



The Accident That Changed My Life

By Rachelle Morgan

TWO days before my 17th birthday I was in a car accident that changed my life. Days after I could still only stutter out a few words. I suffered through countless torn muscles, a back injury, and a serious concussion which lead to amnesia and memory loss. My schooling, social life, and my parents finances all took the hit. Imagine being 16 years old, you leave the house on a Saturday night around 9 o'clock to meet your friends at a movie. You are slowing down at a stoplight when suddenly a truck swerves through a gas station, trying to avoid stopping for the yellow light ahead. The truck smashes into the front right side of your little red Honda Civic. This is what happened to me.

Upon impact, my body was forced to the right, towards the passenger side. Rather than locking into place my seat belt moved with me. I felt my head hit the rearview mirror, cracking it and breaking through my front window. I was missing pieces of my hair that I later found in the shattered glass. I was in shock, someone, a man in a black jacket with a hood covering his face, ran around my now totaled car to see if I was okay. The only words I could get out were, "My head is bleeding." The mysterious man told me to pull off

the road, into the gas station. I tried to restart my car, it took awhile but eventually I was able to inch it off the road. As I began moving my car, the man returned to his truck and sped off.

Confused and disoriented from my aching head, I pulled out my cell phone and called my dad getting out a few words in my dizzy state. Being only a few blocks from home, my dad arrived within minutes and together we called the cops. The officer arrived only moments later, he was a big, kind man and I remember feeling assured. As confused as I was, I couldn't give the cop much information—just that the man drove an old looking truck. This was all the cop needed, and fifteen minutes later I got a call asking if I felt well enough to come identify the truck. Still at the scene, I rode with my dad to the apartments up the street.

When I first saw the truck I was unsure, I couldn't quite remember anything but as I walked to the front of the dark vehicle I saw the red paint. I nodded to the officer, letting him know it was a match. The cop knocked on the door and a woman answered, she revealed that her boyfriend was hiding in the bushes out back. More cops showed up at the scene as the original officer dragged the hooded man out. I

felt chills down my spine and I remember the anger I felt as I again nodded to my officer friend letting him know this was the man. When the officer later came to visit me in the hospital he informed us that he knew where to find the man at his girlfriend's house because he had been in trouble with the law before, he told us the man was driving on a suspended license from an earlier DUI offense.

Though I remember this night vividly, the months after are all a blur. I remember waking up on my birthday, surrounded by flowers, balloons, and food, with no idea where it all came from. My life was flipped upside down. The man who hit me had no insurance, the money we had from PIP and uninsured motors was all used the first night in the hospital, the burden was now on my parents.

Now, exactly one year later, two days before my 18th birthday, we are still sorting through the legal portion of the situation. We have obtained an attorney to try to help with the finances. The first round in court I didn't accomplish what I had hoped. Though the man was under the influence he couldn't be charged because he had fled the scene. The man was charged with a hit and run and only had to pay for his mistake with two months in jail. I am still paying, I fight nerve damage in my back, headaches and a fear that I'm not sure will ever completely go away. This all happened because someone decided to drive drunk. My wish is to call attention to the subject. People need to realize that these kinds of things do happen. Those of us who have experienced the effects of it need to speak out. When you drive under the influence you are not only risking your own life, but everyone's life around you as well. 🚫

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Rachelle Morgan is a recent high school graduate from Washington. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.