

You know that feeling when you think you're about to die? When you're in a situation you can't get out of and your heart starts racing, and all you can think about is how you *don't want to die*. You might experience this feeling on a really intense rollercoaster, or when you're walking home at night and see a sketchy person following you, or when you get stuck under a pool float in the water and can't seem to find the edge so you can come up for air. Yet, if you're reading this, that means you're still alive. You made it to the end of the coaster with no harm done. The sketchy person took a turn onto the street you just passed and you made it home safe. You found your way out from under the pool float and felt the sweet relief brought to you by fresh air. But what if you didn't?

You never really realize how afraid of death you are until you think it's coming for you. It's rare that we experience those "*I'm going to die*" scenarios, but when we do, it's the most terrifying feeling in the world. What people don't realize, though, is that you put yourself in the path of death *every single time* you drive irresponsibly. Sometimes you'll pass a breathtaking sunset or a field full of cows on your way home from work, and you'll turn your head for a second to look. Then, you look back at the road, and realize you're veering into the other lane. "*Good thing no one was coming from the other direction,*" you think. If you can get that distracted by everyday things like cows in a field, think about how distracted you can be while composing a text message.

Imagine this: you're driving home and you decide to ask your significant other if they want you to pick up anything for dinner on your way back. You and them send a few texts back and forth discussing what you should pick up, and how you're so excited to see each other. Then you feel your seatbelt pushing into your gut and the airbag forcing your head back. The feeling of whiplash is almost unbearable, but you can't scream or cry because the wind has been knocked out of you. However, you're okay – physically, at least. The woman you hit? Not

so okay. You finally catch your breath and get out of the car so you can see what's beyond your shattered windshield. You see a car completely off the road in a ditch beyond the guard rail, and it's destroyed. Your stomach drops. You know this is all your fault, and you know you're going to be in *serious* trouble for it. You also know that the person inside that car either hates you right now or is dead, and you don't want to find out which. But you have to. You approach the car and see a woman inside, clearly deceased. You have killed a person.

Now imagine this: You're a 10 year old watching TV with your older sibling waiting for your mom to come home. You've missed her all day, and can't wait to show her your spelling test that you got a 100 on. She's going to be so proud. She should be home any minute now, and you can already feel the warm hugs and wet cheek kisses that come every day when she gets home from work. But time goes on, and she's still not home. She's hours late and hasn't called explaining why. You finally get a call, though, and feel relieved. "*There's Mom,*" you think, glad to be hearing the phone ring. It's not, though. It's a first responder telling you they're calling from a fatal accident, and your mother was the one killed. The accident occurred when a distracted driver swerved onto the wrong side of the road and hit your mom's car head-on. You'll never feel her warm hugs or wet kisses again. You won't have her to tuck you into bed anymore, you won't have her to comfort you when you're down or hurt, and you'll never get to tell her you love her again.

See? Distracted driving can completely ruin lives. You have to live with the fact that you killed an innocent person, and you'll have to face time in prison. The person you killed will never be able to see their loved ones again. They'll never be able to eat their favorite food, feel the sun on their skin, or sing their favorite song again. Their life is over. Their family will never be able to hold them again and let them know how much that person means to them. All that

because of a text message? Not worth it. Death is a scary thing. If you can't wait to send your message, then pull over. Never drive while distracted.