

# a closed-casket eulogy

Nico Willman // junior ●

*monologue*

*Ahem.*

Thank you all for coming, for taking time to be here. Sorry about the parking situation. We gather today to lay to rest a great force in many people's lives, my father. But I know, and you know, the reason most of you are here is my mother. And Dad knows it too, whichever direction he went.

Everybody loves my mother. She's the one who makes you soup when you're sick or calls to check in when you've suffered a tragedy. She's a mother to just about everybody in this church anywhere near my age. She's had at least a half-dozen people consider her a best friend, and she's here in the front row -- stone-faced and passing out Kleenex.

But my dad, which is why we're here today, was a lot of things. Strong, hard-willed. He had his opinions and never changed them, no matter what new information was presented. He had the same breakfast, two eggs and an Eggo, every morning for fifty years, which definitely didn't help his cholesterol, and is probably why we're here. But he was not kind, or compassionate, or very much fun to be around.

In fact, he was kind of a jerk sometimes and made most people he interacted with feel bad about themselves. He was the type of person to kick you when you're down, I would know.

My dad found it real hard to talk about anything but the weather or why Nixon should've stuck it out. He wasn't a real good listener, either. I remember when I told him he was a grandfather. He was reading the paper, and I told him. "I've got a son on the way," I said. And without looking up, he told me that babies were expensive and a waste of time, but to make sure he wasn't raised a liberal.

Why was he like this? There are a lot of places we could point our fingers. I know he didn't come from the kindest home. I know he had family in Chicago, and I know he never took me to meet them. I know, at one point, he wanted to live out West, but I think that I came along and suddenly, he couldn't. I know he silently resented me for it. I could feel it in every stare. And I know he hated getting older.

I remember the first conversation I had with him after he had found out he was dying. Ass cancer, as you all know. The Cubs had been on a losing streak, and we argued about whether it was the new second base coach or Joe Maddon's fault. And I remember something had shifted in him, something in his eyes, like he had become human for the first time. Coming face-to-face with his own mortality brought him down to the same sad group as the rest of us. I think that destroyed him. He was no longer untouchable by death, no longer immortal. And he was sad. And he agreed with me, for the first time, it was Joe Maddon.

I remember another conversation, after his diagnosis. We had both had one beer too many, and he told me congratulations for my kid. I don't think he meant to say it, but he did. And I said, "Thanks."

He shot himself. A dignified death in his mind, he got to go out on his own terms. Which is also why the funeral is a closed casket, if anyone was wondering. He's in there though, it's not pretty. Mom and I had to throw this together on real short notice. Thanks, Dad. Again, sorry about the parking.

I think he loved me and my mother, deep down, and I think he cared what happened to us. And I think he was so, so terrified we would know that. It really does suck how you never know what to say to someone until you can't anymore. My dad's dead, and now I understand that no matter what we do in this world, we all end up just like him. And I feel lighter having closed his casket. )



*watercolor*

Chloe Allen // junior

# forest sun

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