



Quick Note: [Chapter 1](#) can be found [here](#), which you may wish to read if you did not already.

Only hours earlier Ben and Andy had been headed back to the Cedar Falls Police Station after attending a meeting with a variety of statewide law enforcement agents about a current string of robberies. They'd been on the road for five minutes when Ben's phone had rung, he'd tapped the speaker button before calling out, "Parker here."

"Hello Ben, can you hear me? I'm on speaker phone with Dad."

"Oh, hey Mom, you guys okay? I've got you on speaker phone too, Andy and I are on the road."

"Hello Andy. We're fine, Dad's been able to wrap up here earlier than expected, are you okay if we bring Lucy your way a little earlier than you'd mentioned? She's very excited to spend the weekend with you."

"Hi Mrs Parker," Andy chimed in sheepishly.

“Yeah, that’s fine, Andy and I are headed back to Cedar Falls now. What time do you think you’ll be getting in?”

They listened as Ben’s parents discussed times before she said, “Oh look Benji, we’re already on the road, but we were going to run a few errands first, say maybe 4ish?”

“That works for me!”

“Are you sure Darling? You don’t need to rush on our account, we’ll keep busy.”

“Mom, it’s fine. Do you guys want to stay for dinner before you head back?”

“Oh, that would be lovely, let’s wait to see what your father says?”

“Sure,” his father offered up, “but we’ll have to be back on the road by seven.”

Ben chuckled, “Okay, see you guys around 4 at my place then.”

“Bye Ben, and you too Andy,” Mrs Parker called out, “Stay safe boys, won’t you, we love you!”

“Bye,” they both called back before the line went dead.

“So, your family for dinner,” Andy stated matter of factly.

“Yea, Lucy’s coming for the weekend. I’ve got a surprise for her,” Ben told him a grin spreading across his face that he couldn’t seem to contain. “I hope she likes it though.”

“Well, I’m just gonna tell you right now, if it’s dinner I’m voting no.”

“Whoa, Man, that’s a low blow!”

“Is it? I ate your, what did you call it, experimental casserole,” Andy’s jibed his mouth turning

into a frown as if he could still taste it.

“Hey, I did warn you it was an experiment, I thought the ketchup would work in place of the tomatoes! I never told you that you had to eat it, though. That’s completely on you! What’s up with the traffic anyway? We’ve slowed way down,” Ben complained.

“Maybe we’ve got a sight seer in the passing lane,” Andy joked Yet, within another hundred yards they were barely creeping along.

“Check in with dispatch and see if there’s anything going on up there, will you?” Ben asked Andy.

Andy grabbed the radio and made the call, seconds later the voice responded back, “Multiple calls for help on Highway 120 from mile marker 60 – 70, with varied injuries from minor to severe from a possible hit and run. What’s your location?”

“10-4, Copy that. We’re at mile marker 75 on the 120. Available to assign.”

“10-4, Copy that, stand by for assignment.”

Ben glanced at Andy while they waited for further instructions, “That’s only five miles up the highway. Sounds like we won’t be getting through anytime soon, but with the pace of this traffic do you really think it could have been a hit and run?”

Andy shrugged noncommittally as he started grabbing gear from the back seat to suit up, “Be weird if they were able to drive off, that’s for sure. I wonder who made that call.”

“10-49, proceed, all available units to mile marker 65,” rattled through the radio.

“10-4, Copy that dispatch, proceeding to mile marker 65.”

Ben flipped on the lights and sirens, manoeuvring the truck out of their current lane of traffic. “Hang on,” he told Andy as the truck bumped into the grassy median. “We’ll see how far we get going this way.”

They'd barely made it a mile when signs of wreckage came into view, cars incapable of making abrupt stops had collided with cars in front of them.

"It looks like we've just got a few fender benders here," Andy noted, "and they've already got help here, keep heading towards marker 65."

Ben continued driving another few hundred yards forward, "You wanna call it I while I grab my gear?" he asked throwing the car into park and opening his door.

Andy nodded and radioed in their location and other pertinent details before climbing out of the truck and joining Ben as they headed towards the pileup of cars.

They attempted to take the entirety of the scene in at once, but it was nearly impossible. Cars were flipped askew, big rigs knocked over, voices screaming for help, children crying. Ben shook his head to concentrate and zone in one car to attend to at a time.

They raced towards the vehicle nearest them to check on the occupants, and continued moving forward up the highway, evaluating each situation they found and notifying dispatch, or other available first responders with the supplies, to help on bigger injuries. As they made the slow creep towards the epicentre of the scene, the escalation of destruction was obvious, and with that came the more serious injuries and fatalities. It had been an absolute nightmare of carnage.

They had just finished helping a family from a minivan, most of whom had miraculously escaped unharmed, when Ben pulled out his phone.

"Your parents?" Andy asked.

Ben nodded, "yeah, I want to let them know I'm not gonna make that four pm deadline," he sighed, "I was looking forward to this visit too."

"Maybe if your brother is at the station they could drop her there?"

Ben wiped a sweaty palm on his pant leg, "Not the best plan, but it could work. Unless James

is out here somewhere too..” He sent off the hurried text before quickly shoving his phone into an empty pocket and darting forward to the next car.

Thirty minutes later, while taking a quick breather and guzzling water someone had mercifully been handing out, Ben checked his phone again. He frowned, it wasn't like parents not to respond to a text message, but he had no time to dwell on it Andy was already ready to get moving again.

“Everything okay?” Andy asked him.

“Yeah,” Ben said distractedly as he capped his own water bottle and shoved it into a pocket of his cargo pants, “just sending James a quick message.”

He quickly fell into a run behind Andy as he decided to call his parents just incase James wasn't available, and silently cursed himself for not getting his house key copied and sent to them earlier like he'd promised.

He punched in their number and jammed the phone closer to his ear as it rang while moving closer to the mayhem in front of him, pausing only to evaluate what was going on ahead of him.

“QUIET!” someone nearby screamed over the deafening noises around them. The refrain was passed around like an echo until everyone froze straining to hear, or see, what the fireman had.

Everyone froze immediately straining to hear or see what the fireman had. It took only a moment before Ben heard it too, a phone ringing within the smashed and mangled vehicle, so horribly broken, bent, and twisted it was impossible to tell what type of car it had once been. Multiple emergency workers were already trying to determine how many people were trapped inside of it when the ringing had begun.

Ben stood, the overwhelming fatigue and heat he'd felt moments early gone. His skin prickled with goosebumps as it went cold, his hands now clammy gripped his phone tighter

as he realised the ringing everyone was listening to was in time with the ringing he heard in his ear.

## Author's Note:

This is the second chapter to the still yet unnamed story. It too has gone through many edits and revisions until it became its very own chapter. I hope you won't mind terribly that it's a bit of a cliff hanger chapter ending, because at this stage I am not prepared to share Chapter 3 as it's still in dire need of revision and editing.

If you missed Chapter 1, you can find it [here](#).

## The Reluctant Author: