

KIDS MATTER NOW

"Pilot"

written by

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TEASER

SCENE A

INT. SHELTER OFFICES - DAY

THE CHIC CORPORATE OFFICES OF A MODERN FURNITURE COMPANY. ANNIE (RADIATES WARMTH AND COMPETENCE) LEADS A FRESH-FACED INTERVIEWEE, ELODIE, AROUND THE OFFICES IN A WALK-AND-TALK.

ANNIE

(RE: CONFERENCE ROOM) And this is
where we have weekly company meetings
with the big boss.

SHE GESTURES TO A POSTER-SIZED, FRAMED MAGAZINE COVER FEATURING NORA MALONE, LOOKING GLAMOROUS AND FIERCE.

ELODIE

Do you just pinch yourself that you
get to work with THE Nora Malone?

ANNIE

Pinch. Punch. Gag -- all in that
family of behavior. (THEN) Now,
being Nora's assistant requires you to
be nimble. I'll toss out a few
scenarios and see how you react.
You're at a funeral. You get an
urgent call because the boss can't
remember her Amazon password -- how do
you respond?

ELODIE

Well, after the funeral when I turn my
phone back on --

ANNIE

Ooh, tough start, but it's best of five, you're still in it. (THEN) You're wearing plaid and your boss asks you to go home and change because "the pattern is making her dizzy".

ELODIE

Why am I wearing plaid to a funeral?

ANNIE

Different scenarios! Keep up! (THEN) It's the storm of the century. Nora sends you to her remote cabin in the woods to check that all the windows are closed... on New Year's Eve.

ELODIE

These are just hypotheticals, right?

ANNIE

(LAUGHS) Yeah. It could also be Christmas. (THEN) You are in charge of her schedule, her call list, her travel, her diet food, the candy she eats when she throws out the diet food. Do you have kids?

ELODIE SHAKES HER HEAD, "NO".

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I'm jealous. Fewer sad face emojis to send to your family.

THEY WALK INTO THE KITCHEN. THEY JOIN: RJ (WEARIER THAN HIS YEARS), MISSY (QUIRKY) AND DEAN (HOTSHOT, NOT AS CHARMING AS HE THINKS).

RJ

(JUMPY) Is she back yet?

ANNIE

(FOR ELODIE'S BENEFIT) No. And even if she were, we'd be at ease and comfortable because working for Nora is a good and desirable thing.

RJ

Oh, God are we on camera again? (TO AIR) Nora is nice and does not scare me!

ANNIE

Elodie, meet RJ, Missy and Dean.

DEAN

Elodie, that's an unusual name. What's your background?

RJ

You can't ask that.

MISSY

That color's pretty on you.

RJ

You can't say that.

MISSY

I just meant because of her skin tone!

RJ PUTS HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS.

ANNIE

(TO ELODIE) RJ runs HR so he's a little sensitive.

RJ

I'm sorry but the world has changed! Do I wish my job was easier and we could just go back to simpler times? Of course! (BEAT) I can't say that.

ELODIE NOTICES A PLATE OF BROWNIES.

ANNIE

(GESTURING) Oh, please take some. I'm kinda famous around here for my baked goods. These guys even entered me in the Great American Bake-off --

MISSY

They said you were too mousy.

ANNIE

(SNAPS) Everyone remembers, Missy!

ELIANE

Oh, I meant to ask, when would Nora need me to start? 'Cause I have a vacation booked in October.

DEAN

Oh, sweetheart, you won't last 'til October.

ANNIE AND RJ EACH KICK DEAN IN ONE OF HIS SHINS.

ANNIE/RJ

Yes, she will! / Don't say sweetheart!

ANNIE

I think you could start as early as next week -- I just need to quit and then she's all yours.

ELODIE

You haven't quit yet?!

RJ, MISSY AND DEAN ALL MAKE "SEE! RIGHT?!" NOISES.

ANNIE

I'm sorry, it's not that easy. When you're part of a team and people rely on you it's not easy to just say "I quit" and toss it all away.

THE OTHERS HARRUMPH.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Okay, enough of this room. This is a stupid room. Don't come in here.

SHE LEADS ELODIE OUT. THE OTHERS FOLLOW.

RESET TO:

INT. SHELTER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

THE GROUP FOLLOWS ANNIE.

ANNIE

But now I can quit because I've found the perfect replacement. The job is yours. Nora just needs to sign off once she's back from China.

DEAN

You really don't know why she went to
China?

ANNIE SHAKES HER HEAD.

DEAN (CONT'D)

I mean if we're moving manufacturing
overseas I'm screwed. I run
manufacturing. But if we're expanding
our markets, I'm golden. (COCKY) I
run manufacturing.

ANNIE

(WITH GLEE) Not my problem anymore.

MISSY

But you're still gonna make treats for
us right? That's the only thing that
gets me to come here. (OFF LOOKS)
This is also where I get stamps.

ELODIE

Now, do I also have to be, like, the
mother hen to all these people?

ANNIE

I wouldn't recommend it.

RJ

(CHECKS PHONE) Guys, did you just get
this email from Nora? She needs an
office cleared out for some "Cassie"
she's bringing into the company?

THE GROUP REACTS, UPSET.

MISSY

Don't respond! I saw this scam on the news -- someone hacked her phone!

ANNIE

I think they generally ask for cash -- not offices.

DEAN

Well, I'm right next to Nora. That's access and visibility. I've worked too hard for that power spot to give it up to some newbie.

RJ

She's certainly not taking mine. Who is this "Cassie" anyway? Of course, any chance for the advancement of a female is most welcome...

THEY APPROACH THE ELEVATORS. THE DOORS OPEN, REVEALING...

NORA

Shelter family! Meet our newest member! Fruit of my legal loin!

SHE HOLDS THE CHILD UP. JAWS DROP.

NORA (CONT'D)

My Cassie! (SNIFFS) Who knows how to change a diaper?

NO ONE REACTS. STUNNED SILENCE.

ELODIE

Yeah, I quit.

SHE WALKS OFF.

DEAN

(TO ANNIE) See? That wasn't so hard.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

SCENE B

INT. SHELTER OFFICES - MOMENTS LATER

NORA ENTERS THE OFFICE WITH CASSIE AT HER SIDE. EVERYONE STARES IN DISBELIEF. ANNIE KEEPS PACE.

ANNIE

You went to China to adopt a child?

NORA

Isn't it wonderful? Hashtag "I got the baby and am still a size two"! So much excitement, they can't speak.

(SOTTO TO ANNIE) Have them turn the shock to joy.

ANNIE MIMES "CLAPPING" TO THE CROWD. IMMEDIATELY THEY CLAP AND CHEER.

DEAN

How does she do it? Mogul mom coming through!

NORA GESTURES FOR HIM TO TONE IT DOWN A LITTLE.

NORA

I want a meeting in thirty about the collaboration with Target. I don't need to tell you what this could mean for the company -- a piece of Shelter furniture in every home in America. Don't worry I may be a mom now but I'm still your shark! Grrr!

MISSY

(BOTHERED) That's not the noise a
shark makes.

NORA CROSSES INTO HER PRIVATE OFFICE WITH CASSIE. ANNIE
FOLLOWS.

RESET TO:

INT. NORA'S PRIVATE OFFICE- CONTINUOUS

NORA AND CASSIE ENTER, WITH ANNIE ON THEIR HEELS. ANNIE
HANDS OVER SOME PAPERS.

ANNIE

Today's schedule and call list.
(BEAT) So, uh, adopting. What...
brought this on?

NORA

Oh, you know how it is -- who hasn't
had too much wine and ordered
something online?

ANNIE STARES AT HER, NOT BUYING IT.

NORA (CONT'D)

I just started to feel like if I
didn't take action, I was going to
miss out. I'm not getting any
younger. (THEN) You know, you should
think about it, too. Tick-tock.

ANNIE

I have three kids. There are pictures
of them all over my desk.

NORA

Those are yours? Oh, thank God.

There's nothing more desperate than an overly involved aunt. (SHUDDERS)

Anyway, I wasn't planning on bringing this little angel to the office today, but the nanny I hired already quit --

ANNIE

(STEELS SELF) Speaking of quitting --

NORA

And there's just so much to do -- a photo shoot so we can send out announcements... I want to turn one of the offices into a nursery... Ooo, and is it too late to do a gender reveal? She's not super feminine yet, right?

CASSIE FUSSES. NORA WATCHES HER.

NORA (CONT'D)

It's just amazing how strong and instant this connection is -- (TO CASSIE, RE: FUSSING) Can't you see adults are talking?!

ANNIE

Let me see what's up. Hi, sweet girl.

SHE NOTICES SOMETHING WITH HER JACKET.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Oh, this is zipped too tight. Let's
loosen it. (SHE DOES) That's better.
And maybe you're thirsty?

SHE HANDS HER A BOTTLE OF WATER AND CASSIE DOWNS IT.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

And I baked some yummy treats.

SHE GOES TO GRAB A BROWNIE.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Wait -- any allergies?

NORA

I don't know...(PATS POCKETS) let me
check the receipt. (FINDS PAPER) Is
there any... (READS) "hanyu pinyin" in
this?

ANNIE

Just... trace.

NORA GESTURES TO GO FOR IT. ANNIE HANDS CASSIE A BROWNIE.

NORA

So... pull up my calendar for the next
two months. Let's contact -- don't
you want to be writing this down?

ANNIE

Actually... I have some news of my
own.

NORA

You got married? Divorced? You
changed your face? Why did you do
that to your face?

ANNIE TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND STARTS READING FROM HER NOTES.

ANNIE

(REHEARSED) I have been at Shelter
for eight years. While I'll always
cherish this time, I haven't had the
chances for advancement I'd like --

NORA

Advancement? I didn't know you wanted
anything beyond being an assistant.

ANNIE

You thought my dream was to get your
dry-cleaning?

NORA

I don't know. People have sad dreams.

ANNIE

Well, be that as it may... I think
it's time for me to go.

NORA

Go? You can't quit now! Annie,
you're my right hand. Well, that's my
dominant hand. You're more like my
left hand.

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)

The point is, I'm embarking on the biggest thing I've ever done. I need you. To research motherhood...

ANNIE

Don't need to research it -- I am a mom.

NORA

Making my case for me! You have to stay. You're so good with her.

ANNIE

She is really cute. I know people call them the terrible twos but I'd take two over four any day.

NORA

(A LITTLE FREAKED) Terrible twos? That's like a thing? (THEN) No, no. You can't quit. I won't accept it. I never even knew you wanted advancement -- and that's on you! You never spoke up!

ANNIE

No one likes a Braggy Betty.

NORA

That. Right there. That folksy, "aw, shucks" act. That is the number one mistake women make in the workforce.

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)

I'll take a Braggy Betty over a...
Mousy Marcia.

ANNIE

(AFFECTED) Wow, that's actually
really good advice. Even if "mousy"
is kind of a trigger word for me --

NORA

(AN IDEA) I'm full of good advice.
What if you stay and I mentor you?
I'll share my expertise -- a six month
training period before you go to the
department of your choice. You'll be
my very first protege.

ANNIE

I don't know, I sorta geared up to
quit. I told everyone, been listening
to Kelly Clarkson all morning...

NORA

And maybe I'm the thing that doesn't
kill you and makes you stronger! Give
me six months. (FIERCE) Or leave now
and I will destroy you. (OFF HER
LOOK) Wrong approach! Strike that!

ANNIE

Nora, you're going through this big
life change, you're not going to have
the bandwidth to help me --

NORA

(LAUNCHES IN) Lesson one! Never show weakness. And that's why you need to -- don't you want to be writing this down?

REFLEXIVELY, ANNIE GRABS A PAD OF PAPER.

NORA (CONT'D)

You need to stop with the baking.

ANNIE

What? Why?! Everyone loves my ---

NORA

You don't need to be loved -- you need to be respected. And no one respects the cupcake lady.

ANNIE

What?! That's not true! What about Martha Stewart?

NORA RAISES AN EYEBROW AND THEN STARTS DIALING ON THE PHONE.

NORA

(INTO PHONE) Hi. Nora Malone for Martha.

ANNIE

You're not.. That's not really...

NORA

Martha! This won't take long. Just gonna put you on speakerphone. (SHE DOES) I have an assistant, Annie --

ANNIE

Hi! Big fan! I love your holiday stencils!

NORA

Annie here bakes treats for people in the office to make them like her.

MARTHA (ON SPEAKERPHONE)

Oh, no, that sounds pathetic.

NORA

Precisely. Thank you!

SHE HANGS UP.

ANNIE

(IN AWE) That was the most thrilling humiliation I have ever experienced.

NORA

A lot more where that came from.

ANNIE

I'm in! From here on out, no more baking!

TRIUMPHANTLY SHE DUMPS THE PLATE OF BROWNIES AND GRABS THE TREAT AWAY FROM CASSIE. CASSIE CRIES.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

No, yeah, that can be the last one.

SHE HANDS IT BACK AND WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE C

INT. RJ'S OFFICE - LATER

RJ WALKS INTO HIS OFFICE AND FINDS DEAN THERE, SHOWING NORA AROUND.

RJ

Uh, can I help you?

DEAN

Oh, I was just showing Nora how beautiful the light is in your office at this time of day. Imagine growing up in this kind of light. How special for that child. I mean she's already won the lottery with you as a mom so this would just be the topper.

RJ

Oh, I see. You think Cassie -- (TO NORA) beautiful name, by the way -- should take my office? That's how you wanna play this? (TO NORA) Well, before you make a decision, there's something I want to show you.

HE PULLS NORA OUT AND DEAN FOLLOWS.

RESET TO:

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

RJ DRAGS NORA INTO DEAN'S OFFICE WITH DEAN CLOSE BEHIND. RJ POINTS TO A CORNER WITH A BUILT IN SEAT.

RJ

(TO NORA) Look at this corner. So cozy, right? For reading. Dreaming. The AAP says the single most important factor in healthy child development is play. Just a magical corner.

DEAN

(RELUCTANTLY ADMITTING) It is a really fun corner.

NORA

Look, I can see what you're both doing -- I'm looking for a nursery for a two-year-old but I'm not that two-year-old. I just need a safe space for my child. I'll pick something before the end of the week. Now I would strongly urge you to all get back to your actual jobs.

SHE EXITS. A BEAT.

DEAN/RJ

(WHEELS TURNING) Safe space? / I can work with that.

CUT TO:

SCENE D

INT. COMMUNAL KITCHEN - LATER

MISSY IS THERE, ROOTING AROUND IN THE FREEZER. ANNIE ENTERS.

MISSY

Hey, before you leave, can you make me
a cake for my birthday?

ANNIE

Oh, I'm not quitting! Nora has agreed
to mentor me. (PROUD) You are
looking at a protege.

MISSY

Wow! That's great. (CALLING OFF)
Yeah, she didn't quit.

FROM THE OTHER ROOM WE HEAR:

RJ/DEAN

Knew it! / Shocker!

ANNIE

And I can't make your cake. I
promised Martha Stewart no more
baking.

MISSY

Just say you don't want to. You don't
need to make up a weird lie.

RJ AND DEAN ENTER.

RJ

Still can't believe Nora has a child. This is the woman who when I asked to leave early for Halloween with my son told me I could go in the costume of an unemployed person.

DEAN

(TO ANNIE) It wouldn't have been the same here without you. What would I do without my work -- well, you're too old to be my wife -- my work Aunt?

ANNIE

That's not nearly as devastating to me as you think it is. (THEN) Nora really stepped up. She offered me a promotion to a department of my choice in six months.

DEAN

You deserve it! (DEADLY) Come near manufacturing and I'll kill you.

RJ USES HIS ARMS TO AWKWARDLY MIME SOMETHING.

RJ

That's me giving you a hug. It's the new, safe way to communicate affection in the workplace.

ANNIE TRIES TO DO IT BACK AND WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE E

INT. NORA'S PRIVATE OFFICE - LATER

ANNIE ENTERS. NORA WORKS WHILE CASSIE SLEEPS IN A PLAYPEN.

ANNIE

Just checking if you need anything
else for the night?

NORA

(CHECKS WATCH) No, it's late. We
should both go.

SHE GETS UP, CROSSES TO THE DOOR AND HITS THE LIGHTS. ANNIE
BLOCKS NORA'S PATH, WAITING FOR HER TO REALIZE. BEAT.

NORA (CONT'D)

Well, are you just going to stand
there like a -- (REALIZES) Oh, God!

SHE RUSHES BACK IN TO CASSIE.

NORA (CONT'D)

(TO CASSIE) I didn't forget. I mean,
I did but I would have realized before
the parking lot. The highway at the
latest. (TO ANNIE) What do I do?

ANNIE

Well, you don't wake a sleeping baby.

NORA

(COVERING) Everybody knows that,
Annie.

ANNIE

But you don't want her to sleep too
much.

NORA

Of course not. (BEAT) Why?

ANNIE

Well, she's on a totally different time zone, so God knows what schedule she's on.

NORA

(SPOOKED) This one. She's on this schedule. (THEN) I mean, I don't believe in jet lag. It's just mind over matter. And she has to sleep. I have a very big week. I need my sleep.

ANNIE

("GOOD LUCK") Ha! (THEN, TO HERSELF) This is gonna be fun. (THEN) Have a good night, you two. Call if you need me.

ANNIE EXITS.

NORA

(CALLING AFTER HER) And your phone will be on! I don't want a repeat of that "college roommate funeral debacle"!

OFF NORA'S PANIC, WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE H

INT. ANNIE'S HOUSE - LATER

IT IS A CLUTTERED, COLORFUL SPACE, EVIDENCE OF ANNIE'S THREE CHILDREN EVERYWHERE. ANNIE ENTERS, ON THE PHONE. SHE IS GREETED BY HER HUSBAND MATT (SALT OF THE EARTH, NO-NONSENSE).

MATT

I got Champagne! You're outta there,
baby! Ding-dong the witch is dead!

ANNIE FREEZES.

NORA (O.S.)

(CHEERY) Actually the witch is on
speakerphone.

ANNIE SHOTS MATT A LOOK AND THEN SPEAKS INTO THE PHONE.

ANNIE

So generally I do a book, then song
and then goodnight kiss. But you'll
find your own routine. Call if you
need anything.

SHE HANGS UP.

MATT

You didn't quit.

ANNIE

No --

MATT

Annie! We wrote out notecards. I
role-played it with you. I wore a
scarf!

ANNIE

Just listen! I've had the most
incredible day! Nora adopted a baby --
Martha Stewart yelled at me!

MATT

Nora has a baby? Like a human child?
Is she going to keep it in a tower and
grow its hair long to steal its youth?

ANNIE

She's gonna mentor me. No more dry-
cleaning!

MATT

So you're gonna be a glorified nanny?

ANNIE

No, I'm a protege! Proteges hire
nannies. You'll see -- this is gonna
be a good thing. I don't know if this
kid is making her a better person but
it is making her a person.

ANNIE'S PHONE RINGS. SHE ANSWERS AND NORA'S ON FACE TIME,
HOLDING SOMETHING UP TO THE CAMERA.

NORA

Is this a normal color for poop?

MATT

(OFF PHONE) Well... it's not dry-
cleaning.

CUT TO:

SCENE J

INT. NORA'S HOUSE - LATER

WE ARE IN AN ALL WHITE MODERN SPACE. NORA, ILL AT EASE, IS FACING CASSIE IN A HIGH CHAIR.

NORA

So I don't really know how to talk to you. What kind of voice should I use? I'm not really a (BABY TALK) "cutie wootie" kind of person. I have to admit, I don't know that much about dealing with children. I feel I can be honest about this as you're a barely verbal, non-English speaker.

CASSIE JUST STARES AT HER.

NORA (CONT'D)

I mean you could give me something. A laugh, a smile? I'm kind of a big deal. I invented open shelving. Yeah. (BEAT) Well, why don't we start with a good old-fashioned bribe? I found an article that listed the fifty best toys for toddlers. I ordered them all.

SHE GESTURES TO A BUNCH OF BOXES OF TOYS.

NORA (CONT'D)

I thought we could open one a week.

SHE HANDS CASSIE A TOY.

CASSIE

Meiyou.

NORA

(LOOKS IN DICTIONARY) Meiyou. Means
"no".

CASSIE

Meiyou.

NORA

Well, that's not the nicest. Is there
another word you can say? How about
"Mama"? That would be sweet to hear.
(TENDER) I know you don't know it
yet, but that's what I am going to be
to you, little one. A mama takes care
of you and makes sure you are safe.

CASSIE THROWS THE TOY. IT HITS NORA IN THE FACE.

NORA (CONT'D)

(PANICKED) Okay, maybe we open one
more toy, today only.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NORA'S HOUSE - HOURS LATER

ALL THE TOYS ARE UNBOXED, CASSIE'S CRYING. NORA JOINS.

NORA

(IN TEARS) I know! Meiiyooooou!

THE TWO CONTINUE TO SOB AND WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE K

INT. NORA'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NEXT MORNING

ANNIE ENTERS AND THROWS ON THE LIGHTS.

NORA (O.S.)

(WEAKLY) Finally.

ANNIE

Aaagh!

ANNIE SEES NORA AND CASSIE ALREADY THERE. NORA'S COMPLETELY DISHEVELED, A STARK CONTRAST FROM HER USUAL PUT-TOGETHER IMAGE.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Good morning.

NORA

(UNDERSTATEMENT) We had a bit of a...
bumpy night and I've been trying to
get some work done but (POINTED)
someone just wants to keep throwing
things.

CASSIE THROWS A TOY.

NORA (CONT'D)

Cassie, we have been over this. I
think I have been quite clear. (TO
ANNIE) If she were anyone else she'd
be fired already. Okay, I should head
to my meeting.

ANNIE

Like that?

NORA LOOKS DOWN AND SEES HOW RUMPLED SHE REALLY IS.

NORA

Give me your top.

ANNIE

What?

NORA

I have the marketing meeting for the
Target collaboration and I can't go in
there like this. Give me yours.

A BIT STUNNED, ANNIE TAKES OFF HER SWEATER AND GIVES IT TO
NORA. NORA PUTS IT ON THEN LOOKS DOWN.

NORA (CONT'D)

(AGHAST) Just so much pattern.

SHE STEADIES HERSELF AS IF IT MADE HER DIZZY AND THEN STARTS
GATHERING WHAT SHE NEEDS FOR THE MEETING. ANNIE CROSSES AND
PICKS UP A STACK OF RESUMES.

ANNIE

Here are a few nannies.

NORA

(TURNS, EAGER) Where?!

ANNIE OFFERS HER THE RESUMES.

NORA (CONT'D)

These are not nannies. They are
pieces of paper describing nannies!

I'm desperate, don't tease me! (THEN)

Oh and I've been meaning to ask you --
did any of your kids not like you?

ANNIE

Well, I took my thirteen year old's phone and he told me I ruined his life. (PROUD) When they say that you know you're doing something right.

NORA

No, I mean when they were little. I don't think Cassie likes me. I gave her fifty toys and the only one she wants to play with is this little plane. And it seems like she's pointing it East. To home. It's fine. She's just not a fan.

ANNIE

(SOFTENING) Oh, Nora. I may need to be liked too much but you know it's ok to want her to like you.

NORA

It's just... I try to be maternal and I think it just comes off as creepy.

ANNIE

I doubt that.

NORA PICKS CASSIE UP AND TRIES TO CUDDLE.

NORA

(SINGING) RING AROUND THE ROSY.
POCKET FULL OF POSEY. ASHES, ASHES,
WE ALL --

ANNIE

Oh, God, stop! Such a menacing minor key. (THEN) Look, you'll find your own version of maternal. You guys will bond. Just give it some time.

NORA

It's easy for you to say. You have the twins.

ANNIE

I don't have twi-- (NOT WORTH IT)
Just go. Kick some Target ass. I got Cassie.

NORA STARTS TO EXIT AS ANNIE KNEELS DOWN TO PLAY WITH CASSIE.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Should we play patty cake? Mash it.
Put it in the oven. (OFF NORA'S LOOK)
What? Now I can't even pretend bake?!

CUT TO:

SCENE M

INT.HALLWAY/INT.DEAN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

NORA PASSES BY AND DEAN, WEARING A PARKA, CALLS OUT TO HER.

DEAN

Loving the new look, boss! Just wanted you to know that I compared thermostats and it turns out that my office is always two full degrees colder than the rest of the place.

NORA LOOKS CONFUSED.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Personally, I think this would be a great nursery for Cassie but I'm just looking out for the kid.

HE SHIVERS. RJ ENTERS DEAN'S OFFICE WITH A WORKER AND A HAND-HELD MACHINE.

RJ

(UPBEAT) Real bad news, guys. We got particles -- mold particles -- everywhere in my office. They're -- how many microns?

WORKER

Ten --

RJ

(HORRIFIED) It's up to ten now?! Can't believe I've been working in that. Scary stuff. I mean, yeah, the light is nice in there. Good thing.

(MORE)

RJ (CONT'D)

(GRAVE) It's the last thing you'll
ever see.

NORA

I am trying to take this company
global and you're seriously talking to
me about temperature and microns?!

RJ/DEAN

(CHASTENED) No. / Sorry.

SHE EXITS.

DEAN

Gotta say -- I didn't expect you to be
such a worthy adversary. Is that
particle thing real?

RJ

WORKER

Nah.

Yep.

RJ (CONT'D)

(VERY CONCERNED) It is?

AND WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE P

INT. NORA'S PRIVATE OFFICE- LATER

CASSIE PLAYS IN A PLAYPEN WHILE ANNIE IS ON THE PHONE.

ANNIE

(INTO PHONE) So I've emailed you the three nanny candidates we'd like to meet. Can you give me an idea of base salary? (BEAT) What? That's like twice what a protege makes! (OFF CASSIE FUSSING) I'm going to have to call you back.

ANNIE COMES OVER TO GET CASSIE OUT.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

You wanna get out, sweet girl?

SHE TAKES HER OUT AND HOLDS HER. CASSIE SNUGGLES IN.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Aren't you a love?

SHE TAKES A MOMENT TO STROKE AND ADMIRE CASSIE. THEN:

CASSIE

Mama.

ANNIE'S EYES GO WIDE.

ANNIE

Oh no, no, no. I'm not your Mama.

CASSIE

Mama.

ANNIE

Please don't. That's gonna make my
life so, so bad.

CASSIE

Mama.

ANNIE

Shhh! Cut it out! You're gonna get
me fired! (POINTS AT FRAMED PHOTO)
Look, that's Mama. Nora's your Mama.

CASSIE CRIES.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, no, I get that.

NORA ENTERS.

NORA

The marketing session was fantastic.
We're ready, we're gonna come at
Target like a -- (REALIZES) -- well,
target. (CLAWS AT THE SWEATER) Uch,
why do you buy this cheap fabric?
There's cashmere. There's silk.

ANNIE

There's mortgages.

CASSIE

(REACHING FOR ANNIE) Mama.

ANNIE COUGHS LOUDLY TO COVER THE WORD.

NORA

Don't cough on her! Bad protege!

CASSIE

Mama.

NORA

Is she saying "Mama"?

ANNIE

No, I think it's some Chinese word.

NORA

"Mama" is the same word in Chinese.

ANNIE

Really? That's fascinating. Is that true in every language? (CROSSES TO COMPUTER) Let's look that up!

CASSIE

(TO ANNIE) Mama.

ANNIE

(OFF COMPUTER) Did you know the Chinese word for "crisis" is the same as their word for "opportunity"?

NORA

My child is calling you "Mama"? Of course she is. Anyone but me.

ANNIE

Okay no need to make this into a giant opportunity...

AND WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

SCENE R

INT. NORA'S PRIVATE OFFICE- MOMENTS LATER

NORA AND ANNIE AND CASSIE ARE AS WE LEFT THEM.

NORA

(FLAT) My own child wants literally anyone else to be her mama.

ANNIE

Look, this is very normal. She's had a lot of upheaval. She's still figuring out a routine. There's no need to freak out.

NORA

(DEADLY CALM) Do I seem like I am freaking out?

ANNIE

(UNSETTLED) No. You actually seem weirdly robotic.

NORA

It is called "compartmentalizing". You don't get to where I am without learning to prioritize. I have a conference call with the Target people in few minutes. I can't afford to freak out now. So I put it away in a little box. To be opened later.

ANNIE

I'm getting a real "Ring around the
Rosy" vibe again.

DISSOLVE TO:

MOMENTS LATER, RJ, DEAN, MISSY AND OTHERS ARE AROUND THE
CONFERENCE TABLE. ON THE SCREEN ANOTHER CONFERENCE ROOM WITH
SEVERAL PEOPLE IN SUITS APPEARS.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(TO SCREEN) Hi. You have Nora Malone
and the team at Shelter.

MISSY

(ASIDE) Aw, this is real? I thought
it was going to be my surprise party.

NORA

(ALL BUSINESS) Welcome. We are so
excited about the possibility of this
collaboration and Shelter reaching a
larger market. Please open your
packets. I think the first item we
launch should be the Martini Table.

SHE HOLDS UP A TEARSHEET.

NORA (CONT'D)

This piece has a shell top with
graceful curves. The vintage lines
recall a bygone era when father and
mother -- (LITTLE SOB) -- would share
a drink to celebrate the end of the
day.

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)

Moving on to the Cameron Bed, a safe cocoon that wraps you in love.

(SNIFFLES) Love big enough for the whole family to snuggle in.

ANOTHER SOB. FREAKED, RJ AND DEAN TURN TO EACH OTHER.

DEAN

(SOTTO) What the hell? Nora doesn't cry. She causes crying.

RJ

(SOTTO) Should I give her a --

HE MIMES HIS WEIRD "AIR HUG", DEAN SHAKES HIS HEAD, "NO WAY".

NORA

And of course the matching crib and changing table --

SHE IS FULL-ON LOSING IT.

TARGET BOSS

I'm sorry, is everything ok?

NORA

(TRYING TO COVER) I just really love my products. And I chose them over having any kind of personal life. And now it's too late because I don't know how to make my own child like me --

THE SCREEN GOES BLANK. EVERYONE LOOKS SHOCKED. ANNIE USHERS PEOPLE OUT.

ANNIE

Okay -- looks like we are having some technical difficulties. Everyone out until we fix this.

PEOPLE LEAVE. WHEN THE LAST PERSON IS GONE, ANNIE SHUTS THE DOOR AND SHOWS NORA THE CORD THAT ANNIE PULLED.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Never show weakness. It was lesson number one.

NORA NODS, DISTRAUGHT. THE PHONE RINGS. ANNIE ANSWERS IT.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(INTO PHONE, "DITZY") Yeah, sorry, that was my fault. I'll reschedule once I've figured out how this silly phone system works. ... My name? Missy.

SHE HANGS UP.

NORA

Thank you. Don't ever do that again!
But thank you.

ANNIE NODS.

NORA (CONT'D)

I'm just so, so tired.

ANNIE

I know. I have set up three nanny candidates for tomorrow.

NORA

Why did I think I could do this? And you know the crazy part? I asked for this. It wasn't an impulse. It took months of planning -- there's an adoption agency in Beijing that has a whole building filled with the Kendall Collection. All because I was single and felt like I had something to share with another human. Now I feel so alone, and like I know nothing!

ANNIE

Give yourself a break. It's a huge adjustment.

NORA

I've lost all control! How am I supposed to find time to bond with her and keep all these plates spinning here? Half my mind is with her all the time. Nothing I do with her or with work is right! And I haaaaaate this sweater!

SHE TEARS IT OFF, THROWS IT ON THE GROUND AND STOMPS ON IT.
SHE GETS A WAD OF CASH FROM HER WALLET AND HANDS IT OVER.

NORA (CONT'D)

Here. Buy a new one.

ANNIE

(WAY TOO MUCH MONEY) Yeah... one.

(THEN) Look, this is nothing new.

It's what people mean when they talk about work-life balance. You just never noticed it before because you didn't care about kids. But once you start looking you see it everywhere...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHELTER OFFICES - LATER

WE ARE IN A PREDATOR-STYLE MONTAGE, ZOOMING AROUND THE OFFICE. WE STOP AT A RECEPTIONIST'S DESK.

ANNIE (V.O.)

See her.

NORA (V.O.)

Ashley.

ANNIE (V.O.)

(CORRECTING) Ainsley. What do you notice?

THE CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON A STAIN ON AINSLEY'S SWEATER.

NORA (V.O.)

That's spit up on her shoulder.

Ashley's a mom!

WE WIDEN TO REVEAL A PHOTO ON HER DESK OF HER NEW BABY.

ANNIE (V.O.)

She had Kingsley in February.

NORA (V.O.)

(SWEETLY) Awww. That's a stupid name.

ANNIE (V.O.)

She cried the whole first week she had to put him in day care but now she just looks at it as more people to love Kingsley.

THE CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON RJ AT HIS DESK. REVEAL HE'S GOT HIS PHONE UNDER THE DESK, WATCHING A LITTLE LEAGUE GAME. A CHILD ROUNDS HOME BASE AND RJ CHEERS.

ANNIE (V.O.)

RJ watches his son play every Tuesday afternoon while he pretends to do expense reports.

NORA (V.O.)

He's a dad!

RJ

Come on! (MARVELS) Man, that fat, Italian kid's got a cannon for an arm!

ANNIE (V.O.)

He does not follow HR rules when he watches.

THE CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON MISSY, WEARING A HOME-MADE MACARONI NECKLACE.

NORA (V.O.)

Hey! Her kid made that! She's a --

ANNIE (V.O.)

No, she doesn't have kids. She made that herself. She has a really unpopular Etsy store.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NORA'S PRIVATE OFFICE- CONTINUOUS

NORA AND ANNIE ARE AS WE LEFT THEM.

ANNIE

The point is -- you're not alone. We're all trying to figure it out. That always helps me, knowing I'm part of a bigger tribe now. Doesn't that make you feel a little better?

NORA

No.

ANNIE

Okay.

NORA

But you know what does? If those dummies can do it, so can I. I mean that woman named her child Kingsley. I'm better than that. I'm Nora F-- (SPOTS CASSIE NEARBY) fudging Malone. I took a small divorce settlement and built a multi-million dollar company, gave the world open shelving and started an empire -- I can do this!

ANNIE

Yeah, you can! And the good news is
you're the boss. You can set the
rules. You might even be able to make
it better for people.

NORA

What do you mean?

ANNIE

So many ideas. Flex time,
telecommuting, job sharing -- don't
you want to be writing this down?

NORA GRABS A PAD. AS THEIR DYNAMIC SHIFTS AGAIN...

CUT TO:

SCENE T

INT. SHELTER HALLWAY - LATER

DEAN IS COMPLAINING TO ANNIE.

DEAN

Sure, it started as a way to make my office seem unappealing but now all I feel is that vent right above my desk. Sixty-seven degrees? Who can live like this?!

RJ ENTERS THE HALLWAY FROM HIS OFFICE, COUGHING.

RJ

Does anyone know what black lung looks like? Because I think I have it. Annie, Nora's gotta choose a nursery. The not knowing is killing us -- and the mold may actually be killing us.

ANNIE

Just wait. I think you'll be pleased.

DEAN

Look who's got the inside scoop. What's up with you and Nora? Trading clothes and braiding hair... (CLEARLY THREATENED) If I wasn't so confident, I'd be threatened.

NORA ENTERS THE HALLWAY.

NORA

Shelter family! Please gather for an announcement. Obviously that conference call did not go as planned and there have to be some changes around here.

CASSIE TODDLES OVER AND NORA PICKS HER UP AS PEOPLE GATHER.

NORA (CONT'D)

For years, Shelter has been my whole life, and I've demanded the same from you. I thought working parents didn't have as much focus. And now I know that's true. I have half a mind to only hire childless workers.

RJ

(PANICKED) But she's not doing that.

(TO NORA) You can't do that.

NORA

But I think we can find a way -- together -- to do the work that we love here and leave room for a life outside. Today, I change. But I can't do it alone. Be strong enough to tell me what you want. (GAINING STEAM) Learn to advocate for yourselves!

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)

No more disappearing into your office
for hours to cheer on your fat
children! I am giving you the
opportunity to build a better Shelter.
I am counting on you. Don't you dare
let me down!

ANNIE

Aww, look at that.

CASSIE HAS SNUGGLED IN TO NORA. A MATERNAL MOMENT.

NORA

Huh. She likes my "in charge" voice.
Well, I got good news for her -- gonna
be hearing a lot of that, because your
mama kicks ass.

CASSIE

Ass.

NORA

Say "mama"! If you're going to pick
one word from that sentence --
(CALMS) Forget it. You're perfect.
(BACK TO BUSINESS) So as a result of
this new thinking, no one is going to
lose their office because I am turning
the conference room into a nursery.
For everyone to use!

THE OFFICE REACTS, EXCITED.

MISSY

But what if we don't have kids? Can I
bring my dog?

NORA

Let's not get bogged down in details
right now! This is a big moment. And
no!

ANOTHER WORKER

What will we use as a conference room?

MISSY

And what about lizards?

NORA

(SNAPS) Still be kind of afraid of
me!

DEAN

(TO RJ) So we're just supposed to
stay in our offices?

RJ

Wanna switch?

DEAN

Yes please!

ANNIE APPROACHES NORA.

ANNIE

Nicely done.

NORA

Well, I really do want it to be a space that everyone uses. Be sure to bring your baby.

ANNIE

My baby is in 8th grade now but thanks.

NORA

(LOOKS DOWN AT TOP) Uch, Cassie drooled. Can you take this to get dry cleaned?

ANNIE THINKS ABOUT THIS THEN TAKES A STAND.

ANNIE

No. I am more valuable than that.

NORA

Good protege! That was a test.

(SMILE) Now go do it.

AND WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE