

Extra Time

"He's done time you know."

The works canteen is busy, they think I can't hear but I've always had good ears.

I constantly relive that night. The sky was inky black, dotted with stars and there was a full moon although the towering fir trees along the roadside blocked out most of its light. The bike was suddenly there, from nowhere, in my headlights. There was a sickening crunch, then something hit the car bonnet. I saw his face for a split second through the windscreen, inches from mine. The expression, difficult to describe and even more difficult to forget was a horrible combination of shock and terror. I'm not sure if my senses were heightened at the time but in my memory everything is technicolour vivid, 100 decibel loud: the heavy thud of him hitting the ground after bouncing off the bonnet; the creak of the car door as I got out; the deep red of the blood pooling under his leg, bent at a strange angle. His groans grew louder and more urgent as I dialled 999, taking several attempts as my hands were shaking so much. I can recall with crystal clarity the graveness of the paramedics voices as they treated the young man, hardly more than a boy. Then there was another bright blue flashing light as the police car arrived, the emotionless monotone of the policeman as he took my details, etched on my memory.

I relived it in my prison cell every night, waking sweat drenched from an even worse version of reality where the teenager came crashing through the windscreen screaming and bloody faced, crushing me so I couldn't breathe.

I'd been in the pub barely an hour, only had two drinks, thought I'd be OK.

Three years later I still think about it every day, break down crying sometimes at night when the boy's face, paralysed with fear, won't go away.

Things were a bit rocky with Karen before the accident but that was the last straw for her. It wasn't the drink driving or the time in prison, she stood by me then, but the way I turned in on myself she said, couldn't put the accident behind me. I still see her around, she's not with anyone else. Her friend Sarah told me she doesn't go out as much these days, keeps herself to herself a bit more.

I've just started back at work, it took a long time to get a job. It's nothing like as good as my old one but that's no one's fault except mine. I'm hoping being busy will take my mind off it, help the memories fade but maybe they shouldn't, for his sake.

"Drink driving apparently. Hit a young cyclist, it was touch and go. They said the lad probably wouldn't walk again."

"That's terrible but then I suppose he's served his time."