

## Driver's Ed?

It was a beautiful day, dry and sunny, not a cloud in the sky. My half-hour driving lesson with my mother matched the weather: It was near perfect. I drove at the speed limit, stopped at all the stop signs, and even landed in the proper lane after a turn. As I pulled onto my driveway, I was really proud of myself. But what started out as the perfect driving lesson ended in a terrible tragedy when I pressed down on the gas instead of the brake.

The long driveway lay ahead of me. Unfortunately, it was not as long as it seemed to be. It was a thunderous crash that brought everyone out as quick as lightning. My little brother, who had witnessed the entire disaster from two feet away, just stood in shock. My other brother came running out to see what had happened. My sister, as always, took pride in pointing out another one of my major mistakes by screaming about how stupid I was. And unfortunately, my good friend happened to be playing ball on his driveway at four that afternoon. He watched without commenting. My mother just sat in the car, speechless. As for me, I was out of the car in a dash, cradling my head in my hands, uttering the same phrase over and over-- "Why me? Why me?"

After what seemed like an eternity, during which time the shock had worn off, I swore I would never drive again and then began to get nervous all over, thinking about my father's arrival within the next half-hour. The only saving grace was that my family was to immediately leave for a holiday dinner at my grandmother's. My father wouldn't have the nerve to start a scene in front of all those people: He would just give me the eye all night. I made sure to sit at an angle, so I wouldn't have to look him in the eye. Actually, my father surprised me by saying the accident wasn't completely my fault. It was those silly sneakers that he's always despised.

I realized later that this unfortunate event was a blessing in disguise. The thought of my little brother standing between the car and the garage door rather than a few feet off to the side as he was, kept playing over and over in my mind. Until this day, the thought still terrifies me. Driving is not as easy and carefree as most sixteen-year-olds think. I am extra careful now because I know that there is no room for error. A car can truly be a lethal weapon. My road-training class recently scheduled a field trip past my now infamous garage doors with me as their tour guide: "To the right is the Garcia house, which is now under repair..."

I have since learned that mine was the most common accident of sixteen-year-olds learning to drive. Because of inexperience, they tend to panic in emergency situations and press the gas pedal. I have learned, however, that I must be responsible for my actions. Fortunately, my accident was a valuable lesson. Cars are not toys; driving is not a game, and accidents don't just happen to the other guy. They can hit home.