

# Sue's Story

**I knew I didn't want to.** It was hard and nobody seemed to understand, living in a new town and all. Although this wasn't the first time we had picked up and moved. I had been to four different high schools in the past six months and I couldn't even remember anyone's name. This time my dad promised me that this was it; no more moving, no more switching between parents. Finally, a life! With a little coaxing, I signed up for my new church's youth group. It is not like our family was religious but we did go for the biggies – Christmas and Easter. I figured it would be a way to make friends before school started again.

Monday came. I went to my new school, like I did every other time, by myself. My dad had to work, like always. In fact, he works a lot and the more I think about it, I think he never comes home because he doesn't want to face the truth. Besides when he is home all I ever hear is that distinct clink of a bottle of rum pouring that next drink. He promised to pick me up that day, but I expect to walk home, that is if I get through these next two classes after lunch.

I turned to go but somebody stopped me. A boy, and a very cute one, at that. I recognized him. He sat at the "cool" table, which was very obvious, as my new school was very divided. He gave me a piece of paper and winked at me. Then he and his group left with a few girls telling me they would see me there and that they hope I would come.

At my other schools, I had never really fit in and this was my chance! Finally a chance to have some real friends! I looked at the paper in my hand and it was a flyer telling about a party tomorrow night. After school I headed to the mall to buy a new dress.

I was so excited that night I forgot about my dad and everything else. The day of the party I asked my dad for the car, he mumbled something about how bad work was and then I heard the clink. I took the keys and ran out of the house with only the party on my mind. When I pulled up I didn't see anyone. I parked down the road because there were so many cars. I found everybody in the back, drinking. I was not a big drinker. I had a glass of wine at weddings or at special events but never bingeing. I knew the dangers of drinking and driving and all the statistics that schools give out. I knew that I would never do something like that.

Two girls from the group who gave me the invitation came over; well actually fell over to talk to me. "You're the new girl, right? Here's a little welcome present." I took a couple of coolers and the mickey of rum from them. Not intending to drink it, though, well, maybe only a little. The girls stood there until they had seen me drink a little and then they moved on.

I continued on my way through the party running into people. "Oh that's right you're the new girl?" was all I heard and then drank a bit with them.

Well, I guess that bits added up to a whole lot more. I was about to leave because I had to get the car home, when I finally ran into the boy from the school. We talked a bit and he gave me some of whatever he had. I tried not to, but he was so charming and I didn't see any harm in it. One more sip won't hurt anything. I told him I was leaving and he asked if I could drive him home. It wasn't far out of my way so I said yes.

Everything was awesome; I was finally fitting in! That is until we turned down the last road to his house. I could barely keep control of the car and my eyes were so blurry, I couldn't tell a tree from a road sign. But I didn't want to stop because I didn't want to seem like a pushover in front of him. My body felt heavy and my foot pushed harder on the gas. I strained to stay on the road almost straying off once but I managed to stay on. One more road and we were there or so I thought. I was drowsy but I forced myself to stay awake when we passed what I thought was the last road.

All I remember was that scream. Whether it came from him or me, I am not sure but that sound is as clear as the day is light. I woke up wondering why I was on the ground. My stomach and head had a dull ache and I could taste something thick in my mouth. I was facing something although I couldn't make it out. It looked like a scrap of metal. The air was eerie and it was dead silent. I tried to get up but my legs wouldn't move. I think I blacked out again because the next time I woke up I saw his body being carried away. I remember screaming, wanting to know why this had happened but then I remembered. It was my fault.

I found out later that "his" name was Jeff Williamson and that he left behind two loving parents and three younger sisters, a hockey scholarship and honours in his schoolwork. I, on the other hand, lived. That scrap of metal was all that was left of the car after hitting the tree. The doctors were able to save me and I was able to walk again. No permanent damage. People tell me that I was lucky, but I don't think so. I have to wake up every day knowing what I did.

I have to go to school every day and see it in their eyes.

I killed him.

(From OPHEA Health and Physical Education Curriculum Support Documents, Module # 5 – Substance Use and Abuse, Grade 10 – Public Profile, Unit 3)  
Teacher Note: there is also a video spot on MTO's youtube channel ("mtotransportation") called "Michelle's Story" that may be used as an option to supplement this lesson  
<https://youtu.be/sh4TVn01iio>