Driving Is Actually Scary
By Brennon Beebe

In America, driving is a rather large part of the culture. It makes sense, as the country is incredibly large, and there's not much in terms of public transportation. However, this means that you don't have many options in terms of travel. You either figure out how to drive or you figure out a much slower way around. You can definitely Uber or ask a friend but then you're "dependent" on people, and American culture is also largely about being independent and if you're not independent you're a liability.

So when you turn 16, just about everyone is trying to get you on the road with a driver's license. Which is interesting to me personally, because at 16 you are full of hormones and have a really unstable brain, so you realistically shouldn't be in charge of a large murder object. Then again, this is America, so not much makes sense anyways.

The point I'm getting to with all of this is: you put a lot of pressure on a very mentally unwell hormonal teenager with severe anxiety to not only control a dangerous vehicle, but be in charge of others lives and movement in that vehicle too, and it makes for a very bad combo when something goes wrong. On a completely unrelated note, I still don't have a driver's license.

If you couldn't tell, that was sarcasm. It is actually completely related.

When Covid-19 hit, I was around 14, which is the age I was supposed to be paying more attention to roadways and how cars work. Of course, that didn't exactly happen. So, when I turned 16, I was still stuck inside with an online course telling me basic road safety and etiquette. Which did just fine in terms of teaching me those things! But it didn't do too well in teaching me how to get used to being in a car, and actually using the pedals, or shifts, or really anything other

than telling me what the mirrors do. To be fair there's a lot of cars out there, and you can't cover every car, but the point is that I was not mentally or physically prepared to drive a car.

The first (and so far only) time I drove a car was around 2 years ago. I don't remember exactly how it started, or who brought it up, but at some point during the day I ended up in the driver's seat in an empty parking lot with my mom. I was supposed to just get used to how the car feels, and turning it. Far from the worst starting point of being the driver of a car. Just a fairly simple half hour at most of getting used to the driver's seat! Surely you can't mess that up!

For the majority of the time, I just learned how to softly brake and turn right. I think I touched the gas pedal *once* and even then I immediately started braking. It was simple stuff and my mom didn't push me to do anything crazy. It was going well! Granted it was still terrifying, but maybe I could get used to it.

I'm honestly not sure how I got to the next situation. Either I turned funny to get myself into that situation or my mom suggested it. Whatever it was, I had to make a left turn. Easy, right? You just do the same thing you did for right turns but the opposite! That's not difficult and normal people do that all the time! Except for some reason, and I have no idea if this is normal or a me thing, changing directions is hard. I learn or do something going left/right, and then when I have to switch to the other direction it feels wrong or uncomfortable. Of course, there's no time to feel uncomfortable in a car that you're driving. So I started turning and immediately everything went wrong.

I was turning right (well, left actually) into a pole. I think I even got on the curb, but I wouldn't be able to say for sure. So what do you *not* do in this situation? Do you a) turn the other direction to hopefully avoid the pole, b) stop the car, or c) forget which pedal is what and hit the accelerate pedal instead of the brake pedal right into the side of the pole despite the fact that you had just

been practicing doing slow stops and should know which is which? If you chose C then you're correct! Don't do that! Unfortunately that is exactly what I did.

The rest is much more of a blur and honestly less important. I remember leaving the driver's seat to go to the passenger's and that's about it. Well, that and the overwhelming guilt at denting my mothers car and failing to remember a vitally important part of the car, but I'm trying to make this as lighthearted as possible.

The combination of this being my first experience driving, my practically all time low mental health, and the mounting pressure of "you *need* to learn how to drive right now so you can at least emergency drive to somewhere because no one else could be there for you" really made the situation much more overwhelming and difficult to deal with back then than if I were to deal with it now.

      While I understand the need for many kids to grow and get away from their home life, the idea that someone not immediately going to get their driver's license at 16 is a weak and useless person that should "really just do it and get it over with it's not that hard" that comes from everything is painful. There are many people that *can't* drive or learn how to drive for various different reasons and they shouldn't be judged for it. While my issue is small and can be overcome eventually, many others can't. Saying you can't drive just feels like asking for judgment from others when you live in America. Asking for a ride makes you feel like a burden on the driver, even if you know them. Or maybe all these problems are all in my head and I'm just very anxious.

Honor Code: I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who has not. /s/ Brennon Beebe _____