***TRIAGE***

***By Shauna O’ Connor,***

***1st Year,***

 ***Scoil Mhuire, Kanturk.***

I stare out of the window, to the ambulance bay. Ambulances are parking and driving off every so often, collecting poor, unfortunate souls from whatever situation they happen to be in. I look out of the door, at nurses and doctors scurrying about, pushing dinner trollies and staring at us, at me. One nurse, probably a matron, walks past, then double backs and steals a long, cold look at me. I know what she’s thinking. I look a state. My frizzy brunette hair is greasy and untidy and I wouldn’t be surprised if there was a twig or something stuck in it. My hands are sore and bandaged. My clothes are tattered and dirty. I look like I walked in from a dump, but I didn’t. I walked in from a crash scene, a crash that I was in. A crash that my Mum was in.

My Mum is lying limply on the hospital bed, the only reassurance that she is alive is the humming of the life support machine and her slow and gentle breathing. Her beautiful, long black hair is brushed off her face. She has a few deep cuts around her eyes, most of which needed stitches, and there is a horrible, purple-brown bruise on her forehead. She looks like a battered doll, a doll that if you drop one more time, she will smash into a hundred pieces. Dad, tired and sad, is sitting by her bed, holding her hand. He looks as if he hasn’t slept in weeks, and even though he’s only forty two, the bags under his eyes and the grey hairs sprouting on his head makes him look ten or fifteen odd years older. A doctor comes in every now and again, checking if there is any change, but no, there isn’t. There wasn’t for hours, since the accident happened.

\*\*\*

It was two o’ clock. I was furious, we all were.

I was angry with both Mum and Dad because they hauled me along to go shopping. I *hate* shopping and they knew it, so that’s why I was so annoyed. They were angry with me because I didn’t co-operate, and even though I was thirteen, I acted like a tantrum throwing three year old, all because I wanted to prove a point. “You should be ashamed of yourself Lauren,” Dad scolded. “You’re Mum and I do everything for you. *Everything*.What do you do to repay us? You sulk around like a spoilt brat. Act your age Lauren.” We went home early, and even though I felt a little bit guilty, I wasn’t ashamed, because I got what I wanted, to ruin their day as they had ruined mine.

The atmosphere in the car was unbearable, I could almost smell the anger in the air. I did nothing but stare out of the windscreen in silence. We were stopped in traffic for a while on the by-road, and when we finally did start driving again, we were in for a horrid surprise.

Dad was driving normally, not speeding (Dad is really safe while driving, and drives Miss Daisy when he’s not in a hurry to get anywhere.) All of a sudden, a motorbike sped past, followed by another, and another. Mum, being the born protester she is, unbuckled her seatbelt, rolled down the window, stuck her head out of it and screeched at them. But I doubt that they heard, I could barely hear her with the roaring of their motorbikes, then…BAM!!!!!!!!

A fourth motorcyclist rammed into us around a bend, and a pile up of cars started forming behind us. I was almost crushed in the back seat, and Dad had the breath knocked out of him by the airbag. Mum, however, was not wearing her seatbelt. Her head had smashed against the windscreen. The airbag had stopped her from totally crashing through it, but her face was badly cut and gushing blood. She was knocked out and flung back like a discarded ragdoll. Dad yelled her name and reached out to touch her hand.

A young man knocked at the smashed window. “I’ve called an ambulance!” he cried, trying, and failing, to open Dad’s door, which was locked from the inside. “They’ll be here any minute now!”

 The paramedics got me out, and managed to unlock both Mum and Dad’s doors. I ran to Mum’s side, slipping, and cutting my hands on the glass on the ground. Spectators started to gather around, some on phones, others offering to help, and one man started ranting and raging about his new car. I hated him. How could he be worried about his stupid car when we could have died?

One paramedic pulled me away from Mum as I touched her, her beautiful skin was bruised and cut. The sleeves on her shirt were blood stained. She was triaged by the paramedics before she was carried off to the hospital by the ambulance.

As they brought me to one of the ambulances, I caught a glimpse of the motorcyclist, the one that ploughed into us. They removed his helmet and revealed a young man, sixteen at the most. His face was purple, and gushing blood. The paramedics ran to him with a stretcher, and hauled him up into another ambulance. I was in an ambulance with Dad, who had his arm in a sling. Dad’s face was cut in several places, probably from the glass raining on top of him. He was crying, and one of the paramedics tried to comfort him, calm him down, but to no avail.

We were bought here to the hospital. Mum was rushed off to the intensive care unit while Dad and I were bandaged up and looked after. It took several hours, but luckily she needed no lifesaving surgery, just to stop the blood gushing from her face and hands. She was stitched up and bandaged, but she is still unconscious.

The teenage motorcyclist is in intensive care, and on the verge of slipping into a coma. We can see the three other motorcyclists roaming the corridors, tears sparkling in their eyes while they chew their fingernails. I know now that he isn’t a bad person. He was a reckless, naïve lad who just wanted to catch up with the other cyclists. I hope that he’s alright, that he won’t slip into a coma. It wasn’t his fault, it wasn’t anyone’s fault.

\*\*\*

It’s one in the morning, and we’ve gone home now. Dad put up a fight to stay with Mum, but the nurses persuaded him that they would call him if there was any change. They won. We won’t sleep, not while Mum is still sick. We wait by the phone, half hoping that it will ring, to tell us that Mum is out of the danger zone, that she’s awake and talking and wanting to see us. Half of me hopes that it doesn’t ring, though. No change means nothing worse has happened, right? We agree that we don’t want a call, that we’ll go up and see her in the morning, when she’ll wake up and see us. Then we’ll all go home and carry on as normal and nothing terrible will ever happen to us ever again.

That’s not real though. It’s a fantasy, an illusion. That only happens in movies, when the hero of the story gets out of whatever difficulty he or she is in and lives happily ever after in the fantasy life of TV, where only dramatic things happen, and conclude with everyone singing and dancing without a care in the world. In the real world, there are troubles. There aren’t always happy endings or happily ever afters. The hero’s don’t always survive, and the villains aren’t necessarily bad guys, just guys who made stupid, reckless mistakes without thinking of the consequences.

At half past seven, the phone rings, and I answer it. It’s a nurse! Talking calmly and sternly, but telling us to come quickly to the hospital. We leap for joy. Mum is awake!!! She wants to see us!!! I know that it will be alright now. Mum will recover. It will take time to heal her physical wounds, as well as her psychological scars. We will all need to be fixed up.

I know myself that I don’t want to go in cars. Last night I almost had a panic attack when the taxi took us home, but after a while, I’m sure it’ll be OK. After all, how many people have been in crashes? We’re not the only ones, not by a long shot. We won’t be the only ones to recover, either. We will recover, I’m sure of that.