

## In Ecstasy

By Margaux Lloyd

“Don’t forget to chew it. It’ll work faster.”

“I know, dumbass, I’ve done this before. Hand it over.”

Neal holds out his hand. In his palm are six white pills of E. I pick one up and look at it more closely. It is almost pure white with tiny brown flecks, a sure sign that the only thing this MDMA is cut with is heroin. We are all in for a very smooth roll. Slipping it into one of my many pockets and taking a bottle of water, I follow the others out to the apartment parking lot.

The party is an underground thing that some friends have set up, with DJ’s like Micro, Diesel Boy, and Aphrodite. Truly an all-star cast with a few up-and-comings starting it off. With growing anticipation, I listen to the rustle of my pants and adjust my skin-baring top. There is that crackle of excitement as we all pile into the back of Neal’s truck, trying to get behind the cab so our gelled, teased, spiked and dyed hair won’t get ruined by the wind. Suddenly bass rips up from the floor and we are on our way, with the video game-like sounds of Full Cycle throbbing in our ears.

We arrive and jump out, adjusting various articles of clothing, and reaching for ID’s, money, and pills. Neal laughs at the face I make as the bitter substance falls apart between my teeth. No matter how many times I take it, it always makes me gag at first. He winks at me and hands me a piece of gum as I wash the rest of the taste down with water. We trek towards the door of the warehouse.

There is a line when we get there, and the night is chilly for a San Diego June. I rub my arms to keep warm and shift from foot to foot. A girl in pink UFO parachute pants and her boyfriend are in front of us, sucking face. I crack my gum and turn back to Neal in his bright yellow visor.

“Jesus, get a fucking room. Don’t need to rub in the fact that none of us are getting any.”

“Yeah, I’m horny enough as it is. Hey Tanni, you got your strings and sticks, right?” Neal throws his arm around my shoulders, “cause you know you gotta dance here. You’re the fucking best chick around.”

“Yeah I brought them. I’ve been practicing that around the neck thing; beat the shit out of myself too. I think I have it ok, but I’m not sure. You’ll have to tell me how it looks or if it needs more speed.”

“Sure, no prob. I’ll be dancing somewhere near you.”

“Tight. Dude, this shit is fast.” My jaws begin to clamp down on the gum I am chewing. Before I was rubbing my arms to stay warm, now I am rubbing them subconsciously just for the feeling it gives me. I hear Neal suck in air through his teeth and let it out in a long shuddering breath. The others in the group feel the drug too and I watch them begin their own tell tale rolling habits.

“Yeah, isn’t it fucking smooth shit?” Neal’s eyes, widening pupils mirroring my own, are glassy with excitement. He rubs my arms really fast, then goes back to his heavy breathing. I just nod; relishing the icy-hot way my skin feels as he rubs it. As we near the doors, I feel the ground shake beneath me. Each pulse sends silver shivers up my legs and into my stomach, where the adrenaline butterflies awaken and begin their frenzied flight. I try not to giggle as one of the bouncers unknowingly sets off tiny electric shocks on my skin with her hands. I show her my ID, get my water tested to make sure it isn’t spiked and push my way into the throbbing mass of people with Neal panting close behind me.

Everything shines with a sweaty iridescence and my eyes dart from one moving form to the next to see the visual trail it leaves behind. I am climbing higher and higher with the E and soon my body is moving of its own accord. The music courses through my veins like liquid fire. Each breath I take seems to freeze my lungs so the next one becomes a gasp. And it all feels wonderful. I close my eyes and run my hand through my short hair, pulling at the ends for just a moment before letting go.

Every part of me begins to move with the icy fire in my veins and I dance liquidly to the deeper pulsing of the bass. Somehow my hand retrieves the glowing red sticks from my pockets and I watch, fascinated, as my fingers deftly tie them to the ends of my most prized shoelace strings. I let out the string and my wrists twist with the beat. Circles of fiery red form before my unblinking eyes and I begin. I draw the music out into the air with circles, then figure eights, and finally around my body. Each time the breeze from my creation hits me I shudder with the tingle it brings. Around my leg with a stall, let it out and back to circling in front of me. I notice Neal to my right and feel him dancing with the music. He seems to pop every one of his joints out of place, then fluidly puts himself back together again. He looks up, sees me and winks. I return with a smile, give myself to the music again and continue to draw with my glowing red paint. The E makes the images stick to the back of my mind for a few seconds before fading into the flashing, pulsing, darkness.

After about two hours, I look up to see a large circle has formed around me. Some of the faces are familiar, most are not, and I don’t see Neal anywhere. The girl with the pink pants is off to my right. She watches me with a glazed expression, bobbing her head to the music. I want to continue but my hands are shaking and so I wind my strings up, slip the sticks into my pockets, and break through the circle of people towards the makeshift bar in the corner. I rub my arms again and loosen my tightening jaws enough to ask for water.

“Good stuff out there. You been dancing long?” The guy standing behind the table winks at me when we make eye contact. He is tall, with a good build, in red UFO’s with a black wife-beater. Looking at his smile makes my heart beat faster.

“Yeah. A veryveryvery longtime. I’vebeendoingitforlikethreeyears. Comingto thesethingstolearnnewshit. I likeitbetterthan anythingelse. Betterthanthemusic atleast. Myname’sTanni. Yeah, Tanni. Ibetyougetbored doingthatallnight. Doyougetpaidlots? Iwouldpayyoulots. ButIbetyoucan’t rollthough. Nopethatwould getyoufiredhuh? Whyisit calledrollinganyway? Iguesscauseyou rollwiththewaves itmakes. Doesn’tmake muchensedoesit? Ohwell. Thanks forthewater.” I’m E-babbling.

He just laughs, shakes his head, and breaks the seal on the lid of the bottle so it will be easier for me to open. There is a jolt of electricity as our fingers brush together and I quickly withdraw my hand and the water. He laughs again and turns to help another person. I move against a nearby wall to slow down and re-hydrate. The water feels orgasmic as it cools off my hot, dry throat. I can feel the moment it hits my stomach and shiver as a shock wave of coolness spreads throughout my body. I close my eyes and ride the feeling for a while, lightly stroking my arms again and again.

When I open my eyes, I see that the girl in pink and her boyfriend are making out a few feet down from me. Her back is against the wall and one leg is wrapped around his waist. I am hypnotized by the trails her white-shoed foot makes as it flails in the air, then I turn, disgusted, as I had been when they were in line. I am peaking with the E and everything is one large blur, with some things more focused than others. I slide down the wall and drink some more water as I run my fingers through my hair. My scalp tingles deliciously with every soft scratch of my nails. There is no more sound just the pulsing feeling in my veins and under my skin. What a truly marvelous drug, I think to myself breathlessly as the lights explode in front of my eyes and the music dances over my flesh.

I turn to the couple again. Curiosity makes me do it. I try to focus on her white shoe. In a series of movie frames I watch his pants drop to his knees. I shake my head and see that they are doing a lot more than simply kissing now. My head rolls around on my neck as I try to loosen my muscles. I wish I could be having sex now. With E it’s got to be the best feeling in the world. I look at the white shoe again. It is pounding into the guy’s back. She’s really lovin’ it. I wonder if she’s rolling too? I try to focus my whirling vision to her face. At first there are three of her heads, then two and finally one, as the residue fades. I blink and look again. There are tears on her face. I look back at her pounding foot, which now hangs limply, skewed to the side.

Another rush of bass sings through me and I take a deep breath. Closing my eyes makes the sensation lift me off of the ground and I am airborne for a moment, hugging myself with the rush of it. I come back down to the floor and rub my head and arms again. I sigh with pleasure and look back at the couple against the wall. My eyes meet with her red, swollen ones. For an instant it all becomes clear and I get up to go to those pleading eyes. Then I am on the floor again, rocking with the beat, and looking up to see her head back and him pounding her body against the wall. Then they blur together as he drops them both to the floor and one form moves away from the other.

Suddenly I am on my feet and looking into Neal's face; his eyes are nothing but pupil and he is yelling something at me. I shake my head and scream that I don't understand; can't hear him.

"It's over. It's busted and every one is leaving. C'mon, we've got to get out of here." He kisses me roughly and we run to the nearest exit, my lips still tingling with the heat of his.

Once outside we sprint, spy style, to the truck to be sure no one sees us. The crisp night air pulls me out of my E-stupor enough so I can function semi-normally. We are both gasping for air as he turns the car on. It rocks and I look behind me to see the rest of our friends piling into the back. Music fills the cab and my senses reel again with bass and cool night air. Neal is clutching at the wheel with both hands. He is rolling but it won't impair his driving. He's done it many times before.

As we round the building I see red and blue flashes and crowds of people running in every direction. We get past the cops and fly out onto the highway. I think I see a flash or bright pink being pulled into a car, but I could be wrong. In fact, who's to say that I even saw her in the first place. Maybe they really were just making out against the wall. I shake my head again and remember the look in her eyes. It wasn't fake. I should have done something.

Neal touches my hand and begins to rub my arm lightly. All my thoughts crash to the sensations that are coming alive under his fingers. I couldn't have done a damn thing. I feel my lips pull into that tight smile and I shudder with the white-hot feeling growing in my limbs.