

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...