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Dramatic Publishing

NICKY'S SECRET

A Play in One Act

by

VIN MORREALE JR.

Part of the River Ridge High Series



Dramatic Publishing

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

Although it is preferred that the roles of Tamika and Curb be African-American, all characters in the play can be race-flexible in their casting.

Nicky's Secret, and all the plays within the River Ridge High Series, are more enjoyable and effective if they appear current. The author grants permission to directors to sprinkle in the latest phrases and topical references when and where desired, as long as the meaning of each specific passage is not significantly altered by the additional dialogue.

This play can also be suitable for middle school or junior high school students. In those cases, producing directors should simply change any stated references to the school name to River Ridge Junior High.

NICKY'S SECRET

A Play in One Act
For 3 Men and 5 Women, extras

CHARACTERS

JENNY an athletic, bubbly cheerleader-type

BETH the shy, but caring, class genius

BRITTANY as she would say—fashion is her life!

TODD . . . a football jock who pretends to be dumber than
he really is

TAMIKA . . . class president, overflowing with personality

NICKY a hippie wannabe

CURB a fast-talking, street-smart teen

RUSSELL . . . the most popular guy in school—with a dark
secret

TWO POLICEMAN

EXTRA STUDENTS (if desired)

SETTING: A hallway and various locations at River Ridge
High School.

The River Ridge High crowd is back in this thought-provoking, often humorous sequel to the popular teen comedy. Everybody thought that Nicky's life was almost perfect. She had a great group of friends, did well in school, and was now going out with Russell, a star athlete and the most popular guy at River Ridge High. Even Nicky would say everything was fine—until the bruises started to show. After it becomes common knowledge that her boyfriend is abusive, Nicky insists it's no big thing—that he doesn't really mean to hurt her. Like so many women trapped in a difficult relationship she finds the choice between love, loyalty and personal safety is easier to make with your head than your heart.

JENNY. Ooops. My turn to latch on to the narrator bit. No problem-o. (*Surprised.*) Hey! Spanish class is sinking in.

after all! (*Again, to audience.*) Anyways, Nicky has been seeing this studmuffin Russell for three weeks now... three weeks being just shy of eternity in high school... and everyone in the solar system is jealous. But hey... Jealousy is what public school is all about, isn't it? I say they should put an envy grade on your report card. Thou shalt covet everybody else's love interest, you know? (*Suspiciously.*) But judging by the look of her eye, my friends and I started to suspect it wasn't all snuggles and cuddles with Nicky and her man. First it was the eye, then the arm. It seemed like after every date, Nicky would show up with another hurt mark somewhere. Although nobody wanted to admit it, we all knew it had stopped being a "flowers and foot massages-Romeo and Juliet in the Garden of Eden"-type love for our friend. Something was definitely out of kilter in Nickyland. But how does a friend know when it's time to say something, or time to back off? When to ignore and when to nag? (*Dramatically.*) Anyway, now it's time for some theatrical eavesdropping...if you're up to the task. (*She waves her hands like a magician.*) With the snap of my fingers, I'm going to bend that pesky old space-time continuum thingie and move us to Mr. Ferngarden's biology class two whole weeks after the last bell has dinged. Are you ready? Then close your eyes. (*Points to audience member.*) You, too, mister! I see you peeking. Close 'em tight. (*She ad libs until everyone in the audience has their eyes closed.*) Okay, all eyes closed? Here we go!

(She snaps her fingers. Nothing happens, except that RUSSELL and NICKY now stand, L.)

JENNY. Awesome! It's now fourteen days later in a whole different part of the school. (*Wryly.*) Kinda makes you wonder what they did with all our special-effects budget, doesn't it? (*JENNY moves off, R, as RUSSELL storms around the stage furiously. NICKY follows, desperately trying to calm him down.*)

RUSSELL. Man! How could I have flunked that test?! It was a cupcake!

NICKY. Take it easy, Russell. Anyone can have a bad day.

RUSSELL. It's not just a bad day! I have to pass it! If I don't bring up my science grade, the coach said he'd pull me out of next week's game!

NICKY. He won't do that, Russell. You *are* the team.

RUSSELL (*turns to her, angrily*). What do you know about what Coach will, or won't do?! (*NICKY shrinks back at his rage, then reaches out again to him.*)

NICKY. Russell...?

RUSSELL. Just leave me alone, Nicky! Okay?!

NICKY. It's really not that bad.

RUSSELL. I said leave me alone! (*He shoves NICKY hard, knocking her to the ground. Immediately, he bends to help her. His anger has dissipated and he is all smiles and apologies. NICKY is hurt and cannot get up.*)
Nicky! Baby, are you okay?

NICKY. Why do you have to do that, Russell?

RUSSELL. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to, Nicky. It was an accident.

NICKY (*wincing*). You hurt me...

RUSSELL. I'm so sorry, Nicky. I...I just lost it. You know what pressure I'm under. It was an accident. I get so used to moving fast and throwing my big old arms

around, sometimes I forget I'm not on the field with the guys.

NICKY (*not really meaning it*). It's okay...

RUSSELL. Are you sure? You know I'd never forgive myself if I hurt my baby girl. (*She starts to get up but is still sore.*)

NICKY. I'm fine.

RUSSELL. I don't deserve you, Nicky. You are so far beyond adjectives. (*Kisses her hair.*) Are you sure I didn't hurt you?

NICKY (*she's been here before*). I'm fine, Russell. Let's just forget it.

RUSSELL. That's my girl. Hey, whadda you say we grab some foodstuffs in the cafeteria? (*He tries to lay an affectionate arm around her, but she winces.*)

NICKY. Ow! Careful!

RUSSELL. Sorry, baby... You know I would never, ever hurt you on purpose. (*Big smile.*) You know that, don't you, Nicky?

NICKY (*softly*). I know, Russell. I know...

(They exit, L, as JENNY re-enters, R.)

JENNY (*to audience*). As you can see, there's trouble in Paradise, and the Russell-Nicky thing has some serious issues going on. I mean, why does a woman hang around when all the guy brings to the relationship is cuts and bruises?

(TAMIKA enters, L.)

TAMIKA. Nobody falls in love expecting to get hurt. Everybody thinks their relationship is gonna be different.

JENNY. Yeah, but the first shove or slap, and I would be miles outta there. I don't understand how a smart woman would put up with it.

TAMIKA. Nicky's smart. We all know that.

JENNY. Then what is that girl thinking?

TAMIKA. I don't know. Maybe we should try to crawl inside her brain a little? See how she thinks.

JENNY. And hope we don't see much of ourselves in there, too.

TAMIKA. Nicky, can you come out here for a minute?

(NICKY enters from L, looking nervous.)

NICKY. What's going on?

JENNY. Hyperbolic hypnotism. Theatrical brain scan. Sub-conscious lie detector.

NICKY. I don't have time for this... *(She turns to leave.)*

TAMIKA. Freeze! *(With a wave of TAMIKA's hand, NICKY freezes in place, as if hypnotized.)*

JENNY. Awesome!

TAMIKA. Don't you wish you could do that in real life? *(To NICKY.)* Now, girlfriend. Spill the standard excuses for staying in an abusive relationship. Number one...

NICKY *(in a trance)*. You don't know him like I do.

JENNY. Wrong. There are tens of thousands just like him.

TAMIKA. Most of them in jail. Number two...

NICKY *(in a trance)*. He just gets mad sometimes.

JENNY. Who doesn't?

TAMIKA. That's no excuse at all. Number three...

NICKY (*in a trance*). He really loves me. He just has a hard time showing it.

JENNY. He can't express love, but has no problem expressing anger. Sounds like prime boyfriend material to me. Number four...

NICKY (*in a trance*). He's under a lot of pressure.

TAMIKA. Everybody is. Pressure's part of life. It's what makes tires inflate and faucets work and Jenny study for exams. But one thing pressure doesn't do is give you a free hand to hit. Next wimpy excuse...

NICKY (*in a trance*). Everybody says we're perfect together.

JENNY. This isn't about everybody's approval. It's about your safety.

TAMIKA. How can you think he's the right guy, when you have to protect him by lying to your friends, your parents...and yourself?

NICKY (*in a trance*). It's not as bad as you think.

JENNY. No. It's *worse* than *you* think. A lot worse. We're talking about your life here. These guys are fear junkies. They like seeing the scared look in your eye when they smack you around.

TAMIKA. And it's a hard habit to kick. Number seven...

NICKY (*in a trance*). It's none of your business.

TAMIKA. Get this straight, girl. It's every bit our business.

JENNY. It's all our business. He did it before. He'll do it again. And so will his kids. And their kids after that. And their kids after that.

TAMIKA. You stay silent and you help spawn a long line of serial abusers.

JENNY. And serial victims... Like you, Nick. Last excuse...

NICKY (*in a trance*). It was my fault. I...I know he's got a bad temper. I shouldn't have gotten him mad.

JENNY. Blame the victim. Blame the one with the bruises. Good strategy.

TAMIKA (*in stilted announcer voice*). Warning! If you, or anyone you know, have made any of these excuses... Get help now!

JENNY. When are you going to wake up and blame him for what he's doing?

NICKY (*waking from the trance*). You don't know him like I do!

TAMIKA (*gently*). We know enough. Even if he was Ghandi, Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa all rolled up in one hunky ball, he still don't have the right to raise his hands to you. Can't you see that?

NICKY (*hesitates, then...*). No! What I see is jealousy. You don't want me to be happy. You want him for yourselves!

JENNY. No way!

TAMIKA. That's not it at all, Nicky. We just...

NICKY. Why can't you all just leave me alone?! (*NICKY runs off, R. JENNY and TAMIKA watch their friend exit with sadness.*)

JENNY (*pause*). So that's it? One part delusion and two parts denial?

TAMIKA. That's the recipe for continual heartbreak. I feel so bad for her.

JENNY. Yeah. But she could stop it in a heartbeat. Just by dumping the thug.

TAMIKA. Agreed. But Nicky thinks she loves Russell and decides to keep the tale of sore shoulders to herself. Just

like she's kept quiet about the slap across her face...the bruised eye...and all the other mystery contusions.

JENNY. That's Nicky's secret...and her big mistake.

TAMIKA. Factual. Somewhere down the line, the girl lost sight of her self-respect.

JENNY. That's a painful thing to lose.

TAMIKA (*to audience*). The point is...and pay attention all you ladies out there... You should never let yourself be used, abused, confused and contused by any guy. It's your life after all.

JENNY. And your body.

TAMIKA. And your body... You don't ever need some over-sized hormone-monger using your curves and cuddlies for target practice.

JENNY. And you boys out there ain't proving anything by putting the slap on someone smaller.

TAMIKA. That's right. Real men don't hit women.

JENNY. Virtually gospel, Tamika.

TAMIKA. Why, thank you, Jenny. You are Eloquence, Incorporated yourself.

JENNY. Mutual admiration time. Can you take it from here?

TAMIKA. Got it doused and packaged.

JENNY. Then, I gotta go. There's a science project with my name on it.

TAMIKA. Study hardy, girlfriend.

JENNY. At least. (*JENNY exits, R.*)

TAMIKA. That girl sure can talk... But to unravel further...even the best locked-up-tight secrets always find some way to leak out. Especially when it comes to romantic martyrdom. Now I was in the library when... (*Looks around.*) I said, I was in the library when...

(Looks around again, then loudly...) A-hem!! The library!

TODD *(from offstage)*. Oooops! My bad!

(TODD and CURB roll on flats painted to look like bookshelves.)

TODD. Missed my cue.

TAMIKA *(sarcastically)*. That's okay. Nobody noticed.

(They dash off and return with a table and chair. TAMIKA sits.)

CURB. One library, to go!

TODD. Hold the pickles!

TAMIKA. Uh, guys...? *(Giving them a hint.)* Library? Li-brar-ree...

(They dash off again and return with stacks of books. They dump them on the table, all around TAMIKA.)

CURB. Book 'em, Dan-o.

TAMIKA. Thank you. *(They dash off again.)* You just can't find good stage help these days... *(Sighs.)* As I was saying...I was sitting in the library, sponging up the Renaissance...when, suddenly...

(BRITTANY and BETH run on from L.)

BETH. Tamika! You are definitely not going to believe this!

BRITTANY. Soap opera in River Ridge!

BETH. Worse than soap opera.

BRITTANY. Days With Our Wives...The Cold And The Pitiful...The Hunks And The Tasteless...

BETH. I think she gets the picture, Brittany...

BRITTANY. Another Whirlwind...General Catastrophe... One Limb To Give...The Guiding Bite...

BETH. Are you finished?

BRITTANY. I think so. I ran out of soap-opera jokes.

TAMIKA. So what set the fire in your chimneys?

BETH. We just came from the nurse's office. Nicky's in there with some major bruises. She's in a world of hurt.

BRITTANY. Who would hurt Nicky? She's such a Beanie Baby!

BETH. It looks like someone mistook her for a punching bag.

BRITTANY. You don't think...?

TAMIKA. Yes, I do. And you do, too.

BRITTANY. I do?

(CURB and TODD saunter on, L.)

CURB. What's with all the "you do, I do" doobie doobie dooing?

TODD. Nice library, by the way.

BRITTANY. Rumor has it that Russell thrashed Nicky!

CURB. Thrashed her?

TAMIKA. Rocky-like. Made her his personal fistmat.

TODD. Russell would never do that. He's not that kind of guy.

BETH. Wake up to the Matrix, Todd. I know he's king jock and everything around here, but the boy has got a seriously wrong way with women. He always has.

TODD. Don't believe what you hear in the hallways. Russell is the man. He's more than the man! He's a sports hero.

BETH. I've only got two words for you. Mike...Tyson...

BRITTANY. And don't forget the occasional pro basketball or pro football's Most Wanted.

BETH. Coming to a jail cell near you.

TAMIKA. Athletes play, Todd. That don't always make them holy.

TODD. I am not believing this. Not about Russell.

(NICKY enters from R, walking gingerly.)