

Beautiful

By Emma Ferguson

“You look beautiful!”

I look up from trying to put in my links, surprised to see my mom leaning against the door frame of my bedroom.

“Mom, don’t say that. I’m handsome or macho!” I correct jokingly, dismissing the compliment, as my mom walks into the room to sit softly on the side of the bed, half made and covered in the clothes I was wearing earlier.

Putting on a suit is no joke, and making sure it looks perfect is even harder. But it’s prom, so might as well go all out, right? I smooth my hands down the side of my satin jacket, abandoning putting in the cuff links to admire the texture of my suit in the mirror. I had gone shopping with dad a week ago to find the perfect suit for the occasion, one that I could use again in the future. After three different shops all scattered across the city, I finally found this one.

Putting a spin on a classic look, I chose the black satin jacket to go with the nice black slacks, white button up shirt and matching black satin tie. I felt like James Bond when I tried it on for the first time—even did the hand guns in the dressing room mirror, not that anyone needs to know that.

“No,” my mom says earnestly, “Aaron, you look beautiful.”

I look up to see her with tears shining in her eyes as she looks at me in the suit. Overwhelmed by the emotion behind that statement, I look down at my shoes and put my hands in my pocket. I’d never thought of myself as beautiful before. I wasn’t super muscular like my wrestling friend Jake or super skinny like my friend Haris. I’d always told myself I was going to start going to the gym and get super fit, but it just never happened. I usually tried to not think about the way my body looked because it makes me anxious when I focus on it too much, my chest tightening painfully. But it sounds so true coming out of my mom’s mouth.

“Thanks Mom,” I say back softly.

This is the closest I’ve felt to being beautiful. Is that weird? It almost makes me sad to think that this is something that I haven’t felt before. My eyes start watering for an entirely different reason than my mom’s.

I turn from my mom, facing myself to look into the mirror again as I, once again, start to attempt to put my cufflinks on. My mom’s feet patter softly over the carpeted floor as she walks up beside me, wrapping her arms around me to put her arms on my shoulders in a tender embrace. We make eye contact in the mirror just as I finish the last cuff, both of our eyes sparkling, and we share a private smile.

She rubs my arms and then leaves the room to let me finish getting ready. I go and take the seat where my mom was and slip on my nice dress shoes, shiny from the polish my dad helped me give them last night. And as I stand up to go downstairs, I glance one last time at myself in the mirror and whisper quietly to myself, "I am beautiful," before I quickly wipe under my eyes and hurry out of the room ready for a fun night.