

HIGHWAY CRASH



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A short story from Martin Eads Pixel & Paper House™

Sirens blaring. Emergency lights flashing through the darkness. Emergency vehicles headed to a serious crash on the highway. A wrong-way driver on the highway.

A wrong-way driver went head-on with a family of three coming home from vacation. Twisted metal and scattered debris covered the roadway. When emergency personnel got to the crash site, police had already started to deal with the scene. The blacked-out wrong-way driver was pronounced dead at the scene. He also had been driving with no headlights.

The father of the family of three was also deceased. He never had a chance. He was wearing a seatbelt. The mother was also killed. She apparently was out of her seatbelt and leaning into the back seat to tend to her baby. She had gone through the windshield backwards and was lying in the street.

The baby was okay, but he was unconscious. The paramedics moved quickly and carefully, afraid of what injuries they could not see. They took him to the hospital to get him checked out. One paramedic saw his name on the back of his jersey. It read, "Alex." They were able to get Alex out with no problem, but he had to be taken out with the help of the Jaws of Life.

They rushed Alex in. He seemed okay except for the hit he took from debris flying around in the car. Alex fell into a coma. The doctors and nurses worked around him while machines beeped softly

nearby. They knew a five-year-old boy might not make it, but they were going to do whatever they could to make sure that he did.

Alex stayed in a coma for a while. When he finally came out, he was turned over to CPS, which also ran the local orphanage.

All Alex could say was Mommy and Daddy. That's all. He was scared. He was alone. He did not know what was happening. The unfamiliar rooms and unfamiliar faces made him pull deeper into himself. All he knew was that he wanted Mom and Dad. They knew he was going to have a hard time adapting to his new surroundings. They were going to make him as comfortable as they could.

During his time with the orphanage, he constantly heard his name being called out. A woman's soft voice, gentle and far away. Sometimes a man's voice, though he did not recognize either voice. Still, something about them made his heart ache with longing.

It seemed like he was at that orphanage forever. He would stand by the chain-link fence with his fingers locked in the links, day after day. The cold metal pressed into his small hands as he waited. People would come, but when they got closer, he could tell they weren't his parents. Each time, the hope in his face faded.

He would turn, slide his back against the fence, put his face on his knees, and cry. "Where's my Mommy and Daddy? Why did they leave me here? Did I do something wrong?" His questions went unanswered, and the silence made him feel even smaller.

Day after day, he watched people come, and some child would leave with them. But for some reason, he couldn't go. The people there were very nice to him. They always gave him juices and a lot of hugs. That always put a smile on his face, which would soon disappear when he remembered who he was waiting for.

He lay in his bed at night and cried himself to sleep. The staff always came in and gave him a lot of comfort until he fell asleep. They always wiped his tears away and gave him a kiss on the forehead. Their voices stayed soft and reassuring as they would say, “God loves you, and God will take care of you.”

He felt so safe while they were with him. They were all like angels. If it were not for the staff being the way they were, sadness and loneliness would have been planted in his heart. They made sure to show him so much love. They didn’t even try; it was just natural. The staff didn’t even have to say anything. Just being around them seemed powerful. He really felt safe around them. He felt the love.

He would get up every morning, eat breakfast, watch cartoons, or go outside and play. He would interact with the other kids, then lose interest. His thoughts always drifted back to Mommy and Daddy. He did see new kids every day, and some of the older ones were gone. He really had not seen these kids leave. Did they leave at night? Did their mommies and daddies come and get them? The questions stayed in his mind.

He had one friend he liked named Winston. He asked about him that morning, “Where’s Winston?” The female staffer paused and gently pushed his hair out of his face. With warmth in her eyes, she said, “Alex, Winston went home. He went home last night. He’s finally home.” Alex wondered what it felt like to finally go home.

He played with the other kids for a while, then went inside to watch cartoons. This was one good thing there: they always had cartoons on. The familiar sounds filled the room, but there was something different about this place that day. Alex went to his room and lay down. He had gotten really tired, and just like at night, they came in and comforted him.

As she was rubbing his hair while he lay there with his hands folded under his face, like he was praying, this time was different, though. Her touch was gentle, and her voice trembled with tenderness. She said, “We love you, Alex, but you’re going home, baby.”

Alex never moved from his position. A small spark of hope warmed him as he said, “I am?” “Yes, baby, you are. Goodbye, Alex. I will see you again. Goodbye.” Alex fell fast asleep with a peaceful smile on his face.

This one particular morning, when Alex woke, things were not as they used to be. The room felt unusually still. All of the staff were standing around his bed, their faces calm and kind. “Good morning, Alex,” one staffer said. Alex felt at peace with life. For some reason, all the bad thoughts he had were gone. The fear and loneliness that had followed him for so long had lifted.

A male staffer held out his hand for Alex to take. Alex reached for his hand, trusting him, then got up and walked with him. “Where are we going?” “You’re going home, Alex.” Alex’s heart leaped. “With Mommy and Daddy?” “With Mommy and Daddy.”

They were walking hand in hand toward this door. Where did this come from? He’d never seen this door before. There seemed to be a bright light behind it. He could see light through the cracks in the door, warm and inviting. When he opened it, the bright light was gone.

As they walked through the door, Alex realized the staffer was no longer holding his hand; he was gone. Alex looked back, and the door was gone. For a moment, Alex stood quietly, trying to understand. As he turned around, all the kids he had asked about were standing off to the side. They were all watching him, smiling as if they had been waiting.

They all said, “Hi, Alex. You’re home now.” “Hi, Alex. It’s Winston. We came home.” “Alex, this is my uncle.” Relief filled Alex at the sight of his friend. Alex went toward them as they were standing there.

Then, out of nowhere, they all started to disappear. Alex continued walking toward them. He wasn’t scared at all. A strange calm surrounded him. As he was walking, he heard, “Alex.” That voice sounded familiar and made him stop. Then he heard, “Come here, son.”

He turned, and his mother and father were standing there. For one breathless moment, he could only stare. Then he ran to them with all the strength in his little body. They knelt to comfort him and wrapped him in their arms. Alex had tears in his eyes. Momma wiped them and said, “There’s no more reason for tears, baby. You won’t ever shed a tear from pain again, only happiness.”

As Alex was hugging his parents, he looked back, and all those kids were standing there again. He was standing there, too. Confusion crossed his face. That door that had disappeared had just reappeared. He watched as the staffer walked out with a girl named Susan. She looked over at Alex and smiled; then she disappeared. How could he be standing over there and here with his parents? He turned back around and gave them a big hug, holding on as tightly as he could. His parents stood up, and they both took his hand and started walking.

Alex looked back as they were walking. Everybody was gone. As he turned back around, he said, “Mommy”—his mother interrupted him and said gently, “I will explain, honey.” They sat down on one of the benches, and Momma held his hand while Daddy sat on the other side of Alex. Between them, Alex felt protected again.

As he sat, he realized there was a group of people standing there. Then another door appeared, and out walked a man holding an older

person's hand. Then, like his staffer and everyone else, they disappeared. Another person walked up, took the person's hand, and walked away. Alex watched closely, trying to understand what the doors meant.

Momma said, "Son, you are in Heaven. This is God's country. That place you were at was one of God's many temporary homes to wait and see if you were going to get better. You were in a coma, baby, for a long time. God felt you could not survive. We were in a horrible car accident that took the lives of your daddy and me. It also took the life of that sweet young man who hit us. He's up here with us. You never came out of the coma, son. God finally decided it was time for you to come home." Her voice remained gentle as she held his hand.

Alex looked from Momma to Daddy, slowly taking in her words. "But what about all the kids that I saw leave with people?" "They lived, baby. Whatever was wrong with them, they got better. They will go on." "I heard my name." Daddy squeezed his hand and said, "Yes, son, that was us, but you could not hear us praying for you to get better." Alex finally understood the voices that had followed him through the orphanage.

Then there was another group of people, another door. They all looked over at the people. Momma said, "God has many doors, son. All you have to do is go through one, and you did." Then it all vanished, leaving only peace around them.

"Baby, you are home. Let's go." As they walked into the clouds hand in hand, Alex felt safe between his parents. He looked up and asked, "Where are we going, Momma?" Momma smiled. "We are going to meet our Father. He's waiting."

Thank you for reading.