

WHAT IF...

A STORY OF SHATTERED LIVES



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About Driving on the Right Side of the Road

This publication is a part of the Driving on the Right Side of the Road (DRSR) program, developed by the Law-Related Education Department of the State Bar of Texas, Law Focused Education, Inc., and the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center with funding from the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and the Texas Department of Transportation. These organizations are very concerned about traffic safety in Texas communities. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15-20 year olds. Younger children are often hurt if they do not sit in a booster seat, wear their safety belt, do not obey traffic signals, or fail to wear protective equipment when bicycling or rollerblading. The purpose of the DRSR program is to offer a preventive educational program to encourage responsible decision-making when it comes to obeying traffic laws and to following safe practices.

The DRSR program has created a series of lessons for social studies classes at the elementary and secondary levels on citizenship education and traffic safety. The program is aligned with the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), which all students are tested on in Texas public schools.

The lessons use interactive strategies and computer based learning to teach traffic safety while studying city, state, and national government, the three branches of government, and the responsibilities of citizenship. Elementary lessons also use traffic safety content to teach language arts and math skills.

Information sheets provide teachers with background information about traffic laws and municipal court. It is recommended that teachers contact local municipal judges, court support personnel, and city prosecutors and ask them to serve as resource persons in the classroom. Resource persons can bring the lessons alive by providing real life or hypothetical examples, accurate descriptions of what the law requires, and serve as positive role models for students.

We thank you for using these materials in your classrooms.

For More Information:

www.drsrcr.info

www.texaslre.org

www.tmcec.com

Or, email: tmcec@tmcec.com

What If...

A Story of Shattered Lives

By Amanda M. Thrasher

Artwork by Dustun Rogers

Adapted for reader's theater by Mark Goodner for TxDOT.

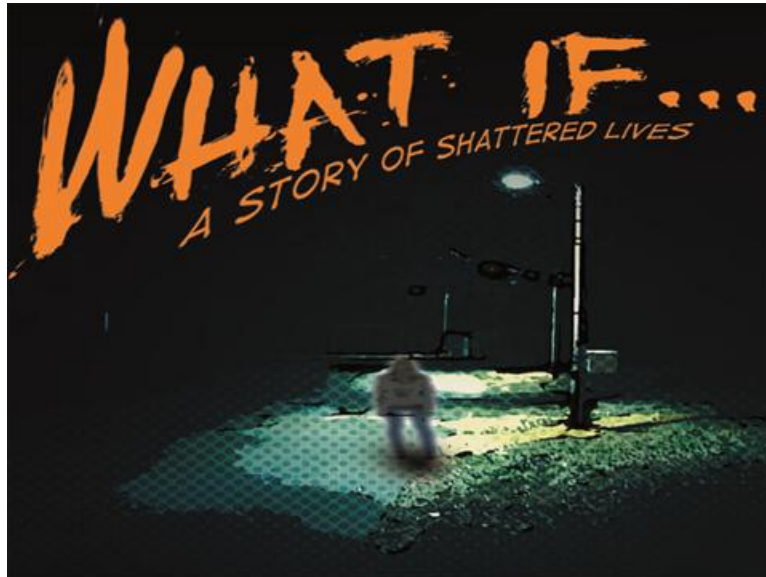
List of Characters:

Narrator	Brooke's Dad	Girl
Brooke	Pastor	Boy
Josh	Nurse	Boy 2
Kiley	Gentleman	Josh's Dad
Drake	Lady	Josh's Mom
Medic 1	Kiley's Mom	LeAnn
Medic 2	Drake's Dad	Jake
Doctor	Friend	Kid
Brooke's Mom	Girlfriend	

Notes: This reader's theatre can be done with as few as five speakers or as many as 26! It is recommended to use one of the following options:

- Option 1: 7 Speaking parts
Narrator, Brooke, Josh, Kiley, Drake, Male Swing, Female Swing (all roles other than Narrator and four main friends can be broken between male and female swing).
- Option 2: 10 Speaking Parts
Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Josh, Kiley, Drake, Male Swing 1, Male Swing 2, Female Swing 1, Female Swing 2
- Option 3: 5 Speaking parts
Narrator, Brooke, Josh, Drake, Kiley (remaining roles can be broken up between actors reading Josh, Drake, and Kiley)

This piece also includes pictures which can greatly enhance a performance when projected behind the readers on a screen. They have been formatted into a powerpoint presentation, and smaller versions of the pictures have been inserted into the script at the point when they should be placed on the screen. This could be done by a teacher, or by one of the readers with the use of a remote.



Narrator: On a cool spring Saturday night, dozens of teens have gathered around a bonfire in the middle of a pasture on the edge of the woods. Loud music is playing and everyone is mingling in small groups with red plastic cups in their hands. They're laughing and having fun. Four high school friends (Drake, Josh, Brooke, & Kiley) are making their way to a party in the woods in Josh's freshly waxed sports car.

Kiley: Is this the way? Through this field?

Drake: Dude, this party better not be lame...

Josh: I can't believe I have to *drive* through this pasture...

Drake: (*laughing*) Better your car than mine!

Narrator: The car enters the pasture through a gate and very slowly crosses the field towards the party. Travelling over the rough terrain of the field in a car like this takes time, and Josh's friends are laughing and making fun of how slow Josh is driving.

Brooke: It's taking forever to cross this field. Everyone's staring.

Josh: Hey, I love this car! I have to be careful!

Kiley: Look! There's so many people here... What a great turnout!

Josh: Yeah...this party might rock after all!

Narrator: As they get out of the car and start walking toward the other kids, Drake pulls out and points to a bottle of liquor. Josh's eyes light up, and he reaches for the bottle. The girls, walking directly behind the boys, peer over their shoulders. They giggle and glance at each other not sure what to do. They want to be "cool" but they're nervous, too—since the liquor is clearly in sight.

Kiley: Drake!! Where did you get that?

Drake: My cousin's apartment. He'll never miss it!

Josh: Let's get this party started! Drink up!



Narrator: They are excited but nervous. They know what they are doing is wrong, but the thought of getting away with it is exhilarating. They pass the bottle amongst themselves and take turns drinking from it. The girls, despite their reservations, follow the boys lead. They take larger than normal swallows, gulping as much of the liquor down them as they can without tasting it too much.

Brooke: (*gagging*) Gross! It smells disgusting, and it tastes even worse.

Kiley: It's nasty, Drake!

Drake: Drink it fast and see if that helps!

Josh: Pass it here. My turn again!

Narrator: Kiley picks up a soda bottle and suggests they mix soda with the liquor to disguise the taste. They fill up plastic cups and drink the liquor quickly and with ease. They begin to laugh and act silly, not realizing what the liquor is doing to them.

Kiley: This will help.

Brooke: Wish you'd thought of that earlier!

Drake: Hey! That's not too bad!

Narrator: The kids mingle with the other kids around the bonfire. The boys, Josh and Drake, are anxious to leave the party and drive around. Brooke doesn't feel right, but she doesn't want to say anything. She doesn't want to appear "un-cool" to her friends. Her surroundings are starting to spin, but she continues to drink. Kiley is laughing, sipping, and partying with the others. The boys continue to goof around and drink.

Drake: A few more minutes and let's blow this party. Yeah?

Josh: Absolutely!

Drake: Let's take to-go cups though.

Kiley: Where are we going?

Narrator: The kids fill up their cups, say their goodbyes to everyone, pile into the car, and leave the party. Josh, Drake, and Kiley are laughing and goofing around, but Brooke feels queasy. She tries to join in. They do not realize they are. The girls in the back seat are not buckled up.

Josh: Get in!

Drake: I call shotgun!



Narrator: Josh drives too fast down the winding country roads. Music is blaring in the car. All of the windows are rolled down, and the sunroof is open. Drake suddenly unbuckles, stands up in his seat, and sticks his head out of the sunroof. The girls, being impaired, think it's hilarious.

Drake: Check this out. I'm King of the World!

Kiley: (*laughing*) Drake!!! You're crazy!

Narrator: Josh continues to drive fast. Kiley and Brooke talk and laugh over the back of the seats. Brooke tries to pull Drake back into the car, but he isn't listening. He is still screaming out of the sunroof, and Josh can hardly drive he is laughing so hard.

Brooke: Come on, you idiot—get back in the car! You're drawing too much attention. You'll get us in trouble!

Kiley: Seriously, Drake!

Josh: Brooke's right, dude—we're drinking! Get back in the car.

Drake: (*laughing*) Did you say they're right?!

Brooke: Yes, he did! Now get back in the car!

Drake: (*still laughing*) I can't believe you just said that they're right!

Narrator: Drake gets back into the car but forgets to buckle up. The music is still loud and Josh continues to drive too fast. His friends egg him on to go faster. Trees fly by and the lines on the road start to blur. Josh doesn't want to let down his friends. He steps on the gas. Josh has no idea how treacherous the roads are.

Brooke: How fast can this thing go?

Josh: The speedometer says it can go 140!

Drake: Let's see if it's telling the truth, man! No one's coming!

Kiley: Dare you!



Narrator: Josh speeds along. His phone rings. He has one hand on the wheel and is holding his phone in the other. He glances at the phone. It's his mom.

Josh: Not answering that! Parental unit. I'll text her back.

Drake: Smart move!

Brooke: She'd just make you come home!

Kiley: Turn up the music!

Narrator: Josh presses his foot on the gas. Drake turns up the music and the girls are jamming in the back. For a brief second, Josh looks down at his hand, as he tries to send a text to his mom. He struggles to text and drive, and he takes his eyes off the road. The car swerves and he begins to lose control of it.

Drake: Whoa, dude!

Josh: Almost done. And...send!



Kiley: Josh! Watch out!!!!

Josh: Ahhhhhhhhhh!!!!

Brooke: Oh no!!!

Drake: Whoa!!!!

Kiley: Ahhhh!!!!

Overlapping and simultaneous



Narrator: As Josh turns the corner, appropriately named *Dead Man's Curve*, his car crosses the faded double line. They are clearly going too fast. Another vehicle is headed toward them. The cars collide. The kids' arms, legs, bodies fly around the car. The sounds—metal on metal, screeching tires, screams, shattered glass, and crushing car parts fill the cool night air. Engines smoke. Steaming liquids leak out of the engine and gas tank. Drake flies out of the car, through the sun-roof. Brooke is thrown out of the window. Kiley is a crumpled mess on the floorboard in the back seat. Josh's car lands in a nearby ditch, on its side. Josh is dazed but conscious. He was the only one wearing a safety belt. The oncoming vehicle slides off the road and hits a tree head on. Its front end is crushed all the way into the back seat. The driver and passenger are killed instantaneously on impact. They never saw it coming.



Narrator: An ambulance arrives on the scene. Emergency responders go to work. The people in the other car are pronounced dead on the scene and are immediately put in body bags and placed on the side of the road. The medics work on the kids. Josh is moaning. He is in severe pain.

Josh: Drake?!?!?!? Where are you?!?!?!?

Narrator: Drake is nowhere to be found. The medics search for him. He was thrown from the crash and landed in a nearby field. Drake has a broken back. The medics are afraid to move him. They administer pain meds and carefully place him on a stretcher. Kiley passed out. She has many broken bones but appears to be alright. Josh has a concussion, broken arm, broken leg, broken ribs, and a punctured lung. He is lucky to be alive. The medics continue to work on Brooke, trying to resuscitate her, but to no avail. The resuscitation is brutal—paddles, the pounding of C.P.R. on her chest. Brooke watches her broken body seize and shake and jump into the air multiple times as they send shock waves

through her heart, before realizing that she has left her body. She panics. She is hyperventilating and has no voice. No one can hear her cry. She is terrified, confused, and cold.

Medic 1: What a waste!

Medic 2: This one's gone, too. I hate this part of my job!

Brooke: HELP ME! Please help me! I'm still here!

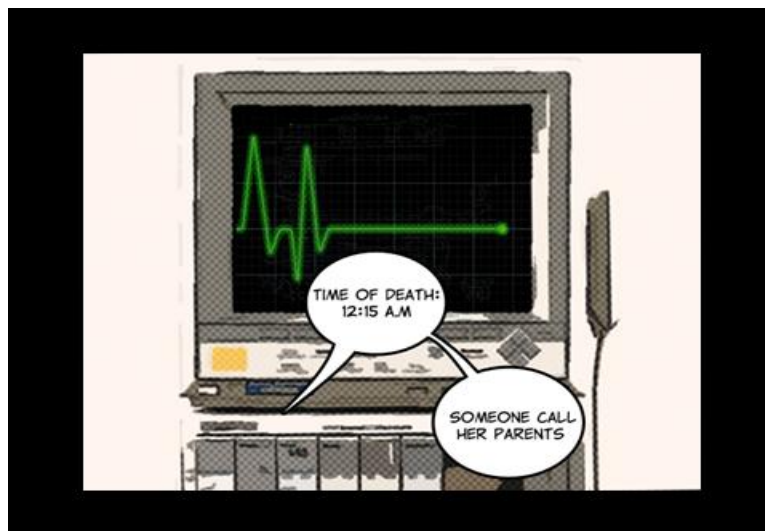


Narrator: The ambulance arrives at the hospital and the medics rush Brooke to see the attending doctor.

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Narrator: Despite everything that they have done to resuscitate her, **Brooke is officially pronounced dead.** Josh is wheeled past her as the doctor tells the medic to call it. He hears the words and passes out. They cover her body with a sheet and wheel her to the hospital morgue. Brooke witnesses all of this and is freaking out beyond belief. She is screaming and no one can hear her; she is standing beside her own body that has been placed on a gurney and covered with a sheet.



Doctor: Call it and I'll record it!

Medic 1: Time of Death: 12:15 A.M.

Doctor: Someone call her parents.

Medic 1: Worst call they'll ever receive.

Brooke: Stop it! Please, stop it!

Narrator: Brooke arrives at the hospital morgue and is placed in a body bag. The attendees place her in the wall; close the door; leave the morgue; and turn off the light.



Narrator: It's Brooke's funeral. Her parents are devastated. Drake can't attend because he is still in the hospital with a broken back. In his hospital bed he

thinks about his friend and the loss. Kiley attends the funeral in a wheelchair, her leg extended in front of her, in a cast. Josh is on crutches. He has a black eye, his arm is broken and he has a brace on one of legs. It is still hard for him to breathe. Brooke's family members, teachers, and friends all attend the funeral. Her mother cannot control her grief. She collapses in the arms of those around her. Brooke's father is stunned, speechless, and emotionless. As the pastor delivers the graveside eulogy, those around the grave weep. When he is done, the casket is lowered into the ground and soil and flowers are thrown on top of it.

Brooke: Stop it! Stop it right now!

Brooke's Mom: *(with tremendous pain)* No!!!!

Brooke's Dad: Why? Why her?

Brooke's Mom: *(tortured)* Brooke, why?

Narrator: Brooke is scared and panics—realizing it is real... it is all real. The morgue, the body bag, the casket, the grave—it is for her. It *is* her. She is gone. She is DEAD!

Brooke: Mom, Mom, I'm here. Please, Mom, please.

Pastor: Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

Josh: I'm so sorry, Brooke. I'm so sorry! I love you!

Brooke: Make them stop, Mom!

Narrator: The mourners are still grieving. They are trying to console the family but to no avail. Josh feels terrible and so does Kiley. Josh feels responsible, Kiley feels devastated. She's lost her best friend; was in the car at the time of the collision, and knows what they could and should have done differently.

Josh: This is my fault. I killed my girlfriend.

Kiley: We're *all* to blame. I just want her back.

Josh: Please forgive me, Brooke.

Narrator: Brooke reaches out and touches her mother. Her mother looks up and for a split second Brooke thinks that she has seen her; she hasn't. Her mother's face is blank. Brooke's mother is numb. She is in shock, despair, and Brooke feels her mother's grief. Sitting amidst the gatherers at her own funeral, Brooke realizes the magnitude of grief, emptiness, sorrow, desperation, and confusion, that her death has brought. The pain shoots through her. She realizes the pain she is feeling is not hers. It is her mother's, her father's, and loved ones'. She wraps her arms around herself, hoping to stop the pain. It doesn't stop.

Brooke: I feel you, Mom. I feel your pain! I'm so sorry. What have I done?

Brooke's Mother: She's gone. My girl is never coming back!

Narrator: Brooke's family is broken and will never be repaired. Brooke watches her dad from across the room. His heart is broken and if she had one, hers

would be too. She is burdened with the pain that she knows that they can feel. She feels physically what they bear emotionally.

Brooke's Dad: What are we going do? She had her whole life ahead of her. We weren't done! I wasn't done!!

Narrator: Brooke is overwhelmed with despair. She can't breathe. Breathing is a thing of the past. She tries to calm herself by assuring herself that the pain will subside if she gets out of there!

Brooke: I can't take it anymore. I've got to get out of here! Wait a minute. Where's Drake? Drake!



Narrator: Brooke is suddenly standing at the foot of Drake's hospital bed. Drake, despite the pain pump that he is holding in his hand, is clearly in distress. He is moaning and talking, as he drifts in and out of consciousness. The crash and the pain medication have caused confusion and fear.

Drake: I can't feel my legs! I have football practice. I have to go!

Brooke: Drake, can you hear me? You've been in a serious collision.

Drake: I'm going to be late, and Coach will be mad.

Narrator: Drake doesn't remember what the doctor said. Drake tries to sit up. He can't move. No high school football, no scholarship opportunities for college ball. A football sits on the side table of Drake's bed. Drake stares at it. Brooke walks over and places it on the bed next to Drake. For a second Drake thinks he may have seen Brooke, he rubs his eyes. Touching the ball, his eyes fill with tears.

Drake: Brooke, is that you? Never play ball again?

Brooke: But you're alive!

Drake: What is life without my dream?

Brooke: You're still here; I'm not.

Narrator: Brooke is overwhelmed. She clasps her eyes shut.



Narrator: When she opens her eyes again, she is standing in a graveyard. She breaks out into a cold, clammy, sweat. Panicking she looks about her. Eyeing the gravestones around her, two particular headstones catch her attention. She doesn't recognize the names, but notices that they are the same last names. As she wracks her brain, wondering why on earth she is there, images and sounds suddenly fill the air. Laughter, tears, screams, music, she watches scenes roll one at a time before her. It is a beautiful couple, elderly, but not old. They are laughing. They appear in a wedding procession; giving away a bride, and then they appear in a hospital room, holding a baby. Suddenly Brooke witnesses the couple surrounded by people. She recognizes the people as family members and friends. Brooke falls to her knees and continues to watch the scenes that flash before her. It takes her a minute, but she realizes the graveside markers belong to the innocent victims of the oncoming car. She is watching their lives, the ones that have been stolen from them. She can visually see all the people that will

miss them. The graduations they will miss, parties, celebrations, and more. She can hear their laughs and ultimately their cries. The ghostly images of the couple suddenly appear next to Brooke. It is too much for her; she bursts into tears, hanging her head in her hands.

Brooke: I see you and the life that you had and should be living. I feel the loss your loved ones feel for you. We did this!

Gentleman: You robbed us... you and your friends.

Lady: We weren't ready to die and our families weren't ready to lose us.

Gentleman What have you done? Our family needed us. This didn't have to happen.

Brooke: I'm so sorry!

Lady: Why?

Narrator: Brooke apologizes but realizes it's too late. Brooke reaches out and touches the lady on the arm. A sharp pain rushes through her and once again she feels the loss and grief that others feel for the lost elderly victims, just as she had felt her family's grief at her own memorial service. She can't take it anymore. She has to get away. She needs her friend, her best friend. As she leaves the cemetery, she is haunted by the words of the older couple.

Gentleman: You robbed us...
you and your friends. What
have you done? Our family
needed us. This didn't have
to happen.

Lady: Why? We weren't
ready to die and our families
weren't ready to lose us.

Overlapping



Narrator: Kiley is lying on her bed, thinking about the past events. Her mind is flooded with memories and the tragic images from the recent crash. She is inconsolable and hasn't eaten in days. Food is still sitting out on a tray by her bed, and she clings to a teddy bear that Brooke once gave her. Brooke appears in

the corner of Kiley's room. Kiley doesn't know she's there, yet she feels the presence of something. The room becomes deathly cold. Kiley sits up on the bed and looks all around her. The hairs on the back of her neck and arms stand on end. Something is not right. A feeling of fear sweeps over her. She opens her mouth to scream, but nothing comes out. Brooke feels terrible that she has instilled such fear into her friend and has no way to communicate that it is her, her best friend, and she means her no harm. Brooke sits on the foot of Kiley's bed. Kiley's heart is pounding. She continues to feel the presence of something and for a split second wonders if it is her friend, Brooke. For reasons unknown even to her, she calls out her friend's name.

Kiley: Brooke, is that you?

Brooke: I'm right here; it's me.

Kiley: (*not hearing Brooke*) Something's not right!

Brooke: Kiley, it's me.

Narrator: Kiley feels Brooke in her midst. She jumps from her bed and runs to the door. Grabbing the door handle, she screams for her mom. Her mom runs up the stairs, grabs Kiley and holds her as she cries hysterically. Brooke tries to comfort her, but for obvious reasons can't. Stunned, Brooke leaves the room.

Kiley: I think Brooke was here!

Kiley's Mom: You're exhausted. You're imagining things.

Kiley: I think I saw her, and I could feel her. She was here!

Kiley's Mom: You just need some sleep; that's all, you will be fine.



Narrator: The following day. Brooke can stand the sadness no more. She decides to sit with Drake in his hospital room and keep him company. Even if he doesn't know that she's there, she hopes she can watch over him. To her surprise, Josh and Kiley are visiting him too. She enters the room and an icy chill fills it. All the kids notice, including Drake. Drake even says he's felt that feeling before and Kiley says that she had too. Brooke stands amongst her friends, they cannot see her. She stands in a corner and observes them interact with each other and without her. She is saddened beyond belief by what she hears; knowing it is true, and realizing it can't be undone.

Josh: I was driving; it's my fault.

Drake: It's my fault. I brought the liquor.

Kiley: We all drank; we shouldn't have drunk, any of us! We were going too fast, and we told you to go faster.

Josh: But I shouldn't have been driving in the first place!

Drake: It didn't help when your mom called. We should've pulled over and you could have called her back.

Josh: I know. When I looked down to text her, I lost all control. Everything else is a blur.

Kiley: I was the one that told you to turn up the music. I know that didn't help.

Drake: If I'd had my safety belt on, I might not have broken my back. I'll never play football again! My dream, my dad's dream, not to mention, Brooke—are gone, for what? Nothing!

Narrator: Brooke moves closer and all of the kids feel her ghostly presence. She reaches out and touches Josh. For some reason, he can feel her touch. He jumps out of his skin! He panics and states that Brooke is there! In Josh's mind, Brooke came back to haunt him! She is haunting him because of what he did. She blames him.

Brooke: Josh!

Josh: Brooke?! She's here! She touched me.

Kiley: Are you serious?

Josh: I'm dead serious! Brooke! I didn't mean to hurt you!

Drake: Dude, you're freaking me out; it's cold in here, I need an extra blanket.

Narrator: Brooke takes a step back and retreats to the corner of the room again. The nurse brings Drake an extra blanket. She glances at Josh and notices how frazzled he appears. She makes a statement that sends chills right through the kid's bones, Brooke's included.

Nurse: Here's the blanket you requested. Are you OK? You look like you've seen a ghost!

Josh: I think I have!

Nurse: You're in shock; it will take time.

Josh: I can feel her; she's back. She's mad at me.

Brooke: Josh, what are you talking about? Mad at you? I'm mad at me!

Narrator: Brooke squats down on her knees and leans against the wall. She knew better than to do the things she did that evening. Her mind flashes back—laughter, party, car, the bonfire—she relives it again via her thoughts. The drinking, the sick feeling, her head spinning, her stomach turning, and all of a sudden she can hear the sound of the tires screeching, the metal on metal crunching and of all things, she can smell the blood that poured out of her own

body. She covers her ears with her hands and looks down at herself and clearly her body is not bleeding. She is a mere ghostly image; a fraction of the person that she used to be. She is gone—gone is the existence and the life that she knew. She will never be with her family, friends, and loved ones again. She is watching them torture themselves as she is tortured from the other-side, knowing, without a doubt, that the entire crash could have, and should have, been prevented.

Brooke: It's too late; the damage is done.

Josh: What if she comes back for me; what if she takes me with her?

Drake: Snap out of it! She was our friend.

Kiley: Brooke loved us. She would never hurt us!

Narrator: Brooke can't stand to listen anymore. She closes her eyes and dreams of going home.



Narrator: Brooke appears in her family home. Her dad is standing over the fireplace; he has a photo of Brooke in his hand and tears are streaming down his face. He doesn't say a word when Brooke's mom enters the room. She can't bare the sight of him, since she blames him for the death of her daughter. The pain that the collision has caused is too much for Brooke. She can tell that both of her parents are suffering in different ways, and that grief is turning to anger.

Brooke's Dad: You don't have to say anything; I know what you're thinking.

Brooke's Mom: You shouldn't have let her go. She shouldn't have gone with them. I told you no; I asked you to reconsider.

Brooke's Dad: It's my fault.

Brooke: No, Dad! It's my fault, mine! I knew better than to do what I did. You taught me better than that!

Narrator: Brooke shrinks into the corner of the room. She realizes there is no going back. She is overwhelmed with the dire situation that she finds herself in and thoughts of trying to help others suddenly flood her mind. What could she do, in this state, to prevent others from being so careless and needlessly losing their lives, too?

Brooke's Mom: Why Brooke....why?

Brooke: I'm sorry, Mom; I love you! But I can help. I can do something to prevent this from ever happening again.

Brooke: I'll figure something out!

Narrator: Memories and flashbacks of how happy she was, flood Brooke's mind. She decides she will undertake a personal mission—making up her mind to make a difference in the lives of others or at least try.



Narrator: Brooke finds herself in a hospital ward. She recognizes the hospital and walks toward Drake's room. Drake's dad is sitting in a chair by the bed; he's reading a sports magazine. Drake has a football under his arm. He has tears slowly rolling down his face, as the reality sets in. Drake will never play football again. He will be lucky to walk at all. He is angry, he is hurt, but he is not confused. He knows exactly how and why this has happened. He is sick about it! Drake also realizes that all of the kids shared equal blame; they all were at fault, they all contributed to the collision.

Drake's Dad: We'll get through this together!

Drake: I don't want to get through it! I want to play football.

Drake's Dad: Son, right now, we just need you better. Up and walking, that's our goal, and you can do it!

Drake: I don't want to do it. What's the point? No football, no life!

Drake: Don't give up, Drake. You're still here; Brooke wasn't as lucky. Don't waste it this second chance you've been given.

Brooke: He's right, Drake, they still have you and you have them!

Narrator: Brooke sits on Drake's hospital bed. Her presence is all around the room. Drake's dad thinks the room is too cold, and asks the nurse to turn up the heat. The nurse does as he requests and adds an extra blanket to Drake's bed. An orderly places a tray of hospital food before Drake.

Drake's Dad: It's freezing in here. I'll get the nurse to turn up the heat.

Drake: I can't eat that stuff. It's gross!

Drake's Dad: Just try it, Son. You need to keep your strength up; you have to eat something.

Drake: She's here ya know. Brooke, she's in this room. I can feel her, she's here!

Drake's Dad: I think you're tired. She's gone. She's not here.

Drake: I can smell her perfume. I can!

Drake's Dad: You're tired, overwhelmed. Eat and then sleep; please, for me.

Narrator: Brooke raises her wrists to her nose. She can't smell her fragrance and yet Drake thought he could. She shrinks into the corner and observes the interaction of father and son. Josh appears at the door. He is holding a burger-bag, video game, and candy. Drake is momentarily distracted. His dad is just happy that Drake isn't talking crazy-talk about Brooke. Josh feels Brooke is in the room with them. He is covered in goose-bumps, and his hair on the back of his neck is standing on end. The boys discuss.

Josh: You hungry?

Drake: Dude, you read my mind!

Drake's Dad: If the nurse asks, I didn't see anything. I'm going to stretch my legs.

Josh: Brooke! She's here!

Drake: Dude, don't freak me out. I said the same thing. Really, I think she is!

Josh: Look at my arm, Drake. Does that look like normal to you? I just walked into an ice-box. Surely you can feel her, too, right?

Drake: She is here. I know it. I think she's trying to tell me something.

Josh: Dude, I'm scared! I think she's mad at me! I think she's going to haunt me for who knows how long. I was driving and I killed her!

Narrator: Brooke continues to listen, and is stunned that the boys know that she's amongst them. She is saddened that Josh believes she's there to cause him harm. She can see that Josh blaming himself. For the first time, Brooke, realizes that Josh looks awful. He is thin, pale, guilt-ridden, and due to the black circles under his eyes, he obviously isn't sleeping.

Brooke: Josh, I would never hurt you or anyone! You're my friends, all of you!

Josh: I'm not sure that I blame her though; I would likely haunt me too, if I were her. Brooke, are you there? Can you hear me? It's OK. I deserve it!

Drake: I feel her presence too, but I don't think she blames you or me. She wasn't really like that.

Brooke: No, I don't blame either one of you.



Narrator: Kiley is in her home, surrounded by her friends. They are discussing prom. Brooke and Kiley had shopped together for the dresses; Josh and Drake would have been their dates, the evening could have been magical. The girls are trying to convince Kiley to at least make an appearance at the prom, and tell her that they can make something work with a dress and the wheelchair. She insists she'd rather not go since Brooke and Drake cannot join her, and Josh hardly feels like getting up each day, let alone celebrating.

Friend: Kiley, you only have one senior prom; you have to go.

Girlfriend: We could find a different dress and work around the chair.

Kiley: I'm not kidding when I say, "I'm not going!" I couldn't possibly go. And more importantly, I don't want to go!

Narrator: The friends change the subject to discuss an upcoming party. They ask Kiley if she'd like to go and hang there for a bit. Kiley shakes her head no. She is in no condition, physically or emotionally, to tackle any public gathering. A party is the last place that she wants to be.

Girlfriend: It might be good for you, I mean to be around people again.

Friend: True! It might take your mind off of everything, you know what we mean?

Kiley: I know you're trying to help; but seriously, as if I could go!

Narrator: Kiley picks up a photo of her with Brooke at a football game; they are laughing and having fun. She stares at it momentarily and bursts into tears. Her friends try to console her, but it is no good, she is devastated her best friend is gone.

Kiley: I miss her so much! I just don't understand why she's gone. Why wasn't it me?

Friend: Don't do this to yourself! You can't change the fact that you lived, and you shouldn't wish that you could.

Girlfriend: He's right. Brooke would be happy that you're alive, you know she would. We lost her, but we still have you. What are you going to do with that gift?

Kiley: Maybe I'll be an advocate or something, tell others why they shouldn't do what we did. I don't know yet, but you're right. I should try to do something in honor of Brooke.



Narrator: Brooke appears in the middle of the road where the crash occurred—*Dead Man's Curve*. She walks over to the ditch and sounds of the crash ring through the air. Standing in front of the tree, she catches a glimpse of the man and woman that were killed too. They are staring at her, but she can't determine

if the look on their face is bitterness or approval. It's as if they understand what she is about to do; save lives, help other teens avoid such collisions.

Lady: Fix it.

Gentleman: Make it count.

Narrator: Brooke nods at the couple and they disappear in a beautiful light. She understands that they are at peace and have gone to the other side. She hasn't. She has work to do. She has to show other teens what they should be doing, and hopefully prevent unnecessary crashes.



Narrator: Brooke finds herself wandering through the school hallways. She will never get used to the feeling of others passing right through her. She stops at the lockers and listens to the conversations that students are having. They talk

about many things—boys, clothes, prom, and graduation. They do not talk about her. It's as if the school has already moved on.

Girl: Josh is so hot! I know this sounds bad, but he's available.

Boy: It does sound bad, but it's true.

Girl: There's no way he'll go. Will he?

Boy: He might. His parents might make him. You only get one prom, after all.

Narrator: Brooke is standing in a long corridor. Kids are rushing past her and through her. She gasps for air that she can't breathe. As she turns around to head back, she catches a glimpse of Josh. He has, of all things, a smile on his face. She doesn't know why, but she realizes for the first time, whether he wanted to or not, his life just moved on.

Boy: You should seriously consider hanging with us at the party, just to get out and back in the swing of things.

Boy 2: Brooke would want you to enjoy your graduation events.

Josh: I don't think she'd approve of me partying at this time, but I can't stand myself and getting out might be a good distraction.

Boy: Agreed! You need to get back out there and live.

Brooke: Why? Why do you need to do that? Without me, why?

Narrator: Brooke knows the answer and knows that Josh should get back to his regular life. She wonders if he will be the life of the party, just like before. She decides right then and there, that the party he will attend will be the first one she watches over.



Narrator: She has no idea where she's going, but must flee the school. She is feeling overwhelmed. She finds herself kneeling at the side of her own grave. She reads the words on the head-stone out loud, and runs her fingers over her name. She has no more tears left to cry.

Brooke: Brooke Lynn Granger – June 3, 1994 – February 20, 2012. Beloved daughter, sister, granddaughter, niece, and friend. Taken too soon, she is still loved. "We miss your smile already!"



Narrator: Brooke sits outside Josh's room. He is reluctantly getting ready for a graduation party. His parents are relieved he's leaving the house. Since the crash he has only visited Drake and attended school. Josh glances in the mirror; he looks normal, but he doesn't feel very normal at all. His cell phone rings, and Brooke listens to the conversation from the other side of the door. Her heart sinks.

Josh's Dad: He needs to get out of this house.

Josh's Mom: What if he gets tempted and does something stupid again?

Josh's Dad: Surely not! He must have learned his lesson through all of this.

Josh: Hi, LeAnn. Yeah, I'll be there by then.

Narrator: Josh picks up his keys and walks toward the door. He turns around and looks into the eyes of his parents. They nod approvingly knowing it's time for him to do normal things again. They do not let him leave without giving him instructions and telling him how they feel.

Josh's Dad: It goes without saying, Son, no drinking and driving. Texting, talking on the phone, acting stupid in the car, speeding... need I go on?

Josh's Mom: Don't get in the car with someone else doing that. Call us! You will never be in trouble if you call us to come and pick you up, ever. And remember that we love you!

Josh's Dad: I can drop you off, Son, but you can do this. You can drive; just be very careful.

Josh's Mom: I'd rather you drove than someone pick you up. I think you will be very, very cautious due to everything that's happened. You will be fine.

Josh: I am a little worried about driving, but I feel, well, sad. The last time we were all together, we were celebrating. It wasn't supposed to happen. It shouldn't have happened and it was my fault. I was driving.

Josh's Dad: Josh, everyone that evening played a part, including you. But it wasn't just your fault. It was a terrible crash that could have and should have been avoided.

Josh's Mom: Don't let it happen again. The best way to honor Brooke is to drive safe every time!



Narrator: Josh parks the car outside of the house where the party is being held. He hesitates before stepping out of the vehicle. He senses that someone is watching him. Someone is... It's Brooke. She has taken on a protective role and wonders why Josh is here at all! The party is already loud and teens are mingling. A chill runs through Josh's body as he recalls the last time he was at a gathering with so many kids. He contemplates getting back in the car and going home, but all of a sudden, LeAnn runs out of the house and greets him with a big hug. Brooke wants to disappear but she needs to be there. She has a personal mission to accomplish and can't leave because her feelings are hurt.

LeAnn: Hey stranger, glad you made it!

Josh: Well, I said I'd come, but it feels a bit weird to me.

LeAnn: Come on. It will be OK. I'm right here!

Narrator: Brooke is disgusted but knows that she can't be there for Josh anymore. She follows the pair into the house. The scene is typical—music playing, snack food on the counter, sodas on tables, parents checking from time to time, and kids hanging in different cliques. Brooke listens to all the conversations, but sticks close to Josh.



LeAnn: Let's get something to drink.

Josh: I'm not thirsty.

LeAnn: Well, I'm not sure you'll approve now anyway, but Jake did bring other stuff.

Josh: That's crazy! No! I think I'm ready to leave, you know what I mean?

LeAnn: Don't leave. You don't have to go. Just don't drink.

Josh: It's crazy, LeAnn. They shouldn't have that.

LeAnn: People will do stupid things like that but we have to be smarter than them. Don't drink and drive.

Brooke: I have to stop this. Somehow I have to get through to Jake and the others. Drastic times call for drastic measures.

Narrator: Brooke realizes that Josh doesn't need her help, but Jake and others do. She leaves Josh and LeAnn, joining Jake and his friends. They are passing the bottle around, secretly, just as they had at one time. She leans over and whispers in his ear. Jake shakes his head and laughs a confused laugh. He thinks the liquor has kicked in already, but her voice has freaked him out. Brooke turns to the others and whispers their names. They hear her. She continues with her message.

Jake: This isn't too bad! Who's next?

Kid: I'll take another drink. I don't like it; but I'll drink it.

Brooke: Really, Jake? Really, drink and drive? What about me? Remember me? Brooke.

Jake: This stuff's messing with my head. I could've sworn I heard Brooke.

Narrator: Brooke is getting irritated they are still laughing and talking amongst themselves. She decides to physically touch them and to remove the bottle from

their hands. Dropping it and spilling the contents, Brooke hopes to make her point.

Brooke: Give me that!

Kid: Jake, you idiot, you spilled it on the carpet.

Jake: I swear I didn't! That bottle was taken out of my hand! I'm so freaked right now! I think Brooke is here!

Kid: Time for some air.



Narrator: Jake is sweating and freaking out. He has liquor in his system and believes he's just encountered a ghost. He has—Brooke. He leaves the house and his friends follow, Brooke walks beside him. She whispers his name and instructions every step that they take toward the car.

Jake: Good idea. I need some air.

Kid: What happened? You're white as a ghost.

Jake: Don't say that!

Brooke: Don't be dumb, Jake. Hand over those keys. Don't get behind the wheel. You know it's me. You know I'm here. Really... really you would still do that?

Narrator: Brooke continues to talk to Jake. Her voice is stronger and she is speaking forcefully. Jake knows that Brooke is back from the dead. He is scared and feels ill. There is something noticeably wrong with him. His friends try to console him, but can't.

Brooke: Are you kidding me? Look closer, Jake...look...I'm dead.

Jake: Leave me alone, Brooke. Go away.

Kid: Dude, what is wrong with you? You just said something about the dead kid.

Brooke: Listen to me, Jake. Don't listen to them. I'm dead.

Kid: Jake, it's the booze kicking in. Air is good.

Brooke: Do you want to join me? Go ahead, get behind the wheel, I'll wait for you!



Narrator: Against his will, Jake hands another friend his keys. Brooke whispers again in his ear. He is 100% certain that she has sent him a message, and that he did the right thing. Jake climbs into the passenger seat and buckles up. He instructs all of the passengers to do the same. His driver hasn't been drinking. He rolls down his window for some air. The kids insist they go for a joy ride. Jake doesn't want to look as freaked out as he is, so he agrees.

Jake: Put your safety belts on. Everyone!

Kid: Let's go the back way down *Dead Man's Curve*.

Jake: That road's creepy.



Narrator: They drive toward *Dead Man's Curve*. Though the driver hasn't been drinking, she is driving too fast for the curve. Brooke knows this and tries to warn them. Brooke appears in the middle of the road, in plain sight, one mile prior to the curve. It is the first time that she realizes that if she puts enough thought into it, people can actually catch a glimpse of her. The car drives right through Brooke.

All passengers: Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Ahhhhhhhh!

Kid: Did you see that? Did you see her?

All passengers: BROOKE!

Narrator: The kids slow down. They pull over and catch their breaths. They know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they've just witnessed a ghost sighting of their friend. Jake believes and convinces the others that she was there to warn

them. They are so scared that they agree! Once they inch the car forward again, they turn down the music, barely drive the speed limit and decide it's time to call it a night. Brooke has found her new purpose. It is not one of choice. She misses her life and her family and friends. She will walk the area for who knows how long, tormented in this undead state, while trying to prevent others from doing what they did. Drive safely. Don't drink, text, speed, crank up the music, or goof around in the car.

Jake: She sent us a message. I told you she was here.

Kid: Man, she died right there. Her ghost was standing in the middle of the road.

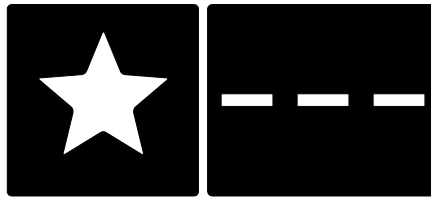
Jake: She warned me and you, all of us, she was telling us to drive safe; I think we were going too fast.

Kid: I may never drive again! She may have just saved our lives, even though she lost hers. What if she wouldn't have been there?

Brooke: Spread the word. Be safe. Don't let stupidity rob you of your life! It seems so simple... until... your life is shattered!

Epilogue

Josh, Drake, and Kiley would all face legal consequences following the tragic crash at Dead Man's Curve. As the driver, Josh would receive the harshest punishment. If convicted of intoxication manslaughter under Texas Penal Code Sec. 49.08, he would face 2-20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000 (Texas Penal Code Sec. 12.33). All three teenagers would be punished for the underage consumption of alcohol. The penalty for the underage consumption of alcohol for a first time offender in Texas may include a fine of up to \$500, an alcohol awareness class, community service, and/or driver's license suspension or denial. Even after any jail sentences are served, fines are paid, community service is completed, and licenses are reinstated, the effects of the teenagers' poor decisions will linger on throughout their lives. They lost a close friend, Drake will never play football again, and the guilt that they feel will probably never go away.



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