

## Arrive Alive

Jackie opened the front door and stumbled into the kitchen of her home. The past few hours had all blurred together into a nightmare, and just the thought of her own bed made her want to drop to the floor and sleep for an eternity.

*"...who was driving?"*

*"...blond boy over there..."*

Jackie couldn't close her eyes without seeing it happen; over and over and over again. It took everything in her to walk to the bathroom to brush her teeth and get ready for bed.

*"...she the only survivor?"*

*"...yeah, I think so..."*

*"...alcohol involved...?"*

*"...doesn't look like it..."*

She stumbled into her room and collapsed onto her bed. She didn't want to stay awake, but there was no way she was going to be able to sleep after what had happened.

*"...the girl's parents around?"*

*"...out of town..."*

The day had started out so fun; they were just going to the beach to swim and get some sun. She had packed her swimsuit and beach towel into her bag and set off to meet her friends happily. They stayed at the beach for longer than they thought they would, packing up their stuff around midnight after laying in the sand for hours.

Cut to fifteen minutes later, and everything had flipped upside down. She heard the shout of one of her friends, the sound of glass breaking, and then nothing. And then the sound of the EMTs at the scene talking to each other, their voices melting together into a blur.

Shaking her head, Jackie came out of her reverie. The last thing she wanted to do right now was relive that moment.

Her cat came into the room, purring, and jumped up on the bed with her. Jackie watched, and seeing her cat acting perfectly normal, as if nothing had just gone horribly wrong, as if everything would stay the same, made her ache. Finally, after hours of keeping it in, the tears in her eyes fell, and she stayed like this: wrapped up in her bed and curled around her cat, for the rest of the night.

*“Poor kids...”*

*“What a shame...”*

*“...who could do something like...”*

*“...unfair...”*

*“...should have been more careful...”*