

I Made a Mistake

My eyes felt heavy, my throat was sore, and my head throbbed. I gasped and sat upright; the room was silent. Around me lay a plethora of drooling teenagers sprawled out on the dirt floor. It was six in the morning and hay coated the side of my face. My best friend's eighteenth birthday party had taken place in an abandoned barn the night before. Christmas lights dangled from the rafters, and streamers hid the chipping paint on the walls. Beer cans clinked against one another as I stumbled off a hay bail. Stomach acid filled the back of my throat as my tired legs struggled to carry me to my car. The thought of myself taking shots at four in the morning made my stomach churn. *I drank a lot but I'm tough...those two hours of sleep definitely fixed it...Right? Yes, everything is fine.* These are the thoughts I was thinking as I hobbled out into the yard.

The dewy grass dampened my socks as I struggled to blink away my blurry vision. After what felt like years of walking I finally reached my car and suddenly Emma popped into my head. Her little hands tightly grasped the side of her crib as she bounced up and down, eager to leave for daycare. Emma was two years old and every morning she constructed, what I called beautiful works of art, out of building blocks and tinker toys at daycare. It was Monday morning and I had promised my mom I would drop her off. I jumped in my car and fumbled around in my purse for what seemed like hours, desperately trying to find my keys. After repeatedly missing the ignition, I finally jammed my keys in, and the car came to life.

It was still dusk outside and the lines on the road slithered back and forth like snakes. The car violently vibrated each time I crossed over the white line and onto the gravel. *It isn't me, it's just dark outside. I'm fine.* Shrubs crunched beneath my tires as a cloud of dust began to appear behind my car. I closed my eyes for just an instance when suddenly my street appeared. The

screen door slammed as I swerved into my driveway, unable to remember how I got home. My mother came barreling out of the house barking, “You said you'd be on time, I'm late for work! Emma is in her crib”. Her heels clicked furiously past me, not once looking up from her phone as she stepped into her car. I sprinted into the house and scooped Emma out of her crib. Her little toes wriggled with excitement beneath her pj's, as she squirmed in my arms.

Shit, shit, Emmas gonna be late for daycare. Emma began to cry from the back seat as I pressed on the accelerator. Her cry embodied impatience and anticipation. Trees began to whisk by her window faster as the speedometer climbed. My headache intensified as the day began. Rays of sunlight began to peak over the horizon and flooded into the car. My head palpitated even more as Emma's cry morphed into a wretched scream. All I wanted was for her to be quiet. Her screams grew louder and louder. Each cry is more desperate than the one before. *I can't see, I can't focus, I can't drive.* Warm orange light coated the car when the road suddenly twisted into a wooded neighborhood. The sun disappeared and was replaced with cold white headlights. My tires screeched as I wrenched the wheel to the right. The pickup truck around the corner was not prepared to meet me over the centerline. My car continued to fly over into the opposite lane as a truck swerved in a desperate attempt to avoid us. Our cars collided, sending us off the road and down an incline. Metal crunched together as shards of glass flew through the air. *I made a mistake.*