

Her Dreams

Dissipated into the *Cloud*

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I was 15 when I vaped for the first time.

It was my freshman year - the night of the school musical. I was supposed to be doing hair and makeup, but I wasn't needed.

One of my friends hanging out in the parking lot called me and told me to come to her car. I went there and saw three friends in the car. I hopped in and saw one of them had a vape. I had never done it before so I tried it. Then a car of boys rolled up and they were vaping, too, so I kept doing it - not because I wanted to fit in, but because I liked to do it. Afterward I kept vaping whenever I was with one of my friends who had a vape.

Once Juul came out, I had someone buy me one so I wouldn't have to borrow from my friends. That instant buzz came after a couple of hits, and it was amazing. My body would relax, and I thought it was awesome. I would bring it to school and go to the bathroom and hit it and walk out like nothing. I was probably buying pods every couple of weeks. I would do it so often that I guess you could say I was addicted to it. The cost for my habit was about \$20 each week, but the price I eventually paid was much higher.

I knew it wasn't good for me because I am an athlete and I have asthma. My mom always told me how bad my lungs were as a baby because I was born a couple weeks early.

My first Juul broke after dropping it on the ground and then I got another one, but I gave it away to a friend because I wanted to focus more on being in shape for swimming. I would still hit other people's Juuls whenever I could, but not as often as I was before.

At the beginning of junior year, I was swimming on the girls' high school team with the Lewis Central girls. I had one friend from LC that had a vape, and I would have her bring it inside the locker room so I could hit it after practice. When we would travel to swim meets she would bring it and we would hit it on the bus, but some of the girls could smell it, so we stopped.

During the week of regionals, I stopped vaping because I really wanted to return to state this year. Last year, I placed 11th at state in the 100 backstroke and competed in the medley relay, the 200 free relay and the 400 free relay. This year I made the list of state qualifiers for the backstroke, although I had a slow time. I also made state as part of the medley relay and possibly the 200 free relay.

I didn't think any of the girls would snitch on me, but I know I had two people on the team who wanted to see me fail, so we had a talk as a whole team about vaping because someone spoke up about it.

The week of state one of my coaches pulled me out of practice. She told me someone said I was vaping, so she checked my bag and found an empty Juul pod and a small bottle of vape juice.

Being a swimmer you don't normally clean out your bag. I meant to throw all that stuff away but just forgot about it. My coach took the vaping supplies and gave them to my head coach. He called me into his office after practice. He didn't want to see me not swim at state, but he had to follow the rules in the handbook. He told me the LC athletic director would get word of this and tell St. Albert's athletic director.

The next day at school I was called into Ken Schreiber's office. He told me that I would not be swimming at state because I had nicotine products on me in a school environment. I had one day of in-school suspension and 15 days probation.

I was so upset that I let my team down. I made sure to keep in contact with the girls to see how everyone was doing. My swim team is my family, and I was missing out on the competition, the celebration and the bonding that takes place during the trip.

I also let down my mom and dad, and also myself.

In my opinion, vaping wasn't worth it. I put in a lot of hard work into swimming that season - two-a-days starting at 5:30 a.m. and coming home from practice at 6:20 p.m. during districts - just to not swim at state. Going to state was my ultimate goal, and I ruined it by vaping.