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Ms. Stein

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The whack of the gavel hits the desk, my mother screaming out my name. That's it: my life is completely over. It started back in May, prom night, the "night of our lives". The music was loud and everyone was dancing like we were never going to dance again. Well, we weren't, not together anyway. Everything was going great; everything was okay. The night continued at Lauren's house with even more music, dancing, and booze. Everyone was drinking and having a good time. The music seemed to play in slow motion. The bittersweet feeling of soaking up the last moments we would all be together ran through my body like warm honey. Everything was going perfect.

The night was coming to an end. The sky was pitch black and I had about a million texts from my mother asking where I was. My friends and I said our goodbyes and thanked Lauren for having us over. I promised her I would replace the vase I broke. Three of my friends, Kat, Ashleigh, and Kiana, climbed into my car, the sound of laughter overcoming my ear drums. Cranking up the music once more, we started our way back to Ashleigh's. Her dad would never know how drunk we were. I told everyone I was okay to drive, because I was, right? I could see, I could focus. I was good to drive back and no one's parents would have to know.

I started driving, the yellow line appearing somewhat blurry, but I was fine. My speed began to get choppy, but I was fine. Sometimes I crossed both yellow and white lines, but I was fine. That's what I told myself. My eyes began to get heavy and I closed them for a split second.

I'm awakened by my head jolting forward, my eyes slowly opened. I feel my body turning and spinning. The headlights of another car keep going around and around; my car was flipped.

There is a ringing so loud I think my eardrums are going to burst. I throw up. I pass out. The next thing I know there is a man with a flashlight calling out to me. "Can you hear me?" "Can you tell me your name?" I look to my right, my best friend's body lay there lifeless. The amount of blood on the ground makes my stomach turn. Crushed glass is through my hair and hands. *What have I done?*

I woke up in the hospital. They tell me everything that happened. I swerved into the oncoming lane and hit a truck head on. My car flipped and ended up on its roof. My best friend Kat, who was next to me in the passenger seat, died. Kiana is paralyzed for the rest of her life. Ashleigh is in surgery and her stability is critical. I hit a man and his eight year old son. They both died. I walked away with a broken arm and a concussion. My guilt took over my body and I couldn't even imagine how disappointed my parents would be; how mad everyone else's family would be.

The courtroom wasn't homely. It was cold and mean. I was now a criminal, something I never thought I would be. DUI and manslaughter are the charges I'm facing for now and the rest of my life. At least I woke up. If only I hadn't had a drink that night. If only I had been smart enough to not drive. If only I told myself I was not okay. If I was smarter, we'd all be here and well. I always heard about distracted driving but never thought it would happen to me. The harmful truth is it can happen to anyone. I let it ruin my life. If only I had listened.