

Have you ever heard a familiar song on the radio while driving?

You know the feeling. Driving to work, to a bar, to a friend's house, home for christmas. It comes up on your playlist, or your phone's not working so you resort to the radio. The radio dial fizzles back and forth with static until you find a station that works. You stop suddenly; was the song playing or has it just started? The chords have been memorized, knowing them like the back of your hand, stomach dropping and body freezing. You know this song.

Maybe it's something you've listened to when you were a kid; acne frosted face and totally believed that every consequence your parents inflicted on you was meant to ruin your life. Middle school was awful, you hated everyone or maybe everyone hated you. Maybe you had one friend, if any at all, and it felt like the world wasn't actually worth living. Wake up tired, walk through the day in a daze, barely believing you were awake yet and not in your bed still dreaming. Go to bed tired, eat one meal a day, mutter that the day was fine when the parents asked, repeat. School grades are slipping, and you've stopped reading a year ago; picking up a book is too much energy, and there is none to spare. You listened to that song through old-wire headphones that plugged into an ipod shuffle while walking to the bus in the chilly November air. Look up through the bare tree branches and see the crip blue sky. You wish you could feel something again, but the sky is empty. Can you still remember how it hurt to take breath through that thin air, with that one song rumbling through your veins?

Maybe it's something you heard one time on the radio that doesn't display the song title or the artist, and you were never able to find it again. It had a melody so divine that it illuminated your entire soul, you could feel each vibration rocking through each cell of your body. Does it send chills up your spine? Was it in the car of someone your one friend was friends with? Don't ask them what the song is, you'll embarrass yourself even more than you already have when you smiled wrong when you got in the car. Idiot, idiot, idiot.

Is it your Dad's music taste that he played through a Pandora radio station on Youtube because he hated the idea of paying for free music? Were you too embarrassed to ask him what the song was because you knew he would tease you about "finally coming around to his music taste?". The song was left to silently move through the world, never really staying, never to be heard again until years later. Now you have a playlist full of that music, and you take pride in the fact that you inherited his music taste. Now it gives you something to talk about.

Maybe the song was sung to you as a kid, your parents voice being the only thing to soothe you, at least for a few years. As a baby, you held onto their fingers, grasping onto their life, clutching tightly and begging to never let go, don't forget, don't stop singing. It's the song that made each scrap on the knee or fall to the ground less painful, the mushy green pea sauce on that rubber spoon tastes less like poison. Maybe it's a song that was always playing in the car when you remember those good moments. Cold air blowing around the van, blurry

mountains peeking out over the window glass. Band of Horses is playing softly in the background, and you can hear your parents mumbling in the front seat. Life is complete, simple, digestible. The song brings you joy now when you hear it; its mountain music. It's what you play now while driving through the mountains, which has now become your home. How nostalgic. How badly do you miss them?

Maybe this song was playing during an important moment. A first kiss. A confrontation. A revelation. A good cry. It's playing in the background and you swear to yourself that you won't forget what that moment feels like, or maybe you're begging to forget that moment in time. "Please don't make me remember this feeling, get off me, get away, forget me.." "Please don't let me forget what this feels like, what they feel like on my skin, how my heart beats through my chest and my body is filled with electric current. Don't leave me behind, stay, stay, stay."

Maybe the song was in a movie you watched when it changed your life. You watched *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* when you were 15, alone, in your bed at night when you weren't supposed to have the phone. Eyes stay glued to the screen, you watch, each cell in your body igniting with feeling. Sadness? Understanding? Nostalgia? It changes your life anyway. Now, when you hear *Come On Eileen* and feel that same feeling, pulling you back into the depths of that feeling you still don't quite understand, but enjoy or hate the feeling regardless.. Maybe the song is in a movie you watch everyday, when you're sad, when you're happy. It's the first movie you show a new partner, "this is my favorite movie." Or possibly this movie is the only one you watch when you're sad, depressed, hopeless. Maybe the movie counts as both. The movie provides unknowing comfort, in a way a sad movie probably shouldn't bring to someone "normal". But it's there, and the song is there, and the feeling is there.

Maybe it's a song you shared with someone special. Could it have played in the background as a soundtrack to an intimate moment? Shared sweetly under the covers of secrecy, giggles and heat trapped under the thickness of the blanket. Sweat soaking into the sheets, swollen kisses suckled to a forgiving neck, love being passed back and forth through each other. You hear this song now and you are back in that bed, in the back of that car, in that place with them when you were once the youthful age of 16. Innocent, fresh, in love. Maybe you revel in that memory for a moment, thankful you shared something so sweet with someone so good. Maybe your stomach churns and your cheeks light with shameful heat, and you quickly skip the song.

Maybe you heard the song for the first time in that car you drove around in with them for so many seasons. The seat is perfectly in the place where it is comfortable for you; you would know if it was moved. Your stray earrings and sunglasses hang from the rear-view mirror, showing everyone around who the passenger seat belonged to. Hair ties wrap around the clutch at your disposal, your water bottle fills the cup holder, your change sits in the

passenger side door. This is your car too, territory you know you didn't need to mark but did so anyway. It was a mark of something; the badge of honor. "I belong here, they told me I did".

Now when the song plays, you skip it when you recognize the first note.

Maybe it's a sad song, because somehow it always is. What does it remind you of? Are you back there again, after that night with a huge victory that was supposed to be special. Can you remember finding out that information that should've stayed hidden? Remember how the world seemed to disappear for a moment, eyes glued on the screen, re-reading that sentence over and over and over. So simple, yet utterly and completely devastating. What are you listening to? You will remember it forever now. Remember holding the phone up to your ear, listening to them yell at you as they had never done before. Hear the phrases that cut into your skin, take the breath from your chest, know that there is no coming back from this fight; not this time. Face hot through the biting cold outside in March, tears burning your face and realizing that there is no longer any love between you and them anymore. The love is stuck in your chest, it's heavy, it wants to leave and it is alone. You are there, outside that restaurant with your winning team inside, and now this is the part of the night you will remember. Realizing that it is over. Truly and completely over.

Maybe the song reminds you of the last summer you felt real innocence. . Summer days filled with the strong smell of chlorine, watermelon juice dribbled down sunkissed chins. Hot boiled peanuts, the salty taste glued to your fingertips for hours after. Calloused toe tips from the sun infused sand, waves filled with salt, shells collected and forgotten in pockets. You and all your friends swim through the pool on your property, hidden through the old oak trees with white hanging moss. You take turns throwing each other back into the pool when it's time to leave, until there is nothing left to do but all jump back in, revealing in the cool water compared to the humid Florida temperature outside. Learning to play guitar with bleeding fingers, double dates with friends at movie theaters, greasy pizza from the best pizzeria on the Island. Bursting laughter with friends, soggy ice cream cones, and the Teen Beach Movie Soundtrack. Do you remember his face when he walked through the door to you and your friends dancing? Can you remember? You need to remember; it will be the last summer he is alive.

Maybe the song was playing in your headphones at school, when the afternoon announcements were starting to crackle overhead. Take one earbud out, too lazy and non-interested to take out both to pay attention. But then you hear a friend's name, and the words "passed away" behind it. Then the word suicide comes from your teacher when a student in the class asks more questions. The song plays on while your heart stops, and suddenly the earbuds are out of your ears- ripped off in any attempt to hear more. But nothing more is said. Sick fills your blood, horror grasps your mind, and the song plays on

through the earbuds. For the following weeks, every song you will hear will be installed into your brain to call back upon those dark days wherever you are in the future.

Maybe the song reminds you of an entire year. The first year you start college, moving from one state to another, fear filling the core of your being. You are lost in a place you chose to go. Anxiety is rampant, eating becomes non-existent. Sickness is something woken up with and fallen asleep to. Dropping out and reluctantly moving home to achieve the status of failure becomes more and more likely each day that passes and food is still not eaten. But then, slowly, the season changes. The leaves become dry and red, the trees a bushel of water-color until they litter the ground in a sacrifice to the Earth. The cooler temperature sinks into your skin, classes become more fun and less of a chore. You meet friends, have movie nights, Halloween, fall in love. And you listen to Head over Heels by Tears for Fears through all of it.

You're in that car, and the song is playing. The scenery outside is rushing past you, maybe you are driving, maybe you are riding. What does that song on the radio make you feel? Is it nostalgic? Is it sad? Who are you remembering right now? Does it bring back memories from the assortment of emotions we are capable of experiencing? Where does it take you? When will you come back?