

FATE AND FAITH

By

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FADE IN

EXT. NEWYORK-PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

We look up at the partly cloudy sky as our MAIN CREDITS roll. Once the last credit fades out, we tilt down to see the exterior of NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City. As we transition to the next scene, we hear the voice of BRENDEN, a 14-year-old African American.

BRENDEN  
(off-screen)  
Mom? Do you think Dad will come  
home this week?

CUT TO

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAYS - NEWYORK-PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - NEW YORK CITY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

We are now inside the hospital as we see Brenden and his MOM, 47, walking down the hospital hallways, along with a NURSE, to his Dad's room.

MOM  
I don't know. But if his blood  
counts improve, yes.

BRENDEN  
I hope so too, just like the day he  
returned home from the World Trade  
Center on 9/11.

The nurse opens the door to the room of Brenden's Dad and they go in.

CUT TO

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NEWYORK-PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

We see Brenden and his mom in the room near the bedside of Brenden's DAD, 50. His Dad looks sick and his breathing is labored. He gives a half smile, appearing to look better for his family, knowing that they're nearby.

DAD  
Brenden, there's something I must  
tell you.

(CONTINUED)

BRENDEN

OK, Dad.

Brenden comes closer to his dad and sits on a chair next to the bed. He scoots up to be close to him and looks into his eyes, which he's having a hard time keeping open.

BRENDEN

What is it?

DAD

It's something that I may not be able to say to you if I die tomorrow. You know I haven't been doing too well lately. The effects of the chemicals and debris I got exposed to at Ground Zero and the chemo they've been giving me to fight this leukemia are taking their toll on me. I don't know what's going to happen, so I think it's best we talk now while I still can.

I want you to believe in yourself and know that you have the power to make your path in the world. You are a very special kid and you're going to do great things. I know you're going to get into a great college, and be loved and accepted for who you are.

BRENDEN

Do you really mean it?

DAD

Yes. I truly do. And I will be so proud of you.

This makes Brenden smile as he reaches for his Dad's hand. His Dad smiles.

CUT TO

EXT. BRENDEN'S HOUSE - SUNRISE - THE NEXT MORNING

We see Brenden's house in a typical looking suburban neighborhood. His Mom's car pulls up and parks in front. His Mom quickly gets out of the car and runs straight to the front door. She nervously fumbles to get the key into the lock as she unlocks and opens the door.

MATCH CUT TO

INT. BRENDEN'S BEDROOM - BRENDEN'S HOUSE - SUNRISE - A  
MINUTE LATER

The Mom opens the door to Brenden's room.

MOM  
(worried and tearfully)  
Brenden! Wake up!

Brenden wakes up fast, startled, nearly falling out of bed.

BRENDEN  
Yes? Mom?

The Mom stands motionless. She shakes her head.

BRENDEN  
(getting out of bed)  
What do you mean by that?

MOM  
Dad. He's dead!

Brenden stops in his tracks, shocked by what he just heard. He runs up to his mom and tightly hugs her. Tears begin to fall down Brenden's cheeks.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

We are in a cemetery with many graves. It is raining. Many family members and friends of Brenden are there, all wearing black and holding umbrellas. All we hear is the soft sound of the rain as the Priest finishes reading the blessings in front of Brenden's Dad's coffin, positioned above the grave site.

The entire crowd begins to disperse. A few family members come up to Brenden and his Mom to share their condolences. Brenden and his Mom are appreciative of this, but Brenden notices his friends are grouped up together, walking away, not taking any notice of him. One of them, a white boy, looks and laughs at Brenden.

Brenden feels sad as he sees this, but also feels suspicion at what he is seeing: something strange is happening to his friends.

FADE TO AND FROM BLACK

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - THE NEXT DAY

We see Brenden and a couple of students in an English class. As the teacher teaches her lecture, Brenden is having a hard time concentrating in class, as he is still mourning the loss of his Dad. He overhears a student behind him, TYLER, a popular 13-year-old, say something to the student next to him.

TYLER

Hey, want to hear something? Well, I learned that when Brenden's dad died, he spit on Jesus.

Tyler and the other friend chuckle behind. Brenden, hurt and angry at what he just heard, gets up and turns to Tyler.

BRENDEN

What did you say, Tyler?

TYLER

Uh, nothing.

BRENDEN

Don't fool me.

TYLER

Trust me. It was nothing. We were just joking.

Brenden grabs Tyler and draws him close to his face.

BRENDEN

I don't believe you. I heard what you said about my Dad. If he were here right now, he'd take a piss on you, you mean piece of shit!

As Brenden finishes the above quote, he throws Tyler to the ground and kicks him in the stomach. Everyone in class is startled and shocked.

BRENDEN

TAKE THAT YOU ASS-HOLE!

Tyler tries to get up, but Brenden punches him. All the students start to get up and form a crowd around Tyler and Brenden. Brenden keeps cursing and physically hurting Tyler.

BRENDEN

Making fun of my Dad, huh? Go ahead! KEEP BASHING HIM YOU MOTHERFUCKER!

The teacher, terrified by what she sees, picks up the phone and calls the PRINCIPAL.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Brenden has been sent to the Principal's Office, which appears organized. Brenden is seated in front of the principal's desk at which the Principal himself sits. The Principal listens intently to Brenden as he speaks.

BRENDEN

But I wasn't doing the wrong thing, OK? I was just trying to protect my Dad, even though he's dead. What's even worse is that I'm getting the feeling that my friends are straying from me. Is it because they're hiding something? Is it because my Dad died? Is it the color of my skin? WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?

The Principal replies after a deep breath.

PRINCIPAL

I understand the situation and am sorry for the loss of your father, but you need to understand that in times like these, people change and move on.

(a beat)

Yes, people are afraid of the topic of death, and they want to hide that fear, which is exactly what your friends are doing.

BRENDEN

I see.

CUT TO

INT. BRENDEN'S BEDROOM - BRENDEN'S HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

Brenden is laying on his bed, in his pajamas, thinking about his Dad while looking up at the ceiling and picking at his nails. His Mom comes through the door.

MOM

Hi Brenden, is everything alright?

(CONTINUED)

BRENDEN

I'm OK. Still thinking about what happened today, as well as about Dad.

Brenden's mom comes to his bed and sits down. Brenden moves and sits next to her.

MOM

I know, it's tough to live without him. But, we need to remain strong and move on with his power and strength. You have that power Brenden.

Brenden, comforted by her words, hugs her, burying his head into her chest, a comforting reminder of his childhood.

CUT TO

INT. SCHOOL CAFE - AFTERNOON - A FEW DAYS LATER

Brenden sits alone at a table in the crowded school cafeteria. He sees many of his friends, including Tyler, at a table far away. Hurt by their rejection of him, he looks away from them and down at his food.

BRENDA, a white 14-year-old girl, enters and sees Brenden sitting alone. Seeing he's alone, she goes to his table.

BRENDA

Hi, may I sit here?

BRENDEN

Sure.

Brenda sits down across from him. She sees the sad look across his face.

BRENDA

Why so glum?

BRENDEN

My Dad passed away from a 9/11-related illness and all my friends have rejected me. I'm even doing terrible in my classes now because of all of this. Don't know if I'll be able to pass my English test, which is one week from today.

(CONTINUED)

BRENDA

Oh, I see. By the way, I also lost a parent, my mother. I faced some trouble too, but I didn't give up in working hard on what I believe in and making my Mom proud when she looks down on me and sees all that I'm doing to make my life the best it can be.

He concentrates on her face and what's she saying, an indication of his wondering he could do the same thing.

**MONTAGE SEQUENCE BEGINS**

**MONTAGE SEQUENCE**

We see these events occur as we pass through the week quickly, cutting back and forth between the following two scenes, except the characters wear different clothing each time we keep coming back to each scene.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Brenden tries hard to ignore Tyler's joking behind him and pay attention to the class.

INT. BRENDEN'S BEDROOM - BRENDEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Brenden is at his work table looking over his English notes, taking additional notes on a notepad next to his papers.

**MONTAGE SEQUENCE ENDS**

DISSOLVE TO

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

It is the day after the test. The teacher is handing the tests back to the students. Brenden receives his test. He is happy to see that it has been marked with an A. There is note beneath it:

*Your Dad would have been very proud of you. Great job!*

Brenden smiles. As the school bell rings and his fellow classmates leave the room, he turns to the window near him and looks at the sunny sky.

(CONTINUED)



The sun shines on his smiling face. He shuts his eyes tightly, trying to picture his father's face, wishing he could bring him back from the dead.

Brenden continues to look at the sky as we fly through the window and return to where we started: a partly cloudy sky with sunshine. It becomes the background for our END CREDITS.

THE END