

SCRAMBLED EGGS

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Logline: When Malia discovers her mother's decision to move to a care facility far away, she must weigh her own guilt and abandonment issues against what is best for her mother's health.

Based on a conversation I had with my late Great Aunt.

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FADE IN:

INT. DINER - DAY

MALIA (18), mature beyond her years, sits across from her mother AYANDE (43), who busies herself with a plate of FRIED EGGS.

MALIA

Didn't you ask for scrambled eggs?

Ayande continues to poke at the fried eggs, unaware that she is being addressed.

MALIA (CONT'D)

Mom?

No response.

MALIA (CONT'D)

AYANDE.

AYANDE

Hmm?

Malia clears her throat to speak over the CLATTER of silverware and the murmur of other families at nearby tables.

MALIA

I said didn't you ask for scrambled eggs?

AYANDE

What?

MALIA

For breakfast.

AYANDE

(looking at her plate)

Oh... Yeah, I did.

She notices Malia's hand go up to flag down their waitress.

AYANDE (CONT'D)

But this is fine too. Don't bother the waitress. It's fine, really.

Enthusiastically, she picks up her knife and begins cutting into the yolks. Malia studies her mother silently as she cuts the eggs into smaller and smaller pieces, not once bringing the fork to her lips.

MALIA
 Mom, what stage are you in?

Again, Ayande doesn't answer, eyes fixed to her plate.

MALIA (CONT'D)
 (sighing)
 What stage are you in, Ayande?

AYANDE
 Stage Three.

MALIA
 Good, see?

She smiles and takes her mother's hand into her own, stroking her knuckles lightly.

MALIA (CONT'D)
 You remembered.

Ayande shakes her head and pulls her hand away. She reaches into her PURSE and pulls out a folded piece of PAPER. Her hands tremble as she gives it to Malia.

MALIA (CONT'D)
 (reading out loud)
 You are having breakfast with Malia
 at Mugg&Bean. Malia is your
 daughter.

She pauses, flipping the paper over in her hands.

MALIA (CONT'D)
 When did you write this?

AYANDE
 (swallowing)
 Last night, I think.

MALIA
 How long have you been writing
 yourself reminders? You don't need
 them.

AYANDE
 I know that. It's just... I'm just
 trying to stay on top of things
 while I'm still lucid, that's all.

MALIA
 Okay... So we'll stay on top of
 things.
 (beat)
 (MORE)

MALIA (CONT'D)

You know, they're still doing that clinical trial at Carter Memorial Hospital on people with early onset Alzheimer's. You could get the treatment and maybe-

AYANDE

(impatiently)

I don't care about the trial, Malia.

Malia's face lights up at the sound of her name.

AYANDE (CONT'D)

Maybe isn't good enough anymore. We need to start thinking about the long-term.

MALIA

What do you mean *long-term*?

AYANDE

(sighing)

We both know there's a chance I won't get to see you graduate from high school or fall in love...

MALIA

Mom...

Ayande falls into herself, her voice frail and cracking.

AYANDE

I won't get to see you on your wedding day.

MALIA

That's bullshit.

Ayande wipes her nose with her napkin and continues:

AYANDE

No. *This*...

She gestures to the diner.

AYANDE (CONT'D)

... is bullshit.

(beat)

Every weekend, we have brunch.

(MORE)

AYANDE (CONT'D)

And I can't even enjoy it anymore because at the back of my mind, I know that I won't remember any of it tomorrow.

MALIA

Don't say things like that.

AYANDE

(ignoring her)

Eventually I'm gonna lose my long-term memories and then I'll have nothing.

MALIA

(taken aback)

You'll have me... Isn't that enough?

Ayande sighs, putting down her silverware.

AYANDE

It's more complicated than that.

MALIA

What do you mean?

AYANDE

What's gonna happen when you go off to college?

MALIA

(caught off guard)

W-we'll worry about that when we get there. I mean... I've already deferred from UPenn, we could-

AYANDE

I've already decided. I found a really nice long-term care facility nearby with-

MALIA

You wanna live in a nursing home? Mom! You're in your 40s! Do you know how crazy you sound right now?
(beat)
I can take care of you myself!

She slams her hands on the table causing the dishes to rattle. Other customers give her dirty looks.

MALIA (CONT'D)
 (softer)
 Let me take care of you...

AYANDE
 No. What's *crazy* is you thinking
 that it's healthy for a 18 year old
 to be taking care of her own
 mother.

(beat)
 You say you'll stick around now,
 but what about when I can't do
 things on my own anymore? Hmm? Are
 you gonna stick around then? When I
 have to be spoon-fed? When I need
 someone else to bathe me? Are you
 gonna wipe your own mother's ass
 when she can't use the toilet on
 her own anymore!?

Malia is too stunned to reply.

AYANDE (CONT'D)
 That's what I thought.

There is a long pause before Ayande fishes a PAMPHLET from
 her purse.

AYANDE (CONT'D)
 It's called Whittler Nursing Home.
 It has an AD Care Unit and
 everything.

Her eyes light up as she slides it across the table.

AYANDE (CONT'D)
 I'll have 24-hour care every day.

Malia doesn't even bother to look at it.

MALIA
 (pleading)
 Why won't you just let me keep
 taking care of you?

AYANDE
 Malia, look. I love you, but I'm
 not gonna do that. We're just
 torturing ourselves here and it's
 not fair to either of us.
 (sighing)
 I just... don't want you to put
 your life on hold for me anymore.
 You'll resent me for it eventually.
 (MORE)

AYANDE (CONT'D)

(beat)
Drop it okay? Can you do that for
me baby?

MALIA

(visibly hurt)
But you're all I have left...
(beat)
I still need my mom.

AYANDE

(voice cracking)
CAN'T YOU SEE THAT I CAN'T BE THAT
FOR YOU ANYMORE!?

Malia stares at her mother in disbelief, her lips quivering. They sit in silence for a beat, taking in Ayande's words.

MALIA

So that's it then? You're just
gonna leave your daughter all on
her own while you get babied in
some stupid nursing home?

A FORK CLATTERS to the ground at a table nearby. The sound startles Ayande and her eyes glaze over. Her face falls and all emotion disappears. She blinks, disoriented and looks around the diner before her eyes finally settle onto Malia, who is seated across from her.

AYANDE

(smiling)
Oh! I didn't realize I had company.

Her smile disappears when she notices that Malia is crying.

AYANDE (CONT'D)

Are you alright? Is there someone I
can call? A parent, or a friend?

Malia's breath hitches, but she composes herself.

MALIA

I'm. Uh... I was just leaving.
(beat)
Sorry.

She wipes her nose with the edge of her sleeve and gets up. Forcing a smile onto her face, she says:

MALIA (CONT'D)

Please, enjoy the rest of your
meal.

Then rushes in the direction of the bathroom, choking back sobs.

Ayande, confused by this encounter, watches Malia push through the bathroom doors. As she returns her attention to her breakfast, she realizes that she has been served fried eggs and flags down the waitress.

AYANDE

Excuse me?

WAITRESS

Hmm?

AYANDE

Hi... There must have been some sort of mix-up. I actually ordered the scrambled eggs.

The waitress furrows her brow as she picks up Ayande's plate.

WAITRESS

Oh, I'm so sorry ma'am. I'll fix that for you right away.

(beat)

Can I offer you something to drink in the meantime? Coffee, tea...

AYANDE

(shaking her head)

Oh, no. I'm waiting for my daughter, actually.

(smiling)

We like to order a new drink off the menu every week and it's her turn to pick. I think I'll wait.

WAITRESS

Alrighty then. Your scrambled eggs should be out in a few minutes.

As the waitress heads towards the kitchen, Malia re-emerges from the bathroom, her face freshly washed and her tears dried. She slowly makes her way back to the table, biting her lip. Right before she enters her mother's eye line, she takes a deep breath and plasters a fake smile onto her lips.

MALIA

(sitting)

Hi, sorry that took so long. There was a line.

(picking up a menu)

(MORE)

MALIA (CONT'D)

So what do you want to drink?

FADE TO BLACK.