

DEAR MOM

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INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

ROWAN, a teenage boy with dark hair and an unkept appearance, sits on a couch staring off into space. Across from him, MARIANNE, Rowan's therapist, a middle-aged, professionally styled woman, looks at him with sympathy in her eyes. The only sounds that can be heard are the HUM of the AC and the heavy silence that hangs over them.

MARIANNE (O.S.)  
Rowan... Rowan... Rowan.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)  
Do you want to talk about it?

Rowan shifts, bouncing his leg. Marianne maintains eye contact and smiles, despite Rowan's avoidance.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)  
I miss your mom, too. Julie was  
always so genuine... such a  
wonderful friend.

She trails off and looks down, clearing her throat.

ROWAN  
(mumbles)  
The towing company returned her  
stuff from the crash yesterday.

Rowan reaches up and holds his necklace, a small silver cross.

MARIANNE  
I haven't seen that necklace  
before.

Rowan averts his gaze, before tucking the necklace into his shirt.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)  
It's beautiful.

Rowan relaxes at Marianne's comment, his anxious movements slowing. After a moment, Marianne sighs.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)  
I want you to know that I'm here  
for you, just give me a call  
anytime, alright?

Rowan doesn't respond, though he visibly softens at the offer.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)  
Are you ready for the funeral  
tomorrow?

INT. ROWAN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Rowan stands in front of the mirror, a look of exhaustion on his face as he takes in the black and white suit staring back at him. Standing in his bathroom, brightly lit and a bit dirty, it's clearly missing a feminine touch. He struggles with his tie, not able to make the knot. Rowan's DAD, a spitting image of his son, with the weight of life heavy on his appearance, walks by and notices him struggle.

DAD  
(chuckles)  
Let me give you a hand.

Rowan rolls his eyes, visibly annoyed, avoiding eye contact. He drops the tie, surrendering it to his dad. Stepping in front of Rowan, his dad quickly begins tying the fabric.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Your mother was always the one to do this for me, but I guess I've learned a thing or two from her.

The tie comes together easily, matching his father's. The two stand side by side facing the mirror, taking in the moment.

DAD (CONT'D)  
When I met Julie, it was New Year's of 1999. We were-

ROWAN  
At a party, I know. You've both told me a million times.

DAD  
Give me a second. What we didn't tell you before is that we were both drunk. I was sprinting towards the bathroom when your mother ran into me and spilled red punch all over my white shirt.

Rowan watches his father become more animated than he has in weeks, the excitement of the story bleeding into him. He hangs onto his father's each word, laughing at his honesty.

DAD (CONT'D)

She was so quick to apologize, two party hats lopsided on her head and the sparkliest dress I've ever seen flying towards me to push me into the bathroom. It seemed like forever that we tried to scrub that stain out of my shirt, only making it worse. After that night we were inseparable.

Rowan and his father LAUGH at the memory, taking comfort in each other. Soon their faces relax, settling into a bittersweet smile. Tears well in Rowan's eyes.

ROWAN

Do you remember when mom said that I'm growing up too fast? That soon I won't need her anymore?

His dad says nothing, looking down at the floor.

ROWAN (CONT'D)

I'm not sure that's true anymore.

Rowan begins crying. The room is silent besides Rowan's quiet SNIFFLES. His dad pulls back, laying a gentle hand on his sons shoulder.

DAD

Is your speech ready?

His dad stares at him expectedly. Rowan wipes his tears and reaches for the note in his pocket.

ROWAN

Yeah.

(beat)

Hey, is it alright if I walk?

Rowan and his Dad share a knowing look. Rowan clears his throat.

ROWAN (CONT'D)

I want to rehearse one more time.

DAD

(sighing)

Of course, Rowan. Please don't be late.

Rowan's dad pats his son's shoulder and gazes one more time at his own reflection before leaving the bathroom. Rowan stands alone.

INT. ROWAN'S HOUSE - MOM'S STUDY - DAY

Standing in the doorway, Rowan moves towards the desk. Opening up his crumpled paper, he looks toward the chair where his mom once sat. Taking a deep, shaky breath, he begins to mumble out the speech.

ROWAN

Dear mom...

As soon as he begins, the sound of his phone RINGING interrupts him. He sighs and fumbles for it in his pocket. He pulls it out and looks at the caller ID, sighing. It's SETH, Rowan's friend, with a laid-back tone of voice.

ROWAN (CONT'D)  
Hey, Seth, what's up?

SETH (V.O.)  
Waddup man, how you holding up?

ROWAN  
How do you think?

SETH (V.O.)  
Type shit, type shit. I heard the funeral's today. Wanted to check in.

ROWAN  
Yeah, sorry I didn't invite you.  
Close family only.

SETH (V.O.)  
Daammnnnn!

Rowan pulls the phone away from his ear, wincing.

SETH (V.O.)  
I thought I was family, Ro.

Rowan lets out a reluctant LAUGH.

SETH (V.O.)  
No, but seriously- I'm really sorry about your mom.

A beat passes.

ROWAN

Yeah, thanks. That means a lot. How have you been?

SETH (V.O.)

Got fired from the video store last week. Remember Martha, my boss? Absolute bitch.

ROWAN

What happened?

SETH (V.O.)

Supposedly, they got me on camera stealing, but you know how it is. She's a liar.

ROWAN

Damn, I thought she was kinda nice.

They both laugh.

SETH (V.O.)

Anyways, man. It's been a minute. I was wondering if you wanted to pull up later, a few friends are coming over. We miss you.

The reality of the situation comes crashing back to Rowan. He glances down at the piece of paper in his hand, folding it back up.

ROWAN

I'll let you know. Thanks for calling, Seth.

Before Seth has a chance to say goodbye, Rowan ends the call.

The study is quiet again. He makes eye contact with a photo of his mom; a candid picture of her, two lopsided party hats and the sparkliest dress he's ever seen adorning her.

Tears slip down his face as he looks at the trinkets on her desk. Tossing the script to the side, he slumps to his mother's chair and falls into the seat. Opening the drawers, he clutches mail, old receipts, and an unfinished to-do list to his chest. Reading the list over, the last bullet point states: 'Pick up Rowan'

ROWAN (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, mom.

Rowan begins SOBBING. The room is exactly how she left it. Despite being surrounded by pieces of his mom, the weight of her absence overwhelms him. Rowan's head falls into his hands.

INT. ROWAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door SLAMS as Rowan's dad calls out his name.

DAD  
Rowan!

Sighing, Rowan's dad loosens his tie as he STOMPS up the stairs. He rounds the corner to check Rowan's bedroom, seeing nothing but darkness.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Rowan, where are you?!

He rushes down the hallway back towards the stairs. Stopping, he notices the cracked door to Julie's study. Looking in, his face relaxes as he sees Rowan. His son is fast asleep, sprawled across his mom's desk.

INT. ROWAN'S HOUSE - MOM'S STUDY - NIGHT

Rowan's dad gently shakes his son by the shoulder.

DAD  
Rowan, wake up.

Rowan stirs awake, disoriented.

DAD (CONT'D)  
How's that speech coming along? You slept through the funeral.

ROWAN  
Oh, fuck. I'm sorry, I'm sorry-

His father cuts him off, sighing.

DAD  
Let's clean this up.

Their eyes look over the mess surrounding Julie's desk; papers scattered, drawers pulled out, and picture frames faced flat. Rowan slides off the chair and stands up to begin reorganizing things. While shuffling through papers, Rowan notices an ODD LOOKING FOLDER, stamped and closed.

He opens it.

Rowan's dad suddenly stares at him, frozen.

ROWAN  
What the hell is this?

DAD  
Rowan, calm down.

Inside the folder is a packet of paperwork, the title page reads 'Divorce Agreement'. Two signature lines sit at the very bottom, with only one name signed.

DAD (CONT'D)  
You don't understand-

ROWAN  
Of course I don't fucking  
understand! How could you do this?

DAD  
We were going to tell you, but  
after everything happened...  
Listen, the decision was mutual.

ROWAN  
Then where the fuck is her  
signature?

His father stays silent, looking away. Rowan stares him down.

ROWAN (CONT'D)  
You're a coward.

DAD  
Everything I've ever done has been  
for her, for you! At least I was  
there. You missed your own mother's  
funeral, Rowan.

Rowan stumbles back, hurt by his dad's words. Dropping the papers, he turns around and rushes out of the room. His dad follows quickly after him.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Rowan, wait!

He chases him down the stairs, calling after him.

DAD (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry! I'm sorry, Rowan.

Reaching the front door, Rowan swings it open and stops, not turning around.

ROWAN  
I wish it had been you.

## EXT. SETH'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Seth, a tall teenager stands on his porch wearing an 'R.I.P. Kurt Cobain' t-shirt and a smirk on his face. He stubs out a cigarette, turning back toward the front door to peer inside his house. Inside is packed with TEENAGERS LAUGHING and dancing, a thin layer of smoke clings to the air. People scattered about the yard talk amongst themselves. A familiar silhouette walks onto the driveway, who Seth recognizes immediately.

SETH  
Rooowwwwaaannnn! My man!

He walks towards the edge of the yard. Rowan approaches the house, meeting him in the middle.

SETH (CONT'D)  
I knew you'd cave! What's up?

Rowan quickly wipes the remaining tears from his eyes, looking away.

SETH (CONT'D)  
Are you crying?

Seth is not discreet. People begin to stare at the two.

ROWAN  
Bro, shut the fuck up.

SETH  
Yo, chill, chill. Come inside and I'll get you something.

Seth puts an arm around Rowan's shoulders and steers him inside the house.

## INT. SETH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The pair squeeze their way through the CROWD lingering around the kitchen island, where a MESS OF BOTTLES AND SOLO CUPS scatter along the surface. Seth grabs a cup and turns on the faucet, getting Rowan a drink of water.

ROWAN  
Thanks.

Rowan chugs it.

SETH  
Are you okay?

ROWAN  
My parents were getting a divorce.

SETH  
What?

Rowan bumps into a GIRL, and her drink crashes between the both of them, staining Rowan's white dress shirt.

GIRL  
Watch where you're going, asshole!

She is sweaty and clearly intoxicated. Her bloodshot eyes focus on Rowan.

GIRL (CONT'D)  
Hey, I like your shirt.

Rowan looks down at his wrinkled, stained white button up and loose tie.

ROWAN  
Thanks, yours is cool too.

The girl is wearing a bleached HARVARD crop-top. Seth smacks Rowan's shoulder, trying to get his attention.

GIRL  
You're cute.

Rowan turns back to Seth, who looks at the girl embarrassed and disgusted.

GIRL (CONT'D)  
I heard you talking, divorces suck.  
Here, this'll help.

The girl pulls out two differently COLORED PILLS from her pocket, offering them to Rowan.

SETH  
What the fuck? Don't take that shit.

Both of them look at Rowan expectedly. Rowan peels the pills from her sweaty palm and swallows them dry. Seth pulls Rowan back, failing at his attempt to stop his friend.

SETH (CONT'D)  
Bro, what's wrong with you?

ROWAN

Fuck off! You invited me here to have a good time, didn't you?

SETH

I invited you here because you're my fucking friend, Rowan!

Rowan SCOFFS and turns away. Grabbing a bottle of alcohol, he follows the MUSIC into the living room.

INT. SETH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Multicolored lights flash across the room. Huge speakers blare MUSIC, drowning out Rowan's thoughts. Moving through the thick crowd of bodies, Rowan joins them.

MONTAGE OF THE DANCE FLOOR

Time passes quickly as the drugs take effect. Dancing to the music and downing his drink, Rowan's vision begins to distort his surroundings. The lights blend together, music fading in and out. Rowan's depth perception warps, the careening people seeming much too close for comfort. As his breathing quickens, Rowan loses balance and falls to the ground, his drink crashing with him.

END MONTAGE

People's feet stomp across him, pinning him to the floor. He feels a harsh pull at his neck, and blearily looks down at his chest to see that his necklace is missing. Crawling through the crowd, he searches for the cross, but can't see clearly enough to find it.

Forcing his eyes to focus, Rowan sees a glint ahead of him. Reaching as far as he can, he picks up the pieces of his broken necklace. Staring down at them, his face falls as his sense of reality kicks back in.

An overwhelming sorrow washes over him. Rowan hyperventilates as he pushes himself off the floor, clutching the pieces of the necklace in his fist. Stumbling to his feet, he rushes past the crowd towards the front door.

EXT. SETH'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Rushing out of the house, Rowan fumbles for his phone. Rowan dials a number, holding the phone up to his face. Fighting through his sobs, he attempts to catch a ride.

ROWAN

Hello?...I know it's late, I'm sorry... I'm okay. I need your help.

INT./EXT. MARIANNE'S CAR - NIGHT

Rowan sits in the passenger seat as Marianne drives the car through the neighborhood, shooting him a concerned glance. His head is hung low, still breathing hard, staring at the broken parts of his necklace.

ROWAN

She was on the way to pick me up. I could've taken the bus like always, but I didn't want to. I didn't want to.

MARIANNE

Rowan, slow down.

ROWAN

My mom didn't need to drive that day. If it weren't for me, she'd still be here. My mom would still be here, Marianne.

MARIANNE

It's okay, Rowan. It's okay. It's not your fault.

Rowan struggles to collect himself. As he tries to focus on the familiar surroundings flying past his window, Rowan finally lets out everything that has been eating away at him. Marianne's car drives further into the distance.

INT./EXT. MARIANNE'S CAR - ROWAN'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Soon enough, the two pull up to Rowan's house. His father is waiting for him on the front porch. Marianne slows the vehicle to a stop. The sound of the engine soothing them both.

MARIANNE

Your mother once told me that just because you think you've lost everything doesn't mean you have nothing.

Rowan turns to look at his dad through the window, illuminated by the yellow glow of the porch light.

A beat passes.

Rowan opens the car door, pushing the necklace into his pocket and stepping out. Marianne watches him leave through misty eyes before driving away.

EXT. ROWAN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Approaching his father, Rowan stops at the porch steps. He pulls the crumpled paper out of his pocket once again. Taking a deep breath, Rowan begins his speech.

ROWAN

Dear Mom,

Do you remember my 7th birthday? Dad rented an inflatable bouncy house for the backyard. You made invitations for me to hand out at school the day before, but an hour into the party I realized that no one was gonna show. You pushed me in the bouncy house to try to distract me from the empty yard. We didn't notice the thunder until the bouncy house roof sunk in, water pooling in the top. You shrieked out for dad and he ran in wielding an old mop, jabbing at the caved in roof, but the rain just kept weighing it down. We gave up and Dad rushed us out of the bouncy house. I tried to keep up, but the ground was too wet. I slipped and fell face first. You quickly scooped me up, trying to shield me from the rain. As I clutched your necklace in my muddy hands, I knew that no matter how hard the rain poured, you would always be there to shelter me. We made it back into the house, soaked and laughing. Dad grabbed a towel and enveloped us under its dry warmth. I clutched your chest and closed my eyes, not wanting to let go.

A beat passes. Rowan's tears soak the paper.

I didn't know how real that feeling was until now. I know it's just a memory, but I would do anything to be back with you. I love you, mom.

Rowan and his dad fall into each other.

FADE OUT.