

THE THOUGHTS AND TRAVELS OF NICKI

by
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characters:

NICKI
a girl of twelve

an ADULT VOICE

MONSTER'S VOICE

PHARPAR
a cat

PETER NOTT
a juggler

POPOQUIK
another juggler

POPOQUELLE
owner of a circus

a BEAR

setting:

The house where Nicki lives
and the land beyond.

time:

The present.

author's note:

The actor playing PHARPAR should know how to juggle three balls and the rudiments of riding a unicycle.

The performers playing PETER NOTT and POPOQUIK should be excellent jugglers. The author has written these characters and their juggling routines and sequences with certain jugglers in mind. These routines and sequences, however, could be adapted to fit the skills of other jugglers, or of good actors who know how to juggle.

The actors playing NICKI and POPOQUELLE don't have to do these things.

Scene One

NICKI, *a girl of twelve, stands alone onstage.*

Upstage is a large armchair, its back to the audience.

NICKI *(to audience)* Every night I dream a monster comes. And eats the foot of my bed. So every night I have to fight this monster. Keep him off my bed. The whole night sometimes. Until I wake up in the morning again. Safe in bed.

Pause.

NICKI I see no monster. When I wake up like that. Back in bed.

Pause.

NICKI But tonight, when I went up to my room, my bed was gone. I couldn't see it there. Anywhere in my room.

Pause.

NICKI So I decided I better go back downstairs. Real quick. And tell my dad.

NICKI goes to the armchair upstage.

NICKI Dad? Dad, I think my bed is gone.

ADULT VOICE What's that?

NICKI My bed. It's gone.

ADULT VOICE Your bed is gone?

NICKI Yes, Dad. All gone.

ADULT VOICE Okay.

NICKI No, Dad, really. There's no bed anymore in my room. It's gone. Would you please come up with me, Dad? And see where my bed is gone?

ADULT VOICE I can't right now, no. Sorry.

NICKI You can't go back up with me to my room?

ADULT VOICE No, Nicki. You're old enough, really. To go on your own up to your room.

Pause.

NICKI That's what you think I should do, Dad? Go back up on my own? To my room?

ADULT VOICE Yes. It's time for you to be in bed.

NICKI Okay, Dad. Okay, then, Dad. I'm going back up now. Up to my room. I'm going to bed. Yep.

No response.

NICKI In case you don't ever see me again. That's where I went. Up to my room. I went to bed.

No response.

NICKI comes downstage.

NICKI *(to audience)* So I went back up to my room to see if maybe my bed had come back. Probably Dad was right. I imagined it.

NICKI(contd.) But then I couldn't find my room. There wasn't even a door. To my room. It was gone. I couldn't see where my whole room could have gone. So I went back downstairs, real quick, to tell my dad about my room. How it was gone.

NICKI goes to the armchair.

NICKI Dad? Dad, I think my room is gone.

ADULT VOICE What, Nicki?

NICKI My room. It's gone.

ADULT VOICE Your room is gone?

NICKI Yes, Dad. All gone.

ADULT VOICE Okay.

NICKI No, Dad, really. I can't find my room anymore upstairs. Where I sleep. It's totally gone. Would you please come up with me, Dad? And tell me where my room is gone?

Pause.

ADULT VOICE Where's your mother?

NICKI Hm?

ADULT VOICE Your mother. You should tell your mother about this. She knows where to look in this house. If something's lost.

NICKI I should talk to Mom?

ADULT VOICE Yes. Find your mother.

NICKI You think Mom will know, then? Where my room is gone?

ADULT VOICE She'll know how to talk to you, yes. About this. Your mother's good at that. She likes to do this. Talk about fear. How to face what would make you afraid. I've even talked to her myself, I have. I like to talk to her, I do. If I get afraid. Something

ADULY VOICE(contd.)bothers me. So why don't you run off and do that? Talk to your mother. She'll get you ready, I know. For bed.

Pause.

NICKI Okay, Dad. I'm going to get Mother. I think I saw her last in the kitchen. So I'm going now, Dad. To get Mom. In case you don't ever see me again. That's where I went to. To get Mom.

No response.

NICKI *(to audience)* So I went to the kitchen to get Mom. But I couldn't see her. I couldn't see her in the basement either. Or out in the night in the garden. She wasn't upstairs in her room, or in the attic, or anywhere else at all I could see in our house. So I decided I better go back downstairs to my dad. I better tell him, real quick, my mom is gone.

NICKI goes to the armchair.

NICKI Dad? Dad, I think Mom is gone.

No response.

NICKI Dad?

No response.

NICKI *(to audience)* It was then I noticed my dad. He was gone too. I couldn't see him.

Pause.

NICKI So I looked around. I thought. I decided it would be best if I just sat right down in Dad's armchair.

NICKI *pushes the armchair. She turns it to face the audience.*

NICKI Maybe if I sit right here in Dad's chair, Dad will come back to me.

NICKI *sits in the armchair. She sees some empty slippers, a pair of glasses and a discarded newspaper.*

NICKI Maybe if I just put on his slippers too. And read that newspaper. Wear these glasses.

NICKI *puts her feet in the slippers. She puts on the glasses and reads the paper.*

NICKI *(from behind the paper)* That's better. I feel better already. I'm sure my dad is coming back to me.

The sound of chomping.

NICKI Except I heard this sound.

Chomping sound gets louder.

NICKI It got closer and closer. That sound.
So I decided I better ask it. Better speak to this sound.
Instead of just hoping, please, it would go away.

NICKI *stands up in the armchair.*

NICKI Who are you? What makes this sound?

MONSTER VOICE I'm the monster.

NICKI What monster?

MONSTER VOICE An escaped monster. I want that armchair.

NICKI You want this armchair?

MONSTER VOICE I want to eat it.

NICKI You can't eat it. This is my father's chair.

MONSTER VOICE I'm eating it anyway.

NICKI No! I won't let you.

MONSTER VOICE There's nothing you could do to stop me. If I eat that armchair.

NICKI Yes, I will. I will so stop you. You'll have to eat me first.

MONSTER VOICE I'm going to eat you, yes. After I eat up everything all around you.

NICKI You can't eat up everything all around me.

MONSTER VOICE Yes, I can. I'm the monster which ate your bed.

NICKI You ate my bed?

MONSTER VOICE I ate it, yeah. I ate your whole room too. You know I ate your room. You saw me. I put my vast hand upon it. And snatched it off this earth.

NICKI I did not. I did not see you eat my room.

MONSTER VOICE Well, it's gone. You saw it's gone. You have no room anymore. No place to sleep, to live or read, no place to be by yourself because I ate it. And I ate your parents too. I ate them up, oh, yes, they're all gone.

NICKI You ate my parents?

MONSTER VOICE Yes, yes, I did, yum, yum. And I'm planning on eating you too. Just like I said.

NICKI What for?

MONSTER VOICE Because you make me hungry. My little tidbit. My dessert. What I will eat when I'm done feasting like this on all that surrounds you.

Sound of loud chomping again.

NICKI *(to audience)* So when the monster said I made him hungry, I decided I better climb higher, in my father's chair. I better stand on the top. So I can get to see this monster. Where it's coming from.

NICKI *climbs to the top of the armchair.*

NICKI Where are you? How come I can't see you?

The chomping continues.

NICKI How can you come eat me? If I can't even see you? See where you are. Huh?

How could you possibly eat me? If you aren't anywhere around to be seen? If you can't be seen to eat me?

Huh, O, monster?

Pause.

MONSTER VOICE Because you have to imagine me. Think me up.

NICKI I don't want to do that. Imagine you.

MONSTER VOICE You'll have no choice.

NICKI Yes, I do. I'm not going to imagine anything like you. I don't have to do that.

MONSTER VOICE Then you'll never know what ate your parents. Or what's chomping like this on everything all around you. Nibbling away. Till there's nothing, no, nothing at all for you to see.

NICKI You didn't eat my parents.

MONSTER VOICE Oh, yes, I did. I ate them till there was nothing left of them. Which is how I will eat you. After I finish first with this armchair.

The sound of chomping.

One of the armchair's legs disappears. The armchair slumps to one side. NICKI almost falls off.

NICKI Ah! Yikes!

MONSTER VOICE Yum, yum. CHOMP CHOMP. Good leg.

NICKI Stop that! You can't have this armchair!

Another leg disappears. The armchair slumps further.

MONSTER VOICE CHOMP CHOMP. Slurp. YUM YUM.

NICKI Stop! Stop this now!

MONSTER VOICE ChompchompchompCHOMPCHOMPchomp....

NICKI holds onto the shaking chair.

NICKI *(to audience)* So I decided the only thing to do was to get off this armchair. Find somewhere to be by myself and think. Because this chair was no place I could stand and face a monster. So I decided to leap off. Do my leaping forward roll off that armchair. Before I didn't have a leg anymore too.

NICKI leaps off the chair. She forward rolls and cartwheels into the darkness.

The sound of chomping stops.

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Scene Two

A LIGHT COMES UP ON PHARPAR, a cat.