

Hot Cocoa Meetup

By: Jessica Fernbach

Present Jess: The writer's twenty-three-year-old self. Struggles with self-esteem but is way better than she used to be. She has wise words to deliver to her younger counterpart

Past Jess: The writer's eighteen-year-old self. Is in the process of getting out of a depressive episode and is hard on herself. Doesn't know what is to come yet.

The scene is in black as a spotlight forms on Present Jess.

Present: Hello everyone. My name is Jess, and I'm twenty-three-years-old. Have you seen that Instagram trend where the creator has coffee with their past self? Well, if you haven't heard about that, it's basically what I just said. But it's someone just delivering words of wisdom to their past self that they probably wish they had heard at that age. This is that, but a play format because why not? Except for the fact that we don't drink coffee, so welcome to me having hot cocoa with my eighteen-year-old-self at Northern Lights.

The cafe is shown and her past self is sitting at a table fixing her hair on her phone.

Present: Hey, sorry that I'm late. Do you want to order with me?

Past: It's alright, I know that we can be- Woah!

Present: What's up?

Past puts phone away: Nothing. It's just, you look so cool.

Present: Thank you. Your outfit's cute.

Past shrugs: Hm, thanks.

They get up to order.

Present: Okay. Since you've never been here before, order the hot chocolate. It is so good. Oh, and with whipped cream too.

Past: Alright. I like hot chocolate anyway. So, do we never get into coffee or is today just a hot cocoa day?

Present: No, we never get into coffee.

Past: At least I did one thing right. Uhm, no offense.

Present: None Taken.

They get their drinks and sit back down.

Past self drinks: Wow, this is amazing. I can't believe I haven't heard of this place before.

Present: I know right.

Past: So, how are we doing by the way? Where I am right now, it's okay I guess. Better than a few months ago when I was so down that the world no longer felt real. It does feel real now, but I'm just so overwhelmed. I don't know what to do with the damage that I left behind. It feels like so much. Sorry, I'm talking a lot. Probably too much. You already know about all of this and to you, this is so long ago. It probably doesn't even matter anymore.

Present: No, you're not talking too much. And even if you were, that is completely okay and it does matter. But we're doing good. I graduated last year and I have a job now.

Past: So, we ended up going to college and graduating on time? That's good. Like, I assumed it would work out because things tend to work out with us but I was worried. It's March and I still haven't applied to any schools. I didn't know the deadlines were due so early and once I did, it was too late.

Present: It ends up being okay.

Past: It does?

Present: Yeah, we meet some nice people. People who helped us find a great bachelor's program.

Past: What do we end up getting it in?

Present: Writing.

Past: We can do that?

Present: Of course we can

Past: So, do we go to Bible College or something?

Present: Not exactly.

Past: Oh. Do we go out of state or even like an hour away to dorm at a University?

Present: Again, not exactly. But, we do dorm junior year for the experience. I am twice as much in debt for that.

Past: Debt? I'll worry about that later. Where do we go then?

Present: Lackawanna College.

Past: The junior college?

Present: Actually, it's just a normal college now.

Past: Still. It's not a University.

Present: Look, you're going to learn this next month, in April. But, you have to do with what you have. Unfortunately, there aren't many other options. Maybe none actually. Well, probably

Luzerne. That campus looks beautiful, maybe look into that one too.

Past: I feel so stupid.

Present: You are not stupid. Lackawanna is actually pretty good for us. I never understood what we had against it.

Past: It's just. I got mostly straight As. I am usually on the honor roll or high honor roll. Well, except for this year. I am in an AP class and an Honors class. What did I do wrong?

Present: I think you already know the answer to that.

Past: That I should've applied to colleges sooner?

Present: Yep.

Past: I can't believe that I worked so hard for years, and it's for nothing?

Present: Well, not entirely nothing. You became closer with your friends because you had more classes with them.

Past: That's true.

Present: Good news is that we join the Honors Society in our third year at Lackawanna. And guess what? We don't get kicked out like you did last year. We graduate with honors cords by the way.

Past: That's good.

Present: But the thing that I learned throughout our time at college is that the classes are just like the ones at Universities. I've had teachers there who also taught at these schools say that the curriculum is exactly the same.

Past: I'm glad it's not as bad as I thought. Still, I feel like I screwed myself out of going to a big school and that my work amounted to almost nothing.

Present: Unfortunately, it's kind of true. Lackawanna has a one-hundred percent acceptance rate.

So, we did try too hard for what we got. But that's not your fault, how were we supposed to know what was going to happen? Would it have been better to listen to advice and apply to colleges sooner? Yes. But, no one helped us do that. We were scared. You needed someone to walk you through it and you didn't. I'm sorry about that. Also, Lackawanna is not a bad school. It was just the stigma surrounding it that made you think it was. But, you are and were going through a hard time when the applications were due. As you said yourself, the world no longer

felt real. It is hard to write essays, find colleges, and apply to them when you feel like tearing yourself apart. Don't blame yourself at all.

Past: It's easier said than done.

Present: I'm sorry that none of the adults were there for you. I know that you tried to ask for help.

Past: Thank you. It really means a lot. So, where do you work exactly?

Present: I work with disabled kids as a teacher's aid.

Past: Oh, so it's like full circle?

Present: Mm, not exactly. These kids aren't like we were.

Past: But you like it?

Present: I do. I'm hoping to find an editorial job or one as a screenwriter. But for now, this is nice.

Past: I thought that we would want to do something like becoming a children's pastor or a missionary, how is that going? I've been wanting to go to Africa for years. Like, I'm sure it won't happen for a while but-

Present: Oh, we went already. You will go with our mom and some people from Church next June.

Past: Next June?

Present: Yeah, we go for about two weeks. We preached to kids on a table, went on a safari, it was fun.

Past: You have to tell me all about it! Ahh! I can't believe it's so soon! It has been my dream to go since I was like fourteen, I'm so excited.

Present: Yeah, it'll be fun.

Past: Is it just me or do you look down?

Present: Yeah, it makes me feel a little down. Ever since then, I want to go back again, but I hardly see myself being a missionary anymore. But who knows? Anything can happen. I just want to go back so that this time I won't feel guilt stricken the whole time.

Past: Guilt stricken?

Present: Yeah, you'll find out why next year. But, don't feel bad about going or about anything that ends up happening because of it. I know that you like to blame yourself. But none of this is going to be your fault. Okay?

Past: Okay. Yeah, I'll try even though I don't know what will be happening yet.

Present: Trust me, it's a good thing you don't know yet.

Past: Okay, so do you have any good news to share other than liking college, graduating, and finding a job?

Present: We're in therapy.

Past: We find a therapist?

Present: Yeah, it takes a while though. We do find one this upcoming fall, but he wasn't right for us. However, during our third year of college, my friend recommended to me this place and we find a great therapist. It's been about 2 and a half years since I started seeing her.

Past: 2 and a half years? Wow, she must be pretty good.

Present: Yeah she is. Not everything is cured or whatever. But we do find out we have ADHD

Past: I knew it!

Present: And we learn that what you're going through and what you are going to go through is not your fault.

Past: That's good, I'm happy to hear that. Do we drive? My dad has been talking about getting me lessons.

Present: We begin to drive independently almost a year from now.

Past: Oh nice! I thought that maybe I was going to be one of those people who never drive.

Present: But here we are.

Past: Here we are.

Present: You also get your own car too because the dad of the girl we babysit or babysat was kind enough to sell it to us for cheap.

Past: We begin to babysit?

Present: For almost four years. I only stopped last year because they moved. Our younger cousin actually babysat her before we did, but once we asked her parents if we could as well, they said yes. I'm still proud that you asked; it was brave.

Past: I asked?

Present: Yep, I think that some of the best things we'll have in life are things we end up pushing ourselves to do. Even when we're scared.

Past: Do we still get scared?

Present: We have held ourselves back quite a bit. But I'm learning not to now, like writing this play.

Past: Play?

Present: You'll see in five years.

Past: Fair enough. Do we still believe in God?

Present: I think that we'll always believe, no matter what. Also, He did end up getting you through what you just went through and what you will be going through.

Past: It's hard, believing in God.

Present: I know, it's hard for me too. But, it's worth it.

Past: Why?

Present: Because, whenever we do feel His love, it beats other kinds of love.

Past: That's cheesy but nice. Do you think He's disappointed? I kinda doomed myself. I know you said it works out. But I used to feel really smart, and now I don't. What if God is mad at me for not taking a better opportunity?

Present: You did not doom yourself. You're just a kid, I'm just a kid. And we're trying our best with what we have. I'm sure that God would rather lower grades than you tearing yourself apart. I'm sure He's proud that you make it through. I know I'm proud that you made it through. Also, during this time, you find out who you are thanks to all of this.

Past: Thank you. I'm proud too. Who am I by the way?

Present: A huge nerd.

Past: Hey!

Present: It's not a bad thing. It brings us joy in such a rough time. But seriously, don't worry. After this, things look up. You'll get closer with friends, have crushes for the first time in years, and when you babysit you are going to take her on so many adventures. I will be honest. What you are feeling right now is the beginning. So much is about to happen. But it is going to be okay. God loves you, your friends and family love you, and throughout the next couple of years, you'll learn just how much they love you.

Past: Okay. So, I basically just have to get through this time to see it get better?

Present: Yeah. I know you love the dark and believe that you belong inside of it. But the light is so much better. And no one worth keeping is going to leave you for finding happiness.

Past: Okay, yeah. I'll remember that.

Present: Good.

Past looks at phone: Crap. Our mom is here.

Present: Darn.

Past: There's so much I still need to ask. Do I get a boyfriend?

Present: You kinda go on a date. But no.

Past: Oof.

Present stands up and past does reluctantly.

Present: Before you leave, I do have something to tell you.

Past: Hm?

Present: We never ended up tearing ourselves apart.

They hug.

They go to the entrance.

Present: Look, it actually does get better, even though you can't see it yet.

Past nods.

Present: Bye. I love you.

Past: I- thank you.

Present: You'll be okay. Okay? Even though you don't see me, I am here for you.

Past: Alright, bye Jess.

Present: Bye Jess.

Past leaves.

Present: I wonder if I'll end up meeting my 28-year-old-self now. I also wonder how she is doing. Probably alright.

Present sits down at the table and it fades to black.

END