

Cheese Toddler

written by

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FADE IN

INT. CHURCH - DAY

ECU of ALEX's (25, blonde, crew cut, average height, slightly overweight) mouth.

His lips move. He is saying something but it cannot be heard.

ZOOM OUT to reveal ALEX, dressed in a black button down shirt and kahki pants, is at a podium about to give a eulogy.

He stares at the piece of paper in front of him. Obviously struck with the weight of the moment.

ALEX
(mumbling)
I'm genuinely curious. The reason,
well because what I think of when I
say...

ALEX's mother KAY (mid 50's, dyed hair, glasses, dressed in a tacky black dress) in the front row tries to get ALEX's attention.

Quietly, as ALEX notices KAY's perturbed nature, ALEX whispers...

ALEX (CONT'D)
What?

KAY
(gesturing)
Speak louder.

ALEX
Oh, should I start over?

KAY
Yes.

ALEX clears his throat and then...

ALEX
Cheese Toddler! What do you think
of when I say that?

ALEX looks around at the perplexed audience. A little disquieted he continues...

CONTINUED

ALEX (CONT'D)

A toddler made of cheese? A toddler with cheese all over them? What? I'm genuinely curious. The reason, well... because what I think of when I say cheese toddler takes me back to before the wedding this past weekend.

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY

ALEX (V.O.)

It takes me to the drive into town.

A green Toyota Sienna drives along the highway in light traffic.

INT. SIENNA - DAY

CU of ALEX (shaved head) laying in on the back row of seats in the car.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)

When we got the phone call that Robert had passed.

OS a cell phone begins to ring in the front of the car.

CUT TO:

MS of KAY answering the phone in the driver's seat. She puts it on speaker.

KAY

Hey Kathryn. What's up? How is Jonathon feeling about his big day tomorrow?

KATHRYN (early 40's, JONATHON's sister, ALEX's cousin) holds back her sobbing and says...

KATHRYN

Jonathon is okay. It's just...

KAY turns off speaker phone quickly and brings the phone to her ear.

KAY

Kat what's wrong? What happened?

CONTINUED

ALEX
What happened mom?

KAY
Oh my god! Kat... how are Jonathon
and Judy doing?

ALEX
Mom! What happened?

ALEX, now sitting upright in the back of the van, looks perplexed. He realizes it must be something horrible, but can't possibly know yet how bad it is.

ALEX (V.O.)
At that point everything was
chaotic. We barely knew what was
going on. But after mom went to see
Aunt Judy things got... a little
better.

EXT. RUNZA PARKING LOT - DAY

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)
By the time we went to eat that day
things were calmer. The wedding was
still on and, although this time
would always have this bittersweet
tinge to it, the family was looking
forward to a reprieve from the pain
of losing Robert. Which, is when I
heard it...

CUT TO:

INT. RUNZA - DAY

ALEX and KAY sit across from each other at a table eating
their Runza's.

Things are quiet in the fast food restaurant except for one
almost annoying EMPLOYEE speaking to another EMPLOYEE (#2) as
he carries a stack of cheddar cheese into the kitchen.

EMPLOYEE
This stack of cheese is so heavy. I
mean really heavy. Like a... a...
cheese toddler.

CONTINUED

ALEX and KAY look at each other and begin to laugh uproariously.

EMPLOYEE #2

You're an idiot. You know that?

The second EMPLOYEE's comment was no matter to ALEX and KAY as they kept laughing.

On and on they went.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)

It doesn't seem like much now, but it was as funny as could be to us in the moment. And, then... my mom made the comment that changed everything for me...

KAY

(catching her breath)

Whew... You know what? I just realized why that's so funny. I have never heard something like that in my life. Not once. And, I'm never gonna hear it again.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)

That was the comment I needed to set my mind loose...

ALEX ponders what his mom just said to him.

MONTAGE

ROBERT (a big burly man, mid-60's, looks like he's constantly about to chortle with laughter, kind, generous) laughing.

The stack of cheese in the EMPLOYEE's hands.

ROBERT and JUDY joking with JONATHON

A family BBQ where ROBERT is cooking.

JUDY crying as JONATHON tells her he is going to get married.

The whole family's outing to a water park.

ROBERT doing a belly flop into the pool.

MONTAGE CONTINUES

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)

I saw Robert and all the great things he had done for Judy and Jonathon. The fun family outings we had. All that Robert seemed to be to me from our relationship. Truly Robert was one of a kind. Just like the damn phrase cheese toddler. But... I saw more...

Families playing together in a park play area.

Business men and women walking up and down the streets of New York City.

Shamans.

People meditating.

People at a huge sporting event.

All of these people seeing their families.

More families.

More.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

ALEX sits at the desk of the hotel room writing something on a sheet of paper.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)

I had to get all my thoughts out. Had to write it all down. All of the people living in this world. Throughout history. Billions. Maybe more. All special and unique in their own ways. Each of them special to a certain number of other people in the world...

ALEX continues to scribble on the page of paper in front of him.

He ponders for a moment. Pencil held aloft. Then begins to scribble some more.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Even the most famous of us in this world only known deeply by a small number of people.

(MORE)

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Every last one of us is somebody that only a few people got to know throughout the history of the human race. Past, present, and future. For those very few though we were these amazing, unique, hopefully wonderful, individuals. Finally I had it all written down. I was ready to make this beautiful statement to Jonathon or Judy since I wouldn't be able to be at Robert's funeral.

ALEX puts down his pencil, turns off the light at the desk, and goes over to his bed in the room, lays down, and goes to sleep.

INT. CHURCH ATRIUM - DAY

ALEX talks to family members and greets others as they wait to head down to their seats in the pews of the church.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)

That next day at the wedding I was hyped. I mean it's not like I was going to go tackle somebody because I was ready to play some football, but I was hyped. I was so ready to say this poignant funny comment, cheese toddler, to somebody and explain its story and what it meant in regards to Robert. But, I had to wait.

ALEX sits excitedly in the pew as he waits for the wedding to begin.

He smiles as his cousin JONATHON (24, big and burly, the spitting image of his father at 24) walks down the aisle.

He does the same as JONATHON's bride walks down with her father.

The wedding is wonderful, beautiful.

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION HALL - EVENING

CONTINUED

ALEX sits at a table with his mother KAY with a few other family members.

He is a little less excited now, but still ready and anxious to find time with JONATHON at some point.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)
Then, at the reception, I found the bar.

ALEX gets up and walks over to the bar.

BARTENDER
Can I get you anything?

ALEX
Well, what's on tap?

BARTENDER
We've got Blue Moon and Coors Light.

ALEX
I'll take a Coors.

CU of the glass filling with Coors Light.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)
And the mistakes continued from there.

The wedding party comes in and sits down to eat.

ALEX, a tiny bit flustered, gets up to get another drink.

BARTENDER
Can I get you anything?

ALEX
I'll take a Coors.

CU of the glass filling with Coors Light.

CUT TO:

ALEX makes faces at the baby at the table he is sitting at.

CUT TO:

ALEX standing in line to get the prepared dinner.

CONTINUED

ALEX gets up and goes to the bar again.

BARTENDER
Another Coors?

ALEX
Yep.

CU of the glass filling with Coors Light.

CUT TO:

ALEX talks with the family at his table for a little while. Still having a little fun playing around with the baby.

Soon though, ALEX gets up again and heads to the bar. This time looking around to see if JONATHON has gotten up from eating yet.

BARTENDER
Another?

ALEX
Of course.

ALEX walks back to the table the long way. Through a series of tight walkways around tables he could have avoided.

ALEX sits at the table getting more and more flustered. He plays a good game, but he is flustered none the less.

He drinks some more.

CUT TO:

ALEX gets up and goes to the bar, again.

BARTENDER
Moving a little quickly aren't we?

ALEX
What? It's a wedding.

BARTENDER
I know, but still... slow down a little. But, another Coors?

ALEX smiles at the bartender.

MONTAGE

CU of the glass filling with Coors Light.

CU of another glass filling with Coors Light.

CU of another glass filling with Coors Light.

Another.

Another.

CUT TO:

At the bar the BARTENDER looks at ALEX walking up and fills a cup with water.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)
About 18 beers in I decided it
truly was time to slow down a bit.

ALEX grabs the cup and heads back to his table.

CUT TO:

JONATHON walks up to the table. He and KAY begin talking for a little bit.

ALEX sits and tries to wait patiently.

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Then, finally, I made my move as my
mom was talking to Jonathon.

JONATHON
Yeah, I loved dad, but if he
could've waited just one more night
to pass in his sleep.

ALEX
Cheese Toddler!

Both JONATHON and KAY turn to ALEX now standing right next to them in bewilderment.

JONATHON
What?

CONTINUED

ALEX
Cheese Toddler! I...

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)
I tried to explain to him what
cheese toddler meant, but at first
it came out slurred. Then, it just
wouldn't come out. In fact, there
was only one thing that was ready
to come spewing out of my mouth.

ALEX runs to the bathroom.

JONATHON and KAY are left standing there for a while.

Then a while longer.

CUT TO:

Finally ALEX reappears.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Sorry. The bartender was right. I
should've slowed down drinking a
while ago.

JONATHON
Alex, it's fine. How long has it
been?

ALEX
Since I drank like this? Probably
before the schizo diagnosis.

JONATHON
Sometimes you just gotta let it
out, get loose, and hopefully not
throw up at my wedding, but if you
need to... spew your guts. Now...
what in the hell does cheese
toddler mean?

ALEX (V.O. CONT'D)
So, I explained. Halfway decent is
how I got it across, but I did get
the gist of Cheese Toddler across
to my cousin. We are these amazing,
unique, complex, and wonderful
individuals only a few get to
know...

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

JONATHON stands at the podium where we saw ALEX earlier. He has been speaking the whole time.

JONATHON

The next time someone passes who you love, remember that.

JONATHON now has tears streaming down his face.

JONATHON (CONT'D)

Those were the last words written by Alex. For those of us who were close to him there was a little knowledge of his diagnosis. He was schizoaffective bipolar type. We knew the pain he felt, but... We just...

(beat)

We didn't know how deep that pain went. I was always proud of how my cousin dealt with his illness, yet I'm left wondering did I force him into this idea that he had to deal with it. That he couldn't let us know what he felt.

KAY crying in the front row next to JUDY mutters...

KAY

Nobody knew.

JONATHON

What I do know is I got to know that amazing, unique, complex, wonderful bit of stardust that was my cousin Alex. Some of that I want to share with the world. I want them to hear of this amazing human being that thought these beautiful things about people and the world. Some of the memories I want to keep to myself because they are so personal and meaningful to me. Whatever you do for however long the person lives who's touched you, cherish them, let them know how unique and special and wonderful they are. Do what I wish I could do now for Alex. And... When they're gone, remember that you got to live with that person.

(MORE)

JONATHON (CONT'D)

This human being and their ideas,
their worldview, and all the things
nobody else got to experience
except you. When you get down and
think of how you miss them just
remember cheese toddler. That one
of a kind individual that never
existed before and will never exist
again here on this earth that you
got to be around.

PAN DOWN to view ALEX's casket.

FADE TO BLACK