End of The Line: A Monologue by Fleance – Eden Tomes

Air... I just need air. *(gasps)* My lungs feel like fire, like they're gonna hammer their way right out of my chest. The cold... it cuts through this alley like a blade, but I can't stop shaking. Can't tell if it's the Chicago wind or... or what I just saw.

*(pauses, looking around wildly)*

Was that real? The flash... the noise... Dad just... folded. Like a coat dropped on the floor. One second, he's pushing me behind that automobile, telling me to keep my head down, and the next... *(voice breaks)*

"Run, Fleance! Run!"

Those were his last words to me. Not "I love you, son" or "Be good." Just... run. Like he knew. Like he'd been preparing for this moment his whole life.

*(wipes face with shaking hands)*

He's gone. Isn't he? My old man... gone. He taught me everything – how to tie my shoes, how to throw a punch, how to spot a mark from three blocks away. He taught me that in this Family, loyalty meant everything. That Uncle Mac was like blood to us. That the whispers on the street were just fairy tales for suckers who believed in fortune tellers and rabbit's feet.

*(bitter laugh)*

Uncle Mac. The Don now, since Mr. Duncan took that long sleep last year. Dad always said Mac had ambition, but ambition was good in this business, right? You gotta want something to get somewhere. But this... this ain't ambition. This is something else entirely.

*(pacing, agitated)*

He wouldn't... could he? Uncle Mac wouldn't put a hit on Dad. They were friends! They came up together, worked the same corners, shared the same risks. Dad saved his life in that warehouse job back in '19. But those old women with their cards and their crystal balls... they've been whispering about me. About Banquo's boy. About bloodlines and power and futures written in tea leaves.

*(stops, realization dawning)*

The whispers Dad heard... about me becoming something important someday. He laughed it off, called it "dime-store hokum." But what if Mac didn't laugh? What if he listened? What if every time he looked at me, he saw... threat?

*(voice rising with anger)*

They know I got away. I heard them shouting, saw the muzzle flashes light up the alley like the Fourth of July. But I'm fast – Dad always said I was quick as a street cat. Where can I go though? This whole city's got eyes. Every corner boy, every numbers runner, every two-bit grifter... they all report to someone, and that someone reports up the chain until it reaches Mac's ears.

*(slumps against wall)*

Good man! That's what everyone called Dad. "Banquo's a good man. Stand-up guy. Wouldn't rat if his life depended on it." And look where being good got him – bleeding out in some back-alley gutter while the rats scatter and the jazz keeps playing.

This "Family"... it's all rotten. Every last one of them. They talk about honour and loyalty and taking care of your own, but the minute someone becomes inconvenient – BANG! – suddenly you're yesterday's newspaper, blown down the street with the rest of the trash.

*(straightening up, voice growing stronger)*

But Dad didn't say "give up," did he? He said "run." Not just away from them, but toward something. Toward survival. Toward living long enough to make this mean something.

*(looking up at the narrow strip of sky between buildings)*

The whispers... those old fortune tellers with their cards and crystal balls... they said Banquo's line would amount to something. That his blood would outlast all the Macs and Duncans and every other ambitious thug who thinks power comes from the barrel of a gun.

Well, I'm still here. The whispers are still alive as long as I am. And maybe... maybe that's what scares Mac more than any rival gang or federal investigation. Maybe what keeps him awake at night is knowing that somewhere out there, Banquo's boy is still breathing.

*(clenching fists)*

I won't let them win. I won't let Dad's death be for nothing. I'm gonna disappear into this city like smoke, but I'll be watching. Learning. Getting smart. And one day – maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but one day – they'll all understand what those whispers really meant.

*(final pause, voice quiet but resolute)*

I am Banquo's son. And I will live. For him. And for the future he died protecting.

*(starts to move away, then stops)*

"Run, Fleance, run!"

*(nods to himself)*

Yeah, Dad. I'm running. But I ain't running scared anymore.