

DAD CALLS ME HIS

by

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An adopted boy is put through hell when his manipulative younger sister learns he stole from their father, but he soon discovers his father's love is greater than his sin.

FADE IN:

INT. DAD'S HOME OFFICE - EVENING

NOAH, a clever 9-year-old adopted boy from Africa, sneaks in. Drops his backpack. Opens a desk drawer. Then another.

Dad's iPad Pro catches his eye as if a beacon of light.

Noah admires it. Turns it on. The start-up sound echoes. Noah freezes. Muffles the noise.

Noah plays with it.

MOM (O.S.)  
Dinner's ready.

Footsteps scamper past the door. Noah shoves the iPad Pro into his backpack.

Slams the drawer closed. Unnoticed by Noah, a caught object springs the drawer back open.

Noah trots to the door. Peeks out.

INT. HALL - EVENING

Noah peeks out the office door. All clear.

DAD comes around the corner. Sees Noah pulling the office door closed. Dad waits as Noah tip-toes away.

INT. OFFICE - EVENING

Dad looks around. Perplexed. Zooms in on the open desk drawer. Peers inside. The void signals his iPad Pro missing. Dad rubs his head.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Noah takes his place at the lovely-set table. Carefully places his backpack at his feet.

EMMA, Noah's 8-year-old sister, plops down in her chair. Dramatic style.

Dad saunters in. MOM, his wife, moves in to welcome him with a kiss, but pulls back when he appears preoccupied.

Mom and Dad take their place. Dad rubs his head.

Emma gasps. Leans in to Noah.

EMMA

(Whispers)

Noah. In America, when someone rubs their head like that, it means it might explode.

Noah has a look of unbelief.

MOM

Are you alright, Dear?

DAD

Long day...My head feels like it could explode.

Noah swallows hard. Emma gives him the "I told you so" look.

Chattering ceases when Dad reaches for Noah's hand. Stern eyes. Noah's eyes go down.

DAD (CONT'D)

Let's thank the Lord for this meal, shall we?

NOAH

Yes, Sir.

All take hands.

DAD

Lord Jesus. Thank you for this meal and the hands that made it. We are truly blessed. May anything that hinders us from being all you want us to be, come to light.

Dad squeezes Noah's hand. Noah shakes a bit, but a deep breath calms him.

DAD (CONT'D)

In Jesus name. Amen.

Food gets distributed around the table. Everything Noah reaches for, Emma intercepts. He lets her.

Her plate is full.

Noah has nothing.

Mom scoops food onto Noah's plate. He shovels it down.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Manners, young man.

NOAH  
Yes, Sir.

DAD  
I was looking for my iPad Pro.  
Can't seem to find it.

Noah freezes mid-shovel.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Has anyone seen it?

Emma perks up.

EMMA  
Maybe the stork took it and flew  
away to never-never-land.

Dad looks at Noah who only shrugs.

DAD  
I guess I must have misplaced it.

Noah chokes on his food. Mom pats his back concerned. A horn beeps. Emma shoves the last bite into her mouth.

EMMA  
Come on, Noah. I don't want to be  
late for game night.

Dad picks up Noah's backpack.

Noah freezes. Won't make eye contact. Dad hands it to him.

DAD  
Have fun.

NOAH  
Yes, Sir.

DAD  
Noah. You can call me Dad.

NOAH  
Yes, Sir.

Noah grabs the backpack. Scampers out the door.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The church teems with YOUTH. A group of BOYS surround ZAC who shows off his Apple Watch. Noah approaches. PETER, Noah's closest friend, drags him to Zac.

PETER

Noah. You got to see what Zac got.

Zac shows Noah his Apple Watch.

Noah Pulls the iPad Pro from his backpack. Holds it up as if on a pedestal. The group is in awe. Gather around him.

NOAH

It's mine. All mine.

Peter reaches for the iPad.

PETER

Can I see it?

The Boys grab toward the iPad for a closer look.

Noah pulls the iPad back. It flies from his hand.

Hits the table behind him.

Cracked.

The commotion ceases. Noah stoops down. Jaw drops.

A sea of muttering commences.

PETER (CONT'D)

It wasn't your fault. Maybe it had butter on it or something.

ZAC

Tough break, man.

PETER

It was an accident, right?

The group of Boys concur.

Youth Group LEADER calls the kids together to play the telephone game. Noah fades into the horizon as Zac, Peter and the others form a circle around their Leader.

LEADER

Remember this game is about listening carefully. Peter. Why don't you start us off.

Peter whispers into Zac's ear. Zac whispers into the next ear. One by one a cupped-hand and mouth-to-ear rhythm goes around the circle.

Noah drops the iPad into his backpack. Watches the kids interact. Shame reigns across his face.

The final whisper comes around to Emma.

EMMA

Noah threw ice packs at Zac?

Laughter rings.

LEADER

Was that it, Peter?

Peter opens his mouth. Time slows to a crawl for Noah as the words pour from Peter.

PETER

No. It was, "Noah's new iPad is cracked."

Emma stares at Noah. The corners of her mouth rise into a grin.

EMMA

YOU took Dad's iPad?

Everyone looks at him.

PETER

It's your Dad's?

Noah and Emma lock eyes. Noah runs out. Emma follows.

EXT. NOAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Noah and Emma stand in the front yard. Emma pats him on the back as they both stare at the cracked iPad.

Emma unzips Noah's backpack. Holds it open for him to drop it in. Gives him a hug.

Noah relaxes.

NOAH

Maybe he won't notice. Do you think he'll be mad?

EMMA

Once I had an adopted brother who came from China. He broke all Mom's china dishes because...well, I don't remember why. But Dad put him on a train and when he got to the ocean, he had to swim back to China. True story.

NOAH

Dad sent him back?

EMMA

Yep. Dad got rid of him just like that. So I wouldn't make him mad if I were you.

Noah looks at her terrified. Hugs the backpack.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Don't think it's a good idea to tell him. But I can help you.

NOAH

You can? How?

EMMA

I promise not to tell Dad if you agree to help me with stuff.

NOAH

Anything. I miss my brother Jared, but I don't want to go back to the orphanage.

MONTAGE - NOAH'S ENSLAVEMENT

1) INT. PORCH

Noah grabs his baseball equipment. Emma shakes her head. Hands Noah a dish towel. He drops his stuff. Sad. Takes it.

2) INT. LAUNDRY ROOM

Noah folds laundry. Dad walks by. Double take.

3) INT. HALL

Dad stares into Emma's room. Watches Noah make Emma's bed.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Noah lays on his bed. Exhausted. A knock. Noah groans.

Peter enters decked out in baseball gear.

PETER

We won. Even though you weren't there.

NOAH

If this is what hell feels like, I definitely don't want to go there.

PETER

Was your Dad mad?

NOAH

I didn't tell him.

PETER

What if you bought a new one and put it back. He would never have to know.

NOAH

It costs like a million dollars.

PETER

You could tell him Aliens came and made you take it. Say it wasn't your fault. Or maybe just tell him the truth. What's the worst thing that could happen?

NOAH

I drown in the ocean.

PETER

You could always try and fix it. Do you have any food in here? I'm starving.

NOAH

What did you say?

PETER

Food? Ya got any?

NOAH

You're amazing, Peter.

Noah's eyes brighten.

He grabs the iPad and superglue.

Noah squeezes the superglue onto the crack. The glue line makes it look worse than the crack.

PETER

You're doomed.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

The dinner table-setting looks as bad as the iPad. Dad motions to Mom.

MOM

Noah set the table tonight.

Dad peers at Emma.

EMMA

He volunteered. Who am I to say no?

The family settles in. Dad has the nicest looking steak on his plate. Mom pokes Noah when Dad walks away.

MOM

Doesn't that steak look great? Do you think Dad would miss it if I took it?

Mom takes it. Cuts a piece. Eats it.

Mom covers the steak with a napkin when Dad comes back to the table.

DAD

Where's my steak? I thought...

Dad looks back at the platter. Then at his plate.

DAD (CONT'D)

I must have misplaced it. Emma have you seen my steak?

Emma giggles. Shrugs.

Mom unveils it. Plops it back on Dad's plate.

MOM

I'm sorry, Dear. I wanted it. I took it. And it was wrong. Will you ever forgive me?

DAD

Of course. It will cost you a french fry.

Mom hands him the longest fry on her plate. They laugh and kiss. Noah sinks into his chair.

EMMA

May Noah and I be excused? I have homework and Noah promised to help me.

Emma gazes at Noah. Forms a Grinch smile.

Dad gives her an approving nod.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Emma grabs Noah's arm.

EMMA

You have work to do.

NOAH

I will not do your homework.

Emma shoves her doll in his face.

EMMA

Patty-doll needs a new outfit.

Emma hands him sewing supplies. Noah pulls his arm from her clutches.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You have no choice. I'll tell my Dad.

Noah grabs her arm.

Dad comes around the corner. Emma sees him. Holds Noah's hand on her arm. Wails like she's being murdered.

Dad steps between them.

Silence.

Dad guides Noah's chin to look him in the eyes.

DAD

Do you have something to tell me?

Noah sucks back the tears. Slumps in resignation.

NOAH

Yes, Sir.

Noah pulls the broken iPad from his backpack. Hands it to Dad.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I took your iPad Pro. And I broke it. I'm sorry.

Noah bursts into tears. Dad offers a comfort hug. Noah accepts without hesitation.

DAD

I love you, Son. And I'm proud of you. It took courage to confess.

Emma smirks. Stands cross-armed at Dad's side.

EMMA

I told him to tell you right away. But does he listen to me? Noooo.

Noah composes himself. Dad's hands cradle Noah's face.

DAD

I wondered how long you were going to let Emma push you around.

Emma loses the smirk. Eyes grow big.

EMMA

What?

DAD

You will both take responsibility for your actions. Emma. You will do double chores. Do you understand?

EMMA

That's not fair! I didn't steal your iPad and break it.

The door bell rings. Noah glances past Dad to the entry door.

DAD

And Noah --

Mom opens the door. On the other side stands Noah's SOCIAL WORKER.

MOM

-- The social worker is here, Dear.

DAD  
We'll be right there.

EMMA  
Hope you have a life jacket.

Dad guides Noah toward the door. Noah walks as if on death row. Looks ready to heave. Turns to Dad.

NOAH  
Please don't send me back to the orphanage. Please.

Noah throws his arms around Dad. Clings.

DAD  
Send you back?

Dad looks Noah in the eyes.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Noah, I chose you. The adoption papers say you're mine. Forever.

Noah turns toward the entry door.

NOAH  
Then why...

JARED, Noah's sibling from Africa, steps through the door.

DAD  
Noah. Emma. Greet the newest member of the family.

Noah runs to Jared. Their exuberant embrace infects the room with love. Noah turns to Dad.

NOAH  
Thank you.

DAD  
Later we will discuss how you are going to pay for the new iPad.

NOAH  
Yes...Dad.

Noah throws his arms around his Dad.

FADE OUT.

THE END

