

# Friendship

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It had been snowing that night, but it'd been a black winter with frequent storms and icy roads. The faded echoes of screeching tires of slick iced pavement and crunching metal still makes me flinch when I'm all alone. Now, where the smell of beer and alcohol once gave me a rush and thrill now makes me sick and brings so many memories from that night back to me.

It had been our senior year of high school, Alyssa, Kris and I. Despite this fact, I was the only one with a driver's license, but it was Kris who had the fake. I could blame her I suppose, but it wouldn't bring her back or make the pain go away because I would know; I was the one who was driving. She had merely supplied the cause.

We'd driven to an old broken down shack of a shed that the three of us had repaired back when we were kids, just silly giggling girls. The tears begin again, the memories so vivid it's like a movie with a broken reel; playing the same scenes over every time until it reaches the end. We ran inside, giggling and giddy.

We believed life was all fun and games. Just a great big joke at the time, but that was before it happened. Now, the cast of shadows on the moon that night dances before my eyes. The smell of rancid smoke still burns my eyes and nose. I can feel the scrape of the metal and hear the pounding of my heart and the screams that cut off so quickly. I can feel the tears streaming down my burnt face even now when the scars are healed. But despite all this, even now their headstones still gleam so brightly when the sunlight streams through the clouds. They're even bright against the glare of the gray white snow, even now when a year's time has passed. Glittering and luminescent as the memories that forever haunt me in the night.

It had the chills of the snow with only the moon and stars above as witness to our dirty deeds. Alyssa was the first to crack open one of the twelve packs that Kris had bought. It was hilarious

to us, that the store clerks were so ignorant as to think just because there was an ID, that a seventeen year old high school girl was a twenty-one year old adult. The clerk hadn't even given it a second glance. The hilarity brought about a new high as one after another the beverages were consumed.

It didn't take long before even the smallest, idiotic statements had each of us rolling on the old wooden floor of the small shack. The winds outside blew loudly, a lonely, heartless howl, like that of an injured coyote. The gusts shook the shack at its base, raining down clouds of dust from the broken shelves. The dust startled Kris, causing an interesting conversation. The one that ultimately led to a night only I would live to regret.

"What is that?" she cried, restraining drunken giggles that refused to stop. It was similar to a case of hiccups, withholding the annoying cures.

"That?" I replied, taking another drink. The taste of the different beers had melted together and had no taste at all, but I felt needless to stop. "That is Spawn of dust. You know the kind that sits and creates millions of tiny baby dusts."

Alyssa snickered and lifted her head, pushing herself up from the wooden floor. She wobbled unsteadily on her heels before falling back to the floor, snorting as she began laughing.

"Wheeble wobble but they don't fall down," Kris sang, her voice high-pitched and off key.

"Be quiet," Alyssa snapped, grinning in spite of herself as she made another attempt at standing, succeeding this time. "Come on, we have a curfew, I think."

I smirked, pulling myself up, gracefully compared to Alyssa. My world didn't spin, but everything seemed muted and I could feel a pleasant buzz rolling through my head.

"Nervous Nelly wants to go home, Kris," I sang, pulling her to her feet. Kris was as unsteady as Alyssa had been, "So let's go home."

Outside the clouds, black and gray spider webs, had all but blocked out the light of the moon. We stumbled to the car; all of us bursting into new laughter as I tried to figure out how to unlock the

car doors. We piled in and raced off, the wheels screaming as they threw up loose dirt and gray snow behind us.

The tiny white four door car raced down the black silken roads, white and gray shaded snow blurred on the sides as the pine trees melded together. The radio was blaring; all of us singing along in low and high, off key pitch, messing up the words in each verse. I turned around in the driver's seat, my foot pressing firmer and firmer on the gas pedal. I yelled something over the radio, only I was drowned out by the blaring music and another scream.

"Look out!"

I think it was Kris who'd yelled from her seat beside me. Where parts of this constantly continuing movie were bright and vivid, smaller details were obscured so the more horrid parts came out stronger. I wasn't able to hide in minute details. I whirled in the seat; my own eyes widening as I saw, in slow motion, the car closing in on the lone deer standing still as a statue in the middle of the road.

My foot slammed down on the brake, hands gripping and ripping the steering wheel wildly in the opposite direction. The tires screamed in protest and the car spun, the wheels catching friction on the suddenly icy pavement. I heard the screams from the back passenger seat. That was when the headlights shone in my eyes as the car went into its final spin. The impact of the other car slammed into the passenger side of our tiny white car.

I later learned that the other driver had been unable to avoid us, his own car colliding into ours with great force. His car had veered off of the road into the trees and sent ours into the ditch. There was no sound I could hear, only the thundering of my own heart. The smell of smoke had filled the car, but there was no light. Pain overcame my body like a brace as I struggled and pulled myself towards the smashed window. I felt the bite of the glass and the warm wet moisture on my face, a fierce burning on my cheeks from the exploded airbag. My body hit the cold icy snow with a thud and it is stained red from where I laid my face. All I can hear is I crying.

The movie begins again. I know the ending, for it's always the same. We'd drank and then drove. It destroyed the world of so many people all at once. People I knew, and people I didn't. One stupid decision had cost so much more than I had ever been willing to pay. The tears falling down my face now are real, not illusions from my nightmares. The names on those three headstones are real.

I wish that my story would be a lesson to any who decide to play the game we did. That's how it always begins, as a game and a farce. We never thought anyone would get hurt. I never thought anyone would get hurt. I was wrong. I don't want any others to be wrong. Take heed and take warning. Underage drinking leads to more than a good time with friends. Even if you don't drink and drive, it was the drink that caused this pain. My pain, my tears and my scars.

Be safe. Be smart. Don't make the same mistakes I did. I have memories one would never want, and nightmares no one should ever have.