

# “Was it Worth It?”

Arrive Alive Contest  
Katey Caron

Who isn't excited after getting their license? It had taken weeks of driver's ed. class, months of driving with your permit, and then a few tries at the driving exam to get to this point. Receiving your license signifies growth and maturity. You can finally go off on your own now and won't have to worry about finding a ride every time you want to go somewhere. Getting your license is a step towards complete independence. Getting your license means you're relying on your parents a little less now. Before they know it, you'll be graduating high school, leaving for college, and then going out into the world on your own to make a life for yourself.

But what if you never get to that point? What if something happens and you can't walk across the stage at graduation and receive the diploma you worked so hard for? What if you didn't break away from your parents by going off to college or moving out? What if your family lost you forever because of one mistake you made while you were behind the wheel?

Rebecca “Becky” Smith was a varsity athlete, a member of her school's National Honors Society, a musician, thespian, big sister to two younger brothers, and beautiful daughter to both her mother and father. The date was May 15, 2014, and graduation was less than a month away. Prom was this weekend and she was on her way to go dress shopping with her two best friends. They were planning on getting ready together before the dance, helping each other with their makeup and taking fun pictures before heading out to dance the night away. Before that, the girls had to get their stunning dresses for the prom they were sure they would never forget.

Becky was running late and was on her way to the mall after dropping her youngest brother off at soccer practice. She hated to be late. She was always on time and hated to make her friends wait for her. She pressed down on the gas a bit more, going about fifteen miles over the speed limit and hoping that she wouldn't get pulled over. She didn't want her friends to be annoyed with her, and she only had about an hour to shop at the mall because she needed to be home in time for dinner.

Becky's phone let out a bright, high-pitched sound, telling her that she received a new text message. It's probably Hayley, thought Becky, and she cursed under her breath as she dug her phone out from the cup-holder beside her seat. "This is so embarrassing," She muttered, glancing down at the brightly-lit screen to unlock the iPhone with her passcode. She's never late! Her friends must be wondering what the hell is taking her so long. I'll just let her know that I'm on my way and almost there, thought Becky as she began to type with one hand on the wheel and one hand on her phone.

"Omg sorry! Almost there. I'm-"

The light at the intersection turned yellow and stayed that color for a brief moment before turning red. Becky, who was focused on the phone in her lap, never saw the light telling her to stop. As Becky ran through the red light, a pickup truck rammed into the side of her tiny Volkswagen Beetle. Her head snapped and glass shattered as her legs were thrust forward into the dashboard by the impact. There was the sound of sirens, but it was faint, and she was aware of only the immense pain in her body. Everything was dark and she could feel the stickiness from her own blood dampening her skin. As she lied there, her body mangled and damaged, her phone lied beside her. The screen was bright against the darkness of the blood and the sirens and the pain.

Becky had never got the chance to hit send before she ran the red light. The text box stayed open, waiting for the rest of the message that would never come.

“Omg sorry! Almost there. I’m-”

Becky was in a coma for nearly a month before succumbing to her injuries and losing her life. She never got to go to prom. She never got to walk across the stage in her cap and gown and receive her diploma. She never got the chance to hit send. She left behind two loving parents, two younger brothers, and a whole community that cared for her and supported her. Was that text worth it? Was it worth a young lady’s life to pull out a phone and try to send a text message? A text can wait. Keep your eyes on the road because you put your life and other drivers’ lives in danger. Is a text really worth losing your life? Put down the phone, and arrive alive.