

THE TEXT ON THE DRIVE HOME

By Bradley Walton

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P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
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A Ten Minute Dramatic Monologue

By Bradley Walton

SYNOPSIS: The school musical opens tomorrow, and the lead performer is driving home from her final dress rehearsal. Anticipating acceptance at a prestigious arts college in New York, her future seems bright. That is until *The Text On The Drive Home*.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 either; gender flexible)

NARRATOR (m/f) A talented but cocky senior playing the role of either Sky Masterson or Miss Adelaide in a production of *Guys and Dolls* at a county high school.

SETTING: Bare stage.

COSTUMES: Spring school clothes.

PROPS

Cell Phone (optional)

AUTHOR NOTES: Texting and driving is stupid and it kills people. There's really no more to be said.

AT RISE: *The NARRATOR, may have an optional cell phone for a prop.*

NARRATOR: I'm driving home from musical practice at 10 PM and the county roads are pretty much deserted. My school is doing *Guys and Dolls* and I'm playing Sky Masterson. (Or *Miss Adelaide*.) It's my senior year and I finally—*finally*—landed a lead role. And I am nailing it. The show opens tomorrow and it's going to be amazing. I don't think I've ever been this excited about something. I so much want to act for a living, and I'm praying that I get accepted to the arts college in New York. That letter should be coming any day now. I'm sure I'll get in. I can almost feel it. But the wait is killing me. The down side of being in musical is that dress rehearsals have been running from right after school until late into the evening. A bunch of the drama parents have been cooking for us, so dinner hasn't been an issue. If anything, I think I've gained weight this week. But my grades are definitely taking a beating—I'm going to have to play catch-up in most of my classes. And I have to wait all day before I can check the mail. My mom works evenings, so we've been coming home about the same time. Tonight, I'm actually getting home a little earlier than usual—rehearsal went really well. They say that's a bad sign, but...*nah*. There's no way the show will be anything but great.

I'm driving past an abandoned gray Toyota pulled off the side of the road when my phone buzzes with a text. I slow down the car a little, reach for my phone, and lift it up level with the top of the steering wheel. I'm not going to be an idiot and take my eyes completely off the road. A couple of kids at another school were killed in a texting and driving accident last year. I refuse to be that person. I glance at the phone. Mom got off work early and she's home. There's an envelope from the school in New York. She's figuring I'm still at rehearsal and asking if I want her to open it. I'm only ten minutes from home, and I really want to open that envelope myself. I can be patient. I *will* be patient. My resolve lasts about five seconds. I slow the car down long enough to text back, "OPEN IT!" And then the waiting begins.

I hold the phone in my right hand and steer with my left. My eyes keep darting to the screen. How long has it been now? One minute? Two? Mom's had time to open the envelope and read the letter. Why is she taking so long? Then the phone lights up and buzzes. My left hand tightens on the steering wheel and I push down on the gas pedal, the acceleration of the car mirroring my rush of adrenaline. I check the message. It's one word in all caps followed by a row of exclamation marks: "ACCEPTED!!!!!!!!!!!!!!". My face isn't wide enough for my grin. I fist pump the air with the phone in my hand, then look at the message again. Accepted. Life is perfect.

The car jolts and I hear a noise somewhere between a thump and a crunch. My stomach twists into a knot. What happened? What did I just hit? I have no idea. I was looking at the phone. Stupid. I can't believe I did that. Please let it have been a deer. Some kind of wild animal. It wasn't a person. It couldn't have been a person. Nobody's going to be out walking on a county road at 10 PM. Should I go back and look? Just to be sure? But what if it's an animal and it's hurt but not dead? What do I do? If it's a deer, I guess I call the police. If it's a dog or something, do I take it to the 24-hour emergency vet? That's fifteen miles away. How would I pay for that? It's not my fault if some animal wandered out into the road. I have no responsibility here. I don't. Only...I do. I should go back and look. I turn the car around, praying I don't find anything. That whatever I hit had enough life left in it to crawl away and die on its own, so I can go home and forget this ever happened. But I'm not that lucky.

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