

MUSIC TO MY EARS

Written by

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Inspired by "Alive Inside" by Michael Rossato Bennett

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FADE IN:

EXT. PORCH - DAY

An old house stands alone in a wide open plain. Nothing but the serene blue sky and bright green grass surround the scene.

Sitting alone is an older, simple gentleman who looks to be in his sixties. This man is JORDAN. Jordan rocks back and forth on his chair, EARBUDS from his IPOD plugged in his ears.

We hear the music playing: it's a folk song that compliments Jordan's serene gaze.

Something catches Jordan's eyes. He focuses his sight ahead to see:

POV - JORDAN - SAME

A black LUXURY SEDAN driving up to the house, leaving a trail of dust behind it.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. PORCH

The car parks in front of the house steps. A man dressed in business attire with sleek hair and sunglasses steps out. This man is SAM.

Sam walks up the stairs to join Jordan. Sam stands next to Jordan waiting for some sort form of "hello". There is none.

Sam shakes his head and walks into the house. Jordan's gaze doesn't change.

Sam walks out of the house moments later with a chair in one hand, a couple of glasses with some bourbon in another. Sam sits next to Jordan and pours a glass to offer Jordan. Jordan still doesn't change his gaze. Sam takes the drink for himself.

Sam finally pulls one of the earbuds off of Jordan, who looks awakened from a dream.

JORDAN

Hasn't anyone ever told you not to disturb the elderly?

SAM

If no one disturbed you then no one would be able to tell if you've gotten "too elderly".

JORDAN

Call me "too elderly" again and I'll outlive you.

Sam smirks and takes a sip of his beverage. Jordan sees the bourbon and pours some for himself in the extra glass.

SAM

Your music player doing alright?

JORDAN

Of course. It is the best thing to ever come from your generation.

SAM

That's a bold statement.

JORDAN

And you know better?

Sam pulls out his CELL PHONE. Jordan looks amused.

SAM

With this, I can communicate to anyone, anywhere, at anytime. Can you imagine where we would be if society had access to that type of technology way back when?

JORDAN

We'd be in hell.

SAM

We would be? Or we're already there?

JORDAN

We're at the point where I need more of that booze.

Jordan goes for the bottle once more, and Sam takes it away from his reach.

Beat.

SAM

There's a lot I can do with this. A lot more than what you can do with yours.

JORDAN

With the press of a button, I can find the smooth, romantic chords of the song playing when I first danced with your mother. I hear the coarse words of Mr. Cash and remember the times with my father before he went to fight across the sea. You say you can do a lot with that thing? These memories are worth more than what's in your pocket.

SAM

There is one thing that music player can't do that what I have can. I can help you.

Sam flips through his phone searching for something. He finds it and gives his phone to Jordan.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's still in research, but clinical studies are proving successful. Nearly 75% of patients say their memories remain intact. You don't have to live a life waiting for everything you know to disappear.

JORDAN

So it's an experiment. I hear experiments are very costly.

SAM

They are. But you have something that can cover it.

There's a pause between the two. Jordan takes the glasses and bourbon with him and starts to head inside.

JORDAN

We're done here.

SAM

I know you miss Mom. I miss her too. But I'm sure she would want you to do whatever you can to save yourself.

JORDAN

(stops and turns)  
You don't know anything.

Jordan opens the door. As it does we...

CUT TO:

INT. WINE CELLAR - NIGHT

A door slowly creaks open. Light slivers into a completely dark room. Casual ORCHESTRAL MUSIC plays in the background.

A head can be seen peering into the room, looking for any signs of life. This is the head of BETHANY. There is no one in sight, and Bethany waves over someone to come in with her.

A Man joins Bethany into the room and closes the door in a hurry as to alert no one of their presence.

Bethany turns on a ceiling light, illuminating the room. Both people wear elegant MASQUERADE MASKS paired with fancy clothing. They're surrounded by racks of wine that stretch from wall to wall.

Bethany smiles brightly. She moves and removes the mask from the Man. It's a young and dashing JORDAN. Jordan looks longingly at Bethany, and her the same.

Suddenly, there's an uneasiness in Jordan's eyes. He looks away from Bethany for a moment, picking up one of the many bottles of wine. He fumbles through his pocket to take out a swiss army knife to open the bottle.

Bethany takes Jordan's bottle opening hand. With a gentle ease, she grabs the wine bottle. She tosses it behind her, the bottle SHATTERS to pieces. They smile, closely intertwined. Bethany pulls the ceiling light once more, the pitch black darkness surrounding them once more.

INT. WINE CELLAR - LATER

A HAND reaches over and lights a CANDLE with a match. The faint light reveals Jordan and Bethany lying side by side. No clothes, no masks, no one but him and her.

Jordan tosses the match away, pulling Bethany back towards him.

BETHANY

My parents really don't know how to  
throw a party. Who knew having fun  
could be so simple?

JORDAN

Come on, Bethany. They don't have to treat you this well. Maybe it's not your cup of tea, but they've proven they care more about you than anything.

BETHANY

You're very quick to defend them. Something happen between you guys?

Jordan plays with the PENDANT wrapped around Bethany's neck.

JORDAN

Somewhat. You know, when someone says they want to leave everything they know and start a new life, I would assume their life now would be complicated in some way. But, I couldn't catch any of that. Just pride for their daughter.

Bethany breaks off of Jordan. She covers herself with her dress and looks Jordan in the eye.

BETHANY

Don't tell me after all this time you want to give up on our dream?

JORDAN

Not our dream. Your dream.

BETHANY

Who would have thought that I've fallen for not just a liar, but a coward too?

JORDAN

Excuse me if I don't understand the fascination you have with running away from everything you have now for a life with nothing. I can't give you what your family can. I never will.

Beat. The music from the party grows louder.

BETHANY

When I was very little, I want to sing in the church choir. It was a silly thing to want, but I was really good at it. And I really liked it.

(MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)

There was nothing back then that filled me with more joy than standing in front of everyone and having my voice echo throughout the crowd. But I think my grandmother enjoyed it more. She would be in the front row, her eyes on me the whole way through. When she would smile at me, I felt her warmth. It was more for her that I wanted to be happy, and she thought the same way. My parents didn't.

(beat)

They found out about what I was doing and stopped it. I try remembering what my father said about it, but it gets fuzzy. Maybe it's because a lot of what my parents would say seemed fuzzy. Every question I asked about grandmother after that were answered with some vague answer that didn't really answer anything. And when she passed away, it was the same thing. Only difference was I remember that answer because they never even mentioned grandmother was sick.

JORDAN

Your grandmother gave you that pendant, right?

BETHANY

It's a family keepsake. It's supposed to represent our history and where we've come from. It's apparently worth more than our estate.

JORDAN

So why do you wear it all the time if you're going to just abandon them?

BETHANY

I don't think I am. What I shared with my grandmother was more reminiscent of what our family was. It's hard to wrap my head around even now, but I feel like what's best for me isn't really what's right for me.

(MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Those memories I shared with her were so long ago, but I remember them more than anything else. Before you, it had been so long since I wanted to hold something close again.

JORDAN

Have you told your parents how you feel? Isn't it possible to just be together and not have to leave everything behind?

BETHANY

Maybe now you have an idea where I'm coming from.

Jordan is confused.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

He won't let us be married. For the sake of our family. He's arranging a marriage for me. He failed to mention that to you?

JORDAN

He never mentioned anything.

BETHANY

Typical.

(beat)

I'll admit I can have a lot more abiding by my parents' law. But none of what they can offer is worth more than what you gave me. I love you, Jordan. You make me want to remember everything, even though it hurts. I have to remember the bad, because I would never appreciate the good. What makes me who I am, what makes me want to keep myself intact is all because of those little fragments of my memory. If leaving everything behind is what it takes, I'll do it in a heartbeat. One simple memory of my life with you is worth more than one where I never had the chance.

The two embrace. Jordan holds on to her tightly. Bethany holds back tears.

Jordan reaches for her PENDANT once more, and Bethany holds onto it as well. The two are totally intertwined.

Suddenly, the music STOPS. The candle that was once illuminating the scene blows out. Bethany and Jordan are consumed in darkness.

Bethany begins to fall away from Jordan. Jordan looks petrified. He tries to reach out to her, but she is stuck in the same way as it was when there was light.

Jordan is slowly frozen in the same spot, reaching out to something that is no longer there. He is alone, trapped in silent darkness.

EXT. RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

A large retirement area during the fall. Elderly are aided by nursing staff as they walk or rest to enjoy the season.

Through a second story window, the head of a man can barely be made out.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - SAME

The head belongs to Jordan. Some time has passed, as told through the crevices and wrinkles developed on his face and hands. He sits in a wheelchair, alone and immobile. There looks as if there's no thought or feeling in his mind and body.

Jordan's IPOD lays in his lap, earbuds plugged in his ear. The iPod, now showing wear and tear through the years, is OUT OF BATTERY.

Footsteps begin to draw nearer to Jordan, and entering the room is a NURSE and Sam. Sam is older as well, wearing the sophisticated clothing when he was first seeing his father.

NURSE

Here he is. Would you like some alone time with him?

SAM

Do whatever you'd like. Either way, I only came to spend time with my father.

NURSE

Then I'll leave you two alone. If you need anything, just give me a holler.

The Nurse turns away and starts to exit. Sam kneels down to look at Jordan's face eye-to-eye. He notices the dead iPod on his lap.

SAM

How long has his iPod been dead?

NURSE

I'm not sure. These days I'm spread out thin. It's impossible for me to pay attention to something like that.

Sam picks up the iPod and gives it to the Nurse.

SAM

This something needs your attention now.

The Nurse takes it and leaves. Sam turns back to his father. Sam takes a chair and sits side by side with Jordan.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sorry it's been a while. Life seems to have a way of interrupting our visits when I try to plan them, so this time I thought I'd try to surprise you so that wouldn't happen. There is a bright side to it though.

Sam reaches in his pocket. He takes out the PENDANT Bethany wore.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sarah and I spent almost a whole weekend searching through mountains of boxes for this. I swear if I had a wrecking crew I would have been ready to tear the place up. I guess if you really did care about it, you would want to make a treasure hunt out of it.

Sam puts the pendant around his father's neck.

SAM (CONT'D)

But you really did care. More than most people care about anything. You and mom never compromised who you were, even when times looked bleak. You would just put on those headphones, and not a single thing would phase you.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

You stayed true to yourself, and that's all a son like me could ask for.

(beat)

I also came here with some news. You're gonna be a grandfather. It's been a hard journey for Sarah and I. When I thought I should just give up, I would think of you. Listening to your music. Re-living the past. Always remembering who you were and why you were here. Well, it paid off.

The Nurse comes back in the room with the iPod. She hands it over to Sam, who gently places the earbuds back into his father's ears. He presses PLAY.

NURSE

That is one old piece of equipment. Must be important to him.

SAM

If some people held onto things like my father did, the world might not be as scary as it seems.

NURSE

See you next month?

SAM

Maybe two. And I'll be having some company with me so save some seats.

NURSE

Looking forward to it.

Sam exits. The Nurse closes the door behind them. Jordan is alone with the sounds of his music. There's a gleam in his eyes that wasn't there before. The music from the headphones grow LOUDER as we:

FADE TO BLACK.

