

Yes or No

By Denali Tetrault

*Yes*

“Vada, are you sure you can drive?” My girlfriend Frankie asked me.

”Yes, I’m fine. I promise.” We stepped into the chilled air, our breaths formed clouds in front of our faces.

”Are you sure? I can drive us home. I don’t care that I can’t drive other people yet,” she said. I didn’t want her to lose her license. Her nine months were so close to being up, I couldn’t let her waste all that time—

Distracted, I looked up at the sky. A smile spread across my face and I laughed. “Look at all the stars!” They were so bright. I spotted Orion but it quickly disappeared as my vision blurred. I looked away, frustrated.

”Yeah. Come on, it’s freezing.” She said, stating the obvious and gesturing to my car in the distance. I walked to the driver’s side, trying not to stumble over my feet. My frozen hands grasped onto the keys, unlocked the doors, and we entered the car. I pressed down on the brake pedal, starting the car. Frankie connected her phone and began to play some music. I shifted into drive and pulled away from the curb, forgetting to buckle my seatbelt. She turned up the music and we sang along to the melodic lyrics.

Mile after mile passed, and I became more confident in my driving. The alcohol coursing through my blood helped too. I glanced at the temperature. It read twenty-eight degrees, cold enough for black ice. I glanced back up at the road. Frankie was still singing to whatever song was playing, the bass covering my heartbeat. She grabbed my hand with a look of pure happiness. I smiled at the sight of her.

A small bridge was approaching, I noticed the slight sheen the concrete had, but my brain didn't register it as important and my body couldn't react quickly enough. I approached the bridge; my car raced down the road. I could feel the tires struggling to grip the pavement. I didn't react until it was too late and the car wasn't on the road.

I could finally feel my heartbeat again, even though it was suspiciously slow. The bass from the music had stopped, as well as Frankie's singing. Why wasn't she singing? I could feel tears well in my eyes but I didn't know what for. We were only four miles away from my house, but then again 77% of car crashes happen within ten miles of the driver's home. I could hear a car passing us, and then turn around. I saw their headlights move across the tree line. And then everything went black.

*No*

"Vada, are you sure you can drive?" Frankie asked as we walked out the door.

"I'm fine. I promise." I replied, my words slowed down compared to their normal speed.

"I don't believe you. I can't let you drive."

"I said I was fine. You can't drive other people yet. I don't want you to lose your license."

"I don't care about—." Her words were cut off as I stumbled down the walkway. A small giggle escaped my lips. She reached out to grab my arm. I could feel her steady grip center my wobbly legs.

"Oops!" I laughed, my brain already forgetting our conversation. "What were we talking about again?"

"I asked if you were okay to drive." She answered sternly.

And at that moment, I stopped and thought. What was I doing? Every health class, school assembly, or parental lecture flashed through my foggy brain. I did not want to be responsible for endangering our lives. I did not want to bring any harm to Frankie. I could imagine my family and friends getting a call that I crashed, that I even died. Their faces painted with worry or grief. This realization hit me like an ice-cold shower.

“No. I don’t think I should drive,” I admitted, “I’m sorry for arguing.” I handed my keys to her. They jangled as they moved from an inebriated hand to a sober one.

“It’s okay,” Frankie said as we approached my car, “I just want you to be safe.” I watched her open the door and sit in the driver's seat. I made my way around to the passenger side, opened the door, and sat down. I watched her start the car, buckle her seat belt, and start to drive. I sighed in relief. We would make it home tonight.