

EPISODE 2: NICK LEESON

Written by

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INT. GERARD'S APARTMENT - MORNING

PRINCESS is asleep on the bed. She wakes up and looks around. No one is here. Traffic noises are drifting up. She picks up the phone and dials.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - MORNING

GERARD:
So what's the plan?

MAXWELL:
The plan is that you're going to visit every client in the computer and keep them from jumping ship. While you do that, I'm going to demand a meeting with Evangeline Sinclair at Art Digest and convince her that Hoffstadt just has a grudge against me. I'll appeal to her ethical side.

GERARD:
Will that work?

MAXWELL:
I doubt it. All journalists lack morals, even art reporters. Also, I tried to sleep with her while I was married.

GERARD:
She hates you?

MAXWELL:
Women hold grudges. That's an important life lesson.

GERARD:
You've never given me any life lessons before. Give me another.

MAXWELL:
Sleep with heavy girls. They appreciate it more.

GERARD:
Fascinating. Well, as a back-up, Torita said something about Le Desenee if Faith can't-

MAXWELL:
Forget it. We can't get in there.

JAMAL:

I vote you just call Hoffstadt and apologize.

GERARD:

That's a good idea.

MAXWELL:

He doesn't get a vote. Jamal, you're going with Gerard today.

INT. ART DIGEST - DAY

MAXWELL sits in a chair beside a potted plant. He keeps looking at the plant. EVANGELINE'S secretary, BEATRICE, is taking phone calls at the desk.

INT. EVANGELINE'S OFFICE - DAY

EVANGELINE is a beautiful middle-aged woman. She is sharply dressed and has unblemished skin, but looks more natural than a model. She and MAXWELL have a habit of talking over each other.

MAXWELL:

I guess you know why I'm here.

EVANGELINE:

No, why are you here?

MAXWELL:

Because of that article.

EVANGELINE:

No, I know that. I meant, why do you think that I'm interested in seeing you?

MAXWELL:

Evangeline, please.

EVANGELINE:

Because the last time I saw you, you asked me five times to sleep with you. In one night.

MAXWELL:

I didn't ask you, I invited you to sleep with me.

EVANGELINE:

What's the difference?

MAXWELL:

I think there is
one.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - DAY

GERARD and JAMAL are about to enter OPHELIA'S studio.

JAMAL:

You ever met Ophelia?

GERARD:

No. Is she reliable?

JAMAL:

What do you mean 'reliable'?

GERARD:

Do you mind if I do the talking? I
think this is sort of an audition
to be Max's assistant.

JAMAL:

You're not his assistant?

INT. EVANGELINE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

MAXWELL:

I'm not trying to pull the wool
over anyone's eyes.

EVANGELINE:

You're trying to manipulate me,
same as always.

Following dialogue is delivered simultaneously.

MAXWELL:

If you'll just give the kid a
chance. You know that you should
be impartial, it's your
journalistic ethos.

EVANGELINE:

Because if you think I will show
you preferential treatment after
years of you leering at me and
making obscene comments behind my
back, you're living on another
planet.

They both stop.

MAXWELL:

We never did get the habit of listening right, did we? We both talk a great game but we're no good at hearing the other person.

EVANGELINE:

I'll give you sixty seconds.

MAXWELL:

I know we have history. But I'm asking you to not punish my client for my past. You want to hate me and belittle me in print? Go ahead. But give the artist a fair chance. Let him succeed or fail on his own merit.

EVANGELINE:

Is that it?

MAXWELL:

I'm pleading here.

EVANGELINE:

If you really want me to write a puff piece about-

MAXWELL:

Not a puff piece. Just the truth.

EVANGELINE:

The truth as you see it?

MAXWELL:

You already have your mind made up. You want my client to suffer for my crimes.

EVANGELINE:

No, Max, I want you to suffer. You never deserved to be on top. You used other people's talent to make yourself rich and treated everyone like shit. I want to see you hit rock bottom. Most people do.

MAXWELL:

I'm not going to forget this.

EVANGELINE:

Oh, I'm sure. Just like no one's forgotten you either. You know why you should be nice on your way up? Because it's us in the middle that are guarding the rungs on the ladder when you fall down. Your sixty seconds is up. Bye, Max.

INT. GERARD'S APARTMENT - DAY

PRINCESS is on the phone.

PRINCESS:

Hey. It's me.

(beat)

At the assistant's.

(beat)

I don't know. Would you believe it?

(beat)

Can you come get me?

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - LATER

GERARD and JAMAL are walking.

GERARD:

What is this place we're going to?

JAMAL:

It's like a halfway house.

GERARD:

This guy was in jail?

JAMAL:

No.

EXT. STOOP OF THE HALFWAY HOUSE - SOON AFTER

GERARD knocks and a middle-aged woman opens the door.

GERARD:

Hello, I'm Richard and this is my partner Gary. We would like to talk to Jason.

LADY:
(exhaling a stream of
cigarette smoke)
They're out.

GERARD:
All of them?

LADY:
Yes, all of them.

She shuts the door.

JAMAL:
What's with the fake names?

GERARD:
I don't know. It just came out.

JAMAL:
She was kind of hot.

GERARD:
She was an attractive older woman.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - LATER

GERARD'S cell phone rings as they walk.

GERARD:
Hey, Maxie.

MAXWELL:
How is it going on your end?

GERARD:
I think I'm getting better. If I
can keep the rest, that's like half
the list.

MAXWELL:
Damn it.
(small beat)
This stinks.

GERARD:
How did it go for you?

MAXWELL:
Never expose a weakness to an old
friend.

GERARD:
More advice. Max, are we screwed?

MAXWELL:
I have one more move I can make.

GERARD:
Going over her head?

MAXWELL:
No, over Hoffstadt's. Just keep
doing what you're doing.
(to SECRETARY)
Maxwell Hargitay to see Vance.

INT. VANCE'S OFFICE - SOON AFTER

MAXWELL sits down across from VANCE. VANCE keeps looking at his computer.

MAXWELL:
Hello, Vance.

No response.

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)
What, you're not happy to see me?
Torita says hi. We had a lot of
fun together back in the day.

VANCE:
I know you did.

MAXWELL:
I meant you and I.

VANCE:
So did I.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - SAME TIME

JAMAL and GERARD have stopped for hot dogs from a cart.

JAMAL:
How you think he's doing?

GERARD:
Maxie? I don't know. You've been
with him longer; what do you think?

JAMAL:
(he shrugs then after long
consideration)
Nick Leeson.

GERARD:
What?

JAMAL:
British stock trader in Asia. They
made a movie about him. He made
some mistakes and covered it up
instead of facing it. But he had
to keep making gambles to win back
what he'd lost. He ended up losing
over a billion dollars of the
bank's money and he went to jail.
He wasn't even trying to rip them
off, just trying to keep his
mistakes from showing.

GERARD:
That's really interesting.

JAMAL:
I think Maxie might be like that
guy. He's trying to dig himself
out of the hole and he could take
all of us with him. Just making
mistakes.

GERARD:
Why are you working with him?

JAMAL:
I can sell the film either way.
People always want to see a guy
lose everything.

INT. VANCE'S OFFICE - SOON AFTER

MAXWELL:
Why don't you just back out of the
deal?

VANCE:
Personally, I'd like to.

MAXWELL:
What does that mean?

VANCE:

It means I have partners now and they want the deal. Loss isn't possible, only gain. They don't care if it hurts you or anyone else.

MAXWELL:

When did you get partners?

VANCE:

When you took Torita out of my gallery, I stumbled for a couple years. I had to bring in investors to stay afloat.

MAXWELL:

Why didn't you ask me for-

VANCE:

We don't do that, Max. We never ask each other for something. At least, we didn't until today.

MAXWELL:

I screwed you.

VANCE:

It happens.

MAXWELL:

And now you can't help me.

VANCE just stares at him.

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)

You're really missing out. This guy's got it. Torita found him.

MAXWELL rises to leave.

VANCE:

Bring him in. I want to meet him.

MAXWELL:

Thank you, Vance. I knew I could count on you.

VANCE:

I can't stand you, Max. I never could.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - SOON AFTER

MAXWELL is practically skipping down the steps of the building. His phone rings.

MAXWELL:

Yeah?

TORITA:

Max, it's me.

MAXWELL:

Hey.

TORITA:

I heard what Hoffstadt did.

MAXWELL:

I guess you would have.

TORITA:

I want you to know that I submitted Faith's slides to Le Desenee.

MAXWELL:

Damn it, Torita. You don't think that's going to be the lead paragraph when he gets rejected?

TORITA:

I think they'll accept.

MAXWELL:

They won't. They hate me. Vance is willing to help.

TORITA:

He's always been a good friend.

MAXWELL:

He hates me.

TORITA:

Well, that too. Can I visit Faith?

MAXWELL:

Why?

TORITA:

I want to see him work.

MAXWELL:

We're going to be doing finishing school for the next week.

TORITA:
He needs that much polishing?

MAXWELL:
The stakes are higher this time.

TORITA:
Then you understand why I'd rather
Faith was showing at Le Desenee.
At least there he'll have a crowd
that can understand him.

MAXWELL:
I'm playing the cards I've been
dealt.
Until finishing school is over, no
one sees the Wizard.
(looking down the street)
Where the hell am I? I think I
see Jersey.

EXT. GERARD'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

PRINCESS is getting into the car her husband, JEFF, is
piloting.

JEFF:
Where do we stand?

PRINCESS:
They're scrambling.

JEFF:
Did you sleep with him?

PRINCESS:
Which one?

JEFF drives.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - DAY

JAMAL:
Did good in there, man. I think
he's going to stay. Hey, ain't
this Faith's neighborhood?

GERARD:
That's who we're going to see.

JAMAL:
Courtesy call?

INT. FAITH'S LOFT - DAY

FAITH has an interior decorator, JASMIN, evaluating his loft.

JASMIN:

I think purple's a good color for this height. We use a lavender for the walls, leave the brick exposed, deep purple for the furniture.

FAITH:

What about carpet?

GERARD and JAMAL exit the elevator.

FAITH: (CONT'D)

Can you excuse me? Some of my boys just showed up. Gerard, Jamal. Where's Max?

GERARD:

He's unavailable. What are you doing?

FAITH:

This is my decorator. We're going over a few options.

GERARD:

Can I talk to you privately?

JAMAL absentmindedly films while talking to JASMIN.

JAMAL:

How did you become a decorator?

JASMIN:

I have a degree from Parsons.

JAMAL:

How much do you charge?

JASMIN:

I have a sixty thousand dollar retainer and I get 15% of all purchases. Are you in need?

GERARD and FAITH are in private conference.

GERARD:

Faith, you can't go spending all your money before you've got it.

FAITH:

Max already got me a showing. And he's the starmaker. You think it's gonna take long to get rich?

GERARD:

It's not that simple. There's a guy that's trying to hurt Max and it would hurt you.

FAITH:

Last night he said it was all cool.

GERARD:

Well, yeah. But...

FAITH:

But what? But what, Gerard?

GERARD:

We don't know if we can sell your work. The only buyer might be the mutual fund guy that hates Max. And he'd just warehouse the paintings.

FAITH:

They sell, they sell. I got money once they start selling.

GERARD:

What if that's the only time you ever sell? You're not going to make enough to live off for very long.

FAITH:

But Max-

GERARD:

He's been like a father to me. You should hear him offer advice. I'm not going to talk him down but you need to know the situation.

(beat)

I know a girl.

FAITH:

That's great and I'm happy for you.

GERARD:

I could talk to her about showing you at Mezzanine.

FAITH:
Isn't that in junkie alley? And
what about Max?

GERARD:
He's not what he used to be. You'd
probably do better with me than
with him now.

From the street comes a loud REVVING sound.

FAITH:
I think my Porsche's here.

INT. CAFE - DAY

MAXWELL enters the cafe and sits at the table where TORITA
waits.

MAXWELL:
So what do you want to say?

TORITA:
Max, you're not going to take Faith
to the top. He may sell some work,
he may even get a little positive
press about his talent. But, for
you, at this time, he will not be a
success.

MAXWELL:
You think I'm poison?

TORITA:
We have to face the reality of the
situation. Slate can make Faith
into the superstar that you are no
longer able to. And he has the
money to buy Faith from you.

MAXWELL:
Is this supposed to be an offer?
It sounds like extortion.

TORITA:
I don't think that word means what
you think it means. Anyway, this
is the situation.

MAXWELL:
What's he offering?

TORITA:
Three million. And you should take it.

MAXWELL:
Why do you care so much about him?

TORITA:
I'm married to him.

MAXWELL:
You were married to me first.

TORITA:
You didn't seem to care at the time.

MAXWELL:
I'm still the most well-known man in this profession.

TORITA:
You need to start thinking of that part of your life as over. You can make this one final deal. Give Franklin half the money and live on a budget for a few years. You'll never have to worry about *fail-working* again.

MAXWELL:
What do I do with Gerard? He thinks he's going to be my partner someday.

TORITA:
He can come work for Slate.

MAXWELL:
So he's part of the deal? Three million and an assistant to be named later?
(beat)
You screwed me with Le Desnee to back me into a corner, didn't you? Forced my hand on this.

TORITA:
No. I submitted there because Faith has talent. And I did it under Slate's name because I know you'll take the offer.

MAXWELL:

Did you know I'm going to save the world?

TORITA:

Really?

MAXWELL:

I have it on good authority. Well, actually she's a drunk. But she's convincing.

TORITA:

(she stands to leave)

Think it over. He wants to know tomorrow.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - SOON AFTER

The car pulls up beside MAXWELL as he walks.

PRINCESS:

Max.

As the car comes to a stop, a bum runs up and prepares to clean the windshield.

MAXWELL:

(to the BUM)

I've got this.

BUM:

No, this my car!

MAXWELL:

It's okay. They want me.

BUM:

(looking MAXWELL up and down)

Man, you ain't even got a cup!

INT. JEFF'S CAR - SOON AFTER

PRINCESS:

How long do you think you can keep going?

MAXWELL:

I don't know. After forty you've been shit on so much that you don't really care anymore.

(MORE)

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)
 (MAXWELL spots the
 Brooklyn Bridge ahead)
 Are we going to Brooklyn?

PRINCESS:
 We are. You have other work to do.

MAXWELL:
 What do I have to do?

PRINCESS:
 Collect Jamal and go to 322
 Eastside Heights.

MAXWELL:
 What's there?

PRINCESS:
 You'll need Jamal to record it.

The car stops. MAXWELL stares at the back of the driver's head. He gets out of the car and watches it drive away. Across the street, he sees JAMAL and GERARD exiting FAITH'S loft.

MAXWELL:
 What are you guys doing here?

JAMAL:
 We...uh...

MAXWELL:
 Did Princess tell you to meet me
 here?

GERARD:
 Of course.

MAXWELL:
 We're heading to Eastside Heights.
 I don't know how, maybe a gypsy
 cab.

FAITH suddenly sprints past them and around the corner.

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)
 She didn't plant another bomb, did
 she?

GERARD:
 You think she plants them?

FAITH pulls up beside them in his Porsche.

MAXWELL:
That's a nice car. How much did
you pay for it?

FAITH:
I'm leasing it.

MAXWELL:
Can we get a ride?

INT. FAITH'S CAR - DAY

MAXWELL:
I think you'd be better served by
another manager.

FAITH:
You said you were the star-maker.

MAXWELL:
That part of my life may be over.

FAITH:
I don't even know how to find
another manager.

MAXWELL:
I already have an offer.

FAITH:
What do you mean, an "offer"?

MAXWELL:
He'll buy you.

FAITH:
Like a slave?

MAXWELL:
It's not like- I wouldn't- Do
you even know what a manager does?

FAITH:
You get me into galleries.

MAXWELL:
That's part of it. My main job is
to sell you to everyone that can
help. And I've got baggage. A lot
of people don't want to hear what I
have to say.

FAITH:

Oh. So you struck out? I'm not getting a gallery show?

MAXWELL:

I can place you but it may not do a damn thing for your career.

FAITH:

I don't now, man. You should see it through. Trust the Lord, he'll do what's right for you.

EXT. SCARLET'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

The Porsche has just pulled up behind a Rolls Royce in front of the stoop. MAXWELL and JAMAL get out of the car.

JAMAL:

Why are we here?

MAXWELL:

I have no idea. Princes told me to come.

They walk up the steps.

JAMAL:

You know why they call these brownstones?

MAXWELL:

They're made from brown rock? I don't know, why?

JAMAL:

No, I was asking. I have no idea either.

Just as MAXWELL draws back his fist to knock, the cell phone rings. He answers it.

MAXWELL:

Yeah?

TORITA:

Max, it's me.

MAXWELL:

I'm still thinking about it. The artist isn't so hot on the idea.

TORITA:
Well this might change his mind.
He's in at Le Desenee.

MAXWELL:
Really?

TORITA:
But only if Slate represents him.

The door opens. SCARLET, a slender young woman in a slip, wrapped around and passionately kissing SLATE. They have not noticed that MAXWELL and JAMAL are standing on the other side of the door frame.

TORITA: (CONT'D)
You need to make a decision, Max.

MAXWELL:
I'll call you back.

SLATE is horrified to see them.

SLATE:
Max.

MAXWELL:
You're already up and around.
Crash must not have been so bad.

SLATE:
This was a one time mistake, Max.
You can't tell her.
(to JAMAL)
Stop that. Stop filming.

MAXWELL:
I've come to discuss your offer.

SLATE:
Wait, Max, I-

MAXWELL:
Don't talk; listen. I want you to represent Faith at Le Desenee. And the Cooper. You'll pay me three million dollars for one show. All the commissions go to me.

SLATE:
That's more than one show, that's-

MAXWELL:

We have a video that Torita would not be happy to see. I'm happy not to show it as long as you cooperate.

SLATE:

Max, he's filming you blackmailing me.

MAXWELL:

I'm not blackmailing you. I'm making a counter-offer. Think it over. I need an answer tomorrow.

INT. FAITH'S CAR - SOON AFTER

FAITH:

Who was that?

MAXWELL:

That's your manager for a couple shows.

FAITH:

His wife is hot.

MAXWELL:

Not his wife.

FAITH:

Who is she?

MAXWELL:

It's a long story.

FAITH slows to a stop. He turns and faces MAXWELL in the backseat.

FAITH:

Was that man cheating on his wife?

MAXWELL:

Yeah, but we both did.

FAITH turns away from MAXWELL.

FAITH:

Please get out of my car.

MAXWELL:

What?

FAITH:
Ten Commandments. You break one,
you're not welcome in my crew.

They exit the car and MAXWELL stops to confer with FAITH.

MAXWELL:
So that's it?

FAITH:
You repent on this for a few days.
Then we'll see what's what.

MAXWELL:
Faith, I need an answer tomorrow.

FAITH:
Gonna take more than one day of
reflection.

FAITH drives away. MAXWELL turns to find JAMAL and GERARD standing by PRINCESS' car.

MAXWELL:
I think I just blew it.

PRINCESS:
Get in. We have to get out of
here.

MAXWELL:
At least we got what we came for.
(to JAMAL)
You got all that, right?

JAMAL:
Yeah, man. Probably. It's
complicated.

SLATE steps out of SCARLET'S door and locks it.

MAXWELL:
Hey, Slate, if this was a one-time
mistake, why do you have a key?

PRINCESS:
Get him in the car with us.

MAXWELL:
Come take a ride with us.

SLATE:
Max, I'm really not in the mood for-

MAXWELL:

I don't care about your personal life. Your professional life though...

SLATE:

I'm not going to pay you three million for a couple shows. And I'm not giving up my commission.

PRINCESS:

I suggest you get in the car. Right now.

SLATE:

You suggest? Who are you to suggest anything?

SLATE'S Rolls Royce explodes. The blast knocks him down, sets a nearby tree on fire, shatters windows.

SLATE: (CONT'D)

What just happened?

MAXWELL:

It exploded. That happens when she's around.

SLATE sits up, stares at his burning car.

SLATE:

I was on a waiting list for six months to get that car.

GERARD:

You were on a list?

SLATE:

Yeah, I was on a list.

END