Habits

It's habit more than anything, you tell your roommate India. She's just broken up with her fiance of two years and brought home another six pack. You've told her she's self-medicating, that she's a bad influence on you, but when she offers you one, and then another, you're too tired to refuse. You drink them down along side her. You just have to break your habits, you tell her.

New York

Let's get out of here, you say. India's sitting on the couch beside you. She nods, and says, New York this summer? You think about escaping the South Carolina heat, the thick air, stepping into the tight, cool corridors of metal and concrete.

Temperance I

Your grandparents are teetotalers. At your college graduation, they're invited to the party your mother throws. They hold up empty glasses for the champagne toast.

Herbert

You tell him his name is an old person's name. He's taken you to a fancy restaurant for your one-year anniversary, but he forgot to make reservations, so you had to wait for two hours. You watch as his knife cuts deep into the red center of his steak. Herbie, you say. He tells you to knock it off, because you say it like that all the time, snarky and whispery and seductive all at once. You know he hates it, but you do it anyway.

Science Looks at Your Drinking Habits

You think it's a fun game when the psychology department asks for subjects who have been told or feel like they drink a lot. They give you a definition—drinks per week, drinks per day. You want to laugh. You could drink those bastards under the table. You swirl the numbers in your head, swallow them before you spit them out. Too much? No, you don't drink too much, you say.
You walk into the kitchen and on the table you find a thick, hard-backed book with the gold-gilded title, "Alcoholics Anonymous," blazing out from the spine. It's sitting on the table, on top of your mail. Your stomach turns. This yours? you ask when India comes out of her room. She shakes her head.

Herbie tells you he's moving to New York after the summer. He doesn't ask you to come with. When he leaves, you find yourself shaking your head back and forth, again and again.

Are you going to your meetings? your mom asks. You want to tell her to fuck off, but that's one thing you can't say to your mom. You suck air through your teeth instead and wish you'd never told her anything.

India says there's a science to getting over him. She relays a ten-step how-to plan, but you don't listen because you know that she really isn't over her ex either, so how can she be giving you advice? She says maybe you should get out of town, go to her parents' beach house or something. You nod. You could use a weekend away.

Looks aren't everything, you say to India, tipping back a beer. You're at her family beach house and stuffed with fried seafood and potato chips. She agrees with you and says that there are handsomer guys that Herbie. In fact, she's seeing this really handsome guy right now and.... You bite a chunk off of a chocolate bar, watch the trash TV play out on the screen.

You find India crying at the kitchen table. She tells you she's pregnant. You don't know what to say. In the morning, you find her dumping half-filled bottles of liquor down the drain--droplets splattering out onto the countertop. You put a hand on her shoulder as the liquid pools, pauses, and disappears.