growing headache. Soon after forcing myself out of bed, though, I felt a sudden surge of energy just as my roommate, Chris, came back from the gym. I vaguely wondered if it was some lingering intoxication from the night before and shook it off, dressing and leaving for class shortly after.

There was a weird sort of energy that cold, Monday morning. I went to a small liberal arts school in upstate New York, and the trees were just beginning to shake off the harsh cold of February. It felt as though the coming spring was not only bringing color to the trees but brought a liveliness, an energy that I hadn’t felt before. I was walking past the stoner bench near the river when my chest came in contact with something warm and soft, and I found it was a girl, Lucy I think her name was, that I had hooked up with a few weeks before.

“Hey, Jordan,” she said, her cheeks pink from the cold and probably a decent amount of embarrassment. I paused momentarily, both struggling to remember her name but also unnerved by a sudden sensation of awkwardness. Sure I felt bad that I never called her back, but it was a small school. I had run into her before.

“Hey… Lucy, right?” I guessed, shoving my hands in my pockets.

“Lauren,” she corrected, and I suddenly felt both annoyed and ashamed, like my parents had just lectured me on bringing a girl home after a party.