

**Song Exploder**  
**Paramore - Liar**  
**Episode 262**

Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE)*

I think one of the hardest things there is to do in music is write a love song that expresses something real. I read that the song "Liar" by Paramore was written by Hayley Williams, the singer of the band, about her longtime bandmate Taylor York, and about the feelings that she started to realize she'd had for him. Paramore has been a band for over 20 years, since Hayley and Taylor and Zac Farro, who plays drums, were all young teenagers. Paramore's won a Grammy for Best Rock Song, and they have multiple platinum albums. But with all that history, Taylor and Hayley only recently became a couple.

"Liar" is a song off of their most recent album *This Is Why*, which came out in February 2023. So, I talked to Hayley, Taylor and Zac in their studio about how their song first came about, and what it means to them.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE)*

*(Vocals: "And, oh my love, I lied to you / But I never needed to / Oh my love, I lied to you / But you always knew the truth")*

Hayley: I'm Hayley; I sing for the band.

Zac: My name is Zac Farro; I play the drums.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor, and I play guitar.

With this record, we wanted to revisit a sort of aggression or like urgency that we haven't explored in a while. And I think I, maybe, in particular was pushing that a little bit hard (chuckles) at times.

Hayley: So, we had been working on... not even always aggressive songs, but just songs that felt jumpy and angular.

Taylor: Zac and I were working at his studio, at his house, at the time, and he was like, dude, do you think maybe we could just, like, try to write something that's chill? Like, I just need a break from just trying to kind of go all out.

Zac: I just like, really wanted a slow song.

Taylor: And I was like, yes. I think I need that, too.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE – demo: guitars)*

The guitar part is actually something that I'd had for years. I'd been trying to find a song for that since I was a teenager.

That happens all the time where there's, like, something I'll write, and every so often I'll play it and just, like, hope someone's, like, Ooh, what's that? You know? And no one normally ever bites.

Zac: That's not true.

Taylor: No, no, no, but all I'm saying is that when I played it, and then you were like, "Oh yeah, that's great, let's do that," I was, like, no way...it might find a home, finally.

Zac: Taylor apparently has had this for years, but I, that I just found out about. But, I normally work off, you know, just immediate inspiration, you know, like a reaction. So I went and tried a drum beat over it.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE – demo: drums)*

Taylor: Anytime I bring an idea in, there's always a split second when a drum beat happens that's not what was in my head, where I kind of have to grieve where I saw things going, you know? But truthfully, Zac is my favorite drummer. And so it always turns out so much better when Zac starts getting his hands on things and also when Hayley does.

That's when it becomes our band, and it's not just what I have in my head.

Zac: We were kind of just riffing off each other.

Taylor: He tried a couple things and then, you know, I was like nodding at him, you know, as dramatically as I could. I was like, yes, that is sick.

After we wrote that, we were like, yeah, we need to get this to Hayley tonight, to see if this is even worth, you know, exploring.

Zac: Taylor kind of was like, "Let's just send Hayley, like, 'start' ideas."

Taylor: 10 years ago, I remember, when I would write an idea, I would get really carried away and I would spend sometimes a couple days making an entire song, you know, and I'd be so, so excited.

And then, you know, I'd send it to her and she would always be incredibly kind, but, you know, sometimes wouldn't connect with it. And so then a part of me would die, because I spent so much time and, and it wasn't the right thing. So I think we've learned, as a group, it's like, just doing little bite-sized things and then seeing if that sparks something.

Hayley: So they first sent me, like, the whisperings of the song. It was like the very beginning. It just was such a warm hug.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE – demo: guitar)*

I vaguely remembered that I'd heard Taylor play these types of chords before, but I was so excited because I, too, was just ready for something different, that felt a bit more like an exhale.

Throughout our entire friendship and like the evolution of the band, I think we've always loved really beautiful, somewhat ambient music, like Blonde Redhead, or Cocteau Twins. Things that people would never equate with Paramore. You know, they would not know that these are our influences.

And I remember thinking, 'Oh, the music's so beautiful. I wish I was the kind of singer that would write something just really soft and flowing to this.' I always wish that about myself, but I love writing rhythmically. The only way I know how to describe it is it's just with more of a hip hop mentality.

I'm thinking about how many bars I'm working with, how many syllables I can fit into that space, and if I can make a good melody out of those little beats.

So I pretty quickly started writing "What was the moment, it's hard to say. / I'm sure I don't remember any way," you know? And then I'm like, how do I put melody to that?

*(Demo vocals: "What was the moment? It's hard to say / I'm sure I don't remember anyway / Before I only knew to hesitate / Pin back in the grenade")*

I was like, okay, I'm trying to say that there's an inherent wisdom our physical selves try to move towards, but you're constantly like getting in the way of truth – that your body, like, wants. But all of the decisions that we make, like, muck it up and make it complicated.

I wanted to find a way to talk about that, in the context of love.

It was a revelatory experience for me, writing this song, because as some of those lyrics are coming out, I'm like, learning about myself.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE – demo)*

*(Demo vocals: "And why should I deny / What's all at once so crystal clear")*

Zac: Hayley would actually sing and perform her parts for us in the room.

And I remember Hayley at one point just pausing and—like, the hesitation of singing about love.

Hayley: Mm-hmm.

Zac: I remember you just making this, like, well, I'm scared, but I like this a lot.

Taylor: Even after all of these years, I think all three of us still have some nerves at that moment every time, because your hope is that you all connect to the same thing.

Zac: But I just remember like, getting halfway through it and being like, why are we not recording? You've recorded this, right? Like, why are we not, like...start tracking this! Because this is gold.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE – demo)*

Hrishikesh: This is the original demo for "Liar."

*(Demo vocals: "What was the moment? It's hard to say / I'm sure I don't remember anyway / Before I only knew to hesitate / Pin back in the grenade")*

Zac: We were writing the song and we weren't happy with the tempo, and I like was moving the tempo up and down in Logic. And it warped the guitar part.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE – demo: glitchy guitar part)*

But Taylor left the guitar part in the actual recording, because it sounded so glitchy and weird.

And I always thought that that was a fun, I don't know why I said fun, cause it wasn't that fun. It was just a cool thing that we left in there.

Hayley: We recorded this record with Carlos de la Garza. We've just always really had such a great creative relationship with Carlos. And he was the catalyst of building the chorus up to feel more open and lush.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE: chorus guitars)*

Taylor: The chorus got a lot more like, dreamy. Everything is a little bit more drawn out.

Hayley: Almost every part of the music in the chorus was like, dancing around another part.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE: add rhythm guitar)*

But there was still a lot of beautiful space. And I remember trying to figure out, do I want to keep being rhythmic with it, or do I wanna try my hand at being one of those singers that does the pretty thing and I really went for it.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE: add chorus vocals)*

*(Vocals: "And, oh my love, I lied to you / But I never needed to / Oh my love, I lied to you / But you always knew the truth")*

I have spent quite some time fighting a very simple feeling, which is just like, falling in love.

And so, a lot of my life, I was realizing as I'm writing these lyrics, I've just spent so much time complicating things that really are simple. For me, so much of my experience of love and intimacy and relationship has been muddled by trauma that either I experienced myself or witnessed in my family. And I think that, for a lot of my life, that's not the kind of vulnerable you want to be, because you really could end up in some scary situations.

So, in my case, having something be simple and feel okay actually felt very scary and wrong.

I always like when there's a song that like, the entire lyric can be summed up in like a line, or in a moment.

And that's why the bridge, you know: "Love is not an easy thing to admit, but I'm not ashamed of it."

*("Liar," by PARAMORE: bridge vocals, guitar, bass)*

*(Vocals: "Love is not an easy thing to admit / But I'm not ashamed of it / Love is not a weakening / If you feel it rushing in / Don't be ashamed of it")*

Taylor: We get very emotional and opinionated in the studio because we're trying to make something that we know is gonna last 'til after we're gone.

Brian Robert Jones played bass on this record. And so, you know, he had so many people speaking in his ear and yet he would still come up with these really beautiful parts.

You know, like that part is really simple, but none of us would have come up with that.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE: bass with harmony, vibraphone)*

When we demoed this song out, Zac played those notes on a MIDI Mellotron plug in. But at some point, a friend of a friend let us use this crazy studio in LA. They had a vibraphone there. And so we were like, we actually have to make that real and recreate it. So Zac played it.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE: woodwinds)*

Those are flutes, clarinets, and a bass clarinet. Our friend Henry Solomon played all of those things.

When we were writing this record, I was really inspired by really airy things, you know, like pipe organs, that really breathy character, like I just was obsessed with it. I was like trying to sneak it in anywhere that I could.

So those parts were actually, like MIDI clarinets. So he just played all of those parts down from the MIDI notes, you know?

It was a really emotional moment for me, you know, to see this thing that we had worked on and then have someone come in and like bring it to life.

Zac: I loved his massive NASCAR shirt he was wearing because when you think about people like that, I think like someone like a straight up bowtie, you know? Just like so professional and like rocking and then he just came in with these, like, big baggy jeans and this NASCAR shirt. And I was like, oh, who's this cool dude? And then he was like rocking the clarinets and I was like, wow, this is...that's my kind of dude.

*("Liar," by PARAMORE)*

(Vocals: "Love is not a weakening / If you feel it rushing in / Don't be ashamed of it / And, oh my love, I lied to you / But I never needed to / Oh my love, I lied to you / But you always knew the truth")

Hayley: It's amazing like, the mental gymnastics that you'll do, the emotional gymnastics that you'll do, to run away from something that's really actually pretty simple and actually right for you.

Love is not a weakening, if you feel it rushing in. It's like... to an extent it happens to you, and you can't control that, but then you're met with the choice. It actually was a harder lesson to learn to receive it, like almost to like, let it in. And I had to allow myself to feel that, and to understand that... that I'm safe here.

Hrishikesh: Coming up, you'll hear how all of these ideas and elements came together in the final song.

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And now, here's "Liar," by Paramore, in its entirety.

(*"Liar," by PARAMORE*)

For more info, visit [songexploder.net/paramore](http://songexploder.net/paramore). You'll find links to buy or stream "Liar."

If you liked this episode, check out Wolf Alice's episode, from 2018, about "Don't Delete the Kisses." Carlos de la Garza was the engineer on that song, and it's also about love. You'll find that, and all the other episodes of the podcast, at [songexploder.net](http://songexploder.net), or wherever you listen.

This episode was made by me, Craig Eley, Theo Balcomb, Kathleen Smith, and Mary Dolan. The episode artwork is by Carlos Lerma, and I made the show's theme music and logo.

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I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Thanks for listening.