

A Drink to Regret

By Brendan Fish

(The Night)

“Come on Jay, speed it up!” My sister Aubrey drunkenly blurted. She was half out of her seat cheering me on as Aubrey’s boyfriend and my best friend, Karl, inched past me. “Jay, I know you didn’t just spend 3k on a new turbo just to lose to Karl’s crappy Volkswagen!” My little brother, Kel jested. I’m not like myself tonight, that bottle of Heineken has got me shifting slower than usual. My Mustang was falling behind, I had to catch up. Clenching my teeth and kicking the clutch, I shot forward. “Wooo! Go Jay!” Aubrey yelled. However, what we failed to notice was a large black truck in front of us. My heart sank into my stomach as my adrenaline rose. „It’s nothing,“ I thought to myself. „Don’t worry it’s just another obstacle like any other, you’ve done this a hundred times before.“ With a jerk of the wheel I yanked the car around the truck.

I let out a sigh of relief, now I was close to Karl. Against my better judgment, I decided to give Karl a cocky smirk as I passed him. As my car glided up to his at a breakneck pace I looked over my shoulder expecting to see his disappointed face. What I was not a face of surprise or disappointment, but one painted in terror and worry.

“JAY LOOK OUT!”

Before I could even look in front of me a darkness swallowed my world. Karl’s words echoed in my head, but I did not know what to look out for. All I knew was that I had stopped suddenly. I woke up to a strange place, incoherent yelling, steel bent and

bowed, and Aubrey. She was bent over her seat at an unnatural angle. Unbuckling myself I slowly crept up to her, I meant to ask if she was okay but as I saw her face, the words caught in my throat. I didn't even recognize what I was looking at anymore. My sister who was just cheering me on with joy was silent. A shriek attempted to leave my throat but all that came out was blood. Before I could check to see if Kel was okay, something yanked me out of the car and I was pulled out of this world.

(Headspace)

I awoke in what felt like a sea of cold sweat. I was back in my room, but something felt off about my situation. The door to my room was ajar and I noticed two figures standing at my bedside. Two people were looking down at me but I couldn't tell who. „Wake up, Jay“ I arose to see my sister Aubrey and *someone*. The only traits I could distinguish about *someone* is that he appeared to be a man shrouded in darkness. „Do you see what you've done Jay? Look at her“ *Someone* gestures towards Aubrey but I didn't know what he was talking about.

„You still haven't woken up yet, have you. You won't accept it. You did it Jay, it was all your fault“ *someone* said. Just as I was going to yell at him, I saw what he meant. Bones cracked and skin split, Aubrey became twisted. As if sent back by a force, I recoiled away. „What's the matter? Isn't this what you wanted? This was the price of your drunk joyride.“ I tried to process what *someone* was saying but my head felt like mush, I couldn't understand. „W-what happened, why did she have to..“ I incoherently muttered to myself. “This is what you did Jay. What we did“ *someone* says. „What?“ It didn't click to me exactly what he meant until the shroud surrounding him was lifted. „W-what?? What are you?“

The man who stood before me was myself. „You just wanted to drink and have some fun with your friends right? What’s wrong with that.“ He said. „How could it! I got my sister killed. My god, Kel and Karl.. how will they ever forgive me..“ I muttered. „And the thought didn’t even cross your mind. Forget about the forgiveness of others, how are you going to forgive **yourself** for this?“ I stood silent after he spoke those words. How could I ever forgive myself? One drink had just ruined not just my life, but ended my sister’s. „Kel loved her and you killed her.“ His words came crashing down on me like a tidal wave. „Stop!“ I shouted but he wouldn’t stop until I understood. „Karl loved her and you killed her.“ He solemnly spoke. „Shut up! I didn’t mean it, it was just one bottle. How could that be worth someone’s life!“ I shouted again. „You loved her and you killed her..“ Shrieking at the top of my lungs, I desperately tried to block him out, but those last words stuck in my head.

(Jay’s Room)

My eyes darted open, I frantically scanned my room but there was no one else in sight. As the situation became clear to me, my rasped breathing started to slow. The sun crept onto my face as I slumped back into the comfort of my bed. I couldn’t even face myself after what happened, how could I face anyone else? It would be better for everyone if I just stayed here and rotted. Guilt and regret weighed down on me, as if keeping me confined to my bed. “If only I didn’t make that one mistake..“ I told myself. I should’ve just turned down Aubrey and Kel’s indulgences. I’m the big brother, it was my responsibility to set an example, but I just wanted to have fun with them one last time before going off to college. If it hadn’t been for that one drink, that ONE drink, I could’ve

said goodbye properly. Now I will never be able to tell them how proud I was of Aubrey for winning the soccer regionals, all because of that one drink.