Kids in Commercials

by Michael Wayne Hampton

KIDS IN COMMERCIALS

Hanna was so close to being one of those commercial kids. I mean, the commercial kids all kind of look like her anyway. They're homecoming queen pretty, and have these dumb smiles like they know they'll never be sad or poor. The commercial kids all have new cars. They have these Dads in button up shirts. They have these mothers who want some cause to give their life meaning so they talk about their kids forever. We have to watch the commercial kids every year in school, and sometimes their mothers will show up in skinny jeans with posters of them, and cry in front of our whole assembly. Avra thinks it makes them feel like stars, like *The Real Housewives of Dead Kids*, but I bet it gets old after awhile. How long can someone cry?

But Hanna is maybe not blonde enough to be a real commercial kid. Maybe her car was too old, or our town is too big. The commercial kids all seem to live in these small towns where their dying is such a big deal, where the football game has a moment of silence, and all the kids light little white candles for the news. Maybe that's why she made it. Maybe God only cares if it makes people stop talking for a second.

This is what happened. Hanna was driving her Dad's old Lexus home from Aimee's cheer meeting and was only like half-high so that had nothing to do with it since she smokes more weed than any of us. And it wasn't the fact that she was texting while she was driving either. That's what all the commercial kids do. They send a text out, usually when it's a pretty day, and one of their dumb friends sends one back. But when they go to look down to see what their friends said, in that one minute when they're looking down at their phones and trying to thumb back a response, they die. It only takes a second, a few feet left or right, and their into a telephone pole and dead forever; simple as that. Maybe that's why Hanna didn't get to be a commercial kid. She wasn't texting me, she could do that with

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one thumb without looking up. She can text faster than any of us. But she wasn't texting. She was sending a picture of what she stole.

Hanna isn't a thief, but sometimes you need proof if you want anyone to believe you. So when she turned around and took the picture she went off the road and hit three or four cars, not head on or anything, just grinded the side of her Lexus into them until she could stop. By the time she did there was this red, white, and purple rainbow on the side of her car. The windows were all broken. That's when she started to cry.

When she came back to school with two black eyes she showed me the picture of the thing she stole on her phone. She found it Avra's dad's office. It wasn't something she heard about or anything, she said she was looking for his credit card, but when she saw it she knew no one would believe her unless she took it with her. The photo was dim and hard to make out, but in her passenger seat it looked like a big turkey baster.

“What is it?” I asked.

Hanna touched the stitches on her cheek, moved her hair behind her bandaged ear, and laughed. “It's a dick pump.”

“A dick pump?”

“Yeah, isn't it funny?”

“You almost died over a dick pump? What happened to it?”

“I don't know,” she said, and closed her phone. “Probably in the car still. They towed it off.”

“If your mom sees it she'll freak.”

“Yeah,” Hanna said, “but she needs to laugh right? Since last week she's cried every time she sees me.”

“Dumb,” I said.

“Right?”