

THE COOKBOOK

By

Miller Boyd

FADE IN

EXT. THE DRIVEWAY OUTSIDE OF A HOUSE - DAY

The sun is beginning to set as a black SUV pulls into a driveway in a suburban neighborhood. The yard is overgrown and unkept. On the doorstep of the house are bouquets of flowers with cards.

The car doors slowly open and two children, a BOY (13) and a GIRL (8) step out. They look somber and are dressed in black formal attire. Their eyes sunken and skin ghostly pale. They walk towards the doorstep with their heads down and feet dragging.

Their father gets out of the driver's seat. He too is somber and his eyes are bloodshot. He appears dazed and not completely present.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

The children wait by the door as their father approaches. He pauses and looks at the flowers below him. He ignores them and opens the door.

The father opens the door with his left hand, a gold wedding band catches the warm light from the sun setting, contrasting with his pasty skin.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The sun dips below the horizon as they enter. The house is disheveled, pillows out of line on the couch, pictures scattered on the coffee table, the plants are drooping and look dull.

The children and father walk down the hallway to the back of the house and enter the kitchen where flowers in crystal vases cover the countertops.

INT. HOUSE // KITCHEN - NIGHT

The children open the fridge and stare at the bare shelves and empty takeout containers. The girl reaches for a takeout container, opens it and scrunches her nose from the odor. The boy begins to CRY.

The father is staring at them blankly. Confusion passes over his face for a second and suddenly realization. He looks around, searching for direction when he focuses on a shelf of cookbooks.

(CONTINUED)

All different titles and colors, he reaches for a thin yellow cookbook. The front of the book reads "Family Favorites."

He opens the book, flipping through the pages and shaking his head. He pauses on the handwritten recipe titled "Homemade Chicken Noodle Soup"

The father's fingers caress the handwriting longingly as he reads the ingredients. His eyes flicker over the flowers surrounding him and he moves the vases to the corner of the counter. The children sit at the breakfast.

He turns around, opens a cabinet door under the counter and begins rummaging through the pots and pans until he finds a deep pot.

He sets the pot on the stove and walks towards the fridge. He cringes as he opens it and sees the bleak shelves. He opens a drawer and digs through the last of the produce.

Triumphantly he lifts several carrots and a bundle of celery. He RUSHES back to the recipe, leaving the fridge open. He glances down and sees onion marked but when he continues to search he cannot find any.

Defeated, he closes the fridge and opens the pantry. The pantry is more promising than the fridge but slightly. The father scours the shelves and pauses on items, grabbing them and rushing them back to the counter.

MONTAGE

The father begins chopping the carrots and celery frantically. He fills up the large pot with water at the sink and it sloshes out of the pot as he struggles to carry it to the stove.

He ignites the stove top and turns around to continue chopping. The kids scream from the dinner table. He turns around and realizes he lit the wrong section of the stove top and a large flame has appeared.

He turns it off and cautiously lights a flame under the pot.

The father looks at the recipe and his finger follows the words "recipe for homemade egg noodles." His eyes grow large with intimidation and they are beginning to appear less red.

He opens a cabinet and finds an electric mixer, placing it on the counter.

He pulls flour from the top shelf and the bag rips and spills as he pulls it down. Covered in flour, he looks at the kids and they giggle.

He pours what's left of the flour into the mixing bowl. He glances at the recipe and cracks eggs in the mixer but some pieces of the shells fall in.

His fingers nimbly pick out eggs shells and he sprinkles a pinch of salt in the bowl.

He turns on the mixer, first at a slower speed then cranks up the dial until the mixer is moving faster. He begins putting the other ingredients into the boiling water and frozen chicken he finds in the freezer.

He pours chicken stock dramatically into the pot, raising it above his head and it spills, splashing onto the stove top.

He references back to the recipe and notices the emphasis on seasoning. Behind him the mixer is out of control, the gears grinding and the mixing blade makes a whooshing sound as the dough forms a ball.

He yanks open the spice cabinet, his eyes grow and take in the overwhelming amount of spices. His eyes appear normal again.

He slowly scans the spices, nodding and grabbing ones he recognizes from the recipe. Then he spots onion powder and frantically pulls it from the cabinet.

He sprinkles some into the pot and generously dumps others in. He stirs the pot and the steam floats into the air.

The scent wafts towards the children and they inhale deeply, their shoulders relaxing.

The mixer speeds up and the ball of dough flies out of the bowl and makes a thud as it lands on the kitchen tile.

The father looks down at the dough and winces. He quickly grabs it and looks at it. He begins brushing off the part that touched the floor. He looks at his children and they look back wearily.

He grabs the bag of flour but it is bare. He ponders and then opens the pantry. He looks for flour next to the sugar when his eye catches a blue box at the very back of the shelf.

He pulls the box out, items falling as he does so. He looks down at the box containing egg noodles. He sighs with relief.

He pours the noodles into the pot. The water sloshes as it bubbles and the boil comes to a roar.

The father begins cleaning and brushing off his clothes covered in flour. As he finished cleaning, a timer sounds.

The children grab bowls and he ladles chicken noodle soup into their bowls. He fills a bowl for himself and a second one. He grabs four spoons from a drawer.

The children walk to the dinner table and their father follows. The boy and the girl sit next to one another and their father sits across from them, placing the second bowl in front of the worn wooden chair next to him.

The children look at the chair longingly, the little girl's eye begin to tear. Their father motions for them to eat while handing them their spoons.

They hesitantly take a bite, pondering for a moment before softly smiling as they realize the flavor is familiar.

FADE IN

After dinner, the father places the dishes in the sink and spots the opened cookbook. He grabs a pen and writes next to the neat recipe "your noodles are better but boxed noodles work too."

FADE OUT