

Eulogy

by Jowell Tan

"In the end, it doesn't matter."

She says this with a straight face, hard as stone, eyes affixed to the far wall, the only thing betraying her inner emotion a lone tear crawling down the right side of the face. In one hand she cradles a cigarette, in the other a glass of red wine. Typically neither of these things would be allowed in here, but on this occasion it was thought that it would be better to let her do what she wanted.

"In the end, it doesn't matter if you were fat or skinny, rich or poor, gay or straight, or even if you were famous or not. All that matters is..."

Her voice trails off, her eyes still a stony gaze, yet not really looking at anything in particular. She breaks her stare to turn to her cigarette, fingers trembling slightly as she takes a puff and slowly releases the smoke through her lips. The room is a still quiet. She resumes the position.

"All that matters is if you were a good man while you were still alive." She turns her head to look behind her. "If you took care of your own. Stood up for those who'd been wronged. Promised - "

Her voice falters, her posture suddenly goes limp. She grabs on to the podium for support. The cigarette that was between her fingers falls, ash breaking from tabacco as it hits the ground. Two men quickly rush to her, but she stops them with a firm outstretched arm, palm facing them: *stop*. She uses her arms as levers to push herself up, slowly, and then as crutches to lean against the podium.

"Promised to be around forever. And in this regard, he was a horrible man."

At this she finally breaks down. The tears flow down from her eyes like endless streams, her body slumped over the podium, shoulders shaking uncontrollably. The two men from earlier walk up to her, one

catching the glass of wine as it slips from her hand, guiding her away from the stage to her seat as the other steps up to the microphone.

"Does anyone else have anything they'd like to say about the deceased?"

