

I KNEW HIM WELL

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Shooting Draft
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A man stares pensively at himself in the mirror. He wears a black suit and a somber look. This is "LITTLE" JOE ABBOTT (30s).

LITTLE JOE

Everyone in this room can say they knew Big Joe, but what made him so special was that he knew us. Really knew us. He had a way of making you feel like every day was your birthday.

Suddenly, he raises an airplane shooter of cheap whiskey to his lips and downs it in one gulp.

LITTLE JOE (CONT'D)

This extended beyond us in the immediate family, to friends, neighbors, strangers. One time, he flew all the way to Omaha to visit one of his flight attendants when she was in the hospital. She was just a colleague, but didn't have much family to speak of, so he knew it would mean a lot to her. He spent days there, making sure she was okay. That was just him. Our family knew we had to share him, because he was so giving of his love...

He trails off, looking away from his own gaze. He nods.

LITTLE JOE (CONT'D)

His love.

He brings another shooter to his mouth, starts to gulp it down. He hears the sound of screeching brakes outside and turns. He sets the shooter down next to the sink, revealing a row of identical bottles, all emptied as he bounds to the bathroom window and peers out:

A beat-to-shit sedan is parked outside. The driver's side pops open and out steps a CLEAN-CUT MAN (30s) in a short-sleeve button-down tucked into his jeans. He leans down and

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exchanges words with the passenger, an older lady in Jackie O-style shades. The man shrugs and shuts his door, heading inside.

Little Joe sprints to the bathroom door and peeks out, catching a glimpse of the man passing through the foyer.

Little Joe hurries over to the paper towel dispenser, grabs a wad and uses it to scoop up the empty bottles on the sink. He wraps them up and stuffs the wad into the wastebasket.

He pops a mint while trying to work up the courage to leave the bathroom, his nerves unraveling. He finally regains his composure and strides out of the room. As the door closes:

TITLE CARD: **I KNEW HIM WELL**

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INT. FOYER / SANCTUARY - CONTINUOUS

2

Little Joe steps through what is revealed to be the foyer of a church. He pushes through double doors to enter the sanctuary. It is filled with people paying their respects.

Little Joe takes in the room, his eyes dart back and forth as he searches for the clean-cut man. Before he can spot him, he is enveloped in a bear hug by a burly, grandfather-type named LEN (60s).

LEN

There's my guy. There's my guy.

Len shakes Little Joe in his arms with each statement and then releases him.

LEN (CONT'D)

Little Joe, I am just crushed about your dad. Your dad -- 25 years of friendship, lemme tell ya, he never missed one tee time.

LITTLE JOE

Thanks, Len. I know he loved playing with you. And not just 'cause he'd always win.

LEN

Watch it there, buddy.

Len squeezes Little Joe's shoulder and leans in.

LEN (CONT'D)

You need anything, me and Cath are right here. We're right here.

Little Joe nods and pats his arm, moves further down the aisle, runs into WINNIE (30s), trailed by her husband, STEVE (30s). She greets him with a hug.

WINNIE

Hey, Little Joe. We are so sorry.

LITTLE JOE

Thanks, Winnie. Steve.

STEVE

How are ya, bud?

LITTLE JOE

I'm here.

WINNIE

You know, I'm not sure I ever told you this. Steve would've never made it back when I went into labor with Jake. Big Joe flew him down from Toronto last minute.

LITTLE JOE

Wow. I never knew that.

At the altar, a gray-haired woman brimming with restlessness tidies up a flower arrangement. This is DIANE (60s), Little Joe's mother. Little Joe walks up, softly placing his arm around her shoulder.

LITTLE JOE

Need help with anything?

DIANE

No, I just can't stop fidgeting with things today. Nervous energy.

LITTLE JOE

Looks great, ma. They did a great job.

She stops fiddling with the flowers, turns to him and starts fiddling with his tie and hair instead.

DIANE

You look great. You always look so handsome in this suit.

LITTLE JOE

He's here.

DIANE

Who's here?

LITTLE JOE

You know who. I saw him walk in.

She turns her head.

DIANE

Where?

LITTLE JOE

Don't look, don't look.

DIANE

He's not gonna say anything, is he?

LITTLE JOE

I doubt it. Why would he want to?

DIANE

Well, I don't wanna meet him, I don't wanna see him.

LITTLE JOE

I understand.

The MINISTER (70s) suddenly appears from behind them, gently putting a hand on each of their shoulders.

MINISTER

Friends, we're about to begin.

CUT TO:

3 INT. SANCTUARY - LATER

3

FLASH IMAGES:

A CURLY-HEADED WOMAN (40s) belts triumphantly, mid-song.

A VET IN UNIFORM (60s) attempts to form a sentence between sobs.

A YOUNG MAN (20s) speaks to the sky:

YOUNG MAN

I'll miss you, Big Joe. Keep
flyin'.

The young man is replaced by a HANDSOME WOMAN (50s). A Flight Attendant's pin is fastened to the lapel of her pantsuit.

HANDSOME WOMAN

Big Joe and I flew many "friendly
skies" together.

Polite chuckles.

HANDSOME WOMAN (CONT'D)

Had to get that in. But he was the
reason they were so friendly.

An obnoxious scoff from the back of the room, loud enough to pause the handsome woman. She clears her throat.

HANDSOME WOMAN (CONT'D)

At the end of every flight, and I mean every flight, he made sure to personally thank everyone on board. Never met a stranger. He was as kind to people he didn't know as he was to his own family.

A loud, resonant voice suddenly calls from the back:

VOICE (O.S.)

Okay, gotta stop you there.

Everyone shifts uncomfortably. They all look towards the back. Little Joe turns his head and watches as the clean-cut man stands at the end of the last pew. This is MARK.

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MARK

Hey, hi, yes, Joe was great. And I get it, these things are more about paying tribute, and all the good things about the person, but let's be honest, that's not the whole person. I don't think it's right to pretend he was perfect. We should talk about the other stuff too. For example. I bet you didn't know he had another son. A whole separate family.

An audible gasp. Confused muttering. Still facing forward, Diane squeezes the life out of Little Joe's hand.

MARK (CONT'D)

I know. Shocker. I was surprised to find out about you all too. But that's just what I mean. The dude had serious flaws. Here I thought he just worked a lot, but he was living another life. He had terrible qualities.

Diane snaps without looking back:

DIANE

That's enough!

MARK

Ma'am --

She swivels her head, biting back:

DIANE

This is not the time.

Mark raises a hand.

MARK

Ma'am, I'm not done --

DIANE

No. It is not your place. These are our friends. Don't do this.

(CONTINUED)

Mark hears this, takes a beat... Starts up again:

MARK

As I was saying. He had his shortcomings, but look, okay, it's not all bad. I'm not saying he was this horrible person. I'm saying he was real, warts and all. I loved him. I still love him. And that's why I'm here.

Mark walks out. Diane starts to weep. A family member arrives to comfort her. Little Joe rubs her back as the minister quickly takes the stage.

MINISTER

Well. We're gonna... Move forward as planned.

The minister looks to Little Joe.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

If that's -- yeah?

Little Joe nods, whispers something in Diane's ear and leaves her, heading up the aisle towards the back of the sanctuary.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Uh, next, Robin will lead us in singing an old favorite of Big Joe's, "When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder".

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EXT. CHURCH - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

4

Mark sits on the curb out front, smoking a cigarette. Little Joe storms out of the church, immediately barking at him:

LITTLE JOE

Mark! What the fuck? What was that?

Mark takes a drag, keeping his cool.

MARK

I'm sorry. Sorry I lost my shit.

LITTLE JOE

Man, I invited you to this so you could make your peace, but this is our service. My mom's a fucking wreck now.

MARK

What about us? Apparently, we've always been secondary to your shit.

LITTLE JOE

Have your own service.

MARK

I wanted to meet you. Not like this.

LITTLE JOE

Yeah, no shit.

MARK

Besides, what's so wrong with what I said? It's all true. I want to accept him for exactly who he was and move on. Maybe you should start to do that too.

LITTLE JOE

Who the fuck are you to tell me how to grieve?

MARK

I'm just saying, stop looking at him like he was a saint. That might help you start to let go.

LITTLE JOE

Let go? I just lost my dad and found this shit out. I tried to do right by you and you're in there making a mockery of my father.

MARK

Our father.

LITTLE JOE

AHHH, FUCK YOU!

Mark just sits there, takes another drag. Little Joe watches him, takes a breath and sits with him. It's quiet for a moment: Two lost men stewing in their silence.

When Little Joe speaks again, he's much calmer, softer:

LITTLE JOE

Look, I know we've both been raked over the coals this last week. I know it's hard for you too, but imagine how I felt, sitting with him in the hospital and then having him drop that bomb. And I have to tell you? I didn't want to do that. That shit was hard. But I did it for you.

MARK

You're not doing me that big of a fucking favor, man. I already knew.

LITTLE JOE

What? What do you mean you already knew?

MARK

I mean, he told me.

LITTLE JOE

What? When?

MARK

A few years ago. I found your picture. I took it to him, he came out with it.

Little Joe is slack-jawed, floored by it all.

LITTLE JOE

You knew? Why wouldn't you say that on the phone?

MARK

Come on, man. Your name's Little Joe, for Christ's sake. I was gonna let you have that, but since you keep pushing me, he did. He told me first. He confided in me. I didn't tell anybody. Not even my mom.

Little Joe stands, pacing as he processes, visibly hurt.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'm sorry he didn't tell you I knew, but it's the truth.

Little Joe is silent. He nods.

LITTLE JOE

Got it.

Beat.

LITTLE JOE (CONT'D)

Song's gotta be over by now.

Little Joe heads inside. Mark shakes his head, throws his cigarette down, crushing it with his heel. He walks towards the entrance, adjusting his shirt and collar. At the door, he suddenly slams it with his left hand in a brief release of rage. He collects himself and enters, shaking it off.

5 **INT. SANCTUARY - CONTINUOUS**

5

Shellshocked, Little Joe slowly wanders back inside. The minister speaks on stage, but Little Joe's hearing is distorted by the daze he's in: Sounds are muffled, distant.

The minister's voice cuts through, snapping him out of it:

MINISTER

Joe?

Little Joe stops, looks at him.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Joe, did you want to have a word before we close?

The entire room stares at him. Little Joe hesitates, then:

(CONTINUED)

LITTLE JOE

Sure.

Little Joe resumes his slow, zombified walk up to the altar. He stares out into the audience, swallowing hard. He sees Mark standing in the back. They look at each other.

After a beat, he blurts out:

LITTLE JOE

Fuck this.

He marches to the table behind him, snatches a brass urn and stomps off stage, heading for the front. The audience is taken aback, growing increasingly vocal. Mark steps forward and reaches for him. Little Joe pushes him away with his free arm and charges out of the sanctuary.

6 **INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS**

6

Little Joe rushes through, urn in hand, brushing past the woman in Jackie O-sunglasses as she stands in the middle of the foyer.

Mark hurries in, followed by members of the congregation.

MARK

Mom.

Little Joe freezes, turns to the woman. Mark's mother, JEANNE (60s), removes her sunglasses and stares unflinchingly at Little Joe. She reaches out and touches his face. Little Joe's anger melts away.

She looks down, sees the urn. She puts her hand on it, looking back at Little Joe. He slowly releases it to her. She takes it, swiftly moving outside to the parking lot.

Little Joe, Mark and the congregation follow her outside.

7 **EXT. CHURCH - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS**

7

Jeanne suddenly stops in the middle of the lot. She holds the urn close, her eyes shut tight, tears falling.

Little Joe and the others watch in silent reverence.

Suddenly, in a burst of anger, she starts clawing at the

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top of the urn and removes the lid. With each heaving sob, she violently shakes the urn up and down, spraying Big Joe's ashes all over the parking lot.

Little Joe and the congregation watch in disbelief during this beautifully morbid dance between the mother and the floating ashes. Some of the ashes spiral away with the wind and others simply fall on and around Mark's mother.

She finishes, out of breath. She looks over at Little Joe. They lock eyes again. A slight beat. She smiles a little, knowingly. Slowly, he smiles back.

CUT TO BLACK.