

FALL FROM GRACE

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BRYANT PARK - DAY

Locals kick off their shoes and relax on the lawn of this Midtown oasis. Skyscrapers tower behind trees on all sides.

Directly ahead is the GRACE Building.

FADE TO BLACK - FIRST TITLE UP

Two young men, about 30, emerge from a nearby subway entrance. MICHAEL wears a cheap suit and carries a duffel bag. JASPER wears jeans and a t-shirt and a backpack over one shoulder.

They make their way to the far side of the park and Jasper removes a handheld video camera from his bag. They check their watches. Michael crosses the park and the street and enters:

INT. GRACE BUILDING LOBBY - CONTINUING

He shows shows his ID to a man at the front desk.

A moment later he, and a few others, step onto an elevator.

He presses a button: "50". And they're away.

FADE TO BLACK - SECOND TITLE UP

He emerges from the elevator onto the 50th floor and approaches the receptionist.

MICHAEL

Hi, I have an appointment.

RECEPTIONIST

Your name?

MICHAEL

Michael Downey.

The receptionist makes a call.

RECEPTIONIST

Someone will be out in a few minutes. You can take a seat.

MICHAEL

Actually, do you have a restroom?

FADE TO BLACK - THIRD TITLE UP

Michael heads down the hall and finds the men's room. He acknowledges a passing OFFICE WORKER as he opens the door...

but stops shy of entering. Once the worker turns the corner and the hall is clear, Michael steps a little further down the hall to another door that reads: STAIRWELL B

He closes the door silently behind him.

CRASH TO BLACK - LAST TITLE UP

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Erratic movement. Shaky picture. The camera is being jostled. It soon comes to rest on the Michael's face. He is holding the camera, filming himself. He hastily removes his cheap suit, revealing shorts and a t-shirt underneath.

The letters REC appear in the corner of the screen.

He whispers.

MICHAEL

Hi. This is jump number twelve.
April fifteenth. Two thousand
nine. I'm in the...

He stops, turns. Listens for a moment. Silence.
... I'm in the Grace building. New
York City. Fifty stories. Six
hundred thirty feet. Took me
about...

(checks his
watch)

... fifteen minutes to get up
here. Should take me about...
thirty seconds or so to touch down
in Bryant Park across the street.

(big breath)

Okay.

The camera spins as he lifts it onto his head. It's a helmet cam. The picture becomes...

MICHAEL'S P.O.V.

... steady as he removes a parachute pack from a duffel bag and straps it across his chest to his back. He zips the pack and bounds up the stairs to a door with a sign that reads: ROOFTOP ACCESS - AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.

Michael's hand opens the door. The afternoon light momentarily blinds the camera as he steps out onto

EXT. THE ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Wasting no time, he rapidly double checks his straps and chords before rounding the corner and heading to the...

... he stops short. He's not the only one up there.

At the roof's edge stands a Man in a suit. A very expensive suit which kicks in the wind. He faces away from and is unaware of Michael.

The picture is now very still. Michael makes not a move or sound, other than his stifled BREATHING.

For an uncomfortably long moment, the picture and the other man remain still.

Then he moves. The Man in the suit. Toward the edge.

MICHAEL

Shit!

Without hesitation, Michael breaks into a run toward the well dressed man as he places his hands on the rooftop guardrail.

The picture shakes as Michael sprints. The man goes in and out of frame. A glimpse of him reveals that he has one leg up and over.

The distance between Michael and the man closes quickly.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

No! Hey!

Michael and his camera stop suddenly and focus on the man who whips his head around at the sound of the voice. The man looks to be about twice Michael's age. Only about ten feet separates the two.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Wait. Please.

The man stares at him for a moment...

... then turns back to the edge. The second leg goes over. Michael lunges, arms extended. His hands twist into the man's custom-fit finery and, in one surprisingly swift movement, pull him back over the railing.

The picture is chaotic now as the two men roll on the rooftop. Concrete. Sky. Suit. Concrete. Sky. Suit.

Unintelligible GRUNTS and CURSES.

The picture levels out as Michael, on his back, watches the

man, HORACE, rise to his feet.

HORACE
What the hell are you doing?! Why?

MICHAEL
(still in his
POV)
I'm...

The man notices a large tear in his suit.

HORACE
Ah! Do you know how much a suit
like this costs?

MICHAEL
The suit?!

HORACE
This is a custom Brioni... ah
fuck!

MICHAEL
Bri...
(rises to his
feet)
Who the hell cares about the suit!

Horace shoots a fiery glance toward Michael, who changes his tone.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
You do... sorry. I'm sorry. I
thought you were... were you about
to... what are you doing?

The man examines the hole in his coat. It's too big. He removes it and lets it fall to the ground.

The man starts again toward the roof's edge.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Wait! Hey!

Horace presses on without reaction.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Wait! Wait wait wait wait!

Nothing. Once again, Michael rushes the man as he grasps the guardrail. Michael takes hold of his arm. Horace spins. Throws a fist straight toward Michael's face.

The SKY flies into frame just before we

CRASH TO BLACK

INT. OFFICE LOBBY - CONTINUING

A FEMALE EXECUTIVE approaches the reception desk.

EXECUTIVE

Hi. Who am I seeing?

RECEPTIONIST

Downey. Michael... Oh, he went to
the restroom...

(realizing)

... a while ago.

Odd.

EXECUTIVE

Ok. Well, let me know when he's
back.

EXT. THE ROOFTOP - CONTINUING

(3rd PERSON P.O.V.)

Flat on his back. Again. Michael's eyes flicker back to
life. It all comes back to him quickly and he bolts upright.
Searches.

There. Horace stands, sans suit coat, precariously on the
dangerous side of the railing, to which both hands cling. He
is motionless.

Michael removes his helmet. Glances back to the access door.
It's closed. They're alone.

Michael regards Horace and decides to move in. This time his
pace is slow. Casual, even. He arrives at the fencing, a few
feet down from the man, and quietly rests his elbows on the
top rail, his helmet dangling on the other side.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry about the...

Horace, startled at Michael's voice, nearly loses his
footing. His grip on the rail tightens as he turns to
Michael.

HORACE

Mother of God - scared the shit
out of me!

MICHAEL

Just wanted to apologize about the suit.

HORACE

Fine. Go away.

MICHAEL

I didn't mean to... you just seemed pretty upset about it. Do you want to... talk about... you know...

The man closes his eyes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

My name is Michael.

HORACE

Look, Michael. I appreciate you wanting to help, but I don't... I would really just like to be left alone.

(notices the helmet)

What is that?

MICHAEL

What?

HORACE

That.

MICHAEL

The helmet? Oh - it's a camera.

Horace takes a good look at Michael for the first time.

HORACE

What's all this?

MICHAEL

What?

HORACE

This. Are you...

MICHAEL

Base jumping.

A moment.

HORACE

Skydiving?

MICHAEL

Base... yes.

HORACE

From here? Are you insane?

(off Michael's
look)

Hey, fuck you!

MICHAEL

I didn't say anything.

HORACE

You've got a look like I'm crazy.
I'm not. Crazy. Pained, maybe. Is
that okay? I'm in a lot of pain,
alright?

MICHAEL

That's fine. Pain is fine. It's
just...

HORACE

What?

MICHAEL

Well you're about to be in a lot
more.

Michael gives a nod to the street below. Far below. They
take it in.

HORACE

It'll be quick and it'll be over.

MICHAEL

O-kay.

HORACE

Ooo-kay what? What?

MICHAEL

Nothing. It's just... I know of
people who have fallen from, well,
a lot higher than this and
survived.

HORACE

Higher?

MICHAEL

Airplanes.

HORACE

Bullshit.

MICHAEL

Swear to God.

HORACE

Out of an airplane? And lived?

MICHAEL

Well - if you call eating through a tube in your nose for the rest of your life living.

HORACE

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU... why did you tell me that? Shit. Oh shit.

(he looks up)

I'm gonna be sick. Oh...

Horace turns quickly, but carefully, to face the rail. He bows over it, heaving. He spits a little.

MICHAEL

If it makes you feel any better, that's extraordinarily rare. I'm sure it wouldn't happen to you.

HORACE

No, it doesn't make me feel any better thank you so much.

MICHAEL

Probably take out a couple of people down there, too. Just seems... I don't know... unnecessarily extravagant. Why not a gun or something?

HORACE

Do you have a gun? Then shut up.

Michael watches - concerned, fascinated. Then, suddenly, he laughs. Laughs a little more.

HORACE (CONT'D)

What?

MICHAEL

Nothing.

(a moment)

This just reminded me... these two guys are standing on top of a skyscraper and one says to the other "You know that if you jump

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 off from right here, there's this
 strong updraft that'll bring you
 right back up to the top?" The
 other guy says "No way, that's
 bullshit" and the first guy goes
 "Here, I'll prove it to you." He
 jumps off and, sure enough, after
 five stories, floats right back to
 the top. The second guy says...

Horace lifts his head and looks, listens in disbelief.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 ... second guy says "Holy shit!
 That's amazing! I wanna do that!"
 So he jumps off the building and
 bam! - splatters all over the
 street below. The first guy goes
 down into a nearby bar, sits and
 has a beer. The bartender looks at
 him and say "You're such an
 asshole when you're drunk,
 Superman."

Horace stares, unblinking, for a moment. Then an awkward
 laugh bursts out of him. Michael chuckles along.

Then tears through the laughter.

HORACE
 I don't want to do this. I don't
 want to die.

MICHAEL
 I know.

HORACE
 Help me down?

MICHAEL
 Of course.

Michael grasps Horace's hand and helps him to safety where
 we

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. GRACE BUILDING - DAY

A crowd of reporters and photographers greet Michael and Horace as they emerge side by side and smiling. Cameras flash as Horace pats Michael on the back.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE FOYER - LATER

A housewife, apron and all, opens the front door revealing Horace in his suit and, behind him, Michael, still in gear. She bursts into tears of joy at the sight of Horace and wraps her arms around him.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. HORACE'S STUDY - LATER

Horace shakes Michael's and extends a check to him with the other. Mrs. Horace leans against the doorway, watching.

HORACE

I can't thank you enough.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROOFTOP - CONTINUED

Horace stares, unblinking, for a moment. Then an awkward laugh bursts out of him. Michael chuckles along.

Then tears. Horace becomes a visible emotional mess, laughing and crying and shaking.

And he lets go of the railing. Arms spread, he closes his eyes and falls back.

In the blink of an eye, Michael pull him back by his necktie and wraps him in a tight bear hug. The weight and positions of the two men lift Michael momentarily off his feet.

HORACE

Please let me go!

MICHAEL

I can't.

HORACE

Just let go!

MICHAEL

No, I really can't. My arms... I can't. I can't seem to move my arms.

HORACE

What? Why?

MICHAEL

Fear, mostly, I think. Yeah.

HORACE

Wha...

MICHAEL

Heights! I'm afraid of heights.

HORACE

(a beat - then
a laugh)

You... you're agoraphobic?

MICHAEL

Yes, okay? I... no - that's fear of... something else. Acrophobia is heights.

HORACE

No, I think agora...

MICHAEL

It's acrophobia.

HORACE

Are you s...

MICHAEL

I'm sure!

HORACE

How can you sky...

MICHAEL

Can we please oh please oh please have this conversation on this side?

From his pocket, Michael's PHONE RINGS.

HORACE

You want to get that?

MICHAEL

Shit.

HORACE
Just let go.

MICHAEL
I'm afraid. I can't.

HORACE
I'm sorry, then.

MICHAEL
For wh...

Before Michael can finish asking, Horace pushes away from the ledge, pulling Michael farther over the railing. Michael scrambles to find a foothold. He does - digging his toes in, he pulls the other way.

The two men struggle, face to face. Gravity starts to give Horace the advantage. Just before they reach a tipping point, Michael twists his body, hard, pulling Horace's feet of the ledge and over the railing once again.

They both just lay there.

HORACE
Would you stop doing that!

MICHAEL
I don't want you to die!

HORACE
You don't even know me!

MICHAEL
I know!

HORACE
Then why?!

MICHAEL
I don't know!

They catch their breath.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I just - I don't know. Call it a... why do you want to kill yourself?

HORACE
I'm a bad man.

MICHAEL
What?

HORACE

I'm evil, ok? I'm lonely. I'm sad.
I'm crazy. Whatever. Fuck you. Get
out of my way.

MICHAEL

I can't let you jump.

HORACE

Do you think you can stop me?

Michael's phone rings again. He hesitates, then answers.

MICHAEL

(into phone)

I'm fine... I know, I know... calm
down. I'm fine... Yes. I'll
explain later. Yeah.

(pockets phone)

My... I have a friend on the
ground video taping my jump.

HORACE

Oh this just gets better and
better.

MICHAEL

Look - if you jump then I can't.
It would look a little suspicious,
don't you think, me sailing down
moments after you... you know? And
police and questions and
accusations and I'm not going to
jail for you!

HORACE

Don't be ridiculous. You've got
your hat there.

He indicates the helmet cam.

MICHAEL

What?

HORACE

Aren't you recording? They'll know
you had nothing to do with it and,
in fact, tried more than once to
prevent it.

Michael hadn't considered this.

MICHAEL

Oh yeah. Well...

HORACE

Look, it's a huge building. If
it'll make you feel better...
where's your friend?

MICHAEL

In the park.

HORACE

You can take that side and I'll
take the other. It'll be as if we
never met - and wouldn't that be
nice?

MICHAEL

Why don't...

HORACE

You're not talking me down. Take
it or leave it.

The two men stare silently at each other for a moment.

MICHAEL

Fine.

HORACE

Fine.

MICHAEL

Fine!

Michael stands, brushes himself off.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I love flying.

HORACE

What?

MICHAEL

I love flying. Earlier, you
started to ask how I can sky-dive
if I'm acrophobic.

HORACE

(gets to his
feet)

I really think it's agora...

MICHAEL

(cutting across
him)

It's because I love the sensation
of flying. For a few moments I'm

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
totally free... there's nothing
else. But I can't do that from
down there.

HORACE
What's your point?

MICHAEL
Whatever it is you're afraid...
whatever brought you up here...
you have to embrace it. If you run
away from it... you can't... you
have to... you have to embrace it.
Face it head on, you know? And you
can't do that if you... if
you're...

HORACE
You sound like a damn fool, you
know that?

The two stare at each other for a moment.

MICHAEL
Fine, you know what? Kill
yourself. You're right - I don't
know you. I don't know why I
should care if you live or die. I
don't, frankly.

HORACE
Thank you!

MICHAEL
I mean, even if I stop you now -
what's to keep you from coming
back up here tomorrow?

HORACE
Exactly.

Michael tightens his straps and looks out over the city.

MICHAEL
Did you leave a note?

HORACE
What?

Michael turns back to Horace.

MICHAEL

A note. Did you write a... you know... a note?

HORACE

What are you talking about?

MICHAEL

Did you write a suicide note?

A moment.

HORACE

No.

Michael holds out his helmet.

MICHAEL

Here. Take it.

(as Horace
considers)

The camera's recording.

Horace starts. Michael cuts across him.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I don't know who you are or what you did or why you want to kill yourself. I'm not going to stop you, but I will not let you... I... do you have a family?

HORACE

What?

MICHAEL

Do you have children? Do you have a wife? Are you married? Do you have a fucking family?

Yes. He does.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I'm not going to stop you from jumping off this roof, but I will not let you leave... you will not leave them without any explanation. Without... anything. Take it.

HORACE

I -

MICHAEL

Take it!

Horace reaches out and takes the helmet.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

It's on. Give an address at the beginning. I'll get it to them. I won't watch the rest. You have my word. I'll be over here.

Horace watches Michael walk away then examines the device. He wipes his face and composes himself as best he can before turning the lens on himself.

Michael stands well off from the man, watches him for a brief moment, then turns away.

He takes out his mobile and dials.

EXT. BRYANT PARK - CONTINUING

Jasper paces. His phone rings. He answers immediately.

JASPER

What the fuck is going on up there? Is there... what? Are you serious? Holy... what do you want me to do? What do you want - should I call the police or...

EXT. THE ROOFTOP - CONTINUING

MICHAEL

No. Just... just wait. I'll be down soon. Yes, I'm sure. I think. Yes. Just be ready.

Horace stops talking as the red recording light goes off.

HORACE

Hey - the little red light went...

He turns. Sees Michael on the phone.

HORACE (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Are you calling the cops?

Michael puts the phone away.

MICHAEL

No. My friend.

HORACE
Bullshit. You were calling...

Michael walks back to Horace...

MICHAEL
Why would I call the police? You
think I want to be arrested?

... and retrieves the helmet-cam from him.

HORACE
Right.

MICHAEL
I'll get this to the right people.

The two men stare at each other for a moment. Michael straps
the helmet back onto his head.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Ok. Good luck, I guess.

He turns and walks to the South side of the building.

HORACE
Michael.

Michael looks back.

HORACE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Michael steps to the edge of the building, blocking Horace
from view. He checks his straps. Dials a number on his
mobile.

MICHAEL
(to phone)
Yeah.

Hangs up. Deep breath. When he jumps, Horace is gone.

EXT. BRYANT PARK - MOMENTS LATER

Parachute material billows around Michael as his feet
scuttle to a stop. A crowd of people makes way and watches
in awe as he quickly pulls in the ropes. Michael moves as he
gathers the chute.

Jasper, excited, films from across the park. Excited, that
is, until he sees the cop approaching Michael, hand on
sidearm.

JASPER

Shit.
 (calling out)
 Mike - Mikey!

Too late.

POLICE OFFICER

Hey - stop right there. Hey!

Michael looks back. Damn it.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Drop the chute and keep your hands
 where I can see them.

MICHAEL

Oh come on, everything's fine.
 Nobody's hurt.

POLICE OFFICER

Drop the chute now!

A moment. Drops the chute. Puts hands out by his side.

He glances over his shoulder. Jasper, still filming from a
 distance, gives a what-am-I-supposed-to-do shrug.

POLICE OFFICER

You know that's illegal, that
 stunt you just pulled, right?

MICHAEL

Are you arresting me, officer?

POLICE OFFICER

I asked you a question.

MICHAEL

Are you arresting me, officer?

POLICE OFFICER

(getting
 pissed, staying
 cool)

I.D. Slowly.

Michael reaches with one hand into his back pocket.
 Carefully removes his wallet.

A call screeches over the cop's shoulder radio.

DISPATCHER (OS, FILTERED)
 Calling all units in the area of
 Bryant Park: please respond to a
 10-40 in progress. Forty-third
 street between at sixth avenue, we
 have a fatal jump. Repeat all
 units in the area of Bryant Park,
 please respond immediately to a
 10-40 in progress.

The Officer eyes Michael as he reaches to the mic on his
 shoulder.

POLICE OFFICER
 Copy that, dispatch. Officer 317
 en route.
 (to Michael)
 Today's your lucky day.

The Officer turns and jogs away.

Michael, hesitates, then quickly grabs up his parachute and
 dashes toward Jasper.

JASPER
 What... what just happened?

MICHAEL
 Come on! Just go!

The two dash to the subway entrance and disappear
 underground.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - LATER

A video appears on a computer screen. Shaky picture. Erratic
 movement. It's Michael's helmet cam introduction.

MICHAEL - VIDEO
 Hi. This is jump number twelve.
 April...

Michael fast-forwards through this. His phone rings and he
 answers.

MICHAEL
 (to phone)
 Hey. Yeah, I'm watching it now. I
 don't know I'm just watching it
 now.

Scenes from the rooftop whiz by at high speed.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 No. No. Because I told him I
 wouldn't. Yeah, well...

The video arrives at Horace speaking into the camera.
 Michael grabs a pen.

MICHAEL
 (to phone)
 Hang on, hang on...

HORACE - VIDEO
 Ok... go to the Gaslight Bar on
 forty-sixth street and tell them
 to give this to Francis. They'll
 know who it is.

Michael writes this down.

MICHAEL
 (to phone)
 Hang on just... oh really? What
 channel?

He grabs a remote and turns on the tv. Flips a couple
 channels, stopping at a local news report.

HORACE (CONT'D)
 (from video)
 Don't ask any questions and don't
 answer any. Just give to him and
 leave. Ok... that's all for you.
 Oh and, uh... thanks for, uh...
 for trying. Ok. That's all. The
 rest is for Francis.

Michael pauses the video and turns up the volume on the
 television.

TV REPORTER
 ... about the delay... we're going
 to break in here for just a moment
 as... we have details just coming
 in...

MICHAEL
 Yeah, I got it. Yes.

TV REPORTER (CONT'D)
 ... we have reports of police
 closing down parts of forty-third
 street as a man has apparently
 fallen to his death. On the scene
 now is Andrea Sims. Andrea?

The picture cuts to...

ANDREA SIMS

The NYPD has closed off forty-third street between fifth and sixth avenues as an investigation begins into the circumstances surrounding a man who fell to his death less than one hour ago. Unconfirmed reports indicate that this man is Horace Menkin, the key witness in the federal case against the Giaramita crime family - a case that has taken over a decade to build. It is unclear at this time whether or not the death is a suicide or if any foul play involved.

MICHAEL

(to phone)

I'll call you back.

Michael hangs up. Mutes the television. He looks at Horace's face staring back at him from the computer. Play.

HORACE - VIDEO

(a pause,
then...)

Ok Frank. You win you goddamn sonofabitch you win. You got what you want. I'm out of the picture now let them go. Please... please let my... please you promised. Sarah, baby... I love... I love you. I'm sorry about... I wish there was another way. I... tell Mary her daddy loves her and that...

(he's held it
together until
now)

... I'm sorry. I love you... I love you both so much.

Horace takes a deep breath and quickly composes himself, stands and turns away.

Michael pauses the video and stares at the screen.

The television shows a picture of Horace - well dressed and smiling.

FADE OUT.