

NIKKO

Written by

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EXT. KUHL HOUSE - DAY

It is a calm summer afternoon in an upper-class suburban neighborhood. Large houses on landscaped properties stand a respectable distance from one another. Old trees line the cracked street, which is shadowed under a canopy of green. NIKKO KUHL, a handsome, 14 year old boy, sits cross-legged on a flat boulder outside his house, on the far right hand side of the property, staring. He is looking at a forest opposite the property that fills two large, empty lots.

A car passes. Nikko watches it.

After a moment, a moving truck passes followed by a minivan. A girl about Nikko's age, ELLA KAISER, looks out the window of the van at Nikko. She smiles. Two taller, heftier silhouettes occupy the front seats of the van.

A woman in her late forties, once described as very beautiful, stands in the doorway of the house. This is ANNE KUHL, Nikko's mother.

ANNE

Nikko!

Nikko sits for a moment as though he does not hear her.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Nikko, honey, it's time for dinner.

Nikko slowly turns his head towards his mother. He slides off the boulder and walks to the house.

INT. KUHL DINING ROOM - DAY

The Kuhl family sits around a mahogany table in an eclectic but ornately decorated dining room - a Japanese scrawl painting on the wall, a small modern statue of two naked bodies entwined on a ledge next to a robust Grecian bowl filled with rocks from the dead sea. The dining room chairs are antique, baroque. At the head of the table sits RICHARD KUHL, digging into a steak. He wears a business suit.

RICHARD

Molly, eat your steak.

MOLLY, a small, pretty, 11 year old girl, stares disdainfully at her plate.

MOLLY

I told you, Dad. I'm a vegetarian.

RICHARD
You're what?

He looks at his Anne.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
What's this?

Anne shrugs her shoulders and takes a sip of white wine out of a large glass in front of her.

MOLLY
Dad, I told you this like a week ago.

RICHARD
Molly, eat the steak your mother made for you.

MOLLY
I can't.

She pushes the plate away.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
I'm allergic to cruelty.

Anne stifles a laugh, spitting some wine back into the glass with discretion.

RICHARD
For heaven's sakes, Molly!

ANNE
Richard- it's fine.
(to Molly)
Eat the green beans, sweetheart.

Anne takes another sip of wine as Molly looks suspiciously at the serving bowl of green beans. She forks three beans onto her plate and begins arranging them vertically with her fingers.

Anne places her hand on Richard's tensed forearm.

ANNE (CONT'D)
The new neighbors moved in today.

Richard turns Anne.

ANNE (CONT'D)
The Kaiser's. I spoke to Mrs. Kaiser today on the phone.
(MORE)

ANNE (CONT'D)

They moved into the Denson house.
We should have them over.

Richard glances at Nikko and back to Anne.

RICHARD

What does the husband do?

ANNE

I believe he's a lawyer.

Molly has now constructed the outline of a house made of green beans on her plate.

RICHARD

Hm.

NIKKO

Hm.

Nikko looks at his father, who is watching Molly arrange the beans on her plate. ,

ANNE

They have a daughter who's also going to be a high school freshman in the fall.

RICHARD

Molly, don't play with the damn beans. Eat your dinner.

MOLLY

There could be meat juice on it!

RICHARD

God damn it, Molly!

Nikko gently rocks back and forth.

ANNE

Richard, please.

RICHARD

(to Anne)

No. I'm sick of you encouraging this behavior.

Anne falls silent.

Nikko puts his hands over his ears.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Molly, you will eat the damn steak
and that's the last I'll hear of
it.

MOLLY
No!

Nikko begins to shake his head.

RICHARD
That is enough!

Richard reaches for Molly's plate and accidentally knocks over Anne's glass of wine. It breaks as hit hits the ground, spilling all over a pristine oriental rug, shards spreading across the hardwood.

Anne, Richard and Molly stare at the broken glass in silence.

Nikko runs out of the room, his chair falling over behind him.

ANNE
Nikko, wait!

Richard stares at the glass.

ANNE (CONT'D)
You should know better.

She looks at Molly.

ANNE (CONT'D)
The both of you.

Anne walks into the kitchen with the bottle of wine.

EXT. KUHL HOUSE - DAY

Nikko sits on the boulder, gently rocking back and forth. The dining room window is open.

Anne and Richard are heard ARGUING in the background.

INT. KUHL DINING ROOM - DAY

Anne crouches down to the floor, collecting the pieces of the broken glass, a fresh glass on the table.

Richard paces near the open window.

RICHARD

I just don't know what we're going to do with him.

ANNE

What we're going to do with him?

RICHARD

How can he be expected to start High School this fall?

Anne picks up a shard.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

He shaking out there on that stupid rock over a broken glass.

ANNE

Dr. Gorman thinks that Nikko needs to be socialized.

RICHARD

Dr. Gorman. Anne- what about the cafeteria?

EXT. KUHL HOUSE - DAY

Nikko sits on the boulder, looking at the street. Ella walks towards him, wearing a bizarre combination of clothing. Nikko takes no notice of her.

ELLA

Hey.

Nikko looks her blankly up and down.

ELLA (CONT'D)

I'm Ella.

Nikko holds his gaze for a moment before returning to watching the street.

ELLA (CONT'D)

My family just moved in down the block.

Nikko watches as a car passes by.

Ella watches Nikko watch the car.

ELLA (CONT'D)

See you later?

Ella smiles at Nikko and heads down the street.

Anne opens the door to the house and stands in the doorway.

ANNE

Nikko, honey. It's time to go.

DR. GORMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Nikko sits, squished between his parents on a small, dingy couch. The walls of the stark room are covered with pictures of various cats dressed in different outfits. DR. GORMAN, an exceptionally frail man in his sixties, scrawls in a notebook.

The clock TICKS in the background.

Richard sits forward in his chair, his chin in his hands.

RICHARD

Dr. Gorman...

Dr. Gorman continues to write, his eyes glued to the notepad.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

We're just not sure that public school is the right environment for Nikko.

Anne looks down.

DR. GORMAN

Hmm.

RICHARD

Mater Dei was very accommodating for him, but public school seems a bit... hectic.

DR. GORMAN

The public schools in this district are exceptional, Mr. Kuhl, I can assure you.

He makes a note.

Richard cranes his neck.

DR. GORMAN (CONT'D)

Nikko is a very bright boy.

Dr. Gorman looks at Nikko, who is staring at a picture of a cat dressed in a sailor's uniform, and smiles.

DR. GORMAN (CONT'D)
Very bright.

He continues to examine Nikko for a moment before turning his attention back to Richard and Anne.

DR. GORMAN (CONT'D)
I'm very encouraged by his progress
over the past few months.
Socialization will be key in
helping Nikko to reach his full
potential.

He smiles at Nikko.

EXT. DR. GORMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Anne and Richard walk toward their car, Nikko trailing behind them.

ANNE
Well, I think that was a very
productive meeting.

RICHARD
I think that we need to find a
doctor who is more concerned with
our son's well being than with
pictures of deranged cats.

Richard, Anne and Nikko get into the car.

INT. CAR - DAY

RICHARD
He needs a new doctor.

ANNE
He's in the car.

Richard glances in the rear view mirror back at his son.

RICHARD
Our son deserves the best doctor we
can find.

ANNE
Oh, another one. That's only four
this year.

EXT. KUHL HOUSE - DAY

Nikko sits on his boulder, watching the woods across the street.

Ella walks toward him.

ELLA
Hi.

Nikko looks at her.

NIKKO
Hi, lady.

Ella smiles.

ELLA
My name is Ella. What's your name?

NIKKO
Nikko.

Nikko sits in thought for a moment.

ELLA
Can I sit?

She motions to the space on the stone beside him.

NIKKO
Sit down, lady. Lady, sit down.

Ella hops up, making sure to leave a decent sized space between them.

NIKKO (CONT'D)
What's your name, lady?

ELLA
My name is Ella.

NIKKO
Hi, lady. Who are you?

ELLA
I live down the street. I just moved here.

NIKKO
I live here.

ELLA
I like your house.

Nikko nods.

ELLA (CONT'D)
How old are you?

NIKKO
Fourteen.

ELLA
Me too. What school do you go to?

Nikko doesn't respond.

ELLA (CONT'D)
I'm going to go to West this fall,
are you?

Nikko looks out into the woods.

Ella looks at him, disappointed that she's lost him.

Molly walks past the dining room window. She stops at the sight of Nikko and Ella and watches.

Ella hops off the boulder.

ELLA (CONT'D)
I'd better go, Nikko. I'll see you
later though, OK?

NIKKO
OK.

ELLA
Bye.

NIKKO
Bye, Ella.

She smiles at the sound of her name. Nikko watches her until she turns the corner and disappears.