

A Funeral for a Friend

By Bethany Cray

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Dear Diary,

The sun is shining brightly today, and all of the teenagers in America are out of school, enjoying the beginning of their summer. All but one. One teenager will never again experience the sunshine, she will never again feel the joy of laughter...she will never have her seventeenth birthday. This seems to be all I can think about as I sit here in my bedroom, dressed in a black skirt and matching top. My best friend is gone... Two days ago..such a short amount of time...I had been determined that this summer was going to be different. This was the summer that I, Charissa Perkins, wanted to become someone who would be able to enjoy her Senior year; someone with a social life. Ha! What a joke...if I had only known where that line of thought would take me. Memories, the only thing I had left of Monica Rosetti. She had always been a reserved individual, someone who enjoyed spending more time with her nose in a book than participating in the typical high school drama. She had been my best friend since kindergarten... the two of us had always been together. Not anymore...and it's all because of my own, thoughtless decision. One choice...One small, seemingly harmless choice, and life is changed. It had been my idea, you know, going to the party. Monica didn't want to go...she knew...she knew something bad would happen. But would I listen? Ha, ohhh no, I had to go and convince her

that this was our lucky break, the chance for us to finally fit in...All of those commercials advocating 'staying above the influence', and I didn't have the selflessness to listen to any one of them. So yeah, I did it, I joined in with the 'cool kids', and that was all it took...it was enough to distract me... to swerve...it was enough to go off the road...enough to end someones life. And, get this, do you know what they're all saying? A tree..A tree is what people are saying took her life, just an accident, something that no one could prevent..But do you know something? They're wrong, all of them. Oh sure, my blood alcohol level was low, so low in fact that the cops never even conducted further investigations. But I know..I know what I did. A couple of bears, that was all, what's the worse that could happen? That was my thought before...but now, after the accident, now I know the truth. The truth is that I did it, me! I killed my best friend. And for what? For a couple of pointless, illegal bears. But no one else knows...no... no one else knows. They will never understand the guilt that I feel, the weight that will forever be on my shoulders..the price I've payed. And why? Why?! Why would teenagers, friends, encourage this?! Even as I ask myself this question, I know the answer. Because just two days ago I was one of them, I was one of those teens who thought that DUI programs such as MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) was something that would never have anything to do with me. Now my best friend's mother is an active member of that very group.

I'll tell you the reason why teens don't take it seriously, it's because they don't understand the danger, the reality of it all. They have the mindset that it won't happen to them, that they'll never know the experience of being the victim of a drunk driving accident. Well, they're all delusional, and I'm living proof. Oh yes, I'm a victim too, in some ways worse than Monica. Not only am I responsible for her death, I'm left with the penance of facing her family and friends for the rest of my life. I may have stayed alive, but surely death would have been a kinder punishment than living with this regret. The only thing I can think about is how I'm going to share my story with everyone else. I mean, it's easy enough to privately jot down my thoughts here on paper, but how can I possibly present it in such a way that they'll all listen? What will it take? Will it have to happen to them? Do more people have to die? Maybe not, maybe I'll never know the answer, or perhaps I'll find a way..somehow..but not today. Today I have different plans. However, instead of going to a seventeenth birthday party, I have a funeral to attend.. No, diary, a tree was not Monica's killer...not even close...no, the culprit was a drunk driver. It's not some far off advertisement, it's a reality that will haunt me for the rest of eternity..something I'll never be able to escape.