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*Paralyzed*

The smell of liquor saturates my nose as I make my way up the stairs. Pushing through and bumping into people the whole way, I finally make it to the kitchen. Standing in front of the fridge I take a few moments to let my ears stop ringing from the obnoxious music in the basement. In search of water for my intoxicated friends, I open the fridge and grab as many plastic water bottles as I can hold.

Before the party even started, I knew that I had to be home that same night. Pleading with my parents was no use, they had their minds made up. Not even wanting to go to the party because of my curfew, my friends nagged at me until I gave in. This made me the sober friend at a party full of drunk teenagers.

Back in the basement I hand out the waters, and attempt to gather all of my friends. It was time to go. My phone buzzes in my hand as I flip it over to look at the time. Twelve thirty. Curfew is at one o'clock. As long as we leave now I'll be home on time. The notification from before is a text from my mother. "Drive safe."

Making my way into the car, followed by my tipsy friends, I put the key into the ignition. The last door slams shut just as the car rumbles to a start. I shift the car into reverse. Time to go.

"That party was so fun I hate that we have to leave right now," says my friend, Lily, from the backseat.

"I know, but at least we get the ride home together," says Brittany. I plug my phone into the aux and hand it over to Brittany in the passenger seat.

“We can listen to the playlist on the way home,” I say while turning up the volume. It was our special playlist we’ve been listening to since freshman year.

Having such a good time, I forget for a moment how much my friends have had to drink. Singing at the top of my lungs, in perfect harmony with every beat, one of my friends grabs the wheel pretending to be the one driving. With Brittney driving, I turn around to see a nervous, but playful expression from Lily. She can’t stop giggling and grinning. Turning around to face the road, I see Brittney has let go of the wheel. Attempting to regain control of the car I unsuccessfully pull the wheel as hard as possible to the right. Too late.

Screeching tires and the sounds of crunching metal engulf my ears as the force of the car hitting the tree slams my brain around the inside of my skull. Panicking, I frantically try to get out of the car. The excruciating pain from my injuries hasn’t even set in yet. I’m in shock. The pitch black night causes me to have no sense of direction. I don’t know which way is up and which way is down. I’ve lost track of time. My brain is racing trying to figure out how long we have been sitting in my crumpled car on the side of the road. Finally, the faint sounds of sirens appear in the background. At once, all of my thoughts and senses blend together with the world as I lose consciousness.

“The extent of her injuries will leave her brain dead and paralyzed from the waist down,” the paramedics updated the hospital staff as they brought my unconscious self into the critical care unit. “The other three girls have broken bones and lacerations to be treated but nothing as severe.” My parents made it to the hospital, but little did they know, I was gone. The doctor confirms no brain activity. Devastation and grief overwhelms my family as they realize they must live the rest of their lives without the daughter that they have raised and loved for the past seventeen years.

Guilt consumes each of my friends. If only they had made better decisions and not distracted the driver while intoxicated in the car, I would still be alive. My family would be spared from a lifetime of suffering.