

The Only Thing That Saved Me, Has Always Been Music

-Ally Azzarelli

I'm starting to think calling an Uber to move the body was a mistake. However, it's 1992. We don't have Uber or Smartphones. Instead, we call a cab from a pay phone.

That night begins like every Saturday night. I get decked out in my favorite band shirt, baggy jeans and Pumas, and plan on catching a hardcore show in Deer Park, Long Island. Deer Park is a quiet suburban town located about 45-minutes from my parent's house near Queens. Nothing much happens there or anywhere on Long Island, really.

Typically we're a crew of about five or six. For some reason, on this June evening only my buddy Kris is around. Not much of a drinker, I accept the role of designated driver, and we head out to the club at about 8 p.m.

The windows of my '79 Mercedes Benz 300D are open and the Beastie Boys Check Your Head CD is cranking on the cheap car stereo my ex installed last fall. Although I love my car, it truly is the butt of many jokes amongst my friends. Because it runs on diesel fuel, the car has a block heat system, which means I have to plug it in on cold nights. So while other kids enter a house party carrying a case of Killian's, I appear holding a bright orange extension cord searching for the nearest electrical outlet.

Chain-smoking Marlboro Lights—one after another—we suck down Snapple Peach Iced Tea and talk about finals, crushes and upcoming summer concerts. Cruising along the Southern State Parkway, about five miles away from our destination, the Benz dramatically slows down. I veer off to the shoulder and switch on the hazard lights. The car comes to a complete stop. Awesome.

Sure, the Benz has 200K miles on it, but Dad swore these German cars were built like tanks. "This car is safe and will last forever," he said the day he purchased it for me. Luckily Dad included an auto club membership in case I required emergency roadside assistance. There is however one major issue. How the hell do I call them so they can actually tow the freakin' thing?

Panic sets in. It feels as if we're in the middle of nowhere. It's dark. We're unfamiliar with the area. We aren't sure how far we are from the club. After a few minutes, a beat-up IROC-Z pulls over alongside us. The driver is a male in his late 20s with spikey hair and wire frame glasses. He's wearing a hideously bright colored vinyl zippered workout jacket and I imagine he's a weird loner trying his very best to look cool.

He offers us a ride. Thanks, but no thanks, guy. I jot down my auto club info along with the 800-number and ask him if he'd mind contacting them for me. He agrees and drives off. We wait and complain about how much this sucks.

After what feels like an eternity, Spikey reappears. He explains that the auto club folks need to speak with me, the account-holder, and are unable to assist him. Now, I'm not quite sure how other 20-year-olds would have reacted to that news, but I believe him. Yeah, I never said I was the brightest bulb.

He offers to drive us to the nearest pay phone. We're desperate. We aren't sure how far of a walk it is to the nearest phone. What choice do we have but to accept a ride with Spikey?

Slowly and carefully, we slip into the backseat of his sports car. I feel this impending doom encompass my entire being. It's like I know I'm doing the wrong thing, yet can't think quickly enough to jump out and yell, "Kris, this is a bad idea, we're going to die."

As we drive along the highway, I watch my car slowly disappear from the rearview mirror. My heart is beating out of my chest as I envision my fate in the hands of this spikey-haired weirdo. I whisper to Kris, "We're dying tonight. This isn't going to end well," and reach for her hand.

Kris and I are tough hardcore-type chicks. Unlike other college gal pals, we don't have that sweet type of friendship where we greet each other with a kiss or hug goodbye. We don't have cute nicknames for each other and to be honest, we aren't even super close. However, this night brought us closer. It was a night we'd never forget.

Hands clutched tightly, I can feel every muscle in my body clench as we inch further and further along the road. I wonder why he's driving so far away. I wonder why he hasn't gotten off at that exit we just passed. I clear my throat and confidently break the silence with, "Dude, isn't there a pay phone or gas station at the next exit? What's up?" He explains there are phones on the parkway and that we're almost there.

Finally we arrive at some sort of park and ride. I can faintly make out a strip of pay phones in the darkness. We both exit the car and find ourselves huddled together by one of the phones. It's dark. Like really dark. Our only light source is from Spikey's headlights.

Shaking with fear, I press each digit as quickly and carefully as I can. Relieved to hear an auto club operator's voice, I describe our unfortunate situation. In her mom voice, she scolds me. Apparently, I shouldn't have gotten into the car with a stranger. No shit, lady. She adds that he's a liar. The auto club would have taken my information from him as this happens often to stranded drivers without access to nearby pay phones.

Hearing this makes my stomach turn, and as I begin describing the car's location, the headlights go dim. "Hey man, can you turn the headlights back on, we can't see." He starts messing with the lights. They go on again, then off again ... on and off. Fear overpowers my entire being and I know we're not making it out of here alive.

Kris screams, "Dude. Stop fucking around. Leave the headlights on. Seriously. What the fuck?" With my back toward her, I whisper, "Kris, for real ... Don't piss him off. Like what if this freak is a serial murderer?"

Hanging up the phone, I slowly turn around and walk back to the IROC-Z. As I look up, the lights are off again. Fucking fantastic. The last thing I remember is him approaching me with what looks like, The Club, a popular early '90s theft deterrent that's basically a heavy metal bar. Blood dripping from my bleached hair, I painfully, yet peacefully drift into total darkness and silence. Am I dead? Is this the end?

I'm not sure exactly how much time passes, but my eyes flicker open. Covered in blood and dirt, I start to remember where I am and how I got there. In the darkness I see my frail friend struggling with that Spikey-haired loser. She's screaming for help. It's just the three of us. There's nobody around to rescue us from this madman.

Figures there's never a cop accessible when I need one. Of course the NYPD were on-hand to bust us for jumping the turnstile at Union Square Station a few months ago. Long Beach cops were on the scene the night we were drinking beers under the Boardwalk over the summer. Oh, and the police managed to break up the party I threw last weekend while my parents were out of town. Tonight, however there were no cops. Nope. None.

I don't know how we're going to get out of this horrific real-life horror show, but what I do know is I have to do something, and fast. As I reach for the pocketknife, my mind starts to wander. I think about how my aunt gave me that knife as a Christmas gift. Although I didn't think I'd ever need it, it looked cool, so I attached it to my car keys.

A high-pitch scream shakes me out of my holiday reverie and I jump to my feet and lunge toward the car, shoving the knife into Spikey's back. He lets out a yelp. I pull the blade out and give him another jab, and then another and another. Blood is everywhere.

Adrenaline overcomes me as I relentlessly stab and kick him. It's as if I'm no longer one with my mind, body and soul. I can't explain it exactly. I'm experiencing that thing murderers describe in their confessions when they say it's as if they're not fully there. That's what I'm feeling each time I gash and kick him.

"Enough. He's dead, Al! Stop!" screams Kris. It was as if she woke me from a nightmare. We sat together on the dirt for a few minutes. Facing the reality that although we've narrowly escaped death, we now have to figure out our next move.

A man is dead. My car is dead. However, the night is young and there's still time to catch the band.

Fuck it. We light a cigarette and call a cab.