

Chain Reaction

I am a waitress. I send my mom a message saying “Leaving work now. See you soon.” I leave work at 10. I walk to my car, turn the heat on, take my hair out of its low bun and get ready for a 20 minute drive home. I turn left out of the parking lot and pull up to a light. With my music playing, the light turns to green and put my foot on the gas.

Drew is on his way to his friends house for a party. Running late, he leaves his house and makes his way to Marginal Way in Portland around 10:05 pm. While driving down the mostly empty street he gets a text from his friend Mike. The text reads, “Dude where are you?!? You’re late!” He reads it and thinks of his response. “I’ll be right there” he types.

I see lights to my left, not thinking anything of it assuming they will stop at the light. I go. Drew doesn’t press send. Before he can send it, he hits my car. My mind goes blank. Drew can’t move.

You see, I can’t tell you what happens next. I can’t tell you who called 911. I can’t tell you who told my mom. I can’t tell you what happened to me. All I can tell you is that I never did see my mom that night.

Maybe Drew could tell you that he broke both his legs, his arm and left with a concussion. Maybe he can tell you what his sentence is. Maybe he can tell you how my parents felt. Maybe he could tell you what happened.

I wonder who took my job at the restaurant. I wonder what my swim team will say on senior night. I think about how fun my 18th birthday party would’ve been. I want to ask my sister if she took my room like she always said she would when I left for college.

Mia is just weeks from her birthday and is waiting for a call back from the director of the musical. She gets ready to leave Mike's house around 12am with Connor and Ashley. Because Drew was supposed to be her driver that night, Mia needed a new ride. Thinking he has just skipped out on her, she decides she needs a new ride. Mia is unable to think clearly due to the fact that she is very intoxicated. Ashley tells her “Mia, don’t worry. I’m not even drunk anymore!” Believing her, she leaves with them.

A trucker is making his way down the highway traveling at around 60 miles per hour in the right lane. Ashley is singing along to the music as she drives up the exit ramp. A light rain drizzles on the windshield. Ashley’s impaired mind gives no thought to checking her mirrors as she speeds onto the highway. She merges, giving no time for the 18 wheeler to stop. The car is wrecked, everyone inside is gone. The truck? Left with little damage.

Mia’s parents are left to wonder why she would ever get into a car with a drunk driver. They never get to give Mia her 17th birthday gifts. They will never see her get the leading role in Beauty and the Beast at school. Connor’s brother has to go to football practice everyday without him as his captain. He wishes he could tell him how much he loves him. Ashley's family feels at fault for the deaths of not just their own daughter, but the others too. They wonder how different things could be.

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Imagine if you worked with me. For rest of your life, you would see someone texting while driving and think of me, that young girl you worked with. Imagine if you were friends with Mia’s parents. You had bought tickets to the musical in advance, to show support for the little

girl you watched grow up. Now you go to the musical but you can't make it through because you can't stop your own tears.

The effects for impaired driving are real. One in every four car accidents in the US are caused by texting and driving. 1.6 million crashes per year are due to texting and driving. In 2016 alone, 10,497 people died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes in the United States. That same year, 263 teens died in distracted driving accidents. Make sure you and everyone you know aren't next. Spread the word, set an example and stay safe.

Works Cited

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