

## Regret

By Breanna Alexander

*The car was swallowed by the darkness except for the tiny, cherry-colored shards of light seeping in through the cracks of a shattered windshield, darting like minnows across our battered bodies. My hands still clenching the wheel, I laid my head back letting the shooting bolts of pain weave up and down my back and waited for the ringing noise to dissipate. I reached out for you, lightly brushing my hand against your cheek, searching for your dimples, searching for the sign, tracing the curved lines of your lips which I have kissed so many times, and feeling the numbing absence of a pulse. My hand collapsed, a small pigeon that had gone into seclusion. There are two of us who wait in this car. Yet I am alone here in my own mind.*

**“This is going to be a night to remember.”**

**“Senior year, baby! WOO!”** The clinging of Miller Lites echoed through the crowded room while scantily clad-bodies writhed to the beat of pulsating pop confection pumping out of speakers mounted on the walls.

**“I don’t know if you should be drinking, babe,”** he said to her.

**She shrugged it off, took a swig of her beer and laughed. “Jake, don’t be a buzzkill. We’re young and we only live once.”**

**“Yeah, that’s true,”** he smirked.

*The whirring sounds of sirens pierced the night. The deputy told me it was hard for them to get you out. You were so tangled up in the machinery. He said it was a miracle I survived at all. I had drifted off into the shoulder too far and one of my front wheels turned too sharply and we rolled off into the Mr. Hirsch’s yard finally wrapping around his old oak tree, the same tree we read Hemingway under, the same tree under which you told me you loved me making my eyeliner run constellations. As the uniformed ghosts strapped us onto separate gurneys, I closed my eyes and cried.*

**“You really need to slow down,” Jake warned. He gripped either side of his seat trying to keep from tossing about.**

**“I’m only going 55,” she said.**

**“Yeah, in a 35.”**

**“Don’t tell me how to drive. I know how.”**

**It all happened in an instant. The car swerved into the far right going off the road. She turned the steering wheel and overcorrected sending the car flipping into the nearby ditch. Trees, stars, neighboring houses, and the inside of the car were reduced to a blur as the car rolled over and over. The crushing of metal and breaking of glass erupted. Jake held his breath and squeezed his eyes shut.**

Now, I am a shell of a being, suffocated by memories and guilt, diseased by the cold and the smell of our car crash, a moment replayed in my mind like a final scene projected on the screen of my brain; a scene burned on the backs of my eyelids; a scene I continuously undress, analyze. *What could I have done? What should I have done?* Like a finger pulling the trigger, I sipped from the bottle and ended your life. I ended all your hopes and dreams with just one sip. That’s all it took. You were more than just some boy with a dry sense of humor. You were a son, a future father...a life cut short by something so easily preventable. It is the small things about you that I remember with such tremendous clarity; the way you ruffled your Beatle-mop hair, the way you enjoyed reading Ginsberg and Kerouac, and the way you laughed.

I read your obituary. And my heart snatches a prayer out of the newspaper and lets it buzz through its ventricle, its auricle, like a wasp stinging where it will, yet glowing furiously in the little highways where you remain.

Don’t drink and drive. It could cost you your life...or the lives of those you love.