

NICKY'S SUMMER OF LOVE

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

NICKY, a solemn 6-year old girl lies spread-eagled on a springy overgrown lawn, staring at the sky as the faint chop-chop of a helicopter grows slowly louder. Somewhere in the distance men shout. The front door of a modest brown shingle house springs open emitting strains of "Grazing in the Grass" and an imperious old woman in a well-cut suit steps out.

GANANA

Nicky!

Nicky scrambles up and disappears into the hydrangeas against the front of the house, where she crouches by a large coil of garden hose.

GANANA (CONT'D)

Nicky, come along inside.

The bushes tremble slightly. The chopper grows oppressively louder.

EXT. TELEGRAPH AVENUE AND DWIGHT WAY, BERKELEY - CONTINUOUS

A few dozen police with gas masks and plastic shields battle a crowd of young demonstrators in front of the barbed wire barricade. Shouts, screams and tear gas - the cops charge the crowd and kids flood down the avenue and scatter off on the side streets. The chopper thrums overhead.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicky lies in the dark, eyes glistening. Excited voices and table thumping from downstairs.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In her pjs, Nicky opens her window and climbs out onto the wide ledge. She climbs down the tree to nestle in the fork where she can see into a dimly-lit

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FRED and BARBARA, a handsome post-beat generation white couple and JIMMY, a middle-aged black man in baggy tan clothing, jawing around the table over a jug of cheap Zinfandel.

FRED

(stubbing out a
cigarette)

No one's safe on the streets. These
fucking trigger-happy cowboys are
all over the place.

Fred is dark and lean, with deep-set eyes and a strong nose.

FRED (CONT'D)

The Berkeley one's aren't so bad but now they've got these thugs in uniform over from Oakland and Richmond - I tell you Jimmy, they scare the shit out of me and you know I'm not afraid of a fight. The other night I was out for a walk before curfew over on Dana and I saw a couple of Richmond cops strutting towards me swinging their arms like they wanted to bash someone's head in -

JIMMY

(interrupting)

They fuck with you?

FRED

Shit no, I wasn't gonna get within reach of their clubs! I ducked into someone's yard and jumped a fence to get back here.

JIMMY

They didn't see you?

FRED

They did but they couldn't get their fat asses over that fence fast enough with all their gear.

They grin at each other.

JIMMY

You really think they're gonna fuck with a University Professor? What about a black man?

Fred taps another Kent Light out of the pack.

FRED

They didn't look like they were gonna kiss my ass and let me go. But yeah. And it's way past curfew now old man so ...

He lights the cigarette.

FRED (CONT'D)

...looks like you're spending the night on our sofa.

Jimmy nods, swirling the dregs of the wine in his juice glass.

JIMMY

If it was me, if it was me they woulda
FLOWN over that fence to catch my
Negro ass.

They laugh ruefully. CRAIG, a skinny freckled tween with long hair and burning brown eyes bounces in. Barbara reaches out for him and smooths his hair.

BARBARA

(hoisting the jug to
pour Jimmy some more
wine)

Bed.

CRAIG

I'm not tired. Can I have some wine
Mom?

Barbara hits her cigarette and smiles at him indulgently.

BARBARA

You can have ONE sip of mine - then
you go to bed.

CRAIG

I can't sleep.

Barbara puts out her smoke, picks up the overflowing ashtray and pushes her chair back - good-looking and graceful rather than pretty. As she rises

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS

Nicky scrambles back up the tree.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Nicky's in bed, still awake. Her parents voices and footsteps ascend the wooden stairs, one last joke from Jimmy.

FRED

If you're not busy tomorrow stick
around. Barb's grandmother is cooking
us an Arabic meal.

JIMMY

(o.s.)

Yeah man, might just do that if the
craziness is still on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Nicky stands by the sofa looking at Jimmy, asleep under a green army blanket with his back to her.

Beside him is an open army rucksack with a camera in it.

EXT. FRONT YARD - LATE AFTERNOON

Nicky sits on the path to the left of the house with a jar smashing fuschia berries and potato bugs into a pulp and scooping them into her jar of poison.

EXT. PORCH

The front door opens and Barbara steps out wearing a pink mini dress and Jackie O glasses.

BARBARA

Nicky!

Nicky tunnels into the bushes that line the path and crawls towards the backyard to a dense patch where she can hide under the open KITCHEN WINDOW.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Dave Brubek's "Take Five" is playing.

GANANA

...Seems to spend most of her time
in one bush or another...

BARBARA

Let me do that Grandmother.

GANANA

(handing Barbara the
dish she was washing)
I'm simply saying, she spends
altogether too much time alone. I
haven't gotten a word out of her.

BARBARA

(grinning)
Well, she always shows up for food,
so maybe you can get a word out of
her then.

Ganana picks up a knife and starts chopping parsley.

GANANA

I don't believe it's sanitary to be
so very introverted. Perhaps you'll
let me take her out somewhere.

BARBARA

Are you sure? Things are a little
out of hand at the moment...

GANANA

My dear Barbara you're talking to a woman who has traveled from Palestine to the Sudan...I've camped with Bedouin...do you remember this medallion? A gift from Emperor Haille Sellassie...it shall be yours when I pass...

EXT. BACKYARD

Steppenwolf's "Born to Be Wild" plays on the record player. Ganana tends kebabs on the hibachi. Barbara lays mismatched fiestaware on a table where Fred, Jimmy and the kids sit, Nicky's solemn eyes glued to Craig's pale freckly face.

JIMMY

You gotta be shitting me.

CRAIG

I shit you not. I was across the schoolyard when it happened.

JIMMY

You go to Willard? What were the cops even doing there?

CRAIG

They chased the demonstrators all the way down Telegraph past Derby. These two pigs had one guy down on the ground and they were kicking the shit out of him. This kid Mark was near the fence with his camera and he started taking pictures and one of the riot cops shot him with buckshot right through the fence.

His lip trembles, brown eyes fierce.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

(outraged)

In the newspaper they said he was 21! He wasn't! He's like my age! Can I have some wine Mom?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Nicky stands looking at sleeping Jimmy, his open rucksack, and the camera. She reaches one plump finger out and touches the camera. Jimmy shifts in his sleep and Nicky poofs out of there.

EXT. BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Nicky lies on the slanted roof of an old shed smothered in ivy. A screen door squeaks and slams shut. Nicky freezes.

GANANA

Nicky. Nicky, are you out here?

Nicky swivels onto her belly and creeps, marine style, to the top of the roof to peer through the leaves at her great grandmother on the back porch.

EXT. PORCH - EVENING

Fred comes charging up onto the porch. Nicky crouches behind a large wooden box stamped with chinese characters that serves as a planter for a fuschia bush.

FRED

(shouting and stomping)

Where the fuck are they? I don't even have the motherfucking car to go look for them!

Ganana appears at the open door, calm and imperious as always.

GANANA

I think it's time to call in the police, Fred. But if they are together, and in the car, they should be alright.

Headlights finger the street. Fred bounds down the stairs and throws up his arms in relief as Barbara pulls up with Craig beside her in a station wagon the size of a tank.

FRED

JESUS fucking CHRIST Barbara where the HELL have you been? I've been out of my FUCKING mind! I was about to call the cops...

Barbara gets out, repressed rage in her cool WASPish face. Craig, on the other hand, is hopping mad.

CRAIG

The cops ARRESTED me Dad! I shit you not!

FRED

Barbara, is this true?!

She nods grimly.

FRED (CONT'D)
(to Craig)
Were you hanging out at People's
Park again?!

CRAIG
(defensively)
I didn't do anything! They said I
was out past curfew but I wasn't!
It was like 7:45 and I was like one
block away.

He gestures up the street towards Telegraph.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
I told them my house was on the next
block and it's not curfew yet" and
they just laughed and one of them
goes "Well then we'll just take you
for a little drive around town before
we go down to the station."

BARBARA
(trembling with rage)
Apparently they didn't like the length
of his hair. They kept calling him
hippie and asking him why he didn't
cut his hair.

FRED
Did they hurt him? I swear if those
motherfuckers even TOUCHED so much
as a STRAND of his hair...

BARBARA
He's okay, he's fine.

GANANA
Let's all go inside before they send
for the paddy wagon. Nicky, come
out from behind that planter.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicky lies in bed listening to Fred shouting his fear out
downstairs.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Nicky stares solemnly into the mirror. Raises the kitchen
shears, unwieldy in her small hand. Grabs a lock of hair
and starts cutting.

INT. CRAIG'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Nicky, hair like a molting artichoke, stands by Craig's sleeping form with the scissors. Craig's face is plastered against the pillow, mouth open, exhausted by the night's events. She reaches out slowly for his long hair.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Nicky is sitting in a large shallow brass bowl on the floor and spinning around in it.

CRAIG
(O.S. - in a high-
pitched wavering
voice)

Moooooom? Daaaaaad? Someone cut my hair in the night!

Nicky stops spinning. A door slams open.

FRED
(O.S.)
What the hell is going on NOW?!

Two pairs of footsteps thud across the floor. A pause.

BARBARA
(O.S.)
Oh, no!

Nicky leaps out of the bowl and scrambles into

INT. NICKY'S CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Where she sits perfectly still among the shoes with her arms around her knees, eyes as round and shiny as marbles.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fred, Barbara and Craig are looking at Craig's unexpected haircut in the mirror.

CRAIG
(sobbing)
I look like TWIGGY!

Barbara can't quite repress a laugh. Craig wails loudly.

FRED
For crying out LOUD Barbara!

INT. ENTRYWAY - MORNING

Nicky, dressed for an outing in coat and poufy dress, black patent-leather mary jane's and ankle socks - and her artichoke hair - clutches the hem of her mother's short skirt, chin tucked down and brow furrowed. Ganana's hand reaches down to her. She stares at it with stolid refusal.

GANANA

Come along.

Nicky's fists clench her resistance.

GANANA (CONT'D)

There may be a treat afterwards...

Nicky looks up slowly, then drops her chin again.

BARBARA

Oh, now Grandmother, after what she did...

GANANA

Indulge me Barbara. Who knows when I'll see my grandchildren again. Now, Nicky, you can just take hold of my little finger. But when we come to a street we must hold hands while crossing.

Nicky's fat hand reaches out and grasps Ganana's pinky.

EXT. TELEGRAPH AVENUE AND DWIGHT WAY - MORNING

Ganana and Nicky progress slowly up a silent, empty Telegraph Ave, littered with the detritus of yesterday's riot. Garbage, broken glass, bricks, burnt junk. Shop windows boarded up. Ganana guides Nicky around a small pile of garbage.

EXT. TELEGRAPH AVE AND DURANT AVE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

As Ganana and Nicky approach a shop with a spiraling barber pole Nicky stops suddenly and starts rubbing her eyes furiously. A whimper escapes her. Then she howls.

GANANA

Don't rub your eyes child! It's tear gas! Quick, let's get into the barber's and we'll flush out your eyes with water.

INT. BARBER SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Ganana is holding Nicky's head still under the tap of a sink, the barber hovering next to her, and Nicky is crying.

GANANA

(to the barber)

...tear gas left over from yesterday's festivities, I suppose. Did you feel it? It's not very strong now but clearly enough to upset a child.

INT. BARBER SHOP - LATER

Nicky, fairly well preoccupied with a tootsie-roll pop that fills her cheeks, ignores the barber snipping her hair into a boy's cut. Ganana, seated nearby, watches her carefully in the mirror while seeming to speak to the barber.

GANANA

...And so I told my friend, "Shy, nonsense! Your so-called shyness is only a kind of selfishness. Why not think of someone besides yourself? Perhaps they would like for you to talk to them. Perhaps they'd like a smile from you. Forget about your own feelings now and then and consider how others are feeling. Everyone likes to feel that others care about them.

Nicky's eyes meet Ganana's briefly in the mirror, then she sucks her lollipop with renewed attention. The radio is playing "Do You Know the Way to San Jose."

GANANA (CONT'D)

Well, Mr. Brewster, that frail, crippled young woman began thinking of others, and trying to make others feel comfortable instead of worrying about how lame and pockmarked she was. That homely, deformed girl with an atrocious New York accent soon found she did have something to give. She became the most popular and outgoing person I've ever known.

The Barber murmurs, bows politely and continues snipping.

EXT. TELEGRAPH AVE AND CHANNING WAY - LATER

Ganana and Nicky maneuver around some bricks and boards. Nicky's hand is clasped in her Great grandmother's.

GANANA

...And so, we climbed down off our camels and walked the rest of the way! And that night, what do you suppose we had for supper?

NICKY

Spaghetti?

GANANA

Dates! Dates and camel milk.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

A helicopter thrums in the distance. Nicky jumps down from the first step, climbs up two steps and jumps, climbs three steps and jumps again. She is about to jump from the fourth step when shouts and screams are heard. She freezes. The helicopter grows louder and louder. She trots out to the sidewalk to look up the street. Two young men and a woman are running towards her.

LONG-HAIRED BOY

(shouting)

Look for a hose!

A short block beyond them, cops and demonstrators are running south along Telegraph Ave. Nicky backs away. The strangers are shouting and stumbling and crying and rubbing their eyes as they run. Nicky stares round-eyed for a moment and then runs and disappears into the bushes in front of the house.

The helicopter is hovering overhead now, deafening. A water-drenched Nicky emerges from the bushes grasping the garden hose. Laboriously, she lugs it across the lawn and waits solemnly, holding the hose out for the approaching demonstrators.

NICKY

(sternly)

People. You must flush out your eyes.

Ganana appears on the porch.

GANANA

Nicky! Come inside.

NICKY

But Ganana. The people have tear gas in their eyes.

Ganana wavers - then descends the steps as fast as her old knees permit. She reaches the sidewalk as the demonstrators converge on Nicky and fall to their knees on the lawn. Nicky relinquishes the hose to the girl. Ganana looks up the street towards Telegraph; it is empty.

Barbara comes running out the front door.

BARBARA
Nicky! Inside NOW.

Barbara dashes past to the sidewalk and looks up towards the Ave, then up at the chopper. She turns to the demonstrators on her lawn.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
(over the sound of
the chopper)
You're safe here.

Nicky looks up at Ganana.

GANANA
(quietly, proudly, to
Nicky)
You'll be alright now.

She holds out her hand. Nicky looks at it, and turns to her mother, who is standing guard over the demonstrators with fierce resolve on her face. Nicky takes Ganana's hand. As they walk up the path towards the house, where the door stands open, the sound of the chopper recedes and "Smile a Little Smile For Me" can be heard playing within.