



FIRST PLACE RECIPIENT

The Green Porsche

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I had been finishing up my final exams before winter break, I was looking forward to some sleep, and most excitingly: I was a newly licensed driver. I'd gotten my license that October and the freedom I felt I'd been waiting for my entire life was finally mine as I drove myself to coffee shops, practices, and my friends' houses without my parents. In general, I was a decent driver: I used blinkers, stayed within the speed limit, and was even a courteous driver, which is NOT normal in California. However, one day, I accidentally backed into a car in my school's parking lot. Even worse, it was a custom-painted, metallic green Porsche.

When I first saw the damage, I had felt like Christmas came early: a scratch the size of my fingernail, but I still couldn't predict how the Porsche owner was going to respond. My friend had seen me back into the car and came over to calm me down amidst my panic, but once he saw the trivial scratch he advised me to drive away without telling the owner, which was what most other teenagers did. Additionally, my parents had warned me that if I got into an accident and caused our driving insurance price to increase, I would no longer be allowed to drive. These were the factors I was weighing in my head as I stared at the seemingly invisible scratch on the Porsche: listen to my friend and drive away, or risk my driving privileges and newfound freedom to do the right thing.

I found the owner and apologized. If I chose to drive away and say nothing, it's likely the owner would've never noticed, but the right decision was obvious, and I knew the guilt I would've felt by choosing to drive away would've weighed on

me. I gave the owner my contact information, and for the next several days I stressed over the thought of losing my license, but I was proud of my decision. The owner contacted me a week after the accident and decided there was no need to get repairs done. Furthermore, the owner thanked me for my responsibility and integrity and said he was impressed by my decision to own up to the accident. Reading the owner's message only reaffirmed for me that honesty is always the right decision. Furthermore, I was reminded of how making the right decision is not always about others, but about ourselves. It's about being able to admit our mistakes, and instead of running (or driving) away from them, deciding to confront and grow from them to be the best person we can be. Choosing to approach the owner was the harder, but right decision, and I will carry my morals and integrity with me wherever I go because it will always pay off and allow me to be a better person in the end.