

The bitter taste of liquor on my tongue was the first of five senses that came back to me. It was strong, pungent, and forced remorse and bile to crawl up my throat. The second was hearing. Crickets, a gentle breeze tangling itself into the leaves of nearby trees, the night was peaceful. The third was smell: petrichor, blood, and dirt filled my flared nostrils. I groggily opened my eyes, ache throbbing through my body. The fourth soon followed: sight. Dark clouds lingered in the night sky, dampening any light from the moon or stars, but slight breaks allowed for the faintest flicker of opalescent fragments split along my cataract ridden vision. They almost resembled fireflies. Finally, the fifth followed, touch. I pushed myself up by my palms, fingertips colliding with the rain slicked tar. The only thing breaking the ongoing road being the white lines signifying the center. Everything was experienced within a drunken haze, the alcohol still having yet to withdraw its hold on me. My hearing began to ring following me sitting up. The crickets fell silent, and my head throbbed. I patted around for my glasses; I did not find them. The only thing my hand met was mud. Thick, damp, brown muck. I tried to swipe the sludge off on my pants but all my hand met was bare flesh. Agony struck through me within an instant, a cry begging to be released from my mouth, but no such noise came. Tears stung my eyes as I pulled my blood-soaked hand away. The crimson bit at my fingers and followed down to my forearm. There was a long jagged gash along my thigh. I didn't know where it came from, but I knew that it hurt like a mother— The moaning of metal pulled me from my thoughts. My brain finally kicked into gear and my head snapped towards the noise. My car. My goddamn car was smashed into a tree, the front having collapsed in on itself, a large hole in the windshield with shards of glass strewn about the hood and grassy floor around it. I tried to stumble to my feet, but the minute I did I felt like a newborn fawn. Legs unsteady, body novel and raw, the world around me felt unfamiliar with my lack of sight. I was a helpless baby.

I staggered to a nearby tree hoping for balance as the severity of everything settled into my mind. I tried to recount the events following. I was out with a few buddies, we hit a nearby bar, and had one drink, that one drink turned into three. Everything blurred from there. The shiny new car my parents got me was now reduced to a bundle of wasted scraps. My clothes were tattered, skin stripped raw, every muscle in my body ached. I dug around in my pockets, pleading to whatever divine being was there to have my phone still be in the pocket of my jeans. An anxious lump grew in the pit of my stomach before my fingertips grazed the corner edge of my phone. I ferociously dug the small rectangular device from my pocket like a starved animal and attempted to dial the number for emergency services. No signal. Damnit. The rumble of a rusted over pickup truck approached the curved back road, puddles lapped at the wheels. I struggled out to the road, my legs stumbled and begged me to stop, but my mind pushed forth. Adrenaline coursed through my veins as I cried out one word: 'help'. I'd never had to speak with such desperation before; I felt pathetic.

The truck halted in its tracks, pulling over beside me. Everything spun as my chest heaved. A bearded man rolled down the window closest to me.

"Get in, boy.. lord knows you need help. Too roughed up to be out here alone." A gruff voice called out with a southern drawl as slow and smooth as molasses.

I shakily took the first steps towards salvation, rebirth, swinging the door open as I climbed up the seat. There was no step to aid in my entry; it had to be done all on my own. The man shifted back into drive after I buckled, sweat trickled down my forehead as he drove headfirst into the billowing void of night.

"You smell like a cheap pub, son. You been drinking?"

A simple question, maybe, but I couldn't answer. Guilt ate at my innards, a starved beast that wouldn't be satisfied until I was swallowed whole. A lump formed deep within my throat.

"Boy, answer the question." He reiterated, irritation slipping into his tone.

"Yes." I muttered softly, beginning to fidget with the cuff of my ripped sleeve of shirt. I felt sick, and it wasn't from the beers I'd had at the bar. The man let out a low sigh as he ran a hand through his graying beard.

"Arrive alive."

"What?"

"You want to arrive home alive, you've got a family, parents, you're too young to die like this. What if someone else was in the car with you? Their blood would be on your hands. Your life is precious, don't waste it on drinking and driving."

The words sunk into my sobering brain. The ride home was silent after that, not another word needed to be spoken between us. I threw open the door to my home and crumpled into blubbing sobs in my mother's arm, blurting out apologies. Tears slicked her arms as I explained everything to her. She slowly stroked my hair, tears pricking her own eyes as she spoke softly.

"I'm so happy you're alive.. My baby."

Guilt ate at my stomach. If I'd have died, my mother would have lost a son, her baby, it wasn't just about me, it was about them, the people I could have hurt, the lives I could have ruined. I knew at that moment I'd never drink and drive again.