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Fire

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The fire alarm had been pulled again. Rhonda pushes back her covers and sits upright. Damn, 2am. She reaches for her pink satin robe as she slips on her fuzzy leopard print slippers. On the pegboard over her desk, she grabs her master key.

She plans to go first to the rooms of the students who had volunteered to be Fire Marshals, back when they thought it was a lark that would look good on their resumes. First to the south wing: Joe opens his door after one knock. A night owl, he is still up, he is putting on a jacket; Joe nods and sets off pounding on the doors in his corridor. He doesn't seem to mind the interruption. Rhonda chuckles to herself that he probably will get a thrill from seeing all the girls in their pajamas.

Next over to the north wing. Abby had apparently already been knocking on doors; the halls are crowded with shuffling and grumbling. "Everyone's out," Abby says.

Rhonda needs to open each room with her master key, to be sure everyone has vacated. "Even if it isn't a real fire, we have to treat each time as if it is," her supervisor had intoned countless times. Some joker had gotten it into his head that making everyone go outside in the middle of the night was hilarious, and had been tormenting the residents of the dorm for two weeks.

Rhonda quickly finishes checking the north wing rooms then returns to the south.

As she opens 717, she recognizes the distinct aroma of pot. As the door swings open, she sees Tommy on his carpet with a bong. “Hey!” Tommy slurs, suddenly aware that someone has keyed into his room. He had been oblivious to the shrill bells. “Gotta get out Tom,” Rhonda says.

He takes a while to stand. Rhonda glances around. Needles. Uh oh. She looks to the upper bunk. A nude girl is up there. “You too miss.” The girl doesn’t move. Not a beligerent unmoving; she is unmoving in a not-capable-of-moving way.

Rhonda goes over to shake her arm. The girl is cold, like a melting ice pop. “I think she had more than she can handle!” Tom slurs, still sitting on the rug.

Rhonda smells smoke.