

GRADUATION

by

A. B. Steel

INT. JONAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

A wall of high school memories. Pictures of a 16-year-old JONAH with friends at the lake. Some of him at school dances. One or two of a young Jonah at the zoo, with his dad, PHIL. Jonah looks happy in each one.

A 17-year-old Jonah lies on this bed, wearing slacks and a button down white shirt. He stares into a small photograph. We can't see the front, just the creased back. His senior ring shines. Tears roll down his cheeks. He's interrupted by a knock on the door.

JONAH

Hold on!

He quickly turns and slides the photo under his pillow. We see a glimpse of a 6-year-old Jonah with a blonde haired beauty. He wipes his face. Sits up.

PHIL (O/S)

You okay in there?

JONAH

Yeah. Come in.

The door opens and PHIL (40s) enters. He's wearing a suit and carrying a dry cleaned graduation gown.

PHIL

You're not even dressed. We gotta go.

JONAH

Sorry, dad.

Phil sits next to him.

PHIL

You ready for this?

JONAH

I think so.

PHIL

You don't sound so sure.

JONAH

I just wanna get it over with.

He walks to his closet. Opens the door, revealing a full length mirror and his suit jacket. Phil looks around.

PHIL

Where's your tie?

JONAH

Top drawer.

Phil opens the top drawer of his dresser.

PHIL

The black one?

Phil takes out a black tie.

JONAH

Yeah.

PHIL

You're gonna look like you're going to a funeral.

JONAH

I am, ain't I?

PHIL

What?

JONAH

Tomorrow I'll be an adult.
Good bye childhood.

PHIL

I'll help you.

JONAH

(taking it)
I can do it.

He tries.

THE MIRROR

- as Jonah ties his tie. It's three inches too short.

PHIL

Let me.

The tie's taken off. Phil ties it perfectly.

JONAH

Thanks, Dad.

Phil reaches for the jacket.

PHIL

How are the kids buttoning
these now?

JONAH

Just the middle.

PHIL

Okay.

He helps Jonah put it on, then the jacket's buttoned. Phil tears off the cheap plastic cover from the gown and unfolds it. It's unzipped and Phil slides it over Jonah's head. Phil puts the cap on Jonah's head.

JONAH

I got it, Dad.

PHIL

Sorry.

Jonah puts it on. He stares at himself in the reflection. Phil stands beside him, beaming with pride.

PHIL

Mom would be so proud.

JONAH

Dad, we promised.

PHIL

I know. I'm sorry.

JONAH

Do I have to wear this all day?

PHIL

No. You can take it off right
after a picture.

From his pocket, he takes out a camera. Wraps his arm
around Jonah.

PHIL

Smile!

Phil snaps the photo. Jonah immediately takes off the cap
and unzips the gown.

PHIL

Before we go, um -

JONAH

What's up?

Phil pulls out a penny from his pocket and hands it to
Jonah. Jonah looks it over.

JONAH

A penny?

PHIL

It's something my dad did when
I graduated. It's a penny from
the day you were born. It's
supposed to bring you good luck.

JONAH

Do you still have yours?

PHIL

Yeah. Somewhere.

JONAH

Does it work?

PHIL

I'm still waiting.

They chuckle.

PHIL

Do you have everything?

JONAH

Uh -

(he looks at the pillow)

No.

He picks up the photo. Looks at it. Phil looks over his shoulder.

PHIL

Is that what you were doing?

JONAH

Yeah.

His eye's swell.

JONAH

I miss her, Dad.

PHIL

I know, Son.

They sit on the bed. Jonah holds the picture. Phil holds him while he cries.

PHIL

Let it out. It's okay.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The first ten rows of seats are packed with GRADUATES. The third row, though, is empty. Those students stand at the edge of the stage. Jonah's at the front. The PRINCIPAL stands at the podium.

PRINCIPAL

Jonah Fields.

Jonah smiles and walks onto the stage. He shakes the principal's hand and takes the diploma with his left.

In the audience, Phil stands and snaps a picture.

FADE OUT.