

LEAVE YOU ALONE AND FORGET

Written by

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INT. BETO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A hint of moonlight glimmers through the faded curtains. BETO (30s) sits on the edge of the bed. He's tanned and bearded, with a cigarette in one hand and a cellphone in the other. The phone presses against his ear amidst unruly hair.

BETO  
What? What is it?

INT. JOEL'S OFFICE- NIGHT

Crumpled in the corner of the dimly-lit office sits JOEL (30s). He has greasy, tangled hair that touches his shoulders. He hunches over himself, phone squeezed between his hands.

JOEL  
There's just a feeling. Nothing's right.

INTERCUT

Beto presses his fingers against the bridge of his nose.

BETO  
What's not right? Joel. What's going on?

JOEL  
I don't know.

BETO  
Are you on drugs?

JOEL  
No. Eliza took them. I just needed to talk to you.

BETO  
I'm here. Aren't I?

JOEL  
Okay.

BETO  
I'm here.

JOEL  
Okay. Good.

Beto plays with his lighter. Smokes some more.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I think I miss you.

BETO

You think you do?

JOEL

I'm not sure. I don't miss all the arguing.

BETO

I miss it sometimes. I don't argue with anyone else the way I do with you.

JOEL

Not sure that's a good thing.

BETO

Yeah. Maybe not.

Joel stretches out, uncurling himself from being plastered to the wall. His eyes are lost in the distance.

JOEL

I wrote you a song. Part of it.

BETO

Really? Show me next time you visit.

JOEL

I don't know. That might not happen.

BETO

What are you saying?

JOEL

Not like that--

BETO

You can't do that. I need you.

JOEL

I know. I need you too. I'm not leaving. Not like that.

BETO

Good. Then. Sing it to me now.

JOEL

No.

BETO

You want to, don't you? Please.

Joel hesitates.

JOEL

Okay. Alright.

Joel picks up his acoustic guitar. He touches the strings. The sound rattles over the cellphone. Beto holds his breath.

JOEL (CONT'D)

(singing; softly)

*I never thought you were mine  
But your absence would elicit a  
whine  
While you keep on going, I'll stay  
behind  
So you can look forward without  
crying*

*Another heart breaking in two  
Another lie you promised was true  
You'll love a girl or maybe a few  
And I'll just stay loyal to you*

*How, how could I leave  
An ocean of love in our veins  
I cried your name as I couldn't  
breathe  
But the door's locked and closed by  
your hands  
How, how could you leave  
When I begged you to hold back the  
pain*

*Our songs used to flow in one  
breath  
Now losing themselves in a death  
I still remember your dark little  
threat  
That I should leave you alone and  
forget*

*But if I leave you alone and forget  
I know that'd be my one regret.*

Beto is frozen. Hunched over. Phone to ear, cigarette forgotten. Ashes flake to the ground.

BETO

Joel. Please.

Joel looks up at the ceiling, tears in his eyes.

JOEL  
God, this world is so cruel.

BETO  
Joel.

JOEL  
It's so cruel.

Beto listens to the sounds of Joel's soft crying. The cigarette burns the tips of his fingers.

INT. GALA - NIGHT - A FEW YEARS EARLIER

Joel and LILA (late 20s) watch Beto dance with a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. They wear matching smiles.

Joel rushes the rest of his drink down.

Lila squeezes his arm.

LATER

Beto moves to the side, catching his breath. Joel goes up to him.

JOEL  
Dance with me?

BETO  
Joel.

JOEL  
Dance with me.

He holds his hand out. Beto sighs.

They sway to the music, hands on each other. Joel looks around the room. Beto awkwardly steps to the music. Sweat forms on his forehead.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
Owen and Ginny are dancing. And Lila and her boyfriend. Thought it might be odd if we didn't too.

BETO  
Odd for who?

JOEL  
Don't be mean.

BETO  
Ginny and Lila are girls, Joel.

Joel tries not to let the cut get to him. Against his better efforts, his face heats up, red and splotchy.

BETO (CONT'D)  
You smell like alcohol.

JOEL  
Thank you.

BETO  
How much have you drank?

JOEL  
Not enough.

BETO  
And what would happen if you had more?

JOEL  
You tell me.

BETO  
(twitching)  
Careful.

The music slows. Joel looks to the band on stage.

JOEL  
Should be us up there.

BETO  
I think so too.

JOEL  
Really?

BETO  
I still love to perform. The five of us--it's always electric.

JOEL  
I guess I've forgotten. These past months, you've seemed sour.

BETO  
It's not because of the music.

The music ends. Joel and Beto stop.

JOEL  
Maybe we should split up.

BETO  
Have you been thinking of it?

JOEL  
Seems like you have.

BETO  
Give me a straight answer, Joel.

The music starts up again--upbeat. People swirl and dance around them, smiles on their faces.

JOEL  
We don't get along anymore. We fight. And we're all tired. Exhausted. And me especially--I can't do this anymore.

BETO  
I'm too hard on you.

JOEL  
No. I can't keep on hoping.

BETO  
We just danced, didn't we?

JOEL  
You think that's enough?

BETO  
Joel. You can't have everything you want.

JOEL  
But this is torture.

BETO  
Then leave.

JOEL  
Beto--

BETO  
Joel. Just leave, okay? Leave me alone and forget about it. All of it.

He walks away, merging into the happy crowd.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Esteemed television interviewer ARIANA MEDEIROS (40s) sits across Joel. The audience watches quietly.

ARIANA

And everyone just wants to know more about your partnership with Beto Rivera! It's amazing, one of the modern era's best songwriting duos. So many brilliant songs. Tell me about it.

JOEL

Sure. Beto's wonderful. We push each other.

Joel's fingers tap so rapidly against the couch's arm they seem to be trembling.

JOEL (CONT'D)

He's a talented musician. I appreciate his gifts and he appreciates mine. It's a match made in heaven.

ARIANA

Love at first sight?

JOEL

You could say that.

The audience laughs. Joel tries to grin.

ARIANA

Speaking of love, your relationship with Eliza Nguyen. Such an incredible artist. How is she?

JOEL

Oh. My soulmate. I couldn't be happier.

ARIANA

Beautiful. Two wonderful partners.

Another forced smile from Joel. The audience cheers.

INT. STUDIO - DAY - MANY YEARS AGO

A fresh-faced, youthful Joel (17) strums a guitar. Bandmates GINNY (17) and OWEN (16) tune their instruments. Owen sits at a drum set; Ginny has an electric guitar.



Lila (17) enters. She has a confident walk and short hair.

LILA

Guys, I want you to meet someone.

A young Beto (15) enters the room, guitar case in hand. There's a cuteness about him--brown doe eyes, shaggy hair. He smiles at the group.

BETO

Hi. I'm Roberto.

GINNY

Who asked?

LILA

Hey. Come on. Kid's got talent. I want him to join us.

JOEL

We have enough members, Lila.

BETO

You don't have a bassist.

Ginny and Owen glance at each other--*the nerve of this kid*. Joel's brow furrows--until he shrugs.

JOEL

Go ahead then. Show us.

Beto sits and tunes the guitar.

BETO

I'm still working on this one. I don't know how it ends yet.

He starts to play. His voice is soft, melodic, and raw.

BETO (CONT'D)

(singing)

*I never thought you were mine  
But your absence would elicit a  
whine  
While you keep on going, I'll stay  
behind  
So you can look forward without  
crying*

*Another heart breaking in two  
Another lie you promised was true  
You'll love a new guy or maybe a  
few*

(MORE)

BETO (CONT'D)

*And I'll just stay loyal to you  
Yes, I'll stay loyal to you.*

Joel watches, utterly entranced. With a careless gaze, he studies every small bit of Beto.

Beto finishes. He looks up.

Joel smiles. Beto smiles back.

THE END.