

A BEAUTIFUL MESS

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From a mind overflowing with crippling nostalgia

Glory to Ukraine

FADE IN.

EXT. CHERRY ROCK - AFTERNOON

A small city of 200,000 in the Midwest, resembling Sioux Falls, in South Dakota. The month of March - snowbanks, high 30's in degrees.

INT. JOSEPH'S CAR (MOVING), DOWNTOWN - EARLY AFTERNOON

JOSEPH KING (20), behind the wheel. Something like "A BEAUTIFUL MESS" by Jason Mraz playing.

Shallow breathing. Paler skin. Bouncing leg.

EXT. SIOUX COFFEE SHOP - MINUTES LATER

He parks. Snatches his phone from the cup holder. Types something to somebody.

Rap *Rap* *Rap* on his driver side window. He jerks his head up.

HAILEY HARRISON (20), outside his car, smiling at him.

His cheeks redden; he smiles back, opening the door.

HAILEY

Hi.

Joseph gives her an awkward hug.

JOSEPH

Hi, Hailey.

INT. SIOUX COFFEE SHOP - MINUTES LATER

At the table with their coffee.

HAILEY

I was so surprised when you texted.

JOSEPH

It's been on my mind for a while.

HAILEY

Why didn't you do it sooner?

JOSEPH

Didn't wanna get in the way of your life - who you were with.

HAILEY

Oh. How'd ya find out?

JOSEPH

I saw you on Tinder and put two and two together.

Hailey bursts into laughter.

HAILEY

The Tinder!

(laughing more)

Yeah. That'll do it. Well, yeah.

You know me.

(beat)

How's New York, Joey?

JOSEPH

It's good. Can't complain. Meeting a lot of cool people, taking great classes, got good professors.

HAILEY

You're like, in the city, right?

JOSEPH

Yep, lower Manhattan.

HAILEY

I don't know where that is.

JOSEPH

Okay, so you got the island...

Joseph draws a circle with his finger on the table. He touches her hands that were resting on the table.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Here you got Harlem.

He moves their hands to the center of the table.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Here, midtown.

He moves their hands to his side.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

And here, me. NYU. Lower Manhattan.
Where I'm always at.

She smiles at him, taking her hands away.

HAILEY
Interesting. How long are you back for?

JOSEPH
I'm leaving tomorrow.

HAILEY
When are you coming back?

JOSEPH
Not for a while. Maybe late in the Summer for a week, then I gotta go back.

Hailey sighs.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - LATER

Joseph and Hailey are walking back toward her car.

HAILEY
He was pretty much lying about his political affiliations.

JOSEPH
Ooh. Republican?

Hailey nods.

HAILEY
For 2 1/2 years! What a liar. He thinks we're gonna get back together.

JOSEPH
What do you think?

HAILEY
I think he's a liar.

JOSEPH
How old is he?

HAILEY
21.

JOSEPH
He go to school with you?

HAILEY
No.

JOSEPH
Where does he go?

HAILEY
He doesn't.
(points at her head)
Not too much up here.

JOSEPH
I see.

They get to her car.

HAILEY
Any plans for the rest of the day?

JOSEPH
Just gonna see my boys.

HAILEY
Pahlo and Malik?

JOSEPH
Yeah. Gonna hoop with them.

HAILEY
Tell them I said "hi".

They give each other a hug.

JOSEPH
Let's stay in touch.

HAILEY
I'd like that. Bye, Joseph.

JOSEPH
Bye, Hailey.

INT. MALIK'S CAR, DIEGO'S RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

MALIK OSMAN (20) in the drivers, APOLLO HAMED (20) in the passengers, Joseph in the middle of the back. Something like "BALL W/O YOU" by 21 Savage playing.

The three passing around a JOINT.

JOSEPH
She said "hi" to y'all.

APOLLO
Why'd her and her man break up?

JOSEPH
Said he lied about his political
beliefs and shit. From the jump.

APOLLO
From the jump? That's crazy.

JOSEPH
But, shit - it's like, I miss her.
A lot.

MALIK
You still not over her?

JOSEPH
She ain't been off my mind in three
years, bro.

MALIK
That's crazy.

APOLLO
For real.

JOSEPH
(to Malik)
You don't miss Anna ever?

MALIK
Nah, bro. I processed and moved
past it a long time ago.

JOSEPH
What's wrong with me, bro?

MALIK
Nothin'.

Malik passes the joint to Joseph.

APOLLO
If you like her, just be upfront
about it.

JOSEPH
She just got out of a relationship,
and I'm leavin' tomorrow.

MALIK
I get the sting though. That first
love, bro.

JOSEPH

Nah, for real. Shit, all these memories man, they just haunting me whenever I come back home.

APOLLO

You sure she ain't feel the same way?

JOSEPH

I really don't think so. I was tryna test the waters and shit too.

APOLLO

Who left who? With y'all?

JOSEPH

I did. And man, she put up with all my shit for so long.

MALIK

All that NYU talk.

Malik and Apollo burst into laughter.

JOSEPH

Got what I wanted.

MALIK

Did you?

The joint burns out.

APOLLO

Let's head in. I'm starving.

EXT. DIEGO'S RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

[THREE YEARS AGO]. Three cars in the lot. Joe and Hailey (both 17) come out the first, Malik and ANNA PARKER (both 17) come out the second, and Apollo (17) come out the third.

The five walk into the building, greeting each other as they approach the door.

INT. DIEGO'S - A LITTLE LATER

The five together at a table. The boys got burritos and tacos, the girls got sundaes and churros.

Joe and Hailey sitting together, his arm around hers. Malik and Anna together, splitting their drink and sharing the sundae.

And Apollo.

There's maybe 15-20 OTHER PEOPLE eating at the restaurant.

JOSEPH
(to Apollo)
She been checking you out, bro.

Apollo looks over to a GROUP OF THREE GIRLS (17) at another table.

Malik SLAPS his arm.

MALIK
Don't look right at her, dummy.

Apollo looks back to the table as Anna and Hailey giggle.

APOLLO
Nah, I'm not tryna do nothin'
tonight.

ANNA
C'mon, Pahlo. Don't be a little
baby.

APOLLO
I ain't doin' nothing. I'm focusing
on me this year.

JOSEPH
Here he goes again.

HAILEY
(to Apollo)
What's your little motto called,
again? K.H.E.D. or -

APOLLO
K.Y.H.D.! Keep Yo' Head Down.

The table LAUGHS.

APOLLO (CONT'D)
Just watch. When y'all see me at
the end of the year, gonna have my
jumper down -

The table goes DEAD SILENT.

APOLLO (CONT'D)
Gonna get my grades up, my skin
gonna clear, gonna -

GIRL (O.S.)
Um, hi.

Apollo looks up to a girl (17), the one that was at the other table. She's cute.

GIRL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry but I just saw you from
over *there* -
(re: her table)
And my friends were kinda giving me
shit for not coming up to you so -
here I am! Do you have a
girlfriend?

APOLLO
(stuttering)
Um, uh - I'm sorry but I'm not
really tryna do anything.

Malik sighs at him. Joseph buries his face in Hailey's hair in embarrassment.

GIRL
Oh, um, okay. Sorry to bother you.

She goes back to her table.

Malik SLAPS the back of his head.

ANNA
She was cute, Pahlo!

APOLLO
I know! I don't know why I did
that!

The table laughs.

HAILEY
Go back to her and get her number!

APOLLO
Nah, it's over. I fucked it.

ANNA
Go back over to that nice girl.
Right now.

Apollo

Man, why y'all gotta put pressure
on me? Just wanna enjoy the night.
Don't wanna worry about stuff like
this bro. Shit, I'm 17. Why y'all
making me worry?

The boys laugh.

Joseph

Chill out, bro. They just givin'
you shit.

Malik

(to the girls)

Pahlo always been like this. Since
I've known him.

Joseph

(to Apollo)

Remember that girl that came up to
you at D1?

Malik

Oh, when I first introduced y'all?

Joseph and Malik start laughing again.

Joseph

Yeah!

Apollo joins in the laughter.

Apollo

Man, y'all always on my dick.

INT. BASKETBALL COURTS, D1 ATHLETIC FACILITY - NIGHT [FB]

[6 YEARS AGO] Joseph (14) and Malik (14) on the bench
sweating and drinking water as PEOPLE (10 of them) are
running 5v5's on the court.

Joseph

Your friend comin' soon?

Malik

Hope so. He on his own time.

Malik look to the entrance to the courts.

Malik (CONT'D)

There he is.