

THE LAST NICE GUY

Written by

Heath Houseman

FADE IN:

EXT. VALLEY - DAY

Colorado - wide open, grassy plain, high-altitude. Midsummer.

On the western side of the valley, a granite wall of 14,000 mountain peaks stretches north to south, each peak encased in heavy cloud, the sun a murky orb sinking behind them. Strong wind BLASTS toward the mountains.

ISABELLA "OLEANDER" FRANGELICO (35) - Italian-American, the Long Island Trailer Trash version of mixed martial arts fighter Gina Carano - runs across the plain. She is weeping.

She clutches a stainless steel URN, the kind designed to attach to motorcycle forks for "the ride of your afterlife."

JOHNNY BOYD (35) - boyish good looks, athletic body, shorter than Isabella - follows her at a steady, determined pace.

Isabella stops at a pile of rocks, a CAIRN, and starts to pull the cairn apart, throwing one rock after another.

Johnny stops and watches her - not good. He looks over his shoulder - at us. Searching for someone. His eyes find who he's looking for and lock-on, he nods, then walks toward her.

JOHNNY

Isabella...!

Hit by altitude, she bends over, sucking in big gulps of air - sounds painful, like an injured animal caught in a trap. Johnny is close now and she reacts when she hears him walk up behind her, turns around, ready to fight.

ISABELLA

You don't fuckin' belong here!

When she says "fuckin'," a puff of BLACK SMOKE with fiery sparks comes out of her mouth - WE SEE THE CURSE WORD AS SMOKE, the WORD MUFFLED and not quite CLEAR. Then, whoosh, it's gone, blown away by the wind.

JOHNNY

Give it to me.

Isabella shakes her head - no way - and puts the urn behind her back, daring him to take it. Johnny moves fast, surprising her. He snags the urn.

A tug-of-war ensues, but he pulls it from her hands. In that moment, we see LETTERS ETCHED into the stainless steel - a NAME - just a flash, indecipherable. Johnny steps away from Isabella and UNSCREWS the cap.

ISABELLA

No, don't!

The wind has intensified, HOWLING now.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Don't! Don't you dare!

He holds the urn out like he's about to give a toast in an Irish pub and... dumps it. The ASH blows toward Isabella.

TIME SLOWS DOWN and we see a ray of setting sunlight punch through the clouds. When the ash reaches Isabella in SLOW MOTION, the sunbeam ILLUMINATES every particle so that it GLOWS around her. She tries to catch the ash.

BACK TO NORMAL TIME.

Wind blasts the ash into atoms. Isabella SCREAMS. Then she focuses on Johnny. They stare at one another - a standoff. Ice cold stars appear in the blue-black arc of twilight.

Johnny looks over his shoulder - at us again. Searching for someone, but his eyes don't lock-on. No one there. He frowns, and we see understanding wash over his features. He looks up, a sad, but relieved, smile forming.

He turns his attention to Isabella again and we see her looking directly at us. The wind blows her hair so that it writhes like snakes - she could be Medusa - and tears stain her cheeks, eyes wild and scary as hell.

She looks insane, capable of anything, even murder.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CAFE - DAY - ONE YEAR EARLIER

Early morning, the HOWLING COYOTE CAFE, a busy, rundown beach-side coffee shop on St. Jonathan's Island, Florida.

Johnny enters - aloha shirt, board shorts, flip-flops. A little lost, first time here, holding a book.

HARRY (60s) makes a drink on a monster-sized, steam-powered Italian La Pavoni ANTIQUE ESPRESSO MACHINE. It LEAKS, HISSES, GURGLES. He wears chef whites, a living Pillsbury Doughboy.

Johnny waits by the counter, polite as can be, then Harry tosses a biscotti cookie at him, points to a sign that says "seat yourself."

Johnny acknowledges Harry with a big smile and a two-finger salute. He picks up the cookie, offers it to Harry, who crosses his arms and sighs: what an idiot.

Johnny holds a beat, then shoves the cookie in his mouth. Harry's expression remains the same: what an idiot. Johnny leans forward and reads Harry's name tag.

JOHNNY  
(chewing)  
Thanks... Harry.

Harry cracks a smile.

Johnny seats himself by a large picture window, looks out - a terrific view of the Boardwalk and Atlantic Ocean, but he has to strain to see because the tinting is scratched and the glass is covered in eddies of sunscreen fingerprints.

We see through the window and everything's a greasy blur. Johnny gives up and opens the book.

ISABELLA (V.O.)  
What you reading, sailor?

He looks up. It's Isabella - in black combat boots, fishnet stockings, mini skirt, and a tee-shirt with the image of rocker Bon Scott. All promises a wild ride. She puts a cup of water and menu on the table.

JOHNNY  
Oh... Uh. "Moby-Dick."

ISABELLA  
"Moby-Fuckin'-Dick." Never fuckin' read that one before.

Puffs of SWEAR-SMOKE come out of her mouth. (NOTE: any time someone curses and Johnny's there, we see it and hear it as Johnny see's and hears it: swear-smoke.) Johnny waves the swear-smoke away so that he can see her face better.

Isabella looks at him like he's nuts: WTF? The swear-smoke clears and when Johnny sees Isabella's strong and alluring face for the first time, it's clear by his reaction he's awestruck.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)  
Oh. Sorry. Forget not everybody's from Long Fuckin' Island, huh?

Johnny grins and puts on a bad Long Island accent.

JOHNNY

I'd kill for a lobstah rowl and an  
ice cold beah. Wicked smaht.

Isabella reacts - and drops her order-notebook.

ISABELLA

Aw... Aw, shit, sorry. Look at me.  
All thumbs today.

JOHNNY

My accent that bad?

ISABELLA

Yeah.

Their eyes connect and they do not want to look away. When they finally do, Johnny sneaks a look for a wedding ring. We see a circular imprint on her finger, where a ring used to be, her thumb picking at it.

After a beat, she picks up the notebook. Johnny goes for the notebook at the same time. Their foreheads collide.

JOHNNY

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Ow!

Fuck!

As they massage their heads, Johnny knocks the glass of water over, grabs a napkin to mop it up, his hand hits the curled end of his fork, CATAPULTING it toward the ceiling.

The fork PIERCES the ceiling tile, TWANG! It stays there, wobbling. A beat, then they look at each other and LAUGH.

HARRY (O.S.)

Order up, Isabella!

She curtsies, all smiles and batting eyelashes, rushes off.

MALE VOICE

Hey, you! Fuck-face with the fork!

Johnny's eyes shoot to a shadowy figure leaning against the cafe's rear wall: STEVIE FRANGELICO (40), black boots, black socks, Bermuda shorts, an ugly aloha shirt.

He's about the same height as Johnny, but chunky, squat, with a lovable naughty-boy face and a headful of rowdy black hair. Stevie steps forward, swear-smoke puffing out of his mouth like a steam locomotive every time he curses.

STEVIE

Get your fuckin' hands of my  
fuckin' wife, fucktard!

Johnny scrambles from the table, races to the exit door,  
leaving his book behind.

EXT. BOARDWALK - DAY

BLUE GILL PIER AND BEACH in the background, Johnny hightails  
it down the boardwalk. He looks over his shoulder, and we see  
Stevie chasing after, not far behind, trailing clouds of  
swear-smoke.

STEVIE

You ever fuckin' look at my wife  
like that again, you sick fucky-  
fuck...

Johnny pumps it up - get the hell out of here - and runs  
around a corner.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

...I'm gonna rip your - fuck!

Stevie is knocked flat on his ass - as if he slipped on a  
banana peel or ran into an invisible wall.

INT. ST. JONATHAN TRIBUNE OFFICE - DAY

ATTICUS LYNCH (65), seated behind a desk, Irish/English with  
fire-engine-red hair, not a stand of white - the name of the  
paper etched into a large rectangular window behind him: "The  
St. Jonathan Tribune."

Johnny stands in front of the desk.

TANGELIQUE (32), African-American, sits behind a secretarial  
desk outside the office in the Reporters Room.

STEPHANIE (28), white, works in a cubical near Tangelique.  
Both watching Johnny through the glass.

ATTICUS

Yeah, yeah, Johnny, I like the bit  
about our local Nazi Chapter. Shed  
some light on the darkness. They  
ain't gonna like it, but that's why  
I hired you: to be my balls. We're  
going to war with those bastards.  
Can't live in fear, Johnny.

JOHNNY  
But Mr. Lynch -

ATTICUS  
Atticus.

JOHNNY  
Mr. -

ATTICUS  
Atticus, Atticus, Atticus.

JOHNNY  
Atticus. I agree, you can't live in  
fear -

ATTICUS  
You do, you know what happens?

JOHNNY  
Uh. No. What?

ATTICUS  
The Nazis.

JOHNNY  
That's what I want to talk to you  
about, sir. I didn't write about  
our local Nazi Chapter. I didn't  
even know we had one.

ATTICUS  
I know. I wrote it because you  
didn't know and you need to know. I  
hired you for two reasons: One, an  
outsider's perspective, and two, I  
want you to go after our Island  
Nazis. Be my balls, Johnny.

JOHNNY  
I can be ballsy, Mr. Lynch, but I  
can't have you, uh, write an  
article and put my name on it.

ATTICUS  
I didn't write it. You did.

JOHNNY  
I wrote about surfing on St.  
Jonathan's. That's all. You added -

ATTICUS

What needed to be added. You know what happens if you live in fear, Johnny?

JOHNNY

What, the... the Nazis?

ATTICUS

Shove a bowling ball up your ass and pickle your dick. Watch your ass, Johnny, and be my balls, that's all I ask. And welcome to St. Jonathan's.

INT. REPORTERS ROOM - DAY

Watching Johnny and Atticus arguing.

STEPHANIE

(whispering)

What's the catch, Tangelique?

TANGELIQUE

Why, what on earth do you mean, Steph?

STEPHANIE

He's freakin' hot, so either he's broke, retarded, gay, or all three. My luck's it's all three.

TANGELIQUE

Oh, no. None of the above. He's nice. Watch.

Tangelique crosses to the office.

INT. ST. JONATHAN TRIBUNE OFFICE - DAY

She knocks and opens the door.

TANGELIQUE

Sorry to bother you, sir, but would you like a cup of coffee?

ATTICUS

That's why I pay you the big bucks, Tanq.

(to Johnny)

Get to balling, Mr. Balls.



Johnny crosses to the door, Tangelique stepping aside.

TANGELIQUE

(whispering to Johnny)

Oh, um, Johnny? Would you mind...?  
Atticus and I need to...?

JOHNNY

Oh. No. Yeah. Sure.

TANGELIQUE

And a cup for me too. Cream. And  
sugar. Two packets. One white. The  
other brown. And give it a stir,  
won't you?

JOHNNY

Anything else?

He steps out, crosses to the coffee station. As he pours the coffee, Tangelique looks back at Stephanie and opens her eyes wide as if to say: see?

EXT. BOARDWALK - DAY

Johnny walks home, reading a copy of The St. Jonathan Tribune, open to the article.

INSERT - THE ST. JONATHAN'S TRIBUNE ARTICLE/PHOTO

-- "Island Nazis. A revealing history of racism, hatred, and surfboards by Johnny Boyd."

-- A photo of Johnny's bright smiling face.

Johnny jerks to a stop, shaking his head - not happy - as he reads the article. A sudden sea-breeze blows the paper from his hands. It settles in front of the Howling Coyote Cafe.

He picks it up - and catches a glimpse of Isabella waiting tables inside. He steps to the glass and cups a hand on the window to see her better.

Isabella senses someone watching, turns, and waves her fingers at Johnny. She smiles. He smiles back.

Stevie appears behind her, giving Johnny a double-bird: fuck you twice! Johnny stumbles backward. The two men stare at one another through the glass, then Johnny walks away.

Isabella watches him go, a sad, perplexed look on her face.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)  
Johnny Boyd?

Johnny stops and turns. A fist comes straight for us, BLAMO!

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A blond, shaggy-haired SURFER NAZI (18), white, SLAMS Johnny against a brick wall. He's a Florida surfer dude: cut-off knee-length jeans, flip-flops, a Pura Vida bracelet, headphones, aloha shirt open, revealing a muscled torso.

He has an SS PIN fastened to his shirt collar and a TOE RING with an SS DEATH'S HEAD.

Richard Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," performed on laid-back Caribbean steel-drums, plays from the headphones and we can hear it, tinny sounding. The Surfer Nazi shows Johnny the newspaper, then throws it at him.

SURFER NAZI  
Gunter glieben glauchen globen,  
Johnny Boyd.

JOHNNY  
Wha... what?

SURFER NAZI  
Dude, it's German, you ignorant  
krüppel-fucker. A warning.

JOHNNY  
Oh, I'm sorry. I thought it was Def  
Leppard. I didn't understand.

SURFER NAZI  
You see this?

He points to the SS pin and the toe ring.

SURFER NAZI (CONT'D)  
Doesn't get more real that that,  
but just in case you don't get  
it...

The Surfer Nazi head-butts Johnny, CRUNCH! Down Johnny goes.

SURFER NAZI (CONT'D)  
You understand that?

Beat, then the Surfer Nazi grabs his head in pain.

SURFER NAZI (CONT'D)  
Owwwww! Ow! Ow! Ow!

The Surfer Nazi, dizzy himself now, blinks back tears, leaning over Johnny, his face inches away. When he curses, swear-smoke fills the space around their heads.

TIME SLOWS DOWN as Johnny loses consciousness. The Surfer Nazi's vowels stretch out.

SURFER NAZI (CONT'D)  
We ain't the bad guys, brother.  
Don't make fun of uz. We ain't  
dumb shit, dip-dick. Dude, you  
should beeee fuuckin' niiiiice...

Swear-smoke hides the Surfer Nazi's face and then Johnny loses consciousness, the swear-smoke MORPHING into his past:

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- Morphs into: Johnny (7), a look of WONDER on his face as he watches "Star Wars" on TV, a scene with Obi-Wan Kenobi.

-- Morphs into: Johnny (7) at CHURCH, a look of WONDER on his face as his MOTHER and FATHER escort him down an aisle to a PASTOR who looks like Obi-Wan Kenobi from "Star Wars."

Both Mother and Father look physically fit, outdoorsy without being 1960s hippie. Two well groomed mountain climbers.

-- Morphs into: Johnny's mother and father lecturing him.

FATHER  
Jesus didn't swear, son.

MOTHER  
Or Obi-Wan Kenobi, right?

FATHER  
You don't have to swear to be cool.

MOTHER  
Swearing is just like smoking,  
Johnny. Turns your lungs into coal.

FATHER  
(good-natured laugh)  
Make you cough out clouds of swear-  
smoke.

-- Morphs into: Johnny (7), on the rooftop of his parent's house in LEADVILLE, COLORADO, dressed like Obi-Wan Kenobi.

A toy LIGHTSABER knock-off called "The Force Beam," a red flashlight with a translucent plastic tube attached, and a white leather GIDEON HOLY BIBLE lie on the roof next to him.

The Bible has the word "Jedi" scribbled between "Holy" and "Bible."

JOHNNY (AGE 7)

Dar - damn. Hell. Ass. Ass-face.  
Asshole. Son of a bitch. Shit...

We HEAR the curse words and do not see swear-smoke.

-- Morphs into: Johnny (7) in the bathroom, WASHING his OWN MOUTH OUT WITH a bar of "STAR WARS" SOAP that has Obi-Wan Kenobi's image engraved in it.

-- Morphs into: soap bubbles in the corner of his mouth, Johnny looks in the mirror, takes a big breath, and...

JOHNNY (AGE 7) (CONT'D)

Fuck.

A puff of swear-smoke comes out of his mouth FOR THE FIRST TIME, the sound of the word MUFFLED, UNCLEAR. Johnny grins.

JOHNNY (AGE 7) (CONT'D)

Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck...

Swear-smoke fills the bathroom, concealing Johnny's image in the mirror.

END MONTAGE

FADE TO BLACK.