

INT. MIDDLE CLASS KITCHEN - NOT LIGHT OUT YET MORNING

PAULINE sits at a kitchen island in a kitchen that looks like it was probably cleaned by a house keeper.

She opens a CALLSHEET on her tablet. Her Call Time is 9Am. The clock reads 6:45.

She sits very prepared. Tablet. Binder. Bottle of water. She checks a text from Agnes. "See you at six!"

Evidence of her three daughters - ranging from 8 to 22 - litter the room. Pictures. Drawings on fridge.

The usual. But only the usual. No actual kids. No contemporary presence. Just relics.

She opens a text chain on the tablet between her and LILY. It's kids stuff. Stuffed Bunnies. Popular cartoons.

She types "Hey Kid, Do NOT let your dad forget to pack your inhaler. I don't want to have to drive over there again."

BLOOP. Send. TYPE TYPE. "Tell Rose I have her Bon Iver tickets." BLOOP. Send. "Love you guys. Hugs hugs."

She stares at the tablet, waiting for a response. None is forthcoming. She swipes to a TRADE PAPER website.

Variety. Or whatever. It's LA. It's Hollywood. There are enough trades that whatever one she chooses is relevant.

BEEP. BEEP. A car horn sounds outside.

INT. UBER CAR - ON THE WAY TO SET - MORNING

Pauline and Agnes sit in the back seat. Their tablets are open on a production document of some kind.

Pauline swipes over to a budget spreadsheet.

PAULINE  
It's never going to work.

AGNES  
It will work.

PAULINE  
No. No. And no.

Agnes READS FROM THE SCRIPT.

AGNES

"He could see the perfect outline of her knee caps through her jeans." That's what I'm trying to put on screen, Paul. That's why it will work. Because it has to.

PAULINE

Get a fucking insert. If anyone at Le Bon finds out you're not shooting coverage, they're going to plotz.

Agnes chooses to ignore her. She daydreams for a Mo.

AGNES

You know the scene in the motel?

PAULINE

Yes, Agnes. I know the scene at the motel. Kind of huge.

AGNES

I was thinking we could re-stage it on a boat. Like a super derelict yacht. How great would that be?

Pauline wishes she was kidding. But she knows she's not.

PAULINE

Just. No.

AGNES

Something to keep on the back burner.

PAULINE

Try to keep a lid on those kinds of thoughts while I'm gone today.

AGNES

Oh. Em. Gee. How psyched are you for Rose's recital?

PAULINE

Recital? I'm making an appearance at the agency.

AGNES

Paul. It's Rose's dance recital tonight. She's been posting about it all week.

Pauline stares out the window.

PAULINE  
I have to follow my kids social media  
shit now?

AGNES  
Yah duh.

Pauline watches the world blur out the window.

INT. SOUND STAGE - MONITOR - DAY

Pauline sits in a producers chair. DALT, a man with an  
incredible sense of patient composure, talks to her.

DALT  
We love Agnes, and we love the  
material. None of us would be here if  
we didn't.

PAULINE  
Yeah. I'm sure the union scale has  
nothing to do with it.

DALT  
Well. That's what I'm getting at. I  
can't have my guys working OT without  
getting paid. It's one thing to  
overlook a meal penalty. But fifteen  
hour days?

PAULINE  
Maybe if you hadn't gotten us flipped  
there would be more money to cover an  
extra ten minutes here and there.

DALT  
The union's the union. If it will be  
more effective, I'm more than happy  
to talk to Agnes directly.

They both turn to look at the crafty table. Agnes does a  
happy little dance as she loads up a plate with snacks.

PAULINE  
We'll cover overtime from here on  
out. Talk to your guys and see if  
they're OK with deferred back pay for  
what they've worked so far.

DALT  
Done.

He extends his hand. She shakes it with a major eye-roll. Dalt strides off to light things with a heavenly glow.

Agnes pounces up behind Pauline.

AGNES  
Boo. Did I get ya?

PAULINE  
Yes, Agnes. I'm terrified.

Agnes swings into her directors chair.

AGNES  
Wuddup Dalt? He feeling good about everything?

PAULINE  
Yeah, he's good. He was just OKing a day player for next week. One of his guys has a thing.

Agnes studies Pauline's face the whole time.

AGNES  
Swear?

PAULINE  
I swear.

AGNES  
Pinky promise?

Agnes holds up her pinky.

PAULINE  
We need to talk about the pool.

Agnes emphasizes her upheld pinky. Pauline links hers with Agnes's. Agnes immediately buries her face in her binder.

AGNES  
We talked about the pool.

PAULINE  
No. I talked about the pool. You avoided talking about it. The one in Highland Park is too expensive. The one in WeHo is free.

Agnes slams her binder shut.

AGNES

The one in WeHo is in Weho.

PAULINE

And birds fly. And bears shit in the woods. And sometimes first time directors have to compromise.

Agnes leaps to her feet.

AGNES

We had a whole conversation about the "C" word. A whole conversation.

PAULINE

Look, Kid.

Agnes clenches her jaw and walks away. Pauline rubs the bridge of her nose. Eventually she follows after Agnes.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - LATER

Pauline stands in the open doorway. Agnes watches a scene being shot on the monitor. Wayyyy far away.

Cassavetes and Penny do major actee on set. Even from that far away Pauline pays studious attention.

A HUGE CLOUD OF SMOKE drifts across her face. Her eyes shoot to A DUDE FROM THE ART DEPARTMENT.

He has a streak of blue hair and an E-Cigarette planted between his teeth. He vapes for all he's worth.

Their eyes meet. She conveys her disapproval.

ART DEPARTMENT DUDE

What. It's not smoke. It's water vapor. There's nothing bad in it.

Her lips purse. Oh boy. She means business.

ART DEPARTMENT DUDE

You can't get bothered by it. It doesn't even have an odor.

PAULINE

If I see you with that thing again it's going right in the toilet.

He starts to stare her down. She's having none of it.

PAULINE

Shoo.

He slinks off. She turns back to the monitor. Agnes claps her hands together and does a little "great take" dance.

She turns and waves Pauline over, excited.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Agnes stares out the window with a permanent smile on her face. Pauline swipes through emails on her tablet.

PAULINE

Good day today.

Agnes stretches and sighs. She rests her head on Pauline's shoulder and flips through instagram.

AGNES

Look, look. Rose.

She plays her a video of a blurry kids dance recital. Pauline glances at it. But that's all.

PAULINE

Good to see those lessons are paying off. They cost a fortune.

AGNES

Oh hush. Rose love it.

PAULINE

Not as much as her dad loves not paying for it.

The car pulls to a stop in front of a nice upper middle class home. It's Pauline's house.

She opens the door and gets one foot out. Agnes stays firmly where she is.

PAULINE

Come on, lazy bones. We have a ton of shit to cover for tomorrow.

AGNES

Oh. I told a couple of people I'd meet them for a drink. I thought I mentioned.

EXT. PAULINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The car pulls off. Pauline watches it go before turning to make the long walk to her darkened home.

INT. PAULINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door creaks open. Pauline stands, haloed by the street lamps. There's not a single light on in the house.

BLOOP BLOOP. She looks at her tablet. No text. She takes her phone out of her purse.

A slew of texts from her daughters sit unread. The new one is from ROY, her ex-husband.

It's a pretty gnarly criticism of her parenting skills. Then a reminder that she's late with her alimony payment.

The glow of the phone fades from her face when she turns it off. She swipes through work emails on the tablet.

CLICK. The door closes as she moves into the dark house.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

CALLIOPE - a lively three year old - sits on Pauline's lap. Pauline brushes her hair.

PENELOPE, early twenties, lounges on a leather couch. She's got a real free wheeling hipster look and a Malibu tan.

PENELOPE

Mom. Are you planning on answering my question some time this century?

Pauline looks through a spreadsheet over Calliope's head.

PAULINE

Kid, of course she can stay. She's my favorite only granddaughter.

Penelope hops up. Pauline folds the laptop closed.

PENELOPE

Great. Because the auditions in like an hour. In Santa Monica.

PAULINE

You need me to make any calls?

PENELOPE  
 No thanks. I actually like this  
 director. I'd prefer to work with him  
 without his head bitten off.

She stands in front of Pauline's desk with her hand out.

PAULINE  
 PIN number?

PENELOPE  
 Three, five, I covered for you with  
 Roy at Rose's recital last night.

Pauline takes an envelope of petty cash out of the desk and  
 hands Penelope a hundo.

Penelope snatches it and kisses Calliope goodbye.

PENELOPE  
 Keep an eye on your grams for me.  
 She's shifty.

CALLIOPE  
 Bye mom.

Penelope waves her way out the door. Pauline turns Calliope  
 around to face her.

PAULINE  
 My my, that was formal.

Calliope runs her hand lightly over Pauline's face.

CALLIOPE  
 Are you old?

She peers at Pauline intently. She really wants to know.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - HAIR AND MAKEUP - DAY

Pauline plops Calliope in a makeup chair under a canvas  
 tent. She immediately starts playing with a brush.

Agnes appears.

AGNES  
 Mush!

She runs up to Calliope, who jumps in her arms. She  
 immediately starts playing with Agnes's hair.

PAULINE

Is there really no Porto's left?

Agnes slips two napkin-wrapped pastries out of the pocket of her yellow hoodie.

AGNES

Come on, Paul. Who do you think you're dealing with here?

She hands one to Pauline. Pauline actually gazes at it as she unwraps the napkin. Calliope reaches for it.

CALLIOPE

Mine.

Pauline breaks off a piece and gives it to her. Calliope opens and closes her hands.

CALLIOPE

Mine mine.

AGNES

Hey, Mush. Why don't you have half of mine instead? It's way better than Grandma Paul's. Her's is. Pfff. For Grandma's.

This appeases Calliope. Pauline eats her pastry and sits in the makeup chair.

AGNES

Where's your mama?

Calliope shrugs through a mouthful of pastry.

PAULINE

On her way to Santa Monica for an audition.

AGNES

Ooo. Ouch.

PAULINE

No, it's good. She's taking classes. They seem to be working. The last thing I saw her in was good.

AGNES

She still devoted to the art and craft of the the-a-ter?

PAULINE

She's devoted to not getting tangled up with her mom on a professional level.

AGNES

Goody.

CALLIOPE

Goody goody.

AGNES

Hey, Mush. You want to go see how movies are made?

Calliope nods her head. And nods and nods and nods.

PAULINE

You sure?

AGNES

Yeah, we'll have fun. Right Mush?

Agnes trots off with Calliope balanced on her hip. Pauline takes an enormous breath and relaxes into her pastry.

She catches sight of herself in the light-bulb ringed mirror. Her pallor is a little gray.

She eyes the makeup.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - LATER

Pauline sits behind her desk with a face full of makeup. It's a bit much. Calliope sleeps under a coat on the couch.

MANDY, a wiry, athletic blonde in appropriate Film Noir attire, paces back and forth. She angry-whispers.

MANDY

I only even did this as a favor to you because we go back a ways. But this is too much, y'all. Agnes has her head so far up her ass it's not even funny. They brought me to set in the wrong wardrobe three times today. Three. She lost her crew on day two. No one takes her seriously. I mean, she has no idea what she's doing. Why did you even let her do this?

PAULINE

Please don't quit.

MANDY

Paul, I'm sorry. Taking a part this small was favor enough. But working on something that both of us know probably won't see the light of day? I can't. I'm sorry, but I can't. Agnes is a good actor. Really. But this? It isn't for her.

She pulls off a wig and drops it on the desk. As she leaves Pauline catches her reflection in her dark monitor.

She winces.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Pauline sways a sleeping Calliope in her arms. Agnes chews her thumbnail.

AGNES

Is it because of me?

PAULINE

Of course not. She said working with you was the only thing that kept her here this long. She's just doing a Mandy thing. We'll live.

AGNES

Is she allowed to do that? "Do a Mandy thing?" Should you be talking to the lawyers?

PAULINE

Kid.

AGNES

What do I do here? We're kinda under the gun, right?

PAULINE

Yeah. Whatever we come up with we have to come up with fast. We'll have to make calls tonight. Unless you wanted to do it. Like that would make any kind of sense.

AGNES

No. Actually. Wait. That's not bad. I already know the part.

Pauline is relieved. It's clear that she wants nothing more in the world than for Agnes to get in front of a camera.

PAULINE

I mean. It could work.

AGNES

You think? It would be a pretty speedy way to resolve the situation.

PAULINE

It would, it would.

AGNES

Do you think I should do it?

PAULINE

I think what you think you should do is what's important.

Agnes considers. Headlights spill over them as Penelope pulls up. She keeps the car running.

It's a sporty kind of car that looks weird with a car seat in the back. Penelope rolls the window down.

AGNES

Fuck it. I'll do it.

PENELOPE

Hey gorgeous, you want a ride home?

Agnes shoots Pauline a look. Pauline nods and hands her Calliope. Agnes gets her in the car seat and hops in.

PENELOPE

Rose texted me like a million times. She wants you to call her.

The window goes up. The car drives off. Pauline stands there alone. Her phone comes up. She ignores all the new texts.

She swipes open Uber.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - DARK ALLEY SET - NIGHT

Pauline stands with Agnes - in full makeup and wardrobe - in the center of an incredibly bright light.

PAULINE

I can't believe this shit worked out so well. Look at that suit. He's happier than a pig in shit.

They glance over at THE SUIT. He's a money guy. Everyone around him is on their best behavior - and on edge.

The Suit smiles. His posture is open and inviting. Pauline and Agnes share a giddy look.

AGNES

Remind me to send Mandy a fruit basket for quitting later. Like an official "thanks-for-quitting-your-job" edible arrangements kind of thing. They make those, right?

PAULINE

Two more shots and we've officially had the best day ever.

AGNES

I'm doing OK? The scene's good?

PAULINE

Since when do you ask me whether you can act or not?

AGNES

This is different.

Pauline fixes a few loose strands of Agnes's hair.

PAULINE

You're killing it.

Agnes's smile is almost as bright as the 4K shining on the both of them. Pauline gives her a nod. Agnes returns it.

FWISH. POP. CRACKLE. FIZZ. The lights go out. But like. All the lights everywhere go out.

The set is completely dark.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE PRODUCTION OFFICE - LATER

Agnes stands with Pauline outside the closed door. Her wardrobe is gone but her face is still made up.

It looks odd.

AGNES

Do we really have to fire one of them? They're good kids.

PAULINE

We're firing both of them. The whole fucking block is out.

AGNES

I know but. I feel like I just built up some goodwill and now it's. Fffft. Right in the fucking toilet.

Pauline looks at Agnes's plain clothes and her dark, rich makeup. And her incredible vulnerability.

PAULINE

Look. I'll play bad cop. Obviously. You can play inscrutable cop. But we have to fire at least one of them. We just do. OK?

AGNES

Yeah. OK.

Pauline reaches for the door knob.

AGNES

Wait. Gimme a second. Let me get my inscrutable face on.

She takes a few deep breaths and nods.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Agnes and Pauline sit next to each other in the backseat. Agnes takes a shitload of bobby pins out of her hair.

Her lower lip quivers. Her eyes close.

AGNES

I have no fucking idea what I'm doing. Do I?

PAULINE

Aggie. Come on.

Agnes tries to keep it together. It doesn't work. She starts a silent cry. Her head flops int Pauline's lap.

Pauline strokes her hair.

AGNES

I'm the worst.

PAULINE

It's alright, Kid. Shh. You'll be alright. I promise.

The car pulls to a stop in front of Pauline's.

INT. PAULINE'S HOUSE - PENELOPE'S OLD ROOM - NIGHT

Agnes lies curled in a twin bed. The room shows off a fairly savvy teenage girls flair. The house is quiet.

Pauline CLICKS off the light and moves to the door.

PAULINE

You know where everything is.

Agnes snuffles and wipes her nose on a sheet that has a no doubt incredibly high thread count.

AGNES

Wait. Will you stay until I fall asleep?

PAULINE

Yeah, Kid. Of course.

Pauline sinks into a beanbag chair next to the bed. Agnes pulls the covers tighter and turns on her side.

Pauline leans under the bedside stand. She plugs in a dopey kids nightlight. And sinks back into the beanbag.

CUT TO BLACK: