

Hope to Be Around

written by

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EXT. CITY ROOF - DUSK

SOFIA, 21, with eyes glazed over, smokes by herself on the roof ledge. She is bundled in foul-weather gear, her breath and the smoke creating clouds around her.

INT. BODEGA - DAY

Two POSTMEN stand in line for the lotto, while one CLERK tends to them. A second CLERK whistles, beaconing to Sofia. They speak with little room for breath in between gives.

SOFIA

Hi, how's it going, can I please --

CLERK

Hi.

SOFIA

Hi. Do you have the smaller, um, boxes of raw papers? Not the huge ones.

CLERK

No, just the big ones.

SOFIA

Ah - damn, okay, yeah. Can I please get, just, one of those please?

The clerk leans forward for a moment, brushing close to Sofia's face, before he turns to retrieve a box.

SOFIA

Okay.

The clerk slides the box over the counter, only to retract it as Sofia reaches out.

CLERK

What's your name?

SOFIA

Sofia. What's yours?

She slides her card twice.

CLERK

It's a chip.

SOFIA

Oh.

CLERK

I haven't seen you in a long time.

SOFIA

I'm here every week. I haven't seen you... ever, I think.

CLERK

I've just started.

SOFIA

I -- okay. Well. Welcome? I --

CLERK

You married?

He is honing in on the slim ring on her ring finger. She smacks her head with a laugh.

SOFIA

Oh - no, God, no. I just wear it so that I don't get, um, hit on on the subway.

CLERK

Oh! And - it works?

SOFIA

Eh. I don't know. It's -

CLERK

Do you have WhatsApp?

There is a clear drop.

SOFIA

Oh.

A MAN in line taps obnoxiously at the counter.

MAN

Ay, quit the flirting, man, let's go.

Sofia repeatedly inserts and removes her card from the slot.

CLERK

Wait, wait, not ready yet.

SOFIA

Oh, sorry.

The clerk taps at the ancient register meaninglessly for a moment. He leans back over the counter.

CLERK

I think we should drink wine together.
I think you're sexy.

SOFIA

I actually have a girlfriend. I am
gay. I like women.

CLERK

A girlfriend?

SOFIA

Opposite of boyfriend.

CLERK

Ah...

The clerk leans away.

CLERK

ID, please.

SOFIA

Oh - okay, well. Interesting. That you
would... okay.

She begins to retrieve her ID from her wallet, but retracts it.

SOFIA

What if this was a bullshit ID, and
I'm just fifteen years old?

CLERK

You fifteen?

Disgusted by the clerk's piqued interest, Sofia hands the ID over.

SOFIA

God, Jesus, no - are you - no.

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

LINA (24) sits wrapped in a cable-knit blanket in a green arm chair. Her back is warped into a contortionist slump over a thick book, her glasses drooping. The only thing missing would be a long pipe and a cloud of smoke orbiting her

temples. Sofia enters in a burst, simultaneously stripping her scarves and jacket. She wordlessly rushes to Lina, sitting over her lap and book, digging her legs into the chair in attempt to wrap her legs around Lina.

LINA
God, you're cold.

SOFIA
Warm me up.

Lina is rapidly rubbing Sofia.

LINA
Hi.

SOFIA
Hi.

LINA
Welcome back.

Sofia steps off her, with a full-body shiver and a slight hoot. She digs around in the pockets of her discarded jacket.

SOFIA
The new bodega guy nearly kissed me,
he was leaning so hard to hit on me.

LINA
Gross.

SOFIA
I think he thought I was a child. Like
fifteen.

LINA
Oh, gross. That's so on-character for
the 'new bodega guy' trope.

SOFIA
Surreal, how spot-on it was.

Sofia pulls an NYU course reader from under her bed and begins rolling joints, consecutively, one after the other, sitting atop the floor.

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Sofia and Lina pass a joint back and forth in bed. Sofia watches Lina, enamored, who stares slackly at the ceiling.

Sofia reaches for Lina's neck, and she recoils, rolls off the bed.

LINA

Do you want anything from the bodega?

SOFIA

What?

Lina puts on Sofia's jacket and exits. Sofia lays still in bed, frustrated.

EXT. CITY ROOF - DUSK

Sofia is bundled in jackets, lighting a tall joint that hangs from her mouth. She is blubbering against the cold again, angered. She smokes, unmoving.

EXT. CITY ROOF - DUSK

Sofia lights a new joint. Her body has loosened from its rigid posture.

EXT. CITY ROOF - NIGHT

Sofia finishes a joint, and looks about her. Eyes soft, she lights another which she pulls from her chest pocket. She watches the high-rise adjacent from her. Every window, dozens, have a TV flickering from image to image, and all at once it is overwhelming. Sofia is caught up in this. She turns, and locks eyes with CHARLIE (25), sitting across the roof on the opposite ledge. They watch each other. Sofia raises the roach to her lips, and he does the same. As she releases smoke, his lips release a pale blue glow mimicking smoke.

SOFIA

That's strange.

She hops off the ledge and walks to Charlie.

SOFIA

Charlie.

CHARLIE

You look tired.

Eyes glazed over, Sofia sighs into a laugh, amused.

SOFIA

What is this?

CHARLIE
Just missed you, is all.

SOFIA
(scoffing)
Yeah.

Sofia turns behind her to look at the door into Lina's apartment, which remains closed.

CHARLIE
She's cute.

Sofia watches him, slightly bewildered.

CHARLIE
Not all that faithful, though.

Sofia turns away, squeezing her head. She laughs again, shaking it off, and removes another joint from her chest pocket. Charlie mimics with empty hands. She lights and exhales.

SOFIA
My girlfriend isn't faithful and my brother isn't dead, hey?

CHARLIE
(with urgency)
Hey.

Sofia watches him, anticipating more. The tone shifts, intensity increases.

SOFIA
Charlie?

She chokes on her breath, coughs. A tear rolls down her face.

CHARLIE
You look tired.

EXT. CITY ROOF - DAY

Crusted to the concrete roof ledge with 3/4 of a joint dried to her lips, Sofia sits up from a deep sleep. The sun blares on her, and she coughs. She is alone on the roof. She slowly dismounts the ledge, and shuffles toward Lina's fire escape. She lights the joint as she goes.

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sofia rattles the door entering the apartment. Her eyes adjust to the dark. Her eyes fall on Lina, splayed naked on the bed over a MAN (28). She stares, the joint still chugging. Lina wakes.

LINA

Fuck.

The man rolls over, awake & confused.

LINA

Sof...

Sofia takes a long drag and ashes on the white comforter. She grabs her jacket from the armchair and exits.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Sofia walks with haste. She speaks on the phone.

SOFIA

I'll be closer to you in fifteen or
twenty... Coming from midtown...
Midtown... Can you hear me? Hold on,
I'll text you when I get to Essex.

She hangs up, and opens Photos. She pulls an old photo of her and Charlie. She is clearly younger, and he looks as he did on the roof. She zooms. She studies.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

The car is crowded, Sofia stands leaning against a door. She folds a wad of bills into her chest pocket and studies the faces of each sitting passenger. For a moment, she catches the eyes of a MAN who bears resemblance to Charlie.

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM - DAY

Sofia locks the door and opens the baby changing station. She wipes it clean, and removes a wrapped ounce from her chest pocket. She puts her earbuds in, and proceeds to roll upward of fifteen joints, consecutively, with unstaggered focus.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Sofia walks with headphones in, joint dangling from her lips in typical, comfortable fashion. Her eyes are trained on every person that passes. She searches for Charlie.

EXT. CITY ALLEY - DAY

Sofia lights another joint, leaning against a poorly-aged painted mural of the New York skyline. A group of tourists, packed into a herd, passes by.

SOFIA
(coughing)
Charlie.

A TOURIST recoils at her cough, and stares at her with wild eyes.

SOFIA
Fuck this.

INT. APARTMENT LOBBY - DAY

Sofia enters the apartment lobby with a joint still burning. She beelines to the elevator. The SECURITY GUARD stands.

SECURITY GUARD
Now, what - hello? You gotta put that
out. You gotta put that cigarette out.

Sofia presses the up button repeatedly.

SECURITY GUARD
Hello?

SOFIA
My brother died.

SECURITY GUARD
Yeah, you gonna kill us all, too, if
you smoke that in the elevator.

Amused, Sofia hands him the rest of the joint. The elevator opens, and she steps inside.

SECURITY GUARD
Nah, shit.

The security guard exits the building, puffing the last of the joint.

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lina opens her apartment door, and Sofia pushes past her.

LINA

Sof, I'm--

Sofia exits through the fire escape and slams the door behind her.

EXT. CITY ROOF - DAY

Sofia locks the door from the outside. She sits at her ledge perch, and lights a new joint. As she pulls the lighter away, she locks eyes with Charlie on the opposite side again. She jumps off and walks with frustrated haste towards him.

SOFIA

Hey, what the fuck? What is this?

CHARLIE

You look tired.

SOFIA

Yeah, I fell asleep on the fucking roof. How did you know about Lina? What -

CHARLIE

Have you talked to Mom?

SOFIA

What?

CHARLIE

Mom.

Unnerved, Sofia looks around her as if to see 'is anyone else hearing this bullshit?'

SOFIA

What the hell is happening right now?

CHARLIE

I don't know. I just miss you is all.

Sofia presses her hands to her face, exasperated.

CHARLIE

You're smoking a lot.

SOFIA

Yeah. Yeah, I'm smoking a lot. I'm just trying to -- fuck, I don't even know what I'm trying to do. This is a

serious, *serious* mindfuck, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Have you talked to Mom?

She stares at him.

CHARLIE
Mom?

SOFIA
Shut up.

She turns away from him, walking towards the edge of the roof. She dials her Mom.

SOFIA
Hi Mom... yeah, hi...I don't... I'm fine. I'm good. How are you? Where?

Charlie peels himself from the ledge and stands, staring from afar, at Sofia's back. He exhales, and the pink smoke wraps around him for a moment. We cannot hear Sofia anymore. Her body hunches down for a moment, and she turns towards Charlie. They stare at each other.

SOFIA
I'm just worried for you, I don't like... the idea of you being alone there... Yeah? What? How long?

Sofia inaudible again, Charlie continues to watch. She turns for a moment, and then breaks down crying. She mouths a few more words, and hangs up the phone. Sofia walks back to Charlie.

SOFIA
(quietly)
I didn't know.

Charlie watches her.

SOFIA
Maybe I did.

CHARLIE
She's learned to live alone. Have you?

SOFIA
What?

Charlie turns his nose upward.

CHARLIE
Something's burning.

Sofia jumps at the immediate sound of a fire alarm in the building behind them. She looks back at Charlie, horrified.

SOFIA
Charlie, stop. Please, stop.

CHARLIE
Are you alright?

SOFIA
No, I'm not fucking alright. Mom left and I don't even fucking know where she lives now -

CHARLIE
Just outside of Austin.

Sofia is appalled.

SOFIA
Okay. Mom lives in *Texas*. Lina is sleeping with a man. The whole fucking city is burning, and you're telling me like some fucked up shaman-

CHARLIE
I just miss you, is all.

This hits Sofia like a knife, and she turns on her heel and powers away. She unlocks the door.

SOFIA
I don't need your fucking... spiritual guidance, Charlie.

Sofia opens and shuts the door behind her.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Sofia sits alone on the corner of the bar. She watches the barback tend to the other guests, her eyes drooping, head lulling back. The crowd is light, live music seeps from the stage behind her. She removes a joint from the breast pocket, and lights it. The BARTENDER notices.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

The bartender shuts the door behind him. Sofia stands loopily, relighting her joint. She is crossed. A group of men in their mid-30s stand nearby, smoking cigarettes.

MAN

Hey, you got an extra?

SOFIA

I don't smoke.

MAN

(laughing snidely)

What, I look blind?

Sofia averts her gaze, focusing on the street.

MAN

Talking to you, beautiful.

He nears closer, reaching for the joint in her mouth. She ducks away violently.

SOFIA

Can you - seriously? Don't touch me.

MAN

Hey, hey -

He reaches for her waist and she whips away, ashing on his white-collared shirt. He yelps, and pushes back. His friends laugh at him.

SOFIA

It's all yours.

She tosses the joint at their feet and turns down the street.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Sofia is slumped into a seat on the nearly empty 6 line. The lights seem to flicker, as they do in the middle of night service. Her eyes are crusted, her clothes worn-in. Her head bobs back and her eyes roll every now and then into milliseconds of sleep.

EXT. CHARLIE'S ROOF - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sofia (17) crawls over the railing and jumps onto the sunbathed city roof. The white reflects against the cloud-

covered sky, her eyes adjust. Her eyes catch Charlie. He lies in the middle of the roof, face-up. Sofia seems to know the stakes already, and her pace grows faster as she nears him. His hair and face are crusted to the roof with dried vomit, under the beating sun. He is dead, and has been for some time now. Sofia screams out, wailing, devastated.

SOFIA

Charlie! Charlie! Mom! Fuck, please!

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Sofia snaps awake, pinching a muscle in her neck as she does. She grabs at it, pained. She is petrified.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment bedroom is small, and minimally decorated. The windowsill is littered with small pipes, dime bags, variously sized grinders. Sofia is transferring the leftover weed from the go-bag into the large mason jar that rests on the sill. Out the window, something catches her eye - what she thinks is Charlie watching her from the high roof above her is really a random. Distracted, she knocks the jar from the sill.

SOFIA

Shit -

The jar shatters on the street.

EXT. LINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The leaves on the trees are green and full. Sofia stands across the street from Lina's apartment. She holds paper grocery bags in each hand. Across the street, Lina walks hand in hand with the MAN from the bed - they laugh, and he sticks a hand up her skirt. They kiss. Sofia watches, with a rigid body and drained face, as they enter the apartment building.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sofia, in a stun, shakes herself and leans out to see the shattered glass and flower blowing away on the street below her. She slams the window shut. The blinds ricocheting against the glass brings her back center.

INT. CHILDHOOD KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Sofia and MOM (50) stand in the kitchen, mid-argument. Mom is frail, with tear-stained cheeks and weak movements. Mom moves

around the kitchen, placing utensils and spices haphazardly into a moving box.

MOM

You're, you're no... guiding post for him, either.

SOFIA

I shouldn't have to be! That should -

MOM

That should be my job.

SOFIA

Yeah, mom, that should be *your* job.

Mom begins to cry. She leans against the counter.

MOM

I'm so... tired.

SOFIA

Moms get tired. Everyone gets tired, everyone has to do shit they don't want to do. *Epecially* parents. Mom...

Sofia reaches for her mother, who recoils. Sofia's eyes well.

SOFIA

Mom?

Mom shakes her head, averting her eyes from her daughter's.

SOFIA

I'm not ready.

Mom pulls away from the table. She looks at Sofia. This pains her.

MOM

Baby, none of us are.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Sofia stands in the doorway, backlit by the hallway. Charlie sits on the carpet. His leg is wrapped in a tourniquet. He looks up and meets eyes with Sofia.

CHARLIE

(under his breath)

Fuck.

He motions for her to come in.

CHARLIE

Don't tell mom. Or dad. Okay?

Sofia stands unmoving.

CHARLIE

Sofia, okay?

She nods. She enters, closing the door behind her. She sits on the carpet across from him, watching. He tightens the tourniquet.

CHARLIE

Is everything okay?

Sofia leans her face against her knees, watching him with admiration.

SOFIA

I just miss you, is all.

EXT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Sofia's face is center shot in CU, streaked with tears old and new. She is numbed, lip quivering. She stares blankly ahead of her. After a few beats, she removes a joint from her chest pocket and places it between her lips. She sparks it.

CUT TO BLACK.

FIN