

## Stop Right Away!

by

Dilfuza Kasymova

“D-D-Di-Difusion!” screeched the five-foot instructor as he clenched on his clipboard. “You have to use your brakes,” explained Mr. Peterson. He was right. I was driving like a bat out of Hades. The colors of the passing cars blurred by me as my frightened passenger reminded me of the speed limit once again.

Earlier that unpleasantly cold March day, I walked out of my mom’s car looking like a zombie, considering it was 8 o’clock on a Saturday morning. I entered a building called Cornhusker Driving School. As I stepped into the classroom and observed the students, I knew right away that they all had the same emotions as I. They were upset about the twelve-hour-driving course, yet cheerful about the possibility of getting the ticket to freedom, known as a driver’s license. I noticed a hoodie that had Millard North printed on the front, so I decided to sit with my fellow schoolmate. As soon I sat down, a short, stocky male hurried himself into the room with his little feet. He could barely reach the chalkboard, so I wondered if he could even see over the steering wheel. When he greeted the class, I noticed that he had a rather deep voice for such a small man. Students raised their heads and mumbled fragmentary sentences as a response to our teacher. He introduced himself as Karl Peterson, our driving instructor and teacher for the day.

After six grueling hours of driving information, we were ready to drive an actual car. Mr. Peterson finally announced that it was time to go outside and look at the different parts of the car. We stood captivated, looking at this hunk of metal that we were obsessed with ever since the thought of driving struck our minds. He turned the key in the ignition and the engine gave up a tremendous roar. Our eyes gleamed with excitement. He explained to us the basic car parts, and then we headed back to class. In class, he explained that the one-on-one driving would take place after class. He would choose the times and dates that students will drive.

I was astonished when I heard Mr. Peterson announce that I was to be the first driver. Of course, he mispronounced my name, but I was too stunned to correct him. I quickly replied to him that I was not ready because my mom had been practicing with me only in the parking lot. He said that I had to practice with him. “Oh no, anyone but me,” I thought to myself. I was definitely not ready to take the risk of driving on the streets. But I had no choice. I had to gather my things and follow him into the car. Starting up the car was no problem; however, the problem was getting out of the parking lot onto the main street. I was sweating tremendously as other vehicles zoomed past my car. He told me that I had to look to my left first, then my right, and finally my left again, before making a turn.

Finally, I got out of the parking lot and onto busy Grover Street. My nerves were a wreck, and my heart pounded so furiously that it felt as if my ribs would break as my passenger ordered me to get on Dodge Street. Not only were there a lot of cars, but also they were going fifty miles or more per hour. The fastest that I have ever driven was

twenty-five miles per hour, and that was only once. As I slowly yielded to the busy traffic, the only thought in my head was “I wish I was somewhere else.” We passed the 132nd Street exit. The 144th Street exit was coming up next. My instructor pointed to the 144th Street exit and ordered me to get off there. I almost hit another car because I forgot to look over my shoulder as I was turning onto the exit. “Remember to check your blind spot!” Mr. Peterson howled as he flailed his arms wildly. “Ssssoooooorrrryyyy,” I explained. As he brought himself together, he told me that it was no problem because I was just learning. He then told me to turn left. We pulled into the Boys Town post office lot, and Mr. Peterson showed me where to park. After readjusting several times, I was finally able to park the car. He explained to me that he had two letters to drop off and that it would not take long. I started having some thoughts about just giving up and refusing to drive anymore, but I realized that I had been waiting for this day for several months now, so I decided to accomplish my goal. Finally, he got back into the car and told me to drive into the neighborhood that was coming up. He informed me that we were going to practice emergency stopping. Quickly acknowledging his orders, I slammed on my brakes. “What are you doing?” he yelled. I responded that I was doing an emergency brake just as he told me to. In a fed-up tone of voice, he explained how an emergency stop was done. First, drivers must turn on their emergency flash, and then they must drive to the side of the road and turn off their cars. With embarrassment, my cheeks turned red. I thought that it was probably the last time I would be sitting in the driver’s seat.

I pulled into my driveway and stopped the car slowly, taking my time to put it in park. I took off my seatbelt and finally turned off the ignition. He acknowledged that I had done a good job and in the right order. I told him that I was glad to finally do something right. We both let out a laugh remembering all the wrong things I had done. When I closed my front door, I let out a heavy sigh as my full day of fear came to an end. I have been driving for a year and a half now. If it had not been for my driving instructor making me face my fear, I would still be too hesitant to drive on main streets.