

FORGIVEN

Written by

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FADE IN:

CAPTION

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

EXT. TRACT HOME - DAY

One of many contemporary cookie cutter homes on the street.

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - DAY

Dishes are piled in the sink, a box of cereal, milk, and orange juice is on the counter. Standing with her back to us, is a blond-haired Black teen, NIKKI.

Between taps on her phone to YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, and the occasional laugh and giggle, she slurps cereal and sips on orange juice.

DING: You have a new message.

MESSAGE: I thought about. I can't forgive you. You kissed him. Be with him. We're over.

Nikki chokes on her cereal, goes to spit into the sink, snatches a paper towel to wipe her face, then returns to her phone.

NIKKI (V.O.)  
What-the-Fuck!

She types. "We've been together since the 6th grade. IT WAS ONLY A KISS!!!"

She slams the send button with her finger.

She waits--

No response.

Snatching her cell up, Nikki paces between the kitchen and dining-room. She glares at a the phone in her hand.

NIKKI (V.O.)

What-the-Fuck! What-the-Fuck! What-the-Fuck?  
Should I have told him?  
Did I just fuck myself?

She slams her phone down on the kitchen counter, opens a shelf, and takes out a prescription bottle. Hands shaking, she takes out a couple of pills and washes them down with a gulps of orange juice straight from the bottle.

She takes some deep breaths, picks her phone back up, and looks at it.

CELL

The contact for Brendan is displayed. The phone prompts "are you sure you want to delete this contact?"

NIKKI

I don't believe this. No.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Looking down from the sky, our view flies past scrub brush and Joshua trees below.

Invisible demonic spirits; PRIDE, DEPRESSION, CONCEIT, and DIVISION speak in shrill and eerie whispers.

DEPRESSION (V.O.)

(with relish)

Nikki is in distress.

PRIDE (V.O.)

(with arrogance)

We will help her through this!  
Slowly and painfully.

Looking down, a dirt road leads to paved streets.

CONCEIT (V.O.)

Remind her how unimportant,  
unnecessary, and disposable she is.

Tract homes appear at the end of the dirt road.

DIVISION (V.O.)

Position a wedge of differences  
between them, and her.

They fly past a community called sign "Quail Run." An amateurish drawing of a qual below the name.

EXT. NIKKI'S BACK YARD - DAY (ENTITIES P.O.V.)

The entities view Nikki's home from roof level, lowering past her bedroom, to hover outside her glass patio door, they hover and watch.

PRIDE (V.O.)  
There she is.

Inside, Nikki paces back and forth. She keeps looking at her cell phone.

DEPRESSION (V.O.)  
Our merciless mission begins, to  
get into their heads!

Eerie AD LIB laughing.

The view of the entities move closer to the glass.

INT./EXT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - DAY

Nikki stops and looks out the patio door. DING! A notification tone sounds. Nikki pulls the blinds closed.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Nikki looks down at her cell phone.

ABOVE

The view of the entity looking down on her.

PHONE

Nikki scrolls through a series of bubble messages between Nikki and Brendan.

Nikki:

"I love you."

"It was only a kiss. He kissed me."

Brendan:

"I can't get pass this babe."

Nikki:

"It was like lip rape."

DING! New Message appears: "I told you, this is not going to work."

She peers closely at her cell then begins to pace back and forth, breathing deeply, she is almost in tears.

NIKKI

I still don't believe this crap!  
Breaking up with me, in a text!?  
Son-of-a-bitch.

DEPRESSION (V.O.)

(whispering)

He never cared about you, that is  
why he cheated on you before. Now  
he will not forgive you?

She walks pass plants, the closed patio curtains, and bookshelves. She spins around and starts again.

NIKKI

Hell of a freaking no! You cheated  
on me. I didn't do anything.

She stops, hyperventilates, then taps a contact

CELL

On her phone, The phone rings, JEWELL (BFF), 20s, answers.

JEWELL

Hey girl! What's up?

NIKKI

I told him.

JEWELL

No!

NIKKI

Yes. I know you told me not to--

JEWELL

--I did tell you. Not to take him  
back -- years ago. He already  
cheated on you and now he's gonna  
turn it around on you. I told you.

NIKKI

I know, I wanted to be honest.

JEWELL

Good luck with that. Sorry, I gotta  
go. TTYL.

Before she can reply, the cell shows "Call ended."

DIVISION (V.O.)

(whispering)

You can't trust men. What a friend.  
You can not trust anyone.

NIKKI

I can't trust anyone. I thought he was different. Damn, I thought she was different. I knew he was going to do this, this kind of crap. I knew it. I knew it. I should have never told him. NEVER!

She angrily walks over to a hanging plant.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Do you have something to say?

She punches the plant. It shakes and swings.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

I didn't think so.

Items on the bookshelf stare at her. Behind them are spiritual and psychological books.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A BIG BIRD toy with wheels.

A ceramic BUNNY.

A crystal bust of JESUS.

A crystal ANGEL.

LIVING ROOM

She looks at the bunny.

It glares back at her.

She looks into its eyes.

NIKKI

What are you freaking looking at?  
You think I'm stupid? Do you?

The bunny's voice is shrill.

BUNNY (V.O.)  
You are stupid. Bunnies don't talk.  
Why don't you ask Jesus or the  
Angel?

NIKKI  
Smart ass! Shut the freak up.

Nikki looks down at the phone, selects her mother, and begins a video call.

PHONE - VIDEO CALL

Her MOTHER, an excited, middle aged woman, burst onto the screen.

MOTHER  
Nikki, I'm doing some shopping--

NIKKI  
Mom, you're always doing some  
shopping. You should stay home  
sometime.

Her mom looks to the side as Conceit whispers to her.

CONCEIT (V.O.)  
Your daughter thinks she is the  
parent.

Her mother frowns up.

MOTHER  
Nik, are you okay?

Nikki shakes her head.

NIKKI  
Mom, I hate when you call me that.  
And you always call me that.

Nikki eyes frowns as Depression whispers to her.

DEPRESSION (V.O.)  
Your mother does not care what you  
think. She did not want children.

Nikki sighs.

NIKKI  
You should know how I am.

Nikki's mother smirks, looks away to speaking to a salesperson.

MOTHER  
Of course I'm going to purchase  
that!

DIVISION (V.O.)  
(whispers)  
You are the parent. She is the  
child. Show her who's the boss!

She looks back to Nikki.

MOTHER  
You should know how I am. I am your  
mother. I'll be there a little  
later.

She quints, intently looking at Nikki.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Did you take your medication?

NIKKI  
That medications isn't good for me.

MOTHER  
So you're the doctor?

NIKKI  
Maybe you should come home now.

MOTHER  
Hunh?

Nikki glances up at the Angel on the shelf.

It glares back. Nikki pokes her lips out.

PRIDE (V.O.)  
(whispers)  
Do not let her get to you. Be  
strong, you do not need her.

NIKKI  
I'm okay, boyfriend problems, see  
you later --maybe.

Her mother starts to speak.

Nikki ends the call.

She looks up. Big Bird, Bunny, and the Angel have turned  
around, their backs to her. Jesus continues to face her.



NIKKI (CONT'D)  
That's freaking better! Stay in  
your places!

She glares at crystal Jesus.

NIKKI (CONT'D)  
What about you?

Expressionless, Crystal Jesus looks back.

NIKKI (CONT'D)  
Whatever.

Nikki presses the contact "Brendon". A VOICE MAIL RECORDING  
answers.

VOICE MAIL RECORDING (V.O.)  
I'm sorry but the person you have  
dialed has a voice mail that has  
not been set up--

Nikki grunts a "GRRRRRRRR" She taps "end call."

She looks up at the PLANT.

The plant gently sways.

NIKKI  
What? You got something to say now?

The plant whispers.

PLANT (V.O.)  
No. Stupid.

Nikki confronts the plant. She intently stares at it.

NIKKI  
Hunh? What?

The plant abruptly stops swinging.

NIKKI (CONT'D)  
That what I thought. Stay in your  
place. I'll get back with you  
later.

As soon as Nikki turns, the plant returns to swing. Nikki  
begins pacing back and forth again. The CLIP CLOP of her  
heels increases to a loud ECHO.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

What am I supposed to do now? What  
am I supposed to do?

She stops in mid-stride and looks at Big Bird.

Big birds big eyes stare back at her.

Nikki drops to the floor in a heap, closes her eyes, and  
heaves breaths crying.

There is a CRASH.

Nikki opens tear-filled eyes to see Big Bird on the floor.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Now you want to be here for me?

He begins to roll up to her face. Her eyes get big. She slaps  
him away. Falling on his side, he stares at her.

LATER

Nikki slumps in a stuffed chair, her phone in her hands.

She reads the texts displayed on the phone.

NIKKI (V.O.)

I love you. It was only a kiss! He  
kissed me, I didn't even kiss him  
back!

DING. A new message appears: "Kissing is like sex with your  
mouth. You're a cunt; a lip kissing, tongue licking whore!"

NIKKI (V.O.)

(wistfully)

Just a day ago, I was his little  
pooh bear that could do nothing  
wrong.

Nikki pulls herself up to look at Jesus and the Angel.

NIKKI

He kissed me. Was I really that  
bad? Was it? I told him to stop.  
Should I have slapped him? Kicked  
him?

JESUS (V.O.)

Your sins are forgiven.

NIKKI

Did I sin? Are you saying that was a sin? Is he right, I'm a whore?

JESUS (V.O.)

No, it was a kiss. Sometimes the one who gives the kiss is the guilty one.

NIKKI

Then Brendan should forgive me, right? Right?

JESUS

Forgive one another... I forgive you.

Nikki begins pacing again. Abruptly stopping, she points at the Angel like he is on trial.

NIKKI

You! What do you have to say?

ANGEL

To err is human; to forgive, divine.

Nikki shakes her head

NIKKI

That's the best you got? You don't have anything original?

ANGEL

That quote is timeless.

Nikki sighs a deep breath and returns to pacing.

NIKKI

Freaking men don't forgive or forget crap. They want your forgiveness when they do shit, but be damned if you can squeeze a drop of compassion out of them when it's your turn.

She stops and stares.

PRIDE (V.O.)

(whispering)

He dogged you out --You are going to let Brendan get away with this? Really? After all you've done for him?

NIKKI

He's not going to get away with this. I'm going to hurt him *and* find a way to ease my pain.

She reopens the curtains. The bright light illuminates her tear streaked face.

A surreal glow envelops her.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pictures depicting death and sadness adorn her wall. Nikki sits on the edge of the bed. She pops open a soda, then pours pills from a prescription into her hand.

Pictures on wall stare.

Nikki wipes her hands, guzzles the soda, picks up her cell phone for one last glance, then lay back closing her eyes.

NIKKI

Lord have mercy on me.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Sunset.

LATER

A dim lamp light displays a pale Nikki sprawled on her back in bed. Her eyeballs roll back showing the white; she takes a deep breath, exhales, but does not inhale.

Her arm hangs over the edge of the bed.

In her other hand, next to her face, is her cell phone.

The last text sent FROM Nikki at 10:45 displays:

"I love you! I didn't mean to hurt you. You were my life."

DING. A new message appears, received at 1100:

"I love you too. I am sorry, I just got angry. I just needed some time. Thinking about someone kissing your sweet lips made me crazy."

Her lips are dry, pale, and lifeless.

DING. A new message appears, received at 1101:

I've been the whore. You've forgiven me so many times. Will you forgive me now?"

DING. New Message: "Hello?"

DING. New Message: "Hey baby, don't be like that."

DING. New Message: "You going to make me come over and beg???"

EXT. FIRE STATION/POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Sirens and emergency vehicles exit.

The NARRATOR, A wise old sage, speaks.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It appears, For Nikki, forgiveness  
came a fraction too late.

The time oh her cell phone changes to the next minute.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The cost of unforgivingness having  
already been paid.

INT. NIKKI'S HOME - DAY

The sound of someone beating on a security door.

INT. MALL - DAY

Manicured nails nervously tap the icon for Nikki.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Damn teenagers. She'll be the death  
of me! Sometimes I wish that girl  
was never born!

The phone goes to voice mail.

NIKKI (V.O.)

Hey, It's Nikki! I'm not available!  
Or am I? And just don't want to  
talk to you! Do what you know to  
do!

The phone BEEPS. A manicured finger pushes "End call."

Nikki's heartbeat softly thumps.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In a fog, Nikki talks to the bust of Jesus.

NIKKI (V.O.)  
You said I was Forgiven? Am I?

A bright light fills the space in front of her

JESUS (V.O.)  
For every one that asketh  
receiveth; and he that seeketh  
findeth; and to him that knocketh  
it shall be opened.

DEPRESSION (V.O.)  
(whispering)  
Do not listen to Him. You are  
hopeless, helpless, and pitiful. No-  
one loves you. Not your mom. Not  
your boyfriend. No one.  
(beat)  
You don't even love you.

Tears run down Nikki's cheeks. She speaks in a weak whisper.

The thump of her heartbeat slow.

NIKKI (V.O.)  
I'm sorry. They don't have to care.  
They don't have to love me. But I  
love them.

MONTAGE - NIKKI HELPING OTHERS

Each scene evaporates before her as she reaches out to help.

NIKKI (V.O.)  
I'm losing it.

--Nikki hands a "Big Breakfast" to a homeless person.

--Nikki hands a dollar to a man at the curb.

--Nikki helps her mother carry the groceries in.

--Nikki pulls a woman back from the curb before a car hits her.

Without Nikki

--The homeless man sits at he curb rubbing his stomach.

--The man at the curb counts pennies in his hand.

--Her mothers struggles with groceries without help.

--Without no-one to help, the woman steps out in front of the car.

Nikki softly whispers.

NIKKI

Oh God, I won't be able to love  
anyone any more. I want to live.

The thump of her heartbeat stops.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

She lay on her bed, below her hand the empty pill bottle with pills strewn around.

EXT. NIKKI'S HOME - BACKYARD (ENTITIES P.O.V.)

Looking at Nikki's second floor window. The entities speak

PRIDE

Onto the next tragedy,  
disappointment, setback, or  
rejection.

The view of her window retreats and we travel between the tract homes.

DEPRESSION

"There are thousands more like her  
needing only a push over the edge  
from those they call their loved  
ones and friends.

They laugh.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki's body twitches, then stops

A loud echoing VOICE THUNDERS.

VOICE (V.O.)

LIVE!

The strong POUNDING of Nikki's heart returns.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki deep gasps and sits up, eyes wide open.

Mouth agape, she looks around, astonished.

Her heart beat softens to a normal pace.

She runs out the room. The sounds of her throwing up is heard, then running water.

Dashing back to her bedroom, she glances down at the text messages, shaking her head.

Hands shaking, she presses hard and taps to shut down the phone. She sits, stretches, and opens the blinds. Sunlight floods in. Bright and wide open, hope is in her eyes.

NIKKI

I choose life! And all the crap  
and crappy people it throws at me.  
I need to live my life --my best  
life for who I am.

Shaking her head, Nikki smiles.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Thank you Jesus, you are the God of  
second chances.

A song plays, "Be Still Know that I am God, I will take care of you."

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...so that, on the contrary, it is  
rather for you to forgive and to  
comfort, lest by over abundant  
sorrow such a one may be swallowed  
up; wherefore, I call upon you to  
confirm love...  
(2 Corinthians 2:7-8)

INT. NIKKI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Nikki intently peers at a web page on her laptop. She smiles and glows as she types.

LAPTOP



Displayed on the screen is a suicide prevention website:

suicidepreventionlifeline.org states:

Everybody has a role to play in preventing suicide, and the Lifeline has lots of ways you can take part. With your help, we can spread awareness about suicide prevention and mental health, and save lives.

Nikki nods her head and clicks on "VOLUNTEER"

FADE OUT.

Disclaimer:

By no means does this story imply that behavioral disorders are caused by demons, evil spirits, or witchcraft. Nor does it refute the necessity of pharmaceutical and psychological remedies. It does solicit the questioning of our beliefs and dogma about both science and religion while demanding a serious conversation about what truly influences human behavior in a search to reduce the staggering increase in suicides in all age groups. However, "Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people in the U.S. between the ages of 10 and 34, and the suicide rate continues to rise." This is stated in a April, 2019, article by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): *Crisis and Suicide Prevention Services Struggle with Demand after Celebrity Suicides.*