

Arrive Alive

“Let’s go! My parents are going to kill me. Oh my god, if I’m not home in ten minutes they will kill me.” Josie, my best friend of thirteen years, stammered as she struggled to grab and open the door of the drivers side.

“Wooaahhh, you are *not* driving Jose. We all know you’ve had way too much to drink.” Kelsey replied and offered to drive.

“No, no, no, I’m fine, honestly!” She slurred. “Let me drive! It’s my car, and you’re going to text which we don’t need right now. I have to get home, let’s go!” She slipped into the seat and turned the car on.

Finally I stepped in and told her, “I’m not getting in this car if you’re driving Jose.” She gave me the are-you-kidding-me-right-now look, and then began drunkenly yelling at me to stop controlling her life like I was her mother. The next thing I know she’s gotten out of the car, into the passenger seat, and somehow convinced me into getting me into the drivers seat. How did I she convince me of this? Can I operate a car right now? Her house is only thirty minutes away, right? Questions raced through my head as I stared at the fuzzy steering wheel my hands were now grasping.

“I can’t do this. I’m drunk. I have a future and college. Please let me call my da—”
“MADDIE. There is no way in hell that I would let you call your dad.” Interrupted Josie, followed by an annoyed Kelsey in the back seat, “Please just drive. Don’t pretend like you’ve had more to drink than us tonight.”

I took a deep breath, asking myself how I got here. How do any of us get in this situation? It’s May of our senior year. We’d all been at a party on a mountain in Cornish, Maine,

where we were supposed to spend the night. Josie's parents had realized that she was not in her bed aka. the reason we had to hurry home because she'd told them, 'Maddie's having boy troubles and I needed to get her ice cream.' Except we weren't five minutes away, we were thirty god damn minutes away on top of a mountain in the middle of nowhere! Her parents were going to call soon, and I didn't want to be Maddie in this situation.

My head was pounding, my heart shaking, and my stomach was seconds away from tearing itself apart. With the car in drive, I pressed on the gas anyways. We were driving, slowly picking up speed. I was close to crying because of how nervous I was, but Josie's glaring eyes made me get a hold of myself.

One second it was fine. Kelsey was laughing about a video we'd taken earlier. Josie had talked to her parents, and assured them she would get home soon. The song we were going to graduate to was playing. I was much calmer than I had been about ten minutes ago. I knew that this was the only time I would ever do this, but that it would be over soon.

But that was then. This is now. Now is dark. It consists of flashes of lights. Glass, everywhere. My legs were fixed; one numb, one with immense pressure. Kelsey was screaming. I could feel a warm liquid running down my left temple. The last thing I'd remembered from driving was a car on the other side of the road followed by a blaring horn. All I know is that Josie took the wheel from me, and we must've hit a telephone pole. Kelsey was still screaming when I heard a males voice asking for my name. I couldn't talk.

"Her BP's dropping. We need to get her to cardio stat." Hurried voices were all around me. That was when I became fully aware of pain, and fully aware of how this will change the rest of my life.

“She didn’t make it, we tried everything we could do,” was the statement made upon Kelsey’s death. Her and Josie were the first thing I’d asked about when I became conscious. There wasn’t enough energy in me to fight the truth. The pain, the horrifying pain that I felt in my stomach was more than I could bear. Josie blamed herself for making me drive, but I was the one who actually did it. I blamed myself for everything. I was ashamed to look at myself in the mirror. I could think about my future and how the next fifteen years in prison would work out, but mainly I thought about Kelsey. Never should someone else be harmed because of another person’s actions. Kelsey doesn’t have a future. I took all of that away from her. If you are being pushed into drunk driving your friends, don’t do it. Your life is more precious than that. Think of everyone else you can impact. Call your parents, or call a friend. Arrive alive instead.