

Take A Sip

She thought there had been more time.

Paris. Versailles. The Eiffel Tower.

“Hello? Hello, did you hear me Rosie?”

Her mom was standing in front of her, a wide grin on her face. They were standing in their family coffee shop, just the two of them as a pile of paperwork sat in front of them.

It was late summer, school had ended, and Rosie’s mother had decided it was time for 17 year old Rosie to take over the family coffee shop. Ever since, the stress had piled on, and Rosie was decidedly screwed.

One by one, she had begun to unpin the aspirations in her brain, the hopes that held the fabric of her being.

School in Paris. Versailles. The Eiffel Tower.

“Yeah sorry, just distracted. I can finish this and just drive home myself,” Rosie plastered a smile on her face, aware of her mom’s sigh as she waved goodbye to her.

Smile fading, Rosie put on a pair of headphones, desperate to fix up the cafe and succumb to the future that was already falling into place.

The sunset had begun to fade into a familiar midnight black. The only illumination being the yellow light of the coffee shop, where Rosie was working to refill everything for the next morning. She ran her hands through tangled brown hair, the machines had gone quiet; the floors gleamed after being scrubbed, and the tables and chairs were perfectly set in place.

Everyone was exactly where they were supposed to be, yet standing around an empty coffee shop, Rosie felt the opposite. Sinking down to the floor she laughed, bitterly looking at the last groups of bags. ‘*Dream Come True: A blend produced in France.*’ Like all people at

some point, she desperately needed coffee, and there was no harm in hoping that the good vibes exuding from it would rub off on her.

An intoxicating aroma filled the air, as the machine whirred late in the night, the familiar smell of coffee wafting through the little building. Her mouth turned up at the corners as the warmth travelled down her spine. Stretching her arms, her green eyes drooped as she took a sip, set down her pen and rested her head in her hands...

Rosie's eyes snapped open all of a sudden, and she looked carefully around her, realizing she was not in the coffee shop. Taken aback, she jumped in surprise as she found herself in the middle of a street in the only city she'd ever dreamed of.

Paris.

It was sunset, and pedestrians mingled among the sidewalks laughing. The air was crisp, filled with the smell of pastries, and the quiet gurgle of a fountain was heard briefly as she took another step forward. Rosie walked, little by little, unsure of where she was going but knowing that it was somewhere important. As she made her way through the city she had a feeling.

The kind of certain feeling that she belonged here, that there were people and places here that she needed to meet.

Her eyes widened, because standing in front of her was a school she could've recognized anywhere. She knew what colors the windows were, the student population, and how the words "*School of Fine Arts and Architecture.*" were written in elegant script at the very front. She'd pored over the website for ages, dreaming of being a student here, of standing in this very spot. This was it for her. This place, and this school was all she'd ever dreamed of, all she'd held on to, so naturally, she couldn't stop her hand from moving towards the door.

As she reached for the handle, a twig snapped.

Whipping her head around, Rosie saw a girl that looked slightly older than her, maybe nineteen, with brown hair and the kind of eyes that sparkled with excitement.

She tilted her head and asked Rosie, “Well? Are you going in?”

Rosie turned, confused. “What?”

“I said, are you going in?” She waited expectantly, a slight glimmer behind her smile.

Rosie stopped for a second, staring at the handle again.

“Is this real? Am I dead?”

The girl laughed, “No, but you might end up that way if you don’t walk in.”

She switched to a serious tone, as she asked Rosie again, “I really do need to know though, are you going in?”

Rosie stuttered, words tripping over one another.

“I mean you just have to take a step,” the mysterious figure said, miming the motion by placing a foot over the line, “You got this.”

“That’s not the problem,” and Rosie's eyes closed as she remembered, as images of her mom swirled in her brain, working at the coffee shop late in the night when she wasn’t there. She saw her neighbors chatting disapprovingly, confused friends who could never seem to understand, and her soaring away above it all.

“I just can’t do that to them.”

“But it’s not about them,” the brown-haired girl rolled her eyes, “This is very much all about you.”

And Rosie tried to take a second, and she tried to find a protest, but the million thoughts in her brain were starting to filter into one, and for once the words seemed to untangle themselves.

“At the end of the day, it’s your life, not theirs,” the girl shrugged, taking a step towards the door. “But whatever you decide.”

Rosie watched as the girl walked in; the gates started to creak to a close. The school’s cobblestone walls, the green trees lining the campus, all began to pull away.

“Wait!” She ran, certainty growing within her, knowing that what she was about to do wouldn’t be reversible. Yet at the same time, this was important. She had to choose this for herself, for once. This was *her* life, and she had to make a choice now.

“Wait, I’m staying,” Rosie panted, catching up to the girl, stepping a foot into the gate to stop its closing.

Grinning, the girl gave her a slight nudge, laughing as Rosie tripped on a brick step. “I figured. Still, do what you will, the choice is always yours.”

And Rosie toppled to the ground as everything went black.

Bang! Rosie whirled her head around. She was lying on the floor, papers from her bag scattered around her, coffee spilling on the ground. She was back at the coffee shop, and it was all just a dream, although perhaps one a little more magical than others. And sitting up, Rosie grinned, staring at the table. Grabbing her phone, she called her mom, explaining that there might have been a slight change in the plans. Her voice still shook, but she did it anyway, taking a deep breath as the weight on her chest significantly began to loosen. With all the certainty she could muster; she knew that this was her life, and she’d go as far as she pleased.

That’s what she repeated to herself in her head; the words holed up in her brain, finally about to pour out. And in minutes, her mom stared across from her car keys in hand.

“Where’d the paperwork go?”

“I don’t know, but it doesn’t matter.”

“I’m pretty sure it does,” her mom smiled uncomfortably, a weak laugh.

Her mom was staring at her, confused, a fleet of worry across her face. Rosie mustered up the energy to spit the words out.

“Not anymore, I’m leaving, and I’ve been accepted to school in Paris, my dream school and I’m going because this is my choice and my life.”

The words were out. It wouldn’t have mattered whatever her mother said because she wouldn’t have cared.

Her mom walked over to the counter, with a smile in place. She rubbed her eyes, saying nothing. No complaints, disappointment, just an empty smile, and a face full of denial. She waved her hand in the air, unsure what to say.

“I mean what about the cafe? The dog? What about your life? Rosie, this was supposed to be the rest of your life. You can’t just-”

Rosie laughed quietly, as she pushed the door open, “I need to book my flight. I’ll see you at home.”

And for the first time in a while, things seemed to be falling into place.

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One month later

As her plane soared through the fluffy clouds, Rosie smiled, leaning against her window. The coffee shop, her mom reluctantly standing at the airport window, waving a halfhearted goodbye, and the small town that she’d called home for so long, all fading away past her grasp. She stared until they were mere specks in the distance, washed in the watercolor-streaked sunrise overtaking the horizon. Yet, it wouldn’t have mattered what world Rosie saw out there.

Somewhere out there, there were thousands of memories for her to make and adventures to chase. And somewhere out there, there was only Paris, and the promise of chasing her dream finally within grasp.