

Charlotte Pfamatter
Journal #2

Sometimes, certain things simply are *not* funny to joke about. Regardless of what you *might* think the moment calls for, “just kidding” can be hurtful, manipulative, and heartbreaking. I will never forget the pain I felt just this past Friday when I was deceived in this way.

My best friend Abbey and I were enjoying a simple dinner on Friday evening at around seven. We had just circulated through the Rock the Block festivities and booths and we were anxious to eat quickly and get back to all of the fun. When I picked up my fork to eat, Abbey’s phone vibrated and screamed a loud tone, alarming her that she was getting a phone call. We glance at the caller ID and see the screen display “Grant”. Grant is our best friend from back home who is a freshman at VCU. He is an exuberant fun and bubbly gay boy with a sweet spirit and a big heart, and me and Abbey love him to death. He is what one would consider a “hot mess”, considering he grew up in a strict and oppressing Catholic home and went to a Catholic all boys military private school and has hardly had any acceptable outlets in his life. He is known to take risks mindlessly without considering consequences, which is what he was occupied with this past week. He had discovered that his boyfriend had Hepatitis and was panicking all week long about possibly contracting it from him. In a panic, he got tested a few days prior for all STD’s. When we saw him calling, we immediately knew what he was calling us about: his test results. Abbey rushed to pick up the phone. On my end, all I could hear was Abbey’s “uh-huh’s” and “mm-hm’s” and “what were the results?”. The air between us suddenly tensed when I saw her eyes grow wide. “What is it?” I mouth out. She looks at me and tells me:

“He’s HIV positive”.

My heart sunk to the bottom of the floor of the dining hall. My body went numb. I visualized our last conversations, our last laughs... I visualized his parents pulling him out of college and kicking him out to live on the streets. I visualized my family taking him in. I even visualized his funeral in that moment. Tears were welling in my eyes. I could not believe this horrible news.

Suddenly, Abbey’s face turned unamused. She hung up the phone and put it back on the table. “He’s clean. He’s fine.” she said in an angry tone. My sadness turned into flames in the pit of my stomach. How dare he joke about something so serious? How dare he take this situation lightly? This was *his* life flashing before my eyes, and he had the *audacity* to laugh in our faces? As if it was *stupid* to believe it? I was lost finding a reason why he would joke about such a thing to people who love him as much as we do.

I felt so hurt and annoyed. Am I going to believe him next time he calls me with devastating news? Will I have to question him in a moment where he is actually in a bad situation? I hate to delegitimize anyone in a crisis, but how will I know next time? When will I ever believe him? For me, he crossed a really sensitive line without even acknowledging any of the consequences of “just kidding” about HIV. This made me doubt my trust in one of my best friends, which hurt most of all.