

Asa Farley

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A bike. Yes a bike, not a car, because the car was gone 3 months ago, totaled beyond repair. What has my life come to, a high school dropout at seventeen. With nothing under my resume except the title of “chugging champion” from my ex-girlfriends seventeenth birthday party. I used to have my life together, at least I thought I did. I was on the path to graduate high school, cradling a 89.5 GPA through my first 3 years, and always being proactive whenever I did not meet my own standards. The steady job with my friends in the next town over, where we tossed pizza dough inches from the ceiling, just a fun game at the end of the day. With my time off, I would enjoy a fresh hot cup of coffee with my girlfriend on our Saturday brunch dates. But she is long gone, and so are those amazing times. Yes, I had everything that a young, post pubescent highschooler longs for, and that is stability in life. Unlike my life, however, the black leather steering wheel of my 2014 BMW 328i was not stable the night my life changed forever.

“Chug, chug, chug!”, was the last phrase remaining from my fractured remembrance, only happening about 30 minutes before the “ding ding ding ” of my driver's side door being flung open faster than a sheep evading a wolf. Indeed, I was a sheep that night, lacking the mental capacity to question my decision of getting into my car. My girlfriend, who turned 17 that night, passed out in the living area of her 4 bedroom 3 car garage monster of a house, after some shots and seltzers. It was quite a scene indeed, a group of our close friends just celebrating a milestone in one’s life. No one knew of my exit from the party, including myself. I was so out of touch with reality, only repeating actions that were familiar to me.

My tires squealed out of the narrow driveway, the rubber remains on the road, reminding me of my reckless decision. Struggling to keep control of the wheel, I had never doubted my ability to make it home untouched and unphased, but that changed. I tried to stay between the “mustard and mayonnaise” as they call it, as I swerved wrecklessly across the center line. Traveling down the wavy backroads, an enormous buck suddenly strutted into the pitch black night, the black slowly receded as my headlights beamed into the center of the buck's hazelnut brown eyes. In a matter of seconds the sharp sound of shattering glass wrung through my ears. My head hitting the activated airbag that saved my life that night. My mind recovered enough to swerve away, enough for the deer to hit my passenger side. My parents received the call that one is never expecting to have to respond to, let alone listen to. To their surprise though, the EMT’s were not reporting their son's death. Instead, they were instructing them to go to the fourth floor and enter room 16 where I was alive and already coming to my senses.

Recovering from my physical scrapes, whiplash, and mental scarring was the easy part, it only took time. I reflect on this life altering incident now with unsupportive parents shaming me for my mistake. Being born into such a strict religious family was just the start of my downfall. They will never trust me or my decisions ever again. My ex-girlfriend will also never trust my decisions again, because her parents were thrown in the slammer for providing alcohol to minors. It was all a real life domino effect, and I was the one who each domino kept falling on. Like expected, I was no stranger when I returned to school. The few scars I still held on to turned much worse as my face was free range to everyone around. They hated me for my mistake, I was helpless. Slowly becoming an outcast at a school that once was my safe haven, I was forced to leave, harboring more guilt and shame than ever.

I don't know why I am writing this, maybe to attempt at giving myself some closure, to slowly bring back my long lost dignity. I may be unsure of the purpose of this heavy entry, but one thing that's clear is that my life could have been lost on the night of my ex-girlfriends birthday. So many innocent, barely blooming teenage lives are taken each year to decisions such as the one I made. For some unknown reason, God decided to spare mine that night, and let me see the light of day once again. Knowing that tomorrow is never guaranteed, I finally took out that rickety old bike and decided to find myself again.