

NICKI ESQ - EPISODE 3

"MAMA"

Written by

Name of First Writer

Based on, If Any

Address
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1 INT. OFFICE INTERIOR - MORNING - DAY 1 1

The elevator door opens and Jacqueline Howell an impeccably dressed 45 year old black female exits and walks directly towards Nicki's office

2 INT. DERRICK'S DESK AREA - 2 MIN LATER 2

Derrick is about to sip his morning coffee with his back turned. He turns around and is startled by Jacqueline's presence. He spits the coffee out.

JACQUELINE
Well hello Derrick.

DERRICK
What are you doing here?

JACQUELINE
Visiting my daughter of course. I heard she had a "new" assistant.

Derrick rushes to the window.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)
What are you looking for?

DERRICK
The winged monkeys that normally accompany you.

JACQUELINE
Has it come to this? What happened to that first class life you were living? Thank god mother's not alive to witness her hard earned money waisted on your precious Ivy League education.

Derrick rises and stands directly in front of Jacqueline. He's had it! Nicki appears in her office doorway.

NICKI
Mother !!!

Jacqueline goes to hug Nicki.

JACQUELINE
Baby !!

Derrick goes back to the window.

NICKI

Uncle D, what are you looking for?

DERRICK

Uhh the winged monkeys...hello.

3

INT. MR. LAYTON'S OFFICE

3

Mr. Layton is at his desk. He hangs up the telephone solemnly. He then tip toes to his doorway.

MR. LAYTON

Psst...Ms. Lotke

He motions for her to come in quickly. Ms. Lotke, his assistant, a 40 yr old white female straight outta Mad Men enters and he shuts the door behind her.

MR. LAYTON (CONT'D)

Oh Ms. Lotke.

MS LOTKE

What's wrong Mr. Layton?

Mr. Layton bursts into a dramatic sob.

MR. LAYTON

I've ruined the company. How can we ever go on?

He turns away from her.

SHOT OF MS. LOTKE REACHING FOR A TISSUE FROM THE BOX ON HIS DESK TO HAND TO HIM.

MR. LAYTON (CONT'D)

You put that back. We cannot afford to waste a thing around here.

MS LOTKE

Davis Financial?

Mr. LAYTON

(intermittent sobs)

Yes.

(beat)

Yes.

MS LOTKE

That's a million in billing.

MR. LAYTON

Why do you think I'm
sobbing...they've decided to take
their business cross town to Jacoby
Weiss.

MS LOTKE

Our competitors...we lost The
Holmes contract to them as well.

MR. LAYTON

Thanks for that reminder Ms. Lotke.

Ms. Lotke reaches for another tissue to hand Mr. Layton.

Mr. Layton takes the tissue and gently tears it in two. He
hands half of it back to her.

MR. LAYTON (CONT'D)

Remember from here on out, nothing
gets wasted.

4

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

4

Nicki and Jacqueline are having lunch. Jacqueline gently
wipes her mouth with a cloth napkin.

JACQUELINE

So you gotcha a Newwww assistant.

NICKI

Mama be nice. Why don't you and
Uncle D get along?

JACQUELINE

Hmph, everybody always fawned over
his every move growing up. Isn't he
cute. Look at those eyes. Look at
him breathe. It was enough to drive
me crazy.

NICKI

Mama !!!

JACQUELINE

And then to add insult to injury, I
found out he was gay. The whole
damn world has gone gay. Enough
already.

NICKI

Mama I wish your way of thinking
was as forward as your sense of
fashion.

JACQUELINE

And now you got tinker bell as your
new assistant. That's just great
(beat)
Enough about him, I really wanted
to speak with you about your
father.

NICKI

What's wrong with Pop?

JACQUELINE

I'm leaving him.

NICKI

What?!!

Jacqueline surveys the restaurant.

JACQUELINE

Nicki Howell you keep your voice
down. I can't take Ellis anymore
and this daily routine we've
created these last few years.
Scrambled eggs in the morning, Dr.
Phil, a trip to CVS to see if the
sales prices match the circular
coupons, tuna sandwich for lunch
and nodding on and off to Wolf
Blitzer for the rest of the day.
Love left a long time ago and now
I'm ready to follow.

NICKI

He eats tuna salad everyday?

JACQUELINE

I think you missed the point of the
story dear.

NICKI

You are not leaving Daddy.

JACQUELINE

There's a whole big world out there
for me to still see.

NICKI

Well you can still see that world
but you taking Daddy with you.

5 INT. OFFICE HALLWAY

5

SHOT OF JESSICA ADMIRING HER NEW MANICURE.

Mr. Layton approaches.

MR. LAYTON

Ms Bouchard it's after 1pm, are you
just arriving to work?

JESSICA

Well Katerina, that's the woman who
does my waxing, could only squeeze
me in this morning.

MR. LAYTON

Well next time your brows will have
to wait!!

JESSICA

My brows?

MR. LAYTON

Your mustache?

JESSICA

Lower.

MR. LAYTON

That's entirely too much
information Ms. Brouchard. I am
tightening the financial reigns
around here starting today. So your
little waxing adventure will have
to be done on your own time. I
expect you in this office at 9
sharp!

JESSICA

AM?!

MR. LAYTON

Yes there is work to be done. We've
got Allied, Spectrum and the new
Ludwell Trademarks to deal with. I
need everybody's A game. If I had
wanted a part time attorney

(MORE)

MR. LAYTON (CONT'D)

(beat)

Well I guess I would hire you.

He laughs and Jessica walks off quickly.

MR. LAYTON (CONT'D)

Ms. Bouchard where do you think you're going?

JESSICA

Well I wanna get my brows done so I can be here by 9 tomorrow.

6

INT. DERRICKS DESK AREA

6

SHOT OF MR. LAYTON PASSING BY, HE SEES DERRICK ON HIS NEW OFFICE IMAC COMPUTER.

He does a double take and quickly approaches Derrick.

MR. LAYTON

Mr. Howell is that by any chance a brand new computer?

Derrick touches the computer like a "price is right" model.

DERRICK

Sure is, you like?

MR. LAYTON

Send it back! Now is not the time for company splurging. Send it back at once.

DERRICK

But Mr. Layton, this here is the brand new iMAC with 32 gigs of RAM, 2 terrabytes of storage and a 2666 mhz processor. Mr. Layton this baby allows me to turn out all needed materials for Nicki's cases in lightening speed.

MR. LAYTON

How much?

DERRICK

(whispers)

\$5,000.

Mr. Layton places his hand over his heart at the news.

MR. LAYTON
 \$5,000 !!! Mr. Howell, Davis
 Financial is leaving our firm and
 taking with them some much needed
 cash flow.

DERRICK
 Oooooooooooh.

MR. LAYTON
 Therefore effective immediately
 Ross Layton will be implementing
 strict cost cutting measures. The
 first being that computer.

Mr. Layton exits. Derrick stands and hugs the computer like a
 long lost friend.

DERRICK
 Don't worry baby, Daddy won't let
 them take you away.

7 INT. DERRICK'S DESK AREA

7

Nicki enters.

DERRICK
 Well how was lunch with
 Ursula...the sea witch?

NICKI
 Uncle D stop.

DERRICK
 Sorry.

NICKI
 She wants to separate from Daddy.

DERRICK
 Wow, did she say why?

NICKI
 Apparently they've fallen out of
 love.

DERRICK
 (with sarcasm)
 Now how could anybody fall outta
 love with your mom?

NICKI
 Is that sarcasm?

DERRICK

Yes mam...oh while you were at lunch Mr. Layton stopped by. He's on a cost cutting tirade.

NICKI

What?! Why?!

DERRICK

Didn't say why but we need to send this new baby back.

NICKI

You should have mentioned that it was on sale. That way he'd think we saved the firm money.

DERRICK

Girl you are really starting to think like me.

NICKI

Now let me go send this email telling him exactly how much we saved on that computer AND my new leather chair...I need my chair!!

8

INT. NICKI'S KITCHEN

8

Jasmine is seated on the sofa. Nicki is on one side of the island and Derrick is seated on the other side with Tanya standing next to him.

NICKI

Jas did you finish your homework?

JASMINE

There was no homework.

TANYA

No homework. I was born at the wrong time cuz that sounds like my kinda school.

JASMINE

You couldn't handle the pressure. Trust me.

NICKI

Maybe I should just start giving her some of my law case to review.

DERRICK
 (to Tanya)
 When are you gonna give us an
 audition update?

TANYA
 Oooh I thought you'd never ask.

Tanya shakes her head to prepare and looks into the camera.

TANYA (CONT'D)
 Ladies do you want thick and
 healthy hair like mine...then Curly
 Q's Scalp Mud is for you. Now it's
 OK to play in the Mud.

DERRICK
 Well your hair may be healthy but
 your acting is still sick.

The doorbell rings. Derrick goes to answer.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
 Well if it isn't Malificent.

JACQUELINE
 Thank God for social distancing.

Jasmine runs to Jacqueline.

JASMINE
 Granny!

JACQUELINE
 Ugh that word...hey baby.

NICKI
 Hey mama.

TANYA
 Hi Ms. Howell.

NICKI
 Mama you remember Tanya?

JACQUELINE
 Of course, the child with the
 horrible auditions.

NICKI
 Mama!!

JACQUELINE

Well I suppose y'all heard the news.

TANYA

We finally have a President who can read?

JASMINE

School is closed for the rest of the year?

DERRICK

Your brand new Tesla electric broomstick arrived?

JACQUELINE

Nicki's father and I are separating.

DERRICK

Remind me to send Ellis a box of cigars.

JACQUELINE

You're sleeping on your nieces sofa, can you even afford one cigar let alone a box?

NICKI

Mama we've been over this already. You and Daddy are not breaking up.

JACQUELINE

Don't you want your mother to be happy Nicki?

NICKI

Of course I do but you know how you like to make rash decisions. Remember when you put us all on that vegan diet cuz somebody developed tofu bacon?

JACQUELINE

Well it certainly looked like bacon.

NICKI

And it tasted like salty glue.

TANYA

Well I could offer you some advice Ms. Howell.

Jacqueline gives her a stare.

DERRICK

Jackie, you actually found somebody to put up with you for the last 31 years. Think about that 31 years. You..

JACQUELINE

What's your point?

DERRICK

You sure you ready to be old and single?

JACQUELINE

You seem to be doing it pretty well.

NICKI

That's enough. Mama all relationships hit speed bumps. You just going through a little phase. It'll work itself out.

JASMINE

Nobody in this family can seem to get this "man" thing down properly.

9

INT. MR. LAYTON'S OFFICE

9

Nicki and Jessica are seated in front of Mr. Layton's desk. Mr. Layton is standing near the window looking at the Dallas skyline.

MR. LAYTON

Ms. Howell, Ms. Brouchard do you enjoy working at Ross Layton?

NICKI & JESSICA

(in unison both confused)

Yes.

MR. LAYTON

Well we are drastically behind our quarterly company projections. And if circumstances don't change rapidly I'm not sure this firm will be able to afford your illustrious legal services.

NICKI

Mr. Layton, The Cloudy Daze case gave us a ton of great press. I've got Allied coming up. I'm pulling my weight.

Nicki glances at Jessica. Jessica clears her throat.

JESSICA

The Spectrum trademark case is proceeding and the ummmmm, ummmmm other cases as well.

MR. LAYTON

Ladies, we must have new blood. Now I would...

Nicki's phone rings. It's Facetime. She notices it's Tanya, which always means urgent.

NICKI

Mr. Layton, will you excuse me for one moment.

Mr. Layton is clearly annoyed as Nicki exits.

9A

INT. OUTSIDE MR. LAYTON'S OFFICE

9A

As Nicki walks out to answer the Facetime call, the screen splits.

On the left, we see Nicki picking up in a rush.

On the right, we see Tanya looking hysterical

NICKI

Girl I'm in a meeting, what is it?

TANYA

(hysterical)

Look at this, look at this!!!

NICKI

Look at what?

Tanya shows the side of her head, pieces of hair have shockingly fallen out.

NICKI (CONT'D)

What in the PERMation is going on?!

TANYA
It must be that Curly Q Mud mess
I've been using!

NICKI
Curly Q?
(Pause)
Curly Q? Wait I just saw a similar
story on them this morning on the
news, a lady had a similar
reaction. I felt so bad

Nicki suddenly stops talking.

NICKI (CONT'D)
That's it !!!!!

TANYA
What?

NICKI
Borrow one of my wigs girl. Anyone
but the Fara, you know that's my
signature look. I'll call you
later.

9B INT. MR. LAYTON'S OFFICE 9B

Nicki rushes back in.

NICKI
I got it!!!

10 INT. DERRICK'S DESK AREA 10

Derrick is starting to unplug some of his computer wires.
Gladys rolls up unexpectedly.

DERRICK
I've told you 100 times already the
speed limit around here is 10 miles
per hour.

GLADYS
Where's Ally McBeal?

DERRICK
She's in with Mr. Layton.

GLADYS
Why are you unplugging that thing?

DERRICK
Cuz it's gotta go back. It's new
and it cost too much.

GLADYS
So does your niece. Why not just
send her back?

Derrick laughs.

DERRICK
Layton says the firm needs to be
frugal. No more big spending.

GLADYS
Nelson has always been cheap. In
good times and bad. You know he
actually steals toilet paper from
folks homes.

DERRICK
Really?

GLADYS
Next time take a real close look at
his pocket square. That ain't silk.

11 INT. NICKI'S LIVING ROOM

11

Nicki is sipping a glass of wine. Tanya is seated on the sofa
with a scarf on her head. Derrick is at the counter looking
through his phone.

TANYA
I can't believe this.

NICKI
Look at it as a chance to make a
new start.

TANYA
But my hair!

NICKI
Remember what India Arie said, you
are not your hair.

Nicki hands her a folder.

NICKI (CONT'D)
Anyway look at this.

TANYA
What's this?

NICKI
I did a little quick research this
afternoon and found almost 40 other
women with similar Curly Q
nightmares...Curly Q is about to be
Curly SUE.

The doorbell rings and Derrick goes to answer. He opens the door.

SHOT OF JACQUELINE IN THE DOORWAY.

Derrick slams the door and walks back to his seat.

NICKI (CONT'D)
Uncle D who was that?

DERRICK
I think your mother but I wasn't
really sure.

Nicki rushes to open the door.

NICKI
Hey mama.

JACQUELINE
I see you're still running a
homeless shelter.

DERRICK
Jackie? That was you. So sorry.

TANYA
Hey Ms. Howell

JACQUELINE
Hey baby. What a beautiful scarf.

TANYA
I had a little hair 911.

NICKI
It's ok, your bank account will
thank me later.

JACQUELINE

Well Nicki I think I've found a cute little place I can rent for a couple months while I figure this all out.

NICKI

Mama, we're still talking about this?

JACQUELINE

Well I'M still talking about it.

DERRICK

(to Jacqueline)

Can I see you out on the terrace for a sec.

JACQUELINE

I don't trust you. Are you gonna push me off the terrace like you ddi when we were younger?

DERRICK

Girl come on.

Derrick walks out onto the small terrace and Jacqueline follows.

12

EXT. OUTSIDE TERRACE

12

JACQUELINE

I'm dealing with a lot emotionally Derrick. So I'm not exactly in the mood for your foolishness.

Derrick raises his hand to silence her.

DERRICK

Jackie I know. Listen I know we hardly ever see eye to eye. But I understand what you are going through.

JACQUELINE

You do?

DERRICK

I do. I was with Bart for 10 years. Now I know the circumstances are very different and my decision was a tad easier.

(MORE)

DERRICK (CONT'D)

But I know that feeling of wanting to run free again, from being stuck in some relationship that's somehow gone from color to black and white. Sometimes I wish I had stayed and fought for US.

Derrick moves in and give Jacqueline a hug. Jacqueline is moved to tears.

JACQUELINE

Oh Derrick I don't know what to do.

DERRICK

Whatever you do just don't make it a rash decision. Marriages are like roses. There will always be thorns but it's still a beautiful thing. I'm sure Ellis still loves you.

Jacqueline touches her face with her sleeve to prevent a tear.

JACQUELINE

Derrick that's the nicest thing you've said to me in years.

DERRICK

Shhhhhh don't go telling folks I've been nice to you. I got a reputation to uphold.

13 INT. NICKI'S LIVING ROOM

13

NICKI

I hope they don't kill each other out there.

Jasmine runs in with one of her dolls. The doll is half bald on one side.

TANYA

Who you got with you baby?

JASMINE

Mya....she might be going through whatever you're going through.

Jasmine holds up the doll and gets a good look and places her hand on her head.

TANYA

Ooooooooooh.

NICKI

All them dolls in your room and you pick the one with a hair challenge.

JASMINE

I wanted Tanya to have some company.

NICKI

(sternly)

I'M her company.

JASMINE

Maybe I should get the doll a scarf.

NICKI

Maybe you should just clean your room.

Tanya turns her attention to the folder Nicki handed her.

TANYA

So they're other women who had the same problems with Curly Q?

NICKI

Some worse than you. Kempler Industries owns Curly Q and when I'm through, Tanya Simmons is gonna own a piece of them.

TANYA

I'll drink to that.

Tanya raises her wine glass.

14

INT. JESSICA'S OFFICE

14

SHOT OF NICKI WHO HAS NOTICED JESSICA'S DOOR OPEN THIS EARLY HOUR.

Nicki enter and sees a nodding Jessica slouched in her chair with her mouth wide open.

NICKI

Jessica?

JESSICA

(startled)

Martini. Very dry. 2 olives!!!

NICKI

It's 9am !! And you're 4 hours early.

JESSICA

It's unusually bright for this time of day.

NICKI

It's called Morning. I can't believe you are a part of it.

JESSICA

Well Layton was adamant about being in early from now on. You got anything new?

NICKI

Baby do I. I'm about to bring the mother of all Class Actions. Got a big meeting this afternoon and you?

JESSICA

Absolutely. It's a high profile case involving Bill and Stan who have been accused of murder in some hillbilly hellhole.

NICKI

Bill and Stan? Jessica that's the plot of My Cousin Vinny.

JESSICA

That's the movie I fell asleep to last night. Dammit.

15

INT. DERRICK'S DESK AREA

15

Jacqueline, stylishly dressed approaches Derrick's desk. This time Derrick's demeanor is somewhat pleasant.

JACQUELINE

Good morning brother dear.

Derrick rushes to the window AGAIN.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)

Derrick, don't you start that again.

DERRICK

What? I thought I saw a drone. Look there it is.

He chuckles to himself.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

Diggin the boots.

JACQUELINE

They are stunners aren't they? Dior.

DERRICK

I don't recall asking

JACQUELINE

You wanna borrow em? Where's my daughter?

DERRICK

Not quite my style and Nicki is in with the boss. They have a big lunch meeting to prepare for.

JACQUELINE

Well I was hoping to see her before I head back to Houston. Derrick I've given it an exhausting amount of thought

(beat)

And I think I'm going to ask Ellis to...

Gladys suddenly comes through on her scooter almost knocking Jacqueline over.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)

Good Lord !! Watch where you're going in that thing!

DERRICK

How many times have I told you this is NOT NASCAR. You almost killed Nicki's mother.

GLADYS

Nicki's mother? Sorry bout that. I'm Gladys. Pleasure to meet you.

JACQUELINE

Jacqueline.

Gladys senses her "snobbish" air.

GLADYS

You raised a true superwoman. I've worked with a lot of attorneys through the years and she's my favorite.

Gladys coughs to try and hide her lie.

SHOT OF DERRICK STARING AT GLADYS IN ASTONISHMENT.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

I was beyond consolable when they assigned me to a different attorney, on a different floor.

Gladys offers up more faux coughs.

JACQUELINE

Well sounds like you and my daughter got along beautifully.

DERRICK

Well that's certainly what is sounds like.

JACQUELINE

Well Gladys it was a pleasure meeting you and Derrick I've decided that I'm going to file for a divorce.

DERRICK

See I knew you.....wait what?!

Gladys suddenly starts the scooter and again almost knocks Jacqueline over.

GLADYS

Well on that note goodbye.

JACQUELINE

I know how big your mouth is so please DO NOT mention this to Nicki. I'd like to tell her myself.

DERRICK

Yes mam.

JACQUELINE

Derrick! I'm serious. Last time I asked you to keep a secret, half of Dallas new about me and Wayne Connolly.

DERRICK

Your secret is safe with me. Now go on, the next broomstick to Houston leaves in 5 minutes.

16 INT. OFFICE HALLWAY

16

Nicki and Mr. Layton are heading to the conference room. They walk and talk.

MR. LAYTON

Apparently the lead attorney for Kemper industries had a family emergency. So a Mr. Boyd is filling in.

NICKI

Oh ok.

MR. LAYTON

You keep impressing me Ms. Howell. I told you we needed new blood and you became a vampire. I should call you Count Nicki.

NICKI

Please don't

(pause)

Mr. Layton this case impacts lots of women who look like me. So I'm glad I'm getting to do a little Black Girl Magic.

MR. LAYTON

Black girl magic? What is that, like voodoo?

Nicki rolls her eyes.

NICKI

You probably will never understand Mr. Layton, but Black women have carried this country for years. We're the backbone of so many things socially and politically. So Mr. Layton when I say "black girl magic", I'm referring to that extra something special that allows us to always save the day.

MR. LAYTON

So there's no White Male magic.

NICKI

No.

MR. LAYTON

Well it's time for you to work your magic.

Mr. Layton opens the conference room door for Nicki.

16A INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

16A

Nicki begins to place her papers on the table. Fabian Boyd a 30 year old black male seated on the other side rises to his feet.

MR. LAYTON

Mr. Boyd I'm Nelson Layton and this attorney...

FABIAN

Nicki Howell.

NICKI

Fabian? Fabian Boyd.