

It's Only Mom

Tedi Gould

9:15 pm

One word, four letters, could have ended my story.

30 minutes earlier

8:45 pm

My hands are full as I run across the pitch-black parking lot in an attempt to outrun the rain. Finally getting to my car, as I am jumping into the driver's seat, I throw everything from my hands next to me. Slamming the door, I lock it immediately, waiting for the reassuring click. I let out a dramatic sigh telling myself the day is almost over. I only need to get home safely.

8:50 pm

Putting the car in drive, I make sure my lights and wipers are on so the road is visible through the night rain. Pulling out of the parking lot, I begin singing along to the loud music coming from the speakers. As I continue onto the road, ignoring the fact my music is obnoxiously loud; I feel a vibration on my wrist informing me of a new notification. Keeping my hands on the steering wheel, I turn my attention to the watch to read who it is. It is only a Snapchat which I ignore and quickly turn my eyes back to the road. I slam on the brakes, extending my arm to the passenger seat to save my belongings from tumbling to the floor. My heart leaps from my chest. My body jerks forwards. I think to myself, *There is no way that just happened. I forgot there was a stop sign? How did I forget there was a stop sign?* Turning right onto the road I ignore what happened and begin the long stretch home.

9:00 pm

Throughout the drive, I continuously get notifications checking them on my watch as they come through, but my phone is still safely tucked away in the passenger seat not having been touched. I get another notification, turning my attention from the road to my watch, but this one is different. It comes through as 1 iMessage from Mom. Reluctantly I reach for my bag feeling around for my phone. The entire time repeating to myself, *It's only Mom. It's only Mom. It's only Mom.* The mantra is yelled throughout my head as I justify having my phone. After every word read, I look back out the windshield, having to adjust my spacing on the road, *But it's Mom.* I think. I begin to type a response back when something catches my attention from above the car. I snap my head up, headlights. My car had begun to drift into the other lane. I swerve back still holding my phone in one hand, trying to let my heart find its correct rhythm again.

9:05 pm

I drop my phone to the floor along with the watch. Turning off the radio, I replay the last five minutes on a continuous loop. It was Mom, but it was only Mom who is now not even two minutes away. One word, four letters, a split second, and I could have changed my answer back from 'okay' to 'unresponsive'.