

"CIRCLES"

Written by

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INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM // MORNING (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Two twenty-two year olds - JAMES and LIZ - are seen slow-dancing in the living room of a house. The house is decorated eclectically, with paintings, posters, etc. "Emotions" by Brenda Lee. As the song continues, they begin to float into the air...

Beat. THREE LOUD KNOCKS ARE HEARD.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM // MORNING

James, asleep on the couch, jolts awake. Confused, he looks to the door as the knocking continues. He jumps up...

FRONT DOOR.

James opens the door.

JAMES

What???

CUT TO REVEAL A POTHEAD COLLEGE STUDENT - SERVE #1.

SERVE #1

Hey bro...you got three G's I can  
cop?

CUT TO:

**TITLE CARD.**

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

James and Liz lay in bed with their legs intertwined and nearly hanging off the bed. Both of their clothes are strewn across the hardwood floor. Liz slowly wakes up, gets out of bed, and begins to nonchalantly pick her clothes up and get dressed. She is clearly comfortable in this environment and routine.

As she grabs her shirt, she notices the corner of a canvas peeking out from under his bed. She squats down to pull out the unfinished work and takes it in as she holds it at her waist. The James opens his eyes, still lying in bed.

JAMES

(playfully)

You can keep that one and sell it  
when I'm dead.

Liz laughs lightly and looks at him with raised eyebrows.

LIZ

And who's gonna want to buy your  
work if you never finish them?

James says nothing. He takes this as a playful remark but knows she is right. James rolls over onto his back and leans up against the pillows.

JAMES

See, I envision myself as more of  
the Basquiat type.

Liz sits on the edge of the bed and begins to put her socks on. She smiles and laughs through her nose at this remark.

LIZ

Oh yeah?

JAMES

Yeah. The work may seem a lil  
finished, but when I'm gone, it'll  
be plastered on Converse, Doc  
Martens, Urban Outfitters. People  
are gonna wanna buy my shit for  
millions.

LIZ

Oh yeah, I can see the Basquiat  
connection. It explains all the  
bipolar-ness.

James clearly takes slight offense to this.

JAMES

I'm not bipolar.

Liz scoffs. James hits his vape.

LIZ

Says the guy who went from  
(In a mocking voice)  
"Oh, we shouldn't see each other  
anymore" to asking me to come over  
in the span of 10 minutes.

JAMES

(Passive aggressively)  
You say that like you didn't want  
to.

LIZ

(With emphasis and a  
slightly raised tone)

No, I did! I just don't wanna have to keep running in circles with you. It makes me feel like I have to convenience you to want me. I mean, come on James, you didn't have time to come to my performance, but you had time to text me to come over? What the fuck is that?

James bites his tongue and says nothing. He looks down and then away. Liz looks down and fiddles with a ring on her finger, clearly very emotional and anxious over what she has just said. James gazes out the window, clearly trying to think of what to say,

LIZ (CONT'D)

It just makes me feel like shit, ya know?

The silence in the room is deafening. After a few moments, she looks back at him over her shoulder.

LIZ (CONT'D)

How's your thesis going? Have you even touched it yet?

JAMES

(beat/quiet)

...It's coming...I think you'll like it a lot.

LIZ

Cool. Hopefully you actually finish this one.

James breaks his thousand-yard stare and turns to face her. Liz looks back down at her hands and returns to fiddling with her ring very anxiously.

LIZ (CONT'D)

James, I just..I really feel like-

A loud doorbell ringing interrupts Liz.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Who's that?

James flips his phone over and sees his lock screen is full of missed Snapchats, calls, and texts.

JAMES

Fuck.

LIZ

What? The serves calling already?

James, clad in only shorts, starts to quickly get out of bed and head towards the door.

JAMES

(From the hallway)

Hold on. Just a sec.

LIZ

I have to leave for work soon.

James rounds the corner and heads for the door as the doorbell rings again.

JAMES

CHILL! I'M COMING!

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

James opens the front door. A skinny white boy with shaggy hair in a long sleeve shirt, shorts, and a backward hat is standing at the door.

SERVE #2

Hey bro. Can I get an eighth.

James leans against the door with one arm as he is clearly still waking up.

JAMES

Yo, what'd I say about just showing up at my house?

SERVE #2

I know bro, but I just got done with class and I'm really just tryna smoke so I figured I'd just...

Liz comes up from behind the James and starts to squeeze between him and the door frame.

LIZ

(Clearly annoyed)

I'm heading out.

James reaches for her arm as she descends down the front steps.

JAMES  
Woah, wait. Already?

LIZ  
I told you I have work this morning.

JAMES  
You don't want to stay for just a little bit longer?

Liz pauses at the base of the stairs.

LIZ  
I can't. You're already busy anyways.

James gives an annoyed look to Serve #2, who now stands between him and the Liz.

JAMES  
You still going to Maddie's lil party tonight?

LIZ  
Yea.

JAMES  
Alright, well I'll see you there.

Liz turns and walks away.

James stands leaned up against the door and watches her walk to her car.

SERVE #2  
Sorry, bro.

James gives him a clearly annoyed look. He pushes the door open and turns to walk into the living room.

JAMES  
You said an eighth?

SERVE #2  
Yea.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The James scoots a small pile of art books on the coffee table to the side and places down a scale and a mason jar full of weed. He begins to weigh out the bud.

SERVE #2

So was that your girlfriend or something?

This question strikes a nerve with the James. He says nothing.

JAMES

Nah.

The scale reads 3.55.

FADE TO:

EXT. JAMES' SHED // NOON

James walks from his house towards his shed. He enters through a side door - CAMERA STAYS OUTSIDE OF THE SHED. WE SEE A LIGHT TURN ON THROUGH A CRACK OF THE SHED GARAGE DOOR. BEAT. THE GARAGE DOOR SWINGS OPEN. CAMERA FOLLOWS IN AS JAMES WALKS FROM THE GARAGE DOOR TO THE BACK OF THE SHED.

James stops in front of a 36 x 30 unfinished canvas - it's a portrait of Liz, with a halo around her head. He examines and takes in the piece.

JAMES (V.O.)

My heart beats to the tempo of your voice. The color of your eyes exploded the color palette of my soul, the same way a supernova destroys and give birth to entire solar systems. Shakespeare could never write about you. Basquiat could never paint you. Tyson could never explain you. There's a line made perfect just for you - "no one, not even the rain, had such small hands."

AS WE HEAR THE VOICE-OVER, WE SEE C.U. DETAILS OF THE PORTRAIT.

He takes a photo of the painting. He starts typing a message to Liz:

"Hey. You inspired me to finish this. Watchu think?"

He sends the text and puts the phone away. He pulls out a paint brush and gets ready to add more to the piece - then hears a text ringtone. He sets the paint-brush down and pulls his phone from his pocket. The message reads:



Yo, can I pick up an eighth right now?

James sighs. He starts typing:

Yeah. Meet me at my place in 15.

James puts his phone away. He starts heading to the garage doors and shuts them behind him.

MEDIUM C.U ON THE PORTRAIT AS THE DOORS CLOSE AND THE LIGHT LEAVES.

CUT TO:

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM // DAY

James' living room. Still. Silent. The door knob turns - James enters, followed by Serve #3.

JAMES

Wait here, imma just run to my room and I can get you that eighth

Serve #3 silently nods. He waits in the living room, while James heads to his bedroom. Beat. Serve #3 walks to the room.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - BEDROOM // DAY

James is seen with his stash and a scale on his bed, weighing out an eighth. Serve #3 enters. James turns.

JAMES

Ayy bro, what're you doi-

Serve #3 pulls up his shirt to reveal the handle of a pistol. James freezes. HOLD.

CUT TO:

INT. LOVE GARDEN SOUNDS // NIGHT

RECORD SHOP, THIRTY MINUTES BEFORE CLOSE. Liz is cataloging at the front counter, preparing to close shop. "Sleepy Lagoon" by The Platters plays off a vinyl record behind her. In the background, she hears a bell - she looks towards the front entrance to see a tall, well-put, writerly looking twenty-something - CHARLES.

LIZ

Welcome in! Can I help you find anything?

CHARLES

Oh, no, I'm just looking.

LIZ

Okay. Keep in mind, we do close in 15 minutes.

CHARLES

I gotcha. I'll be quick.

Charles flips through the record section directly across from the front counter, facing her. Liz continues cataloging, focused on the records in front of her. She glances up at Charles, noticing him looking up at her. They both dart their eyes back down. He continues flipping through records, but every few beats he glances up at Liz. She does the same.

Then, Charles stops flipping and looks at her.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

I love The Platters. Did you choose this?

LIZ

Yeah. They're one of my favorite groups. My mom used to play one of their records every morning when I was kid, so I grew up on them.

Charles starts walking towards her, a record in hand.

CHARLES

That's incredible. My grandfather was a big fan. He saw em live back in the 50s.

LIZ

Oh yeah?

CHARLES

Yeah.

Liz notices the record he has - *Someday My Prince Will Come* by Miles Davis. She gently grabs it.

LIZ

Miles Davis. You have good taste.

CHARLES

I'm sure you say that to everyone who comes in here.

LIZ

No. You'd be surprised. Most of our sales are for The Eagles or Billy Joel. Hell, half are jazz sales are..Kenny G.

CHARLES

(chuckling)

You guys need to find better clientele.

LIZ

Well, you're a good start. \$15.00

Charles hands exact change to Liz. She deposits the money and hands him the record.

CHARLES

Well, it was nice meeting you. I hope I see you around town.

LIZ

Same here. I'm Liz, by the way.

Liz puts her hand. Charles shakes it.

CHARLES

Charles. Have a good night.

Charles smiles and heads for the exit. Liz watches Charles leave, fiddling with her ring. She takes it off, sets it on the counter and returns to cataloging.

FADE TO:

INT. LIZ'S BEDROOM // NIGHT

Liz puts on her earrings, while looking in her vanity mirror - she's all dressed up for the party. Once finished, she holds a gaze, examining herself. HOLD.

SMASH CUT TO:

JAMES SMILING, LOOKING DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA.

SMASH CUT TO:

LIZ PERFORMING ON STAGE, IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE. SHE LOOKS TO AN EMPTY SEAT IN THE FRONT ROW.

SMASH CUT TO:

LIZ AND JAMES DANCING IN THE AIR IN JAMES' LIVING ROOM.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LIZ'S BEDROOM // NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Liz continues staring into the mirror.

INSERT: OVERHEAD SHOT OF THE TABLE. WE SEE LIZ TAKE OFF HER RING AND DROP IT ON THE TABLE. SHE GRABS HER PURSE AND EXITS FRAME. HOLD ON RING.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. HENRY'S BAR // NIGHT

Liz is seen talking with a trio of friends. She's slightly bored, focused more on finishing her drink and getting her next. Suddenly, "Make Out" by The Greeting Committee starts playing off the speakers. Her eyes immediately lighten up.

GIRL #1  
You good, Liz?

LIZ  
I love this song!

The group laughs.

GUY #1  
Yeah, Greeting Committee's pretty good. I kinda miss their old stuff though

LIZ  
Fuck you.

GUY #1  
...I'm sorry?

LIZ  
I said  
(mouths, but doesn't  
speak)  
Fuck you.

Liz hands her drink off and starts strolling through the bar, dancing her heart out (think *Vivre la Vie*). She immediately becomes the life of the party - her energy radiates and brings the bar alive. CAMERA FOLLOWS ALL OF THIS IN ONE-TAKE.

As the song gets closer to its end, she stands by the bar.

CHARLES (O.S.)

Now I know that's not who I think  
it is.

Charles enters, walking from the stairs to the bar, right next to Liz.

LIZ

You! Charles! What're you doing  
here?

CHARLES

Just meeting some friends for some  
drinks. You with the party?

LIZ

Bitch, I am the party!

CHARLES

(chuckling)

I can see that. You really love  
this song, huh?

LIZ

One of my favorites. These other  
fuckers are too shy to really get  
down to it.

CHARLES

Not everyone has as much energy as  
you. You're just special.

LIZ

Thanks. I think so too.

Writer smiles.

CHARLES

Can I buy you a drink?

LIZ

Hell yeah. I'll take a mule.

Charles and Liz continue talking as they order drinks. CAMERA SLOWLY ZOOMS IN ON THE BACK DOOR WINDOW - JAMES LEAVES HIS CONVERSATION, LAUGHING AND LOOKS THROUGH THE WINDOW TO SEE LIZ TALKING WITH THE WRITER. HIS SMILE SLOWLY FADES. Charles and Liz take their drinks and head to the dance floor.

CAMERA FOCUSES ON LIZ AND CHARLES DANCING, ENJOYING THEIR NIGHT. James enters, tapping on Liz on the shoulder. Liz turns, but continues dancing.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Oh, hey.

Liz turns away.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I didn't know you made it.

JAMES

Yeah...can I talk to you outside?

LIZ

Right now? I'm dancing.

JAMES

Yes. Please.

CHARLES

(to Liz)

Do you know him?

James steps up to Charles.

JAMES

Yeah, she knows me.

Liz glares at James - she heads to the back patio. James glares at Charles. He follows Liz out.

EXT. HENRY'S BAR - BACK PATIO // NIGHT

Liz enters the back patio, James following closely behind. She turns around to her.

LIZ

What's up?

JAMES

What're you doing?

LIZ

..I'm having fun. It's a party.  
That's what you're supposed to do.

JAMES

Who is that guy?

LIZ

A new friend.

JAMES

...You didn't reply to my message.

LIZ  
I liked it.

JAMES  
That's not a reply!

LIZ  
James, I'm not gonna fight with you. I'm having a great night with friends right now, the first time in awhile!

JAMES  
All right. My bad  
(beat)  
Can you buy me a drink?

LIZ  
Don't you have money? You've been serving all day.

JAMES  
I got robbed.

LIZ  
...What?

JAMES  
They took my cash, my stash. I got \$10 to my name.

LIZ  
I fucking told you, James. You need to quit this shit! What do you expect, of course you're gonna get robbed if you're selling right out of your house!

JAMES  
It's a set back, that's no reason to quit! I just gotta re-up and I'm back in business.

Liz doesn't look at James. She stares at the ground.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna be straight. Don't worry.

LIZ  
...I can't do this anymore.

JAMES  
Do what?

LIZ  
Us...this...

JAMES  
...What do you mean?

LIZ  
James, this is...this is dumb! This isn't going anywhere! You're not going anywhere! You could be somebody, we could be somebody! Instead of a bum, which is what you are! Face it!

JAMES  
Liz, calm down. We're okay, this is okay. I'm just...I'm figuring it out

LIZ  
You're running out of time, James. I'm not gonna run out of it with you.

Liz heads for the stairs.

JAMES  
Liz. We can still be something. I can still be something!

Liz throws her hands in the air.

LIZ  
Pretty to dream. Isn't it?

Liz stumbles down the stairs, away from James. James watches her leave, shocked. Alone.

HOLD ON A WIDE SHOT OF JAMES ON THE BACK PATIO OF THE BAR. He pulls out a cigarette, lights it up and pulls a drag. MUSIC CUE: "Emotions" by Brenda Lee plays.

CUT TO:

CREDITS POP IN AND OUT ON A BLACK SCREEN.

FADE TO BLACK.

**THE END**