

Sadness Because of Josh

by
Trevian Leigh

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - EIGHTH GRADE STAIRWELL - DAY

A dim concrete room with black rails.

SUPER: THE SUMMER OF 2015

TRE, 14, skinny, not comfortable in his skin, stands at the top of the platform. He uses his back to block the door. He holds a small sheet cake.

TRE
(whispers)
Josh, where are you?

Tre puts the cake down. He checks his watch. *

The door handle jingles twice. Tre steps back. He runs his tongue over his braces.

JOSH, 15, handsome with a dash of edge, slams the door shut. He doesn't make eye contact with Tre.

TRE (CONT'D)
Hi, I made you a cake: Peanut Butter,
Chocolate, your favorite.

Tre hands Josh the cake.

Josh lifts the foil to smell the cake.

JOSH
Thanks.

Tre inches closer to Josh.

JOSH (CONT'D)
So, I got your message last night. And it
was a lot. But I wanna hear it from you.
I wanna know how you feel.

Tre exhales. He doesn't make eye contact with Josh.

TRE
I've only known you for a hot second, but
I feel like we've met in another
lifetime. When I saw you, my heart came
alive. I finally woke up. I finally knew
what love was...and it was you.

Tre wipes his tears.

TRE (CONT'D)
I've always loved you. I know today's
your last day.
(MORE)

TRE (CONT'D)

I know you're going back to North Carolina, and I know that this won't work. But long-distance exists. We have Kik. That app is never gonna die. Like ever. I wanna be with you.

Josh stares intensely at Tre.

TRE (CONT'D)

I just--

JOSH

Why?

TRE

Huh?

JOSH

Why do you love me?

TRE

What's not to love? You made me feel seen. You know my name. You know, things that I didn't know myself. You made me feel special.

JOSH

I did?

TRE

Yeah, when you asked me for a pencil, and we locked eyes, those beautiful hazel eyes made me melt.

Josh sits on the first step—his back to Tre.

Tre leans on the rail.

JOSH

You like my eyes?

He nods.

TRE

You didn't know?

JOSH

No, I didn't.

TRE

I thought I was obvious.

Josh half-heartedly chuckles. Tre follows suit.

An awkward silence falls upon the two.

JOSH
Did you write that note?

TRE
I did.

JOSH
Why didn't you own it?

TRE
I planned on owning it. But I saw your reaction. You got so angry. You look disgusted...I was scared. I didn't wanna lose you.

JOSH
(whispers)
You never had me...

TRE
Huh?

JOSH
Look, Tre, I'm not gay. I ain't never gone be gay. Never was gay.

TRE
Josh, I know. But I had to tell you. I knew this was your last day. I woulda never forgave myself if I never told you how I felt. Please, let me finish.

Josh stands up.

JOSH
I don't love you.

Tre looks at the floor.

TRE
Could you learn?

JOSH
No fucking way.

Tre stomps his foot.

TRE
Even after everything! Everything I did for you. I defended you from Jayvon Mince, Kaylee, and her crew!
(MORE)

TRE (CONT'D)

I gave you my essay. I gave you all of me. And I want a part of you.

Josh grabs his cake he then pushes past Tre.

TRE (CONT'D)

Josh. Please, don't go. I love you. I need you to love me back.

Josh slams the door shut.

Tre sits in Josh's old spot on the stairs. He puts his face in his hands. He sobs heavily.

TRE (CONT'D)

(muffled)

Oh my god.

DERRON, 13, tall and slender. NICK, 14, short and geeky, and AMYA, 13, beautiful but has a busted bob and thick glasses, run up the stairs.

DERRON

Tre?

Amya wraps her arms around him. Nick opens the door.

NICK (O.S.)

He's gone.

AMYA

I'm so sorry.

She kisses the top of his head.

DERRON

You say the word, and he'll get a farewell ass-kicking.

Derron punches the wall.

AMYA

C'mon, let's get you outta here. I don't want people to see you like this.

NICK

Tre, c'mon, get up.

Tre doesn't budge.

DERRON

T, get up.

Tre doesn't move. Derron throws Tre over his shoulders.

AMYA
Really? Over your shoulder?

DERRON
I don't hear him complaining.

AMYA
He's not saying much of anything.

Nick holds the door open.

DERRON
Can I still beat his ass?

He waits for Tre's response.

DERRON (CONT'D)
I'll take that as a "yes."

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - EIGHTH GRADE HALLWAY - DAY

Sky-blue lockers line the walls. Amya holds Tre's hand.

TRE
(muffled)
Put me down.

EVERYONE
Huh?

TRE
Put me down.

Derron puts Tre down. He brushes the wrinkles out of Tre's clothes. Tre sits. Everyone follows except Nick.

NICK
How ya feel?

AMYA
How'd you think he feels?

TRE
I feel numb, but I'm glad I got it off my chest...at least--

NICK
You can move on now.

TRE
I don't think I can. He was my everything.

(MORE)

TRE (CONT'D)

I learned his schedule, for fucks sake. I looked forward to seeing him every day. I guess I'm delusional.

DERRON

You're not delusional. You're in love.

AMYA

(whispers to Derron)

Were in love.

Amya wipes his tears.

NICK

Do you think he's gonna tell anyone?

AMYA

He leaves in a couple hours. He's got nothing to lose.

TRE

I know.

AMYA

You'll find someone. I promise.

Nick quickly taps at the large windows.

DERRON

What?

NICK

Josh's leaving.

Everyone rushes to the window.

TRE

(whispers)

No...

AMYA

Well, at least he's outta your life.

Tre runs down a flight of steps. The others chase him.

NICK

Stop him!

AMYA

Trevian Leigh, get your ass back here!

Tre bursts through the school's front door. Everyone else follows behind.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

TRE

Wait!

Josh places the cake in the car.

JOSH

What now?

DERRON

Fuck off.

TRE

Please, don't go...please.

JOSH

Leave me alone. I'm not gay. Stop putting that label on me.

Josh walks to the group.

TRE

I know. But I thought we had a vibe, a connection. Something. You lead me on.

JOSH

I didn't lead you on.

NICK

You kinda did tho. If you weren't interested in him, then why did--

DERRON

Cause he's an asshole, Nick.

Derron steps closer to Josh, but Nick blocks him.

TRE

Please, don't go. Please tell me you love me. Please. Tell me something.

JOSH

You're embarrassing yourself.

AMYA

No, he's not.

Tre places his hand over his heart.

TRE

Josh.

Josh opens the car door.

TRE (CONT'D)

Josh! Wait.

JOSH

Lemme go. My mom is ready to go.

TRE

(frantic)

First period, Algebra. Second period, Spanish, Third...our period. English, Fourth Computer Skills. Fifth period Gym. I devoted my entire year to you--

JOSH

(disgusted)

You're crazy.

Tre grabs Josh's arm.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Get off me.

He jerks his arm back from Tre.

TRE

You're my first love. I love you. I don't know how many times I have to keep saying that. But I need you.

JOSH

I'm not gay.

TRE

Look me in my eyes and tell me.

Josh doesn't make eye contact with Tre.

JOSH

I'm not gay.

TRE

I need you like I need oxygen. I wanna breathe.

MOM, 40, steps out of the car.

MOM (O.C.)

Enough of this. Josh, get in the car.

Josh enters the car.

MOM (O.C.) (CONT'D)

You need help.

Mom gets in the car. The engine revs.

They pull out of the lot.

TRE

No!

Tre runs after the car. He trips over some rocks.

DERRON

Tre!

AMYA

Oh my god, get him.

Amya, Nick, and Derron run to him.

DERRON

Tre.

Derron holds Tre in his arm. Tre sobs.

Nick puts his hand on Tre's shoulder.

DERRON (CONT'D)

Let it out. Just let it out.

Amya covers her mouth as she fights back tears.

The school bell rings.

THE END