



You Only Live Once.
Get up with the sunrise before the sun sets
on all your chances.

Katie Toussaint

This room is temporary. Every part of it. The single window that opens to the slant of the roof. The bed beneath, clouded with pillows. The sealed brick fireplace, hearth strewn with fabric flower petals. The mirror I'm looking into while not-so-artfully applying eye shadow. And every part is mine for the summer.

But nothing worth remembering has happened here. Outside of this space, I've had months of new people, live music, walking bridges, writing in coffee shops, and relaxing on rooftops along the South Carolina coast.

I've formed an easy friendship with the three girls who sleep behind the other white doors of this apartment, and the sun is setting on our summer and on our college lives. So we try to live a little. I put down my makeup brush and open my door to join them in the living room for Friday night festivities. We collect our respective bags, phones and keys, and lock the house behind us.

We stroll the city's cobbled streets and uneven sidewalks awash with light from lampposts and restaurants. We bar-hop and mingle and dance and sing and sweat until we ache for fresh air. Then we walk away from the sleepless bustle of downtown, down side streets tunneled by moon-kissed trees, up the stairs to our second-floor home in the house with the grey peeling paint.

We throw down our bags and phones and keys. We make plans to wake up in three hours to see the sun rise on the beach. I laugh and doubt it will happen. I shut myself in my room, close my curtain on the night, and sink into sleep under the whirl of the ceiling fan.

At 5:30am I sit up to the scrape of a door opening and the tap of footsteps. The voices of my housemates muffle through my wall and I lie back and consider feigning unconsciousness so I can actually feel alive later. I reason that every day presents the chance to see the sunrise. But I've never taken that chance. What if this is the last time I can take it here?

At this point, it's not the room that matters, what's in it or that it's mine. What matters is that I decide to leave it.

I half-fall out of bed, yank open my door, and see Clare rummaging around the kitchen for her car keys. She looks at me and asks, "You coming?"

I raise my arms over my head in the affirmative and drag myself into the bathroom. I poke my contacts in my eyes, throw on a swimsuit, snatch my still-sandy beach towel and stumble down the stairs to catch up with the other girls.

Sarah Jean is already planted shotgun in Clare's little silver car, somehow bubbling with conversation and energy.

Erin, however, is still metabolizing last night's beverage selection in the back-seat and lolls against the strap of her seatbelt. I toss my towel on the floor next to her and climb in.

Clare backs out of the driveway, turns onto the main street, and we are off and up and over the bridge, windows cracked, sunroof wide open, hair whipping. Time seems swifter, and we fly to beat the 6:26am sunrise. Houses and buildings cut across our vision. The pre-dawn light threads itself through the green marsh grasses, pink skimming the sporadic pools.

Clare turns the car onto a side street and swerves it into a thicket of shrubbery next to the beach access point. We hop out, kick off our flip-flops and walk until we find the perfect place to plop down on our towels.

I lean back and look up—the skyline is swathed in a pastel haze. I breathe in the sight and the thought that we beat our own odds by getting here. That we left our personal spaces for a greater space. Some place without doors or keyholes, without ceilings, without floors.

6:26 arrives and ticks past. Clare starts to curse the fact that we came all the way here when it's too cloudy for us to see the sunrise instead of merely the changing light.

Sarah Jean interrupts her, saying, "Hey guys, look." We glance east and there it is: A crescent-curved flame. It expands into an orb and rises as though gravity never mattered. We are caught in this sight, in this place, in this intersection of sand and ocean, of night and day. In this place that is not ours to own. This place that is not temporary, but timeless.

The sun keeps climbing, but our eyelids droop. We shuffle back through the sand to the car. It's time to head back to where we came from, to civilization, to sleep. We grab bagels on the way and drive on, sipping light roasts swirling in Styrofoam cups. We roll onward, upward, back over the bridge to the city, content with our coffee buzzes, with the foreign feel of the early hour.

Sarah Jean tilts her head out the window, toward the waves of the sea, the waking city. "YOLO," she says. You Only Live Once. Get up with the sunrise before the sun sets on all your chances. Walk out of the rooms you own and step closer to the places you can never forget.

Katie Toussaint is a senior at the University of Richmond and a former skirt! intern. She enjoys the desk space and coffee buzzes that Richmond has to offer, but misses her cubicle and the Keurig coffeemaker at the skirt! office.