The Night that Changed Everything

I’m older than most of the people I’m friends with, yet I won’t get my license before any of them. My mother messed up with the temporary license law and driver’s ed. Now I would have to wait another year to be able to go anywhere I pleased. My best friend was my only way around, not including parents of course. This wasn’t so bad; at least it was her right? Ashley was trustworthy, got decent grades, kind of the innocent one. One Friday night, I received a text from Ashley asking to hang out.

“Sure, I don’t have anything better to do.”
“I didn’t think you did. Where do you wanna go?”
“Well, I was thinking about hanging out with Miranda, we can swing by and pick her up.”
“Okay, but where are we going?”
“Can’t we just drive? I don’t feel like staying home.”
“Okay, I’ll be over in two minutes.”

It was nice living across the street from my best friend. I unlocked the door and slipped into some jeans, boots, a sweat shirt, and a beanie to protect my ears. I looked like crap, but I’m not focusing on how I look when it’s freezing outside. I heard my door open.

“You ready?” Ashley was always impatient.
“Yeah, you know any place we can go?”
“Well I need more cigs, but other than that no.”
I wrinkled my nose in response, “Okay.”

We walked out of my room, I gave my parents a “We’ll be back later.”, and we headed out the door. We hopped into Ashley’s truck only twenty feet away.
“Miranda first? I don’t want her to think we forgot about her.” I plugged my USB stick with 200 plus songs into her stereo system.

“All righty.”

She turned the engine, cranked up the volume of her radio, and zoomed off in the direction of Miranda’s house. I skipped countless songs until I found our favorite artist at the time: Skrillex, the creator, the grand master, the lord of dubstep. We were in love with his bass drops and dance inducing rhythms. His music simply captivated us. We danced in the car even though we were sitting and probably looked like the biggest idiots on the planet. Oh well, at least it was night time. It wasn’t long before we pulled up to Miranda’s house.

“Miranda!” I leaned out of the truck and shouted at the top of my lungs. I felt kind of bad for her neighbors, but not bad enough to shut up.

“Miranda!” Ashley was doing the same thing.

Miranda was grounded, but her mother was gone for a week to Maryland. What she doesn’t know won’t hurt her. Miranda came running out of her house. I got out and let her sit in the tiny middle seat. Ashley whipped the truck out haphazardly before we were even settled in and sped away. We cranked the music louder and continued our dancing fest.

“So do we know where we’re going?” You could barely hear Miranda over the music.

“Gas station, I need menthols.”

“Which gas station?”

“BP.”

“Oh God, my sister works there.”

“Miranda she’s probably not even working.”

Ashley pulled into the gas station parking lot and we all piled inside. Ashley went up to the cash register who had her face buried in a magazine.

“Kool Menthols please.”

The cashier looked up and made a face. First a face of recognition and then shocked.

“Hey Brittany.” Miranda chuckled uneasily. Of course her sister would work on this night.
Brittany grabbed the pack of cigarettes, eyed all of us and asked for Ashley’s ID. It seemed like she didn’t believe her ID, or didn’t want to, but she sold Ashley the cigarettes.

“These aren’t for me, Brittany.” Miranda assured her sister. Brittany just stared at her and shrugged. I don’t know what that was supposed to mean; I don’t even know if Miranda knew.

“Hey, let’s go to Meijer’s!” I threw out this idea not only to change the subject, but also show Brittany that we weren’t up to anything. Ashley and Miranda both seemed to like the idea. We filed back out to the car and returned our music to its loud volume.

Miranda and I had a new found love of badminton and I was in need of some brand new shuttlecocks. We walked to the sports section of Meijer's and happened upon the baseball section.

“This is some serious equipment for such a boring sport.” I grabbed a colorful batting helmet off the shelf and a matching metal bat. I placed the oversized helmet on my head and got myself in a traditional baseball batting pose. Miranda laughed and snapped a couple pictures of me. This started a charade of all three of us putting on every piece of equipment in the aisle, trying to outdo each other. We got the occasional mom and child stopping and staring, but everyone was too afraid to even come down the aisle.

“I have an idea.” Miranda pulled down three bases and placed one at each end of the aisle and one in the middle. I grabbed my bat and ran down to one end of the aisle, waiting for the first pitch. Miranda worked a ball out of its packaging, took her position in the middle and pitched. I was determined to hit the ball. I swung and slammed the bat into the metal bars of the shelves which sent vibrations all up the bat and my arms causing me to drop it completely. Miranda and Ashley were on the floor laughing at the obnoxiously loud noise and how pathetic my attempt at batting was. Ashley composed herself enough to shout *strike one!* I turned red and rolled the ball back to Miranda. I got into batting position again and waited for her pitch. Miranda couldn’t contain her giggles though; the ball went flying into the shelf causing another laughing fit from all three of us. Ashley managed to choke out a *ball one!* I got into position a third time and waited for a third pitch. Miranda took a deep breath and tossed the ball perfectly in the middle. I smacked my bat against it and watched it
fly straight forward. Miranda hit the floor dodging the ball almost perfectly, but this left Ashley wide open. The ball slammed into her chest and she flew backwards into a bouncy ball display. We watched the balls fall out everywhere, bounce down every aisle. I dropped the bat and helmet, and Miranda and I picked Ashley up off the ground and carried her outside. It would be kind of embarrassing for Ashley’s mom for her own daughter to be kicked out of her place of work.

We all rushed into Ashley’s car and booked it out of there. Our adrenaline was pumping, there was no way we could just go home after something like that.

“Hey,” Ashley reached into her purse and pulled out a new can of spray paint. “You guys wanna use this?”

“Where did you get that?” I grabbed it from her and stared.

“I was gonna buy it, but you know, that whole thing happened.”

“When did you even go off and get it?”

“I found it in the aisle next to us, I guess those lazy people who never return items back to where they’re supposed to go come in handy.”

Miranda grabbed it from me “We could go to Addy’s house and spray paint something.”

We let it soak in for a moment. Should we go home, or continue with our night? Miranda gave Ashley directions to Addy’s house.

Ashley whipped her truck around in those tiny, residential streets where everyone parks their cars on the road. She pulled into the driveway that belonged to Addy and her mother. Miranda was the first one out, she was eager to show off her apparently great spray painting skills. She shook the can of lime green paint and sprayed the phrase “YOLO” on Addy’s back door.

“That looks like a first grader wrote it Miranda,” I snatched the spray can out of her hand. “And very cliché.” I shook the can and tried myself. I managed to create a lovely looking smiley face in my personal opinion.

“Talk about mine.” Miranda sneered.
“Lemme try.” Ashley took the can from me and pondered what intelligent thing she could write. She came up with nothing, so she just wrote hi.

“We suck at vandalizing.” I looked at the pathetic excuse of spray painting we did. We heard some old woman yell across the street at us threatening to call the cops. We all once again ran into Ashley’s truck. Ashley threw it in reverse and whipped her truck out of Addy’s parking lot and right into a minivan parked on the street. We all froze, not knowing what to do. Ashley, seeing that neither I nor Miranda had any answers, drove off at top speed. We all sat in total silence knowing what consequences this could have.

“I think we should stop… I mean, we have to look at the damages.” I was the first to break the silence. Ashley said nothing, simply wanting to get as much road as possible between her and the location of the accident.

“Hey, I know where one of our teachers lives. Maybe we can go there and pull a prank.” Miranda chimed in. No one responded to her, so she just started telling Ashley where to go. A few lefts, rights, and stop lights later, we parked on the side of the street across from the teachers house. We all got out slowly and walked towards the back of the truck, not knowing what was in store. Ashley groaned when she saw a giant dent in her bumper.

“Maybe your license plate was too confusing for them to remember.” I whimpered.

“It’s JX094, not that difficult.” Miranda always knew how to make a situation better.

“Let’s just go to this teacher’s house.” Ashley turned and walked towards the house across the street. Miranda and I stared at each other and followed her. We stared inside a window to see who was inside the house, no one. We checked the drive way, no cars. We heard sirens in the distance and this sent Ashley in a frenzy. She felt the deep seated need to run and hide. The closest place to her was an open window to our teacher’s house. She flung herself inside, not giving Miranda or me another choice but to follow her. The house was dark, no lights on at all. We all flipped our phones open for a small light source. Apparently we were in a living room, there were couches and a small TV in the center. This place was a wreck; I can’t even imagine someone living here. Miranda flipped on the light and allowed us to actually see each other and the full room.
“Ashley, are you fucking crazy?” I shouted at her and even shook her to get it across that I was not happy.

“I just committed a hit and run, I’m sorry if I’m a little jumpy. Don’t I have that right?”

“You don’t have the right to just jump into someone’s open window, dumbass. You just added another charge: breaking and entering.”

“We could’ve just gone home after that!”

“Ashley, I didn’t make you drive anywhere. I can’t make you do anything. You were driving. You could’ve gone home. You could’ve stopped and accepted that you hit someone rather than driving away!” I shoved her against the wall.

“Guys!” Miranda pulled me off Ashley and stepped in between us. “Maybe we should just get out of here.”

“Maybe. Maybe. I dunno, I’m not the one that can drive.” I crossed my arms and sat on the couch to be dramatic.

"Okay, we really need to get out of here." Miranda headed back to the window.

"No! I am not going back out there." Ashley sat on the couch next to me. I squirmed away.

"You guys are stupid, out of everything we've done today, this is the worst. This is breaking into someone's house!"

"Oh so destroying an aisle at Meijer's, stealing, making graffiti, and performing a hit and run is any less illegal?" I jumped up, my anger now completely focused at Miranda. Ashley jumped up and joined the screaming match. All three of us were shouting at the top of our voices when we heard the floor creak. We froze and stared at the dark stair case in the neighboring room.

We made out a tiny, black figure in the middle of the stairs. I didn't know if it was a person or an evil entity coming to steal my soul, and I didn't care to figure it out.

"Oh shit!" I pushed Miranda and Ashley out of my way and catapulted myself out of the window. I ran across the street and hopped inside the bed of Ashley's truck where I convinced myself to stay. Miranda and Ashley both screamed and made a beeline for the
window. Miranda accidently slammed in the wall, slowing her race for the window, which caused her and Ashley to become stuck. They screamed even more, kind of like trapped animals. They kicked and screamed to dislodge themselves only to fall straight to their faces on the ground below. Ashley and Miranda jumped in the truck and took off not even knowing if I was in the bed or not. It's always nice to know they thought about me.

"Hey!" I slammed my fist on Ashley's back window which caused her to scream and swerve, tossing me onto the hard pavement at almost forty-five miles per hour. She slammed on her brake, knowing it was me she tossed.

"Morgan!" She parked her truck and ran out to me. "Are you hurt? Are you okay? Where does it hurt?"

"My everything hurts." I groaned.

"She can't go back home like this, and there's no way we can take her to the hospital without getting caught." Miranda came out of nowhere.

"I know." They both pulled me up to observe my wounds. Scraps and gashes everywhere, bruises already forming, blood stained my clothes. They helped me into Ashley's truck and we were off again. Where, we didn't know.

"We should go to my house, no one's home so she can just go in the shower and get all the blood off." Miranda suggested. I nodded, I didn't even want to go to the hospital.

We got to Miranda's house, and I jumped into the closest shower. The water managed to clean away the blood that hadn't set yet, but the wounds and bruises couldn't be covered. Then there was the fact that I was completely soaked. I got out of the shower and saw myself in the mirror.

"Oh my God, my face." I touched my left cheek and eye. Both were bruised, cut, and swollen. Great, a giant black eye. That's going to be easy to cover. I sighed and walked out into the living room.

"I can't just walk into my house soaking wet."

"Morgan, have you seen what time it is?" Miranda threw me my phone. 3:36 in the morning. Miranda was right, there was no way anyone in my house was awake.

"Ashley, take me home."
"Sounds like the smartest thing you've said tonight," Ashley murmured.

Miranda showed us out and off we were. Ashley stayed under the speed limit, well under it. She had the heat blasting so I wouldn't get hypothermia from being wet. Ashley's radio was off completely. We sat in total silence. She casually parked her truck in her driveway and we both hopped out and started walking towards our houses.

"You wanna come to my house?" I called back to her.

She looked at her house. "Might as well." She turned on her heels and joined me across the road. We walked into my house, locked the doors, and went to my room. No one was awake. No one could see the destruction yet. I changed into warm, dry clothes, and she changed into some pajamas. We both laid in my bed and let the whole night soak in.

"Well, at least we're still alive." I eventually said.

"Yeah, and at least we're together."

Sleep eventually took us. We were ready, though, ready for whatever tomorrow had in store for us.