

Olivia Bryant

That Distracting Buzz

Everyone knows that distracted driving is an unsafe choice. Everyone thinks they would never be distracted drivers. They think “Why would I touch my phone while driving?”.

Until it happens...

Racing down the road, every window opened. Allowing the crisp fall air to whip in and out of my car. The sky is dark and the moon is barely there, making it almost impossible to see much outside the range of my headlights. But I like it that way, it adds to the relaxation of late-night drives. It isn't a new thing. I frequently go for drives to relieve stress, something about it makes me feel like all the things causing my stress and frustration aren't there. My foot's pushing further down on the gas pedal. The needle of the speedometer keeps rolling forward. The farther it goes the more I feel my stress melting away. The humming of the engine is a familiar ringing in my ears. It's like nothing else is there, just me in my car. No stress, no road, no other drivers, and certainly no consequences.

While I'm in the zone, my mind free and clear, I hear a buzz. I try to ignore the nagging sound, but it will not go away. Still, in my consequence-free state of mind, I look over towards that distracting noise. The sound is coming from my phone.

While thinking, I realize it must be important if it's gone off this many times. My parents might need to reach me or one of my friends might need help. There isn't anyone else on the road. I make the choice. I reach over to my passenger seat to get my phone. I keep leaning lower to reach it until I can't even see the road. Then I feel the bumps of the centerline rumble strips.

I'm pulling the wheel past the yellow line. That's when I snap back into reality. The state of just me in my car is torn away. I pop my head back up to see the road ahead.

Adrenaline is coursing through my veins, triggering fight-or-flight instincts. It's like watching a TV show during a crucial plot point that could forever change the future of the series. You're on the edge of your seat just wanting to know what's going to happen next. It feels like everything is moving in slow motion, the anticipation is killing you. Except it's not a TV show, it's real life, it's my crucial plot point decision, and I made the wrong decision. I don't even know why I did it, I never touch my phone while I drive, but because I did it here I am. Sat, watching my future possibly change forever, from the view of the camera.

All I see is brightness. All I feel is regret. All I hear is the sustained honk from the truck in front of me, the truck slamming on its brakes. I drifted into the other lane, right in front of a semi. Once the realization sets in I jerk my steering wheel, yanking, begging my car back to my side of the road. My tires squeal against the pavement, returning to my lane and narrowly avoiding the truck.

With a giant sigh of relief, I pull over to the side of the road. Trying to process what just happened. I reach over for my phone to see what was so important. It's nothing, just texts from my friends about random things. I toss my phone into the back seat. Then I see something off the road.

Then I realize what I'm seeing, it's me in my car on the side of the road. I'm not driving down the road untouched. I am stuck in my car, off the road in the grass, upside down, with shattered glass surrounding me, mangled car parts enclosed around me. My opposite fate if I hadn't swerved out of the way, such a real possibility.

On the side of the road alone and afraid, I'm too scared to move, too startled to hear a single thing. The gory scene in my imagination fades. That could've been me, I almost threw my future away for a stupid text. I'm terrified by what could've been, pissed at myself for almost letting it happen. But, I'm terrified enough to know I'll never touch my phone again while I'm driving. No text or call is more important than arriving alive.