

UNIQUE

Written by

Sean N. Amaso

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

ANDRE OBI (14, African American) makes it to the last door. He struggles to balance his sketchbook and a plate of little fingers of orange pastry wrapped in leafy greens.

ANDRE
(to himself)
S-she's going to like it Andre.
She's going to like it.

Andre steps towards the door. He pauses and backs up a bit.

Andre's father, HAKEEM OBI (40, African) walks out of the room with his laptop. He pauses and sees Andre.

HAKEEM
(mumbles)
Oh. Sorry, Andre.

ANDRE
H-hey, Dad. I got Mama's plate
ready. D-do you want to join us?
I'm also going to show her my
drawings too. Dad?

Pain and sorrow is written all over Hakeem's face. He walks past Andre and towards the living room.

Andre looks back and frowns.

INT. HAKEEM & KALIYAH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Andre walks into the small bedroom. He hear light panting. Andre closes his eyes, breathes deeply, and forces a smile.

ANDRE
(sings)
MAMA! I'M HERE!

Andre fails to ignore the medical machines filling the room. His smile shrinks. Andre proceeds to his weak mother, KALIYAH DOH OBI (43, African albino), lying on her bed.

KALIYAH
(raspy)
Andre?

Andre pulls up a chair and a small table. He places the plate and the sketchbook down. He presents a fork to his mother. Andre spots her yellow skin and tired eye.

ANDRE

I...

(clears his throat)

...I'm sorry this took a minute. I was trying to warm up the Ekwang. Mmmm...leafy, gooey goodness. Made sure that there were no bones or fish either. Just how you like it.

Andre hears Kaliyah's heavy panting. He clenches the fork.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

You need to eat...please.

Kaliyah glances at the plate. She struggles to lift her arm. Her arm collapses back to the bed. She resumes panting.

Andre stares at his sketchbook. Andre puts the fork down and presents the book to Kaliyah.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

How about I show you my surprise? I worked on my character yesterday. I think you're going to like it.

Andre scoots his chair next to her. He opens the sketchbook. Andre presents to his mother a child-like drawing of an angel with golden wings and an armor suit.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

So, I finally figured out his powers: golden energy wings capable of being razor sharp and shooting his energy feathers at his opponents. He's capable of soaring in the air. He's a great fighter, a great hero, and...and...Mama?

Andre sees his mother staring at the ceiling. Andre closes his sketchbook and sinks into himself.

Kaliyah glances at Andre. She slowly moves her hand over to his and lightly grips it. Kaliyah expresses a warm grin.

KALIYAH

Don't...forget me...when you're...famous...Andre...

Andre looks over to his mother. He smiles.

ANDRE

Never, Mama. How could...MAMA?!

Kaliyah pants harder. She squirms uncomfortably. She lets go of Andre's hand. Her panting turns into harsh gasping.

Andre stands up. He quickly backs away. He accidentally knocks over the plate. Andre turns to the door.

ANDRE (CONT'D)
(screaming)
DAD! DAD!

Hakeem rushes in and to his ill wife.

HAKEEM
(in Igbo)
No! No! Not now! Please!

Kaliyah stops breathing. She lies still.

Hakeem stares at his wife, heartbroken. Hakeem holds Kaliyah's hand tight. Hakeem slowly turns to his son.

HAKEEM (CONT'D)
(to Andre)
Are...are you ready?

ANDRE
(to Hakeem)
I...I...

A worried Andre sits in his chair. He stares at Kaliyah's lifeless body. Andre holds his sketchbook close to his heart. He closes his eyes and submits to his sorrow.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: UNIQUE

CUT TO:

INT. MARTICE HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAYS - MORNING

SUPER: FIVE WEEKS LATER

Andre walks down the hallways. He holds a strap of his backpack in one hand and the sketchbook in the other. Andre sighs at the sight of teens hanging near their lockers. He reaches a locked classroom door and pauses.

MS. OLSON (O.S.)
I'M HERE! I'M HERE!

Andre turns around. He notices MS. ANNA OLSON (39, white) rushing to the door. She carries loads of papers.

MS. OLSON (CONT'D)
(panting)
Sorry! Sorry! Parking was crazy!

She gets out her key. A few of her papers slip out. She opens the room and gestures Andre forward. Andre slowly walks in.

INT. MS. OLSON'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ms. Olson reaches her desk. She puts her things down and takes a deep breath. Ms. Olson focuses on Andre and frowns.

Andre puts his sketchbook and bag down. He sits down and lay his head down. His right leg starts bouncing.

MS. OLSON
(cautious)
Hey, Kiddo. You okay?

Andre stares at his sketchbook. His leg bounces harder. Ms. Olson grabs a sheet of paper. She walks towards Andre.

MS. OLSON (CONT'D)
Andre? Andre? *ANDRE!*

Andre shakes his head. His leg stops bouncing. He faces her.

ANDRE
WHAT?! Oh, sorry Ms...Olson.

MS. OLSON
Have you give some thought about what Mr. Harrison talked to you about? It has many activities where you can meet other people. Or just find a quiet place to study and reflect if you want.

Ms. Olson hands Andre the slip. Andre reads it.

IT READS: Martice High School Student Life Center. Come for an experience. Stay for the community.

ANDRE
I-I think I'm good, Ms. Olson. I don't want to look like I'm a wei...I-I'm good. Thank you though.

MS. OLSON

Keep it then. Don't remember if I
gave it to you a couple of weeks
ago. Been busy. Busy. Busy. Busy.

Ms. Olson chuckles lightly. She sits next to Andre.

MS. OLSON (CONT'D)

But...listen. I know that you're
dealing with a lot, but just
promise me that you'll at least
befriend someone in class, okay.

Andre hesitantly nods. Ms. Olson smiles. She heads back to
her desk. Andre puts the sheet in his sketchbook.

LATER

Groups of students fill the room with their chatter. The
volume of laughter and squealing grows.

Ms. Olson stands before them and claps her hands together.
The class quiets down and returns to their seats.

MS. OLSON (CONT'D)

Now, I'd usually have you all do
this next assignment alone, but...

Ms. Olson raises her eyebrow. Andre looks confused.

MS. OLSON (CONT'D)

...let's try something different.
Get into groups everyone. Go on.

Andre surveys the classroom. He sees the groups forming. He
grabs his sketchbook. Andre moves towards the nearest group.

TYRONE BRADFORD (15, African American) glance at the entire
classroom. He becomes angry and balls his fists.

TYRONE

Where's E? He's supposed to be
here! Basketball tryouts are in two
weeks! Yet, that sorry excuse wants
to skip practice after school?!
That's total-

HARMONY MONROE (15, African American) puts her hand on
Tyrone's chest. She pushes him back and sighs.

HARMONY

CHILL TYRONE! Elijah's comin'. He's
just late as always. Now, focus!

(MORE)

HARMONY (CONT'D)
Dumb teacher probably wants to
drool over her obsession with that
actor again.

TYRONE
Ha. Yeah. Guy who played "The
Chosen One" role in ...ugh. What
was that movie?

ANDRE (O.S.)
The...Embodiment.

Tyrone and Harmony turn to Andre. They look a bit annoyed.

ANDRE (CONT'D)
I...I watched the movie a lot with
my mother. I love the world-
building in it. The exotic,
elemental landscape. The battles
infused with martial arts. I even
managed to make some fan fiction
from it. I created this charac-

HARMONY
Yeah, that's...nice, love. We would
love to listen, but I think she's
about to start. Sorry.

TYRONE
(sotto voce; to Andre)
Weirdo.

Andre frowns as the two walks away. Andre notices ELIJAH
GRIFFIN (14, African-American) sneaking into the classroom.
Andre scowls Tyrone and Harmony before heading to Elijah.

ELIJAH
(to himself)
She didn't see me.
(sotto voce; to Andre)
Alright. Darn it. Not you again.

ANDRE
H-hey, Elijah. I don't know if you
remember me. My name is Andre. We
had a class together during the
seventh grade. Then we didn't
during...anyway. I want to ask if
you want to be partner for Ms. Ol-

ELIJAH
Listen, man. I would,
but...um...the others have been
waiting for me. So, I'm going to
have to pass for now.

Andre tries to hide his frustrated. He fails.

ANDRE
Okay...but I think it's just us.

Andre and Elijah looks around. The groups are established.
Ms. Olson approaches Andre and Elijah.

MS. OLSON
(to Elijah)
Well, well, well. I see that we're
not paying attention in class
today. I wonder why, huh?

ELIJAH
Well, you see I was...um...I-

ANDRE
H-he was talking to me about what
the assignment could be, Ms. Olson.
Since we decided to be partners.

MS. OLSON
Really? Elijah?

Elijah spots a shocked Harmony and a giggling Tyrone. He
turns to Andre's shy smile and Ms. Olson stern gaze.

ELIJAH
Well...yeahhh...We're already
comin' up with ideas like...

ANDRE
Like using my character: Angel.

Ms. Olson sees Andre's big smile. She nods to Elijah. Ms.
Olson walks to the front of the classroom.

MS. OLSON
(to the classroom)
Alright then. In two weeks, each
group will come up with their own
short story. This means getting
together, what do the cool kids
say...link up, and get ready to
present them to the class!

DING! DING! DING! DING!

Everyone head to the door. Ms. Olson waves to Andre.

MS. OLSON (CONT'D)
(light chuckle)
Now, GO CREATE EVERYONE!

Andre look back. He spots Elijah hiding his face from Tyrone's hysterical laughing and Harmony's annoyed look.

INT. THE OBI HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Andre sits at the dining table. He barely eats his plate of orange rice and meat. He gently taps his vegetables before deciding to eat a piece of meat. Andre look at the clock.

IT READS: 4:00.

Andre puts his fork down and gazes at his father.

Hakeem sits at the long couch. He rubs his eyes. He types vigorously on his laptop. Hakeem pauses and slams his laptop shut before he covers his head with his hands.

Andre leaves the table. He moves towards Hakeem.

ANDRE
Dad. Dad? I-I think I'm getting
somewhere with my character. I'm
partner with this guy in class, and
I thing we making something Mama-

Hakeem brings his hands down. A quiet sorrow and frustration is written all over his face. He scolds Andre.

HAKEEM
What did I tell you about leaving
the table while you're eating?

ANDRE
I...I just wanted to check...um

HAKEEM
(sighing)
Never mind. Just finish your Jollof
rice and clean up when you're done.

Hakeem gathers his things and exits the living room.

ANDRE
I miss her too. Can't we just...I
don't know...talk about it.

Hakeem pauses. He shakes his head and continues onward.