

A Muffin Is A Cheaper Cupcake

By

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INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A tiny, crumbling, dingy apartment. Though small, it's cozy. But it's clear that everything was either a gift or purchased at extreme discount.

It's currently overrun by bright decorations. A 'Happy Birthday' streamer hangs on the wall. Party plates, snacks, drinks and over a dozen home cooked dishes practically spill over the sides of the tiny kitchen counter.

On the walls hang various paintings. One of these paintings is a person in a glass bottle floating on the sea.

ADRIENNE- late 20's, levelheaded, tenderhearted, sits on the couch drawing something quirky on a balloon. She's dressed for what either was or will be a party. It's unclear.

She hears someone climbing up the creaky stairs outside the apartment. She tosses the balloon to the ground and leaps up.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

EZRA, late 20's, lumbers slowly up the last few stairs to his apartment door. He's hard working. He's independent. He's an optimist. Usually.

He's in a suit. Nothing flashy, but nice. On his shoulder a briefcase hangs a bit too heavy. He lingers at his front door for a second. He takes a breath and opens the door to find...

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Adrienne standing there, all smiles. She's holding a muffin with a singular lit candle in the center. She's no Jennifer Hudson but...

ADRIENNE

(singing)

Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday  
to you. Happy birthday dear Ezra.  
Happy birthday to you.

Ezra stares at her, the one person who could make him forget about the shitty day- shitty year- he's had. If only for a second.

EZRA

Thank you...Is that a muffin?

ADRIENNE

It is a muffin. Muffins are basically cupcakes just cheaper. It's a budget cake. Budgetcake? Budgetcup? Muff-

Ezra pulls Adrienne into a gentle kiss. They stand forehead to forehead, living in their own moment for a second. Adrienne holds the muffin between them.

ADRIENNE

Make a wish.

This request brings him back to reality. He blows out the candle and pulls away. He walks past her and disappears into their bedroom. She starts packing up all the food.

ADRIENNE

I told everyone to go home. But they're happily all on standby for like 20 more minutes if you feel like...anything.

Ezra comes out in more comfortable clothes. He shakes his head and sits at the kitchen counter. Adrienne sends a quick text.

ADRIENNE

(re: the mounds of food)  
Well, our scam worked. We're set for weeks.

Ezra can barely smile. He watches her put the food away.

ADRIENNE

And even better, they all made food from different countries. So now we can feel like we're traveling. But for free. And we can do the best part of traveling...the eating part.

He'd rather not talk about what they can't afford.

EZRA

How was your day?

ADRIENNE

Good. I think I'm getting closer to figuring out who the mug thief is.

EZRA

More evidence?

ADRIENNE  
Tons more evidence.

EZRA  
Lay it on me.

Adrienne smiles, ok with being a distraction...for now. Ezra helps her put the food away, his mind elsewhere.

ADRIENNE  
Ok. So first, Ryder. Enslaved to coffee. Has never once said anything about herbal tea. Who has himself said 'People who drink tea are fucking losers'.

EZRA  
Good ole' Ryder.

ADRIENNE  
I saw him looking at the little tea cart thing. Why would he even be over there? The coffee maker is on the other side of the counter.

EZRA  
Very sketchy.

ADRIENNE  
Right. And you know what's above the teas?

EZRA  
The mugs?

Adrienne makes a face like she's just dropped a bombshell of evidence.

ADRIENNE  
And he has his Yeti thermos. So it's like, you really have no business over there. Like what are you doing?

EZRA  
Stealing for sure.

ADRIENNE  
If we're being honest, I think it's a hate crime.  
(re: Ezra's skepticism)  
Against tea drinkers.

EZRA

Right.

ADRIENNE

Tessa agrees. She keeps-

Ezra's phone rings.

EZRA

Sorry.

He pulls his phone from his pocket. It reads 'Jonah'. He knows what that conversation will be and he's not in the mood. The call goes to voicemail.

ADRIENNE

Spam?

EZRA

Jonah.

Adrienne waits for an explanation that doesn't come.

ADRIENNE

It might-

His phone rings again. Still Jonah.

ADRIENNE

It might be nice to talk to him.

Ezra's doubtful. He picks up anyway.

EZRA

Hey. Sorry, I was in the bathroom.

He gets up and moves around the living room.

JONAH(O.S.)

Did you get the painting?

EZRA

Yeah. Yeah thanks. It's really good.  
Probably second place.

JONAH(O.S.)

Still?

EZRA

Nothing's ever gonna beat the man in  
the bottle.

JONAH(O.S.)

We'll see. So how does it feel?  
Inching closer to the big 3-0. I'm not  
sure I can keep calling you my baby  
bro anymore.

EZRA

Yeah, but you will.

JONAH(O.S.)

Hell yeah.  
(beat)  
So how'd the interview go?

EZRA

Fine.

JONAH(O.S.)

Good.

Silence.

EZRA

Well thanks-

JONAH(O.S.)

Hey, so, I'm having a really hard time  
keeping the books. I don't know if  
you're free- I'm sure you're busy. But  
if you could lend a hand or...I could  
really use your brain.

EZRA

Jonah.

JONAH(O.S.)

Ezra, I need help. Really. It's not a  
handout. And it'd be totally legit.  
The whole process. You'd interview  
with Ricky or-

EZRA

I'm sure you can find someone else.

JONAH(O.S.)

You'd be doing me a huge favor man.  
Honest to God.

EZRA

I have to go. I have to help Adrienne  
put away the rest of the party stuff.

JONAH(O.S.)  
Ok. Just think about it.

EZRA  
Sure.

JONAH(O.S.)  
Tell Adrienne I said hey.

EZRA  
I will.

JONAH(O.S.)  
And Happy Birthday.

EZRA  
Thanks.

Ezra hangs up and settles on the couch.

EZRA  
He says hi.

Adrienne puts the last of the food away and sits next to him.

EZRA  
I know they love me. But it's hard  
enough trying to...live a life that  
doesn't suck, without them always...

ADRIENNE  
I think sometimes it's harder for  
family to be unconditionally  
supportive.

Beat.

EZRA  
So, Tessa?

ADRIENNE  
Tessa? Oh Tessa! She said we could  
keep the baking pan by the way. So yay  
us.

He stares at her.

EZRA  
Thank you.

Love and understanding flows between them without words.

EZRA  
What'd you tell them?

ADRIENNE  
That you had a really bad migraine.  
And you felt really sick.  
(beat)  
Do you wanna talk about it?

EZRA  
(softly)  
No.

ADRIENNE  
Ok...So Tessa...she keeps making this  
joke about installing a security  
system but just around the mugs.

Ezra is fighting to focus on Adrienne and not his thoughts or the tears welling up in his eyes.

ADRIENNE (CONT.)  
Going to one of those spyware stores  
and asking for a 'mini system'. Which  
I'm pretty sure doesn't exist.

Ezra sprawls out on the couch and rests his head on Adrienne's lap. Without missing a beat, she comforts him: Running her hands through his hair, rubbing his back, massaging his shoulders.

ADRIENNE (CONT.)  
But we keep saying that on a lunch  
break one day we'll go. Michael and  
Paula are gonna come too, apparently.  
But they're still suspects as far as  
I'm concerned. Trust no one.

They sit quietly. Tears fall silently down Ezra's face.

ADRIENNE  
It's been a hard year. But we'll be  
fine.

Beat.

With incredible tenderness, she starts singing "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" by Starship.



ADRIENNE

(slowly, softly)

Lookin' in your eyes I see a paradise.  
This world that I found is too good to  
be true. Standin' here beside you,  
want so much to give you this love in  
my heart that I'm feelin' for you.

She pauses. We get the feeling this is something they do, a special memory perhaps. And it's Ezra's turn to sing the next line. But he doesn't have the heart. Adrienne continues.

ADRIENNE

(a bit more energy)

Let em' say we're crazy. I don't care  
about that. Put your hand in my hand  
baby don't ever look back. Let the  
world around us just fall apart. Baby  
we can make it if we're heart to  
heart.

(prompting him to sing with her)

And. We. Can

ADRIENNE (CONT.)

build this dream together.  
Standing strong forever.  
Nothing's gonna stop us now.

EZRA

build this dream together.  
Standing strong forever.  
Nothing's gonna-

Ezra buries his head in her lap, broken. She holds him tighter, tears of her own falling. She finishes the chorus.

ADRIENNE

And if this world runs out of lovers,  
we'll still have each other. Nothing's  
gonna stop us. Nothing's gonna stop us  
now.

She rests her head on his. It's just the two of them.

END