

RESPONSIBILITY NARRATIVE

Happy Birthday Bri

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Coming home to my dorm on a Friday night to find myself suddenly, but willingly, forced to take on the position of mother and nurse comes to mind when reflecting on a past situation where I had a choice between letting a friend die or take on the responsibility of making sure she lived. It's unfortunate how typical it is to encounter a seen in college where alcohol has taken total control of someone. I had just come back to the dorms with my roommate Erin after spending an evening of fellowship with some of our closest friends. After we had just put down our purses and were obsessively checking our email to see if anyone had written when our friend Kelly runs into our room frantically and says, "I need you guys to watch Bri for a minute, I need to go find the others." Erin and I took one look at each other and knew that what we were about to encounter was not good.

Earlier that night a bunch of the girls on the floor had gotten together to celebrate Bri's nineteenth birthday.

None of them bothered to ask Erin and I to join them, knowing we would decline because of the fact that alcohol would be involved, they promised to give Bri our love anyway. Knowing our friends who were throwing the party; it was inevitable that alcohol was involved in our situation that we were about to embark upon.

Walking towards Bri's room as Kelly dashed down the hall I was so scared of what I might find, but I knew I had to go in. Standing in the door way Erin and I found Bri, completely unconscious in her bed with her face lying in a pool of her own vomit. It was evident that she had at least attempted to make it to the garbage can lying sideways next to her bed because her vomit had spilled over the edge of her comforter onto the carpet just barely next to the can. The sight of it all made me sick to my stomach, along with the smell. The room looked as if a herd of drunken cattle had passed through, instead of leaving behind muddy tracks; it was spills of vomit and more empty bottles that I cared to count. Erin and I were completely flabbergasted. We had no clue what to do; all we could comprehend was that this was obviously not a healthy situation. I closed the door behind us for fear that anyone walking by could take a look in and suddenly Erin

and I would be thought to have more involvement than just staring at our hopeless friend across the room. We were always aware of the fact that the girls on our floor were huge partiers but we never actually saw anything, they were usually careful enough to take it off campus; and wouldn't come back until they were sober enough to drag themselves up three flights of stairs to their room. I usually only heard stories about the night before and saw the occasional puffy blood-shot eye loitering around the next day with an ice pack on their forehead.

Starring at the sight of Bri in the most vulnerable state that I had ever witnessed in my life, I knew that I had a responsibility to save her life. The first words out of my mouth sense we had entered Bri's room were, "We have to tell someone." Erin was apprehensive to tell anyone about it and to just try to take care of Bri ourselves because she didn't want to get anyone in trouble or be charged ourselves with being directly involved. Which to a certain degree is completely understandable, there were our friends, but taking one look at Bri, who was involved no longer mattered to me. If saving my friends life meant me getting written up for being involved, then that was a price I was willing to pay hands down. I knew that we were not

the appropriate people to take on a challenge quite as big as that. And at this point I honestly didn't care if my friends involved would be angry at me, I knew that if Bri were to die that would not be a load that I was willing to carry on my own for the rest of my life just because I didn't want to be falsely accused of association and a few people upset with me. She hardly had any pulse at all, and taking a look around the room at all the empty bottles of alcohol it was pretty evident why. That was no longer blood running through her veins but all the different brands of underage drinking she managed to drown her system in.

Coming from down the hall we could hear the rattling of keys and the mumbling of really low voices, which could only mean one thing; campus safety was taking their nightly round through the dorms. Erin's dad was one of the officers on duty that night, I'm not sure if this played a role in her decision but I looked at her and with a face overwhelmed with worry she told me, "No don't. Let's just wait until Kel comes back. Then we can see if we need to contact campus safety." I turned from Erin's direction and looked directly into Bri's exhausted and swollen face, at that moment I made the final decision

that what this poor girl needed was not a couple of naïve young women who have never been put in a situation like this before, but a medical team that could provide for her what she really needs. I look at Erin and whispered, "I have to." I ran out the door and down the stairs, fortunately for me campus safety never really does a speedy job of rounds so it wasn't hard to catch up with them. I gave Erin's dad a hug and told them they needed to follow me back upstairs to third floor, that there was an emergency.

When I returned to the room, Erin was standing outside the door, pointing to the inside of the room and saying, "Daddy...it's Bri." Erin seemed more comfortable with the idea of having them involved at this point which made me feel a little better because I wasn't sure how much longer I could hold out on my own. Erin's dad stepped into the room while his partner stood in the hallway with us and asked us what happened. We told him only what we knew which was pretty much exactly what we were all looking at, that "We came back to the dorm and were told to watch Bri as Kelly ran downstairs to get the others."

Kelly finally returned running down the hall with

the rest of our friends who were involved. They looked shocked to see campus safety standing there with Erin and I but I thought they handled the situation well. I was nervous about the response that I might get from them but they didn't turn and run away but into the room saying, "We got her; we'll take care of her. We can handle this," I think they realized how crucial the situation had really become.

At this point Erin and I slipped back into our room, knowing that right now all we would do was get in the way and we didn't come out until we were asked by the police who later showed up. We could hear Bri screaming, "Leave me alone! I'm fine, go away! I hate you!" as Kristin and Kelly tried to move her from her bed into the bathroom. We saw lights flashing outside the window, lined up were not only the paramedics but cop cars as well. I felt numb. We could hear the cling, cling of a stretcher being propped up and the wheels spinning against the floor in the hall. As awful as those sounds were to our ears they gave us a bit of comfort; I knew she was in much better hands. I looked at Erin and said, "Happy Birthday Bir." The sirens outside our window blared and we knew that Bri was being taken to the hospital, but looking

through the peep hole in the door everyone was still running around like mad, the drama wasn't over yet.

Erin and I were soon asked to step outside our room and present our testimony of what we knew to the police and how we were involved. They didn't bother with us much, which was a relief, but it seemed like Erin and I were more of a nuisance than anything because of how little we were involved. We were asked to leave again until they had finished interviewing the other girls. Needless to say we willingly obeyed to make ourselves scarce.

The cops and campus safety soon left, leaving behind a gigantic mess. Kelly and Kristin were allowed to follow Bri to the hospital which left Gina, K.K., Erin and I to clean up the mess seeing as how other than waiting on news about Bri's condition there was nothing left to do. We picked up all the empty bottles and scrubbed vomit from Bri's bed and carpet, through the hallway into the bathroom and finally the second stall. It wasn't long though before Erin and I were once again left alone because Gina and K.K. eventually had to make their way to the police head quarters for further questioning. The only thing Erin and I had left to do was wait and hope that the news was only good.

We didn't even plan on trying to go to sleep, that just wasn't an option. We didn't hear anything of Bri's condition until around 6 am the next morning (6 hours after we found Bri) when Kelly and Kristin came back from the hospital. They came into our room sobbing and could barely talk. We tried our best to comfort them and it was evident not one hard feeling had been felt about the decision to involve authority. They told us that Bri had a blood-alcohol level of .21 (which is an equivalent of 60 shots!) and was in bad shape. She was in and out of consciousness but fortunately didn't need her stomach pumped; the poor thing pretty much accomplished that on her own. She was on an I.V. and they weren't sure how long she would have to stay there. I was relieved and angry. I was hoping that their tears were not for themselves but for their friend whom they allowed on her nineteenth birthday to succumb to such a pitiful state.

Bri ended up having absolutely no recollection of what had happened to her. Therefore she has never really understood the impact of how dangerous her situation was. The other girls involved were effected by the devastation of almost losing a friend, but only for a short time. Throughout the rest of the school year they all still

continued to party and Kristin told me that the only thing she learned was, "Not to drink in the state of Illinois."

The responsibility that I took on at the moment that I did was what was needed to be done to save a friend's life. If I hadn't made the final decision that someone needed to be notified of the situation, even though Erin and I could get in trouble as well, Bri would not have made it to 6 am the next morning. No one else was willing to take that risk and be accountable for the safety of Bri. The other girls involved would have only tried to help her themselves so as not to get in trouble, but would have ultimately ended the ordeal in the worst way possible.

Sometimes taking on too much responsibility can lead to a disaster. In this case if Erin and I had decided to try and take care of her ourselves with the other girls, I know she wouldn't have lived through the night. What she needed we could not give and I was absolutely not willing to risk that.

There is a crucial point where someone must answer for the decisions of others and take on a great deal of responsibility. Now granted not all situations where there is a need for someone to take the responsible role are

as drastic as the one with Bri. Looking at the different times where I have taken on challenges of being accountable to the people around me however, it seems to me all are of equal importance. With responsibility comes a duty to perform a task with intention of providing the appropriate outcome.