

A Brief Treatise on Apathy  
by Evan Kahn

I recently went out for cocktails with a group of my closest friends - Henry, Paul, Samantha, and Nicole - all of whose opinions I respect and all of whom I love very much. Henry had recently graduated from college and we were seeing each other for the first time in quite a while. We used to go drinking together all the time, but now we don't make it out very often - in fact, only about once every four years. Life catches you by surprise sometimes.

Paul fancied himself a whisky snob, so when we walked up to the bar he decided we were drinking whisky that night. But the bartender went through all of his whiskies and Paul decided that none of them were good enough for the momentous occasion. Samantha and Nicole didn't get much out of drinking, but since they were women they felt obligated.

Henry, the recent graduate, looked at Paul incredulously. "What's wrong with this whisky? It probably costs two hundred dollars for a bottle!"

Paul looked down the bridge of his nose over his glasses.

"I don't trust this because it costs so much. I read that it doesn't cost the whisky company two hundred dollars to make this bottle of whisky. They just let it sit in a cask for thirty years. The whisky business is crooked and a lie. Whisky is just water with chemicals in it. Do you know what else is water with chemicals in it? Gasoline! Do you want to drink gasoline?"

Henry was already a little drunk, and sick of Paul's elitism. "You know what, why don't we?"

Paul glared back at him. "All right, let's do it! Barkeep, do you have any gasoline?"

In fact, the bartender was a generous soul and was willing to go above and beyond to serve his loyal customers, so he went and siphoned some gas out of his Hummer. He poured it out into five tumblers. Henry downed his immediately, making a face but afterwards pretending it was the greatest thing he had ever tasted, and all of us followed suit, not really knowing what else to do.

"Ugh!" said Nicole. "That tasted like gasoline!"

"You're a woman," said Henry, "of course you feel that way."

Samantha interjected.

"Listen, guys, I'm lighter than you all are, since I'm a woman. I don't really think that drinking gasoline is very healthy. If we've all drunk the same amount of gasoline, I might die faster. I really think we should call the poison control center. If we manage to do that fast enough, some of us might stay safe."

That made Paul angry.

"Listen, Samantha, I don't like your attitude. You haven't taken the time to understand why Henry made the choice he made. This is his special day, and all of us together helped choose what we want to drink, so now we need to sit back and enjoy it."

I knew that she was being silly. Hospitals existed in the world, so how could anyone ever get hurt from poisoning? If drinking gasoline really was dangerous, surely an ambulance would already have picked us all up and carried us away.

The evening ended with us on the floor, face down and twitching, expiring slowly into mixing pools of caustic bloody vomit. Perhaps mercifully, the women went first.