

Jenn's Comments

*My story is about a girl named Alex who loses her parents when she is young and she is friends with a boy named Ryan. He ends up falling in love with her, and he really cares for her because she is all alone. They end up getting married because it is set during WW2 and she has no one to stay with and no means of support during the war. She realizes that she really needs him, but doesn't necessarily love him. Then he ends up going off to war and he comes back, wounded and unable to talk and ultimately needs her. They end up falling in love, but it's not flashy or glamorous or anything like that. It's just kind of about how love sometimes overflows out of a need for someone because you cannot live without them.*

She remembers her fingertips trailing out the window, and the kind of wind worked up by pushing the car a little too fast, and something vaguely country playing on the radio. Then Gigi's mama takes a sharp breath, like she is choking, and Alex lunges forward to peer <sup>between</sup> through the two front seats. Gigi's mama uses her palm to shove Alex in the chest, trying to get her to sit back down, <sup>to see what is happening ahead.</sup> but Alex struggles and keeps her eyes wide open. Her mama and daddy's car is spinning, round and round, tiny, like the little blue tops that she and Ryan spin on the sidewalk. Gigi's mama slams her foot down on the brake and skates to a stop. Alex is jerked backward, but she is still watching <sup>her parents' car until it slams into a tree.</sup> the car spin, and slam into a tree. Alex jumps out of the car, and Gigi's mama screams at her to stay, but she <sup>keeps</sup> is running. Cars have stopped all across the road, and people have <sup>gathered</sup> began to gather like a cloud around the <sup>crumpled</sup> car. On one side, the metal has crumpled like a fistful of paper. The other side is pinned against the tree at an awkward angle, half wrapped around it <sup>like</sup> in a grotesque comma. <sup>where are her parents?</sup>

There are firemen there now, Alex did not even hear their sirens pierce the air. They scan the area, and their eyes land on what has happened. Now, Alex <sup>sees them</sup> sees it, too, and she cries out like a wounded dog. Her parents' bodies have been flung from the car, and they lie <sup>far</sup> away from it in limp heaps. Alex is there now, and she stands over them, too horrified even to scream. Her

They landed in the same spot?

EPISODE 21: NOVEL EXCERPT (YA-MIDDLE OF STORY) – NO TITLE

mama's back has ~~been broken~~<sup>been</sup>, nearly snapped in two and she is bent double on the ground, her red hair ~~caught~~<sup>soaked</sup> in the mud, and her mouth open, as if to get a breath she will never ~~have~~<sup>take</sup>. Her dad is partially on top of her mom, his glasses are in little pieces around him, and his face is ~~bathed in~~<sup>splattered with</sup> blood. And then Alex sees the ~~blood~~<sup>Blood is e</sup> Everywhere, seeping into the mud ~~on the ground~~, and making her mom's white shirt see through. The blood is on Alex's sandals now, and she is on her knees in it, reaching out to touch their still warm faces and press her face in the blood, and wishing that it was her own. But then there are firemen grabbing at her, and one lifts her and ~~carries~~<sup>drags</sup> her away. ~~Now~~<sup>She sings</sup> she has found her voice, and she is screaming, cursing, words with jagged edges to hit someone, anyone.

“Mama!” She screams, “Daddy!”

The fireman holds her in his arms, smelling vaguely of smoke and wood. He ~~takes~~<sup>drags</sup> her back to Gigi's mom, who is running ~~over~~<sup>toward her</sup> in panic. She holds out her arms for Alex, but now Alex has grabbed onto the fireman with two fists and will not let go. She screams and fights until the fireman yells over the noise, “Where do you want to go, Alex?” — *the fireman knows her name?*

And then there is only one name she can get off her lips.

“Ryan.” And again, “Ryan!”

Gigi's mom shows the fireman the way to go, and Alex does not even realize that it is only a block away. He carries her there, dripping with tears, and bangs on the door. Ryan opens it, and ~~he sees Alex~~. She pulls herself out of the fireman's arms and flings herself on him, and his arms are out and he holds her. He tugs her down to the steps, and ~~half~~<sup>the fireman tells him what happened</sup> pulls her into his lap. She beats his chest and screams curse words into the air and he does not say anything at all. Then she holds up her hands, still bright with her parents' blood and rubs it onto her face.

“I wish I was dead, Ryan. I ~~wish it was me instead~~.”

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He looks at her, and there is panic on his own face.

“No, Alex. Don't say that. I ~~still~~ need you.” *He rocks her gently in his lap.*

She is too tired to argue, so she slumps against him, as the blood dries on her ~~cheekbones~~ *cheeks* and ~~her~~ *clothes* ~~body~~ *and* ~~her~~ *stead's* body quavers until there is only the sound of Ryan's ~~breath~~ *breath* which ~~smells of~~ *who* ~~steady~~ *Ryan's breath* ~~comes~~ and the ~~gentle~~ *stead's* beating of his heart.

JOVE

*My story is about a girl named Alex who loses her parents when she is young and she is friends with a boy named Ryan. He ends up falling in love with her, and he really cares for her because she is all alone. They end up getting married because it is set during WW2 and she has no one to stay with and no means of support during the war. She realizes that she really needs him, but doesn't necessarily love him. Then he ends up going off to war and he comes back, wounded and unable to talk and ultimately needs her. They end up falling in love, but it's not flashy or glamorous or anything like that. It's just kind of about how love sometimes overflows out of a need for someone because you cannot live without them.*

*(Love: is it the chicken or the egg. Does love come first or is it to fill a need that is missing otherwise? Interesting premise)*

*As I read this, I'm taken with the tragedy. But, at this point in the story, and not knowing how the characters have been portrayed in previous pages, it's difficult to react to the tragedy unless we – the readers – are set up to fully understand the magnitude of the loss. We're told that Alex is upset. Of course we can understand the loss. The real challenge for the author is to help us to feel the loss. As I see it now, this is as grabbing as a newspaper account. Sad, but distant.*

She remembers her fingertips trailing out the window, and the kind of wind worked up by pushing the car a little too fast, and something vaguely country playing on the radio. *(too many ands. Try to rewrite.)* Then Gigi's mama takes a sharp breath, like she is choking, and Alex lunges forward to peer through the two front seats. Gigi's mama uses her palm to shove Alex in the chest, trying to get her to sit back down, but Alex struggles and keeps her eyes wide open. *(I'm having a difficult time figuring out who is sitting where.)* Her mama and daddy's car is spinning, round and round, *(tiny, like the little blue tops that she and Ryan spin on the sidewalk.)* ~~delete~~ Gigi's mama slams her foot down on the brake and skates to a stop. Alex is jerked *(forward? The car is stopping.)* backward, but she is still watching *(feeling?)* the car spin, and slam into a tree. Alex jumps out of the car and Gigi's mama screams at her to stay, but she is running. Cars have stopped all across the road, and people have ~~began~~ *(began)* to gather like a

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cloud around the car. On one side, the metal has crumpled like a fistful of paper. The other side is pinned against the tree at an awkward angle, half wrapped around it in a grotesque comma.

*(Oh, I get it now. There are two cars in this scene. Alex's folks are in the front car and spin out of control. I was confused. Maybe the previous pages explained all of this.)*

There are firemen there now, (.) Alex ~~did not~~ (didn't) even hear their sirens pierce the air. They scan the area and their eyes land on what has happened. Now Alex sees it too, and she cries out like a wounded dog. Her parents' bodies have been flung from the car, and they lie far away from it in limp heap. Alex is there now, and she stands over them, too horrified even to scream. Her mama's back has been broken, nearly snapped in two and she is bent double on the ground,(.) her *Her* red hair caught in the mud,(.) and her *Her* mouth *is* open, as if to get a breath she will never have. Her dad is partially on top of her mom,(.) his *His* glasses are in little pieces around him, and his face is bathed in blood. And then Alex sees the blood. Everywhere, seeping into the mud on the ground, and making her mom's white shirt see through. *(Too many ands)* The blood is on Alex's sandals now, *and* she is on her knees in it, reaching out to touch their still warm faces *and* press her face in the blood, and wishing that it was her own. But then there are firemen grabbing at her, *and* one lifts her and carries her away. Now she has found her voice, *and* she is screaming, cursing, words with jagged edges to hit someone, anyone. *(Try to rewrite using fewer ands)*

*"Mama!" She screams, "Daddy!" ("Mama," she screams. "Daddy.")*

*You're missing a powerful moment. This is pivotal to the story and all we hear are a few brief screams and a summary of what she said. This loss deserves more emotional impact. Where does her mind travel in the instant of realization that her family has been wiped out. Does she*

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*think about the good things of the past? Or the loss for her future? Too much left out to be the powerful scene it could have been.*

The fireman holds her in his arms, smelling vaguely of smoke and wood. He takes her back to Gigi's mom, who is running over in panic. She holds out her arms for Alex, but now Alex ~~has grabbed~~ *(grabs)* onto the fireman with two fists and will not let go. She screams and fights until the fireman yells over the noise, "Where do you want to go, Alex?"

And then there is only one name she can get off her lips.

"Ryan." And again, "Ryan!"

Gigi's mom shows the fireman the way to go, and Alex does not even realize that it is only a block away. He carries her there, dripping with tears, and bangs on the door. Ryan opens it, and he sees Alex. She pulls herself out of the fireman's arms and flings herself on him, and his arms are out and he holds her. He tugs her down to the steps, and half pulls her into his lap. She beats his chest and screams curse words *(Let's hear the words.)* into the air and he does not say anything at all. *(lets experience his discomfort)* Then she holds up her hands, still bright with her parents' blood and rubs it onto her face. *(Lets see his reaction to the situation and her crying and actions.)*

"I wish I was dead, Ryan. I wish it was me instead."

He looks at her, and there is panic on his own face.

"No, Alex. Don't say that. I still need you."

She is too tired to argue, so she slumps against him, as the blood dries on her cheekbones and pant legs and her body quavers *(quaver is shaking of the voice. Quiver in of the body.)* until there is only the sound of Ryan's breath which smells of candy canes and the gentle beating of his heart. *(His breath doesn't smell of gentle beating of his heart. Try to reference candy canes*

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*and beating heart separately.)(I don't understand why the description of Ryan calming down is important. His actions are necessary only to highlight Alex's, a kind of emphasis).*



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Ed

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She remembers her fingertips trailing out the window, and the kind of wind worked up by pushing the car a little too fast, and something vaguely country playing on the radio. Then Gigi's

mama takes a sharp breath, like she is choking, and Alex lunges forward to peer through the two front seats. Gigi's mama uses her palm to shove Alex in the chest, trying to get her to sit back

down, but Alex struggles and keeps her eyes wide open. [Her mama and daddy's car] is spinning, round and round, tiny, like the little blue tops that she and Ryan spin on the sidewalk. Gigi's

mama slams her foot down on the brake and skates to a stop. Alex is jerked backward, but she is still watching the car spin, and slam into a tree. Alex jumps out of the car and Gigi's mama

screams at her to stay, but she is running. Cars have stopped all across the road, and people have

began to gather like a cloud around the car. On one side, the metal has crumpled like a fistful of paper. The other side is pinned against the tree [at an awkward angle], half wrapped around it in a

grotesque comma.

There are firemen there now, Alex did not even hear their sirens pierce the air. They scan

the area and their eyes land on what has happened. Now Alex sees it too, and she cries out like a

wounded dog. Her parents' bodies have been flung from the car, and they lie far away from it in

limp heap. Alex is there now, and she stands over them, too horrified even to scream. Her

- avoid using "is" and other "to be" constructions
- abbreviations feel more immediate; "he's" not "he is"

SO, this paragraph is exciting but confusing. it would help to tell us what is implied. who is car who's driving. etc.

Alex is in back  
Gigi's mama is driving Alex's parents car  
how is car spinning if it's stopped?

what crumple the side that didn't hit the tree?

didn't know they were in the car

- very powerful scene!



EPISODE 21: NOVEL EXCERPT (YA-MIDDLE OF STORY) – NO TITLE

*what can she see?*  
mama's back has been broken, nearly snapped in two and she is bent double on the ground, her red hair caught in the mud, and her mouth open, as if to get a breath she will never have. Her dad is *partially* on top of her mom, his glasses *are* in little pieces around him, and his face is bathed in blood. And then Alex sees the blood. Everywhere, seeping into the mud on the ground, and making her mom's white shirt see-through. The blood is on Alex's sandals now, and she is on her knees in it, reaching out to touch their still warm faces and press her face in the blood, and wishing that it was her own. But then *there* are firemen grabbing at her, and one lifts her and carries her away. Now she *finds* ~~has found~~ her voice, and she *is* screaming, cursing, words with jagged edges to hit someone, anyone.

"Mama!" ~~She~~ screams, "Daddy!"

The fireman holds her in his arms, smelling vaguely of smoke and wood. He takes her back to Gigi's mom, who is running over in panic. She holds out her arms for Alex, but now Alex has grabbed onto the fireman with two fists and will not let go. She screams and fights until the fireman yells over the noise, "Where do you want to go, Alex?"

And then there is only one name she can get off her lips.

"Ryan." And again, "Ryan!"

Gigi's mom shows the fireman *where* the way to go, and Alex does not even realize that it is only a block away. He carries her there, dripping with tears, and bangs on the door. Ryan opens it, and *he* sees Alex. She pulls herself out of the fireman's arms and flings herself on him, and his arms are out and he holds her. He tugs her down to the steps, and half pulls her into his lap. She beats his chest and screams curse words into the air and he does not say anything at all. Then she holds up her hands, still bright with her parents' blood and rubs it onto her face.

"I wish I was dead, Ryan. I wish it was me instead."

*more time needs to pass before she can speak*

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<sup>weak with</sup>  
He looks at her, and ~~there is~~ panic on his own face.

“No, Alex. Don't say that. I still need you.”

She <sup>is</sup> too tired to argue, so she slumps against him, as the blood dries on her cheekbones and pant <sup>legs</sup> and her body <sup>quivers</sup> until there is only the sound of Ryan's breath <sup>⑤</sup> which smells of candy canes <sup>①</sup> and the gentle beating of his heart.

Susan

EPISODE 21: NOVEL EXCERPT (YA-MIDDLE OF STORY) – NO TITLE

*My story is about a girl named Alex who loses her parents when she is young and she is friends with a boy named Ryan. He ends up falling in love with her, and he really cares for her because she is all alone. They end up getting married because it is set during WW2 and she has no one to stay with and no means of support during the war. She realizes that she really needs him, but doesn't necessarily love him. Then he ends up going off to war and he comes back, wounded and unable to talk and ultimately needs her. They end up falling in love, but it's not flashy or glamorous or anything like that. It's just kind of about how love sometimes overflows out of a need for someone because you cannot live without them.*

is it  
ignore (comment  
from filming)

I had no idea there were  
two cars.

She remembers her fingertips trailing out the window, and the kind of wind worked up by pushing the car a little too fast, and something vaguely country playing on the radio. Then Gigi's mama takes a sharp breath, like she is choking, and Alex lunges forward to peer through the two front seats. Gigi's mama uses her palm to shove Alex in the chest, trying to get her to sit back down, but Alex struggles and keeps her eyes wide open. Her mama and daddy's car is spinning, round and round, tiny, like the little blue tops that she and Ryan spin on the sidewalk. Gigi's mama slams her foot down on the brake and skates to a stop. Alex is jerked backward, but she is still watching the car spin, and slam into a tree. Alex jumps out of the car and Gigi's mama screams at her to stay, but she is running. Cars have stopped all across the road, and people have began-begun to gather like a cloud around the car. On one side, the metal has crumpled like a fistful of paper. The other side is pinned against the tree at an awkward angle, half wrapped around it in a grotesque comma.

Commented [s1]: This would be hard for the mother to do if she's driving the car.

Commented [s2]: If the mother skates to a stop, then the car can't still be spinning.

Commented [s3]: Hard to tell what's going on.

Commented [s4]: I'm confused as to what's happening, that the mother can scream at her to stay but the car is spinning?

Commented [s5]: Good

There are firemen there now. Alex did not even hear their sirens pierce the air. They scan the area and their eyes land on what has happened. Now Alex sees it too, and she cries out like a wounded dog. Her parents' bodies have been flung from the car, and they lie far away from it in limp heap. Alex is there now, and she stands over them, too horrified even to scream. Her

Commented [s6]: awkward

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mama's back has been broken, nearly snapped in two, and she is bent double on the ground, her red hair caught in the mud, and her mouth open, as if to <sup>draw</sup> get a breath she will never have. Her dad is partially on top of her mom, ~~his~~ His glasses are in little pieces around him, and his face is bathed in blood. And then Alex sees the blood ~~everywhere~~, seeping into the mud on the ground, and making her mom's white shirt see ~~see~~ through. The blood is on Alex's sandals now, and she is on her knees in it, reaching out to touch their still warm faces and press her face in the blood, and wishing that it was her own. But then ~~there are the~~ firemen are grabbing at her, and one lifts her and carries her away. Now she has found her voice, and she is screaming, cursing, words with jagged edges to hit someone, anyone.

Commented [s7]: she just saw blood on her father

Commented [s8]: good visual-very sad

Commented [s9]: I'm not sure about the tenses here.

"Mama!" She screams, "Daddy!"

The fireman ~~holds her in his arms~~, smelling vaguely of smoke and wood ~~holds her in his arms~~. He takes her back to Gigi's mom, who is running over in a panic. She holds out her arms for Alex, but now Alex has grabbed onto the fireman with two fists and will not let go. She screams and fights until the fireman yells over the noise, "Where do you want to go, Alex?"

Commented [s10]: You can't grab with fists, unless she is hugging him?

And then there is only one name she can get off her lips.

"Ryan." And again, "Ryan!"

Gigi's mom shows the fireman the way to go, and Alex does not even realize that it is only a block away. He carries her there, dripping with tears, and bangs on the door. Ryan opens it, and he sees Alex. She pulls herself out of the fireman's arms and flings herself on him, and his arms are out and he holds her. He tugs her down to the steps, and half pulls her into his lap. She beats his chest and screams curse words into the air and he does not say anything at all. Then she holds up her hands, still bright with her parents' blood and rubs it onto her face.

Commented [s11]: Unsure as to who is dripping with tears. I know, but it's misplaced.

"I wish I was dead, Ryan. I wish it was me instead."

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He looks at her, and there is panic on his own face.

“No, Alex. Don't say that. I still need you.”

She is too tired to argue, so she slumps against him, as the blood dries on her cheekbones and pant legs and her body quavers until there is only the sound of Ryan's breath which smells of candy canes and the gentle beating of his heart.

Overall, I think this is good. some excellent imagery, emotion. I think the fixes are on the technical side. The first paragraph is confusing; I wasn't sure if Alex was inside the car or not, etc (see my notes). I think I would have wanted the scene at the end (with Ryan) to be a little bit longer, to see their relationship more, but that might not be needed since this scene takes place in the middle of the book.

Nice job.

**Commented [s12]:** This isn't the right thing to say. It's not reacting to her shock. Maybe "it will be okay" or "I'll help you." Something like that. "I still need you" implies that this is a situation that has been going on for a long time. But the accident just happened.

JULIE

EPISODE 21: NOVEL EXCERPT (YA-MIDDLE OF STORY) – NO TITLE

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She remembers her fingertips trailing out the window, and the kind of wind worked up by pushing the car a little too fast, and something vaguely country playing on the radio. Then Gigi's mama takes a sharp breath, like she is choking, and Alex lunges forward to peer through the two front seats. Gigi's mama uses her <sup>right</sup> palm to shove Alex in the chest, trying to get her to sit back down, but Alex struggles and keeps her eyes wide open. Her mama and daddy's car is spinning, round and round, tiny, like the little blue tops that she and Ryan spin on the sidewalk. Gigi's mama slams her foot down on the brake and skates to a stop. Alex is jerked backward, but she is still watching the car spin, and slam into a tree. Alex jumps out of the car and Gigi's mama screams at her to stay, but she is running. Cars <sup>are stopping</sup> have stopped all across the road, and people have <sup>are beginning</sup> began to gather like a cloud around the car. On one side, the metal has crumpled like a fistful of <sup>paper in an angry man's</sup> paper. The other side is pinned against the tree at an awkward angle, half wrapped around it in a grotesque comma.

- Who?  
How related to Alex?  
Where are they going?  
in front of theirs?  
Why? on icy roads

TENSE

<sup>to see</sup> There are <sup>are</sup> firemen there now. Alex did not even hear <sup>the</sup> their sirens pierce the air. They scan the area and <sup>to see</sup> their eyes land on what has happened. Now Alex sees it too, and she cries out like a wounded dog. Her parents' bodies have been flung from the car, and they lie far away from it in limp heap. Alex is there now, and she stands over them, too horrified even to scream. Her

"there" sound



JULIE

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mama's back has been broken, nearly snapped in two and she is bent double on the ground, her red hair caught in the mud, and her mouth open, as if <sup>gasping for</sup> to get a breath she will never <sup>quite get</sup> have. Her dad is partially on top of her mom, his glasses are <sup>mangled across his nose</sup> in little pieces around him, and his face is bathed in blood. And then Alex sees the blood. Everywhere, seeping into the mud on the ground, and making her mom's white shirt see through. The blood is on Alex's sandals now, and she is on her knees in it, reaching out to touch their still warm faces and press her face in the blood, and wishing that it was her own. But then <sup>a</sup> there <sup>a</sup> are firemen <sup>s</sup> grabbing at her, and one lifts her and carries her away. Now she has found her voice, and she is screaming, cursing, words with jagged edges to hit someone, anyone.

"Mama!" She screams, "Daddy!"

The fireman holds her in his arms, smelling vaguely of smoke and wood. He takes her back to Gigi's mom, who is running over in panic. She holds out her arms for Alex, but now Alex has grabbed onto the fireman with two fists and will not let go. She screams and fights until the fireman yells over the noise, "Where do you want to go, Alex?"

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"Ryan." And again, "Ryan!"

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"I wish I was dead, Ryan. I wish it was me instead."

How? Describe.  
leg slung over her torso  
drenching her mom's white shirt

4 mention of blood  
SYNONYMS  
warm liquid  
red goo  
crimson  
viscous liquid

Would she curse?  
Why hasn't Gigi's mom caught up to her?  
Where's Gigi?

Does he know her?

Really? He walked her there?  
Why?  
She needs = parent = Gigi's mom

JULIE

EPISODE 21: NOVEL EXCERPT (YA-MIDDLE OF STORY) – NO TITLE

He looks at her, and there is panic on his own face.

“No, Alex. Don't say that. I still need you.”

She is too tired to argue, so she slumps against him, as the blood dries on her cheekbones and pant legs and her body quavers until there is only the sound of Ryan's breath, which smells of candy canes and the gentle beating of his heart.

without commas, Ryan's breath smells of the gentle beating of his heart.

NICE MIDDLE.

- I'D LIKE TO SEE HOW THE STORY STARTED AND HOW IT PLAYS OUT.
- DOES ALEX HAVE ANY SIBLINGS?
- WHERE DOES SHE LIVE AFTER THE ACCIDENT?
- HOW OLD IS SHE? SEEKS SOLACE IN RYAN'S ARMS? NOT THOSE OF PARENTS OF FRIENDS?
- WHY IS SHE WITH GIGI'S MOM AT START OF SCENE? AND NOT IN HER PARENTS' CAR?
- ARE THEY RUSHING TO THE SCENE OF AN ACCIDENT? IF SO, SHOULDN'T THE GROWNUPS GO AND LEAVE HER HOME OR IN THE CAR UNTIL THE DAMAGE/INJURY/DEATH HAS BEEN ASSESSED?
- ARE THEY CARAVANING SOMEWHERE — DINNER, STATE FAIR, SCHOOL PROGRAM?
- WAS THERE ANOTHER CAR INVOLVED IN THE ACCIDENT?
- WHERE ARE THE POLICE?