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The Twelfth Notification

Basketball practice ran late... again. Practices were scheduled from 7:00 PM-9:30 PM, but all week Coach Edwards had been making the team stay past the original schedule so we could learn a few more plays before that weekend's tournament. This night in particular, he made us stay past 10:30 PM -- over an hour late. Before practice I had agreed to drive my teammate, Jay, home. His mom often stayed past the end of her shifts at the hospital and Jay didn't have a car, so I offered to give him a ride.

After dropping Jay off around 11:10 PM, I started the drive home. My house is on the opposite side of town, about a twenty minute drive, but just five minutes after leaving it became apparent how tired I really was. Without Jay in the passenger seat cracking jokes about Coach Edwards and the "pointless drills" he makes us run, sleep became increasingly difficult to fend off. I cranked the music near max volume in the hope that I'd keep myself from dozing off.

Then I blinked once. As my eyes pried themselves open they were blinded by the glowing eyes of an oncoming car. My hands yanked the steering wheel and the car swerved back into the right lane; tires screeched against the pavement as other cars flew past me.

"That was close," I whispered under my breath, my hands trembling on the steering wheel.

My car coasted along the bypass, a blur of passing trees in my peripheral vision. I was fighting against any blinks that might turn into the nap my body so desperately desired. Out of

the corner of my eye I saw my phone vibrating and lighting up in the cup holder -- probably my mom trying to figure out what was taking so long. *I should've told her I was giving Jay a ride*, I thought. Just as I reached over to grab my phone, the car hit a crack in the pavement, jolting me forward. The phone slipped out of my grasp and fell into the space between the driver's seat and the center console. I leaned over, my arm squeezing into the crevice. My right hand felt for the phone while I gripped the steering wheel with my left. My neck was outstretched in the hope of maintaining my view of the road while I continued my search.

Finally my fingers struck the rough plastic of my phone's case and I was able to retrieve it. The bright glow of the screen illuminated my face as I glanced down at it. To no surprise I had twelve notifications from my mom. I lifted the phone and turned my head to the right in order to unlock it using Face ID.

CRASH -- just as the phone unlocked I heard crunching plastic and metal and felt the impact of the car that I had just plowed off the road. My airbags inflated and sharp pains flew through my legs. The windshield of my car was shattered, but I could see the car I hit right in front of me. The driver was hidden by the airbag that had emerged from their steering wheel, but I recognized the car. I sat, trying to remember where I had seen it, while thick, dark liquid dripped from my scalp and my vision began to blur. Then, just before the world around me faded to darkness, my heart sank and everything clicked: I had seen Jay get into that car countless times after games and practices... always greeted by his mother's wide smile.