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### Only One Text, Only One Life

#### **Mary's Point of View**

Bennett's 5th birthday party is today and excitement is racing through me. He's the youngest cousin and by far my favorite, after Hazel of course. Hazel is only 15, not old enough to drive but I'm happy to give her a ride to Bennett's party so we can spend some time together. As I pull into the driveway she is already rushing out of the front door. She looked ecstatic and I can tell Bennett's party meant a lot to her. As we pull out of the driveway and head for our Aunt Jasmine's house, I get a text from her. She only lives ten minutes away so the message can wait. Then I realized that Aunt Jasmine might be asking us to pick up a few last-minute decorations for the party. My hand reaches for my phone. I'm suddenly very aware that someone is looking at me. My eyes lift and I'm met with an icy stare from Hazel. "You better not be thinking about touching that phone," she says with her arms crossed. Rolling her eyes, she looks out the window. While Hazel sulks and watches the trees roll by, my fingers grip the sides of my phone as I lift it to my eye level. Almost instantly tires were screeching on the road. Chills rose up my back as I looked up in horror. They were my tires drifting into the left lane. A deafening scream came from the passenger. I tried to look that way but my vision was blurry and my senses were dull. My head aches as it strains to lift high enough for me to see the car in front of me, and my stomach drops when the driver is in view. The only thing I can do is cry in what I'm afraid are my last moments.

**Hazel's Point of View**

Mary is picking me up for Bennett's birthday party. I'm so excited because I only see him a few times a year when I come up for the summer. My shoes are resting next to me and I hastily put them on. The present I've picked out for Bennett resting beside them. Laughter bubbles in my throat because the box is so poorly wrapped. Mary's car pulls into the driveway and my feet carry me quickly to her car. I consider saying bye to my parents but I'll only be gone for an hour or two so I opt for a quick "I'm leaving!" As we pull out of the driveway, Mary gets a text from our Aunt. Hopefully, she isn't thinking about opening it. I saw Mary look at her phone skeptically. "We're only ten minutes away, you should wait", I said. "I just want to make sure Aunt Jasmine doesn't need us to pick anything up", she replied. "Whatever", I muttered as I rolled my eyes. My eyes found their way to the window so they didn't have to look at Mary. Instead, I let my mind wander thinking about how fun the party will be. Suddenly I'm snapped out of my daydream when the screech of tires skidding on cracked pavement hits my ears. The car is drifting into the other lane and an oncoming car quickly comes into view. A scream louder than anything I've ever heard pierces my ears. Realizing that it's my own becomes too much to handle. A warm liquid drips from my temple, and I'm only vaguely aware that it's blood. The sound of it dripping as it hits the wrapping paper of the present is haunting. My body is in pain but not physically, it's emotional pain. The feeling is overwhelming as I meet the eyes of the other driver staring through me, lifeless and daunting. A single tear falls from my cheek when I see who it is, and then everything goes black.

**Aunt Jasmine Point of View**

Mary and Hazel are supposed to be here in about ten minutes to help set up for Bennett's party. The house looked empty and a few more decorations were needed to put it all together. I quickly shoot a text to Mary and let her know I'm leaving and won't be home when they get here. The happy birthday song played in the background of the car to keep Bennett entertained on the way to the store. Shortly after the song played for the third time, a notification on my phone told me that Mary was typing. "That's weird, isn't Mary driving right now?", I said mostly to myself. Bennett shrugs from his seat in the back. "How am I supposed to know?" he replies. I look up from my phone realizing that it shouldn't have been looked at in the first place. A car crossed into my lane and there was no time to react. My eyes glanced lazily around the scene, making direct eye contact with the driver of the other car, and then with the passenger who was staring back at me. To my horror, the girls sitting in the car across from me looked all too familiar. Girls I loved as if they were mine. The tiny device held in the driver's hand sent guilt rippling through me. The car's windows are down, the same as my own. The only sound is a piercing scream, my heartbeat pounding, and the soft hum of the happy birthday song.