

As Long As I Can Remember

By

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INT. APARTMENT - DAY

ALEX, a young man in his early twenties, is putting up birthday decorations. Streamers, balloons, you name it. He's done a nice job. Then a bedroom door opens, and we see ERIC emerge. He looks around and laughs in disbelief.

ERIC

Oh my god, Alex, you didn't have to do this...

ALEX

I know. But I wanted to.
(He comes over and pinches
Eric's cheek.)
You're a big boy now.

Eric laughs and ducks away. He snags an unused balloon from the bag, blows it up, and lets it go, sending it flying around the room. They both laugh.

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

A knock on the door. Alex opens it, revealing their friends, CATHERINE, MAX, and LUNA. Catherine is at the front, holding a box. She puts the box on the kitchen counter and wraps Eric in a hug.

CATHERINE

Oh, birthday boy! You're so big now!

ERIC

I'm literally a month older than you, Cath.

CATHERINE

Shh. You're a little baby.

She lets him go, giving way for Luna to hug him, then Max. Max hands Eric a bottle of champagne; Eric laughs and shakes his head. He's so happy to see all of them.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Alex is at the kitchen counter, doing something we can't see. Eric comes over to him.

ERIC

Ooh, whatcha doing?

ALEX

Shoo! I'm finishing up your cake!

Eric looks at the cake. It's a store-bought cake, but Alex has added "HAPPY BIRTHDAY ERIC" with a little tube of icing.

Eric reaches over and tries to swipe a bit of the frosting. Alex smacks his hand away. Eric laughs and tries to exit, and Alex gives him a little shove. Eric shoves him back.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Okay but for real, go sit down. I gotta do the candles.

Eric complies. Catherine stands next to him, putting a gentle hand on his shoulder. Luna and Max stop their quiet chatting and stand around the table. Alex enters, carefully carrying the cake. He starts singing Happy Birthday, and the others join.

Alex puts the cake down in front of Eric, still singing. Eric looks down at the cake, then up at his friends. His gaze locks onto Alex for a moment too long. The sound of the singing fades away.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Eric is sitting at a desk. Alex comes and sits down next to him. They're meeting for the first time. They start talking, and there's clearly an instant connection.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Eric is still staring at Alex.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - AFTERNOON

Eric and Alex walking together, talking about anything and everything.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Eric looks at the cake, the candlelight flickering in his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Eric and Alex sitting at the kitchen table, doing an assignment together.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Eric is still looking at the cake. His eyes close.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

Alex with a camera, taking photos of Eric, who's doing goofy poses.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark, but we can see Eric sitting with his back to the wall, his head down. Alex comes in and sits with him. Eric begins to cry, and Alex gives him a hug.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alex is sitting and looking out the window. Eric comes and sits next to him. Alex rests his head on top of Eric's.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Alex is cooking something while Eric washes dishes. Alex goes out of his way to bump his hip against Eric's. They both laugh, and Eric nudges him back.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

Eric sits on the couch, shivering under a blanket. Alex sits down next to him, wraps him in a hug, and presses a kiss to the top of his head. Eric melts into the hug.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Eric opens his eyes and blows out the candles.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Eric is washing some dishes, while the others chat in the background. Music plays softly.

Catherine comes over and puts her hands on Eric's shoulders.

CATHERINE

Come on, why are you doing the dishes?! It's your party! Enjoy yourself!

ERIC

Wait, Catherine, just let me finish--

Catherine doesn't let him finish. She turns off the water and practically drags him away from the counter, pushing him to where Max is sitting. She pushes him down into a seat.

CATHERINE

(to Eric)

You look like you could use a drink.

She disappears to the kitchen. He watches her go. Max starts talking to him, but Eric isn't paying attention. Instead, he's looking across the room at Alex, who is talking to Luna.

Catherine hands Eric a plastic cup full of something. He takes it without thinking, his eyes still on Alex. Then he lifts the cup to his lips and drinks.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Alex is sitting on the sofa. He watches as Catherine dances around with Luna. Max and Eric are sitting with them, laughing and cheering.

Then Eric catches Alex's eye from across the room, gets up, and comes to stand next to Alex.

ERIC

Hey.

ALEX

Hey...?

Eric stares at Alex for a moment.

ERIC

When was the last time someone told you how pretty your eyes were?

ALEX

...what?

ERIC

Yeah. You've got gorgeous eyes. And really pretty hair. It's so nice, such a pretty color.

ALEX

Thanks...

He's never heard Eric say anything like that to anybody.

Eric sits down on the arm of the sofa. He's not smiling, but he's not frowning either. He's simply staring.

ERIC

I could just look at you all day.

This makes Alex laugh a little bit.

ALEX

Eric, you're drunk.

ERIC

Pfft. No I'm not.
(He slides into the seat
next to Alex.)

ALEX

Yes, I think you are. And you've only had a few drinks. God, I always forget how much of a lightweight you are.

ERIC

Well, you don't have to make fun of me for it.

(He slumps down in his seat, wearing an over-exaggerated pout.)

And on my birthday, too. Shameful.

ALEX

Okay, you know what? I'll make it up to you: you can sit on my lap.

ERIC

Okay.

He doesn't want to sound too eager, but there is nothing more that he would love in the entire world than to sit with Alex forever.

So he hops onto Alex's lap, and Alex laughs. Which makes Eric laugh. It's a nervous, flustered sort of laughter, but the longer it goes on, the more relaxed it becomes.

Eric finally regains his breath, and he places a hand on top of Alex's head.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(murmured)

You're so pretty.

ALEX

You're so stupid.

ERIC

Hey, what can I say? I've always thought you were pretty. And I'm definitely not the only one.

He leans back until he's laying on the couch, his legs still across Alex's lap.

ALEX

What are you talking about?

ERIC

I mean, how could I not think you're pretty?

(He's completely serious.)

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)

You've got this... what's the word... charm? Charisma? This... this fucking... it's like you glow. Especially when you're happy, it's like your eyes light up, and I never want to look at anything else ever again.

ALEX

(laughing)

You're such an idiot.

ERIC

Hey, I may be an idiot, but I hope I'm at least *your* idiot.

ALEX

Of course you're my idiot. You're never this stupid around other people.

This sends Eric back into another fit of laughter. He leans against Alex, laughing until he's nearly in tears. Finally, he calms down, relaxing against Alex.

CATHERINE

Eric, stop flirting with Alex and get over here! I wanna dance with you!

Eric sits straight up, a look of seriousness on his face. He leans in and whispers to Alex.

ERIC

Was I... flirting with you?

ALEX

Yeah, I think so.

(He laughs.)

I mean, you said I have pretty eyes. And you called yourself "my idiot". And you just complimented me more in five minutes than I've ever heard you compliment anyone before.

Eric presses his hands over his face with a groan.

ERIC

Oh, god...

ALEX

Come on.

As Eric drops his hands from his face, Alex gives him a quick kiss on the cheek.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Now go dance with Catherine,
birthday boy.

Eric gets up and stumbles over to Catherine, his mind reeling from the kiss. Catherine grabs his hands and pulls him into a dance. They sway back and forth in silence for a few moments.

CATHERINE
(softly)
You've just got to talk to him.

ERIC
What?

CATHERINE
Oh, don't play with me. I've seen
the way you've been looking at him
all night. You can't take your eyes
off him.

ERIC
I can, I just...
(He hides his face in her
shoulder and mumbles.)
I just don't want to.

She bursts out laughing.

ERIC (CONT'D)
I don't know what's going on,
Catherine. I've never... felt like
this around him.

CATHERINE
Honey, I think you love him.

ERIC
Well, of course I love him, he's my
best friend.

CATHERINE
You know that's not what I mean.

Eric looks at her, as if he's scared by what she's suggesting.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Just talk to him.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Catherine, Luna, and Max leave the apartment. Eric waves goodbye to them. Once they're gone, he shuts the door and turns around. Alex is looking at him.

ALEX

Hey.

ERIC

Hey.

They stand there for a moment, the silence almost overwhelming them.

ALEX

I have a gift for you.

ERIC

Oh?

Alex crosses the room and then returns with a bag.

ALEX

Happy birthday.

Eric opens the bag. The smile slides off his face, replaced by a look of surprise.

ERIC

What the... Alex...

It's a framed photo of the two of them.

ALEX

Do you like it?

ERIC

(breathless)

Yeah.

He crosses the room and places the photo on the shelf. When he turns around, he sees Alex looking at him. He feels a smile spread across his face.

ERIC (CONT'D)

What is it?

Alex closes the space between them, slowly. They're right in front of each other.

And then Alex kisses him. Eric's almost too shocked to kiss him back. Almost.

They pull apart, and Eric can hardly move. He's drowning in Alex's eyes. He never wants to look away.

Alex smiles, his face only inches from Eric's.

ALEX

What are you staring at?

ERIC

Nothing. I just like looking at you.

Alex hugs him close, and they stay like that for a long time.

FADE TO BLACK.