

What Happened to Josephine

By Connor Wilson

I don't like to talk about Josephine because she was the best thing to ever happen to me. She was always so beautiful when her sunshine hair would light up her dimpled smile. And her eyes could cradle my heart and calm me. But, what happened to her was my fault. To say the least, I was mad. She needed me to have a job and I needed her support. We couldn't have one without the other. She was yelling at me in the car and I just wanted to get home, so I tuned her out and kept what focus I had on the road. But, her voice crept its way back. Her voice echoed in the car and my blood boiled hotter with every "Lazy," "Idiot." Eventually, it just got to me.

"Josephine! I get it. Just please stop talking," I yelled slamming my fist into the wheel. When I looked at her, her hair wasn't lighting up her face and the fear in her eyes broke my heart. I didn't know what to do. I could only stare at the petrified girl in my passenger seat.

Her gaze broke and she pointed out the window with a scream. When I turned to look, my car had gone through the railing and we plummeted from the bridge, into the river.

I woke up in the hospital in the company of a single nurse. I tried talking to her, but the pressure of the air in my lungs against my ribs forced me to quit. The nurse noticed I was awake, checked the monitor, and left with a look of disgust on her face. As the nurse walked out, Josephine's mother came in, her eyes, brimming with tears of fierce rage.

"How could you?" she asked me quietly. I knew she was holding herself back from her clenched and shaking fist. I tried to ask her for forgiveness and question Josephine's condition,

but the pain of my chest held me back. Her mother's anger paused when she looked at my pathetic face and my eyes, full of shock and sadness. She ripped the curtain open and left.

The whole time I was there, I was never informed about Josephine. I was just left to my thoughts until I got out to go right to court. During the trial, I discovered Josephine died on impact. I was able to go with a fine and community service due to the discovery of a fault in the bridge. They mostly blamed the city.

Every day, I wonder what would've happened if there was no fault. If I didn't get mad. If I wasn't some lazy shit who would just get a job. I've found myself sitting under our tree in the park, waking up in her spot on the bed, and standing at the spot of the bridge, listening to our song. I like to think that she's beside me whenever I listen. Sometimes it feels like her head is resting on my shoulder. I go to pet her head, but there's nothing there.

There was one morning I woke up to the song being played on the radio.

"Josephine. Can you turn that off?" I said, my half-woken brain thinking she was still there. The radio slid itself from the nightstand and crashed onto the floor. I shot out of my bed, my brain, fully awake now. My eyes flurried around in my sockets searching for someone, but my room was empty. My gaze went back to the radio. I picked it back up and examined it. There wasn't anything wrong with it. I checked to see if the nightstand was just crooked, but it was fine. I returned the radio to its spot and began to prepare myself for the day. It was my first day of my new job.

As I was buttoning my shirt, the radio began playing the song again. I stepped over and went to change the station, but the knob was fighting me. It was probably just stuck. I unplugged the radio and continued getting ready. When I was set to leave, the radio started playing again. I

went to check it, but the music stopped when I entered the room. After another fruitless scan, I left.

On my drive, I had made sure to keep the stereo off. I didn't want to listen to the song over the bridge. It was Josephine's birthday and I wanted to be respectful. I could see the fresh metal where we crashed. The welded seams stared at me. They were the city's scars to everyone else. The rails vanished into the horizon and my stereo thrust itself on, full blast. In my panic, I had steered the car into the one beside me. I was spinning and flew over the rail. The warm water welcomed me into a darkness.

I wasn't wet. I wasn't drowning. I wasn't even in my car. Just a darkness. I spun around looking for an answer. All I saw in front of me was Josephine, holding her arms out, happy droplets coming from her eyes and wrapping around her gentle smile. She was here, she was living.

"Aaron. You're back," she said softly.

"I'm so sorry," I whispered.

"I know. I'm sorry too."

I ran into her arms. I could feel her hair on my face, her arms tight and her hands clasping the back of my shirt. Her breath on my neck.

I had Josephine again.