

Thought I'd end up with Sean, but he wasn't a match

Wrote some songs about Ricky, now I listen and laugh

Even almost got married, and for Pete I'm so thankful

Wish I could say thank you to Malcolm, cause he was an angel

Music blared through the radio, as Rachael and I sang along at the top of our lungs. We were way off key, but we didn't really care. We were just having fun. Rachael had insisted that we go to the mall because there were some sales happening, plus I needed to get a few things, so the two of us had driven an hour to the nearest shopping mall. I had only wanted to stay there for a couple hours, but by the time we left, it was almost 10:00 p.m., and pitch black outside.

So now, we were on our way back, with still 45 minutes of driving left, and our favorite song playing at full volume. Rachael suddenly stopped singing, and let out a little gasp.

"Lizzie, we have to go get some Chinese food. I've had a hankering for it all day." I rolled my eyes at her.

"Rachael, you do realize it's quarter past ten, right? No place is going to be open at this time." I couldn't see her, but I could imagine the pout that crossed her face. She let out a small sigh, and became very quiet. I reached over to turn down the music, and that's when I heard the *tap tap tap* of her phone as she typed something out on her screen.

"You're looking up Chinese restaurants around here that are still open, aren't you?"

"What, no, what are you talking about?" I glanced over at her, and raised an eyebrow at her obvious lie.

"Fine. Yes, I'm looking at Chinese restaurants. I know that you're probably right, and there's nothing open at this time, but I just really want Chinese food." I rolled my eyes again and laughed quietly under my breath. She was persistent, if nothing else.

Once Rachael had given up on her search for Chinese food, we started talking about a wide array of things, bouncing from topic to topic whenever we got off on a tangent. I was just about to start a story about how Michael Loaski had gotten detention by cussing out the teacher when my phone buzzed in my pocket. I took it out, and looked down at it.

Alex

You busy tonight? :)

I smiled down at the text, and Rachael looked over at me.

"What are you smiling at?"

"Alex texted me."

"Uggghhhh, Not Alex again. I know you like him, but I've heard rumors about him. He's bad news. He dates a girl for a few weeks, sleeps with her a few times, and then dumps them for the next girl. It's disgusting."

"Those are just rumors. You don't know if they're actually true or not. Plus, he's so nice to me, I couldn't really imagine him doing that."

"Alright, since you like him so much, I'll lay off him, but I'm warning you, I don't trust him." I looked over to see Rachael cross her arms and glare at my phone, as if she was trying to mentally glare at Alex himself.

“Thanks for looking out for me, but I think I’ll be okay.” I looked back down at my phone to send a reply back to him. I would love more than anything to go over and hang out, but it will be so late when we get back, and I needed to get some sleep for the calculus test tomorrow. My grade wasn’t so hot right now, and I needed to do well on this test in order to get back up to at least an A- or maybe even an A.

“Hey, Lizzie, maybe you should put the phone down. Whatever Alex texted you can’t be that important.” I waved my phone at her in a yeah yeah motion, before bringing it back up to my face in order to finish the message and send it.

“It’s fine. I’ll just send this one text, and then I’ll put it down. Plus, there’s no one out here, so it’s fine. It’s just one text.”

“I know, but haven’t you seen those stories online, about people texting and driving, and then getting into a car accident?”

“Yeah, but that rarely ever happens. Adults just share those stories in order to scare us into not using our phones. Just give me a second and-”

“Shit, Lizzie, watch out.” I looked up to see glaring yellow lights, and I swerved a second too late. The other car rammed into us, and the last thing I saw was a driver get out of the car before everything went dark.

I woke up to the sound of a loud siren blaring next to my ear. No, it wasn’t next to me, but the searing pain in my head made me think it was. My vision was a little blurred at the edges, but I could make out what was around me. I was still in the car, but it definitely didn’t look the same. The front end was smashed, the glass had been shattered, with pieces lying around me, and one of the front doors had been crushed. I tried to look over at Rachael, but the movement caused so much pain in my neck that I didn’t dare move any further. So, I called out to her instead.

“Rachael, are you okay?” No answer. “Come on Rachael, answer me.” Still no answer. “I swear to god, if this is a joke, it’s not funny, just please, answer me.” The panic quickly rose in my chest when nothing but silence followed. I slowly reached out my hand and felt around until I grasped onto her arm. I shook it a little bit, hoping to wake her up, but she didn’t move at all, and she continued to stay silent.

“Oh god, Rachael, I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry. Please be okay.” My voice was barely a whisper, unable to get out anything much more than that before I let out a silent sob, tears beginning to stream down my face. Someone appeared next to me, but their features became less defined as my vision started to blur again. I could hear a man’s voice next to my ear, trying to ask me questions, but my mind couldn’t focus on anything. Then everything went dark.

The next time I woke up, I was laying in a hospital bed, a breathing mask around my mouth, and consistent beeping around me. My eyes fluttered open to see a white popcorn ceiling, and when I went to move my head to look around, pain shot through me, and I let out a small cry. That’s when I remembered everything. The car crash, the pain, the fear...
Rachael.

“Oh, honey, you’re awake, thank god. Are you alright?” I could hear my mother’s voice before she appeared by my bedside. A second later, my father and my sister joined her, looking down at me with worried looks.

“I’m fine, but where’s Rachael? I want to talk to her, make sure she’s okay.” At first there was no response. My parents looked at each other, and my sister looked down at the ground, avoiding eye contact.

“What’s going on? Is Rachael okay? Did something happen?” Please let her be okay, please let her be okay, please let her be okay, please let her be...

"I'm so sorry honey. When the ambulance got to you guys, Rachael was in really bad condition. They tried everything they could, but she didn't make it. She died a couple hours ago. I'm so sorry." I heard her words, but my brain couldn't comprehend them. It couldn't be true, it couldn't be. It's all a Dream. I'm going to wake up from this awful nightmare, and go visit Rachael in the next room over. We're going to talk about the things we always did, she would probably complain about the amount of homework she got from her honors classes, and I would tell her some hilarious story from one of my classes, or something stupid one of my coworkers did, and see that light in her eyes as she laughed at my stories until she was at the point of crying. I refused to believe that I would never be able to have another movie night with her, or another sleepover, or cry on her shoulder whenever I needed her. Most of all, I refused to believe that I was the reason Rachael is dead. I couldn't live with that guilt, to know that it was my fault.

My mother reached down to hug me, and I felt the sob rip through my throat. I gripped the back of my mother's shirt in a tight hug, and cried as hard as I could into her shoulder. She rubbed circles on my back, and whispered into my ear that it was going to be okay. It didn't feel like it would be.

Two weeks later, we went to Rachael's funeral. A part of me didn't want to go, knowing that the moment I stepped inside, it would all be real. That this wasn't just a bad dream. A part of me didn't want to go at all, but I had to. She would want me to be there. I wanted to be there. That was the only way I could really say goodbye, instead of clinging onto to this false reality that I had created for the past couple weeks. I had to face reality at some point, and there was no better place to do it than surrounded by friends and family.

I looked at the front of the church, and took a big gulp. A hand was laid on my shoulder, and I looked up to see my father smiling at me.

"You okay Lizzie?" I didn't really know how to answer that. To tell the truth would be too complicated, and too much for me right now, so I settled for a simple nod.

"You ready to go in?" I looked back up at the church, and grimaced a little bit, but I knew I had to.

"Yeah. Let's go."

The ceremony was beautiful. Her parents both got up to speak, both of her brothers performed a song, one of them singing and one of them playing the guitar, and I eventually built up the courage to say a few things. I barely got through the first few lines without crying, but I took a breath, and tried to focus on the good things. Still, I couldn't get through much, and I quickly went to sit back down. A few more speakers went up, and before I knew it, the ceremony was over, and her casket was being carried out. I couldn't help but watch the two men walk out with my best friend, who I would never speak to again.

I was glad that I went. It gave me a sense of closure that I really needed. Although, no matter how much time had passed, I don't know if I would be able to ever truly forgive myself. Rachael was right. The text wasn't worth it.