

There Was A Boy

Written by

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There is no fade in or prefatory images or beginning credits. Just --

A TINY SPOT

A random, miniscule spot of BRIGHT LIGHT on a BLACK SCREEN. The spot begins to grow and becomes larger and LARGER -- till it EXPLODES and BLINDS us. It flickers.

And as we PULL OUT, we see that it is a ray of yellow sunlight that shines down on --

EXT. CORNER STORE - DAY

-- A bucket. Standing beside a newspaper rack outside a dingy corner store.

The bucket is filled with sad flower bouquets that are wrapped in creased paper and cheap wrapping film. The film casts the column of sunlight back in our faces.

A hand COMES INTO FRAME and selects a bouquet of flowers from the bucket. PULL OUT and SEE --

JAKE KING

Sixteen years old. Sad. Detached. Lost in a world of his own. His eyes turned inward. Struggling against a current that pulls him within himself.

He studies the flowers critically. They aren't pretty but they will have to do.

INT. CORNER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Jake exits the store. Heads down the street. Carefully carrying his bouquet.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

Jake walks out of the cemetery. Closes the gate after him. The sadness in his eyes even more pronounced.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASS ROOM - DAY

SMACK! A crumpled paper ball HITS Jake square in the face. He flinches. It hurts. And an angry red mark gradually appears on his cheek.

Behind him -- the humiliating SOUND of his CLASSMATES' stifled giggles.

Jake keeps still. Pretending nothing happened. But in the corner of his eyes -- traitor tears begin to pool.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASS ROOM - LATER

The bell RINGS -- at last. Jake heaves a sigh of relief. Jumps to his feet and collects his things.

Suddenly, he gets A HARD SHOVE in the back -- and he TUMBLES forward, his head almost connecting with the table. He turns his head and stares into the grinning faces of --

RUPERT PAULSON

Sixteen. Hard on the outside. Hides all his anger, insecurities and pain behind an impenetrable armor.

SPENCER BLACK

Sixteen. Rupert's friend. Too scared to stand up for himself and others.

SARAH DIONNE

Sixteen. Rupert's girlfriend. A quiet teenager who has her heart in the right place.

His other classmates start chortling. And Jake becomes the laughing stock again. Jake averts his eyes. Too proud to let them see his pain.

Rupert takes Sarah's hand as he, Sarah and Spencer walk out the door, leaving Jake to his misery.

INT. KING HOUSE - JAKE'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Jake sits on his bed with his back leaning against the wall and writes in a notebook. His eyes distant.

A SOFT KNOCK ON THE DOOR

The door opens and his father sticks his head in --

GARY KING

Mid-forties. With a face marked by too many sleepless nights and constant worry about his son and what the future may bring. A face of grievances unspoken.

GARY

Dinner is ready.

His father withdraws and closes the door. Jake puts his notebook down and rises reluctantly from the bed.

As we ZOOM in on the notebook, we see that he is writing a poem. Beside the poem, he has drawn a series of disturbing figures with sorrowful faces.

INT. KING HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jake and Gary have dinner. The silence is thick. In the corner, we see THREE LARGE GARBAGE BAGS. One of them is open. And we see that they are full of CLOTHES.

GARY
How was school?

JAKE
Okay.

GARY
Just okay?

Jake shrugs. Clearly isn't in the mood to talk.

GARY
I guess okay is -- good.

Strained silence again. Gary looks helplessly at his son. Knows he is hurting as much as Gary is himself. But doesn't know what to do.

Jake lifts his head. Catches sight of the garbage bags in the corner and FROWNS.

JAKE
Is that mum's? Why are you
throwing out mum's clothes?

GARY
I'm not throwing it away. I'm
giving it to charity.

JAKE
That's the same thing.

Jake pushes his chair back. Rises. Darts over to the bags. Starts pulling the garments out of the bag. Scattering them all over the floor.

Gary gets to his feet. Grabs his son's arm.

GARY
Jake, stop it! It's been a year!

JAKE
So? How could you do this? It's
mum's! How do you think she would
feel if she knew --

Gary BANGS a frustrated fist into the kitchen counter.

GARY

-- She's dead, Jake! She's dead
and she's not coming back!

Dead silence. Jake GLARES at his father. His eyes full of fierce accusation and pain. Gary stares into space. Horrified by his own outburst. His eyes tortured.

Then -- Jake spins around on his heel and marches out of the kitchen. A few seconds later -- SLAM! He pulls his bedroom door shut with a bang. Gary starts by the sound that cuts deep into his soul.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY

The GYM TEACHER, MR. ADAMS, pulls TWO BOYS aside to captain the two basketball teams. The team captains go on to select their players among the REST OF THE CLASS.

TEAM CAPTAIN #1

Rupert.

TEAM CAPTAIN #2

Spencer.

Rupert and Spencer join their respective captains. Jake watches on in anticipation as the boys in his class all get selected and join their teams. One by one. His face falls as he realizes that he is the last to be chosen. Again.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - LATER

The boys' basketball teams run drills on half the basketball court while the GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL TEAMS occupy the other half. The boys avoid passing the ball to Jake. Treat him like he's contagious.

INT. BOYS' DRESSING ROOM - SHOWERS - LATER

Jake is the last to hit the showers. Rupert and Spencer give him a small shove as they run into him on their way out. Their towels wrapped around their waists. Jake trips and almost falls on his head on the slippery tiles.

INT. BOYS' DRESSING ROOM - SHOWERS - A LITTLE LATER

Jake stands under the shower. Relaxes. Blocks out the rest of the world. His eyes closed.

INT. BOYS' DRESSING ROOM - SAME

Rupert and Spencer head for the door. Fully dressed. But stop. They eye Jake's neatly folded clothes on the bench. And exchange a quick look. Then -- Spencer grabs Jake's clothes while Rupert lists back across the dressing room and into --

INT. BOYS' DRESSING ROOM - SHOWERS - CONTINUOUS

-- Where Jake stands with his back turned. His eyes still closed. He's escaped to his private place. Deep inside his own troubled mind.

Rupert yanks Jake's towel down from the rack.

INT. BOYS' DRESSING ROOM - SHOWERS - LATER

Jake turns off the water. His eyes still closed. He feels for his towel. Can't find it. Opens his eyes. A small GASP escapes his lips. It's gone.

He starts to hyperventilate. Panic building. Where is it? He steps into the --

INT. BOYS' DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- And makes a beeline for the bench where he put his clothes. They are gone. He searches the entire dressing room -- under benches -- in toilet cubicles -- inside lockers -- on the top of lockers --

But they are nowhere to be found. Finally, he sits down on the dirty floor. Dripping wet and cold. Overwhelmed. His eyes begin to pool. He hugs his knees and grabs his mouth with his hand to withhold a sob. It's just too much. At last, he can't take it anymore and starts to cry.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - LATER

Jake hurries across the asphalt. Covering his naked body the best he can. Hurt and humiliated beyond measure. The STUDENTS in the school yard stare at him and talk in low voices.

Jake reaches the school building and FREEZES as the door suddenly opens -- and out walks Rupert's girlfriend, Sarah.

Sarah stops and stares at him. Shocked. Her mouth open. Jake bites his lip. His face red with shame. His eyes well up a tad. His chin trembling.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASS ROOM - LATER

Sarah opens the door into the room with a BANG. She hastily scans the room. No pile of clothes is lying around. She SLAMS the door shut as she leaves.

INT. SCHOOL - ANOTHER CLASS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah quickly peeks inside. Her eyes examining the interior. Nothing. She closes the door.

INT. SCHOOL - THIRD CLASS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door is pushed open. Sarah sticks her head in and FREEZES. The class is in progress and she finds herself staring into about A DOZEN CURIOUS FACES.

TEACHER

Can I help you, miss?

Sarah's eyes rapidly wander across the room. Investigating every inch of the class room. But she finds nothing.

SARAH

No. Sorry.

INT. SCHOOL - GIRLS' TOILETS - MOMENTS LATER

BANG! Sarah slams a door open to one of the cubicles. It's empty. BANG! She opens another one -- And a third. They are all empty.

INT. SCHOOL - BOYS' TOILETS - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah opens the door. Stands in the doorway. Hesitant. It's clear she has never been in here before. She ventures inside. Her eyes wander across the bathroom. There is nothing by the urinals.

Then -- she stiffens -- she sees something on the floor in one of the cubicles. She darts inside the cubicle. THERE! And finds Jake's clothes lying in a messy heap on the floor. She smiles. Relieved.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - BOYS' DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Jake sits on the floor. Hugging his knees. Naked and cold. His teeth clattering in his mouth. Suddenly --

A SOFT RAP ON THE DOOR

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