

ASHES

a short film  
written by  
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FADE IN:

INT. BROOKE'S HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING

Ambient prog music plays - an album spins on a record player.

BROOKE (18) lies on her floor, staring up at the ceiling. Large headphones wrap around her long brown hair and over her ears - she grows more and more relaxed.

As the music gets closer to its climax, Brooke closes her eyes and smiles.

The record stops spinning.

Brooke opens her eyes as the sounds of YELLING come from her walls. Her smile fades off her face as she slides the headphones off of her.

She takes a deep breath before leaning up right and looking around her room, stressed.

She walks over to her dresser where the record player sits. She carefully raises the needle off the album before opening her drawer.

She sorts through her mess of a drawer before finding a collection of crumpled twenty dollar bills. She grasps the money firmly and counts it.

She sticks the money back in the drawer and then reaches to pull out a bag of weed and ear buds. She closes the drawer.

Brooke walks over to her bed and tosses the weed in the backpack sitting on top of the bed. She sits down on the side of the bed and rubs her hand over her face.

She sticks the ear buds in her ears, plugs them into her phone. She stands and swings the backpack over one shoulder as she makes her way toward her bedroom door.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Brooke sits beside JESSICA (23-25) on top of her teacher's desk. Brooke bites her nails as she carefully stares at a sheet of paper.

JESSICA  
Memorized yet?

Brooke nods.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
What's an extra three minutes staring at  
it going to do?

Brooke quickly looks and forges a smile at Jessica before  
her face returns to its natural look of concern, staring  
down at the paper.

BROOKE  
How much did you say the fees were?

JESSICA  
Drama is a little more. \$150.

BROOKE  
That should be okay.

A bell rings.

JESSICA  
Don't you have French?

BROOKE  
Fuck that class.

JESSICA  
You've already skipped it a dozen times.

BROOKE  
Then one more isn't gonna hurt.

JESSICA  
And you said that last week.

Brooke gently takes hold of Jessica's hand.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Hey, you'll get in. At this rate you'll  
even get a lead I bet-

BROOKE  
I really just need to get in.

JESSICA  
Ready for the drama though?

Brooke scoffs.

BROOKE

I'm excited to watch it and laugh.

JESSICA

Seriously, I'm still surprised you went with "theater".

BROOKE

What? I've always been interested in acting.

JESSICA

But the people-

BROOKE

Fuck them.

JESSICA

-they're not your kind of people. They're immature, glued to their little microcosm-

BROOKE

Hey, I'll say this about theater kids: they live at this school.

JESSICA

And you'll be living with them.

Brooke leans her head on Jessica's shoulder.

BROOKE

Better than who I live with now. Trust me, I know this is the right thing for me.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - STAIRWELL - DAY

Brooke sits on the staircase with her backpack next to her. She reaches into her backpack and pulls out her headphones which she puts on.

SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICER (30-40) walks down the staircase about a floor below where Brooke sits.

Brooke pulls a joint out of her pocket and is about to light it when the Safety Officer reaches her level of the stairwell.

They stare at each other, and then the Safety Officer looks down at the backpack.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A computer types the following bullet points under CONDUCT VIOLATIONS:

1. Possession of marijuana.
2. Romantically intimate notes to/from employed teacher in backpack.

A printer prints out a sheet of paper.

A red stamp punches SUSPENSION onto the paper.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Brooke sits against the wall, dialing Jessica's contact into her phone. She bites her lip and shakes her leg as she stares at the screen. No answer.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - THEATER - DAY

Brooke sits in one of the chairs in the theater. She listens to her earbuds by herself, careless of her surroundings.

A few drama kids gossip and giggle in the aisles rehearsal. Brooke looks at them, then away as she rolls her eyes and shakes her head.

THEATER DIRECTOR (30-40) stands up front near the stage. Brooke stands from her chair and walks up to the Theater Director.

BROOKE

I have the fee.

Brooke pulls a handful of cash out of her pocket and holds it up for the Theater Director who stares at it taken aback.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Uh, thank you, Brooke, you can actually drop that off in the main office tomorrow. They take care of all that. Do you have a few minutes?

The Theater Director keeps his eyes glued to his clipboard.

BROOKE

What's up?

Brooke tucks the money away and takes out her earbuds.

THEATER DIRECTOR

I need to talk to you about your conduct violation.

Brooke looks behind her to see the theater kids staring.

BROOKE

Can we go to your office?

THEATER DIRECTOR

No, we're fine here.

The theater director drops his clipboard on the side of the stage then crosses his arms as he stares at Brooke.

THEATER DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Brooke, how old are you?

BROOKE

18.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Are you going to continue with theater in college?

BROOKE

I'm not going to college.

The theater director nods and leans on the side of the stage.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Why are you doing this?

BROOKE

Just the experience, I guess, I don't know-

THEATER DIRECTOR

You don't know.

Brooke scoffs and rolls her eyes.

BROOKE

No, why do you care?

THEATER DIRECTOR

You don't even know why you're doing this and you expressed interested in a lead.

BROOKE

Who doesn't? No one writes "ensemble" on those sheets, and I'm a senior so I figured what the hell.

THEATER DIRECTOR

What's your problem with being ensemble?

Brooke's eyes narrow with concern.

BROOKE

I never said I had a problem.

The theater director leans up from the side of the stage.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Look, I'm just trying to figure you out. You're good, don't get me wrong, but this isn't for you.

BROOKE

You're saying you don't want me here.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Well-

BROOKE

Just say it then.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Your conduct violation requires that you miss three out of the six performances. As an ensemble member, all that would do is inconvenience everyone else on stage.

The door shuts behind any other drama kids left - Brooke now alone with the Theater Director stares at him, keeping her tough guard.

BROOKE

You're threatening to kick me out.

THEATER DIRECTOR

This is an administrative issue, Brooke.

BROOKE

Exactly, and they already determined a consequence for it.

THEATER DIRECTOR

I still have the final say in your-

BROOKE

Which you didn't discuss with them.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Are you completely missing the point of what I'm trying to say?

BROOKE

You haven't even told me what you're trying to say.

THEATER DIRECTOR

If you can't give me a strong reason as to why you need to be in this production, then there should be no reason as to why you're going to stay here and inconvenience everyone else involved.

BROOKE

You don't need to know why I'm doing this. The reasons are personal, and I'm not telling my life story to a stranger.

The Theater Director glares at her.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

All I know is what people say about you: that you pre-cast and pick favorites.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Don't pretend to be one of them.

BROOKE

Them?

THEATER DIRECTOR

Just another sour theater kid who's mad at their mother for having them when they did because other people their age are better than them and get the parts they wanted. That's not who you are.

BROOKE

Then tell me who I am, if you know so much about me.



THEATER DIRECTOR

You're a stranger to me. All I knew about you before this came from Ms. Coleman.

Brooke struggles to cover up her reaction.

BROOKE

Don't talk about Jess.

THEATER DIRECTOR

She talked a lot about you. All normal, just praising a student, so it seemed. She only said one thing that stuck to me: where most people have an inner child, Brooke has nothing but ashes.

Brooke's feet shuffle in discomfort as she slouches in a chair in the audience, staring up at the theater director.

BROOKE

What?

THEATER DIRECTOR

This is not a place for you to come and escape from your problems. To everyone else here, this place is their life. If this is not your life, then don't bother coming back.

Brooke stares hopelessly into the Theater director's eyes before he picks up his clipboard and writes on it.

THEATER DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

You can leave now.

Brooke, trembling, stands up, turns around and stares down at the floor as she exits the theater.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKE'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brooke saunters into her room, staring down at the floor. She drops her backpack on the floor and it falls with a THUD.

She walks over to her dresser and takes her headphones off the top of it. She puts them around her neck as she places the needle down on the record album.

Brooke lies down on her floor - dried up tears sit beneath her exhausted eyes.

She slides the headphones over her ears, takes a deep breath, and closes her eyes.

CUT TO BLACK.