

BEFORE YOU GO

Written by

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When an estranged son comes home for his father's memorial his family braces themselves for his eulogy.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME- FRONT STEPS- DAY

ANDRE, 24, all-black suit, hair combed over, sits on the stairs outside of MCCORMICK & SONS FUNERAL HOME. He shuffles through NOTE CARDS with careful precision.

Out the door behind him, walks CHUCKIE, 54, burly. Wearing a put-together, but much more laid-back outfit. He plops down next to Andre, consoling.

CHUCKIE

I can't believe he's gone, kid.

ANDRE

What's good, Chuck. Still doesn't feel real.

Chuckie puts his arm around him.

CHUCKIE

He still owes me \$20. Can you do something bout that? And what are you wearing by the way? Looking like a fucking narc and shit.

ANDRE

Fuck off, I wanted to look respectable for once...I don't know.

Chuckie, emphysemic. Out of breath.

CHUCKIE

Respectable? Respectfully your pops and I would've knocked you the fuck out back in our day kid. I guess that's why you're some sorta big shot now. You got something we never did.

Andre playfully pushes Chuckie. He holds his NOTE CARDS tight.

ANDRE

I don't know why he wanted me to say something. Devyn's practically begging me to let her do it.

CHUCKIE

I mean... she's better at the talky-talky kinda thing. Honestly, I would've picked her.

ANDRE

So what's that make me?

CHUCKIE

You got different skills, that's all. Only kid I know who turns his grief into a presentation. Look at you, rehearsing to speak in front of what- five of us?

ANDRE

I just want it to be special man. I can't leave it how I did before I left. I can't fuck up again.

CHUCKIE

Honestly Dre, you can't fuck it up more than you already did! KIDDING, I'm kidding. Use that smile, and it'll work out.

ANDRE

I'm not him though.

Andre stands, leans over the guard rail. He holds his NOTE CARDS tight.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

I dunno if I can be.

Chuckie stands with him. A moment of sincerity.

CHUCKIE

Kid... I'm not telling you to be him.

Grunt. Chuckle.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

There was one time- we were like 16, 17- we were walking down the street, we see a canoe. Just sitting there in some old fart's front yard. We saw an opportunity and we took it. We took the kayak.

ANDRE

Wait I thought it was a canoe?

CHUCKIE

Not important. Your father was a visionary. That man had an eye for adventure. That and I mean there was nothing better to do. Anyways,  
(MORE)

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

We took the canoe out that night. It was beautiful. The sky was cloud-free, stars shining down at us. We were invincible. Then he stood up. Arms in the air and he screamed. We both just stood there screaming for a second. Until- the wood under us gave out and we were stranded, soaked. Now- I'm really screaming and truly losing my shit. I think we're goners, but your dad? Calm. Swam us right to shore with a smile on his face. I always thought he gave you that smile. Even if it doesn't always show up!

He presses his pointer finger into Andre's chest. Andre, still uncertain.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

Let's go inside, I think me and your Great Aunt Caroline might have something brewing tonight!

ANDRE

Nasty dude.

INT. FUNERAL HOME- FOYER- DAY

Old carpets. Floral arrangements. Dimmed lights. DEVYN, 27, all black, elegant.

Andre and Chuckie enter the room.

DEVYN

Oh little brother, it's about damn time. Outfit could use some work, but you did okay.

ANDRE

Hey Dev, good to see you too.

They hug.

DEVYN

You see my texts? How's that speech going? I can still take over for you, you know?

She gestures to NOTE CARDS that peek out the side of her pocket, winks.

ANDRE

Naw, really, I got it, it's mine to do.

DEVYN

Whatever you say. Looking sharp!  
And ohhmyyygawdd that waist!  
Snatched.

She snaps. Chuckie chuckles, pats his erupting stomach.

CHUCKIE

Really? You think so? I've been trying that keto thing. C'mon now, bring it in.

They hug.

GREAT AUNTIE CAROLINE, 59, shuffles over. Black cashmere, pearls, and a martini glass, half empty.

GREAT AUNTIE CAROLINE

If it isn't my favorite nephew, come give your auntie Caroline some love.

CHUCKIE

Lookingg fineee Carolineee. Still in your prime girl.

She scoffs. Shoos him off.

GREAT AUNTIE CAROLINE

Charles, not today.

She kisses Andre on both cheeks.

GREAT AUNTIE CAROLINE (CONT'D)

He missed you, hun, so much you know? How are you my dear? You look skinny. What's your new address in the city? I'm going to send you food. And those bags under your eyes! You need sleep honey. You better be taking care of yourself now.

ANDRE

Hey auntie. No rest for the wicked, you know.

She rustles in her purse.

GREAT AUNTIE CAROLINE  
Nervous huh? Gawd, pale as a ghost!  
Here, here- take this.

She hands him a baggie of small white bars.

GREAT AUNTIE CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
It's Xanax.  
(whispers)  
Sometimes I crush them up and mix  
it with a little gin. Hits the  
spot. Miracle juice.

She winks.

ANDRE  
Oh ok wow, uh thank you. I think, I  
just uh, I need a minute to go over  
this.

He holds up his NOTE CARDS. She swirls her martini, takes a  
swig.

GREAT AUNTIE CAROLINE  
No, no come along now, your  
mother's worried sick that you  
would not show face. I'm glad you  
made it, family is forever.

They follow her, into the viewing room.

INT. FUNERAL HOME- VIEWING ROOM- DAY

A somber silence. A few rows of chairs. Closed casket.

Framed pictures of ANDRE'S FATHER spread throughout the room.  
A recent one with Devyn and Andre is closest to the casket.

MA, 51, stands at the casket. All black veil over face. Hands  
clasped. Composed.

She lifts the veil. She takes it all in.

MA  
Oh my, there you are. Look at this  
we're all back together now.

She embraces Devyn and Andre.

MA (CONT'D)  
Seeing all of us here, it would've  
meant everything to him.

She motions to Andre.

MA (CONT'D)

Would you like a moment with him?

Andre silently nods. He approaches the casket. Ma, Great Auntie Caroline, and Chuckie make small talk.

Devyn stays close behind Andre.

Andre places his fist on the casket. Pressure.

DEVYN

You ready for that eulogy? I can run it with you if you want?

ANDRE

Nah. It's actually all good. I'm gonna wing it.

DEVYN

Dude, does the old Dre really need to make an appearance?

He shrugs

ANDRE

This just has to be from me, please.

DEVYN

I think Dad would appreciate that.

They hug. She goes to sit.

Ma leaves Chuckie and Caroline.

She approaches Andre.

MA

You know, you don't have to pretend today. No reason not to get messy, we're almost out of vodka, and Caroline's the only one drinking. It's okay, you can talk about it.

She squeezes his arm.

MA (CONT'D)

He tried. Trust me. He loved you, after you left, he waited by his phone every night. For a call, a text. But nothing.

ANDRE

He was the one who kicked me out.

MA

He asked you to grow up.

ANDRE

I tried.

MA

Listen, the only side I'm taking is that of honesty. I'm talking about you. Not whatever performance you have planned. I love you. He tried too.

She returns to her seat, everyone waits for Andre to begin.

Andre looks down at his NOTE CARDS, crumbles them, throwing them to the side.

He stands before the room. Posture straight, proud.

He looks at the photos. At Devyn. At Chuckie. His mother and Caroline.

He takes a deep breath (then unfiltered)

ANDRE

Dad, I fucking hate you.

Silence. Caroline faints.