

HAHAHA
By Maura McGrath

Laughter and sexual assault. The two don't really seem to go together, but with my shit sense of humor, anything is possible. How, you might ask? Let's start with the humor part.

Back in November I found a kid passed out drunk in our lovely dining hall at 4:30 in the morning. Being a reasonable adult I decided that I couldn't leave him there, so brought him back up to my room to vomit and sleep it off. Fortunately he did vomit. Unfortunately it was not in the toilet but across my bed, and on my stack of thesis books, and onto my backpack, and on a pile of clean clothes. I freaked out a bit, and the security guard found me crying at 5:30 AM doing laundry in the basement, yelling "He vomited on everything! He vomited on my life!"

This was not exactly a super happy fun-time night for me. But as a story three-months removed? Hilarious. Especially since I found another student passed out in his vomit in the dining hall a few weeks later.

I'm like the dining hall vomit fairy.

See, I have a particular sense of humor. It's sarcastic, cynical, dry. It's a self-deprecating humor, the laughter directed at myself and the unfortunate situations I find myself in, addressing those situations directly to an almost uncomfortable degree.

Another example. This semester I really have my shit together. I brush my teeth not just once, but twice a day, with flossing. I also wash my face twice a day and even manage to shower multiple times a week instead of once, maybe. I haven't even cried in class yet. I'm totally killing it.

Now, am I bragging about my excellent oral and general personal hygiene? Yeah, kind of. But I'm also trying to laugh about how much of a mess last semester was, putting that sarcastic spin on a time when I really didn't have my shit together. See, last semester I spent a lot of time not brushing my teeth and not showering, choosing to place crying and late night bagels over basic daily functioning.

Now you might ask: why was last-semester Maura such a mess? That would be because of the assaults. I took last year—my senior year—off to study abroad in Tokyo. In the second half of that year I was sexually assaulted twice. It was hard dealing with then, but it was even harder when I returned to Harvard in September because not only did basically every friend I had graduate last May, but also I lost the support network I built in Tokyo. Hence the crying and the carbs and the poor hygiene.

Unlike the November vomit incident, a lot of last year is not something I can look back on objectively and find humorous because last year wasn't funny. But that doesn't stop me from laughing. I joke about having scheduling conflicts because of breakdowns I'm planning for later in the week. I chuckle to myself as I explain that my relationship didn't quite work out, because the assaults were a tad bit of an inconvenience.

I make people uncomfortable when I say these things. Compared to how we think a victim should handle an assault—denial, anger, lots and lots of tears—my laughter and snark don't make sense. If last year really bothered me, then how could I talk about it so nonchalantly? Because that's who I am, and that's how I talk about everything. Talking helps me deal with the mess of feels I have surrounding

last year. I don't like that I still cry, but if I can make fun of myself for crying it makes it easier. It means I haven't lost myself completely. I'm still 100% Maura, shit sense of humor included.

If I've anything learned from this, it's that everyone is going to deal with this sort of experience differently. Some people might not talk ever. Some might talk to a select few. Some might talk to everyone and the kitchen sink. But no matter how you deal you're still you both before and after, although maybe with a lot more crying on the after side. I cry, and I talk, and I laugh. If you ever want to laugh with me, I'm usually alone in the back of the dhall so come say hi. If you don't, avoiding the dining hall at 4 am when you're drunk might be a good place to start.