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Ms. Stein

English 12 Advanced

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Everlasting Effect

It's a warm spring night signaling the approaching summer season in Maine. Music is playing and flows through the house. Unexpectedly, my mother bursts through the front door in extreme distress. I ask her repeatedly what's wrong, and as she catches her breath she manages to squeeze out four words that would forever change my family. "Grant just shot himself." My stomach plummets and my heart races, I don't think I heard her correctly. "What? What do you mean? Where? When? What?!" Grant may have survived the day of the accident 8 years ago, but that's when his true battle with mental health began.

My mother is bent over the kitchen sink trying to gather and stabilize herself. Suddenly, the music that had filled the night with good vibes had just become background noise. The racing of questions and thoughts stirred in my head. We turn the police scanner up and sit on the back deck listening to the scurrying of the operator. Phone calls after phone calls from our family reaching out about the news. Just then, while listening to the police scanner dispatching paramedics and police to Grant's house for a male subject who had shot himself, the call is immediately followed up by another. The voice of the operator calls out over the scanner of a woman who is in extreme distress and is completely out of control. Those words entered my head and immediately I knew that woman was my step-sister. My mother and stepfather are scrambling in and out of the house, with tears streaming down their faces speaking with panic and heartbreak in their voice. I stand frozen, shaking with anxiety and confusion, trying to

comprehend what is happening. Ping! Ping! My mother's phone lights up with notifications from a family friend, whose husband is a first responder to the scene. It is too late, Grant died at the scene. He was dead upon arrival.

May 2, 2018 was almost exactly 8 years from the night he lost his best friend and was severely injured in a distracted driving accident. Grant, his best friend Michael, and their dates were on their way to their senior prom when a tanker truck driver blew through a red light and hit their car. The impact sent them tumbling over and into a ditch. Fortunately, Grant had survived but head injuries and the permanent mental image of his best friend's dead body in the seat next to him, slowly began to eat him up inside. Over the years, his trauma from the accident and struggle with mental health continued to worsen until it pushed Grant to take his own life. Even though someone may survive a distracted driving accident and be physically okay, does not mean that they are mentally. Your poor decisions could strip a son from passing a ball with his father in the backyard, and leave a daughter's arm absent as she walks down the aisle to start her own family. Even though physical wounds heal over time, the mental wounds remain. Don't let a phone notification or a dropped piece of food be the reason a fiance goes unmarried, and two young children question where daddy is. Every action has consequences. Arrive alive.