

**NANO AND NICKI
IN
BOCA RATON**

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CHARACTERS

NANO

Everything about her is elegant. She is 84 years old College educated, majored in Latin. Has always had money. Lives in Kansas City. Speaks with no particular accent--she is that rare species known as an almost Southern Jew. Knows not one word of Yiddish, and neither did her parents.

Nano still has all her hair--it is kept a pure silver white, and is always beautifully in place. She keeps all her jewelry in the vault, and wears only a gold wrist watch and her wedding ring. She dresses in a black wool suit with a box jacket. A red silk scarf knotted around her neck, tucked in carefully. Her shoes are slightly boxy. Her nails are long, and perfectly manicured.

At night, she wears a matching pink fleece nightgown and robe set. She wears a satin pink hair protector that Nicki calls her helmet--it is a more or less rectangular piece of satin with a velcro closure.

NICKI

Her granddaughter. Almost a foot taller than her grandmother. Lives in New York, after a Seven Sisters education. She is 30 years old.

Nicki dresses in a style born of compromise--her flowing flower child mentality, left over from the early 70's combined with Nano's rigid perception of what a young lady should wear. As a general rule, the result is a mid-calf length jean skirt and a Mexican peasant blouse, with a pair of leather sandals that Nano would have thrown out last year.

At night, Nicki wears a sexy, black nightgown that Nano has just bought her.

THE MAID

A woman in her 50's. Non-speaking role.

SETTING

A progression of Howard Johnson motel rooms.

TIME

1982

SCENE ONE

(Preshow: The maid is making up an ordinary Howard Johnson's motel room.

She pushes her maid's cart along, humming MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, LOUIS.

As the house lights fade, she places a WELCOME TO ST. LOUIS SIGN--one of those high gloss tent placards-- on top of the TV, and exits through the door.

A beat.

The sound of a key turning in the lock of the door.

From the other side of the door)

NANO (o.s.)

Do you really think two women traveling alone should be on the ground floor?

(As the door opens a few inches)

I don't know, Nick, two women, all alone--

(The door slams shut.

A beat.

The key is turning again)

Now as soon as we get in I want you to look at the map they've got on the back of the door and show me where to get out if there's a fire.

Ouuuuuh, I hate being up so high, I feel trapped--

(The door opens slightly)

--I know you'll be with me, but--

(The door is immediately shut.)

The sound of the key in the lock)

Oh, Nicki, I'm sure we'll be fine here--you're not going running to that damn manager again--so what if this room is way out in the boondocks, at the very end of the world, I know how to scream real loud--

(The door opens)

--and you know how to run--

(The door closes slowly.)

A beat.

The sound of the key in the door--and the door is flung open--Nicki rushes into the bathroom, and Nano throws herself onto the bed nearest the door)

NANO

You hurry or I won't be responsible. Ooooooh, I'm dead. Dead. Dead. Dead.

NICKI

(Flushes toilet)

All yours.

(She comes out of the bathroom, carrying two wrapped bars of motel soap.)

NANO

(Hoists herself off the bed and hobbles, obviously holding it in, to the bathroom.)

Don't you go stealing all the soap, leaving me without any.

NICKI

(As she puts their overnight bags on the luggage stand, she slips the soap into her bag.)

You bring your own soap anyway.

NANO

So, that doesn't mean I might not want to use some of theirs occasionally.

(She is in the bathroom, the door slightly open.)

I'll never forget the time you were over at our house and you came out of the bathroom with your plastic training pants draggin' almost to the floor--you were just a little bit of a thing--and I said to myself, Good Lord, she's got a full load in there.

NICKI

(As she goes through the room, opening up drawers, taking out the stationary and putting it in her overnight bag, and looking through all the brochures.)

I've never really believed that story, Nano.

NANO (o.s.)

So I got you right back into that bathroom real quick and if you hadn't stuffed your panties all full of bars of soap. Said you were taking 'em home to your mother and father cause they didn't have any.

(Nano laughs softly to herself.)

Imagine. Two years old and even then you couldn't keep your hands off other people's soap.

NICKI

I like the one about walking in on Uncle Harry better.

NANO (o.s.)

Yes, that was something--he wasn't used to children, and he didn't bother locking the door--you marched in, unannounced--scared him more than it did you. I'll never forget the way you came up to me, with the saddest look on your face and said "Poor Uncle Harry. Nobody taught him how to tinkle."

There's a shower cap in here wrapped in plastic, you want it?

NICKI

Nope, don't use 'em.

NANO (o.s.)

Someone might. Your mother.

NICKI

Yeah, okay, remind me.

(Nicki unlocks the sliding glass doors and opens them, stepping out onto the balcony. Sounds of traffic drift into the room)

Oh, great. Right over the lobby.

NANO (o.s.)

Nicki?...did you open a window? CLOSE THAT WINDOW!!!!!!
THERE'S A DRAFT!

NICKI

(Stepping inside and quickly slamming the door shut)

There is not. And even if there were, it couldn't of gotten all the way from here to where you could have felt it half that fast.

NANO (o.s.)

I shall let you know, Nicki, when I am too old to know what I feel.

NICKI

Princess and the Pea.

NANO (o.s.)

What?

NICKI

NOTHING.

NANO (o.s.)

You think everybody should be Nanook of the North, like you. Well, they shouldn't. I appreciate a nice warm room. I remember the days before central heating.

NICKI

Well, you're sure making up for lost time now. Remember last year, when you forgot to turn down the thermostat before we left for Boca? We got back, and your kitchen was covered with mold. Took your girl five days with Clorox and a toothbrush to get it all off. Good thing it didn't get into the Persians--it would have taken a flame thrower to get it out.

NANO (o.s.)

Oh, stop it, Nicki. I keep my house comfortable. Why shouldn't I?

NICKI

Would have made one fabulous sitcom.

(Uses booming announcer type voice)

"84 year old grandmother of three turns French provincial home into disease control center after rare mold cultures coat every stick of furniture in the place. In tonight's thrilling episode of HAVE MOLD, WILL SWEAT HERE, Nano grows the cure for cancer in the Louis the 14th love seats."

NANO (o.s.)

Do you want this shower cap or don't you?

NICKI

Okay, sure, I'll take it.

NANO (o.s.)

(The sound of the toilet flushing.)

Lookie here--

(Nano enters from the bathroom, carrying the shower cap, and several courtesy bottles of shampoo, conditioner, and lotion.)

Aren't these nice--

(She shows them to Nicki)

NICKI

I'll take the shampoo, it's the kind I use.

(She takes the shampoo and puts it in her overnight bag.)

NANO

No, take 'em all.

NICKI

But don't you want the handcreme? In case you run out?

NANO

I'm up to my ears in lotions, Nicki. Here--you take 'em.

NICKI

Well, if you're sure.

(She puts everything in her overnight bag.

The sound of a souped-up car racing its engine, then peeling away fills the room.)

NANO

What's that noise--is somebody trying to get in?

NICKI

They gave us a room right over the lobby. We'll hear them driving up and checking in and pulling out all night.

NANO

They see two women traveling alone and they figure they'll stick us with the worst room in the place.

NICKI

They didn't do it intentionally, Nano--

NANO

They wouldn't have dared do it to your grandfather.

NICKI

People are not out to get us because we're women, Nano. They're out to get us because they're out to get everybody. It has nothing to do with us. We gave them an opportunity to get us and they took it.

You think they get some special pleasure from giving us an awful room? No, Nano, they get paid to give people awful rooms. It's their job.

NANO

Oh, I wish you'd stop being such a Pollyanna all the time.

NICKI

I am not being a Pollyanna--I'm far too much like you.

NANO

Well what's the point of making the best of things all the time if you don't have to?

NICKI

Everybody has to, Nano.

NANO

I don't.

NANO

Everybody in the world has to but you?

NANO

Yep.

NICKI

Well what are you going to do instead?

NANO

Instead of what?

NICKI

Instead of making the best of things--are you just going to get all upset about them? Is that it?

NANO

If I feel like it. If that's what makes me happy--yes. I have that right.

I have that luxury.

NICKI

It's going to make you happy to be upset?

NANO

Oh, stop picking me all apart, Nicki. Just because your life isn't the way you want it--well, mine is. Mine is just the way I like it, and when it isn't--I don't have to pretend that it is. I have the right to say I don't like it.

NICKI

(Suddenly very angry)

GOOD POINT. EXCELLENT POINT. You're absolutely right. I don't know how I could have forgotten that. If the littlest thing doesn't suit you to a T--you just go right ahead, Nano. Get upset.

NANO

(Also angry)

Thank God your grandfather saw to it that I'd never have to make the best of things, and I'm not about to start now.

NICKI

(Exploding)

Well maybe I have to, okay? Maybe I have to make the best of things! Maybe I don't have a choice!

(Pause)

NANO

(Nano shakes her head, sadly)

Oh, Nicki...I love our little trips together, but--

NICKI

(Sits down on the bed next to her)

You know how much I do too--

NANO

I'm getting too old--

NICKI

You are not, don't say that--

NANO

I know we fight sometimes, but--

NICKI

This trip we won't fight.

(Pause)

NANO

Maybe this will be our last trip--maybe you'll find some nice man and get married and the two of you will drive down to Florida together--

NICKI

We'll take you with us--

NANO

Oh, just what a young couple starting out needs--an old hag hanging around--

NICKI

The French do it--it's very European--you always see the French with their grandmother at the beach--

NANO

We do not need to ape the French--we are superior to them in every way--little anti-Semites--yes, they pretend they're not, but you watch, that's where the next Germany will be, you mark my words. If I didn't love my Blue Hour and my Shalimar so much--I just hate myself for buying it, but I can't help myself--

NICKI

(Laughing)

It's probably made in this country anyhow.

NANO

Is it?

NICKI

Probably.

NANO

I'd feel better--but even if it is, some anti-Semite over there is making money from it.

I bought a couple extra bottles--they run that special every year about now--you want one?

NICKI

No thanks--

NANO

A girl needs to put on a little perfume, Nicki, now please--

NICKI

I said I don't need any--I haven't even started on the bottle you gave me last year.

NANO

No social life at all, Nicki?

NICKI

No...

(She sighs, editing out the social life she can't tell her grandmother about.)

...not the way you mean.

NANO

Well--concentrate. Haven't you learned what the other girls do to get a husband--or don't they get husbands anymore, just bed partners--oooooooooooouuuuuuuch, that's not for you.

Tell me, Nicki--what ever happened to that nice lawyer you were seeing--

NICKI

Is it warm enough for you in here?

NANO

Well, it sure couldn't be any colder.

NICKI

Then you'd rather I didn't open a window?

NANO

OPEN A WINDOW!!! MY GOD, NICKI--IT'S LIKE AN ICE BOX IN HERE!

NICKI

Well then, I guess it's time once again to transform an ordinary Howard Johnson's motel room into the burning depths of hell.

NANO

What do you mean?

NICKI

I'm turning on the heat.

Say when...

(She sullenly goes over to the heating unit)

She turns the heat on, to the first setting. A loud click)
Mississippi in August?

(She turns it up again)

Death Valley at high noon?

(She turns it up again)

Ground zero, Nagasaki, July 1945?

(Pause. She turns the heating setting, but it doesn't click)

That will have to do, Nano, that's as high as it goes.

NANO

Nicki, I was like an icicle all day in that car and didn't say a word, but--

NICKI

AN ICICLE--what are you talking about--I had the heat up so high I practically passed out--

NANO

It was freezing in that car--

NICKI

Then how come every time I put on the turn indicator I got a second degree burn--

NANO

After the first few hours I couldn't even feel my toes--

NICKI

I was delirious with heat--

NANO

Right about the time we passed Columbia my legs went numb, but I said--what the hell, maybe I'm having a stroke--

NICKI

(Dropping the game)

Nano--come on--don't joke--

NANO

(Still dead serious)

Old people have no business being with the young--

NICKI

I turned it up, Nano, all the way--can you feel it yet?

NANO

Old people deserve what they get--they should never foist themselves on young people for more than short periods at a time, and if they do--well, they get what they deserve, they truly do.

NICKI

(Changing the subject)

Then who you gonna drive down to Boca with--Pearl Rubenstein?

(She laughs.)

The two of you in your separate cars?

NANO

Well, when we go out we don't want to have an accident-- you know the way Pearl talks, we'd be yakking away and the next thing you know, we'd be in a ditch.

NICKI

That must be something to see--the two of you pulling up to the Kentucky Fried Chicken in your matching Fleetwood Broughams.

NANO

No, Pearl's got a new one. White with red leather

NICKI

That sounds nice.

NANO

She's very particular. Won't even think of taking it out in the rain.

NICKI

You really do need a new one--too bad Pearl didn't wait, you could have gotten a deal. Bought your Cadillacs in bulk.

NANO

I don't care what a car looks like, long as it gets me where I'm going. Though it is making a lot of noise lately, they can really hear me

coming--surprised you didn't hear me all the way in New York.

NICKI

It's nice you have someone to--you know, pal around with.

NANO

Oh, Pearl's all right. She's no good to go shopping with--nothing's good enough. But we do like our fried chicken and she cries on my shoulder about Geraldine, and I cry on hers about you.

NICKI

Gerry's almost five years younger than I am, Nano--

NANO

Yes--you've got a five year head start on her with the men, and look at the good it's done you.

Don't you have any social life at all?

(Nicki shrugs.)

What's wrong with the men--what are they looking for, sex?

NICKI

(Laughs and shakes her head. This is, after all, what she often looks for in men.)

It'd be a lot easier if they were. Unfortunately most of them are looking for a mother. Of course that's better than the ones looking for free therapy. How much can you learn about a person, really, in one date? There ought to be limits. A Geneva Convention for dating. But the worst of all—the ones who want to know about you. The exhaustive interrogation. The relentless cross examination. And not so they can know you and love you, no, no, that is not the point. So they can find out why they shouldn't bother. So they can find out what's wrong with you up front. Give me the ones who just want sex, Nano. It's faster, kinder, much more pleasant, and more honest, in the end.

NANO

Sex sex sex--god, what's happening to the world?

(Nicki can't stop laughing)

What's so funny?

NICKI

You are.

NANO

Oh, go on. I don't feel funny. I feel very sad.

NICKI

Why?

NANO

I don't know what the future holds for you.

(Nano and Nicki sigh.)

Lights dim slightly)

SCENE TWO

(The door into the room opens, and the maid enters with her cart.

She is humming MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME.

Nano and Nicki have gone into the bathroom to change. They seem unaware of the maid's presence, and the maid is unaware of theirs.

The maid takes the orange Monets off the wall, puts them in her cart, and pulls from the cart two orange-tinted Renoirs, which she hangs in their place. She then turns down the beds, and puts a WELCOME TO PADUKA, KENTUCKY sign on the TV.

The door to the hallway is open, and the sound of soda cans being dispensed from a vending machine right next to their room is very loud.)

NANO (o.s.)

My God, I hope we don't have to listen to that racket all night.

NICKI (o . s .)

I'm sure we won't.

(The cans continue falling.)

NANO (o.s.)

Regular little Miss Mary Sunshine, that's what you are.

NICKI (o . s .)

It's still not too late to change rooms, you know--

NANO (o.s.)

And repack and go traipsing around at this time of night? Not on your life. No telling where we'd end up.

NICKI (o.s.)

Okay. But remember, you had your chance.

NANO (o.s.)

I'll go crazy if this keeps up.

NICKI (o.s.)

You will not.

NANO

(Entering from the bathroom, wearing her nightgown, robe, and helmet. The maid exits.)

See if I don't.

(She gets into bed. Nicki enters from the bathroom, wearing a revealing satin and lace nightgown--black. She swirls around as she heads for her bed.)

NICKI

I really do like this, Nano.

NANO

Well, it's nothing special, but it was a good price.

(The maid has closed the door behind her, but the sound of the cans clanging is only slightly muted)

NICKI

It's really nice.

NANO

(As Nicki starts to get into bed.)

You're not going to wear it tonight, are you?

NICKI

Why not?

NANO

Well, I just thought you were going to save it, that's all.

NICKI

Save it for what, Nano?

NANO

Well, I'm not going to live forever, you know. The way you're going, I won't be around to shop for your trousseau--

NICKI

People do not shop for trousseau anymore, Nano.

NANO

Oh, you know it all, do you?

NICKI

Forget it.

(She turns, heads for the bathroom.)

I'm sorry, I'll take it off, you bought it for me under false pretenses--

NANO

Nicki, please, wear it if you want to--I'm tired and it doesn't matter.

NICKI

I'm sorry. I just--

NANO

I just need a good night's sleep, that's all I need. Though I don't know how I'll get it with that racket going on.

NICKI

I'm gonna go out there with an out of order sign in about two minutes if it keeps up.

NANO

Like that?

NICKI

Yes--sure--why not? Maybe then you'd get your wish--I'd wear this nightgown during acts in keeping with the spirit, if not the letter, of its purchase.

(She drapes herself against the door.)

Yahoo Mountain Dew, Pepsi Caffeine Free, or me.

NANO

I think you're capable of it.

NICKI

Capable of, maybe. Desperate enough, no. Maybe by our trip next year.

NANO

(Shaking her head.)

Oh, Nicki, what are we going to do with you? It's just not right--you have so much to give. Hate to see you go to waste.

NICKI

Yes, it's a real shame.

NANO

A regular tragedy.

NICKI

I wouldn't go that far.

NANO

Maybe what we need to do is mount a campaign, the way Lucille Glitz did for the Felischaker girl back in—I don't know, right after the war, I guess. Lucille had already married off all her girls, and I guess she saw Molly Fleischaker as a real challenge. Well, she set out to get that girl a husband--first she bought her slews of clothes at Hartsfields in Kansas City, that was where you went when you wanted only the very best. Then they went up to Chicago on the train and installed themselves in

one of the poshest hotels--can't remember the name, guess my mind is going--and Lucille started giving the parties. She gave 'em all that season, and by the end of it that Fleischaker girl had gotten herself a man. From a very nice family, too.

NICKI

Sounds great. When do we leave?

NANO

Oh, I'm too old for that kind of thing. Still, it was quite an accomplishment for Lucille. She really knew how to mount a campaign.

Oh, I don't know, Nicki, things were so much easier back then. I still remember hunting violets with my boyfriend-- must have been all of 5 years-old. And I got some tadpoles, that was my first gift from a beau.

(Pause)

Well, guess it's time we got some sleep. Night, dear.

NICKI

(Switching off the light)

Night, Nano. Thanks again for the nightgown.

NANO

You're entirely welcome.

(They lie in bed, as the soda cans continue to clang.

Nicki swings herself out of bed as quietly as is humanly possible.)

Nicki--is something wrong?

NICKI

No, I'm just...going to the bathroom.

NANO

Oh.

(Nicki very quietly takes a pen from her bag and tiptoes into the bathroom.

The light shines out from the bathroom. After a few moments, Nicki emerges, wearing Nano's coat over her nightgown—the coat is too short in the sleeves, as well as

the length.

Nicki is carrying the paper "FOR YOUR PROTECTION" strip from the toilet seat, that she has written something on.

Nicki opens the door to the hall as quietly as she can, and slips out into the hall, after looking both ways to make sure the coast is clear.

She is halfway out the door when she turns the knob on the door, realizes it will automatically lock after her. She decides to try it anyway--she swings the door open, and holds it with her foot while she leans far to one side, attempting to put the strip of paper on the vending machine.

All that is visible is her foot in the door. As she inches further and further out of the door to reach the vending machine, the door closes further.)

NICKI

(A proud whisper.)

Got it!

(But as she attempts to go back into the room, her foot slips, and the door closes the final centimeter. It clicks shut.

For several seconds, silence.

Then Nicki taps quietly on the door)

Nano? Nano, it's me. Nano?

(Not as loudly, to someone in the hall.)

No, I'm sure I have the right room...no, I will not be coming to your room when I have finished...

(Very loud, banging on the door)

NANO!!!!!!

NANO

Nicki?

(She switches on the light next to the bed.)

Nicki--

(She sees that Nicki is not in bed. She gets up and goes toward the bathroom.)

Nicki, what's wrong--

NICKI (o.s.)

I'm out here, Nano--let me in!

Look, sir, I'm sorry your team lost the big game, but you will have to find another way to make up for it.

NANO

(She comes out of the bathroom, confused.)

NICKI--where are you?

NICKI (o.s.)

NANO I'M OUT HERE! NANO!!!

NANO

(Opening the door)

NICKI--what on earth are you doing out here like that?

NICKI

(She slides inside quick as she can, locking the door behind her. She takes off Nano's coat.)

Fixing it so we could get some sleep tonight.

NANO

What do you mean?

NICKI

(Dashes back to her bed, gets under the covers)

I put an out of order sign on the coke machine.

NANO

You did WHAT?

NICKI

Nano, it's not right that it should keep us up all night. So, I--

NANO

Listen to me, young lady. You go right back out there and take that sign off this minute. I never heard of such a thing.

NICKI

But Nano, you've got to get some sleep.

NANO

If you think I'll be able to sleep a wink now--we don't do this sort of thing, Nicki. If we can't sleep, we don't sleep, but we never, ever, stoop to something like this.

NICKI

It's not hurting anybody, Nano, if somebody wants a coke they can just use the machine on another floor.

NANO

That is not the point.

NICKI

I'm not going to take the sign off. There is no reason why we should be bothered all night. And I don't intend to be.

NANO

All right. But I'm getting dressed. I'm going to go sit in the lobby.

NICKI

Nano--

NANO

I will sit up all night in the lobby--

NICKI

None of this would have happened if you'd just let me change our room.

NANO

Why should I always have to be changing rooms all the time? No, Nicki, I won't do it. I paid my money for a room, and if they stick us with rooms like this then they just do it. That's the way it is. I can't be running from room to room all the time--if this is the way it is for travelers today, then I'll just stay at home. Your grandfather and I never had to put up with this kind of--

NICKI

Of course you didn't. He would have gone out there with his shotgun.

NANO

He would not. He was too much of a gentleman.

NICKI

(Mimes shooting)

Pow. Fountain service.

NANO

That is not the point, Nicki.

NICKI

All right. I'll take the sign off. Give me your coat.

(She takes Nano's coat, puts it back on)

NANO

(Can't help laughing)

Oh, you do look a sight.

NICKI

Hold the door open, would you?

(Nano holds the door while Nicki dashes out.)

Look, mister--I don't care how far you drove to see the game, I will not come to your room when I'm through...why not?...because...because...I won't be through. Now let me go--the winning team is waiting in my room.

(Nicki throws herself back into the room.)

Close call.

(She double locks the door.)

NANO

Who were you talking to?

NICKI

Just a drunk.

(Nicki goes over to her bed, climbs up on it and begins jumping up and down on it, making as much noise as possible.)

NANO

Nicki--what are you doing! NICKI!! PEOPLE ARE TRYING

TO SLEEP!!

NICKI

(Between grunts and groans)

Got to do it, Nano! It's for our own protection!

NANO

What are you talking about, Nicki--

NICKI

(Stopping)

Do you think I could make a living as a hooker?

NANO

What?

NICKI

(She starts up, jumping and groaning again.)

One more really good one ought to do it--

(One really spectacular jump and groan, and she stops.)

The really top of the line prostitutes make thousands of dollars a throw.

(She climbs down off the bed, taking off Nano's coat.)

Do you think I could make that much?

NANO

Why? Are you thinking of changing professions?

NICKI

I'd have to invest in a whole new wardrobe, of course.

NANO

Well, anything would be an improvement over your current one. How do you ever expect to land a husband looking like a rag-a-muffin?

NICKI

I'll get a husband who wants a wife who looks like a rag a-muffin, obviously.

NANO

And what good will that do you?

NICKI

For your information, some people like the way I dress. There are some people, some men, for instance, who think I--

(The vending machine starts in again, very loud. They listen for a moment. Nano sighs. Nicki glares at her.

Nicki gets into bed)

NANO

I'm sorry, Nicki, I just couldn't let you keep that sign up.

NICKI

I know, Nano. It's all right. Let's just try to get some sleep.

(Very loud can sound again, after she switches off the light.)

If we can.