

THE FOREST BOY

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. ONORO - SUNSET

Onoro is a hub of tranquility that 873 New Zealanders call home.

The calming town is located about 35 miles south of *Nelson* on the South Island. *This* is how it looks in 1971.

The only aspect of the town that appears OUT OF PLACE is the HUGE, MENACING FOREST directly west.

INT: NOMURA'S NOODLES - AFTER HOURS

Nomura's. If a soul could ever find solace in a wooden box of polished floors, short-legged tables, and artistically etched walls, it would be at Nomura's.

And the food is f**king AMAZING.

THREE FRIENDS AND AN EAVESDROPPER are left in the restaurant.

AKIRA NOMURA (57) is the proprietor and head chef of Nomura's Noodles and a town-proclaimed *Noodle Master*. Pig-bellied and chubby-cheeked, he grants a lot of life to the phrase "A fat chef is a good chef".

NIKITA BORISOVICH LEBEDEV, MD (65) is as complex as his name would suggest. His gentle blue eyes and wide smile never fail to lighten his friends.

LOUIE BROWN (41), the only born New Zealander of the bunch, is a stone-handed carpenter that never married and never plans to; he doesn't like talking about it.

As for the eavesdropper -

JACKIE FOSTER (73) is a WWI veteran and works as Onoro's grave-keeper. His eight fingers and lame eye has always been subject to FEAR from the towns-children and DISTRUST from their parents.

The three friends are sitting together near the back of the dining room. Jackie is nearby, respectful enough not to intrude on their conversation.

Empty bowls of noodle soup and Japanese beer crowd the smoothed-over table.

AKIRA
(drunkenly) (to Louie)
A man divided between several women
is not a man!

LOUIE
And a man divided between several
bottles of beer doesn't know what
he's talking about.

AKIRA
(chuckling)
Now you may not be as drunk as me,
but I know a loner when I see him.

NIKITA
(to Louie)
Ironic, isn't it? The more women
you get, the lonelier you become.

LOUIE
Both of yous' are spinnin' yarn.

The stench of beer on Nikita's lips can almost be smelt
through the screen.

NIKITA
The world is beautiful, Lou, but
without someone to share it with -
it's like having all this ice
cream, and no one... All this -
chocolate sprinkle scoop ice cream,
or whatever you New Zealanders
like, marmite or something, and
it's just -

LOUIE
You're munted, Doc.

NIKITA
Let me talk, Lou. As I was saying,
all this ice cream -

INT: KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen, congested with grimy pots and pans, has a
carpeted space towards the front with tables and a sofa.

Within the space are THREE CHILDREN, all being subjected to
the slurred antics of their guardians and family friends.

DAISY BROWN (16), Louie's adopted daughter. She's working on
a short school assignment not due for weeks.

CHARLIE NOMURA (16), Akira's son. A generational trailblazer - he has an intense passion for journalism that upsets his Father because it has nothing to do with cooking noodles.

INDIGO BROWN (8), Louie's adopted son, is Daisy's younger brother by blood. Timid and gentle by nature, Indigo is ironically the only child in town that's *not afraid of Jackie*.

AKIRA (O.S.)
I love you, Louie!

CHARLIE'S POV

The teenager finds his eyes locked onto Daisy. He's IN LOVE WITH HER, he *thinks*, and he's going to make her his WIFE... *maybe*.

Daisy turns over the Charlie, noticing his star-stricken stare.

DAISY
Y-yeah?

Charlie drags himself back into reality.

CHARLIE
Sorry - I'm in outer space.

Daisy gives him a second glance of slight confusion.

Indigo seems busy at work on a DRAWING. A forest, animals, and flowers can be made out.

INT. DINING ROOM - TANDEM

The conversation between the three friends continue.

NIKITA
Loss is the price of love, Lou.

AKIRA
(to Louie)
Your friends have lost, your kids have lost, you probably have lost before and just won't tell us!

LOUIE
But you don't need pain and grief to move forward, friends. That's my point. And no drunken philosophical Nikita lecture will sway me any different.

NIKITA
(defensively)
Who are you calling drunk?

INT: KITCHEN - TANDEM

Indigo approaches Daisy with his drawing.

INDIGO
Do you like it?

Daisy releases her pencil and absorbs the piece.

It exhibits a deep-sea-like sky overlooking a group of dignified evergreen trees with animals of all different shapes and sizes playing in a field of daises in the foreground.

Rich of CHILD-LIKE IMAGINATION and ARTISTIC MATURITY.

DAISY
It's really pretty, but I don't
think a lion would be dancing with
a deer.

Daisy points at the drawn lion and deer, who are on their *hind* legs, dancing a sort of *tango* together.

INDIGO
Why?

DAISY
Because the lion would eat the
deer.

INDIGO
Well, this is a lion that doesn't
eat deer.

Charlie approaches the table and looks at the drawing.

CHARLIE
Very ironic, Indy.

INDIGO
What's "ironic"?

CHARLIE
Like - opposite. You're using
advanced artistic techniques, but
the substance of your art is so
outside the realms of reality.

INDIGO
(dumbfoundedly)
Huh? Is that bad?

DAISY
(to Charlie)
You sound like a pretentious art
critic.

CHARLIE
I'm just saying what I see. It's
very good, Indigo.

EXT. NOMURA'S NOODLES / EXT. TOWN - SOME TIME LATER

Akira and Charlie wave their guests goodbye, and Louie, along with Daisy and Indigo, walk with Nikita in the silence of the night. Jackie trails behind, respectably.

The forest of Evergreen trees SWALLOW the background, FORCING ATTENTION.

Wide shot of the black silhouettes peacefully strolling throughout the town, like a Beatles cover band reenacting the "Abbey Road" album cover with an eco-friendly twist.

Indigo is showing his drawing to Nikita and Louie.

INDIGO
Do you like it? Do you like it?

NIKITA
I-I have no words! What a drawing,
Indigo!

LOUIE
Very nice, Indy. Very good.

Indigo begins to run towards JACKIE with his drawing. Daisy TRIES TO GRAB him back, but Indigo PULLS AWAY from her grip and approaches the lone man.

Jackie grants Indigo a cautious smile, but is obviously very welcoming of his company.

Indigo hands him the drawing. Jackie holds it up to the moonlight, letting his GOOD EYE take in every aspect of the artwork.

INDIGO
Do you like it, Jackie?

JACKIE
Yes, Indy, I do, but where's
Waffles?

INDIGO
He's at home right now.

JACKIE
No - where is he in the drawing?

Jackie lowers the piece to Indigo's height. Indigo points at a brown colored puppy with a MICROPHONE next to a mariachi band of PENGUINS.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Oh, there he is. He has a
microphone?

INDIGO
In the drawing, he can talk. He's
doing stand-up for the penguins.

JACKIE
Charming.

Jackie hands the drawing back to Indigo, and Indigo runs back to his group.

EXT. LOUIE'S HOUSE - LATER INTO THE WALK

The four halt near the front door of the Brown's.

LOUIE
Thanks for joining us tonight,
Niki.

NIKITA
A pleasure, Lou. Always.

ROARRRR!

A LOUD AND BODY-FREEZING SOUND BOOMS the town from the FOREST. Like a LION SCARING AWAY PREDATORS FROM THEIR CUBS.

Indigo JOLTS his head towards the SHADOWY FOREST in the background where the noise just came from.

A *ghostly* cut-out of a large grey jaguar with *shut eyes* blends with her surroundings, woven in between shrubs and evergreen trees. On the jaguar's head is a pair of **HUGE, MILK-WHITE, UNBLINKING EYES**, scowling STRAIGHT AT US.

The other three are *unbothered*.

INDIGO
(to Daisy)
What was that?

DAISY
What was what?

The noise has now been replaced with QUIET SOBS and OCCASIONAL SNIFFLES.

INDIGO
The roar in the forest, just now?

Daisy turns her head towards the arsenal of mischievous evergreens.

The jaguar and the set of eyes have *vanished*.

DAISY
I didn't hear anything.

Indigo turns and SPRINTS towards the forest, a look of ANXIOUS DISTRESS painting his face.

LOUIE
Indigo, are you taking the piss?
Daisy, go get your brother.

Daisy sighs and takes off after Indigo, CATCHING him no more than a dozen paces from Louie.

Indigo looks towards the forest as Daisy drags him back home, unable to fully comprehend what he's witnessing.

Now A RED FOX, a GREEN CAT, and A WHITE BEAR, all cloaked in a *white glow*, can be made out from within the trees, STARING at the boy.

INDIGO
Daisy, look!

Daisy cranes her neck upwards and looks into the forest.

No fox. No cat. No bear.

INT. LOUIE'S HOUSE (INDIGO'S ROOM) - MAYBE AN HOUR LATER

Louie pulls up the blanket drawn with cartoon animals over Indigo's shoulders and kisses him on the forehead.

INDIGO
Dad?

LOUIE

Yes?

INDIGO

Where's Waffles?

LOUIE

Sleeping in his kennel.

INDIGO

Can he sleep with me tonight?

LOUIE

If you like dog hairs in your bed...

Louie whistles a signal, prompting a "HEY" from Daisy, who's trying to sleep.

ENTER WAFFLES BROWN (1 year old), a brown and white Australian Shepherd. Noted as a very CALM AND COLLECTED companion, *no one has ever heard the dog bark.*

Louie pats the foot of the bed. Waffles LEAPS and LANDS at the edge of the bed, circling around, and dropping into a restful spot, snuggled up against Indigo's leg.

INDIGO

Are you sure you didn't hear that roar from the forest? Or see the jaguar?

LOUIE

Yes, Indy. Your imagination is probably just getting the best of you. Get some sleep and we can talk about it when I get home from work tomorrow.

INDIGO

Okay, Dad.

LOUIE

Sweet dreams. I love you.

INDIGO

Love you too.

EXT: FOREST - NIGHTLY HAZE

INDIGO slumbers in his bed, tucked in between two EVERGREEN TREES, bed legs PLANTED into the SOIL of the FOREST.

WAFFLES wakes from the foot of the bed, comes to Indigo, and licks his face awake.

Indigo ARCHES UP, visibly STARTLED of his surroundings.

AN EVAPORATING GLOW FLOATS around the MILLION FOOT TALL TREES. The moon is FULL, and noticeably LARGER than normal.

The stars, normally dots, have MORPHED into CONNECTED CONSTELLATIONS and DRAWINGS OF INSTRUMENTS that TROT about the sky, playing a fascinatingly somber backdrop tune.

Indigo CLUTCHES Waffles in raw fear.

INDIGO
Daisy! Dad! Where are you?

CHANTS start to *radiate* around him. Their sounds are an *accompaniment* to the forest.

The RED FOX, basked in a GHASTLY GLOW, LEAPS onto the foot of the bed.

INDIGO (CONT'D)
Ah!

Waffles points his snout and SHOWS HIS TEETH at the fox. No noise is emitted from the dog, however.

Indigo YANKS the blanket up and OVER his head, QUIVERING from within his cozy shield of defense.

Waffles now lets out a sad yawn, beckoning Indigo to slowly lower his blanket to under his eyes.

The WHITE BEAR, standing ON ITS HIND LEGS with a GREEN CAT on the bear's shoulder, stand at the foot of Indigo's bed.

Their faces appear distorted by grief and pain.

Indigo's observations of them are within the realms of his imagination. They look as how an eight-year old would imagine the animals, except painted in unorthodox colors (like green and red).

The trio of *spirit animals* visually inquire at Indigo, *asking for help*.

They beckon Indigo and Waffles out of bed. The five begin to pace throughout the forest, eventually finding A STONE COVERED PATH leading through the maze of towering trees.

The fox and cat lead Waffles and Indigo, while the bear brings up the rear, as if *defending* them from something...