



Fragile: The True Story of My Lifelong Battle Against Anorexia

Nikki Grahame

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Say the name Nikki Grahame and most people will remember the bubbly, highly strung and hugely entertaining Big Brother 7 contestant, famous for her diary room outbursts. Since leaving the Big Brother house, she had forged a successful career for herself in presenting and writing. Yet Nikki isn't just another reality television contestant and her life story is not like any other you will ever read. From the age of eight until she was nineteen, Nikki battled anorexia nervosa—but few cases have been quite as extreme as hers. What she has been through while suffering from this illness might surprise you—it will definitely shock you. At just seven years old, Nikki began feeling that she was overweight. A remark about her being fat from a fellow pupil at a gymnastics class along with insecurity brought about by her parents' separation and her beloved grandfather's death, were the catalysts for Nikki's long-term eating disorder. Aged just eight and weighing just under three stone, she was diagnosed as anorexic. For the next eight years, Nikki was in and out of institutions—seven in total—during which time she attempted suicide twice and had to be sedated up to four times a day so that she could be force-fed. At one point, she was sedated for fourteen days while doctors sewed a tube into her stomach, through which she was fed in order to get her weight out of the critical range. Nikki admits that she knew every anorexic's trick in the book: from breaking into hospital kitchens to water down full-fat milk, altering her diet sheet and switching name tags on food to ensure that she received smaller amounts, to even stuffing a door-stop down her trousers before a weigh-in. The extremes that she went to in order to avoid eating and find ways to exercise excessively shocked doctors who have worked in the field for years. As Nikki says, “I've always wanted to be the best at everything I do, so I had to be the best anorexic—and I was.” This is the heart-rending and powerful story of a girl who lost her childhood but was brave enough to finally admit that she wanted to live again. With searing honesty, Nikki recounts her long and painful road to recovery, how she has had to come to terms with the long-term ramifications of her illness, how she coped with being in the Big Brother house and how she uses her new-found fame to promote awareness of eating disorders and to help those who are suffering from similar problems. This compelling book tells the story of an incredible journey.

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