

MARRIAGE STORY

Written and Directed by Noah Baumbach

Black.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
What I love about Nicole...

INT. THEATER. MANHATTAN. DAY

Nicole, early 30's, appears out of the dark.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
She makes people feel comfortable
about even embarrassing things.

We remain CLOSE on her face in shadow. She's very still
and very serious.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
She really listens when someone is
talking...

EXT. FLATBUSH AVENUE, PARK SLOPE, BROOKLYN. DAY

Her coming out of a subway. A young "funny" ASPCA
solicitor stops her.

SOLICITOR
Hey, you look like you care about
animals?

NICOLE
I do.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
...sometimes she listens TOO
much, for too long-- She's
a good citizen.

The kid launches into his pitch. She listens intently and
starts writing down her phone number.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
She always knows the right thing
to do when it comes to difficult
family shit.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT. DAY

Charlie is sulking. A hand holds out a phone.

NICOLE (O.S.)
Just call him.

CHARLIE
No.

NICOLE (O.S.)
Call him.

CHARLIE
No.

NICOLE
(with real empathy)
Call him.

He reluctantly grabs the phone.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I get stuck in my ways and she
knows when to push me and when to
leave me alone.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT. ANOTHER DAY

She cuts their son, (8 years old) Henry's hair. We see
Charlie sweeping up.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
She cuts all our hair.

Cuts Charlie's hair. We see the kid sweeping up.

Cuts her own in the mirror. Charlie and the kid play in
the background.

She sweeps up her own hair.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
She's always inexplicably brewing
a cup of tea that she doesn't
drink.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT. SEVERAL DAYS

A kettle whistles.

STILL LIFES of mugs of tea on window sills, bookshelves,
Henry's toy shelf, on the floor...

All the kitchen cabinets are open. Charlie closing
drawers, picking up shoes. Charlie hitting his head on the
corner of an open cabinet.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
And it's not easy for her to put
away a sock, or close a cabinet,
or do a dish, but she tries for
me.

A framed PHOTO of Nicole, Sandra (her mom) and Cassie (her
sister) standing in the front lawn of a Hollywood home.
Nicole is pretending to step on the reclining dog.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 Nicole grew up in LA around actors
 and directors and movies and TV
 and is very close to her mother,
 Sandra, and, Cassie, her sister.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT. ANOTHER DAY

Charlie rips open a present. It's a trumpet.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 Nicole gives great presents. She
 is a mother who plays -- really
 plays -- she never steps off
 playing or says it's too much (and
 it must be too much some of the
 time).

EXT. PROSPECT PARK, BROOKLYN. DAY

She and Henry play in the park with Star Wars figures. The
 kid makes high pitched sounds for the fights.

HENRY
 Arrrh, waaa, urgh...

NICOLE
 Arrgh--

HENRY
 No, he's dead.

NICOLE
 My guy is dead?

HENRY
 He's dead but you can use this
 guy.

NICOLE
 (taking that guy)
 Arrrhggg--

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 She's competitive.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT. ANOTHER DAY

Nicole, Charlie and Henry are playing Monopoly.

NICOLE
 Goddammit! I was just IN jail!

Henry and Charlie look at each other and laugh.

NICOLE
 Do NOT laugh at me. I'm serious.
 Do NOT LAUGH AT ME!

INT. HENRY'S ROOM. ANOTHER NIGHT

Nicole is reading to Henry in bed. She's falling asleep while reading, but still managing to read.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 She's a great dancer. Infectious.
 She makes me wish I could dance.

INT. THEATER. NIGHT

Nicole putting on a song and getting people to dance at a cast party.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 She always says when she doesn't know something or hasn't read a book or seen a film or a play (whereas I fake it or say something like, "I haven't seen it in a while.") She keeps the fridge over-full. No one is ever hungry in our house. She can drive a stick.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S KITCHEN. ANOTHER DAY

Charlie's trying to open a jar of pickles. He struggles. He knocks it on a table. Grabs a dish towel and tries it that way. No luck.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 She's amazing at opening jars because of her strong arms, which I've always found very sexy.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT. ANOTHER DAY

On TV, a younger Nicole (acting in a movie) is part of a raucous college party.

NICOLE IN THE MOVIE
 You might as well get what you paid for!

She grabs her shirt and lifts it-- We PAUSE mid-lift before it comes off.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 She's brave. After that movie, All Over The Girl, she could have stayed in LA and been a movie star, but she gave that up to do theater with me in New York.

INT. THEATER. DAY

We're back to the first image of her face in half-shadow. Suddenly she walks forward and into a spotlight.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
My crazy ideas are her favorite
things to figure out how to
execute.

She walks across the floor and climbs (scales like a rock-face) the body of a male actor.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Try it crawling but also standing.

We see that she's on a stage, rehearsing for a play.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
She's my favorite actress.

INT. THEATER. SAME DAY

CLOSE on Charlie, early 30's, in deep thought. A warm yellow glow on his face.

NICOLE (V.O.)
What I love about Charlie...
Charlie is undaunted. He never
lets other people's opinions or
any set-backs keep him from what
he wants to do.

INT. PIZZERIA, PARK SLOPE, BROOKLYN. DAY

Charlie eats sloppily with Henry at a pizza place. He suddenly stands up and walks around to Henry's side. He asks Henry to raise his arms. He lifts Henry's sweater up over his arms and turns it around to face the right way.

NICOLE (V.O.)
Charlie eats like he's trying to
get it over with and like there
won't be enough food for everyone.
A sandwich is to be strangled
while devoured. But he's
incredibly neat and I rely on him
to keep things in order.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT. LATE DAY

Nicole is reading in a room. All the lights go out. She looks up. Charlie is at the switch.

CHARLIE

Sorry.

NICOLE (V.O.)

He's energy conscious.

He turns them back on.

NICOLE (V.O.)

He doesn't look in the mirror too often. He cries easily in movies.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER. DAY

He and Henry exit a movie theater. Both of them are crying.

HENRY

I cried four times.

CHARLIE

Me too. I wonder if it was the same four.

NICOLE (V.O.)

He is very self-sufficient -- he can darn a sock and cook himself dinner and iron a shirt.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S KITCHEN. EVE

He's cooking - it's elaborate. There are a lot of pots, a lot of steam. Henry is "helping."

HENRY

(holding up a knife)
The peppers are cut!

NICOLE (V.O.)

He rarely gets defeated (which I feel like I always do).

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT. ANOTHER DAY

Nicole is raging about something.

NICOLE (V.O.)

Charlie takes all of my moods steadily, he doesn't give in to them or make me feel bad about them. He's a great dresser, he never looks embarrassing which is hard for a man.

INT. TENNIS BUBBLE. DAY

Charlie is serving in a tennis game.

NICOLE (V.O.)
He's very competitive.

He double faults.

CHARLIE
(to himself)
Goddammit Charlie! Get it
together.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Henry walks into their bedroom and taps Charlie on the shoulder until he wakes up.

HENRY
(whispers)
I had a bad dream.

NICOLE (V.O.)
He loves being a dad, he loves all
the things you're supposed to
hate, like the tantrums, the
waking up at night.

INT. HENRY'S ROOM. SAME

He puts Henry back to sleep. Henry doesn't want to sleep. They compromise with Charlie sleeping on the floor. Then Henry climbing down and sleeping with him on the floor. Then Charlie slipping out and getting into the bed. Then the kid getting into the bed with him.

NICOLE (V.O.)
It's almost annoying how much he
likes it, but then it's mostly
nice.

INT. SUBWAY/PLATFORM. DAY

He and Henry reading on the subway. The doors close. The train lurches forward. Charlie looks up suddenly.

NICOLE (V.O.)
He disappears into his own world.
He and Henry are alike in that
way.

CHARLIE
Shit!

HENRY
What's "shit?"

CHARLIE
That was our stop!

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT

NICOLE (V.O.)
He can tell people they have food
in their teeth or on their face in
a way that doesn't make them feel
bad.

Nicole, from across a table picks something from between her teeth, she looks back up at Charlie who is off-camera, and smiles. It's still there. She starts digging for it again.

INT. THEATER OFFICE. DAY

NICOLE (V.O.)
Charlie is self-made -- his
parents -- I only met them once --
but he told me there was a lot of
alcohol and some violence in his
childhood.

Henry plays on the floor. Charlie leads a meeting with his set decorator and Nicole and the stage manager around a big table. They reference a model of the stage set.

NICOLE (V.O.)
He moved to New York from Indiana
with no safety net and now he's
more a New Yorker than any New
Yorker.

INT. THEATER. ANOTHER DAY

Charlie is passing out coffees to all the actors and crew members of their theater at the beginning of a rehearsal. He's gotten everyone's drink right, and bought them all himself.

NICOLE (V.O.)
He's brilliant at creating family
out of whoever is around.

CHARLIE
I made sure they used the
right almond milk--

NICOLE (V.O.)
With the theatre company he
cast a spell that made
everyone feel included. No
one, not even an intern was
unimportant. He could
remember all the inside
jokes.

CHARLIE
(handing an intern a
coffee)
And where do *YOU* go when it's
windy?!

YOUNG INTERN
(laughing, flattered,
remembering)
Oh yeah, that was funny!

INT. THEATER. PREVIOUS DAY

We RETURN to the close-up of Charlie. He sits in the back of an empty theater taking notes, the small yellow reading light illuminating his face. He watches Nicole, in rehearsal, climb up onto the actor as she did earlier.

CHARLIE
Let's stop there.

Nicole, up almost atop the actor's head, turns to him with a look that asks, "Was that OK?" Charlie nods.

INT. MEDIATOR'S OFFICE. DAY

CLOSE on a sheet of paper: We can see written everything we just heard.

MEDIATOR (O.S.)
Who wants to start?

Nicole, no make-up, in a baggy sweatshirt and jeans, sits in a chair, not saying a word, staring at a piece of paper in her lap.

NICOLE
I'm not going to read this out
loud.

MEDIATOR (O.S.)
Why is that?

NICOLE
I don't like what I wrote.

We see now that she and Charlie are sitting in two adjacent chairs in an office on the Upper West Side. A male mediator, 50's, in a sweater vest wearing too many rings, tightly cross-legged, facing them.

MEDIATOR

As we mediate your separation and eventual divorce, things can become quite contentious, so I like to begin with a note of positivity. For the people I work with to remember why they got married in the first place. And so, that as you come apart, you're reminded that this is a person you had great feeling for and maybe still do in many ways--

CHARLIE

(holding up his phone)
I'll read mine. I like what I wrote.

MEDIATOR

For it to really work, you both have to read--

NICOLE

(folding up her paper)
I'm not going to.

MEDIATOR

OK--

CHARLIE

She always says I can't write. But I think mine is pretty good.

MEDIATOR

Nicole, maybe you'll change your mind once you hear Charlie's.

NICOLE

(looking at him now)
I don't want to hear Charlie's.

CHARLIE

We promised to listen.

MEDIATOR

That's right, that's the very first step in this process.

Nicole stands up, suddenly furious.

NICOLE

Well, I think I'll go if you two
are just going to sit around and
suck each other's dicks!

A hubbub of protests then:

INT. THEATER. NIGHT

Audience members watch, rapt. Nicole is on-stage in a red dress. A black and white video of her face projected on either side of her. On stage, she delivers her lines in an almost life-less way while the video Nicole is very animated and emotional.

Charlie sits in the back of the theatre--she can't see his face, but she knows where he is.

She continues speaking, looking into the audience when several bodies approach her, turn her to her side and carry her off like a stiff rolled-up rug.

Charlie sees her looking and is sad and disturbed and stops writing his notes for a moment.

Behind her, a portal opens up, the stage is awash in red light and the company members carry her through the door.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT

Closing night party. The whole company is there celebrating, this is clearly their spot. There's a piano, and names are pulled from a bowl and people take turns singing. Investors mingle as well, notable for the disobedient air of people who shouldn't be "downtown."

A woman, 30's, Mary Ann, also the stage manager (we saw her earlier in rehearsals), sits in a booth with the costume designer, Donna, 40's. She looks over at Charlie in a booth in the corner, surrounded by members of the troupe. He works on a beer and makes more notes in a book.

MARY ANN

Do you think I can go over there
now?

Donna, turns and we SWING OVER to: Nicole, on the other side of the room at a table flanked by other members of the cast and crew.

DONNA

Not yet.

On Charlie's end of the room, Frank, an older actor, carries on with Terry, a younger one.

FRANK

...Charlie gave me the note - but it's really for you: he told me to pick up my cues.

TERRY

How is that for me?

FRANK

Acting is reacting - I'm responding to you and you're slowing ME down.

ACTOR 3

...hey, hello, Frank - it's closing night, you know, we're done?!

LIGHTING TECH

...first, no, we're moving to
(doing some HANDS!)
The BroadWAY-

TERRY

(also doing HANDS!)
To The BroadWAY!

FRANK

The Main Stem.

They all cheers and laugh.

ACTOR 2

...but we'll have to restage it anyway!

FRANK

...it's still a good note...

ACTOR 1

...and you know Charlie, it's never done, he never finishes.

ACTOR 3

We NEVER FINISH!

ACTOR 2

Love you, Charlie.

They all laugh, but they're excited, it's big. Charlie, still looking at his notes, reaches out and pats the actor's leg affectionately. Terry, gets up--

TERRY

I need a cigarette.

--and makes his way across the room passing other company members and snippets of conversation.

BETH

(dramatically)

...that's why it seems wrong to take over for Nicole - the role is hers! And what if her pilot doesn't go, she'll come back from LA and want the part back, right?

ACTOR 3

No, she's done with it.

BETH

Something like 100 percent of pilots don't get picked up.

ACTOR 4

It can't be 100 percent. There would never be any shows.

ACTOR 5

No, but statistically, it's true. The probability is zero. It's one of those things.

BETH

You don't think Charlie and Nicole will ever get back together?

ACTOR 3

(sadly)

No, this time it's really over.

BETH

(to herself)

Still feels weird...

ACTOR 9

...I feel like MY parents are splitting up.

ACTOR 7

It's always been "Charlie and Nicole." It just doesn't sound right any other way.

ACTOR 3

Poor Henry.

Terry passes Mary Ann and Donna who still watch Charlie.

MARY ANN

(re: Charlie)

How about now?

DONNA

I'd wait, honey.

Terry arrives at the booth at the other end of the room where Nicole and her group are camped together.

ANOTHER ACTOR
 (shaking her head)
 He still giving notes?

TERRY
 Yep.

SET DESIGNER
 (to Nicole)
 You're lucky, Nic, I wish I was
 going to LA. You can have space
 in LA. There's no SPACE here.

Nicole looks across the restaurant and catches Charlie's eye. He mouths "hi" and she nods. Is it nice?

MARY ANN
 (growing more impatient)
 Now?

DONNA
 Don't do it.

Frank stands and makes a toast to Charlie and Nicole and the move to Broadway ("The Main Stem") and how much they'll miss Nicole and then makes it about him returning to Broadway with the young turks. In 1968, he was the young turk.

FRANK
 Winning your first Tony at 27--
 which I did--messes with your
 head. I was just a baby! Elia
 Kazan came backstage on opening
 night elbowing Mike Nichols into a
 corner. Mike, who I later turned
 down twice, a big regret of
 mine...

During the speech, Mary Ann, the stage manager, suddenly rises (we can see Donna making protestations) and makes her approach to Charlie's corner, whispering something in his ear.

MARY ANN
 I wanted to make sure that I have
 all your notes down so I can
 compile them into the master list
 for when we move into the new
 theater...

Nicole, clocking this, abruptly stands. Charlie sees her rise and does the same.

INT. Q TRAIN SUBWAY

Riding home across the Manhattan Bridge. Nicole sits on the mostly empty bench gazing out the window.

Although there are available seats, Charlie stands and leans against the doors.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT

She and Charlie enter and relieve a young babysitter who for some reason is buttoning her pants up and looks a little ashamed.

BABYSITTER

Oh hey, I didn't expect you guys until late.

NICOLE

How's he doing?

BABYSITTER

Good, good. He went to bed on time, no fuss. I read him some of Cricket in Times Square...

(takes them in)

God, you guys are so attractive.

(hand to mouth)

Shit, sorry. I didn't stop that from being said.

Nicole goes back and checks on Henry--

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Ha! No it's okay. I'll pay you for the whole time, we decided to come home early.

BABYSITTER (O.S.)

Hey, thanks! And also the travel time to Greenpoint--

She stumbles on something. It's his little suitcase, open on the floor--toys crammed into it. He's sleeping soundly, all twisted up in his superhero sheets. He uses a well-worn white bear as a pillow. She fixes his sheets.

The Babysitter is gone and Charlie is setting up the couch as his bed. He surveys the room while he reflexively fiddles with a small X-Acto knife on his key chain. We CUT QUICKLY between objects (the clicking sound of the knife as a soundtrack): Books, a chair, table, lamp, a TV which turns on, painting, photos... Objects from their life together. (Mugs of tea rest beside some of these objects.)

A book on a table.

Nicole retrieves the book and heads back to the bedroom.
Charlie's voice stops her:

CHARLIE

It's not always going to be like
this, it's going to get better.

Nicole nods.

CHARLIE

If you don't like that mediator,
we'll find another one--

NICOLE

Yeah...

CHARLIE

We might not need a
mediator, we'll just split
everything anyway, I don't
care--

NICOLE

Me neither--

CHARLIE

You can have most of it.

CHARLIE

We'll get apartments near
each other, make it easier
for Henry--

NICOLE

Right.

CHARLIE

We'll figure it out. We want the
same things.

Nicole meets Charlie's eye. He hesitates.

CHARLIE

In the meantime, the pilot will be
fun for you.

NICOLE

You don't think it's bad, do you?

CHARLIE

(hesitates)

I don't ever watch TV so, you
know, I can't tell...

Nicole glances over at the TV which is on.

NICOLE

Uh huh.

CHARLIE

I told Henry I'll come out to LA
in two weeks to see him.

Nicole nods. Charlie looks down at his notebook. Looks back up at Nicole.

NICOLE

Yes?

CHARLIE

Nothing.

Nicole turns, and then turns back.

NICOLE

I can tell you want to give me a note.

CHARLIE

No, I don't... Yeah, I mean, yes I do. But I guess, I guess it doesn't matter now. You won't be with the show anymore. It's stupid.

NICOLE

(knowing him well)

You're not going to be able to go to sleep until you tell me.

CHARLIE

Maybe not.

NICOLE

Okay then.

CHARLIE

Well, yes, okay, but just because saying it out loud might help me remember it for later.

NICOLE

Sure.

CHARLIE

(reading)

So - there were two things -
I thought your posture at
the top of scene seven was
still too dignified...

--okay--

NICOLE

CHARLIE

--and then at the end, I could
tell that you were pushing for the
emotion--

NICOLE

--you know I can't cry on stage
and I know you don't like when I
fake it, but I thought maybe it
would come tonight. But it
didn't...

He flips through the notebook. Silence.

CHARLIE

That's all I had. Thanks for
indulging me.

NICOLE

Goodnight Charlie.

She starts crying as soon as she turns away from him. We
MOVE with her as she cries through the apartment to their
bedroom. She trips briefly on one of her suitcases also
lying on the floor open and half-packed. She removes her
shoes, but not her clothes, and gets into bed, crying.

Fade to Black.

A curtain flies open revealing a rich blue sky and swaying
palm trees. The light is painfully bright. We hear a
female voice lightly singing:

VOICE

"This is the day, this is the
day..."

INT. NICOLE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM, LOS ANGELES. MORNING

Nicole opens her eyes which are crusted with mascara and
tears. Her mother, Sandra, 60's, violently opens the
curtains, loudly closes drawers and doors.

We're in LA.

SANDRA

(singing)

"That the Lord has made, that the
Lord has made..."

Nicole rolls over. Henry, yawning, lies next to her in the
bed.

SANDRA

(singing)

"Let us rejoice, let us rejoice.
And be glad in it and be glad in
it..."

This is her childhood bedroom in her mom's house. There are old magazines (Cosmo, Seventeen, Teen Vogue, Maxim) with photos of Nicole. An MTV Best Kiss award. There is "Teenage Nicole" and "Adult Nicole" all mashed up together, and both Nicole's are messy.

Nicole presses her face into the pillow.

Mom...	NICOLE	HENRY
		(tired)
		G-ma summer is for relaxing.

SANDRA
 (to Henry)
 You can't make home too nice,
 otherwise your children will never
 leave--

Nicole whispers to Henry.

NICOLE
 What do you want to do today?

Hang out and relax with you.	HENRY	NICOLE
		(nuzzling him)
		Me too.

SANDRA
 (listening in)
 No relaxing! Nicole has a hair
 and make-up test and Henry, we got
 you into Fairy Camp with the
 cousins.

HENRY
 I hate Fairy Camp.

SANDRA
 Cassie says everyone likes Fairy
 Camp and I think this is true.

Sandra kisses Henry on the head.

SANDRA
 Henry, go make your mom some
 coffee like I taught you--

HENRY
 Mom, wait till you taste my
 coffee.

Henry walks off, hair sticking up. Sandra fluffs the pillows, retrieving Henry's white bear.

SANDRA

Do you always sleep together?
Even in New York?

NICOLE

It's just for now, while we go
through this transition. Shit,
don't tell Charlie when he gets
here -- he hates co-sleeping.

Nicole climbs out of bed. Her pillow is stained with black
eye make-up.

SANDRA

Well, I have to say, I agree with
Charlie.

NICOLE

Surprise, surprise.

Nicole walks toward the bathroom, Sandra behind her--

SANDRA

It's as if you've exploded
into this room.

NICOLE

(looking at her phone)
Jesus, it's early.

--and into the bathroom, her mother follows her inside.

NICOLE

I can do this part alone?

SANDRA

That's fine. I won't look.

Sandra leans against the sink, Nicole shrugs and lets her -
how can she stop her now?

SANDRA

As long as you're in my house,
wake up is at 6:30 AM. And until
you know what you want to do,
we're going to do what I like to
do.

NICOLE

I can't just go from what Charlie
wanted to do to what you want to
do.

Nicole finishes, flushes and starts washing her hands.

SANDRA

Even though I'm sixty-four and have a dead gay husband, I manage to get up everyday and live my life and feel pretty good about myself so maybe your Mom knows a thing or two.

Nicole heads out of the room and down the main staircase. Her mom following her, of course.

SANDRA

You know what I would do?

NICOLE

(no idea)
About what?

SANDRA

When Charlie gets here, I would whisk him off to Palm Springs? That's what your father and I did whenever we hit a speed bump--

NICOLE

Didn't you walk in on Dad blowing the porter in Palm Springs?

SANDRA

And I always regretted getting so upset about it.

NICOLE

Charlie and I are getting a divorce, Mom. There's nothing for us in Palm Springs.

SANDRA

(suddenly angry)
YOU NEED TO WASH YOUR FACE BEFORE
YOU GO TO SLEEP.

They both enter the kitchen. Henry has made a giant mess with the coffee, and he's trying to press down on a French Press coffee maker.

HENRY

When Daddy gets here maybe we can all go on the Jaws ride--

NICOLE

Yeah--

HENRY

(accommodating)
Or I can go once with you and once with Daddy because I wouldn't mind going twice anyway--

SANDRA
 (to Henry)
 Did you know Universal
 Studios is where I did my
 first screen test--

NICOLE
 No, we'll all go together,
 sweetheart.

Henry presents his mom a cup of coffee.

NICOLE
 On the plane, I re-read the pilot
 as if I were Charlie reading it
 and I started to think it's just
 bad.

SANDRA
 My agent says it's "one to watch."

She sips her coffee.

NICOLE
 (to Henry)
 This coffee IS good. Thank you.
 (to Sandra)
 What if Charlie's on Broadway with
 the play I brought him--which I
originated and I'm just doing bad
 TV.

SANDRA
 It doesn't matter. Everyone is
only impressed when they see
 someone on TV.

INT/EXT. TV STUDIO. DAY

FEMALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
 She's beautiful.

Nicole is standing in front of a camera in a
 hair/makeup/wardrobe test. She's barefoot in a nightgown
 with some kind of red mask being applied to her face. We
 hear voices (that she can't) murmuring near the monitor.

Nicole holds what looks like a blue, foam football and
 stares combatively at the camera. Hands enter frame,
 adjusting her hair, swapping out the masks.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
 Where's she been for the past ten
 years?

MALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
 Doing weird theater in New
 York.

FEMALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
 She looks great.

NICOLE
Can I say something?

No one answers. We hear bits of side-conversations about a book club book they're all reading.

MALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
Downtown shit. I saw one. It rained on stage.

DP (O.S.)	MALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
Plays make me uncomfortable.	It was good. Edgy.
	Directed by her husband.
	Supposedly very controlling.

DP (O.S.)	FEMALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
The live aspect--	We're lucky to have her.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)	FEMALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
I'm surprised she said yes.	We can thank her divorce.

EFFECTS GUY (O.S.)
Can she move her hand? It's going to be hard to roto the hair in on the baby around her fingers--

MALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
(aloud to Nicole)
Can you move your hand further down the baby?

NICOLE
What do you mean? Like down here?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)	NICOLE
Off his head entirely--	I'd need to support his head.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
No, no, support the head, of course, just try to do it from the shoulders?

She hesitantly slides her hand down the blue football.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Perfect.

NICOLE
I can't hold a baby like this.

FEMALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
She's right, that's going to
look weird.

EFFECTS GUY (O.S.)
Just so you know, we can
TOTALLY do it, it's just
going to take time and money
and mean less hair.

A handsome, bearded and tatted grip, 30's, Pablo, enters
frame with a white bounce board, holding it up to her.

GRIP
So we can see your pretty face.
And not ours.

NICOLE
Ha. You should have seen me
before the plants invaded.

GRIP	DP (O.S.)
I say that with respect. I	(not amused)
was raised by two mothers.	Can you lower the board please, Pablo?

The grip lowers the bounce board then raises it directly in
front of Nicole's face, then lowers it, being cute.

GRIP
Here? How 'bout here?

Nicole smiles. A hand removes her mask and applies
another.

GRIP	MALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
How about now?	Why is there always a flirty grip.

Pablo finally places the board in the proper position.

GRIP	MAKE-UP ARTIST (O.S.)
(to the DP off-camera)	I can do ANYTHING you want,
That better, boss?	but we'll need to have her two hours before call every day we work with the plants--

Someone walks through the shot carrying an enormous plant
arm.

NICOLE
(louder)
Can I say something?

FEMALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
Hold on.
(to Nicole)
What honey?

NICOLE

She has to know how to hold a baby. Later after she kills Donny, she becomes this sort of earth mother for the plant community and that won't make sense if we think she's a bad mother to her own kid.

MAKE-UP ARTIST (O.S.)
She kills Donny?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
That's a secret. We didn't give the crew those pages.

NICOLE

You don't want her to appear unsympathetic this early in the show, do you?

MAKE-UP ARTIST (O.S.)
Does Donny know?

FEMALE PRODUCER (O.S.)
She's right.

NICOLE

Also, why does she kill Donny anyway?

INT./EXT. SOUNDSTAGE. LATER

Nicole marches across the soundstage, still in the nightgown, now wearing Uggs, followed by the male (Dennis) and female (Carol) producers, both 50's. He wears all denim. She's in fitted jeans, and a white blazer. There's also a cadre of hair and make-up and wardrobe people.

MALE PRODUCER

Must be nice to get out of New York. Our daughter, Mia is at NYU living in a shoe box--

NICOLE

Well, I'm from out here--

MALE PRODUCER

She's says it went up to a hundred and four the other day--

FEMALE PRODUCER

We're just so excited to have you.

NICOLE

(nods)
I'm excited to be here --

MALE PRODUCER

We're going for an early aughts aesthetic -- so having your presence nails that.

MAKE-UP ARTIST

What signifies early aughts?

They go outside, the bright LA light hitting their eyes.
Everyone puts on sunglasses.

FEMALE PRODUCER
Into The Girl was on TV--

NICOLE
(correcting her)
All Over--

FEMALE PRODUCER
--or streaming or something
and you are fucking HOT in
that movie.

MALE PRODUCER
Carol--

FEMALE PRODUCER
Fuck it, I speak my mind!

MALE PRODUCER
We're not allowing our son to see
it.

FEMALE PRODUCER
Because you show your tits.

MALE PRODUCER
Carol--

NICOLE
Yeah.

MALE PRODUCER
This is Carter Mitchum, he's a
futurist at UCLA who's consulting
on all the environmental stuff for
the show.

Carter, 30's, has been politely following behind. He
reaches forward to shake her hand.

MALE PRODUCER
You know, so it's accurate.

CARTER
Nice to meet you.

NICOLE
So, is it?

CARTER
What?

NICOLE
Accurate?

CARTER
So far none of it.

Nicole laughs. She's handed another nightgown by the
wardrobe assistant. "For when you're on the mother ship."

MALE PRODUCER
This pilot WILL go. Get ready to
move back to LA!

FEMALE PRODUCER

And listen: everything you were
saying back there was absolutely
right--

MALE PRODUCER

Except no one knows we're
killing Donny. Including
Donny.

FEMALE PRODUCER

If she's a bad mom, we'll
lose the audience.

NICOLE

Oh...good, you know, I just
thought-

FEMALE PRODUCER

Let us know if you'd like to be
part of our writer's room -- I bet
you'd be really helpful.

NICOLE

(surprises herself even)
Or I could direct? Sorry, maybe
that sounds crazy.

FEMALE PRODUCER

No, yeah... Do you have a reel?

NICOLE

No, because I've never done it. I
mean, I watched my husband do it
for years...

(quietly)

Almost ex-husband? What's the
opposite of fiance?

FEMALE PRODUCER

(taking her in)

We'll talk to your agents about
it.

NICOLE

At our theater, I always wanted to
direct and Charlie would say
something like "The next one!"
But he was always the director and
there never was a next one.

(contradicting herself)

But I don't know, maybe there
would have been if we stayed
married. You know, I don't know.

Nicole turns away, embarrassed. The Female Producer has
been watching her, while the Male Producer is just texting
like a motherfucker.

INT. NICOLE'S TRAILER

Nicole enters the cramped space and realizes the Female Producer is right behind her. Nicole tries to busy herself.

FEMALE PRODUCER
(takes out her phone)
I'm going to give you a number.

NICOLE
Oh...OK. Is it a therapist? I have a therapist. Well, she's my mom's therapist. We share her.

FEMALE PRODUCER
She's a lawyer, she represented me when I left Dennis.

NICOLE (re: the male producer) You and Dennis are divorced?
FEMALE PRODUCER Since 2013.

NICOLE
And you still work together?
That's nice.

FEMALE PRODUCER
Oh, no, he's a fucking cocksucker. Nora got me half of this project in the settlement.

NICOLE
We talked about doing it without lawyers.

FEMALE PRODUCER You think that, but you won't...
NICOLE My sister made me meet a bunch of them already, I just HATED them.

FEMALE PRODUCER
(with certitude)
Call Nora. She saved my life.

NORA (V.O.)
I'm sorry I look so schleppey.

INT. NORA FANSHAW'S OFFICE. DAY

Nora Fanshaw, 40's, looks amazing and elegant. Today she is in tight designer jeans, a YSL blazer, red pumps and full make-up.

Nicole, in old jeans and a button-down, sits on a comfortable, stylish couch, a Moroccan rug on the floor--in an office that looks like a suite at a W Hotel. A sheepskin throw, fresh flowers on the coffee table.

NORA

I had an event at my kid's school.

Nicole grows suddenly self-conscious about what she's wearing.

NORA

Let me get this out of the way, I think you're a wonderful actress.

NICOLE

Thank you.

NORA

I loved All Over The Girl but the theater stuff too.

NICOLE

(can't help but be pleased)
You've seen the theater stuff?

NORA

I saw Electra.

NORA

I was in New York last year for my book -- which, remind me to give you a copy -- and my publisher took me.

NICOLE

Oh...great. Thank you.

NORA

Fantastic. You're awesome.

NICOLE

(almost apologetically)
Charlie directed it.

NORA

I know. He's very talented.

NICOLE

He is. They're moving it to Broadway. Without me of course.

NORA

He was lucky to have you.

NICOLE

While I'm making a show about a plant invasion.

NORA
 (really asking the
 question)
 How are you doing?

Having been asked that question at that moment in that way,
 does something to her. Tears run down Nicole's cheeks.

NORA
 Oh, honey.

Nora kicks off her shoes and tucks them under her feet.
 She rises, grabs a box of tissues and curls up next to
 Nicole on the couch.

Nicole takes a tissue and she and Nora meet eyes. It feels
 intimate and safe.

NORA
 You take some breaths. And while
 you do, I'm going to tell you
 about myself.

She texts something to someone and then very deliberately
 puts her phone down on the table. Nora puts her hand on
 Nicole's leg. She talks to her like a good girlfriend.

NORA
 If you should choose to hire me, I
 will work tirelessly for you and
 am always available by phone or
 text, EXCEPT when I'm with my
 kids. I insist on doing drop-off
 and pick-up at school every day.

NICOLE
 (likes this)
 Oh, I understand.

An assistant enters with a tray that has green tea and
 cookies. Nicole starts eating the cookies, Nora does not.

NORA
 I've been through this myself so I
 know how it feels.

NICOLE
 (hopeful)
 You do?

NORA
 Yes. I have a kid from my
 ex who was a narcissistic
 artist and verbally abusive.
 I'm now with a great
 boyfriend, who lives in
 Malibu.

NICOLE

Oh, good.
 (hesitates)
 But Charlie's not terrible.

NORA

No, of course not, but they ravish you with attention in the beginning and then once we have babies, we become the mom and they get sick of us.

Nicole nods.

NORA

Where do you want live now, doll?

NICOLE

(takes a breath)
 Well, I'm here now, obviously, and I don't know if this show will be picked up, but... it feels like home... it is home. It's the only home I've known without Charlie.

NORA

You want to stay here.

Nicole likes hearing this affirmation, but then hesitates.

NICOLE

Charlie won't want to do that. He hates LA.

NORA

We're interested in what YOU want to do. Sounds to me like you did your time in New York. He can do some time here, no?

NICOLE

(nods)
 He always said we would, but we never did.

NORA

How old is your son?

NICOLE

Henry is eight. He likes LA, but I don't know if it's fair to him...

NORA
 It sounds like a wonderful
 childhood to me: the first half
 New York and the second half in
 LA.

NICOLE
 (to herself)
 The second half...

Nicole processes this.

NORA
 I want you to listen to me, what
 you're doing is an act of HOPE.
 Do you understand that?

NICOLE
 (suddenly meaning it)
 Yes.

NORA
 You're saying, I want
 something better for myself.

NICOLE
 I do.

NORA
 And this, right now, is the
 worst time. It will only
 get better. Wasn't it Tom
 Petty who said the waiting
 is the hardest part?

NICOLE
 I don't know.

NORA
 I represented his wife in
 their divorce, I got her
 half of that song.

NICOLE
 Oh, I don't want money or
 anything, he doesn't have money
 anyway, he puts it all back into
 the theater-- I used to think he
 gave TOO much away. I just want
 it to be over.

NORA
 Of course you do. But we can do
 both.

NICOLE
 I just worry... You know we
 weren't going to even use lawyers
 so...I don't want to be too
 aggressive. I'd like to stay
 friends.

NORA

Don't worry, we'll do it as gently as possible.

(beat)

Now, can you tell me a little bit more about what's going on? Because part of what we're going to do together is tell your STORY.

Nicole wipes her eyes for the millionth time. She stands and grabs a tissue from the table. She takes a deep breath.

NICOLE

It's difficult to articulate. Sorry. It's like I know why I'm doing this but I don't know too. It's not as simple as not being in love anymore.

NORA (O.S.)

I understand. Why don't you start at the beginning, wherever that is for you.

And Nicole begins. As she talks she finds her voice and gains momentum and she starts to feel better, the tears start to dry up and she becomes more powerful, more herself.

NICOLE

Well, I was engaged to Ben, you know, and living in LA and I felt like "Yes, I want to make movies and marry Ben" - Jesus I was only nineteen or twenty, I've never felt older in my whole life - But if I was honest with myself, there was a small part of me that felt dead, or dead-ish, but you tell yourself "no one is perfect, no relationship is perfect."

(realizing)

Boy, this tea is delicious.

NORA

Isn't it? It's the Manuka honey.

NICOLE

Anyway, you were asking about Charlie. So yes, so I was happy with Ben, but aware of the deadness.

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

And then I went to New York to meet a director for a space movie, but one where they take space seriously. Sex trafficking in space. It was political, or they wanted us to think it was. It was actually just fulfilling the same need certain fucked up porn does. Anyway, while I was there, the producer invited me to a play. It was in someone's living room with all the lights on and like nothing I'd ever seen before. A strange, surreal dystopian story. So well acted and one of the actors was this big shaggy bear who played all his lines looking directly at me which I knew couldn't be really the case, but it felt that way, and of course later I learned that it was.

(also realizing)

The cookies are really great too.

NORA (O.S.)

I'll give you some to take home.

NICOLE

Afterwards, I was introduced to the cast and this bear turned out to also be the director. He didn't really know who I was - or he did, or he figured it out later - and that was it. He started talking to me. And I talked back - and the dead part wasn't dead, it was just in a coma. And it was better than sex, the talking. Although the sex was also like the talking... everything is like everything in a relationship, do you find that? ... We spent the whole night and next day together, and I just... never left. And to be honest, all the problems were there in the beginning, too. I just went along with him in his life because it felt so damn good to feel myself alive. In the beginning I was the actress, the star, so that felt like something. People came to see me, at first.

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

But then the farther away I got from that and the more the theatre company got acclaim, I had less and less weight. I became "Who?" "Oh you remember, that actress who was in that thing that time." And he was the draw. And that would have been fine, but...I got smaller. I realized that I didn't really ever come alive for myself, I was just feeding his aliveness. He was so smart and creative, it didn't matter. I would tell him things at home, in private, and then they would work their way into public conversation, into his work and for a while that felt like enough. I was just so flattered that someone like him would find an idea of mine worth using or a comment of mine worth repeating. And then I got pregnant. And I thought "having a baby will be ours, really ours, and it will also really be mine" and he was so excited. And it was nice for a while. But kids... they belong to themselves. Like the instant they leave your body, it's just a process of going away from you. And I didn't belong to myself. It was stupid stuff and big stuff-- All of the furniture in our house was his taste. I wasn't even sure what my taste was anymore because I'd never been asked to use it. I didn't even pick our apartment, I just moved into his. I made noises about wanting to move back to LA, but it came to nothing. We'd come here on holidays because he liked my family, but whenever I suggested we do a year or something, he'd put me off. It would be so weird if he had turned to me and said "And what do you want to do today?" I watched that long documentary about George Harrison and I thought "just own it, own it like George Harrison's wife. Being a wife and mother is enough." And then I realized I couldn't remember her name.

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

So this pilot came along, and it shot in LA and it paid so much and it was like there was a little life-line thrown to me "Here is a bit of earth that's yours." And I was embarrassed about it in front of him, but also, it felt like "this is who I am, this is what I'm worth and it's stupid, but at least it's mine." And if he had taken me in a big hug and said "Baby, I'm so excited for your adventure and of course I want you to have your own piece of earth" then we might not be getting divorced. But he made fun of it. And was jealous, like he is. BUT then he realized about the money and told me I could funnel it back into the theatre company. And that's when I realized that he truly didn't see me. He didn't see me as something separate from him. And I asked him to say my phone number. And he didn't know it. So I left.

Nora wipes a ink-stained tear from Nicole's cheek and hugs her.

NICOLE

(realizing she forgot to include)

I think Charlie also slept with Mary Ann, the stage manager.

NORA

(fierce)

That fucking asshole.

INT. SANDRA'S HOUSE, LOS ANGELES. EVENING

Cassie husband, Sam and their kids, Jules and Molly, play Monopoly with Henry in the den. Henry has trouble reading the Chance card. Sam helps him with it.

JULES

You should buy everything.

HENRY

But I want to keep my money.

INT. SANDRA'S KITCHEN. SAME

CLOSE on a manilla envelope with Charlie's name on it and Nora's firm's address in the corner. Cassie, 30's, Nicole and Sandra are preparing. They're all drinking wine and drinking it too fast.

NICOLE

So, Cassie, you're going to hand him the envelope--

CASSIE

Why do I have to do it?

SANDRA

Because Nicole is very good at getting people to do things for her--

NICOLE

That's not what this is--

SANDRA

I wiped her butt until she was nine years old. She's very seductive that way.

NICOLE

No. Mom. Legally I can't be the one who serves him.

SANDRA

But still this is true what I'm saying.

CASSIE

(nervous now)
Do I have to actually hand him the envelope?

NICOLE

Yes, but I'm going to tell him in advance that they're divorce papers. Nora says it doesn't have to be so formal.

(suddenly nervous)

Where's Henry?

Nicole finishes what's in her glass and pours herself more.

CASSIE

He's in the living room playing with Jules and Molly.

NICOLE

Let's get them upstairs. So, I'll tell Charlie what's happening and Cassie, you can then hand him the envelope--

CASSIE
OK, I just get nervous--

SANDRA
(nervously)
Can you un-serve?

NICOLE
What do you mean, like take it
back?

SANDRA
Yeah.

NICOLE
(getting anxious)
I think so.

CASSIE
You should check.

SANDRA
In case we change our minds.

NICOLE
I'm not going to change my mind.

CASSIE
I know, but maybe just to
know in case I do something
wrong--

SANDRA
Or we all just feel too bad
for him.

NICOLE
Now you're both just making ME
feel bad about it, OK.

CASSIE
Sorry... Sorry. I'm
nervous.

SANDRA
We all are. And we LOVE
Charlie.

NICOLE
(with more power now)
You have to STOP loving him, Mom.
You can't be his friend anymore.

SANDRA
Charlie and I have our own
relationship independent of your
marriage just like I'm friends
with Cassie's ex, Jeff--

CASSIE
(news to her)
Are you still seeing Jeff?!

SANDRA
(shrugs)
An occasional lunch.

CASSIE
I can't believe you!

SANDRA
He still wants his camera
back by the way.

NICOLE
(getting emotional, but
staying strong)
Listen, nothing can be independent
of our marriage right now. I
can't believe I have to explain
this to you. Just be on MY side,
OK?

SANDRA
OK.

CASSIE
And stop seeing JEFF!

NICOLE
Cassie, you're the server.

CASSIE
Just let me practice a few times.
I was never a good auditioner.

SANDRA
You wanted it too badly.

NICOLE
It's not an audition.

SANDRA
I'll play Charlie.

CASSIE
It's just my palms are so
perspired.

SANDRA
Sweetie, you're blotting the
envelope. Maybe Nicole should
play you.

CASSIE
Did you really just say that???

NICOLE
We don't need to practice it.
It's not a performance!

Sandra is working on opening a bottle of wine.

NICOLE
Did we finish the other one
already?

CASSIE
 (with dead certainty)
 Oh, yeah.

Outside, a car door closes, they all jump. Cassie even screams. Nicole snaps into action.

NICOLE
 OK, let me get it. You both go in the other room. Cassie, make sure Henry goes upstairs with Jules and Molly.

CASSIE
 Happening now.

Cassie and Sandra disperse. Nicole goes to the door. Sandra reappears from another entrance.

NICOLE
 Mom!

SANDRA
 I'm getting my wine.

She grabs her glass and scurries away as Cassie reenters.

NICOLE
 What?!

CASSIE
 Henry's pooping in the bathroom downstairs.

NICOLE
 Can we transfer him to the upstairs one?

CASSIE
 I think it's mid-poop.

NICOLE
 OK, grab him when he comes out.
 (Cassie nods and starts to leave)
 Cassie!

CASSIE
 What?!

NICOLE
 (re: Nora's legal document)
 (MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)
I'm putting the envelope here by
the toaster.

CASSIE
Copy you.

Cassie hurries out of the room. The back door opens,
Charlie enters in a whirl. He kisses Nicole on the lips,
heading into a spare bedroom.

CHARLIE
Hey-- Where's Henry?

NICOLE
He's pooping.

CHARLIE
Hi Henry!

He dumps his bags on the floor. She watches through the
doorway.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Does this couch still open?

He reappears, squeezing past her into the kitchen.

CHARLIE
(excited)
I got off the plane to a text--
But don't tell anyone yet, it's
still a secret.

NICOLE
OK--

He goes straight to the refrigerator, passing the manila
envelope next to the toaster. He turns to Nicole, unable
to contain his excitement.

CHARLIE
I won a MacArthur grant.

NICOLE
Oh, Charlie, that's so great.
Congratulations!

She hugs him, truly happy for him.

CHARLIE
Thanks.

NICOLE
(so pleased)
I'll say it because you
can't, it's the genius
grant. You're a genius.

CHARLIE
 (bashful, but beaming)
 Well...

NICOLE
 I'm really happy for you.
 You deserve it--

CHARLIE
 It's yours too. We did all of
 this together.

NICOLE
 Well, thank you, but it's yours,
 Charlie, enjoy it.

CHARLIE
 I'm starving--

Charlie removes a roasted chicken from the refrigerator.

CHARLIE
 It's good money, and they parse it
 out over five years, but it means
 I can keep everyone in the theater
 company employed, pay my credit
 card debt and--

NICOLE
 (eyes on the envelope)
 It's so great.

CHARLIE
 Of course I went instantly to,
 "it's all down hill from here."
 Now my first Broadway play HAS to
 fail--

NICOLE
 No!

CHARLIE
 We just started rehearsals
 again...I don't know...

NICOLE
 You always don't know at
 this point and then it gets
 there--

CHARLIE
 Do I? Cause I don't remember.

NICOLE
 I know, but it's true. It'll be
 great.

CHARLIE
 (smiles)
 OK. I hope you're right.
 Everyone says, Hi.

NICOLE
Tell them Hi. I miss everyone.

CHARLIE
Well, you'll see them when
you come back--

NICOLE
A MacArthur, Broadway, it's
so exciting.
Congratulations, Charlie.

He picks at the chicken with his hands, licking his fingers. Nicole takes a breath, wanting to acknowledge the envelope sitting now to Charlie's right and all that's about to happen.

CHARLIE
Which bathroom?

NICOLE
What?

CHARLIE
Is he pooping?

NICOLE
Oh...downstairs.

He starts off. She follows him into the other room.

CHARLIE
Your mom home?

NICOLE
Yeah, she's upstairs--

He knocks on the bathroom door.

CHARLIE
Hey, how's it going?

HENRY (O.S.)
Nothing yet.

CHARLIE
It's me.

HENRY (O.S.)
I know.

CHARLIE
I just got here.

HENRY (O.S.)
Hi.

CHARLIE
I brought you something.

HENRY (O.S.)
Yay. Mom is giving me a present
too.

CHARLIE
Why?

HENRY (O.S.)
For pooping.

CHARLIE
Oh...
(pause)
I love you.

HENRY (O.S.)
I love you.

Charlie reenters the kitchen. Nicole trailing.

CHARLIE
I don't think we should reward him
for pooping anymore.

NICOLE
I know, but he holds it in,
it's getting on a week...

CHARLIE
It's its own reward.

Sandra pokes her head in.

SANDRA
Hey there, Charlie-bird.

CHARLIE
(smiling)
G-ma!

Sandra kisses him on the lips. He lifts her up. Nicole
watches impatiently.

SANDRA
Don't, I'm so heavy!

CHARLIE
You're light as a feather.

SANDRA
Oh, God, I'm so HUGE!

CHARLIE
You didn't respond to my
last email!

SANDRA
Your emails are so articulate, I
get intimidated!

NICOLE Mom, can you help with-- SANDRA Now, I'm going to lift YOU!
 She wraps her arms around him and he pretends to be lifted.

NICOLE
 MOM!

SANDRA What? NICOLE Upstairs--

SANDRA
 Oh...
 (to Charlie)
 I'm going to go write you back
 now.

Sandra reluctantly leaves as Cassie enters.

CASSIE Hey, Charlie. CHARLIE Cassie, I like your haircut.

CASSIE
 (disarmed)
 Oh, thanks.

HENRY (O.S.)
 Mom!

SANDRA (O.S.)
 Henry's calling you, Nicole!

NICOLE I hear him! CHARLIE What's going on, Henry?!

HENRY (O.S.)
 Can you have Mom come?

CHARLIE
 He wants you--

Nicole and Cassie look at one another.

NICOLE
 (mouths)
 Wait for me--

Charlie continues to eat (and mangle) his chicken. Cassie stands in front of him awkwardly. She collects her things, holds a pie tin, on top of a script. She's red faced and blushing, and shaking from nerves.

CHARLIE
 What kind of pie is that?

CASSIE
 (for some reason that
 stumped her)
 It's...
 (long pause, as if trying
 to recall a line in a
 play)
 Pecan.

CHARLIE
 Did you make it?

CASSIE
 I don't know. No! It's store
 bought. You know Joan's on Third?

CHARLIE
 Oh, yeah, that's good, right?

CASSIE
 What? The store? Yeah! Jules
 and Molly love it.

CHARLIE
 (re: her nerves)
 Are you OK?

CASSIE
 Yes. I'm just HOT.

CHARLIE
 I'll pour you some water.
 (he does)
 Nicole says you're doing a play?

CASSIE
 (happy to be asked)
 I think you'd like it! It's a
 great unproduced play by this
 really interesting British writer.

CHARLIE
 So you do an English accent?

CASSIE
 Yeah, it's more Northern England.

CHARLIE
 Oh, what does that sound like?

CASSIE
 Ya want a cup of tea, do ya?

CHARLIE
 Oh, right. Good.
 (doing an OK English
 accent)
 Oh, thank you, missus. What is--

Charlie's gaze goes down to the counter. The legal envelope lies there. Cassie sees him seeing this.

CHARLIE
 What's this?

CASSIE
 (still trying British)
 It's a manilla envelope, love.
 (shakes her head)
 Can I start over?

CHARLIE
 It has my name on it.

He picks it up. She lunges forward and violently grabs it out of his hands. She hesitates and then formally hands it back to him.

CASSIE
 Oh Jesus, sorry. You're served.
 Sorry.

Nicole reenters. She sees Charlie holding the envelope.

NICOLE
 (to Cassie)
 What did you do?

CASSIE
 Nothing. I don't know. I can't lie. You're being served. You guys are getting divorced. I don't know. I'm sorry.

She runs out of the room. Nicole looks at Charlie.

NICOLE
 I was going to warn you. So it didn't become a thing.

Charlie stares at the envelope. And then:

NICOLE
 I'm sorry.

CHARLIE
 (eyes on the envelope)
 I feel like I'm in a dream.

NICOLE
 We don't have a marriage anymore.

Charlie looks up at her.

NICOLE
 I know you don't want the
 disruption, but you don't want to
 be married. Not really.

CHARLIE
 (holding up the envelope)
 But I don't want THIS.

NICOLE
 Well, what did you expect was
 going to happen?

CHARLIE
 I don't know... I guess I didn't
 think it through. But I thought
 we agreed--

Nicole gets out a bottle of whiskey and pours two drinks.
 She places one on the counter in front of him.

CHARLIE
 We weren't going to use
 lawyers.

NICOLE
 I want a... I don't know,
 I'm trying to say this as
 undramatically as possible.
 I want an ENTIRELY different
 kind of life.

CHARLIE
 Let's wait until you finish this
 pilot and come back to New York
 and... Let's figure it out there,
 at home. Together.

NICOLE
 Nora is known for being
 really fair-

CHARLIE
 We don't need to do this
 with envelopes and...

CHARLIE
 (holding up the envelope)
 This is Nora?

NICOLE
 Yeah. She's great. I feel like
 we could be friends with her.

CHARLIE
Why do I feel like that won't
happen...

NICOLE
It's a formality and you
don't have to respond right
away.

CHARLIE
(suddenly)
Why...why did Cassie have a
pie?

NICOLE
The pie was hers. The pie wasn't
part of it.

CHARLIE
Are you sure?

NICOLE
Yeah, I mean, what would the pie
have to do with anything?

CHARLIE
I don't know, it somehow
makes it worse.

NICOLE
Sorry. The pie was just a
pie.

CHARLIE
So, what... What do I do?

NICOLE
You get a lawyer too.

INT. NICOLE'S ROOM AT SANDRA'S

Charlie and Nicole lie in bed together on either side of
Henry. Charlie is reading Stuart Little. They get to the
end. Both Charlie and Nicole wipe tears from their eyes.

NICOLE
I forgot it ended that way.

CHARLIE
Yeah. Wow. Stuart really over-
reacted, didn't you think?

HENRY
He was upset about his boat.

Charlie kisses Henry on the head.

HENRY
Dad, you go away-- Mom, you stay--

NICOLE
But Daddy, just got here--

CHARLIE
It's OK. I love you.

HENRY
(picking up his Dad's
disappointment)
But you can come back and wake me
up and read to me later, Daddy.
OK?

CHARLIE
OK.

Charlie gets up and walks outside the door. We STAY with
Nicole and Henry.

HENRY
(whispers)
Will you come sleep in my bed
later?

NICOLE
(whispering)
Yes.

We CUT TO Charlie standing outside the door and for the
first time shift to HIS perspective. He hears their
whispers. A door squeak grabs Charlie's attention. Sandra
peeks out from her room.

SANDRA
(whispers, shaking her
fists)
Hang in there, Charlie-bird.

CHARLIE
(whispers)
Thanks G-ma.

Sandra shuts her door. He looks at the family photos on
the hallway wall. Sandra younger on a TV show, being
directed by Roberto, a handsome curly haired man with big
glasses. Nicole and Cassie as kids.

A framed image from a New York Times article on Charlie and
Nicole. They pose, looking great, standing apart on the
stage of the theater. Titled: Scenes From A Marriage.

Nicole comes back out. She sees Charlie looking at the
photo. She hesitates.

NICOLE
He's in a Mommy phase right now.

CHARLIE

It's OK.

They both head down the stairs. Nicole sways for a second and clutches a bannister. Charlie takes her arm.

NICOLE

Sorry, I think I drank too much wine--

CHARLIE

I can imagine. Stressful time.

NICOLE

And didn't eat dinner--

NICOLE

Ha, yeah... I hope Henry didn't notice.

CHARLIE

I'm sure he didn't.

NICOLE

Now that I'm a parent I realize my parents were probably drunk all the time with me.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

NICOLE

Sorry again.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

NICOLE

Where are you staying?

CHARLIE

Oh, um...I hadn't...I guess I'll...

He puts on his jacket, and leaves the room--

NICOLE

There's a new hotel over on Highland that's supposedly not too expensive and pretty nice.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Oh...OK...I'll check it out.

NICOLE

Again, that's great about the MacArthur.

Charlie reappears clutching his bag.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

They half-hug strangely, he holding his bag in one hand, she holding the legal envelope.

He heads for the door.

NICOLE

Charlie?

CHARLIE

(turning hopefully)

Yeah?

Nicole hands him the envelope with the divorce papers.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

Charlie flips off all the lights in the room. Leaving Nicole in darkness.

A VOICE (V.O.)

Fuck.

INT. JAY MAROTTA'S LAW OFFICE. DAY

Charlie sits across from a lawyer, 50's, a strong, husky silver-haired man in a suit. This is Jay Marotta. The office is nothing like Nora's -- sleek, corporate, tough. There are photos of Jay playing sports.

An associate, 30's, Ted, a younger jock, sits at an adjacent table, taking notes.

CHARLIE

What?

JAY MAROTTA

(to the associate)

She's being represented by Nora.

Ted nods, knowingly.

CHARLIE

She's supposedly very fair?

JAY MAROTTA

Here's the fact Jack: I charge 950 dollars an hour, Ted is 400, so if you have a stupid question, call Ted.

Ted smiles at Charlie. Charlie looks sick.

JAY MAROTTA

To start we'll need a twenty-five thousand dollar retainer--

CHARLIE

Oh, that's more than I can--

TED

And all your financials.
We'll need to do a forensic
accounting.

JAY SILVERMAN

Which runs anywhere from ten
to twenty thousand dollars.

CHARLIE

(sweating)

But if we can all agree right
away, it shouldn't get too bad,
right?

JAY MAROTTA

(not responding)

You were married here, in LA?

CHARLIE

Yes, because her mom and
sister are out here and I'm
not close with my family and
so we just did it here...

JAY SILVERMAN

And your son was born out
here?

CHARLIE

Yes, because again her family was
out here and I'm not--

JAY MAROTTA

So you got married here, your kid
was born here and she served you
here?

CHARLIE

Yeah. But we LIVED in New York.

(pause)

Why? Is there a problem?

TED

We're going to have to reshape the
narrative.

JAY MAROTTA

If you're serious about having
your child in New York, this is
what I would suggest, you take the
kid, did you say his name is Fred--

CHARLIE
Henry.

JAY MAROTTA
--Henry? Why did I think
Fred.

TED
I have a kid named Fred.

JAY MAROTTA
--you take Henry to New York
with you right now. Then we
file an action in New York.
Make it a New York case--

TED
We need to make an argument that
you're a New York based family.

CHARLIE
Well, we ARE.

JAY MAROTTA
Otherwise, you'll probably
never see your kid outside
of LA again.

CHARLIE
(shocked)
Really? No.

JAY MAROTTA
It's very difficult to convince
the courts to MOVE a kid. As soon
as you let your wife and child
leave New York, you made life very
difficult for yourself.

CHARLIE
Yeah, but as I said, we are a New
York family, that's just a fact.
She's here temporarily.

JAY MAROTTA
(leading question)
Then why do you think she served
you out here?

Jay and the associate exchange a meaningful glance.

CHARLIE
I don't...know. But, Henry wants
to go back to New York, he tells
me--

JAY MAROTTA
Don't quote your kid. He's just
telling you what you want to hear.
Trust me, he's telling her the
opposite.

Jay looks back at the papers.

JAY MAROTTA
What's Exit Goat?

CHARLIE
Exit Ghost. It's the name of my
theater company.

JAY MAROTTA
You're a director?

CHARLIE
Theater director, yeah.

JAY MAROTTA
Anything I've seen?

CHARLIE
I don't know. What have you seen?

Silence.

CHARLIE
Our production of Electra is moving to
Broadway which is exciting--

JAY MAROTTA
We have to make sure that money is
protected.

CHARLIE
I mean, it's theater, so it's not
a lot of money. I basically put
whatever money I make back in the
theater.

JAY MAROTTA
I wonder--
(looks at Ted)
Do WE ask for support?

TED
Interesting--

CHARLIE
From Nicole? I'm not going
to do that--

JAY MAROTTA
Does your wife's family have
money?

CHARLIE
Her mother has some from her TV
career and her father died--

JAY MAROTTA
We could say we don't want
her mother to see the kid,
draw HER into the case.

TED
In that instance, her mother
could pay your legal fees
too.

CHARLIE
 (can't believe his ears)
 No. I'm very close to her mom.
 Nicole's family has been my family--
 -

JAY MAROTTA
 That's going to change and I
 suggest you get used to that.
 (to Ted)
 We should hire a private
 investigator--

CHARLIE
 Really? I mean...REALLY?

JAY MAROTTA
 We need to look for ways we
 can show she's a bad mother.

CHARLIE
 But she's not.

JAY MAROTTA
 Your wife do drugs or
 anything? Coke?

CHARLIE
 Not in any real way--

JAY MAROTTA
 We're not going to win if she's a
 perfect mom.

CHARLIE
 (hesitates)
 She was addicted to Tums for a
 while.

Jay stares at him.

CHARLIE
 It wasn't nothing. She was up to
 a tube a day.

JAY MAROTTA
 Have you noticed anyone following
 YOU?

CHARLIE
 No!

JAY MAROTTA
 Keep an eye out. California's a
 no-fault state so even if you're
 fucking around it wouldn't matter,
 but, it doesn't look good--
 (stands)
 (MORE)

JAY MAROTTA (CONT'D)

You need to be prepared for the fact that Nora's going to portray you as a neglectful, absent, father.

CHARLIE
But I'm not--

JAY MAROTTA
You live in New York, consumed with your work, she and the kid are out here, struggling. Nora will use that strategy, I'm sure of it.

CHARLIE
She's not going to LIE.

JAY MAROTTA
Listen, if we start from a place of reasonable and they start from a place of crazy when we settle, we'll be somewhere between reasonable and crazy.

TED
Which is STILL crazy.

JAY MAROTTA
Half of crazy is crazy.

CHARLIE
Uh huh.

TED
You know what people say, criminal lawyers see bad people at their best, divorce lawyers see good people at their worst.

JAY MAROTTA
You'll end up hating me and Ted before it's all over just because of what we represent in your life.

CHARLIE
I'm sure you're right.

Charlie looks like he'll pass out.

CHARLIE
Maybe I didn't explain this well. We're friendly, we're fine, we're just trying to figure this out--

JAY SILVERMAN
So, tell me the story again, you came out to see your kid and she served you? What a bitch.

CHARLIE

She's not a bitch...thanks, but this isn't...we're doing it a different way. And I can't even close afford this... I've got to get back to New York. I have a Broadway play in rehearsals--

Charlie stands.

Fade to Black.

INT. BROADWAY REHEARSAL SPACE, NEW YORK. DAY

Actors are mingling, stretching, in a mostly white room in midtown. Different color tape on the floor indicates the set. Various conversations are going on at once including Frank telling another anecdote from his younger days.

FRANK

She was Rosalind and I was Jaques. Nobody knew her then --

BETH

Do you think it's OK that I'm doing the laughing fit that way. Nicole did it more like --
 (she laughs strangely)
 I'm doing it--
 (laughs her way)
 And I don't want to imitate her--

ACTOR 3

You're making it your own.

FRANK

Complete unknown. And I was the hot shit you know, young and very sexy with this great head of hair.

BETH

I just so appreciate that Charlie gave me this opportunity. Or maybe I should thank Nicole.

TERRY

I heard Nicole's pilot went to series so she's staying in LA.

ACTOR 2

And they put Henry in school out there.

ACTOR 4

Is Charlie moving there too?

BETH

Not Charlie.

ACTOR

He won't abandon us.

TERRY

And you can't do theater in LA.

They all laugh.

ACTOR 5

Charlie said she and Henry are coming back to New York once she finishes filming her show.

ACTOR 1

I wouldn't be so sure.

ACTOR 5

She was never going to stay in New York. That was obvious.

ACTOR 2

She was probably planning this move all along.

ACTOR 5

When she sees an opportunity, believe me, she takes it.

ACTOR

Well, LA is nice. The space.

FRANK

And you know it's "The Park" and all that, and Joey Papp was directing, and she just glided on stage... we were cats in heat.

ACTOR 3

Charlie HATES LA.

All of their attention eventually drifts toward Frank for the big finish.

FRANK

Miss future four time Oscar winner sucking my...

The door swings open and Charlie enters. He's immediately swarmed by the costume designer and props guy who is showing him different items to approve.

Charlie puts his things down on a white folding table.

CHARLIE

Nobody come too close, I think I got Donna's cold.

DONNA

Sorry Charlie.

Terry and other actors approach him.

CHARLIE

Just a heads up, I'm waiting for a
Skype call from Henry so I might
have to step out--

Everyone very understandingly says "Of course." "Say Hi
from us" etc. Frank puts his arm around Charlie.

FRANK

What you're going through now is
going to be horrible. BUT it will
be over.

CHARLIE

Thanks, Frank.

FRANK

Another thing.

CHARLIE

Yes?

FRANK

Fuck as many people as you can
right now. Women, men...

The Costume Designer, Donna, holds up a brown suit, hat,
goggles and white gauze and a small Frankenstein outfit.

COSTUME DESIGNER

You might need help wrapping
some of the gauze, it needs
to stay tight.

FRANK

Take what I said seriously.

SET DESIGNER

I'm confused. What scene is the
Invisible Man outfit for?

CHARLIE

No, that's my Halloween costume.
And the Frankenstein is for Henry.

All the actors surround him, approving of the outfits.
"Aww!" "So cute!" "Frankenstein and the Invisible Man!"

CHARLIE

He's coming here this
weekend and we're going to
trick or treat in the Slope
and whatever--

COSTUME DESIGNER

I made it more James Whale
than Kenneth Branagh.

CHARLIE

Perfect.

MARY ANN

Can I talk to you?

CHARLIE

Yeah, over--

Charlie and Mary Ann duck into the hallway. The crew clocks this and makes knowing eye contact with one another.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE HALLWAY. SAME

Mary Ann hands him a stack of papers and an old scuffed up book.

MARY ANN

I typed up the notes from the last two rehearsals and here's the blueprints--

CHARLIE

(pleased)
Where'd you find it?

MARY ANN

--from the original layout of the Broadway theater--

MARY ANN

The library. Duh.

CHARLIE

Ha!

MARY ANN

(sweetly)
Can I come over tonight?

CHARLIE

(pause)
Mary Ann, it's too hard now...I just can't be with anyone right now.

MARY ANN

We did it when you were married, when we shouldn't have done it. Now, that you're not married, um, shouldn't we be doing it?

CHARLIE

I'm not not married...yet.

MARY ANN

You're torturing yourself.

His phone is ringing.

CHARLIE

Just make sure everything doesn't go to hell here. I'm relying on you, OK?

MARY ANN

Fine.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

He kisses her on the head. She flushes, rebuffed.

CHARLIE
Hold on, let me--

MARY ANN
I wish you'd accept
generosity better.

CHARLIE
(hesitates after this
remark and answers the
phone)
Hello?

Charlie pushes open the fire exit doors--

INT. STAIRWELL. SAME

NORA
Is this Charlie Barber?

CHARLIE
Yes.

NORA
Hi, this is Nora Fanshaw, I
represent your wife, Nicole
Barber.

CHARLIE
Hi.

NORA
Do you have an attorney yet?

CHARLIE
No.

NORA
OK, then it's OK for me to talk to
you directly. OK?

CHARLIE
OK.

NORA
I'm calling because we haven't
received a response to our filing.

The set designer, Agnes, opens the door to the stairwell and holds up two photos of stools. Charlie points at one of them. The designer nods.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I've been rehearsing this play and flying back and forth to LA--

NORA

You're going to need to file your response.

Now she holds up two images of phones. An old style one from the 30's and a rotary from the 70's.

CHARLIE

Nicole said there was no rush.

He points at the rotary. She nods gratefully and hurries back inside.

NORA

It's been more than thirty days since you were served. By law you're meant to respond within thirty days.

CHARLIE

I didn't like the first lawyer I met.

NORA

It says that very clearly on the document you were given. Did you read it?

CHARLIE

But I thought that's just what it says...we weren't going to even do it with lawyers--

Charlie absent-mindedly fiddles with the X-Acto knife on his key chain, opening and closing it. Frank pokes his head in.

FRANK

Charlie, I'm thinking I shouldn't tuck in the shirt?

CHARLIE

(holding up a finger to say "hold on")
Nicole said I could take my time--

FRANK

--it keeps coming out during the love scene--

NORA

And we've let you take your time...

CHARLIE

What love scene?

FRANK

When I hug Beth.

CHARLIE
You don't hug Beth.

FRANK
It's something I'm trying.

<p>NORA If you don't file your response we're going to file a request for default judgement against you.</p>	<p>CHARLIE (to Frank) You can't just tuck it in tighter or get Donna to safety pin it?</p>
--	--

FRANK
(admitting)
I also have a thing about tucking
in things--

Charlie indicates for Frank to come forward. He tucks it
in for him.

<p>FRANK It's a hold-over from childhood. Insecurities about my figure.</p>	<p>CHARLIE Charlie?</p>	<p>NORA</p>
---	-----------------------------	-------------

CHARLIE
Yes, sorry--

Frank looks at his reflection in the glass of a fire
extinguisher. He does his "handsome" face. He pantomimes
hugging someone. Charlie starts walking down the stairs.

CHARLIE
A default judgement. What does
that mean?

NORA
We'll be able to lay claim to
whatever we want.

CHARLIE
What do you mean? Whatever you
want of what?

NORA
Your apartment, your things--well,
everything you own.

CHARLIE
She and I already discussed this,
we don't own that much stuff, she
can have pretty much whatever she--

NORA

And it means, we'll set the number for child support at its highest level and claim full custody of your child...

CHARLIE

(alarmed)

Full custody? I mean, that's not even--

Charlie opens an Emergency Exit door and emerges into--

TIMES SQUARE

Chaotic city SOUNDS and vibrating video screens.

NORA

This is what the law says.

CHARLIE

Nicole's not going to do that. I mean...she won't.

NORA

No, Charlie, I represent Nicole and she's aware of everything I'm saying to you.

CHARLIE

I just spoke to her this morning.

NORA

Well, I spoke to her five minutes before I got on this call.

Silence.

CHARLIE

Um, OK, what do I do?

NORA

You need to get a lawyer and respond immediately. Nicole wants to do this amicably but you're leaving us no other option, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I'll get a lawyer. Can I get a lawyer here?

NORA

I don't know where "here" is.

CHARLIE

New York.

NORA

That's what all that honking is!
No, you'll have to come to LA and
meet people in LA.

CHARLIE

I'm rehearsing a--

NORA

If you don't respond in Los
Angeles by Friday, you'll
leave us no choice.

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RENTAL CAR AREA, LAX AIRPORT. DAY

A plane flies over palm trees and strip malls. We MOVE
down to find: Charlie, dressed in a black coat and black
jeans, wandering around aimlessly in a parking lot.

INT. RENTAL CAR. DAY

Charlie drives, fiddling with the air conditioning to no
apparent success. He looks uncomfortable and hot. The sun
suddenly blinds him through the windshield.

CHARLIE

(squinting)

Ugh, I can't see..

(pause)

And I'm still driving.

EXT. SANDRA'S HOUSE, WEST HOLLYWOOD, LOS ANGELES, DAY

Henry comes running out. He wears shorts and high socks.
Charlie opens his arms but doesn't get a hug as Henry is on
to other things.

HENRY

Me and Mommy are in the middle of
a Super Secret Treasure Hunt--

CHARLIE

What are you wearing?

Nicole follows. Her hair has been dyed blonde.

NICOLE

I thought the plane landed at ten.

CHARLIE

It did.

HENRY

Sock pants!

CHARLIE
What are sock pants?

NICOLE
He doesn't like the breeze on his
legs--

CHARLIE
There are long pants--

NICOLE
He dressed himself.

CHARLIE
Can I talk to you--

HENRY
Why don't we ever do a
treasure hunt?

NICOLE
It's almost noon.

CHARLIE
(aside to Henry)
We got to get going--

HENRY
I'm not done searching for my
money!

CHARLIE
(to Nicole)
Can I talk to you for a
minute? Henry, can you wait
a minute--

HENRY
No talking alone.

CHARLIE
Just one bit of talking alone and
then I'll be right there--

He walks Nicole over away from the car and Henry.

CHARLIE
I got a call from your lawyer.
She said you'd take everything and
custody and everything if I didn't
respond.

NICOLE
That's how lawyers talk--

CHARLIE
Yeah, but she's saying
things I don't think you
mean--

NICOLE
It's better if we just let the
lawyers do this--

CHARLIE
We said we'd figure this out
together.

Henry starts running back to the house.

CHARLIE
Henry, we need to get going--

NICOLE
Have you gotten a lawyer
yet?

HENRY
I don't want to go now.

CHARLIE
That's what I'm here to do.

Charlie opens the car door.

CHARLIE
Come on, Henry, I'm in a rush--
(to Nicole)
And I looked Nora up. She's
fancy. We...you can't afford her.

NICOLE
She said she'd make it work--

CHARLIE
(shouting)
Henry!

HENRY
I have three more clues!

CHARLIE
(to Nicole)
Why did you start a treasure hunt
or whatever so close to my
arrival?

NICOLE
You were late, we were killing
time.

HENRY
I'm going to be rich!

NICOLE
(aloud)
We can finish the treasure hunt
later. Go with Daddy now, it'll
be FUN.
(loud whisper)
I'll have a present for you when
you get back as a reward--

CHARLIE
(glares at Nicole)
He's not going to the dentist.

NICOLE
I'm trying to help--

HENRY
I'm staying here.

Henry grabs hold of his Mom.

NICOLE
(laughs)
OK--

Charlie gently takes Henry's arm.

CHARLIE
Come on--

Henry yanks it back. Charlie pulls again on Henry who is clutching his Mom.

CHARLIE
Henry--

NICOLE
You have a booster?

This tug of war feels ridiculous and Charlie lets go.

CHARLIE
I have a booster.

Nicole looks at the car-seat in the back of the car.

NICOLE
It's not in.

CHARLIE
What's not in?

NICOLE
The seat. It's not connected.

Charlie leans in. The car-seat isn't connected to anything. Charlie and Nicole, both crouched closely together in the back seat, share a small laugh.

CHARLIE
I asked the rental company to install it.

NICOLE
I think they can't for liability reasons--

CHARLIE
Do you know how these things-

NICOLE
Let me do it--

Henry itches his nose as he watches his parents struggle with the booster seat.

NICOLE
No, you have to--

CHARLIE
There should be a clip thing, a thing to clip on to.

NICOLE
Here, you have dig--

CHARLIE
Ow, fuck.

HENRY
Why "fuck?"

NICOLE
You OK?

CHARLIE
Something's sharp--

Charlie gets out, he's sweating and his hand is bleeding.

HENRY
Can't I stay with Mom?

CHARLIE
No--

HENRY
Why not?

CHARLIE
It's my time with you. I just flew three thousand miles.

HENRY
I don't want to--

CHARLIE
Henry, get in the fucking car!

Henry laughs uncomfortably and then reluctantly climbs in.

CHARLIE
(defeated)
I'm sorry, but Jesus, get in the fucking car.

INT. RENTAL CAR. DAY

Charlie drives. He sucks on his hand which is bleeding looks at all the billboards on the strip. Henry sits in the back.

HENRY
How do you spell Lego Bionicles?

CHARLIE
That's two words. What does Lego
start with?

HENRY
Just tell me.

CHARLIE
Don't you want to learn it?

HENRY CHARLIE
No, it's on the box anyway. L.

HENRY
Then what?

CHARLIE
E. You know, everyone at the
theater says Hi.

HENRY
Hi. Then what?

CHARLIE
A "ggg" sound. Are you excited
for Halloween?

HENRY
J?

CHARLIE HENRY
G. Then what?

CHARLIE
An "O" sound.

HENRY CHARLIE
O. Are you excited for
Halloween?

HENRY CHARLIE
Yeah. I brought both our costumes.

HENRY
I'm going to go as a store-bought
ninja.

CHARLIE
But we agreed, I had Donna make
you a Frankenstein.

HENRY
I don't want to be a Frankenstein
anymore.

CHARLIE

Are you sure, maybe just look at it? It's awesome. We'll be Frankenstein and the Invisible Man!

HENRY

Mom bought me a ninja costume which is better because it costs more.

CHARLIE

Technically, the Frankenstein costs more when you factor in Donna's time and the materials--

HENRY

The cousins are also going to be ninjas.

CHARLIE

(frustrated)

But Henry, we went through all this trouble--

(catching himself)

OK, whatever you want...

EXT./INT. PARKING ENTRANCE

Charlie lowers the window and stretches his arm out to push the button to get the ticket, but he's not pulled in close enough. He has to open the door, unbuckle himself, and step out to push it.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY

A wide white space flanked by windows. Charlie, still sucking on his hand, carries two travel bags and he and Henry, having checked in, head toward the elevator bank.

CHARLIE

(in the middle of a previous conversation)

...and so I'm not comfortable leaving the bags in a car where I've given the key to someone I don't know--

HENRY

I've been here.

CHARLIE

It's an office building so you've been to places like this before.

INT. LAW OFFICE

Charlie approaches the receptionist.

HENRY
I remember those fish.

CHARLIE
A lot of fish look the same.

The receptionist looks up.

RECEPTIONIST
Can I help you--

<p>CHARLIE I'm Charlie Barber, I have a one thirty with Dan Cohen.</p>	<p>RECEPTIONIST (to the kid) Oh, hi. Where's your little man?</p>
--	---

HENRY
I don't have it this time. I keep
my skeletons at my mom's.

Charlie looks at Henry strangely and back at the
receptionist. She scrolls on her computer and frowns.

RECEPTIONIST
OK... Oh, OK... I'm sorry, we
tried to reach you, Mr. Cohen
wanted me to apologize. He can't
see you because apparently your
wife already met with him on the
7th of August about
representation...

CHARLIE
But she hired somebody else, uh,
Nora...

RECEPTIONIST
Fanshaw? But unfortunately
because she consulted with Mr.
Cohen already, he's legally barred
from representing you.

<p>CHARLIE Oh... Really?</p>	<p>RECEPTIONIST (to Henry) Should we feed the fish?</p>
----------------------------------	---

She rises and leads Henry over to the tank.

RECEPTIONIST
It happens all the time. If you
have a ticket I can validate your
parking.

Charlie searches for his ticket. He gets blood from his hand on the loose bills and receipts in his pocket.

RECEPTIONIST

It's common that people meet with as many lawyers as possible so that their spouse has limited options.

CHARLIE

I don't think she would have done it deliberately.

RECEPTIONIST

You'd be surprised.

CHARLIE

Did you go to a lot of offices with your mom?

HENRY

Not so many. Like eleven.

EXT. MINI-MALL/FAST FOOD RESTAURANT

In harsh sunlight, Charlie heads for his parked car, on the phone, pulling a rolling bag and hauling a duffel. Henry trails behind him, carrying Charlie's lap-top bag and eating a hamburger over a paper bag.

HENRY

I don't think anyone would have stolen the bags, Daddy.

CHARLIE

(into the phone)

I need somebody TODAY. If I don't respond by tomorrow, she said I could lose custody? I didn't know who else to call... There's got to be someone she didn't meet.

VOICE

(loud whisper)

She'd kill me if she knew we were talking.

CHARLIE

I know. I really appreciate it.

VOICE

It's high alert over here.

INT. SANDRA'S HOUSE, BATHROOM, LOS ANGELES. INTERCUT

Sandra, her head in a scarf, and tinted blue glasses on, runs the shower to drown out her conversation and talks in a whisper. She flips through an old address book.

SANDRA

OK, I have a name for you. Bert Spitz. He was the entertainment lawyer at Roberto's agency, and for years, he negotiated all of Robbie's Dynasty and Falcon Crest deals. He kind of got pushed into retirement a few years ago and he went into family law.

HENRY

(reading a billboard)
"They're out for bl-ode."

CHARLIE

It's a double "O". What sound is that?

HENRY

Blo-oode?

CHARLIE

Blood. You're getting good at reading.

HENRY

"They're out for blood."

Charlie and Henry approach the car in the parking lot.

SANDRA

I called him and he can see you today at 4.

CHARLIE

Great!

SANDRA

And he should be more affordable.

Charlie opens the back door and indicates for Henry to go in. Henry drops his burger on the pavement.

HENRY

Oh, shit.

CHARLIE

Thank you G-ma. Thank you.

HENRY

Dad!

Sandra now lies on the tile floor looking under the bathroom door to see if someone is listening.

SANDRA
We never had this conversation,
Charlie-bird.

CHARLIE
Got it! I love you.

NICOLE (O.S.) Mom?! SANDRA I have to go--

Sandra hangs up.

HENRY
I need a new burger.

CHARLIE
Why?

HENRY
Because you made us carry your
bags into the restaurant, I
dropped it.

Charlie picks up the burger and wipes it off.

CHARLIE
(handing it back)
It's fine, get in the car.

HENRY
Why did you take me today if you
couldn't hang out with me?

CHARLIE
Because I've been away and want to
see you.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD. DAY

A cramped parking lot in the back of an old run-down building on Hollywood Boulevard. Charlie helps Henry out of the back seat.

BERT (V.O.)
Getting a divorce with a kid can
be one of the hardest things
you'll ever do. It's like a death
without a body.

INT. BERT SPITZ'S LAW OFFICE. DAY

A man, late 60's, in slacks and a tweed jacket, takes a pill from a container and swallows it with a glass of water. This is Bert Spitz. A grizzled cat wheezes in a corner on a stained pillow.

BERT

I know, personally I've been there four different times.

CHARLIE

You've been divorced four times?

BERT

I've been married four times. Three divorces. This last one will stick God willing.

Charlie nods as Bert sits across from him.

BERT

That's why I graduated into family law. To help people survive this painful time.

(leans forward)

Here's how I see it: If we get bogged down in who did this and that and "I don't want to pay the two dollars" it'll just cost you more money and time and emotional stress, and you'll probably end up with the same result anyway.

CHARLIE

Right. I mean, I agree with that philosophy. She does too, I'm sure.

BERT

And I always go with the truth wherever that takes us. Most people in this business make up the truth to get to where they need to go.

BERT

You're just transactions to them. I like to think of you as people.

CHARLIE

Oh. OK. Good.

BERT

And not just you, her too.

Yes. CHARLIE BERT
It can be an ugly process.
But I believe it also
doesn't have to be terrible.

CHARLIE
I'm glad to hear you say that.
Um, I'd love to keep expenses down
as much as possible.

BERT
Of course you do. I charge 450 an
hour and I'll need a ten thousand
dollar retainer to start.

CHARLIE
Maybe this is a stupid question,
but is there any way to do this on
a budget?

BERT
This is the budget version.

CHARLIE
(swallows)
I'll see if I can get an advance
on the Broadway transfer...

BERT
And keep in mind, you'll have to
pay for her lawyer.

CHARLIE
Oh... I didn't... What?

BERT
Or at least part of her. It
doesn't make sense, does it? The
reason you're doing this is
because you love your kid and in
doing so you're draining money
from your kid's education.

CHARLIE
It seems ridiculous.

BERT
Oh, it is.

Bert shuffles through the papers in front of him.

BERT
 We'll have to respond right away.
 (re: the papers)
 Your son is in school out here?

CHARLIE
 Temporarily. We agreed. Her
 pilot went to series and I wanted
 to accommodate her as she's often
 felt we do things on my terms.

BERT
 Be a better husband in divorce.

CHARLIE
 I guess something like that. But
 we live in New York.

BERT
 (putting on his glasses)
 With your kid in school here, the
 court may see it otherwise.

CHARLIE
 (alarmed)
 Will we go to court?

BERT
 No no no, we don't want to go to
 court, the California courts are a
 disaster -- it's just how we have
 to think about it.
 (looks back at the
 papers)
 I'm not sure these are my glasses.
 (removes them, stands)
 Where are you living when you're
 out here?

CHARLIE I'm in a hotel right now-- BERT Hotel doesn't look good.

CHARLIE
 To who?

BERT
 The court.

CHARLIE
 You just said we weren't going to
 go to court.

BERT

Of course, of course. We prepare to go to court hoping that we don't go to court.

CHARLIE

OK.

BERT

You should get a place in LA. And get a place NEAR her. That will look better for custody reasons.

CHARLIE

She's in West Hollywood. That'll be expensive. I guess I could rent our New York apartment.

BERT

Don't rent it, you need to continue to prove New York residence--

CHARLIE

(not sure what he's going to do)
OK.

BERT

And of course getting a place in LA, doesn't make it look like you all live in New York, does it?

CHARLIE

So...
(hesitates)
What do I do?

BERT

I recommend you try to spend as much time with your child as possible. Many people fight to get the time and then they don't even use it. They just want to win.

Bert leaves his office and disappears down a hallway.
Charlie follows.

CHARLIE

This shouldn't be that complicated, right? I mean, we're a New York family. I think it's all pretty straight-forward.
Right?

Charlie finds Bert in a kitchen area. The old cat following them. Bert opens an old fridge and takes out some of kind of meat and rice in a tupperware container.

BERT

I hope so, yes. I see no reason--
you both love your son, you
respect each other--why this
shouldn't be relatively pain-free?

CHARLIE

(pleased)
Right.

Bert gathers plastic silverware from a drawer and heads through another doorway into an outer office/waiting area. Charlie hesitates and follows.

Henry looks at a magazine on the floor with Bert's associate, Nell, 30's.

BERT

(handing Nell his
glasses)
I think you have my glasses--

She takes off hers and they swap. She nods.

NELL

That makes sense.

CHARLIE

(to Henry)
What have you been doing?

NELL

We were talking about money.

HENRY

And I was reading this
magazine.

CHARLIE

(looking)
You were reading California
Lawyer?

HENRY

Uh uh.

CHARLIE

OK, I'm almost done.

Henry pets the old cat.

BERT

I wouldn't expect too much from
that cat.

Charlie follows Bert back to the kitchen.

BERT

I want you to know that eventually
this will all be over and whatever
we win or lose, it'll be the two
of you having to figure this out
together.

CHARLIE

(moved)

Thank you. You're the first
person in this process who has
spoken to me like a human.

Bert, tears in his eyes, hugs Charlie.

BERT

You remind me of myself, on my
second marriage.

HENRY (V.O.)

Mommy!

INT. SANDRA'S HOUSE, LOS ANGELES

Henry runs in and hugs Nicole. Charlie stands in the doorway, he holds the Frankenstein Halloween costume. The place is decorated warmly for the holiday and delicious-looking food is being prepared by a house-keeper.

NICOLE

Did you have fun with Daddy?

HENRY

We drove around to offices.

NICOLE

Do you want to try on your ninja
costume? It's on your bed!

HENRY

Yeah!

Henry runs upstairs.

CHARLIE

You know I had Donna build him
this whole Frankenstein thing with
the plugs and --

NICOLE	CHARLIE
The cousins are ninjas so he wanted to do that too.	But he and I had decided together--

NICOLE
I can't make him be Frankenstein.

CHARLIE
I'm not asking you to. But maybe you could help me out a little. I'll leave the Frankenstein here and maybe you can nudge him in that direction--

NICOLE
I'll try.

CHARLIE
What's the...did you dye your hair again? Is that for your show?

NICOLE
No, this is me. It was this way when I saw you before.

CHARLIE
I know, but I didn't say anything then.

NICOLE
You don't like it?

CHARLIE
No, I guess...it's fine. Is it shorter? I prefer it long, but...

NICOLE
(laughs bitterly)
I'm sorry, it's just -- absurd.

CHARLIE
Is everything OK?

NICOLE
Yeah, why?

CHARLIE
You seem...I don't know like something is--

NICOLE
Everything's fine.

CHARLIE
OK.

Charlie peers over her shoulder again at the warm living room. Nicole stands as a sort of barrier.

CHARLIE

OK, I'm going to check in at the hotel, but should be able to get to you guys by five, five thirty. We'll go trick or treating from there--

NICOLE

Um, we're going to go to Cassie's in Pasadena.

CHARLIE

Cassie lives in Pasadena now?

NICOLE

And trick-or-treating with the cousins.

NICOLE

Yeah, she and Sam moved a couple of months ago.

CHARLIE

OK. I don't really know Pasadena. I'll figure it out. What's the address? I'll text Sam.

NICOLE

And because my mom is looking forward to this and Cassie and Sam are--

CHARLIE

Wait until you see MY costume.

NICOLE

Are mad--

CHARLIE

Mad at who?

NICOLE

You.

CHARLIE

Cassie and Sam?

NICOLE

You can understand that.

NICOLE

--so I think we should probably do separate Halloweens--

CHARLIE

But if you're OK with it, then shouldn't they be OK with it--

NICOLE

Let's just do it this way this time. OK?

CHARLIE

Do you not want me there?

NICOLE
 (hesitates)
 No, I'm fine with it.

CHARLIE
 OK.

NICOLE
 It'll be nice for him, he'll
 get two Halloweens.

CHARLIE
 What am I going to do with him for
 second Halloween? Walk around
 Sunset Boulevard?

NICOLE
 Maybe the hotel has something? Or
 you can drive to another
 neighborhood?

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT

Charlie, wrapped in gauze, in a brown suit sleeps slumped
 over on the couch. The TV is on. The hat in his lap. A
 beer and a crinkled candy wrapper from the mini-bar on the
 coffee table.

The doorbell rings. He startles awake.

He puts on the hat, checks himself in the mirror,
 straightens his goggles and gauze and opens the door.

Nicole is dressed in a peach suit and her hair in a sort of
 pompadour a la David Bowie. Henry dawdles behind her, in
 the hallway. His ninja mask is askew and his costume
 hanging partly off. Charlie, ignoring Nicole, greets
 Henry.

CHARLIE
 (muffled by the gauze)
 OK! Ready for Halloween!

NICOLE
 (re: Charlie's costume)
 Wow. Elaborate.

Charlie adjusts his goggles.

NICOLE
 (to Henry)
 Sweetheart, don't forget your
 jacket. It's getting colder.

Henry passes by both of them and into the room. Charlie
 parts the gauze over his mouth so he can talk easier.

CHARLIE
 (calls to Henry)
 You ready to go back out?

NICOLE
 He has to pee.

HENRY
 No, I don't.

NICOLE
 (to Charlie)
 He does.

She hands Charlie Henry's backpack.

NICOLE
 Some of his men and Bear Bear are
 in there-- You can keep this Bear
 Bear because I got another one--

CHARLIE
 Does he know that there are two
 Bear Bears?

NICOLE
 Yes, it was his idea--

HENRY (O.S.)
 I have LA Bear Bear and New
 York Bear Bear--

Charlie regards Nicole.

CHARLIE
 Station to Station?

NICOLE
 Let's Dance.
 (waving)
 OK, bye Henry. Have a great
 Halloween with Daddy.
 (to Charlie)
 Have fun.

Charlie nods coldly and closes the door.

HENRY
 (re: the hotel room)
 This is a nice house.

Henry turns his plastic jack o' lantern over and dumps all
 his candy on the floor. He lies down and starts sorting
 it.

CHARLIE
 (forcing enthusiasm)
 Go pee and then we're going back
 out!

HENRY
 I'm too tired!

CHARLIE
 GO pee and then we're going to go
 drive to Halloween!

INT. CHARLIE'S RENTAL CAR

Charlie, wiping moisture off the windshield, cranes his
 neck, trying to see out the glass.

CHARLIE HENRY
 This block looks promising-- I wish Halloween was over.

CHARLIE
 Well, it isn't.
 (looking for parking)
 If we were in New York we could be
 walking.

HENRY
 But I like that we're sitting
 right now. I like to sit.

CHARLIE
 That's true, Los Angeles does have
 sitting going for it.

HENRY
 I think that's why I like Los
 Angeles better.

CHARLIE HENRY
 Because you get to sit? And because I like my
 friends here better.

CHARLIE
 That's not true. What about
 Horatio and Poppy and--

HENRY
 Horatio doesn't like me anymore
 and I don't like Poppy. Here I
 have Axel. Axel is hilarious.
 And my family is here. Besides
 you.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD

Cars rush by. The Invisible Man and a ninja in a parka hold hands looking for an opening to cross.

They dart across the street.

They trudge up a steep curvy street behind Sunset.

They stand outside a house. They ring and wait. Nobody answers.

HENRY
Everyone's asleep.

INT. PINK DOT

They approach the convenience store counter. Henry's mask is coming off at this point.

CHARLIE
Say it.

HENRY
I don't want to.

CHARLIE
Trick or treat.

The seventeen year old clerk looks around and hands them some junk.

INT. CHARLIE'S RENTAL CAR

Charlie drives. Henry is falling asleep in the backseat.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT

They both exhaustedly enter. Henry turns his plastic jack o' lantern over and a couple of things trickle out. Something lands with a thud. Charlie picks it up.

CHARLIE
Who gave you a lighter?

HENRY
(holding his fly)
I have to pee.

Henry goes into the bathroom to pee. Charlie gets a beer.

CHARLIE
I'm going to have to go back to
New York on Monday.

Henry comes back out.

CHARLIE
Did you flush?

Henry goes back in and does. Comes back out.

CHARLIE
Wash your hands.

Henry returns to the bathroom. Charlie hears the water run and then he reappears.

CHARLIE
Did you hear me? I have to go
back to New York.

Henry gathers some of his toys.

HENRY
(playing with his men)
Aaah, watch out... BSSSHH! "I'm
falling." "I'll catch you."
BOOOM. "You didn't catch me."

CHARLIE
OK?

HENRY
Why aren't you here more?

CHARLIE
I have to work. You know my play
is opening on Broadway.

HENRY
Is it because you don't want to be
near mom?

CHARLIE
No-- You know, like we've talked
about, we've decided not to be
together no matter where we are.
But we both want to be with you.

HENRY
But you're not near me if you're
in New York.

CHARLIE
(clarifying)
Well, we all still live in New
York.

HENRY

Yeah. But I go to school here.

CHARLIE

Just for right now. Like that time we were in Copenhagen for my play. Remember all those kids in buckets?

HENRY

I like my school here and Mom says we can stay here if we want.

Charlie freezes.

CHARLIE

What do you mean...She said that?

HENRY

Yeah.

CUT TO: Henry is asleep in the king size bed in Charlie's room with his bear as a pillow. Charlie turns out the light and adjusts the covers. He watches Henry for a beat and kisses him on the cheek.

NICOLE (V.O.)

Hello?

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY. NIGHT

Charlie steps out onto the small concrete balcony attached to his room. He's on the phone.

CHARLIE

Are you moving out here?

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HALLOWEEN PARTY. INTERCUT

We see now: Nicole stands out by a pool on the phone. She's still dressed as David Bowie. Agents, the ex-husband and wife producers from her show, actors, all in costume, mingle inside and out.

NICOLE

(pause)

Did you find a lawyer?

CHARLIE

Yes. Henry says you're moving here???

NICOLE

Have your lawyer call Nora.

Charlie clicks his portable X-Acto knife in and out.

CHARLIE

I want to talk about it as us.

NICOLE

Who the fuck is "us?"

CHARLIE

Let's just get in a room, YOU and ME, that's what we always said we'd do.

NICOLE

My lawyers wouldn't let me sign anything.

CHARLIE

It's not up to them. It's up to us. It's OUR divorce.

NICOLE

They say I could later sue them for malpractice.

CHARLIE

(frustrated and growing angry)

What am I walking into?

NICOLE

What are you walking into?!

CHARLIE

Yes! What the fuck is going on?

NICOLE

I read your fucking emails, CHARLIE. I read them all.

CHARLIE

When?

NICOLE

I don't know. Recently!

NICOLE

You are a FUCKING LIAR. You fucked Mary Ann.

CHARLIE

... Shit.

CHARLIE

(weakly)

It was after I was sleeping on the couch.

Some guests glance over at Nicole who is now shouting.

NICOLE
 And all this bullshit about
 working on us or whatever, you
 know what-- I HAVE been working,
 I've BEEN DOING THE WORK. ALONE.

CHARLIE
How did you read my emails?

NICOLE
 I HACKED INTO YOUR ACCOUNT
 YOU DUMB FUCK.

CHARLIE
 I think that's illegal.

NICOLE
 About a week ago. So don't
 give me this shit about
 being surprised about LA.
 Surprise! I have opinions.
 Surprise! I want things that
 aren't what you want because
 SURPRISE YOU WERE FUCKING
 ANOTHER LADY.

CHARLIE
 How do you even know how to
 do something like that?

CHARLIE
 I think you're conflating two
 different things. Mary Ann has
 nothing to do with LA.

NICOLE
 I'm conflating, motherfucker.
 Watch me conflate!

She hangs up and visibly stamps her foot.

PABLO (O.S.)
 Did you just stamp your foot?

NICOLE
 I don't think I've ever done that
 before. I'm sorry I'm just so
 ANGRY.

She's handed a drink by Pablo, the tatted grip from her
 show. He wears a tight black T-shirt with a ratty flannel
 thrown over it and black jeans.

PABLO
 You look like you needed one.

NICOLE
 I do. Thanks.

PABLO

You know the Japanese are making really interesting tequila right now.

NICOLE

(distracted)

That's exciting, I guess.

PABLO

What are you so angry about?

NICOLE

Ugh, my fucking ex-husband. I spend so much time feeling guilty, but he's so self-absorbed it's pointless. It's a game I'm playing with myself.

PABLO

(shaking her hand)
Oh, hey, Pablo. We met at the--

NICOLE

You held the bounce board!

PABLO

The flirty grip!

INT. PABLO'S GRIP TRUCK

They're making out in the front seat.

NICOLE

Here's what I want you to only do, OK?

PABLO

What?

NICOLE

I want you to finger me.

PABLO

What?

NICOLE

Just finger me.

PABLO

OK.

NICOLE

That's all we're going to do, OK? Just fingering. I'm changing my whole fucking life.

Fade to Black.

NORA (V.O.)

Nicole and Charlie's son, Henry, was born here in Los Angeles and currently attends Laurel Elementary in Laurel Canyon--

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, CENTURY CITY, LA. DAY

CLOSE on Nicole.

NORA (O.S.)

--and Nicole works in Hollywood on her show while also maintaining a full schedule as a mother with classes of swim, art, gym and music as well as play groups.

And then CUT TO Charlie, in a dark wool suit, who sweats.

NORA (O.S.)

Nicole is Henry's primary custodial parent and to the extent that Charlie would like to exercise his custodial time, he should be making efforts to visit Henry here in California.

And now INTERCUT between their two faces as if they're having a conversation, though neither of them opens their mouth. They both listen to their representatives, sometimes with emotion, other times anger, disbelief, and self-consciousness. They occasionally look at their hands or jot down a note.

BERT (O.S.)

Nora, you seem to be ignoring the fact that they lived in New York for ten years--

NORA (O.S.)

My client worked in New York, for several years--that's true. But Nicole was born and bred right here in LA. She and Charlie would come here most holidays and summers to spend time with her family who all live here. She and Charlie were married here, would you like to see the photos?

We CUT WIDE.

The room has big windows with views of other surrounding glass offices.

Nicole sits next to Nora who looks amazing in an expensive, fitted power suit and heels. Behind them sits, Amir, Nora's associate.

BERT

I don't need to see the photos--
Although I'm sure they both look
beautiful--

Bert grins at Charlie who seems to be sweating through his wool blazer. They sit across the wide table. Bert's associate Nell behind them in a chair by the window.

BERT

It's my client's expectation that
after this TV show is completed,
the parties will move back to New
York where they currently keep an
apartment--

NORA

And it's my understanding that
Charlie PROMISED Nicole that they
would spend more time in LA during
the marriage but because of
Charlie's insistence that his work
keep them in New York, Nicole
ended up staying much longer than
she ever anticipated. In fact, a
few years ago, Charlie was offered
a residency at the Geffen
Playhouse that would have taken
his work and family to LA for a
year and he turned it down knowing
full well that this was Nicole's
desire.

BERT

He wanted to maintain consistency
for his family and his child.

NORA

Was this the same consistency he
wanted to maintain when they went
to Copenhagen for six months so he
could direct a play?

An assistant has her head in the door trying to get Amir's attention.

NORA

So, while I understand that CHARLIE lives in New York and when it's convenient for his work schedule, flies out here to see his son--

BERT

He flies out here every chance he gets at great expense--

NORA

(looking at Charlie)
I don't see any reason you can't be out here full-time.

Amir acknowledges the anxious assistant and interrupts.

AMIR

Oh... Sorry. Do we want to contemplate lunch--I'll order now so it'll come when we're all hungry?

BERT

Good idea.

AMIR

Everyone good with Manny's?

BERT

I love Manny's.

NORA

(to Charlie)
Have you had Manny's?

Charlie is taken aback, unsure how to process this question. He shakes his head.

NORA

You'll love it, just really yummy salads and sandwiches.

CHARLIE

(nods)
Great.

Amir passes out menus. Orders are made, Bert specifying no butter or cream. It gets to Charlie, he's unsure.

CHARLIE

(re: the menu)
Hmm, I don't know-- Sorry...

NICOLE

(reflexively)
Charlie will have the greek salad.

CHARLIE

OK.

NICOLE

But with olive oil and lemon instead of the greek dressing, and I'll get the Chinese chicken salad.

Charlie nods, satisfied. Amir writes down the orders and hands them to an associate who exits. Nora gets up to pour herself and Nicole more coffee.

NORA

Congratulations, Charlie, on your grant, Nicole told me.

CHARLIE

(can't help but smile)
Thank you.

BERT

He's a genius.

He tussles Charlie's hair. Everyone laughs awkwardly. Charlie blushes. Nicole smiles sweetly, sensing his discomfort. Nora raises a mug, offering Charlie.

CHARLIE

Oh, thanks.

NORA

I told Nicole, I LOVED your play. You are one smart cookie. I'd love to get inside your brain!

CHARLIE

Thanks.

NORA

There was that one moment when you smell the toast.

(to Amir)

Smell! It was literally my favorite thing I saw that year. Truly genius.

BERT

(to Charlie)

I was sorry to hear it closed on Broadway.

CHARLIE

(to himself)

They couldn't smell the toast.

Charlie looks at Bert, like why bring that up?

BERT

It's very competitive, I imagine.

Charlie nods. Nora places the coffee in front of Charlie.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

NORA

(launching back in)

Now, whenever Charlie is in LA, Nicole, of course, agrees that it will best for Henry to see each parent equally--

(to Charlie)

It's nice out here, Charlie. You should give it a chance.

AMIR

Yeah, and the space -- you can't beat it.

BERT

I love it too, but all of our personal feelings about the two cities aside, we don't share your assertion that the couple is an LA based family. It was very clearly their deal that they would go back to New York after Nicole finished her show.

NORA

I'm not aware of any deal.

CHARLIE

(can't help himself)

I didn't get it in writing.

NORA

Charlie, is this like the deal you made that you and Nicole would spend more time in LA during the marriage?

CHARLIE

(flustered)

We didn't have a deal. It was something we discussed...but...

NORA

So, it's a deal when it's something you want, but it's a discussion when Nicole wants it?

Silence.

BERT

Sidebar!

(putting his hand on Charlie's arm)

(MORE)

BERT (CONT'D)
 Nora, is there a spare office,
 where Charlie and I could sidebar?

INT. SMALLER CONFERENCE ROOM

A small, windowless, bare impersonal room with a table, a phone, some left-out coffee cups and a plate with crumbs.

BERT
 (a bit overwhelmed)
 Nora's a very good lawyer.

CHARLIE
 Uh huh. (impressed)
 Tough, right? BERT

CHARLIE
 Yeah.

BERT
 And you're in a bind because
 you've shown that you're willing
 to fly out here and rent an
 apartment to see your son--

CHARLIE
 You told me to do that!

BERT
 I know that. CHARLIE
 And I'm doing that because I
 want to see my kid. Not to
 set a precedent.

BERT
 Yes, but unfortunately you are
 setting a precedent. And a judge
 may look at it that way.

CHARLIE
 What's the alternative? I stay in
 New York and never come out here?

BERT
 No, because then it will look to
 the court like you don't care
 about seeing your son.

CHARLIE
 Court or no court, stop saying
 court and then never court!

BERT
 Well, the way this is going, we
 might have to go to court.

CHARLIE

Are you aware how maddening you sound?

BERT

I am. And I know it seems unfair. But imagine if you were a poor mother abandoned by her husband who refuses to pay anything. That's what the system is trying to protect people from.

Charlie nods.

BERT

Listen, if I were representing you--

CHARLIE

You are representing me.

BERT

Right, no, of course. I don't see a judge moving this child from LA-- I think we try to settle today--

CHARLIE

Settle meaning... what?

BERT

She gets LA, but--

CHARLIE

(upset)

No, Bert... just NO. I mean, we have to win this?

BERT

Remember, the win is what's best for Henry. And if you guys go to court, he'll get pulled into it.

CHARLIE

If he stays out here and I stay in New York, that's just, then I won't, I'll never get to really be his parent again.

BERT

It'll be different.

CHARLIE

It won't exist!

BERT

Maybe you move here. You heard what Amir said about the space.

CHARLIE

Fuck the space, Bert. FUCK THE SPACE.

BERT

I'll do whatever you want me to do, but this is my advice. I've seen these things go on and on and the burden of these battles is immeasurable. I had a client get colon cancer and die before he and his wife came to agreement.

CHARLIE

What about filing in New York?

BERT

It's too late and even if you did, I don't think it would matter. They're being reasonable financially. You're lucky they're not asking for half of your grant money--

CHARLIE

She wouldn't do that. She knows, I put all that money back in my theater.

BERT

If this continues, she might.

CHARLIE

The actors and crew all rely on that money, they have families and--
- A court would never agree with this, right?

BERT

Whether they do or not, it'll cost you half your grant money anyway to go to court and prove it.

Charlie deflates.

CHARLIE

I feel like a criminal.

BERT

But you didn't commit any crime.

CHARLIE

It doesn't feel that way.

BERT

If we give on LA right now and try to make the best deal possible, I think we can get her to give on some other fronts.

CHARLIE

There are no other fronts. This is the thing.

(suddenly emotional)

He needs to know that I fought for him.

BERT

He'll know.

CHARLIE

(dismayed)

I should never have let her come out here with Henry.

BERT

If it wasn't LA and New York it would be something else. You'd be fighting over a house or school district or... It's like the joke about the woman at the hairdresser who's going to Rome--

CHARLIE

I don't--

BERT

A woman is at her hairdresser's and she says, "Oh, I'm going to Rome on holiday" and the hairdresser says--

Charlie stares at the clock on the wall.

BERT

"What airline are you taking?" And she says, "Al Italia." And he says, "Oh that's the worst airline I've--"

He continues the joke as Charlie observes the second hand moving around the circle. Finally:

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, Bert, but am I paying for this joke?

Bert hesitates.

BERT

No matter what happens here, it's temporary. He's growing up, he's going to have opinions on the subject. Time is on your side, Charlie. Maybe he'll do college on the East Coast.

CUT TO: Henry's face. He's talking animatedly about how much money he has in his piggybank.

HENRY

I have my quarters and dimes at Daddy's, but I'm keeping my dollars and my one twenty with you, OK?

Charlie watches him.

INT. CHARLIE'S RENTAL APARTMENT. EVENING

Nicole's face is on the computer screen in front of Henry. He's doing Face Time with her.

The place is small and mostly bare with furniture that came with it.

CLOSE: A bill from Bert's firm for 25 thousand dollars. Charlie sits at a table with a stack of bills, legal letters, and a checkbook open. He hesitates.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Goddamn it.

HENRY

What's goddamn it?

NICOLE

Did you lose power where you are?

HENRY

Dad, did we lose power?!

CHARLIE

(looking up)

No.

NICOLE

It's back on now. There are rolling blackouts in the hills but now the gate won't close.

HENRY

Her gate won't close!

EXT. NICOLE'S NEW HOUSE, ECHO PARK. NIGHT

Nicole stands outside in the dark. The gate is wide open. Charlie appears from the shadows holding Henry's hand.

Henry runs and hugs his mom.

CHARLIE
You tried all the--

NICOLE
I tried everything.

HENRY
Can I look at my room?

NICOLE
Of course.

Henry runs inside. They remain outside.

NICOLE	CHARLIE
I'm sorry I made you come out--	It's fine--

NICOLE	CHARLIE
It's just--	You don't want your gate open.

NICOLE
Right.

CHARLIE
There should be a panel or something either inside or--

She stands in the threshold, blocking his path. She points toward a white box amongst trees in the yard.

NICOLE
I think this is something--

He steps over some bushes and inspects the alarm system.

CHARLIE
It's a cute house.

NICOLE	CHARLIE
(pleased) Thanks.	I mean, from what I can see.

NICOLE
You're getting shaggy.

CHARLIE
Yeah, I have to find a haircutter.

NICOLE
(pause)
Do you want me to cut it?

CHARLIE
(hesitates)
OK.

NICOLE
I'll get scissors.

EXT. NICOLE'S PORCH

Charlie, shirtless, a towel around his shoulders, sits very still on a chair. Nicole cuts his hair. The porch light illuminating.

NICOLE
Close your eyes.

Charlie does.

CLOSE on the scissors snipping across his shut eyes.

EXT. NICOLE'S NEW PLACE. ECHO PARK, LA. NIGHT

Nicole carries the sleeping Henry. They both smile at the sweetness. Henry stirs.

NICOLE
He's out. Maybe he should stay here tonight--

CHARLIE
It's my night.

She nods and hands him to Charlie.

CUT TO: Charlie and a tired Henry pull on the gate. Nicole helps, dragging from the other side. It starts to close. They yank it shut, closing her in and them out. We CUT QUICKLY between them both just as it closes. We stay with her.

Fade to Black.

The sound of a couple loudly arguing in Spanish.

INT. LOS ANGELES COURTHOUSE, HALLWAY. MORNING

A man and woman are shouting at each other. The lawyers trying to separate them. Various benches are filled with the other divorcing couples, men and women sitting apart from one another with their individual representatives.

In their midst, Nora and Nicole sit on a bench in the wide, dingy hallway. Amir sorts through documents nearby.

NORA

I think we're mostly finished. Bert and I hammered out ninety-percent of the details, there's a couple minor things hanging that should be easy and then the judge will make your divorce official.

NICOLE

OK, good--

NORA

I hear the tracking for your show is off the chain--

NICOLE

Oh, I don't even know what that means, but good I guess--

NORA

I made sure the date of separation came AFTER the pilot pick-up to protect that money--
(suddenly)
Fuck me.

NICOLE

What?

She follows Nora's gaze to Jay Marotta who marches down the hallway, conferring with Charlie.

JAY MAROTTA

It's not television. It's not a wise judge played by a great character actor. These are just people open to manipulation like anyone else. You think it's justice, but it's not.

NICOLE

Who is that?

NORA
Charlie shouldn't have done this.

NICOLE
What do you mean? Where's Bert?

NORA
It means everything we've agreed upon is now off the table.

Jay and Charlie take a bench a ways away. Jay says Hi to some other lawyers.

NICOLE
But, we've got LA, right--

NORA
Not with Jay Marotta representing him. This is a street fight now. And I'm going to have to ask for things we wouldn't normally ask for. We'll need as much leverage as possible to negotiate with.

Nora rises with a pinched smile--

NORA
This system rewards bad behavior.

--and greets Jay.

Nicole looks over at Charlie who doesn't meet her eye.

INT. COURT ROOM. DAY

The low hum of a copier machine and periodic mouse-clicks from a computer.

JAY MAROTTA
A little history.

Jay speaks in front of the judge who clearly has a bad cold. Charlie sits at the end of the table with Ted, the associate. Nicole is at the corresponding end of an adjacent table next to Nora and Amir.

JAY MAROTTA
Ten years ago, Charlie takes a risk when he first hires Nicole as an actress in his play in New York City.

(MORE)

JAY MAROTTA (CONT'D)

He's a well regarded, up and coming director of the avant garde and she's known as the girl in that college sex movie who takes her top off.

NORA

My client will not be slut-shamed for an artistic choice.

JAY MAROTTA

Ten years on and many prestigious theater roles later, she's become an actress of great credibility. And because of this credibility, she's offered a lead roll on a major television show. This new opportunity in her life is thanks to Charlie. Your honor, I don't see why we should be paying any support money at this point. In fact, Charlie should be entitled to half of her TV salary, present and future earnings on the show.

Nora takes a moment.

NORA

Charlie has just received the enormous sum of six hundred and fifty thousand dollars in the form of a MacArthur grant for the theater work he has conducted during the marriage.

JAY MAROTTA

Of which he gets in 125 thousand installments over five years, money that is used to employ actors and crew members and to pay back debts he's accumulated with his theater company that stars his wife.

NORA

By Jay's same logic, this is work that Nicole contributed to in numerous ways. Not only did she give up a lucrative and successful career in movies to perform in his little theater, she also supplied Charlie with a loan early on to help out.

JAY

Which he paid back--

NORA

She lent her name to the marquee and was the principle reason people came to the theater.

JAY
That may have been true ten
years ago--

NORA
She, in turn, helped
establish Charlie's
reputation.

Charlie looks over at Nicole. She looks down.

NORA
Over the next ten years she was
subsequently offered parts in
movies, TV shows, most of which
she turned down at Charlie's
bequest to be a mother and to act
in his plays. Now, while we're
willing to be flexible on support
we contend that half of Charlie's
grant money should be split
between the parties.

Charlie looks at Jay.

JAY MAROTTA
I don't see how you can claim that
she gets half a grant dedicated to
his genius.

NORA
He became a genius during the
course of the marriage.

JAY MAROTTA
Oh, come on, Nora.

NORA
Charlie, himself, upon
hearing he received the
prize, told Nicole it
belonged to her too.

JAY MAROTTA
That's something people say when
they win awards.

NORA
No, he was implying what was true:
his genius was an intangible asset
built during the marriage.

Charlie and Nicole both stare at the floor.

JAY MAROTTA

Nora, I like how you refer to Charlie's theater as a ramshackled downtown dump when you're arguing custody, but when you want more money, Charlie's a big rich genius Broadway director. You can't have it both ways.

NORA

Why not? And whether you think it's fair or not, Jay, the first monetary installment from the MacArthur grant was then put in a joint marital account and thus became community property so this and any further installments should be split between the parties.

Jay whispers to Charlie.

JAY MAROTTA

Fuck. You shouldn't have put that money in the joint account.

CHARLIE

There's not going to be anything left anyway, I'm using it all to divorce her...

Jay turns back to Nora.

JAY MAROTTA

Nora, I have to say your account of this marriage takes place in an alternate reality. By suddenly MOVING to LA, and insisting on an LA residence, Nicole is withholding Henry, alienating him from his father. This has turned Charlie's world upside down. It amounts to an ambush.

NORA

Withholding, Jay? Really? Alienating. Those are fighting words and it is simply false and does nothing to further our settlement. Your recap of this situation is outrageous.

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)

And although California is, without doubt, a no-fault state, it does bear mentioning in the accurate recap of this situation that Charlie had had extramarital affairs--

CHARLIE

AN extramarital affair.

Nora turns and stares at Charlie.

NORA

Do you really want me to go there?

JAY MAROTTA

Let's go there. Nicole has admitted to HACKING Charlie's computer and reading his emails.

Nora turns to Nicole who shrugs. Jay stands.

JAY MAROTTA

Which if proven is a felony. And Nora, I don't think you'll be happy if I start to ask Nicole about her alcohol consumption in the evenings--

NICOLE

What?

JAY MAROTTA

She confided in Charlie one night recently, having just carried Henry to bed, that she was having trouble standing while walking down the staircase. From what I understand this was not an isolated event. You let me know, Nora, otherwise we'll go there as needed.

Jay sits back down. Nicole stares at Charlie who looks humiliated.

NORA

Charlie, can I ask you: How can you expect to have more time with Henry when you don't exercise the time you have AND exercise it responsibly.

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)

On a recent visit to Los Angeles, after failing to text, call or communicate in any way, shape or form, Charlie finally arrived two hours late to pick up Henry at Nicole's mother's house. At that point the car seat which he assured Nicole had been professionally installed was clearly not even belted in, just sitting on the back seat.

Jay turns to Charlie.

JAY MAROTTA
You have to buckle the seat in, man, it's the law.

CHARLIE
I know that. I thought the car rental place did it.

JAY MAROTTA
They can't do it, it's a liability--

CHARLIE
I know that NOW! Once we discovered that, we fixed it.

The judge wipes his runny nose and interrupts--

JUDGE

(to Jay and Nora)

Counsel, you can see my courtroom is full and there are people who don't have the resources your clients have. And I'm fairly certain you haven't exhausted in good faith the arguments in the case of this child. In the meantime, we'll keep the status quo. This remains an LA family for the time being.

Charlie's face drops.

JUDGE

I took over this department recently and am still becoming acquainted with the cases so I'm going to appoint an expert evaluator who knows much more about young children than I do. Once the evaluation is done we'll modify the orders where necessary.

CUT TO: A door opens revealing Nicole. She smiles politely.

NICOLE

Hey.

INT. CHARLIE'S RENTAL APARTMENT. DAY

Charlie, somewhat formally, ushers her in.

CHARLIE

Where's Henry?

NICOLE

He's with Cassie and her kids at Laser Tag.

CHARLIE

You want something to drink?

CHARLIE

I have unfiltered tap water, beer and some juice boxes.

NICOLE

I'll have a juice box.

He goes into the kitchen. She looks at his rental place. It makes her sad.

NICOLE

You don't have anything on the walls.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

I don't have anything to put on them except Henry's art which is being framed.

NICOLE

I can give you some things, you know until you get some stuff... How about that great picture of Henry on the Staten Island Ferry--

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Aren't you in that one?

NICOLE

Oh, right, I guess I am.
(shrugs)
I guess you can cut me out?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Oh, I'm going to have to leave a day early to go to New York on the 22nd so I was wondering if I could take Henry that Friday--

NICOLE

The 22nd? So, that's the 21st? We have plans actually. We're going to this thing at LACMA with the cousins--

He reappears and hands her a juice box.

CHARLIE
But could you change it so I can take him--

NICOLE
It's only that night. He's looking forward to it.

CHARLIE
Really?

NICOLE
It's my night, Charlie, we negotiated it.

CHARLIE
(coldly)
OK. Fine.

NICOLE
I mean...what?

CHARLIE
No, I'm just asking you to be flexible--

NICOLE
I AM flexible. You come in and out and I adjust based on your schedule. This one night we happen to have to have tickets to a thing. I mean...

CHARLIE
It's not only this one night, but fine...

She opens the straw, and uses it to puncture the hole and sips the drink.

NICOLE
Henry's teacher wants to meet with us.

CHARLIE
You mean his LA teacher--

NICOLE
Can you respond to the email so we can set a time?

CHARLIE
Yeah, I've been distracted.

NICOLE
I understand. They just want to rule out everything, you know, with his reading.

CHARLIE
I think he's just over-anxious. I think he wants it so much.

NICOLE
I know, he quits too easily
if things aren't easy for
him. You know, he's like
us, he's stubborn.

CHARLIE
They said he's off the
charts in math.

NICOLE
He's still a lousy Monopoly player
because he tries to save all his
money.

Charlie laughs. Nicole smiles.

NICOLE
So... I thought we should talk.

CHARLIE
Uh huh.

NICOLE
I feel like maybe things
have gone too far.

CHARLIE
Uh huh.

NICOLE
I mean, my mom has taken out a
loan against the house to help me
pay Nora-

CHARLIE
I thought I pay Nora.

NICOLE
You pay thirty percent of Nora.

CHARLIE
Well, I'm going broke too if
that's any help. I've just agreed
to direct two shitty plays and we
can forget putting anything away
for Henry's college.

NICOLE
(trying not to take the
bait)
It's just that...up until now
we've been able to keep Henry at
least somewhat removed. And this
will change that.

CHARLIE
Uh huh.

NICOLE
And we have to protect him.

CHARLIE
I agree.

NICOLE

Nora says the evaluator will come into our homes. She'll interview Henry in addition to us, our family, friends, enemies... And then she'll observe us with him, how we are as parents.

CHARLIE

Sounds awful.

NICOLE

I know! I feel like if anyone observed me on any given day as a mom, I'd never get custody.

(pause)

That was a joke.

CHARLIE

I know. I feel the same way.

NICOLE

(smiles)

Right. So, maybe we can figure something out between us--

CHARLIE

You'll remember I said this to you at the beginning.

NICOLE

I know you did, but these are different circumstances--

CHARLIE

I was anticipating these circumstances--

NICOLE

Mm hm. Anyway... Shall we try this?

CHARLIE

(pause)

OK.

There's a long silence. They both laugh.

CHARLIE

I don't know how to start...

NICOLE

Do you understand why I want to stay in LA?

CHARLIE

No.

NICOLE

Well, that's not...Charlie, that's not a useful way for us to start--

CHARLIE

I don't understand it.

NICOLE

You don't remember promising that we could do time out here?

CHARLIE

We discussed things. We were married, we said things. We talked about moving to Europe, about getting a sideboard or what do you call it, a credenza, to fill that empty space behind the couch. We never did any of it.

NICOLE

And you turned down that residency at the Geffen that would have brought us here and--

CHARLIE

It wasn't something I wanted. We had a great theater company and a great life where we were.

NICOLE

You call that a great life.

CHARLIE

You know what I mean.

NICOLE

Me discovering you're fucking Mary Ann--

CHARLIE

Don't pretend you're not capable of deception. You left Ben for ME.

CHARLIE

I don't mean we had a great marriage. I mean, life in Brooklyn... Professionally. I don't know. Honestly I never considered anything different.

NICOLE

Well, that's the problem isn't it? I was your wife, you should have considered my happiness too.

CHARLIE

Come on! You WERE happy. You've just decided you weren't now--

NICOLE
 (not taking the bait)
 So, OK, let's... I work here now.
 My family is here.

CHARLIE
 And I agreed to put Henry in
 school here because your show went
 to series. I did that KNOWING
 that when you were done shooting,
 he would come back to New York...

NICOLE
 Honey, we never said that. That
 might have been your assumption,
 but we never expressly said
 that...

CHARLIE
 We did say it.

NICOLE
 When did we say it?

CHARLIE
 I don't know when we said it, but
 we said it!

NICOLE
 I thought--

CHARLIE
 (remembering something)
 We said it that time on the
 phone--

NICOLE
 Let me finish. Honey--
 (hesitates, angry at
 herself)
 Sorry, I keep saying THAT.
 (resumes)
 I thought...that if Henry was
 happy out here and my show
 continued, that we might do LA for
 a while.

CHARLIE
 I was not privy to that thought
 process.

NICOLE
 The only reason we didn't live
 here was because you can't imagine
 desires other than your own unless
 they're forced on you.

CHARLIE

OK, you wish you hadn't married me, you wish you'd had a different life. But this is what happened.

NICOLE

(trying to stay calm)
So what do we do?

CHARLIE

I don't know.

NICOLE

Nora says there's no coming back from this.

CHARLIE

Fuck Nora. I hate fucking Nora telling me I always lived in LA even though I never lived in LA. How could you have her say those things about me?

NICOLE

Jay said them about me too!
(hesitates)
You shouldn't have fired Bert.

CHARLIE

I needed my own asshole!

NICOLE

Let's both agree both of our lawyers have said shitty stuff about both of us--

CHARLIE

Nora was worse.

NICOLE

Jay called me an alcoholic!

CHARLIE

You pulled the rug out from under me and you're putting me through hell--

NICOLE

You put me through hell
DURING the marriage!

CHARLIE

Is that what that was?
Hell?

NICOLE

And now you're going to put Henry through this horrible thing so you can yet again get what you want.

CHARLIE

It's not what I want...I mean,
it's what I want, but it's what
was...WAS...what's best for him.

NICOLE

I was wondering when you'd get
around to Henry and what HE
actually wants.

CHARLIE

Oh, fuck off--

NICOLE

No, YOU fuck off. If you listened
to your son, or anyone, he'd tell
you he'd rather live here.

CHARLIE

Stop putting your feelings
about me onto Henry.

NICOLE

He tells me he likes it here
better.

CHARLIE

He tells you because he knows it's
what you want to HEAR!

NICOLE

He tells me you're on the phone
all the time. You don't even play
with him.

CHARLIE

Because I'm going through a
divorce in LA and trying to
direct a play in New York.

NICOLE

You're fighting for
something you don't even
WANT.

CHARLIE

Which closed because I wasn't
THERE! That was a HUGE
opportunity for me. For the
theater. And I let everyone down.

NICOLE

You're being so much like your
father.

CHARLIE

DO NOT compare me to my father.

NICOLE

I didn't compare you. I said you
were acting like him.

CHARLIE

You're exactly like your mother!
Everything you complain about her,
you're doing. You're suffocating
Henry.

NICOLE

First of all, I love my
mother, she was a great
mother!

CHARLIE

I'm just repeating what
you've told me--

NICOLE

Secondly, how dare you compare my
mothering to my mother? I might
be like my father, but I'm NOT
like my mother.

CHARLIE

You ARE! And you're like my
father. You're also like MY
mother. You're all the bad things
about all of these people. But
mostly your mother. When we would
lie in bed together, sometimes I
would look at you and see HER and
just feel so GROSS.

NICOLE

I felt repulsed when you touched
me.

CHARLIE

You're a slob. I made all
the beds, closed all the
cabinets, picked up after
you like an infant--

NICOLE

The thought of having sex
with you makes me want to
peel my skin off.

CHARLIE

You'll never be happy. In LA or
anywhere. You'll think you found
some better, opposite guy than me
and in a few years you'll rebel
against him because you need to
have your VOICE. But you don't
WANT a voice. You just want to
fucking complain about not having
a VOICE.

NICOLE

I think of being married to you
and that woman is a stranger to
me.

CHARLIE
 You've regressed. You've
 gone back to your life
 before you met me. It's
 pathetic.

NICOLE
 We had a child's marriage.

NICOLE
 People used to say to me that you
 were too selfish to be a great
 artist. I used to defend you.
 But they're absolutely right.

CHARLIE
 All your best acting is
 behind you. You're back to
 being a HACK.

NICOLE
 You gaslighted me. You're a
 fucking villain.

CHARLIE
 You want to present yourself as a
 victim because it's a good legal
 strategy, FINE. But you and I
 both know you CHOSE this life.
 You wanted it until you didn't.

Nicole is silent.

CHARLIE
 You USED me so you could get out
 of LA.

NICOLE
 I didn't use you--

CHARLIE
 You did and then you BLAMED
 me for it. You always made
 me aware of what I was doing
 wrong, how I was falling
 short.

CHARLIE
 Life with you was JOYLESS.

NICOLE
 So you had to fuck someone else?
 How could you?

CHARLIE
 You shouldn't be upset that I
 fucked her, you should be upset
 that I had a laugh with her.

NICOLE
 Do you love her?

CHARLIE

No! But she didn't hate me. You hated me.

NICOLE

You hated ME. You fucked someone we worked with.

CHARLIE

You stopped having sex with me in the last year. I never cheated on you.

NICOLE

That was cheating on me.

CHARLIE

But there's so much I could have done. I was a director in my 20's who came from nothing and was suddenly on the cover of fucking Time Out New York. I was hot shit--and I wanted to fuck EVERYBODY and I didn't. And I loved you and didn't want to lose you...and I'm in my twenties and I didn't want to lose that too. And you wanted SO much so fast...I didn't even want to get married...and fuck it, there's so much I DIDN'T do.

NICOLE

Well, thanks for that.

CHARLIE

You're welcome. You're...welcome.

Nicole stamps her feet and shakes her fists like a child having a tantrum.

NICOLE

I can't believe I have to know you FOREVER!

CHARLIE

You're fucking insane!

Charlie raises his arm and punches the wall. The cheap dry-wall cracks and chips.

CHARLIE

And you're fucking winning.

NICOLE
 Are you kidding? I wanted to be
 married. I'd ALREADY LOST.
 (sadly)
 You didn't love me as much as I
 loved you.

CHARLIE
 (pause)
 What does that have to do with LA?

Nicole stares at him, incredulous.

<p>What?</p>	<p>CHARLIE</p>	<p>NICOLE</p>
		<p>You're so merged with your own selfishness that you don't even identify it as selfishness anymore. YOU'RE SUCH A DICK.</p>

CHARLIE
 Every day I wake up and hope
 you're dead-- Dead like--

And then Charlie starts crying.

CHARLIE
 (through tears)
 If I could guarantee Henry would
 be OK, I'd hope you get an illness
 and then get hit by a car and DIE.

He sinks down, weeping. All this vitriol has taken its
 toll. Nicole watches, taken aback. She walks over and
 gently puts her hand on his shoulder. He shakes and cries.

NICOLE
 I know.

Finally, he looks up at her.

CHARLIE
 I'm sorry.

NICOLE
 Me too.

SET DESIGNER (V.O.)
 Try the chair by the window...

INT. CHARLIE'S RENTAL. DAY

Charlie gets a delivery of rental plates, glasses, furniture, plants. He stands on his balcony directing the delivery men.

Charlie set-decorates his rental. He Skypes with Agnes, his set designer from the theater. Holding out the computer to show her the apartment.

He buys a stack of board games with Henry.

He and Henry get Henry's drawings at framer.

They hang the art-work.

HENRY

Why do we have so many plants all of a sudden?

CHARLIE

We'll have to return some of this stuff so don't get too used to it.

HENRY

My mom is the last person to turn into a plant on her show.

CHARLIE

Yeah?

HENRY

(nervously touching a fern)

I find plants kind of scary.

CHARLIE

These plants are good guys.

(hesitates)

Hey, tomorrow this woman is going to come and visit us and be with us while we eat dinner.

HENRY

Is it your girlfriend?

CHARLIE

No, no...

HENRY

Mommy's boyfriend?

CHARLIE
No, why...does Mommy have a
boyfriend?

HENRY
I don't know. Does she?

CHARLIE
I don't know.

HENRY
I don't know. Why is someone
watching us eat dinner?

CHARLIE
I know, it's weird. It's just
something we have to do which has
to do with Mommy and me figuring
out everything...and how we're
going to be and...you know?

HENRY
Will you read to me?

Charlie and Henry lie down on the floor against the blank
wall and Charlie starts reading to him.

EVALUATOR (V.O.)
Any history of domestic violence?

INT. OFFICE. DAY

We STAY on Nicole who sits facing an unseen evaluator.

NICOLE
Oh... No. You mean coming from
me? No. Not coming from him
either...

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
Have you been to prison?

NICOLE
Yes, actually. Well, not prison.
Jail. But it was deliberate.

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
OK.

NICOLE
I was demonstrating as part of a
Grandmothers for Peace rally. I
was with my mom, but she didn't go
to jail.

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)
 (laughs, remembering)
 Somehow she avoided that part.
 But I did.

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
 Do you use drugs or alcohol?

NICOLE
 I drink alcohol.

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
 How much alcohol do you drink?

NICOLE
 I don't know. Glass of wine with
 dinner. Sometimes more?

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
 How much more?

NICOLE
 Well, sometimes, a few... I
 sometimes split a bottle of wine
 with someone?

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
 OK. Who do you split it
 with?

NICOLE
 I mean, if I'm having dinner
 with someone and we order a
 bottle of wine.

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
 OK.

NICOLE
 You know, like if you're at
 a restaurant and you say,
 "Should we go by the glass
 or get a bottle?"

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
 You get a bottle.

NICOLE
 Sometimes! Sometimes I go by the
 glass. You know, it depends...
 (hesitates)
 Do you mean drugs ever? I have
 done drugs. In college. I don't
 do it regularly.

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
 Anything since you've been a
 mother?

NICOLE
 Pot a few times. Coke once at a
 party. But Henry wasn't with me.

Silence.

EVALUATOR (O.S.)

What would you say are your strengths as a parent?

NICOLE

I listen. I play. I put in the time. I love taking care of him, watching him grow up... Sometimes it's true what they say about it goes so fast, but sometimes it's not. Sometimes it goes too slow, honestly...

EVALUATOR (O.S.)

What are your weaknesses?

NICOLE

I'm too precise. I care too much.

EVALUATOR (O.S.)

Are those weaknesses?

NICOLE

(smiles)

Maybe not.

(thinks)

You know what, he can be an asshole and I can get really pissed off. I'll call him on being an asshole and--

NORA (O.S.)

I'm going to stop you there.

Nora stands up from behind the female associate who is doing the practice interview with Nicole. We're in Nora's office.

NORA

Don't ever say that. People don't accept a mother who drinks too much wine and yells at her child and calls him an asshole. I get it. I do it too.

While she talks she also texts and addresses emails on her phone.

NORA

We can accept an imperfect Dad. Let's face it, the idea of a good father was only invented like 30 years ago. Before that fathers were expected to be silent and absent and unreliable and selfish and we can all say that we want them to be different but on some basic level we ACCEPT them, we LOVE them for their fallibilities. But people absolutely DON'T accept those same failings in mothers.

(building up steam)

We don't accept it structurally and we don't accept it spiritually because the basis of our Judeo-Christian Whatever is Mary Mother of Jesus and she's PERFECT. She's a virgin who gives birth, unwaveringly supports her child, and holds his dead body when he's gone. But the Dad isn't there. He didn't even do the fucking because God's in heaven. God is the father and God didn't show up so you have to be perfect and Charlie can be a fuck up and it doesn't matter. You'll always be held to a different, higher standard and it's FUCKED up, but that's the way it is.

INT. CHARLIE'S RENTAL APARTMENT. EVENING

Charlie is cooking an elaborate dinner. The bell rings. He takes a deep breath.

He glances into Henry's room. He's playing by himself on the floor.

He walks through the set-decorated living room which looks relatively homey, full of warmth and board games and pictures of Charlie and Henry.

Charlie opens the door. A diminutive woman with frizzy hair is staring at the door across the hall. She startles, turns around and smiles and puts out her hand.

EVALUATOR

I think I rang the wrong bell.
Nancy Katz.

CHARLIE

(shaking)

Hi, I'm Charlie Barber. Nancy,
can I get you anything?

EVALUATOR

Oh, I'm easy. A glass of water?

Kitchen. Charlie opens up a cabinet. Plates. He opens another cabinet. Pots. A third cabinet. Empty. Finally he finds glasses in a low cupboard. He glances back at the evaluator who waits patiently.

CHARLIE

It's a new apartment.

Charlie and Nancy take their drinks to the dining room table.

CHARLIE

Shall we go in here?

EVALUATOR

Sure. What's a day like for the
two of you here?

CHARLIE

Well, if he has school, I take him
there, of course and pick him up,
assuming I can do both.

EVALUATOR

What prevents you from picking him
up?

CHARLIE

Um, you know, work. I'm preparing
a play I'm directing in a few
months.

EVALUATOR

Oh, what is that?

CHARLIE

Kasimir and Karoline by Odon von
Horvath? We're doing it at the
Barrow in New York.

EVALUATOR

So, you have to be away?

CHARLIE

Yes. Recently, since Nicole has been working on this show in LA, I come back and forth a lot.

EVALUATOR

That sounds difficult.

CHARLIE

It is. And expensive. I'll try to take him with me some of the time, but Nicole doesn't like for him to fly so much.

EVALUATOR

That can be hard on a child. All that recycled air.

CHARLIE

(hesitates)

Well, he's sturdy.

EVALUATOR

Some parents won't take their kids to a restaurant because of these super bugs.

Uh huh.

CHARLIE

EVALUATOR

(looking at her notes)

I notice on one visit to Los Angeles, you came on a Sunday and left on a Thursday. Why not stay for a weekend?

CHARLIE

Oh...on that time, I had tech for Electra back in New York.

EVALUATOR

What's that?

CHARLIE

It was my Broadway debut.

EVALUATOR

I don't know what tech is.

CHARLIE

It's the technical part of the production. You figure out the lights and--

EVALUATOR

(moving forward)
And what's a weekend day like?

CHARLIE

(still explaining)
Monday is our day off in theater--

CHARLIE

(discovering his mouth is
dry)

Well, out here he has basketball
on Saturday at 12, 11, I'm sorry
and so we go there.

(swallowing)

And then afterwards, maybe we'll
get lunch somewhere and then if
there's a movie to see...

EVALUATOR

Does he like basketball?

CHARLIE

He does. His coach, um, Rick says
he's a good dribbler and I've seen
that...

EVALUATOR

Uh huh.

CHARLIE

Ron. I'm sorry. His coach's name
is Ron. Rick's his dentist in New
York.

The evaluator writes something in her book.

CHARLIE

Well, you know our home home
was...is in New York. That's
where we live and--

EVALUATOR

New York is a long way from here.

CHARLIE

We like it because we can walk.

EVALUATOR

You can walk here.

CHARLIE

Not really.

EVALUATOR

And the space.

Charlie nods.

CUT TO: HENRY'S ROOM

Henry plays on the floor. The evaluator sits in a chair.

EVALUATOR
Do you like your school?

HENRY
I love it.

EVALUATOR
What's your favorite part about
it?

HENRY
I don't know. Maybe gym.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
You like math--

HENRY
Math is boring.

Charlie enters and hands Henry a plate with cut-up apple.
Henry takes it.

HENRY
Thanks.

CHARLIE
You're welcome. But you're
getting really good at it.

HENRY
No.

CHARLIE
Well, you are, but...

Charlie exits.

EVALUATOR
What do you and your Dad like to
do together?

HENRY
When I'm at my Dad's we sometimes
watch a movie or build a Lego or
something. My Dad's a great Lego
builder.

Nancy smiles.

HALLWAY

Charlie listening at the door, smiles.

EVALUATOR (O.S.)
And at your mom's?

HENRY (O.S.)
At home, I have most of my toys
and-

Charlie bristles at the word "home" used to describe Nicole's.

HENRY'S ROOM

HENRY
--there's a pool and I have a tree-
house and jungle gym. We play
lots of games. We have Super
Secret Treasure Hunt which is
really fun.

CUT TO: KITCHEN

Charlie is making ground meat and potatoes and spinach. He has a lot of burners going at once, making a mess.

CHARLIE
Sweetheart, do you want to help me
set the table.

HENRY (O.S.)
Do I have to?

CHARLIE
Just come in here and grab a plate
and--

HENRY (O.S.)
I'm playing.

CHARLIE
Henry!

HENRY'S ROOM

Henry plays with his men on the floor. The evaluator sits in a chair nearby.

HENRY
(grudgingly)
O-K.

Henry gets off his chair and goes into--

KITCHEN

CHARLIE
Why are you being like this?

HENRY
What?

CHARLIE
If I ask you to help out, help
out.

HENRY
(eating something from
the pan)
What is this?

CHARLIE
It's special meal.

HENRY
What are the green things? There
aren't green things in special
meal.

CHARLIE
It's just a garnish.

Uck. HENRY CHARLIE
Here, I'll take it off.

HENRY
I don't want to eat anything it
touched.

CHARLIE
It doesn't change the taste of
anything.

HENRY
I might want to be a vegetarian.
Mom's a vegetarian.

CHARLIE
Is she a vegetarian now?

HENRY
Yeah.

CHARLIE
(prickly)
Well, then you should like
garnish. It's all garnish,
vegetarianism.

Charlie looks over. Nancy stands, watching, in the threshold of the kitchen.

EVALUATOR

I'm done with my water.

She returns her water to the sink.

DINING AREA

Charlie and Henry eat. Nancy sits with them.

CHARLIE

You sure you don't want anything?

EVALUATOR

No, I'm fine, thank you.

They eat in silence. The evaluator observing.

HENRY

Do the thing with the knife.

CHARLIE

No...I'm not...no.

HENRY

Come on!

CHARLIE

It's not a dinner thing.

Silence.

CHARLIE

It's not an anytime thing.

EVALUATOR

What's the thing with the knife?

HENRY

It's hilarious.

CHARLIE

No...it's dumb. I have a small knife on my keychain. Which is only for adults. I do a thing with it sometimes...

HENRY

You said I could get a knife.

CHARLIE
A jack-knife, yeah. When you're
older.

HENRY
Like ten.

CHARLIE
No, like twenty.

HENRY
Yeah.

Charlie watches the evaluator's face closely, trying to discern something, anything.

LIVING ROOM

Charlie and Henry do his homework. Henry is sounding out a word.

HENRY
Dime, rime, lime, pime, sime--

CHARLIE
Honey, stop guessing. You're so
close, stay with it.

HENRY
(lying on his back)
Ugh, I don't want to do it.

CHARLIE
What's the first letter?

HENRY
I don't want to do it. Can I do
the iPad?

CHARLIE
No. Just look, what's the first
letter?

HENRY
I don't want to.

CHARLIE
It's a T. What sound does T
make.

HENRY
(pause)
Tuh.

CHARLIE
Right and then just do the rest of
it.

HENRY

Dime.

CHARLIE

No! You have "Tuh" and "ime."
What is that?

Henry takes a piece of tape and puts it on his mouth.

CHARLIE

Time. It's time.

He looks at the evaluator. She nods. Henry rolls over onto his front, playing dead.

CHARLIE

You'll see, honey, one day it's
just going to click and you'll be
able to read everything.

HENRY

(through the tape)
I need a break. Can I play in my
room?

CHARLIE

Sure.

Charlie tries to kiss him on lips. Henry gives him his head. Charlie kisses the top of his head. Henry runs out.

Nancy is looking at the crack in the wall from Charlie's punch. Charlie clocks this. Silence.

CHARLIE

Do you ever observe married
people?

EVALUATOR

No, why would I?

CHARLIE

I was kidding.

EVALUATOR

Oh.

Silence.

CHARLIE

The knife thing is, I carry this
knife on my keychain which his
mother got me actually--

He takes out his key-ring and shows her the X-Acto knife.

CHARLIE

--and I'd do this thing for his mom--

He clicks open the knife.

CHARLIE

Where I pretend to cut myself, but
I retract the blade--

He pantomimes cutting his arm.

CHARLIE

But I don't do it with him...

The evaluator stares at Charlie with horror. Charlie hesitates and follows her gaze. Dark red blood streams down his arm.

CHARLIE

Oh...that's fine.

It's really bleeding. He covers it with his hand, the blood spreading between his fingers.

EVALUATOR

Are you OK?

CHARLIE

(casually)

Yeah, I must not have retracted
the blade all the way.

EVALUATOR

Do you need--

Blood is getting over everything. He lowers the sleeve on his oxford shirt to cover the wound. Red blots immediately soak through the cotton.

CHARLIE

Yeah...yeah. No! I'm fine.
(smiles at her and
crosses his legs)
What else can I tell you?

EVALUATOR

I think I have enough.

CHARLIE

(again trying to talk
casually)
You got enough?

EVALUATOR
 (winces)
 Are you sure you're OK?

CHARLIE
 Totally. I'm fine.

Silence.

EVALUATOR
 Well, I'll leave you guys for
 tonight.

CHARLIE
 Oh, OK...

EVALUATOR
 I'll be in touch if I have further
 questions.

She stands and gathers her things while Charlie grabs her coat from a chair and holds it out to her, his left shirt arm growing crimson. She takes it, trying to avoid the blood.

EVALUATOR
 Thanks.

She climbs into her coat, Charlie nominally helping out with his good arm, and moves toward the door.

EVALUATOR
 Thank you for the water.

CHARLIE
 Oh, yeah, sure.

EVALUATOR
 You're sure you're OK?

CHARLIE
 (too loud)
 Yeah!

EVALUATOR
 Bye bye.

CHARLIE
 Bye.

She tries to open the door, but it's locked. She turns a bolt and another latch but it still won't open.

CHARLIE

Oh, let me--

Charlie rushes over and undoes the bolt. She tries to get out of the way of the blood, while he reaches his long arms around her to do this, putting them both in a strangely intimate proximity. He pulls and it won't open.

CHARLIE

I think you turned--

He does the latch and finally it opens.

CHARLIE

Sorry.

She flushes and smiles awkwardly and slips out, closing the door behind her.

Charlie runs into the kitchen, swaying, leaning against the wall for support. His shirt is now soaked in blood. He rolls up his sleeve, and runs cold water on his arm. He winces. Watery blood fills up the pots and pans in the sink mixing with whatever bits of remaining food.

He finds a small box of band-aids in the cupboard and opens about seven of them and tries to cover up the wound. But it's still really bleeding. He wraps his arm in paper towels, sweat now sliding down his face and soaking his armpits. He drops to the kitchen floor and lies down on his back in exhaustion and pain.

Two small bare feet step over him and pad over to the refrigerator.

HENRY

Dad, are you OK?

CHARLIE

Yeah, I'm just tired.

Charlie rolls over onto his arm, hiding it from Henry. The sound of milk being poured into a glass. Then the feet re-approach and step back over Charlie. Little drips of milk whiten the floor.

HENRY

(sleepily)

Dad, did she like us?

CHARLIE

(from the floor)

Yeah, she thought we were great.

Fade to Black.

INT. NICOLE'S NEW PLACE. ECHO PARK, LA. DAY

Cassie, Sandra and Nicole sing "You Could Drive a Person Crazy" from the musical, Company -- The tight harmonies are sung a capella, and there are dance moves to go along with it.

The group of people watching includes kids and an agent, cast and crew from her show and family -- it's a housewarming party.

(The house looks very different from the home she shared with Charlie. More color, more patterns, more hippy-dippy, more lamps, more her. It's how she likes it.)

They finish their song and everyone applauds, kind of to be polite, but also because it was seriously, strangely great.

INT. NICOLE'S KITCHEN. LATER

Nora pops the cork on a big bottle of Cristal.

Nicole is getting food together for the guests, pulling saran wrap off platters. She leaves cabinet doors open which she maneuvers around. Kids run through the room playing. Guests enter to grab drinks, etc.

NORA

I want your mom!

NICOLE

Oh really? Yeah--

Nora makes a heart symbol with her hands and leaps up on the kitchen counter, swinging her feet and drinking champagne like a teenager.

NORA

So, because Charlie dropped his claim to New York, we're mostly done. Jay's lost interest and Ted, his associate, is doing the paper work.

NICOLE

And we're not taking any money, right?

NORA

We withdrew the claim for the MacArthur, which I think we could have gotten by the way, and they're not asking for any of the show.

NICOLE

(clinking glasses)
OK, good. Thank you for everything, Nora

NORA

You're welcome, doll.

(pause)

And when Charlie's in LA, I got the custody breakdown to be 55/45, so you'll have Henry one extra day every two weeks...

NICOLE

I thought we made it equal.

NORA

I tweaked it at the last minute. I just didn't want him to be able to say he got 50/50.

NICOLE

But I don't--

NORA

Bragging to his friends.

NICOLE

--want to do that.

NORA

Take it! You won.

NICOLE

(sadly)
Uh huh.

INT. NICOLE'S KITCHEN, LA. DAY

CLOSE on Nicole writing her signature. She uses the last name (her maiden name) Ryder.

Nicole sits at her kitchen table in LA.

INT. CHARLIE AND NICOLE'S APARTMENT, NEW YORK. DAY

CLOSE on Charlie writing his signature.

Charlie sits on the floor of his half-empty apartment.

EXT. FLATBUSH AVENUE, BROOKLYN. DAY

An ASPCA guy approaches him smiling.

ASPCA GUY
You look like a guy who really
cares about animals--

CHARLIE
Nope.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT, BROOKLYN. DAY

He watches a mother and father with a young baby in the stroller.

INT. BARBER SHOP, BROOKLYN. DAY

Charlie sits in a barber's chair getting a haircut.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT

Charlie enters the same restaurant we saw everyone at for the closing night party so many months before.

He sees Mary Ann and Terry and a couple of other actors. A piano player, actors singing, performing.

He joins his old group. The gang is happy to see him. He opens a tab at the bar for everyone.

They all sit at a booth, having been drinking for a while now.

CHARLIE
...and the couch was technically hers pre-marriage, but, I mean, it was OUR couch, it's not like I was going to BUY another couch but then when it comes time to split, it's suddenly HER couch and I have no couch and-- I'm sitting on the floor is the short version.
(waves his hand)
I'm sorry. This is all so self-pitying and boring.

TERRY
Oh, no, no, sounds really tough.

CHARLIE
No, it's all stupid. I'm sorry.

MARY ANN
(pointedly)
No, it's sad.

The piano player plays the opening notes of a song.
Charlie recognizes it.

CHARLIE

"Someone to hold you too close..."

He gets up and walks to the piano.

People know who he is, and are intrigued to see what he's going to do.

Sings "Being Alive" from Company. It's sloppy, but surprisingly emotional and comes from a deep place. And in the end is beautiful.

Fade to Black.

EXT./INT. SANDRA'S HOUSE, WEST HOLLYWOOD, LOS ANGELES. DAY

Charlie gets out of his rental car.

He knocks on the back door. No answer. He apprehensively opens the screen door to the kitchen. Food is on the stove. Music plays. It's warm and welcoming.

But Charlie remains in the threshold.

CHARLIE

Hello?

He hears laughter from the other rooms. And then Henry shouting excitedly.

CHARLIE

Hello?

Suddenly Carter runs, breathlessly, into the kitchen. He clutches a ray gun.

CARTER

You'll never take me!

He sees Charlie and hesitates.

CHARLIE

Hi. Sorry, the door was open.

Carter puts his finger up to his lips.

CARTER

Shhh.

CHARLIE

Oh...OK.

The electronic sound of something bad happening. Carter's been hit in laser tag. Sandra runs in holding a gun.

SANDRA

I got you!

She hesitates when she sees Charlie.

SANDRA

Charlie, hi.

She comes forward and hugs him. It isn't cold particularly, but it isn't what it was. Carter extends his hand.

CARTER

Carter.

CHARLIE

Charlie.

CARTER

Nicole's still at work.

Silence. Then Henry enters.

CHARLIE

Hi.

HENRY

Hi.

CHARLIE

Can I get a hug?

Henry hugs Charlie. Charlie smiles at everyone awkwardly.

CUT TO: Charlie, Sandra and Carter talk at the dining room table. Nicole arrives from filming her show. Carter rises, they kiss.

CARTER

How'd it go?

NICOLE

Good. Donny's dead now. I shot the scene where he merges with the ficus.

Charlie grins.

CARTER

She got an Emmy nomination!

CHARLIE
She's a great actress.

NICOLE
No, for directing!

Charlie nods, a bit stunned.

CHARLIE
Congratulations.

NICOLE
I love it. Now I know what you
were so obsessed with all the
time.
(moving)
We should get ready!
(to Charlie)
We're the Beatles.

Everyone clomps upstairs. Charlie follows.

CHARLIE
I didn't really get a costume
together.

CARTER
You can be George Martin.

CHARLIE
I don't need to be anything.

CARTER	NICOLE
You got to be something--	At least a ghost! I'll get you a sheet--

Sandra and Carter hurry into different rooms, getting ready. Nicole enters into the bathroom.

NICOLE (O.S.)
We should leave soon! I'm saying
that as much for me as anyone
else.

CHARLIE
I wanted to tell you, I took a
residency at UCLA. I'm going to
direct two plays in rep at Red
Cat.

Nicole reenters holding a sheet.

NICOLE
Oh...

CHARLIE
So, I'll be here for a while.

NICOLE
That's great.

But something strikes her as sad about it too.

CHARLIE
You OK?

NICOLE
Yeah. It's only good.

Sandra calls her for help with her costume. Nicole hands Charlie the sheet and goes into the next room. Charlie, alone, inspects the sheet. He notices the photos on the wall have been swapped out with different ones. He hears:

HENRY (O.S.)
"Charlie is...in...cr..." --
something -- "neat and I re-ly on
him to keep things in or-der.
He's energy con..." -- I don't
know what that word is --

Charlie drifts towards Henry's room.

Henry, legs dangling off his bed, reads from a crinkled loose leaf paper.

CHARLIE
You're getting so good at reading.
(beat)
What is that?

HENRY
"He doesn't look in the mirror too
of-ten. He cries eas-ily in
movies..."

Charlie hesitates and sits next to Henry on the bed.

HENRY
"He is very self-suf--"

CHARLIE
Self-sufficient.

HENRY
"--he can dar-n a sock--"

CHARLIE HENRY
That means sew, like a hole-- "--and cook himself dinner
and ir--"

CHARLIE
Break it into two parts.

HENRY
Ur. On.

CHARLIE
Not "ur" but "ire"

HENRY
Ire. On.

CHARLIE
Iron.

HENRY
"--a shirt. He rarely gets def-
eated (which I fell...feel like I
al-ways do). Charlie takes all of
my moods stead-ily, he doesn't
give in to them or make me feel
bad about them. He's a great
dress-er, he never looks em--" I
don't know this one...

CHARLIE
Embarrassing.

Nicole appears in the doorway.

HENRY
"--embarrassing wh-ich is hard for
a man." You read it now...

He hands it to Charlie. Charlie reads:

CHARLIE
"He loves being a dad, he loves
all the things you're supposed to
hate, like the tantrums, the
waking up at night-- He
disappears into his own world. He
and Henry are alike in that way.
He can tell people they have food
in their teeth or on their face in
a way that doesn't make them feel
bad. Charlie is self-made -- his
parents -- I only met them once --
but he told me there was--

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 (Charlie skips ahead for
 Henry's benefit)

He's brilliant at creating family
 out of whoever is around. With the
 theatre company he cast a spell
 that made everyone feel included.
 No one, not even an intern was
 unimportant."

HENRY
 What's an intern?

CHARLIE
 Like a helper. But who isn't
 paid.

HENRY
 Why aren't they paid?

CHARLIE
 They're young. They're
 learning... I don't know, maybe
 if they do a good job, they get
 paid later?

HENRY
 OK. Keep going.

CHARLIE
 "He could remember all the inside
 jokes. He's extremely organized
 and thorough. He's very clear
 about what he wants unlike me who
 can't always tell. I fell in love
 with him two seconds after I saw
 him and I'll never stop loving
 him..."

Charlie hesitates. He swallows. He's crying.

CHARLIE
 "...even though it doesn't make
 sense anymore."

EXT. PASADENA RESIDENTIAL STREETS, LA, LATE DAY

Henry, Nicole, Carter, Sandra are dressed as the Beatles
 from Sgt. Pepper. Carter is Paul. Henry is Ringo. Nicole
 is John. Sandra is George. Charlie's a ghost. They're
 joined by Cassie and Sam and their kids, also dressed up.

The kids run from house to house trick-or-treating.

The adults linger and talk casually.

Henry, exhausted, is having trouble keeping his eyes open. Nicole regards him. Charlie, his sheet on his arm now, is saying goodbye to the family as Sandra takes off with Cassie and Sam. He shakes Carter's hand, it's friendly. Nicole hesitates then approaches Charlie.

NICOLE

We were going to bring him to dinner, but he's wiped out. Do you want to take him?

CHARLIE

(taken aback)
It's your night...

NICOLE

I know.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

NICOLE

OK, good.

CHARLIE

I'll drop him back in the morning?

NICOLE

Yeah, just text when you're up and we'll figure it out.

NICOLE

(leaning down to Henry)
You're going to go with your Dad, OK?

HENRY

OK.

The boy wraps his arms around his Dad's neck and Charlie lifts him.

NICOLE

I love you, sweetheart.

HENRY

I love you.

She kisses Henry's face which rests on Charlie's shoulder and for a moment all three of their heads are nestled close together. Then Nicole releases.

Charlie, holding Henry, advances toward his parked car. Nicole watches.

NICOLE

Wait--

Charlie hesitates as Nicole hurries after him. She kneels down in the middle of the street.

CLOSE: Charlie's laces spill out on the pavement.

She tugs on one which he's stepping on. She taps his calf.

NICOLE

Can you--

He lifts up his foot so she can retrieve the lace.

She ties his sneaker. Charlie watches.

CHARLIE

(smiles)

Thanks.

She nods. He hikes Henry up tighter in his arms and continues toward his car. Nicole and Carter get in their parked Subaru in the foreground.

The Subaru drives toward us and off-camera and then reappears heading away from us now. As they pass Charlie and Henry, an arm waves out the window. Charlie raises his hand back.

Nicole's car heads into the distance. Charlie stops at his rental and digs for the keys in his pocket. Henry holds on.

All of them, Nicole and Charlie and Henry, are now recessed into the landscape. The light is waning. We hold on the wide tableau of the LA street and finally cut to black.

End.