

Sample of Short Story

Donny smoothed his hands over his suit for the millionth time. The cigarette was almost gone. He'd have to go in soon.

It killed him. It had killed him when he got the call about the funeral. Killed him on the flight there. Killed him while he waited for the single bag he packed for his short stay in Indiana. Killed him as the rental car rumbled up streets he hadn't seen in a decade but knew like the back of his hand.

He could handle the body, he supposed. Some forgotten cousin. A sad thing, but nothing worth coming home over—had one's father not twisted one's arm, financially speaking. Work out west was hard to find. The old man was rich. It was a natural arrangement, of course—none of the thirtysomethings he knew could survive out there without accomplished parents—but not one without its inconveniences.

"You got this, Donny." He checked his reflection in a corner of the window and decided to do away with the sunglasses. "Big tears. Big tears. Big tears."

They came pretty easily. He'd do the head-down thing, for sure, the sorry-for-not-staying-dad-I'm-on-a-filming-schedule thing too. His dad would never ask when he could see Donny's latest appearance, because he was too smart and too caring to ask difficult questions. But the understanding would be there, staring Donny in the face every time he cashed another check.

"You got this."

He still couldn't make himself walk towards the door.

Here he was, a professional friggin' actor, and he couldn't whip up some tears at a family member's funeral. He smashed his fists against his thigh. The extra pain provided by the Indiana cold gave him an idea. He brought his right hand up, pulled himself out of the window's view, and slapped himself in the face. Hard. Again.

The tears flowed easily, then.

Into the funeral home. His cheeks still stung from the slaps. His tears made it worse. He felt like a gigantic idiot. The family, or the few that remained this far into the service, all turned from their front row seats to look.

None of their smiles looked real. He returned one just as fake.

Then, dad stood. Richard Bolt, the brake king of the Midwest, receiving his actor son back home. He didn't raise his arms for a hug, so Donny lowered his.

Three more steps. Two more. One. Still no arms. No smile, either. Only a quick admonition before he turned:

"Your cheek is red."

This is just a sample.

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