

ALL-AMERICAN HIKIKOMORI

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ALEX YAMADA, a 19-year-old college student is seen playing a game on his multi-monitor computer in his room. The room is covered with take-out bags, energy drinks, and dirty clothes. The walls are lined with various guitars and rock band posters. He is very deep in the zone. The intense music playing on top of the scene would reflect just that. He's in his own world. Just like that, the round is over, and he won.

ALEX

(Laughing)

WHOO! That's what I'm talking about!
Nice work!

He checks the time which now reads sometime after 3 AM.

Well... I should be getting to bed. I
have school at 9 tomorrow.

(beat)

Yeah. Trust me. I don't like it
either.

(beat)

It's a stupid philosophy class, I only
have it on Monday's, thank God.

(beat)

Well yeah... but I'll be back tomorrow
'aight?

(beat)

'K sweet. See ya'.

He gets up from his computer, walks to the kitchen, and pour himself a glass of water. While drinking the water he checks his phone and sees he has a message from his philosophy professor. A message appears on screen. "Alex, I'd like to meet with you in my office hours tomorrow to discuss your performance in my class. -Dr.C". He walks back to his computer and pulls up his grades. 58% in philosophy followed by other slightly better grades in other classes. He sighs, turns off his computer, lights what we assume to be a blunt, grabs one of the guitars and starts plucking out a melody.

We hear the classic I-Phone alarm. He stumbles out of bed and slaps off the alarm. He sees another message from his philosophy professor. "Just checking again that you're planning on meeting with me. I'd love to chat. -Dr.C". Alex responds "Yup, I'll be there." He looks at the door

for a moment, then gets up and starts getting dressed.

3 INT. YAMADA HOME - DAY

3

In the living room, ALEX'S mother and father are seen eating breakfast at the table. He tries to sneak past them and out the front door but is caught.

MOTHER

Alex, you thought you could sneak past me?

He sighs.

ALEX

That was the goal, yeah.

MOTHER

(Grabbing him by the shoulders)
Well, that's not going to happen.

She sees he has dark circles around his bloodshot eyes.

Ugh... how late were you up last night?

He puts her hands down and reassures her.

ALEX

Mom, I'm fine.

FATHER

(In a thick Japanese accent without breaking sight from his phone)
You look like shit.

ALEX

Good morning to you too dad.

MOTHER

You know we don't like it when you stay up that late! All of that caffeine will put you in casket long before you graduate college.

ALEX

(Under his breath)
If...

MOTHER

Hmm?

(beat)

ALEX

I'm leaving.

MOTHER

Oh Alex... we've been telling you this for a while now but you don't-

ALEX

No mom. Leaving for school. I have class in 15 minutes.

MOTHER

Oh. I see.

(Chuckles)

Well, I won't hold you here then.

ALEX

I wouldn't mind...

MOTHER

Well don't you enjoy your classes?

ALEX

(laughs nervously)

Uhhh...yeah.

CUT TO:

4 INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

4

ALEX is seen sitting in a lecture hall, leaning on his palm, dead asleep.

DR. C

So that is precisely the reason why Socrates was seen as such a threat to ancient Rome. However, despite the expectations of the Roman public, his execution is what many believe was the catalyst for what we call the Socratic period in the ancient western world of philosophical thought.

He looks over at Alex, now drooling down his arm and sighs.

(CONT'D)

I believe the rest of this lesson was covered in your reading assignment. So, unless there are any questions, I'll see you all next week.

The class all get up which startles ALEX to wake up. He starts gathering his things as well and heads for the door.

DR. C

Hey Alex!

He motions ALEX to come closer. ALEX reluctantly does so.

DR. C

Nice to see you here!

ALEX

Yeah...

DR. C

Are we still good for our meeting in a few minutes? You seemed to be in a rush, do you have somewhere else to be?

ALEX

(Defeated)

Um. No. We're still on.

DR. C

Ah! Great! Well, I'm going to tidy up a few things here and then I'll meet you at my office. You remember where it is right?

ALEX

Yup. 410 in the English building.

DR. C

Great! You go ahead and I'll meet you there.

ALEX

Alright. See you there.

DR. C

I look forward to it.

ALEX leaves and bumps into DR. ALARIO. Her clothes look

expensive and perfectly clean. Her condescending attitude makes her presence unbearable. She is a luxurious example of misused university payroll. Despite her apparent outward success, she has the intelligence equivalent to a box of rocks with a Ph.D.

DR. ALARIO

James! How's the adjustment been?
Definitely a bigger space than where
you used to teach. Where was that
again?

He returns to cleaning up his papers feeling somewhat degraded.

DR. C

Gilbert High. For 9 years.

DR. ALARIO

Ah, that's right. I forgot you're so
new to the university game. How old
are you?

DR. C

Hardly relevant.

DR. ALARIO

Well, it's still interesting.

DR. C

Well, I have a student waiting for me
at my office, so I really don't have
time to play get-to-know-you games
right now.

DR. ALARIO

I know you don't like me but maybe you
should at least pretend to.

DR. C

(Sigh)

It's not that. Just... can we talk
later? I really need to talk to this
kid. He hasn't stayed awake for a full
class for the past three weeks and his
grades are plummeting.

DR. ALARIO

Alright, whatever you need to do. I
remember when I was as uptight as you.
Well, that'll change once you're

like us big kids.

DR. C
I have to go.

DR. ALARIO waves him away and begins setting up for her class as DR.C rushes out of the room.

5 INT. DR. C'S OFFICE - DAY

5

ALEX walks around the office observing the different books, pictures, and sentimental pieces spread across the room. He picks up a small, oddly shaped, multi-color pot. He carefully observes its odd shape. He runs his fingers along the cervices, looks inside it, and even wiggles it to see if it will pull apart. DR.C enters the office.

DR. C
Hey there, Alex.

Startled, ALEX drops the vase amalgamation which shatters on the floor. He looks at DR.C, terrified, then rushes to pick up the pieces.

ALEX
I am so sorry. I was just looking at it. Maybe we can glue it or...

DR. C
Oh, don't worry about that. My wife made that in an abstract pottery class. I only kept it in here to make her happy. If anything, I should be thanking you. Now I don't have to look at it all day.

ALEX
(Chuckles nervously)
Oh...ok. I guess that makes me feel a little better.

DR. C
Seriously, don't worry. I think we have some other things to focus on right now. Take a seat.

They both sit down. Dr. C opens his computer and begins typing. He turns the screen to reveal to ALEX his grades.

DR. C

I may have only had you in class for a few weeks, but I know you well enough to know that this isn't normal. I mean, your first papers were better than most other students who take my class. You've got a real knack for this stuff. Even though you didn't talk in class, I could tell you were engaged. Now I can't compete with whatever dream you think is more important than my class.

(beat)

I'm not mad. Honestly. I don't see a point in teachers getting mad at their students.

(He thinks for a moment)

What's going on?

ALEX

Um... I don't know.

DR. C

If you think I'm going to be satisfied with that answer, you're dead wrong. Is there an issue with your roommates?

ALEX

I'll say.

DR.C just stares at him as if beckoning for more information.

(CONT'D)

I live at home. My parents drive me nuts. My mom is always down my throat about everything, and my dad is just disappointed. I don't think he even learned how to say "good job" in English.

DR. C

So, you just feel a lot of pressure?

ALEX

Well... I don't know.

(beat)

It's not them. The only time I leave my room is to eat, pee, or come here.

DR. C
We're diagnosing symptoms with other
symptoms, Alex.

ALEX
What is that supposed to mean.

DR. C
I think you know. That isn't the
problem, just another effect of the
problem.

ALEX
What do you think the problem is then?

DR. C
I can't be the one to tell you that.
But I can ask: why do you stay in your
room? Is it because of your parents?

ALEX
Not really. I just... Everything I
need is in there. I've got no reason
to leave.

DR. C
People don't just stay in their room
for days on end because they enjoy it.
I think you're avoiding something.

ALEX
Like what? People?

DR. C just looks at him as if to suggest that is exactly what
he's avoiding.

(CONT'D)
Look, I'm an extrovert. I have tons of
friends. I'm not anti-social. I'd just
rather spend time by myself than have
the public eye on me 24/7. That's the
whole reason celebrities don't do
their own shopping. I'm not a loner,
just...Taylor Swift.

DR. C
Ignoring the fact that you just
compared yourself to Taylor Swift, do

you know what anti-social means?
(He waits for a response but
doesn't get one)
So, you're afraid of what people think
about you?

ALEX

Maybe? I'm not sure. I just don't like
going out.

DR. C

And have you tried talking with a
counselor?

ALEX

He basically just told me to suck it
up and go out anyway. Great advice
from someone who's supposed to have a
degree in making people feel better.

DR. C

Well, our counselling services aren't
great here. I've noticed that myself.
(He thinks for a moment)
I was going to keep this reading for
next week, but I think it could be
helpful.

He pulls a paper from a filing cabinet under his desk.

(CONT'D)

This is about Diogenes. You know who
he is?

ALEX

He was a philosopher, that's all I
know.

DR. C

Yeah, he lived during the beginning of
the Socratic period just like Plato
and Socrates. He was famous for his
cynical lifestyle. He lived on the
streets, urinated where he wanted, ate
whatever he could find, and... well
masturbated whenever he felt like it.

ALEX is clearly confused and slightly disgusted by DR. C's
explanation.

(CONT'D)

Yeah. But the reason I bring him up is because I think you could benefit from his philosophies.

He begins to hand ALEX the paper but pulls it back at the last minute.

DR. C

As for your grade, I'll fix it, but you have to do something for me too. Don't think I'm just letting you off the hook.

ALEX

Please don't make me masturbate in public.

DR. C

No. I just want you to read this. Completely. Then, apply it. Ok? Care less about what other people think about you. Society doesn't make your rules. You do. So just apply this stuff and write me a paper by the end of the semester about your experience. And so long as you stay on top of your assignments from here on out, I'll correct the bad grades. Ok?

He goes to hand him the paper but again pulls it back at the last minute.

(CONT'D)

And seriously, no public masturbation. Deal?

ALEX

Deal.

ALEX takes the paper and quickly skims the first page.

6 INT./EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

6

ALEX is reading the paper from Dr. C as he walks through the halls. He is seen walking on the left side of the hall, going completely against the flow of students, absolutely engulfed in the paper. He finishes reading it just as he arrives at a crosswalk. He stuffs the paper into his bag and looks up at the "don't walk" sign. He

thinks for a moment, looks both ways, smiles, and sprints across the street. Overjoyed with himself (and completely out of breath) he starts looking around for rules to break. He then sees a towering tree just a few blocks away. He smiles again and runs. He begins climbing the tree, which is now revealed to be in the front yard of a random house and begins climbing to the top. He just stands at the top of the tree. Soaking in the wind and the sun. He hears a cracking sound and with fear looks down at his feet.

ALEX

Shit!

He immediately drops out of frame. The camera cuts to black as we hear the sound of him falling through the tree, branch by branch, and a loud thud when he hits the ground. The camera cuts back to a close-up of his face, somewhat shocked as he lays flat on the ground. He coughs a few times, which then evolves into uncontrollable laughter.

THE END