

Case 1: The Wink

You've been looking forward to this party. It's going to be a good time to let loose and forget the stresses of the week.

You arrive a little after eight and see your friend Mia, who is talking with some people you haven't met before. You've known Mia since middle school. You also know she never misses a party and enjoys having a good time. But then again, you enjoy a good time too.

You begin to mingle. And soon find this party has a limitless supply of alcohol and drugs. You have one beer and join in the dancing. You see that Mia has moved on; she is talking to a young man. You know he is an athlete at your school, but you can't remember which sport. Mia seems to be enjoying herself as she puts down a cup that he immediately refills.

A stranger next to you comments: "There he goes again. If he gives her the right stuff to drink, he's sure to get lucky!" You turn to see that the stranger is one of the athlete's friends. He gives you a wink and walks away.

An hour later, you notice Mia again. This time she is sitting on the couch and doesn't seem to be enjoying herself.. She looks as though she isn't feeling well or has had a little too much to drink. You watch her as the same man helps Mia up from the couch and begins guiding her up the stairs. She doesn't seem to be resisting, but then again, she doesn't seem to be standing on her own two feet. You think to yourself that either he is taking her upstairs to lie down or Mia is playing helpless to be alone with him.

You decide it isn't your business and rejoin the party. The next day, Facebook is abuzz with Mia's accusations that she was raped last night.

Study questions:

1. What kind of relationship do you have with Mia? How does this relationship bear on your ethical responsibilities to her?
2. When you are uncertain of the consequences your actions will bring about, how should they affect the conclusions you draw? For instance, if you think there is a 75% chance Mia is safe and a 25% chance she is in danger, what should you do?

3. Does the fact that alcohol may have impaired your judgment make you more or less blameworthy for your failure to look out for Mia than you would have been if you were sober?

4. You mistakenly believed that Mia was safe when she was led up the stairs. To what extent does your ignorance excuse you from blame for the consequences of your failure to act?

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