



Nomad Motel
Carla Ching

Mason is a seventeen-year-old Hong Kong native (but passing as Asian American) living in Orange County. Mason has been dropped off in the United States to go to high school and lives alone in a big house. Mason's mother has just died and his father has seemingly disappeared and stops sending money. Flat broke and fearing deportation, Mason sets out to apply to an American college with the help of his friend Alix. This is Mason's personal statement on his application, his hail mary at being able to stay in the States.

MASON: I scrapped the other one. This is from scratch. Okay

(Mason does that weird siren exercise every drama school teacher teaches their students in voice class.)

Sorry. Vocal warm-up. We do it in debate.

(Mason starts to read from his college essay Mason's hands shake a little and the paper flutters.)

You said a letter

Dear Alix.

I don't want to go to college for the reasons most other people want to go to college.

Most people want to build the next big thing or be the next big thing. Not me.

Most people want to earn five million Twitter followers, see their face on billboards, and demand that there be a bowl of white M&Ms wherever they go. Not me.

My father wants me to go to Harvard so I can get an MBA and move a lot of money around.

Not me

I'm not interested in being 'great.

I'm not interested in being the Next Big Thing.

I'm just interested in doing the right thing

Two months ago,

I found a dying bird.

We set its wing, fed it sugar water and nursed it back to health.

No one was watching.
We didn't Instagram it or Snapchat it.
We saved the bird and cursed it back to health because it was the right thing to do.

Music has done for me what the sugar water did for our bird.
She has nursed me back to health.
She has made me get stronger.
Music is the one language that doesn't plague me with her rules and rhythms.
But frees me to express everything that I am.
Wherever in the world I am forced to go, I have her, even when I have no one else.

I want not just to make music, but to teach music because music has saved my life.
Given me a home.
Given me a reason.
And I want to teach other people how to play.
To help them find a home. A reason. A voice.
To give them the tools to save their own lives when they have no one and nothing.
Because that's what greatness looks like to me.

(Mason crumples the essay up and throws it aside. Embarrassed that it's all wrong. But Alix is incredibly moved. Upon hearing her voice, Mason's eyes brighten.)

Are you sure? That's it? Really?

(Mason picks up the crumpled essay and smooths it out.)

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