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5/07/21

Arrive Alive Contest

*Buzz.*

My phone vibrated on the table next to us. I reached over and checked the screen.

*Mom: Leaving soon? It's almost 10:30.*

I had been sitting on the couch, watching a movie with my boyfriend at his house. We forgot to keep an eye on the clock, and it was getting late. "I'd better go," I told Kevin. We both knew how strict my parents were and I didn't want to get in trouble for arriving home behind schedule.

Running to the car, I fumbled my key into the ignition. My headlights pierced through the black road ahead of me. I had driven this way many times, countless times in fact, that I was confident I could make it home in time if I rushed a little.

Kevin waved goodbye as I drove into the night.

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Spiller Road. Two more turns and I would arrive home. I drove through the hilly pavement, approaching a yellow sign up ahead.

Two roads crossed, forming an X. Cars coming from the left and right would be met with a stop sign. I continued on.

*“Almost home,”* I thought to myself. *“Wait... is that another set of lights? A car? They’re not gonna- oh-”*

**Crash.**

The truck blew through the stop sign, and without any warning slammed into the right side of my car, sending it across the road and down into a ditch where my headlights collided with a tall oak tree.

**Shatter.**

My body lunged forward as the seatbelt choked me back.

*Can’t breathe. Can’t breathe. Can’t breathe. I’m gonna die.*

The car immediately jerked back.

**Gasp.**

I rapidly panted for air, struggling to open my lungs all the way. Something was fizzing- the smell was nauseating. My eyes shot open, prepared for a terrible scene, until I remembered it was pitch black out. I couldn’t see a thing.

Still panting, I reached for the door handle. I had to get out of here.

*Where is it?*

Pure panic began to set in. Never in my life did I think I would have to memorize where my door handle sits.

A minute went by, my hand scraping against the door, crying out in pain, adrenaline rushing through my veins. My fingers finally found the handle and I lunged out of the car. Prickly bushes surrounded me on every side; beads of cherry red blood began trickling down my bare legs as gashes decorated my thighs and shins. I squinted over at the car-- windshield cracked all over with chips of glass missing, a popped tire and a missing side mirror, the hood crumpled like a piece of paper. Dents the size of a basketball surrounded the front side of my car. Knowing I couldn't make it out of the brush without help, and my phone was lost somewhere in the wreck, I leaned my arms against the top of my car and tried to steady my wavering breaths. Sirens wailed in the distance. They were coming for me. I cried tears of relief-- silent, steady tears, as the blinding lights flashed, and the figure of a man walked over, pulling the brush aside.

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“What was that guy thinking?” exclaimed my dad, reading the police report. I had been hit by a man in his early thirties who had a few too many drinks, completely missing the stop sign in front of him. By the time he took the breathalyzer, his blood alcohol content was at 0.07%, which was 0.01% under the legal drinking limit.

“If only I hadn't rushed you home,” my mom said.

“If only that guy had stayed off the road,” my dad said.

“If only I had watched the time,” Kevin told me.

“If only I had known that truck wasn’t going to stop,” I said to myself.

The truth is, we can’t predict these things coming. The drunk driver lived just down the road from where we crashed, but after a few drinks he was too impaired to recognize the stop sign in front of him. No matter how good of a driver you think you are, or how close to home you may be, don’t take that risk. The next time that driver has a few drinks and needs to get home, I hope he remembers that seventeen year old girl, driving innocently, with her family expecting her to Arrive Alive.