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To That One Sunset

The fear of losing yourself to the unknown and uncertainty of life is such a complicated and overwhelming feeling. Growing up is just a really scary and confusing process. It's almost like being in a race that you have no desire to participate in, yet you have to just keep the pace, as there is no means of stopping without giving up on life. Most of us have longed to grow up for most of our childhood, but now that we are facing this reality, I think it's safe to say I much rather hit remind and allow myself to just live in the bliss of innocence I once had. I've come to realize all these years I simply just wanted to have the freedom of being older, not to banish youthfulness. Finding your place in this world is not an easy feat, especially with all the pressure many of us go through. Living this truth in a pandemic has only worsened the symptoms of these growing pains. Life had felt like it was on pause but in reality, time never stopped moving, and two years later we resumed as if almost nothing had happened. Losing out on vital time during the most important parts of my life, all those high school trips, stomach-pain-inducing laughter, and overall happiness is one of the hardest things to process. It's hard to believe that before all of this I was just a small fresh sophomore and when life seemed to catch up with time I was a high school senior trying to figure out my life decisions. The halls that have cared for me for almost a decade, and the people whose smiles have fueled me for so long are now nothing but a distant memory. Throughout all these memories music has always been a constant outlet and as I listen I allow myself to be transported to a much simpler time in my life. I've always listened to and

appreciated music however it wasn't until July 7th, 2022 that I was able to fully immerse myself into an entirely different realm of auditory goodness.

The way I listen to music has often been beyond the beat and melody, and I take a deeper dive into the lyrical substance and try to connect the art to my present and past life experiences or expectations. I almost pride myself on being intellectual with the things I listen to as I try to feed myself with music that makes me feel good beyond having a catchy phrase. I look for songs that transport me to a different space and allow my mind to create this imaginary world, whether one of peace or anger. I search for lyrics that fuel my energy and create a space for me to dig deeper into myself, almost as a gateway to my emotions. I have often found songs that fit these criteria however it wasn't until a special day that I truly came to appreciate the auditory magic Lorde created in her song "Ribcage". July 7th was a day that empowered me to know so much about myself and those close to me in a way I never thought was possible. The day started fairly simple with me at work and later meeting up with my friends during a bright and hot evening in Manhattan. The city was often our place of escape from all the worries of our personal lives, as it allowed us to detach from all the expectations and views placed upon us. After mindlessly wandering around Time Square, not knowing where to go or what to do, I convinced both Ester and Jessica to let me take them to this beautiful spot where we could watch and capture the sunset, with an amazing view of the water. They hesitated as they knew this wasn't a place within a five-minute walk and they hate walking, however, I managed to drag them downtown hoping the view would make it worth wild. Walking along a train track turned park, with me leading the group and Ester and Jessica trailing behind me, the normal 10-minute walk has now turned into a nearly hour trek. It was all filled with laughter and love though, which made time feel nonexistent. I kept reminding myself we had to stay focused as we were losing daylight and

didn't want to miss the main event. After it seemed we would never get there, we made it to our destination, "Little Island ". Ester and Jessica were instantly overwhelmed with the view of the Hudson River and I simply couldn't contain myself as we got closer and closer to the part that was the true star, as what they had seen was only the beginning. I led the way, guiding them up some stairs, making some turns, and then finally there it was. The place itself was not to die for architecture or art, but the view was really what brought everything together. Gathering ourselves from the overwhelming beauty, we went to find our place for the next hour. Little did we know this would be the beginning of such a special and inspiring moment.

As we sat down, time seemed to just pass us. What felt like a minute or two was nearly twenty. We were in complete awe, just sitting there in silence with nothing really on our minds, but just taking a moment to bring peace within ourselves. As moments passed, the sun gently started to transform, from this angelic white to a dull warm orange, it was starting... Finally breaking the silence, Ester proposed the idea that we take this moment to connect ourselves to some tunes and just vibe out as the sun continued setting, and it couldn't have been more perfect timing. I think we all knew the exact song we wanted to play, rushing to our pockets to grab our headphones to finally be plugged into the realm we so often crave. We were all ready and had our songs locked and loaded, and at this point, the sky had changed from this dull orange to very bright orange with hues of pink emerging. It was time, we all looked at each other and counted down to 3.

One....two....three...boom, "hmmhmmhmm",

the ambient droning buzz instantly took me away. How can such a simple but complex noise convey such a deep and misunderstood feeling? Although it lasted only a few seconds, I felt such an immersive emptiness within that time frame. There I was looking at this amazing

natural wonder but I felt like I wasn't really there, I was drifting away. Towards the clouds? I'm not too sure. One thing I am positive about is that Lorde had made me feel something without feeling anything, a feeling so complex that I still don't understand it. A feeling triggered by such a simple buzz. Eventually making my way back to reality, as the crescendo reaches its climax and her voice fills this once vast emptiness with tangible emotions, I take a second to glance over at Ester and Jess. I find them fixated on the view yet their eyes full of tears, I knew the sunset wasn't the cause. What we were experiencing was something so candid and real, for the first time we were able to be so vulnerable with each other, without having to even say a word. Our presence said enough, and this pain that we were experiencing was all the same.

“We can talk it so good
We can make it so divine
We can talk it good
How you wish it would be all the time”

In came rushing through my brain moments of pure bliss and innocence. The times of letting my inner child roam free without a care in the world, memories made just moments before coming here. Memories that will forever be stuck in the past and hardly in the future, a truth that will forever haunt me. Memories so “divine” that I crave to live through them all the time. Moments that as I look over to the two next to me, I know will soon be a distant souvenir of a period where life was so simple. I bring myself back to the present one more time, to give my brain a rest. The faces of my friends are covered by this beautiful purple tone, as their faces dampen with tears and pain. I took this time and asked if they could disconnect from what they were listening to for a moment and although I already knew, I asked what was wrong. The silence was so loud for a few seconds following my question, but as I waited I saw the build-up of emotions on their faces, eventually leading to more tears as they struggled to get their words together. Ester spoke as she

fought the lump in her throat and streams flowing down her face, and said she is scared of the uncertainty of her life that lies ahead and the fear of losing each other. Then soon followed Jessica with her pain of going away to college, fearing her inadequacy and being forced to grow up. It was then I knew truly, I wasn't alone. Assuring them we will be okay, I got them up and walked over to a semi-empty area that showcased an amazing view of the city. I took Jessica's phone and searched up "Ribs" by Lorde on Spotify, and fast-forwarded it to 3:33. I did the same on my phone, keeping one airpod in my ear and giving Ester the other. For the last time, we counted to three.

One...Two...Three

You're the only friend I need
(You're the only friend I need)
Sharing beds like little kids
(Sharing beds like little kids)
And laughing till our ribs get tough
(Laughing till our ribs get tough)
But that will never be enough
(But that will never be enough)

You're the only friend I need
(You're the only friend I need)
Sharing beds like little kids
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As soon as we heard Lorde's voice, we let go of everything. We didn't care who was around, and who was watching. It was our moment and if it was soon going just to be a distant memory, I sure as hell was going to make it worthwhile. There we were dancing our asses off, waving all around in the cringiest and strangest way, but it was amazing. All of our worries were gone, they were all I needed.

This day was more than a simple experience, it was a day that changed the way I understood and connected with myself, my friends, and music. The anxiety and fear I once thought were my own and unique to me were shared and expressed throughout the entire world. Lorde has once experienced this same pain, conveying such a feeling in her song that makes one dig so deep within themselves they might get lost on their way out. Her constant tiredness and fear are heard through the song and only add to the effect. It helped me see and feel emotions that I had taught myself I shouldn't feel. I think I speak for the three of us when I say the fear in our eyes was so freeing that day, not because of what and how it made us feel, but rather because for that moment we saw we weren't alone. We saw in each other what we felt in ourselves. The question I continue to ask myself is what this day would have looked like without the presence of music. I do know though that because of music, we were able to be one and undeniably feel.