

A Good-Bye Party

By

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EXT. BACKYARD--DAY

The backyard is decorated with tables and blue and white balloons. A large blue and white banner adorning the garage reads "Good Luck At Cornucopia!"

About 30 or so people mill about. Mostly adult, they range from middle aged to elderly.

BRAD, 18, stands off to the side, at a beverage table. He purses himself a cup of Coke, is about to take a sip, and then decides to sneakily add a little rum.

He takes a quick gulp, and then a deep breath. Finally, he turns and faces the crowd.

All at once they swarm him.

His AUNT SUSAN is at the front of the crowd, and wraps him in a big hug, kissing him on the cheek.

AUNT SUSAN
Bradley, we're all so very proud of
you!

BRAD
Thanks Aunt Susan. Not to toot my
own horn or anything, but I'm
actually quite proud of myself.

She fades off into the crowd as GRAMPA emerges, hunched over his cane. Brad takes another quick gulp of his Rum and Coke.

GRAMPA
California's a crazy state,
Brad. I don't want you coming home
a hippie.

BRAD
Don't worry Grampa, I'll wear a tie
everyday.

GRAMPA
Atta boy.

Grampa is swallowed up by the crowd as the next smiling face emerges--UNCLE TOM. He pulls Brad into a headlock and gives him a noogie.

UNCLE TOM
Brady-Boy!

Brad struggles free, and offers Uncle Tom his hand.

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BRAD
Hey Uncle Tom.

They shake hands. Uncle Tom elbows Brad in the rib cage, playfully.

UNCLE TOM
Hey--you promise to get some studyin' done between keggers?

Brad smirks and raises his cup.

BRAD
Maybe around finals week!

Uncle Tom horse laughs as he disappears into the crowd. MR. ROBERTS and MRS. ROBERTS appear. Mrs. Roberts gives him a quick hug.

MRS. ROBERTS
Congratulations Bradley!

BRAD
Thanks Mrs. Roberts!

Mr. Roberts offers him his hand, and they shake.

MR. ROBERTS
You call me next summer and I'll get you a job at the restaurant again, okay Brad?

BRAD
Only if you give me a college-level raise.

Brad winks, Mr. Roberts chortles.

MR. ROBERTS
Deal!

The friendly couple walk away and Brad finds a few seconds to himself. He downs the rest of his beverage, then digs into his pocket for a little bottle of hand sanitizer, which he squirts and rubs into his hands.

His DAD walks up and puts his arm around his shoulder.

DAD
Hey, kid, what's cookin'?

BRAD
Pot roast.

His dad chuckles and pats him on the back.

DAD
Not gonna lie, Brad. I'm real
proud of you.

BRAD
I know, Dad.

DAD
It feels like just yesterday I was
laying in bed while your mother
changed your diapers.

They share a quick chuckle.

DAD
But seriously, you'll be missed.

BRAD
Yeah, I'll definitely miss all you
guys too.

They stand there for a second, Dad's arm still around Brad's shoulder.

BRAD
Alright, well, I better keep making
the rounds.

Dad holds him for another second before letting go.

DAD
Right. Well, don't go to far, I
think I may make a speech in a few
minutes.

Brad shoots his dad a screwy smile.

BRAD
Where am I gonna go?

Dad returns the screwy smile, and playfully punches Brad's shoulder. He looks around him quickly, then pours the contents of his beer into Brad's now empty cup.

DAD
Don't tell your mother.

Dad walks away. Brad looks into his cup, smiles, shakes his head and laughs to himself before quickly downing the half-cup full of beer.

Still on the outskirts of the party, he leans over the fence separating the backyard from the front.

Parked on the street in front of his house, is a pretty girl who looks about Brad's age sitting in the driver seat of a parked car.

Brad waves, and she waves back. Brad smiles, but it seems different from the rest of the smiles of the night--more genuine.

He turns back to see his mom, a few feet away, walking towards him and smiling--it's just as genuine as his just was.

Brad's genuine smile quickly turns to a frown, and then just as quickly it turns back into the somewhat cheesy looking smile he had when talking to the guests.

MOM

Hi honey!

BRAD

Hey Mom!

She hugs him and squeezes.

MOM

Ooh! I'm gonna miss you so much!

She hasn't let go.

BRAD

I'll miss you too, Mom.

She still has him wrapped up like an anaconda.

MOM

Promise?

Brad laughs.

BRAD

Yeah, I promise, now let me go!

MOM

Nope!

Her eyes are closed, she is fully invested in this hug.

BRAD
I'll call you every night, I
promise.

MOM
You know, no one would think less
of you if you just went to
community college...

BRAD
Mom...

Mom opens her eyes, and holds Brad at arms length, staring at his face and smiling sadly. Her eyes are even tearing up a little.

MOM
I love you so much.

BRAD
I love you too.

She stares at him for another secon or so, and then hugs him again.

DAD (O.S.)
Uh, hello? Does this thing work?

Mom let's go and the crowd quites as they all look over to Dad, who stands on a patio with a sort of Home-Karaoke-Machine, talking into a microphone. It does work.

DAD
Testing, testing, one two-

MOM
Enough, Frank! It works!

The crowd chuckles, Mom and Dad both smile widely.

DAD
Well alrighty then! Um, I just
thought I'd take the chance to say
a few words about my boy Brad, the
man of the hour.

The crowd cheers.

DAD
I remember when Brad was growing
up, he was always talking about the
future.

Dad smiles at Brad as he makes his speech. Mom holds onto his arm.

DAD

One day he'd run up to me, more excited than I'd ever seen him, and he'd proudly announce that when he grew up he'd be an artist.

The crowd is attentively listening to Dad's words.

DAD

Then the next day he'd run up, tell me that he'd changed his mind, and that he now wanted to be a scuba diver.

The crowd guffaws.

DAD

Well, there was a lot of this over the years--Brad wanted to be a doctor, a fireman, a cop, an astronaut, a pirate, an author, a movie star, a rock star, a comedian, and at one point he even had his heart set on being Jaws.

More laughter from the crowd, Dad waits the appropriate amount of time before continuing.

DAD

Point is, Brad could be a little scatterbrained, sure, but that didn't stop him from sticking to a straight path and from making the right choices. He might not grow up to be Jaws, but I am sure, in my heart, that he'll grow up to be great.

Dad smiles warmly at Brad as the crowd erupts into applause. As the crowd quiets down, Brad raises his hand.

BRAD

I, uh, I'd like to make a quick speech too?

DAD

Sure, buddy, get up here!

Brad works his way up onto the patio, and takes the microphone from his Dad. Over his shoulder, he has a view of the front yard. The car is still there.

BRAD
First of all, I wanted to thank all
of you for coming-

Uncle Tom, now slightly wasted, stands up and yells.

UNCLE TOM
Woo! Braddy-Boy!

An aunt gets him to sit down, some of the crowd chuckles.

BRAD
Anyway, I'll keep this quick. I'm
not really going to
Cornucopia. I'm not really going
to college at all--I didn't
apply. But, I do hate it here, and
I am leaving.

Brad stares out at a confused audience.

BRAD
I'm pretty sure that's it.

He hands the microphone back to his dumbfounded Dad, hops off the stage, runs past his family and family friends, and hops the fence to the front yard. Everyone in the crowd is too shocked to do just about anything.

The following sounds are heard over the silence of the party: A car door slams. An engine is started. A car quickly pulls away and rushes down the street.

The crowd simply listens. They listen, and exchange confused glances.

GRAMPA
Is this some kind of joke?

Mom and Dad spring into action. Dad hops the fence and runs into the front yard, while Mom quickly uses the gate.

A sussurus is heard as the crowd begins to whisper.

EXT. FRONT YARD--DAY

Dad runs down the street, chasing after what's long gone.

Mom runs out into the street, and stares down it. While she is not sobbing, her face is wet with tears.

Aunt Susan walks up next to her, and takes her hand.

MOM
He's... He's coming back, right?

AUNT SUSAN
I'm sure. I'm sure it's all just a
joke.

Dad, so far down the street that he's just a sillhouette in front of the setting sun, stops running, and leans over, resting his hands on his kness, his head tucked down.

He stands up straight, takes one last look out down the road, then turns. He begins walking back.

MOM
He...he said that he would miss me.

Dad continues to walk back. Nothing follows him.

End.