

Summer

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A cell phone rang, “Don’t Worry Be Happy.” Summer groaned and squinted her eyes against the bright rays of sunlight bursting through the cracks in her shades. She checked her clock, 2:00 P.M. *Whoops, I guess it’s time to get up anyway.* She ran over to her phone and picked it up before she missed the call.

“Hello?” Summer answered groggily. “Craig! How are you? Yeah, I just woke up. You’re coming to visit? No way. When? Today? Oh, I have a birthday party to go to but I’ll leave early to come home. Okay, see you then.”

Summer had always looked up to her brother Craig. He was a tremendous athlete, always kind, and the perfect big brother. He was always there for Summer as a friend when she needed him. Instead of accepting many of the athletic scholarships for college, Craig decided to enlist with the Marines to help his country. He barely ever got to come home to visit, so this was a special treat.

Okay, Summer thought, Time to get my chores done, shower, and head to the party. I can’t believe Craig is coming home! I should probably leave the party around seven or eight so I can make it home before he does. Summer set off to get all of her stuff done.

Summer’s friend Anna and her dad pulled up in their car and honked. Summer came rushing out the door trudging through the snow.

“Sorry about the wait, Anna and Mr. Carter. I had some last minute things to get done because Craig is coming home.”

“No problem, Summer,” Anna replied. “We weren’t waiting that long and it’s awesome that Craig gets to come home.” The car pulled up to the girls’ friend Jake’s house.

“Thanks a bunch!” Summer and Anna shouted in unison.

“You’re welcome, girls,” Mr. Carter called back.

The two girls walked down the shoveled walk way to the front door. They knocked a couple of times and the host of the party, Jake, answered and let them inside.

All of Summer’s friends were already there: Thomas, Frank, Rachel, Dylan, Sara, Josh, and Jenny. They were playing spin the bottle. Jake returned to his spot and Summer and Anna joined right in.

The group laughed and played games like Truth or Dare and other stupid games kids play. Summer looked at the clock. *Oops, time to go.* She asked around if anybody had to leave early.

“Yeah, Summer, I do,” answered Dylan. “My parents want me home before it gets too late because I’m driving.”

“Wait, I didn’t know you had your license,” questioned Summer.

“I don’t but, I’ve been driving since I was twelve, so it’s no big deal,” replied Dylan.

I really want to get home, thought Summer. Oh well, what’s one time with an underage driver? Dylan is responsible and I trust him. Plus, Craig should be pulling in at home in a half an hour or so and my parents are probably getting ready for Craig. I really just want to get home quickly.

“Okay, I guess I will ride with you Dylan. See you guys later,” yelled Summer as she walked out the door with Dylan.

“So Summer,” began Dylan. “You don’t live too far from here right?”

“No, just about 5 blocks. Can we make it kind of fast? I mean not too fast, but since Craig is coming home I sort of want to be there before he does. I would walk but I really want to get home and it’s freezing out here!” answered Summer.

“Sure, I can do that,” replied Dylan.

Dylan and Summer headed off in the cold winter night. Dylan was going about ten miles over the speed limit, but Summer thought he was under control so she didn’t say anything. Dylan went to turn up the radio when he hit some ice and swerved into the other lane. Summer looked up and screamed. There was an ear-piercing screech of the brakes and Summer closed her eyes in the realization and shock of what was happening.

Summer squinted her eyes against the bright rays of sunlight bursting through cracks in the shades; she sat up quickly, but soon realized her mistake. Her head throbbed and her arm felt like a knife had been stabbed through it.

“Where am I?” she murmured. She tried to turn her neck to look around but her body screamed with pain. Her mother and father rushed in. Summer stared into their bloodshot eyes. It looked like they had been crying for a long time. She looked at them with questions in her eyes, searching for a million answers, but getting only sympathetic and loving stares. Then she remembered what happened, *Dylan!*

Dylan let out a short grunt preparing for the impact and then Summer felt a wave of pressure, her seat belt caught her breath, she banged her head against the dashboard, and then lost consciousness.

Summer woke to the sound of Dylan’s short, rapid, and shallow breaths. She wanted to call out to him but no words came out. She tried to lift her arm but only felt a shot of numbness.

She didn't want to open her eyes in fear of what her friend might look like. Her head ached and she tasted blood in her mouth. *How long have I been out?* Summer thought. *What happened?*

"Dylan?" Summer whispered, finally being able to get some sound out. "Please Dylan, stay with me." *What happened?* Summer thought. *I need to find help.* Summer opened her eyes struggling to keep conscious. The battle was relentless. She heard the sound of sirens in the distance and soon unfamiliar voices that seemed so far away.

"I don't think the boy will make it; the girl is questionable too." The words echoed in Summer's ears, then nothing.

"Mom, Dad, is Dylan okay? He's not dead is he?" Summer asked reluctantly. Her parents glanced warily at each other.

"Baby, maybe you should just lie down and rest some more." Her mother finally replied.

"No! Please just tell me if Dylan is okay. What about the other car. Oh my gosh!" Summer burst into tears. "I just need to know, please."

Hesitantly her parents began to speak, "Summer, Dylan didn't make it. He got the force of the impact. He received head trauma and both of his lungs were punctured. There was nothing anyone could do to help him. The injuries were just too severe."

"It's my entire fault. I had Dylan bring me home. I told him I needed to be home fast to see Craig. Craig, where is he? I ruined his visit didn't I?"

"Summer, Dylan was speeding when he hit a patch of ice. It doesn't matter if you told him you needed to be home fast or not. He should've known not to speed and especially in these winter conditions. Not to mention he doesn't have his drivers license. He shouldn't have been driving in the first place. I know it might seem easy to blame yourself, but you can't. It wasn't your fault."

“Where is Craig?”

“Baby, I’m sorry but, Craig was driving the other car in the accident.” Summer’s mother turned away. Her father continued, “Summer, Craig was in the other car and he didn’t survive the accident either.”

Summer froze and stared blankly into her parents’ eyes, hoping it would all be a part of some cruel, sick joke. *How could this be happening! Craig shouldn’t have been that close to home. I should’ve beaten him by fifteen minutes.* All Summer could do was cry. *It was all her fault. She had insisted that Dylan go fast and he didn’t even have his license. Now she felt responsible for killing her friend and her brother. How could she live with herself?*