

Arrive Alive
By Jack Adams

Fort Hill Road seemed to be the only constant in her life. No matter what fastball the day pitched her- bad test grade, trouble at work, disappointed parents, the 3 hours of sleep she got last night, boyfriend ignoring her texts, coach telling her she need to lose weight, accidentally hearing her friends make fun of her outfit- the only guarantee was this all too familiar stretch of road to guide her home every night. This is when she could let her guard down. She reached down and crinkled her shaking hand into a small plastic baggy as she let out a long sigh. The distant fall sun glimmered rays of copper as it disappeared into the trees leaving a ravishing pink sky in its trail. She continued to snuffle helplessly as tears flooded down her rosy cheeks and onto her old navy jeans. If anything could help ease the pain it would be this. Her boyfriend may be blind and deaf to her constant daily scuffles with life but he had observed her stress and troubles enough to gift her this 18 count baggy of edibles every month he promised would remediate her pain.

The sunset cast shadows over her as she continued on her path. She had already taken one gummy earlier after practice but with this second one came the promise of a quality sleep tonight. She messily chewed and looked down at her phone. The screen showcased the unanswered texts to her boyfriend from earlier, only this time indicating read. A fresh wave of tears simmered in her eyes with a fresh sting, blurring her vision. She couldn't shake the thought of her boyfriend snapping the girls on his phone. She cast these thoughts away and slammed her phone into its holder violently, frustrated with her own calamities and insecurity. "Some friends I

got,” she thought. Street lights flickered and poured their beams on the path ahead. The world outside the car began to feel like a dream as snow began to fall and swallow up the horizon. The dead trees that hooded her path began to spin whenever she lost focus. The path ahead of her only blurred further. She turned up the music and the beat began to match with the fast beating of her heart. She wiped the last tear from her eye and blew her nose a couple more times. She seemed to be safe in her car, she was beginning to feel content.

She began to feel light everywhere and and only struggled further to keep an eye on the path ahead of her without drifting off into a hazier reality. This wasn’t her first time navigating these conditions. She hadn’t yet realized she had been mixing the gummies with a caffeinated beverage. Her heart began to pound in her chest and her breathing increased. She scanned her car wondering what was happening to her when she spotted her iced coffee from Dunkin. ”Never mix these with caffeine,” her boyfriend had warned her. Her heart felt like it was punching at her chest to escape. She struggled to look around and process her surroundings for more than a couple seconds. How was she going to make it by her parents when she got home? What was this pressure in her chest? How was she even going to make it home? And that’s when it hit her. A loud honk. She hadn’t looked up at the road or even steered her car in the last ten seconds.

She quickly stuck her head up, a crazed look in her widened eyes. Red creases seemed to surround her pupils betraying her poor and inadequate state of mind and obvious inability to focus. A bright beam of headlights etched into her brain, the image froze as her mind failed to react to the dreadful information it was gathering. Although only a second passed, she opened her mouth to make a noise but only vomit came out. Finally she jerked the wheel, she had managed to escape the bright lights that had entranced her, but she had turned her car too much. As she spun off the road, time seemed to stop. She caught a glimpse of a bright white Ford truck

swerving in the road and beginning to come to a stop. She could hear a chorus of beeping in the road in what seemed to be miles away from her reality. The world was so full of sounds and lights and... trees. With a disgusting sound of metal cracking, tree crunching, and a quick second of unmitigating and punishing pain, her world went silent.