

KICKBACK

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KICKBACK

1 EXT. BACKYARD GRASS LAWN - DAY 1

CLOSE ON: AN INCENSE STICK. Lit. Smoke RISING. CUT TO:

JAY lays on the grass. We're TIGHT ON the side of his face. Headphones plugged in his ears. He's gently jamming to a beat... A TUNE.

We CUT ALL OVER the yard. Find a TORN DOWN "Congratulations" sign... a "Class of 2018" banner... Empty mason jars...

Jay walks over to the yard table. SEES a PARTY SIGN BOOK. He takes it, flips through it. Glimpses all the memos and signatures.

WIDE SHOT: Jay stands in his backyard holding the sign book.

2 EXT. DOWNTOWN KC - DAY 2

JAY walks through the empty streets of downtown. MURALS. BIG BUILDINGS. SMALL SHOPS.

SUPER TITLE:

K I C K B A C K

And we get MORE SHOTS of Jay WALKING DOWNTOWN. Strutting along. Minding his own business.

3 EXT. DOCKSIDE - PARK - MORNING 3

JAY sits on a dock. Eats a bowl of cereal. His phone rings. He answers.

JAY

Hello?

(a beat,)

Hey, what's up Hannah?

(then,)

No. It's all good. What's up?

(a long beat; then,)

Okay... like... you need this today or..?

(then,)

Oh. Okay. Alright... yeah, no I work later today but...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

3

CONTINUED:

3

JAY (CONT'D)

maybe like tomorrow or... Sunday
if you're free.

(then,)

Yeah. Sunday... Okay. Cool. Yeah.
Alright.

Jay hangs up. Goes back to eating his cereal. The sun
GLOWS behind him. We PAN OVER to...

AN INCENSE STICK planted on the dock. Smoke ARISING from
it.

4

EXT. COURTYARD - NELSON ATKINS MUSEUM - DAY

4

JAY and HANNAH sit in the courtyard. The Big Birdie
resides in the b.g. behind them.

JAY

So we talking like just people
sitting around or like... effed up
and dancing --

HANNAH

No no no no -- no. Just chilling.
It's... I'm calling this a
kickback. People come over and
just take it easy.

JAY

Okay and you want music...

HANNAH

Something that like... you know
establishes a vibe. Good feels.
Nothing super loud or... like you
know the songs that you play and
the volume *has* to be all the way
up or else there's no point in
listening to the song...

JAY

Hm.

HANNAH

I don't want that.

JAY

Alright. I gotchu. When is this
again?

HANNAH

Next Friday.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jay pulls out his phone. Types it in.

JAY

Friday. Okay. Alright, Hannah. I will get on that.

HANNAH

And you're definitely invited so please come.

JAY

Sure, yeah. See you then.

Jay gets up. Starts to leave...

HANNAH

Hey wait Jay...

JAY

(turns,)
Yeah.

HANNAH

I ah... is there any way I can see the playlist before Friday... like, just to see what's on there?

JAY

Um yeah... is there like -- anything specific you want on there?

HANNAH

No-no, just... I just want to see it before my friends hear it.

And Jay is hit by that. He doesn't understand. But nevertheless --

JAY

Ah yeah I can... show you like... maybe like sometime next week before the party.

HANNAH

Yeah. Awesome. I'll text you.

JAY

Okay. See ya Hannah.

HANNAH

Bye.

(CONTINUED)

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4 CONTINUED: (2) 4

Jay and Hannah part ways.

5 EXT. CREEK - DAY 5

JAY treks down a creek. Wandering. LOST.

He then comes upon a small pond. At the other end, he finds...

A GIRL. Mysterious. Unknown to HIM AND US. She's sitting on her knees. Fishing rod in her hands. She stares at Jay. He stares back. And as he WAVES to her...

6 INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - MORNING 6

Jay awakes from a vivid dream. Flickers his eyes.

7 INT. KITCHEN - JAY'S HOME - DAY 7

We're TRACKING SMOKE from an incense stick. It SLITHERS and CRAWLS into thin air as we PAN DOWN and find JAY in the b.g on his phone, texting.

8 EXT. FIELD - DAY 8

WIDE FRAMES. Tall, branchy trees. A quiet, open plane. A LIT INCENSE STICK in the ground. And we CUT TO:

PLAIN BLUE SKY. Fills frame. And suddenly...

A GLASS BOTTLE is tossed into the open air. It FLIPS and SPINS until --

SMASH! A baseball bat SWINGS into frame and fucking SHATTERS the bottle. CUT WIDE to find --

JAY and his friend MAC in an open field, smashing glass bottles. Mac sits on the ground, watching Jay go at it.

MAC
And so then we skrted from her house, 'cause her dad was ready to like... throw hands... and went to Blaze's.

JAY
You still talk to that guy?

(CONTINUED)

MAC

We just needed somewhere to go,
man. I wasn't about to go back
home looking like that.

(a beat,)

We got Mason all bandaged up...
and then hid the rest of the pods
in Mike's car.

Jay SMASHES another bottle.

JAY

His dad didn't say anything about
it?

MAC

I didn't ask. Honestly haven't
talked to those guys ever since...
not after that night.

JAY

I don't get you sometimes, bro.

MAC

What?

JAY

Doing all this dumb shit.

MAC

It's whatever.

(then,)

I know it's not going to last.

Jay brings his bat to his side. Turns to Mac.

JAY

What do you mean?

MAC

Doing all the dumb shit. Just
going around... being stupid. It's
like... you know...

JAY

We're not getting any younger.
Yeah.

Jay and Mac hold a look at one another. They GET what one
is trying to tell the other.

(CONTINUED)

MAC

Don't get me wrong. College is going to be the shit but... med school is going to be a bitch.

JAY

That's what you're going to do?

Mac shrugs.

MAC

I got into the program. Feel like... at some point... you gotta grow up. Be real about what you wanna do in life...

JAY

You sound like you're seventy.

MAC

We'll get there one day. You and me.

JAY

Mhm. And you're some rich ass doctor with a hot wife.

MAC

And you're some famous rapper with a big ass mansion?

Jay smiles. Looks away. WIDEN:

Jay SMASHES another glass bottle.

Jay plays away on his piano. CLOSE SHOTS of him clacking the keys as he lets out a funky beat.

As Jay plays, we GLIMPSE the INCENSE STICK

And then we CUT TO:

Jay starts to mix his hymn with a beat. He then TURNS to his friend SEAN.

JAY

How's that?

SEAN

That's magic right there man...

Sean starts to clap loudly. Jay turns back to the keyboard, sinking into his thoughts.

SEAN

What's wrong with it, you don't like it?

JAY

I don't know man... just needs some more heart... more kick.

SEAN

Like?

Jay stares at the keyboard

JAY

Like something laid-back. Maybe like Stevie Wonder... something like that with some more swagger.

SEAN

Bro you tryna go blind?

JAY

Nah... just that feeling he puts into his music.

(a beat,)

That calm... smooth voice.

SEAN

Yo you gonna... gonna like do this stuff in college? Be a musician?

JAY

Thinking about it. But like... school of music and stuff -- I'm not -- I'm not trying to learn all twenty instruments. Like -- I don't care about... I don't care about flute or... or saxophone...

SEAN

No-no yeah, but like... you think you're ready for all that?

JAY

Maybe.

SEAN

Gonna be a band or choir teacher...

CONTINUED: (2)

Sean holds his arms out, like a concert conductor.

JAY

SEAN

No. Definitely not that. Conducting at the front --

SEAN

(hymning "Air Force
One")

Pa-pa-pa-dah-pa-pam pam-pa-dah-dah-
dah-pam-pam-pam pum-pum --

Jay laughs.

JAY

Nah man.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

JAY runs zig-zaggedly down the street, trying to balance a helliball in the air. Off his look --

INSERT CUT:

Jay's dream from earlier. Seeing the mysterious girl. She stares at him.

Jay suddenly stops. Grabs the helliball. Continues to walk. We CLOSE ON him.

INSERT CUT:

Jay holding the grad party sign book. Seeing all the names and memos signed on it.

BACK ON JAY. He lets the helliball back up in the air, starts running along with it, balancing it.

As we watch Jay run down the street, we PAN BACKWARDS to...

A LIT INCENSE STICK.

EXT. SIDEWALK

JAY walks along a sidewalk.

JAY

Ah yeah... I don't really remember... I had... it was dumb, my teacher didn't really let us choose, but... I got Johann Wolfgang von something...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

10A CONTINUED:

10A

JAY (CONT'D)

No, I definitely had to Google him and do the project.

(a beat; then,)

Oh who my parents? Nah -- they got divorced earlier like last year or so.

(a beat,)

Yeah I basically have two of everything. Its -- you get used to it.

11 EXT. PARK - DAY

11

JAY and his friend SARAH are at a park, sitting in the grass.

JAY

So why are we here again?

SARAH

Jay. Laughter is the BEST medicine for anything.

Jay furrows his eyebrows.

SARAH

What?

JAY

What are you like in a cult now?

SARAH

No. Seriously. Laughing's good for your mental health.

JAY

Weren't you the same girl saying weed was like two weeks ago?

SARAH

Mm. My mom caught me rolling a blunt last weekend. So I had to stop.

JAY

Not secretly getting high off of Matt's --

SARAH

No, no, and NO!

(CONTINUED)

JAY

Dude. You're seriously overdoing this.

SARAH

Okay. I stayed up till two this morning researching this shit and guess what I found?

JAY

Don't wanna know.

Sarah shoots Jay a look.

SARAH

Fine. Then just follow along.

JAY

Okay.

Sarah takes a minute. Then starts to LAUGH OUT LOUD.

SARAH

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!

Jay just watches her blankly. Sarah turns to him.

SARAH

What?

JAY

That's just so... fake.

SARAH

You're fake Jay Nelson! You try doing it!

JAY

I can't. I don't... even... need this.

SARAH

I do! BRO -- I'm already going to be STRESSED OUT to the fucking max in college. Class, work, rushing -- I am going to need SOMETHING to keep me from slaughtering a fucking pig.

JAY

Yeah I could totally see you doing that.

SARAH

Jay! This is supposed to be natural.

JAY

So make it natural.

SARAH

I -- am trying.

JAY

Or you're just trying to think about it too much.

SARAH

About what?

JAY

You know...

(a beat,)

C-o-l-l-e-g-e.

SARAH

Ugghhhhh!! Jay!!

(then,)

I swear the lady in the YouTube video did it better.

Sarah looks off. Stressed. Worried. But most importantly, she's just SCARED.

SARAH

I am too extra.

And Jay starts to crack up.

SARAH

What?

JAY

Nothing.

Jay continues to laugh.

SARAH

I saw it online, it looked legit. I was fucking overjoyed after I saw it.

And Jay keeps laughing...

SARAH

See it's working for you!

(CONTINUED)

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11 CONTINUED: (3) 11

JAY
I'm -- I'm laughing at you.

12 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD POOL - DAY 12

JAY sits at the edge of the pool. Legs dipped in water. Stringing away at a Yo-Yo. A LITTLE BOY approaches him.

LITTLE BOY
Excuse me sir -- do you have a
dollar?

Jay looks at the kid -- *Who are you?*

JAY
What's up?

LITTLE BOY
Do you have a dollar?

JAY
Ah... yeah. Why?

LITTLE BOY
The -- the ice cream truck is
outside. Can you give a dollar
please?

Jay shrugs. Nods.

JAY
Sure.

Jay fishes through his string back. Pulls out his wallet. SLIPS a one dollar bill. He hands it to the Boy.

JAY
Here bud.

LITTLE BOY
Thank you!

The Boy runs off. Jay watches him go. A BEAT. Then --

He slips off his shirt and JUMPS INTO THE WATER. We go in with him --

UNDERWATER...

Jay swims around the pool, slithering across our frame. We get a couple more QUIET SHOTS of him swimming as we fade to:

(CONTINUED)

12

CONTINUED:

12

JAY comes up from the water. He finds the LITTLE BOY, carefree, with an ice cream cone in his hand, eating it rashly.

INTERCUT with Jay and the Boy eating his ice cream. Off Jay's look... and then he SLIPS back into the water as we SLOWLY FADE TO:

13

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

13

Jay's friend ANNA is plucking JAY'S eyebrows.

ANNA

So how long have you been working on this thing for her?

JAY

What the music?

ANNA

Yeah.

JAY

Not too long. Just like a couple days.

ANNA

Mhm. Is she like paying you or..?

JAY

Oh no. No, I'm just doing this.

ANNA

What kind of party is this?

JAY

She... calls it a kickback.

ANNA

Huh.

JAY

It's... she's kinda sus about it. Like -- super insecure.

ANNA

Who is this again?

JAY

Hannah Mills?

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

Oh okay. I was going to say I think I know who that is.

JAY

I like barely know her.

ANNA

Uh-huh. So are you like excited? About the music thing?

JAY

I mean... it's fine. Just struggling to figure out what to make of it.

ANNA

Are you trying to be inspired or..?

JAY

Kind of. I'm trying to... look for something to... latch onto. Some feeling, some memory. She said she wants a... like a vibe to it.

ANNA

Yeah...

JAY

How was orientation?

ANNA

Um... Good. It was super awkward. My mom went and complained about the co-ed dorms... and then everywhere I wanted to go visit she had to make all her dumbass comments.

JAY

Sounds like fun.

ANNA

I am just so ready, Jay. So ready to leave and just... yeah. Leave.

(then,)

I feel like eighteen's just the age where it all just magically kicks in you know?

(a beat,)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

13

CONTINUED: (2)

13

ANNA (CONT'D)

You don't wanna be around your
parents... don't wanna do stuff...
like you want to do *your* stuff,
but not --

JAY

Not anyone else's, yeah.

ANNA

And just... to be independent, you
know? Setting your own priorities,
being responsible.

JAY

You're going to be hella more
responsible than me, trust me.

And we CUT TO a LIT INCENSE STICK.

ANNA

I already know that. Thanks,
though.

FADE TO:

14

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

14

A FIRE PIT is lit. JAY and ANNA sit in front of it.

ANNA

So it's going to happen, right?
This music thing? Like... you
applied to Baker and everything?

JAY

Nope. Fort Hays.

ANNA

Oh really. You changed your mind?

JAY

Yeah. And I mean -- my parents
were honestly fine with either...
I... just wasn't really for Baker
anymore.

ANNA

But you're definitely not going to
Lawrence?

(CONTINUED)

JAY

No. No...

(then,)

I'm... fine with not going to --
High school two point-o.

Anna laughs at that.

ANNA

So true.

JAY

It's just like... a whole bunch of
the same people... partying and
you know.

ANNA

You want new things.

Jay nods. Then takes a beat. Thinks about that. Clearly
Anna just read his mind.

JAY

So... I had this dream.

(then,)

And I was... just wandering
through some creek. I'd never seen
it before. But I liked the
atmosphere. And then all of a
sudden I come up to this pond. And
across, I see some girl. Never
seen her before. And she just...
looks at me. And I look at her.

ANNA

And you're sure you don't know
her?

JAY

No. And for a second... I was
kinda alarmed. Like -- some random
girl in my dream I didn't know. In
a place where I had never been.
But then...

(a beat,)

I realized... that's going to be
us here soon. All the people we
hang out with. All the things we
do. Our lifestyle...

ANNA

It's all gonna be different.

(a beat,)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANNA (CONT'D)

Yeah, and honestly, I'm super down for that. Like -- I've heard it's the best time of your life, but I'm ready for just -- the newness. And the change, you know?

JAY

Yeah?

ANNA

Yeah, aren't you?

JAY

I'm... I don't know. It's... just... life only goes by quicker, you know? And... this... part of our lives is...

(a beat,)

It's like you're at the end of the book sooner than you thought, right?

ANNA

Yeah.

JAY

But that girl... I looked at her and for like a second... And... just had this feeling. Like -- it... was the future. Just a whole bunch of new territory.

ANNA

So like what did you think of when you saw her?

JAY

Just... the possibility. Of... the future. Of... Where any of us can end up. It's just... it's all unknown. You know? This next year... it's going to be jumping into the water. And you don't know if it's going to be hot or cold.

ANNA

I think it's going to be hot. Definitely hot.

JAY

It could be either.

(a beat,)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (3)

14

JAY (CONT'D)

I might come back next year and be
some drug dealer... or a -- a
hairstylist.

ANNA

And I might go vegan.

Jay and Anna laugh at that.

ANNA

What? I might -- you never know.

CUT TO:

15 INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - DAY

15

Jay plays his piano. Soothing music vents from the keys
as he moves his fingers swiftly across the board.

And then he stops. He seems troubled. A little
frustrated. He just can't seem to get it right.

A LONG BEAT. Jay thinks. And thinks... and keeps
THINKING...

INSERT CUT:

*The moment of Jay looking across the pool to the little
boy eating ice cream.*

And back on Jay. He moves his fingers back to the board.
An idea... a feeling ignites in him. It's like he just
got a shit load of INSPIRATION.

Jay begins to play again.

INSERT CUT:

*Jay jumps INTO the pool. He swims around. Lost in his
thoughts.*

And we continue to stay on Jay playing music while
INTERCUTTING him in the water... discovering something...
FINDING something to play to.

16 EXT. BACKYARD GRASS LAWN - DAY

16

CLOSE ON: An INCENSE STICK planted nearby. In the b.g. we
can see...

JAY and HANNAH are planting flowers.

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH

Can you pass me more of that soil?

Jay shoves a spade into the potting soil bag. Takes a scoop and passes it to Hannah.

HANNAH

So.... Did you ever get that playlist made?

JAY

Mhm... Still working. I should have it done by Friday.

HANNAH

What's the hold up? Don't overdo it with Post-Malone on there. This isn't like... a banger.

JAY

Post-Malone? What..?

HANNAH

I don't want it all rap.

JAY

Wait so you want like... like actual songs...

HANNAH

Mhm. Maybe put in some throwbacks in there.

Jay double checks Hannah. He's confused.

HANNAH

So yes actual music. Like -- good ass chill music.

Jay runs his finger through the RED FLOWERS. Seemingly confused.

HANNAH

What? You seem like super dazed.

JAY

Oh nothing just...

(a beat,)

I've kinda... been on the keyboard the last couple days... trying out some new tunes.

(then,)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JAY (CONT'D)

For your... what are you calling
this, a kickback?

HANNAH

Yeah. Just... people sit around
and talk and shit.

(then,)

Wait, tunes? Like -- you've been
trying to make music for this?

JAY

Yeah.

HANNAH

For my party?

JAY

Yeah.

Hannah laughs. Jay doesn't get it.

JAY

What?

HANNAH

Dude... I just wanted regular
music. Like chill music.

JAY

Okay... like...

HANNAH

Like Frank Ocean? Or Kid Cudi? Or
Lil Wayne? Fuck -- you could even
put Weeknd on there and it would
be --

JAY

Hold up. So you know what you want
on there... what am I supposed to
do?

HANNAH

Well you're the... the music kid.
Everyone said you have good taste
so I figured you'd have aux.

JAY

And you said you'll pay me? For
this?

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH

Well we've never like... like
we've never talked. So obviously I
didn't think you'd do it for free.
And --

JAY

So you want me to sit there and be
the DJ at your thing?

HANNAH

I mean -- my friends --

JAY

Because your friends told you to?

Hannah looks off. Defeated.

HANNAH

Pretty much.

JAY

You even wanna have this party?

A beat. Hannah thinks on that one. Unsure of herself.

HANNAH

Is it bad if I said not really?

Jay smirks. He could totally tell.

HANNAH

What?

JAY

Nothing.

HANNAH

It was Molly. She was like "Oh
yeah, you're basement is hella
big, throw a party" and I'm not
like the all out... you know...
and if I said no then everyone
would be like -- so judgy about
it.

JAY

Why do you care so much about what
your friends think?

HANNAH

I don't know... probably because I
try so hard to fit in. That was...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

pretty much me all of high school.
And then I just tell myself that
this is probably going to be the
last time I'm going to see some of
these people.

(a beat,)

In a way I guess it's good right?
Thinking about next month... how
we're all going to be in different
places... with a shit ton of
just... new stuff. Away from...
this?

JAY

You're really excited to leave,
aren't you?

HANNAH

It's hard to tell right?

(A beat,)

Aren't you?

Jay looks off. Thinks. Doesn't answer. A beat. Hannah and Jay SIT THERE.

EXT. JAY'S HOME - DRIVEWAY - DAY

JAY watches as Hannah's car drives off in the distance.

EXT. BACKYARD GRASS LAWN - DAY

JAY comes back into his backyard. His eyes notice the grad party sign book. He flips through it again. Takes in all the names, memos, and notes his friends left him.

BASE SHOT: Jay holding the book with BLUE SKY filling the frame above him. He TOSSES the book aside.

We find an incense stick. We linger on it for a BEAT. The residue on it then crumbles. In the b.g. we see Jay exit the frame.

HOLD ON THE INCENSE STICK...

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END