

YESTERDAY'S JOE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. OASIS CLUB - NIGHT

The warm, dark, Oasis Host Club HUMS with conversation. The space is a luxurious dreamworld removed from natural reality, without the bright screens and rush of day to day life.

The room is open and the air crackles with a flirtatious, yet deeply emotional energy.

The HOSTS, bearers of this energy, weave in and out of curved booths with drinks. Slim, suited, and beautiful, they exude both exoticism and comfort with a smile.

Customers also play their part. OL's, housewives, divorcees. Women who, for one reason or another, have found that engaging in this dream world provides a necessary escape.

EIJI (23), a young hot-shot host in a slim-cut grey suit, saunters over to one of the booths.

In the booth sits first-time customer MS. SATO (25), a large-eyed OL still dressed in her work clothes. She sees the beautiful, auburn-haired man and fumbles with a cigarette.

EIJI

Please,

Eiji conjures his lighter out of thin air and flicks it open with a flourish, lighting both his and Sato's cigarettes. Ms. Sato lets out a small, involuntary gasp.

EIJI (CONT'D)

Allow me.

Eiji smiles, and Ms. Sato melts. Satisfied, Eiji shoots a glance at his mentor, JOE (28).

Joe nods, and sits back in his booth, weary. His hair is black and slicked back, not long and spiky like Eiji's, and he wears a v-neck shirt and black blazer with dress slacks.

His chin is marked with stubble, and his eyes tired. He's done this for too long.

Despite this, he exudes a certain animal magnetism that sets him apart from Eiji and the others, for better or for worse.

Joe's customer MS. GOMI (30s) smiles at Eiji's trick and turns back to Joe. She tugs at his arm playfully.

MS. GOMI
Do you know that trick?

Joe cracks a smile and grabs a drink from the table.

JOE
I taught him.

Ms. Gomi, drunk but content, giggles and tugs at his arm.

MS. GOMI
You're so mysterious.

Ms. Gomi thinks about it, then frowns.

MS. GOMI (CONT'D)
You never tell me about yourself.
I've seen you at the club a couple
of times.

Joe doesn't listen. He stares at his half empty glass of beer.

MS. GOMI (CONT'D)
Why don't you tell me? You must
have the most interesting life...

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - THAT MORNING

An old CLOCK-RADIO on the floor reads 9 AM and RUMBLES to life.

RADIO
*Ashita ga aru, ashita ga aru,
ashita ga aruuu sa --*

Joe's hand SLAPS the radio silent. He rolls over on his belly, stares at the radio. Suddenly, his eyes go WIDE.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - SECONDS LATER

Joe kneels over his toilet, THROWS UP alcohol. After a few moments, he gets up and looks in the mirror.

Vomit spit dribbles from his mouth and down his undersized, bright red Ultra Seven T-shirt. His hair falls over his face, a mixture of gel and sweat.

Joe stares at the man in the mirror. His phone RINGS. Joe scrambles out of his bathroom and into --

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Joe's small studio apartment is impressively filthy. Old clothing and old takeout boxes litter the floor. A shelf on the left holds manga and a few toys, slowly falls apart. Fish swim around in a too-big aquarium on a desk.

Three UNTOUCHED suits and pristine shirts hang from a hook on the door, untouched by the war zone.

The phone continues to RING. Joe digs through his bed and the trash on his floor. He opens a dresser drawer. 5 FLIP PHONES, cheap burners given as gifts sit in the drawer.

Joe takes out the RINGING phone. It's pink, and decorated with rhinestones. A gift from Ms... can't remember. Joe flips it open and looks at it.

19 NEW MESSAGES. Joe clicks.

FROM: MS. SASAKI

MS. SASAKI (V.O.)
Joe, why haven't you called me?
Don't say your busy with another
customer!

Joe continues to flip through the messages as he gets dressed.

MS. SASAKI (V.O.)
We haven't had dinner in ages!
What, am I not your girlfriend?

Joe pulls on some gray sweats and running shoes.

MS. SASAKI (V.O.)
No! I knew it! There's another
woman, isn't there? You've gotten
close with another customer! Well,
this is the last you can expect to
hear from me! And I want my phone
back!

Joe looks at the phone. No more messages.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Joe runs sprints along the pavement next to the Imperial Palace moat. His friend PARK (27) sits on a railing and looks at Joe's pink phone.

PARK
You serious? I can keep this?

Joe finishes a sprint and nods to his friend. Park stashes the phone and takes out a cigarette box.

PARK (CONT'D)
Awesome! You want one?
(beat)
Oh, yeah. You're doing that health thing.

Park takes a long drag. He's chubby and unshaven, and wears a bucket hat and an oversized hoodie.

PARK (CONT'D)
I guess I'm lucky my job doesn't depend on looks. If guys like you worked at the Arcade, I'd be out of a job!

Park laughs heartily. Joe continues running.

PARK (CONT'D)
But damn if I know. I'm just happy to have work.

Park's brow furrows with anger.

PARK (CONT'D)
It's better than working in some big company with the same assholes from high school. But that's why I have you, right?

Joe stops, takes a break.

PARK (CONT'D)
Those assholes wouldn't mess with the captain of the boxing team! Oh, that reminds me,

Park digs into his hoodie and retrieves a book. He tosses it to Joe.

PARK (CONT'D)
Thanks for letting me borrow that. I've heard a lot about *Ashita no Joe*, but I wanted to see for myself. It's your favorite, right?

Joe nods reluctantly.

PARK (CONT'D)
I knew it! That's why it's your
alter-ego at the club! I wonder if
any of the old ladies you hit on
know *Ashita no Joe*...

Joe ignores his joke and keeps running. Park pulls out the
pink phone and plays with it absentmindedly.

PARK (CONT'D)
So, are you coming to the reunion
tonight?

Joe stops, looks at Park.

PARK (CONT'D)
What, you forgot? You must be
really busy these days. Yeah, a
couple guys from middle school were
gonna meet up at an *Izakaya*.
Tanaka, Yamamoto, I think Miki's
going.

Joe's eyes WIDEN. Park smiles.

PARK (CONT'D)
Ah, you liked her back in the day,
didn't you?

FLASHBACK TO:

MONTAGE - JOE'S MIDDLE SCHOOL ROMANCE

A). INT. JOE'S MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Joe and Miki sit next to each other in class. Miki leans over
and grabs Joe's arm. He pulls back, blushing.

MIKI
Hey. Could I borrow a pencil?

JOE
Sha -- sure.

Joe hands Miki a pencil.

MIKI
Thanks!

Miki's smile LIGHTS UP her face, and Joe MELTS.

B). INT. JOE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joe furiously scribbles a love letter to Miki. Frustrated, he crumples it up and tosses it to his floor with dozens of others.

C). EXT. JOE'S MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Joe stands in front of Miki, arms outstretched and holding a mass of newspaper and tape. Miki accepts the package, and unwraps it. Joe smiles as she reads it.

She gets to the end, and frowns.

MIKI (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I just --

Miki drops the letter and runs off. Joe stands still for a moment, then picks up the letter and rewraps it in the newspaper.

BACK TO:

EXT. SHINJUKU CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Joe stands frozen, reliving his school heartbreak.

PARK
Hello? Anybody there?

Park stands in front of Joe, waving his hands. Joe grabs a cigarette from the pack in Park's hand.

He lights it, and takes a drag.

INT. KINOKUNIYA BOOKSTORE - DAY

Joe picks through books in a crowded bookstore. He's wearing a baseball cap and face mask, and is dressed in heavy clothing.

Joe picks out a book, Kazuo Inamori's *A Passion for Success*. He grabs another. *No Schooling, Just Business*. Joe squat-walks along the floor, grabbing other books from the shelves.

He doesn't notice a young OL standing in front of him, and bumps into her. She SHRIEKS and stumbles, and Joe falls over, losing his hat and mask.

JOE
I'm sorry, are you OK --

Joe looks up at MIKI (28). She's dressed smartly, in a black skirt and suit. She still has the same bright smile.

MIKI

Ichiro?

Joe scrambles for his disguise, and gets up.

JOE

Excuse me, I think I should be
going --

MIKI

Ichiro! How are you?

Miki brushes Joe's arm. He flinches slightly at the mention
of his name and scratches his head. The jig is up.

JOE

I'm uh... OK, I guess.

Miki looks at the books in his hand.

MIKI

Doing some shopping?

JOE

Yeah, it's for work...

MIKI

Oh! What kind of work do you do?

Joe freezes up.

JOE

I'm a... consultant. I help clients
with their uh...

Joe trails off. Miki catches the hint.

MIKI

Well, did you hear about the
reunion tonight?

JOE

Yeah, Park told me.

An awkward silence.

JOE (CONT'D)

How are you doing?

Miki sweeps her bangs behind her ear.

MIKI
I'm working as an OL. I have a
lunch break right now, and I'm
meeting my --

JOE
An OL? That's great!

Miki chuckles at Joe's enthused reaction.

MIKI
I'm actually one of the older
girls, but it's all right, I
guess...

Miki trails off this time. A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN recognizes Joe
and approaches the pair from an aisle over, but neither
notice.

MIKI (CONT'D)
So, do you think you'll be going to
the reunion tonight?

JOE
I have work tonight.

Miki frowns a bit. Joe reconsiders. The Woman gets closer.

JOE (CONT'D)
But I think I could finish early.

Joe pumps his fist with a flourish, in a manner he thinks is
heroic.

It looks ridiculous.

JOE (CONT'D)
I'll do my best!

Miki chuckles. The Woman makes it over to them. She's
obviously angry but trying to hide it. She grabs Joe's arm.

MS. SASAKI
Honey! I'm done looking at books.
Are you ready to go?

Joe looks at Ms. SASAKI (40s). She's impeccably put together
and wears a constantly sour face. Miki raises an eyebrow.

MIKI
(smiling)
Ichiro! You didn't tell me about --

JOE
This is Ms. Sasaki. She uh... works
with me.

Ms. Sasaki bows. Miki reciprocates.

MS. SASAKI
Pleasure to meet you.

Miki looks around awkwardly.

MIKI
Well, I guess I should be going.
See you at the reunion?

Joe nods. Miki leaves. Ms. Sasaki turns to Joe as soon as
Miki is out of earshot.

MS. SASAKI
Let's go, *honey*.

INT. MS. SASAKI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joe sits on Sasaki's bed, staring blankly at the wall. Sasaki
darts around the room.

JOE
How did you find me?

MS. SASAKI
I know you. You're always hanging
around that book store, with other
women no less.
(beat)
Ichiro? Who does she think she is?

She turns to Joe.

MS. SASAKI (CONT'D)
Why haven't you returned my calls?
It's not easy being a housewife,
you know.

Sasaki lights a cigarette.

JOE
I've been busy with work.

Sasaki laughs.

MS. SASAKI

Work? I know what you're work is.
You entertain beautiful girls and
drink all night.

(beat)

And why aren't you wearing the suit
I bought you?

Joe looks around for an escape but can't find one. A switch
FLIPS in his head. He gets up and grabs Sasaki by the arms.

JOE

(sultry)

I wanted to save it for our nights
together.

Joe kisses Sasaki's neck tenderly, and she shudders.

MS. SASAKI

There he is... my Joe...

Joe is silent and strong, a completely different man. He
picks Ms. Sasaki up and carries her to bed.

INT. MS. SASAKI'S BEDROOM - LATER

Joe wakes up to the sound of his phone RINGING. He rolls out
of the bed and picks it up.

A reminder alarm reads VISIT AT 5. Joe puts the phone away
and scrambles to get dressed. Sasaki rolls, stretches back to
life in the bed.

MS. SASAKI

Jo.. Joe?

Joe finishes pulling up his pants. He turns and leans over
the bed.

JOE

Yes?

MS. SASAKI

Are you going?

Joe strokes her hair and gives her a peck on the cheek.

JOE

I must get going. Your husband will
be home soon.

MS. SASAKI
He wont be back today... business
trip...

Sasaki pulls Joe closer, but he pulls back.

JOE
I need to get ready for work. See
you tonight?

Sasaki is beginning to wake and sits up.

MS. SASAKI
I can't tonight. Tomorrow?

JOE
(smiling)
Perfect.

Joe stands to leave, but stops himself before he reaches the door.

JOE (CONT'D)
Ma-chan? Do you mind if --

Sasaki frowns. She knows where this is going.

MS. SASAKI
(sighing)
Every time. What do you do with all
of your spending money?

Ms. Sasaki points to her purse on her dresser.

MS. SASAKI (CONT'D)
There.

Joe shuffles over and takes a few bills from her wallet. He bows nervously, breaking his charismatic host illusion.

JOE
Thank you.

Joe leaves. Sasaki watches him go, then flops back into the bed.

INT. PRIVATE CARE HOME - AFTERNOON

Joe sits in silence with his GRANDMOTHER (93) in her clean, small room. Joe fidgets in the environment, but his Grandmother smiles, content to be with her grandson.

A royalty-free instrumental facsimile of *Ashita ga aru sa* plays over the intercom.

JOE

Uh... the aide told me that you've started playing Go.

GRANDMOTHER

Yes. Mr. Yamada from a few rooms down taught me. He's really quite good.

Joe starts to loosen up.

JOE

Mr. Yamada? I think I remember him. Was he the handsome one that danced with you at dinner?

GRANDMOTHER

(more animated)

He told me that he learned to dance while working in France. He's such an interesting man.

JOE

And handsome too, right?

She LAUGHS;, a breathy, laborious cackle that nonetheless makes Joe smile.

GRANDMOTHER

Haven't you found a nice girl yet?

Joe stammers. She doesn't know what he does for a living.

JOE

There are a couple I like, but it's hard to get away from work...

GRANDMOTHER

It seems like being a salaryman is harder these days. So much competition with the others. Nobody ever slows down.

Joe nods. He know exactly what she means. Suddenly, an AIDE enters the open door to the room.

AIDE

Excuse me? Mr. Taniguchi?

JOE

I'll be right back.

Joe rises and goes over to the Aide.

JOE (CONT'D)

Yes?

The Aide holds out a stack of forms.

AIDE

As you know, rent collection is
this week...

Joe takes the sheet and looks at the number. His eyes WIDEN.

JOE

Well, I...

MONTAGE - JOE SPENDS HIS MONEY

A. Joe stumbles out of the Oasis Club after work. He looks down at the YEN BILLS in his hands and smiles.

B. Joe enters an Akihabara toy store and exits with three large bags.

C. Joe enters an Armani store and exits with multiple suit bags.

D. Joe walks down the street and stops by a pet store. He enters, and exits carrying a large aquarium.

JOE (CONT'D)

I, uh... this is all I have for
now.

Joe takes his money from Ms. Sasaki and gives it to the Aide, who counts it.

AIDE

This is quite a bit short.

The Aide FROWNS. This has happened before.

JOE

Just, just take that for now. I'm
getting paid later today. I... I'll
get the rest to you tomorrow.

The Aide smiles.

AIDE

Okay, Mr. Taniguchi. I should be
taking Ms. Taniguchi to her bath in
a few minutes.

The Aide leaves. Joe returns to his Grandmother.

JOE
It looks like they're kicking me out.

GRANDMOTHER
Don't worry about me, Ichiro.
You've taken such good care of me
all by yourself.
(beat)
Find someone that can make you
happy.

The Aide comes in and takes Joe's Grandmother away. Joe picks up his phone and calls Park.

JOE
Hello? Park? Hey, where did you say
that Izakaya was again?

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Joe gets dressed for work. He erases any leftover stubble on his chin with a electric razor. Smooths out the cuffs on his linen suit. Hangs a thin gold chain around his neck. A gift from Ms. Sasaki.

Lastly, Joe applies some cologne and scoops up a dab of hair gel in his hand. He stares at his unkempt, messy, normal hair. He SLICKS it back, and it glows with a healthy sheen. Perfect.

Satisfied, Joe leaves grabs his keys and leaves his apartment. A large ball of wrapped NEWSPAPER and TAPE sits on his desk.

INT. IZAKAYA - NIGHT

Joe and Park sit next to each other at the table. They're the only ones here.

JOE
Shit. Maybe I should just go to
work...

PARK
Nah, man. I think Tanaka's still
coming. Just wait a minute.

Joe puts his head down. Miki rounds the corner, and Park waves to her.

PARK (CONT'D)
Hey, look! Miki!

Joe looks up, butterflies rising in his stomach. Miki enters the bar, followed by handsome salaryman ENDO (30s).

Joe's gut TWISTS. Miki and her man sit down.

MIKI
Park, Ichiro. This is Endo, my
boyfriend.

Park, Miki, and Endo smile and converse. Joe finishes his beer and calls for another.

INT. IZAKAYA - LATER

Endo finishes retelling the story of how he and Miki met. Park listens attentively. Joe sits slumped over in his chair, eight beers in.

PARK
So she dropped the chocolates in
the elevator before she gave them
to you?

ENDO
(laughing)
Yes! I was convinced she hated me
for a month! Who else gives broken
chocolate on Valentine's Day?

The three LAUGH. Joe is silent. Park looks over and pats Joe on the back.

PARK
Hey buddy, you OK or --

JOE
Get yer fuckin' hands off me!

Joe SLAPS Park away. Miki and Endo recoil in shock. Joe sneers at them, HAMMERED.

JOE (CONT'D)
What are you looking at? You think
you're better than me or somethin'?

Joe reaches forward and grabs Endo by the tie.

JOE (CONT'D)
Fancy ass businessman thinks he's
better than me just cause he wears
a tie and knows how to drive!

Park pulls Joe away.

PARK
I'm sorry. He's had a bit too much
to drink. Come on, let's go --

JOE
I ain't finished!

He turns to Miki.

JOE (CONT'D)
You! You're even worse than he is!
Since when does a boring guy in a
suit make your dreams come true?
You wanna be a housewife for the
rest of your life?

Joe wipes the tears and snot from his face.

JOE (CONT'D)
I didn't get to go to school! I had
to make my own way, make my own
money the only way I knew how for
ten years! Why don't I get someone?
Why don't I get to be happy?

Park gets Joe to stand up and tries to push him outside.

PARK
Come on. Let's go outside.

Joe STARES a hole into Miki.

JOE
I fuckin' loved you. Why can't that
be enough?

Park pushes Joe out of the bar.

EXT. IZAKAYA - LATER

Joe sits hunched over on a bench. Park stands over him.

PARK
Look man, I didn't know that she --

JOE

It's OK.

Joe's tears are dry, and he's stable.

Beat.

PARK

Hey, do you want to go to the
arcade? It's only a few stops away.
It'd be like the old days.

He sits down and elbows Joe in the shoulder lightly.

PARK (CONT'D)

Whaddya say, huh?

Joe shakes his head and rises.

JOE

Nah. I should get home.

PARK

Okay.

Park drifts off for a moment.

PARK (CONT'D)

Hey, Joe.

Joe looks up.

PARK (CONT'D)

I have to, well my brother's making
me go back to Korea. I didn't want
to, but after thinking for a
while... I like living here, but I
can't work at an arcade for the
rest of my life.

(beat)

My bro's got an opening at his
company and I think I'm going to
take it. It's grunt work, but the
pay is good and --

Park trips up.

PARK (CONT'D)

I gotta grow up. I can't keep
pretending that I don't have
responsibility for my life. I don't
want to wake up one day and realize
that I wasted it all.

(MORE)

PARK (CONT'D)
That's why I wanted to tell you
that I'm leaving tomorrow. And
thanks. For everything.

Park sits for a moment. Joe's VOICE fades in, BREAKING his
DAYDREAM.

JOE
Park?

Park snaps to attention.

JOE (CONT'D)
You zoned out a bit there.

Park smiles.

PARK
It was nothing. Wanna meet by the
Palace tomorrow?

JOE
Sure.
(beat)
Hey. Have fun in there.

Park smiles, and goes back into the izakaya. Joe turns, and
begins to walk down the street. A few DRUNK SALARYMEN stumble
and sing across the street.

DRUNK SALARYMEN
*Ashita ga aru, ashita ga aru,
ashita ga aruuu...*

They forget the words and die down. Joe's phone buzzes. He
unlocks it and looks at the screen.

REMINDER: 30,00 YEN FOR THE CARE HOME TOMORROW

Joe turns and looks at himself in the reflection of a
convenience store window. He's disheveled, to say the least.

Joe smooths the folds from his suit. Wipes his brow with a
kerchief. Takes out an emergency gel bottle and re-sets his
hair.

BACK TO:

INT. OASIS HOST CLUB - PRESENT TIME

Joe sits next to Ms. Gomi, still frozen in thought.

MS. GOMI
Hello? Joe?

Joe turns to Ms. Gomi.

MS. GOMI (CONT'D)
Why don't you tell me about your
life? It must be wonderful!

Joe stares at her for a moment.

A switch FLIPS and he adopts a sly smile.

JOE
Why don't we have a few more drinks
first?

Joe kisses her on the neck lightly, and Ms. Gomi LAUGHS. Joe
pours them both more drinks, and the two share in happy, idle
conversation.

FADE TO BLACK