

# Zee Novak

In the early spring of 2014, set in Indiana, the narrator reflects on her relationship with Cyrus, with whom she has been living for a year post-graduation. During this time, they engage in casual dating and heavy drinking, which persists until Cyrus embraces sobriety. Their weekly visits to Jude's house for yard work become a peculiar ritual; initially seeking "fresh groceries," they discover Jude's offers are literal—groceries in exchange for labor, with Jude watching them from his rickety lawn chair.

Jude, a balding man in dingy underwear, observes them doing odd jobs in his yard whilst consuming alcohol. The narrator and Cyrus, high on fentanyl, joke about their arrangement, pondering if their efforts constitute sex work. They playfully analyze their situation through a sociopolitical lens while engaging in wood chopping, an endeavor they find both amusing and dangerous.

One Saturday, after preparing for their visit, Cyrus injures his foot with an ax during their wood-chopping task, resulting in a significant cut that bleeds profusely. In a state between shock and high, the narrator struggles to manage his injury, demanding first-aid and contemplating a hospital visit due to the severity of the blood loss.

Jude, panic-stricken and nearly useless, attempts to offer minimal assistance while being mainly concerned about the aftermath of the injury within his home. As the narrator tends to Cyrus's foot, they can't help but laugh at the absurdity of the situation: Cyrus's injury became a source of humor rather than panic.

Eventually, as the situation calms, Jude hands over a mix of cash in compensation for the mishap and a pair of strange wind chimes becomes a token from their bizarre transaction. That evening, with the cash, Cyrus and the narrator throw a party, where the tale of their "adventure" grows increasingly exaggerated. In the morning, they awaken to a messy apartment and the sight of Cyrus, still slumped on the couch with his wounded foot unceremoniously displayed, illustrating the strange blend of humor and chaos that characterizes their existence .