

Emma Stevens

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### Your Future Awaits

May 8th, 2022 - I anxiously rub the white stringy tassels between my fingers. I've never been someone who enjoys the center of attention or extremely large groups of people. Nor have I ever completely mastered the art of walking in heels - but here I am in 3 inch heels, standing in front of hundreds of people. I smile and glance to either side of me; my beautiful best friends stand to my left and right. Their hair was perfectly curled and eyelashes coated heavily with mascara. I start to count; one, two, three, four, five, six and seven. Only seven people are in between me and that long, brightly lit stage. I fix my hair, take a deep breath, return to fidgeting with my tassels and listen to my vice principal call out the names. I am up next; How's my posture? Can the crowd see my lips quiver as I plaster a smile across my face? "Emma Stevens," echoes throughout the overwhelmingly large Merrill Auditorium. I forget that there are hundreds of people watching me and I forget that these heels are cutting off my ankles' circulation. I am walking across the same stage my sister and brother once did. I am getting my diploma, graduating high school and starting an entirely new chapter in my life. I can't believe that I made it this far.

June 15th, 2030 - I couldn't sleep last night. There was too much to think about; too much excitement in my belly and too many nerves throughout my body. They say your wedding day is the best day of your life. I've been so focused on preparing for it; sending out invitations, picking out a caterer, and selecting a band. I haven't been able to really process it. The fact that I

only have a few more hours to be called by my dad's last name. It's bittersweet - starting a new chapter in your life. However, I am ready for it. I slip on my beautiful, 2,000 dollar white dress. Snug in all the right places, layers of lace upon silk outline my figure. My favorite part - the long trail that gives my clumsy self ample opportunity to trip and fall. I stare at myself in the brightly lit mirror. A thin coat of foundation allows my freckles to still peer through and a dark eyebrow pencil makes the scar I received at age three almost invisible. My hair is pinned back loosely leaving only a few strands to dangle in front of my face. I feel beautiful, secure, but so incredibly nervous. I open the doors to see my dad waiting for me, staring at me with his ever so contagious smile. He cracks a stupid but funny joke just like he always does when I'm feeling down or anxious. My laughter almost turns into tears as I stand before my father. I grab his arm and squeeze his hand as we make way to the next set of doors. It's finally time; the wide church doors swing open, and my father walks me down the aisle.

August 20th, 2032 - A feeling I can't put into words. The pain was much harder and the joy was much bigger than I could have ever imagined. After months and months of carrying another being in your body, you start to picture what she will look like. Will she have my eyes? Be bald like me when I was first born? The anticipation is unmatched and the fulfillment of seeing your very own child for the first time is simply extraordinary. She's so small and beautiful. I caress her wrinkly skin and get lost in her big blue eyes. I smell her warm and soft head, feeling fuzzy wisps of hair tickle my cheek. My husband squeezes my hand tightly as he counts her toes and fingers - just in case. The excruciating pain I was once enduring feels like such a distant memory now. I am now filled with the utmost joy and can't stop smiling. Now I am a mother.

These are all substantial parts of Emma's life that she looked forward to. She had hopes and dreams and plans; ideas of how her life would be and goals she wanted to achieve. It was a Friday night. She was driving along Day Road instead of Main Street because she thought there might be traffic and wanted to get to her friend's house as quickly as possible. She was meeting up with friends to go to a football game that they were already late to. The sun was just beginning to set, shining a blinding light onto the windy road she drove. Emma pulls down the visor to relieve her eyes when she hears a ring. She reaches for her phone that lies in the passenger seat. Her friend was calling to see how far out she was and if it was too late for Emma to bring her an extra jersey which was the football game theme. As Emma's talking to her friend she balances the phone on her knee, but fumbles it and it falls next to her foot on the gas pedal. It took three seconds for her to retrieve the phone from the ground. Three seconds she didn't look at the road. And when her eyes did return to the road, she was head to head with a 33,000 pound truck. The skid marks on the road show that she tried to swerve out of the way. However, it was too late; three seconds too long. Emma Stevens died at 6:02 p.m that Friday night at age seventeen. She didn't get to cross the stage at Merrill Auditorium or have her father walk her down the aisle. She didn't get to feel the joy of holding her own new born baby and raising it alongside her husband. Do not make the same mistake that Emma did; your future awaits.