

INT. TEEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

LIGHTS UP ON ALEAH.

The bedroom is dark, lit only by a faint light coming from the top of ALEAH's walkie talkie. She lays with a blanket covering her head, and posters of Ted Lasso, a National Geographic depiction of Iceland, and WILLOW cover her wall. Her feet kick behind her, and her eyes glimmer, like even the darkness of the room couldn't suffocate her joy.

ALEAH
(giggling)
Ted Lasso is not immature. It's just fun! There's nothing immature about good fun.

From the other side of the walkie talkie, a voice crackles and giggles with Aleah.

DAMION
(giggling, lighthearted)
Okay, you got me. Maybe I'm just a Jason Sudeikis hater.

Aleah gasps.

ALEAH
I'm sorry, what? What is there to hate about that beautiful man?

DAMION
He's got a mustache! Mustache's are disgusting!

ALEAH
We're not getting into your hatred of facial hair now, buddy. Just because--

DAMION
(interrupting)
--Plus, didn't he end like a nine year relationship with Olivia Wilde? Why would he do that? She's hot. Honestly, she looks a little like you. You've both got those amazing eyes, and beautiful hair and... you know.

Aleah pauses before speaking.

ALEAH
(hesitant)
Don't do that.

The static between the two walkie talkies crackles.

DAMION
(chuckling nervously)
Do what?

ALEAH
That. That subtle flirting shit. Don't do it.

DAMION
I'm not--why? Aren't you single?

ALEAH
Damion, I'm single, but that doesn't mean I'm into you. God, you've gotten so much worse since you grew up. Why can't we just talk like we used to?

LIGHTS DOWN ON ALEAH. LIGHTS UP ON DAMION.

DAMION shifts on his side of the walkie-line. He lays on his back--an inverse of Aleah--with his feet propped against his wall, which tacks up a poster of WILLOW and a school calendar.

DAMION
What do you mean "like we used to"?
What's so different about how we talk now?

ALEAH
That's the thing. We don't talk without you starting something.

DAMION
(aggressive)
What's something?

ALEAH
(gesturing at the walkie talkie--as if Damion could see it)

This! This is something!
You get wrapped up in some GPA booster event, or STUCO election, or track meet, and the only time you come to me for anything is once it all falls apart. And then you flirt. I'm here for you when it gets tough, and then you flirt. Well, I'm done. I hate it. Jesus Christ, don't you?

The other end of the line is silent. Damion hasn't moved since Aleah started talking, and still makes no move to. He stares straight ahead, at the ceiling. There is a long stretch of silence, like quiet could magic itself into something tangible and dangerous, and slowly suffocate both the static, and the unspoken words between the two.

DAMION
(resigned)
Remember the summer of sixth grade...

As Damion begins recounting his version of the summer of sixth grade, two younger versions of Aleah and Damion walk onto stage and position themselves in their respective parallel rooms--Young Aleah laying upside down, off the bed, feet pointing toward the hanging poster of Iceland, Damion laying on the ground, legs kicked up behind him, chin in his hands, facing Aleah. A string-can "telephone" connects the two rooms, taking the place of the walkie talkies. As Damion continues to talk, the kids pantomime what he describes.

LIGHTS UP ON YOUNG ALEAH AND YOUNG DAMION.

DAMION
...When you told me that you wanted to leave town because you found out that it was illegal to plant community gardens without a permit? And so you said...

YOUNG ALEAH
...I'm going to go to Iceland.

Young Aleah mouths the rest of Damion's words as he says them.

DAMION

It's so beautiful there, and no one ever goes there because the name scares them.
And if stupid people that can't use Google don't go there, that means that stupid laws don't either.

A soft chuckle warms the line of static.

LIGHTS UP ON ALEAH.

DAMION

I almost kissed you then. Your eyes were so wide and determined. I could have kissed you.

The chuckling ceases. Aleah's face turns cold.

ALEAH

(drawing in a breath)

This is your problem, Damion. We were seven. There were playground kisses, not romanticized-children kisses. God, that was the day I knew I wanted to do something big with my life. And even though I didn't know what yet, I knew...

Young Aleah and Young Damion speak at the same time.

YOUNG ALEAH

...I want you by my side.

YOUNG DAMION

...I want to kiss you.

ALEAH

No!

LIGHTS DOWN ON YOUNG ALEAH AND YOUNG DAMION. THEY EXIT STAGE LEFT.

DAMION

Damn, I got played for nearly 10 years. I thought you loved me.

ALEAH

(on the verge of tears)
I do! I do, god, I promise! Just not
like that. I want you to be my friend,
not like that.

DAMION
How could you even hang out with me if
you didn't like me?

ALEAH
(crying)
Because I liked hanging out with you!
I am not naive for my joy, Damion. I am
not naive for my love, or for my
friendships, or for my trust. I am not
wrong, or bad, for loving hard. Yeah, I
went to a WILLOW concert with you. And
when you leaned in for a kiss, I
deflected it. I'm there for music, not
for your favors. And the first time we
met in the fourth grade and we cut out
paper stars, I wanted to tell you that
you must not know how to use a pair of
scissors because your star looked a
whole lot like a circle, but you were
just so kind that I couldn't find the
guts to. And when you drove me to
school for those few months, I know I
should have paid you gas money. And
shit. Every moment that we can't
explain. Every underlying condition of
each other. Every late night call. This
is an unspoken currency. We are
exchanging love letters to each other,
whispering truths to affirm that the
other is alive. I love you because I
love you and that doesn't need
explanation. I love you on purpose. I
love you. But you crossing my
boundaries is not a reflection of bad
boundaries, it's a reflection of you. I
am not naive for my joy. You are
immature for your flirts, even when
they're small. It doesn't matter. I
matter more.

LIGHTS DOWN ON DAMION.

The bedroom is much lighter now, as sunlight begins to spill into Aleah's room and morning encroaches with a bitter hand and comforting taste. She lays with a blanket covering her head, and posters of Ted Lasso, a National Geographic depiction of Iceland, and WILLOW cover her wall. Her feet kick lay behind her, and her eyes are nearly swollen from her tears. Even her joy has begun to suffocate her thinking, and only sadness can clear the way for clarity. She understands this balance, only now, of course.

ALEAH

(softer)

Yeah. I am not naive for my joy.