

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

NICO'S DEMISE

written by

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EXT. SHORELINE - MORNING

An overcast sky covers a coastal town. It's unusually warm outside. The beach is practically empty.

NICO, an anxious 8-year-old in a lavender bathing suit, watches a tiny wave crash and lap the sand. Before the water touches his feet, he steps back.

His DAD, 45, is already in the water, which is up to his stomach.

DAD
(waving him over)
Come on, Nico!

Nico takes a step forward, but hesitates as another wave crashes. He breathes in and runs towards his father as the water splashes everywhere.

EXT. WATER - CONTINUOUS

Nico finally arrives. His Dad crouches. Nico wraps his arms around his Dad's neck. Nico's breathing heavy - getting there was no easy task.

DAD
Ready?

Nico nods. They take a deep breath. Dad submerges himself and swims.

EXT. WATER - LATER

Nico and his Dad walk out of the water, smiling. Out of the corner of his eye, Nico spots a glimmer on the sand. Dad, unaware, heads for their beach towel. Nico approaches the glimmer.

EXT. SAND - CONTINUOUS

Nico, now alone, stares at the glimmer. It's a smooth gelatinous shape on the sand that's reflecting sunlight.

It's a dead jellyfish.

He crouches and extends his arm. As his index finger gets closer to the jellyfish, Nico's breathing intensifies. He's only an inch away from it when-

DAD
Nico!

Nico flinches.

DAD (cont'd)
You're gonna catch a cold!

Nico runs to his Dad.

EXT. BEACH TOWEL - MOMENTS LATER

Dad wraps Nico in a towel. They sit in their folding chairs.

DAD
Did you find a pretty shell?

Nico shakes his head.

INT. TV ROOM - NIGHT

Nico, in his pajamas and laying on the floor, is watching a nature documentary. It's about lions in the savannah of Africa. A soothing British voice narrates the images.

NARRATOR
(from the TV)
The males fight. The older lion must stand his ground...

Two lions brutally attack each other, scratching and biting. The younger lion is shown laying still on the ground. He's bleeding. Nico leans forward.

NARRATOR (cont'd)
The older male emerges victorious. The aspiring younger lion lays on the ground, motionless. His attempt to socially climb has failed. And so, he must now pay the highest price... A slow and agonizing death.

MOM (O.S.)
Nico! Supper!

Nico looks at the bleeding lion one more time. He sprints out of the room.

INT. DINNER TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Nico, an only child, sits at the table with his parents. We do not see the heads of Dad, 45, or MOM, 45. We only see up to their collarbones. They're eating homemade stew.

MOM
D'you do anything interesting today,
Nico?

NICO
I went to the beach.

MOM
Anything new?

NICO
I found a dead jellyfish.

Mom sighs.

DAD
(mouth full)
When?

NICO
After we were in the water.

DAD
Why do you like the dead jellyfish so
much?

Nico shrugs his shoulders.

DAD (cont'd)
I used to hunt for crabs when I was
your age. In fact-

MOM
Roger, the kid's eight and he's heard
that story at least a hundred times
already. Tell'im something new.

DAD
As I was saying, before I was rudely
interrupted-

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Nico takes a step forward. He's breathing heavy. He crouches and extends his index finger. Just before touching it, the jellyfish sparks. Nico's arm flinches.

Once again he extends his arm and finger. He carefully approaches the dead animal. As he pokes the jellyfish, a bolt of electricity travels up his arm and engulfs him in a white flash. His skin chars and his body convulses.

Nico dies instantly, and his body plummets to the sand.

EXT. THE UNKNOWN - CONTINUOUS

Nico wakes up in a world of darkness. It's pitch black, but we still manage to see Nico, who can barely breath. He stares down at his legs, which are now disintegrating. Nico cries as he completely disintegrates into darkness.

INT. BED - MIDNIGHT

Nico wakes up. He's sweaty, out of breath. He gets out of bed.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He walks towards his PARENTS' BEDROOM.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door is locked. There's no light coming from underneath. Nico hears Dad and Mom snoring. He turns back.

INT. BED - CONTINUOUS

Nico tucks himself back in and hides beneath the covers. He's shaking.

INT. VINYL ROOM - MORNING

In a series of cuts, Nico searches through his parents' records. He finds an AC/DC album and skips to the track "Back in Black". After that, he plays a Led Zeppelin album and skips to "Stairway to Heaven". He memorizes each and every word of both songs meticulously.

INT. BED - MIDNIGHT

Nico stares at the ceiling and takes a deep breath. He closes his eyes.

NICO

(whispers)

"There's a lady who's sure
All that glitters is gold
And she's buying a stairway to heaven
When she gets there she knows
If the stores are all closed
With a word
she can get what she came for"

INT. DINNER TABLE - MORNING

Nico stares at his olive oil and tomato toast. He's not hungry today. Dad does the crossword while Mom eats.

MOM

How'd you sleep, Nico?

Nico ignores his Mom. He leaves the table in a hurry.

MOM (cont'd)

Nico! Finish your breakfast!

Nico does not turn back.

INT. BED - CONTINUOUS

From underneath his bed, Nico pulls out an empty shoe box. He runs downstairs.

INT. ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nico grabs a fisherman's sweater from the entryway closet.

NICO

I'll be back in a little bit!

MOM

Honey, you barely ate!

Nico slams the door.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

The shoe box is opened, its lid carefully slotted underneath. Nico is pacing frantically.

NICO

Where are you guys?

Nico spots a crab's shell and puts it in his box. He carefully examines the sand around him. He walks and spots something yellow. It's a seagull's beak. He adds it to the box.

He approaches the water. There's a glimmering eye in the sand. It's a recently deceased fish. Nico waits for the tide to lower. He picks up the slimy fish, throws it in the box, and quickly runs away from the tide.

INT. DINNER TABLE - LATER

An hour later, his parents are still at the table, enjoying their slow morning. Nico walks in. He's not carrying his box.

NICO
Where's my tent? The one I took to camp.

DAD
Are you camping?

NICO
Yes. I need my tent.

DAD
Tonight?

Nico nods.

MOM
Did you check your closet?

Nico leaves the table in a hurry.

EXT. BACKYARD - DUSK

Nico is setting up his olive green tent. He's struggling.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nico walks in. His parents haven't changed out from their pajamas. They lay in bed, reading.

NICO
Mom, Dad.

They answer without looking up.

MOM
What's up?

DAD
Tell me.

NICO
I need help to set up my tent.

MOM
You know it's gonna be cold out tonight.

NICO
It's important.

DAD
Why do you want to camp all of a sudden?

NICO
I like camping.

DAD
You never camp.

MOM
Just help him out, will you?

Dad gets out of bed.

DAD
You know why married men are always hunched over, Nico?

MOM
Here we go...

DAD
Because they're always saying "Yes, honey. Of course, honey. Right away, honey."

With every word of affirmation his Dad hunches further. Nico doesn't get the joke.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Dad stares at the tent parts on the grass.

DAD
You couldn't get it to work?

Nico shakes his head.

DAD (cont'd)
So you need my help.

Nico nods.

DAD (cont'd)
I'll help you if you help me.

NICO
Okay.

DAD
Promise?

Dad extends his pinky finger. Nico does the same. They shake pinkies. The deal is made.

DAD (cont'd)
From now on, we need you to be more vocal. Just tell us where you're going next time, even if it's the beach.

(beat)
You can't just leave the table in a hurry after your mother made you breakfast. Okay?

NICO
Okay.

INT./EXT. TENT - LATER

Inside, his box is waiting for him. There's also a flashlight, a sleeping bag, and the thickest blanket his Mom could find.

Nico opens the box. The smell is pungent. Nico frowns. He's cut the fish into thirds. He lays them out on the floor of the tent, forming a triangle. In the middle he places the crab's shell and the seagull's beak.

Nico, not convinced by the triangular shape, forms a small circle with his fish parts and crab shell. He places the beak in the middle.

He tucks himself into the sleeping bag, flashlight in hand, and waits.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT./EXT. TENT - HOURS LATER

Night has come, and a strong gust of wind wakes Nico up. Startled, he sits upright and looks at his creation. It's still in a circle. He lays back down and waits.

NICO

(whispers)

"I've been let loose from the noose... I've got nine lives, cat's eyes..."

EXT. THE UNKNOWN - LATER

Nico opens his eyes again, but he only sees a black sky. His tent is gone, along with his flashlight, sleeping bag and blanket. He looks at the ground, now nuclear white, and finds his circle is gone.

He stands.

Silence surrounds him. He screams, but sounds does not travel. He looks down at his legs, afraid they may disintegrate. A booming voice speaks.

VOICE

ENOUGH!

Nico flinches. He spins in circles, searching for clues. He runs, but seems to cover no distance. He screams again, to no avail. The ground sinks. Nico tries to fight it, but there's nothing to hold onto.

THE VOICE is now high-pitched and serene.

VOICE (cont'd)

"One cannot live if they only think about death".

INT. BED - MORNING

Nico, breathing heavy, wakes up in his own BED and sprints to the-

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

His tent is still there. He peaks inside.

INT./EXT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

The circle of fish, crab and beak, and his flashlight, are gone. His sleeping bag and blanket are still there.

THE END