ASSISTANCE

"Pilot"

by
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Based on her play "Assistance"

DRAFT 1/15/2013

ACT ONE

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Award ceremony. Anderson Cooper stands at a podium. He holds a Nobel Peace Prize.

ANDERSON COOPER
Recently a woman has emerged in her field who has inspired countless others to stand up against adversity. For producing “Open Hearts” which has effectively ended hate crimes forever, I am proud to award the very first Nobel Peace Prize in Filmmaking to producer, Nora Johnson.

NORA JOHNSON (accomplished young woman) enters and takes the award from Cooper.

NORA
Oh my gosh, Anderson. It’s so good to see you again. This is such an honor. First of all, I couldn’t pursue this tough career without the support of my beautiful husband and five home-schooled children. But I also have to thank my mentor and my first boss in the industry, Daniel Weisinger. Sadly he’s passed on. He recently perished in a fiery car crash with a helicopter. I don’t know why he was flying a helicopter but that was Daniel... Always brilliant. Always unpredictable. He taught me the value of hard work and saw something special in me--

An iPhone ringtone. “ALARM”. Jarring.

NORA (CONT’D)
Okay, Maureen Dowd, can you turn off your cell? It’s interrupting my dream.

Cooper gives her a crying baby. The ringtone gets deafening.

NORA (CONT’D)
I didn’t order this.

ANDERSON COOPER
But you wanted it.

NORA
I did?!

ANDERSON COOPER
His name is Daniel.

The iPhone rings continue as we...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON -- **NORA JOHNSON** (20s) bolts awake. Nora is a magnetic hyperactive workaholic with a sex appeal directly proportional to her anxiety level.

Exhausted and disoriented, she answers her ringing iPhone.

NORA
I'm here! Ready! What happened?!

SETH (O.S.)
Good morning, beautiful.

NORA
Seth. Let me sleep. I was having my favorite dream.

SETH (O.S.)
The one where Daniel's dead and you get an award? Or the sex dream with Anderson Cooper?

NORA
You can't possibly know me that well. What's up?

SETH (O.S.)
Not much. Chill morning. Daniel hasn't even called in yet.

NORA
Then WHY are you calling me?!

SETH (O.S.)
I just love the smell of Nora's stress in the morning. You are my napalm.

NORA
Ugh. Where am I?

SETH (O.S.)
Unclear. Describe your surroundings.

Nora looks around. We PULL OUT to --

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Nora is on a couch. Fully dressed. An anvil-like purse around her neck. She has slept the entire night at this location.

NORA
White walls?

SETH (O.S.)
(guessing)
Psych ward! You finally cracked under the pressure!

NORA
Leather sofa. Never been cleaned. Mid-century, no, Ikea furniture. Movie Posters? Question mark?

SETH (O.S.)
You're in college! Did you hook up with a girl? Did you tape it? Actually Google Earth says you're in hell. No, wait, Google Earth says you're a lesbian.

Nora notices a sign: EDITING ROOM

She verbally retraces her steps.

NORA
Daniel said: Wait here. I don't care if it's all night. Wait here for the new cut. That's it NEW CUT.

She remembers, grabs her things and sprints to a nearby **RECEPTIONIST**, paper-dry office drone.

TITLE CARD: 8:30 AM

SETH (O.S.)
Daniel will be in by ten.

NORA
I'll be there at 9:30.

SETH (O.S.)
I love you.

NORA
I love-- Shut up! I HATE YOU!

She hangs up on him and addresses Receptionist. She is all business. Here we see Nora is good at her job.

NORA (CONT'D)
Hi. I'm Nora Johnson. Daniel Weisinger's assistant. Here to pick up the newest cut of The Heater. Bad title. We're changing it. Weisinger Company. Project No. AAB-1345. That's Alpha Alpha Bravo. 1345. What's your name?

RECEPTIONIST (DOROTHY)
(feigning importance)
Dorothy. I'm not authorized to release confidential material.

NORA
Dorothy, Do you know who Daniel Weisinger is?

DOROTHY
He's a big producer, right?

NORA
Have you seen The Godfather?

DOROTHY
(more confident)
Yes. Did Daniel produce that?

NORA
No. But good to know your baseline. You know that Godfather scene where the guy wakes up with a bloody horse head in his bed? If I don't get something done, Daniel is the man who puts it there. In MY bed.

Dorothy is sort of scared now.

NORA (CONT'D)
I want you to think about who the horse is in this analogy.

Dorothy trembles.

NORA (CONT'D)
Here's a hint. She's got two thumbs and I'm looking right at her.

Dorothy gives Nora a DVD labeled: THE HEATER - NEW CUT.

NORA (CONT'D)
Thank you. You are a hero. I'm gonna name my first child after you! Wait. "Dorothy?" No, I can't do that. Sleep well tonight!

She bounds out the exit.

MONTAGE - INT./EXT. SUBWAYS - DAY

Nora takes several subways to get to...

INT. NORA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Brooklyn warehouse apartment. Cool but cheap real estate.

Spotless. Zen. Incense burning. Chill Anthropologie vibe.

Nora bursts through the front door like a hurricane.

NORA
GAH!!!

Her sister, **ANNIE JOHNSON** (college-age, fresh-faced hippie) is mid-meditation. She peeks her eyes open.

NORA (CONT'D)
Oops. Namaste. Sorry.

ANNIE
Really. No bra?

Nora feels herself. Annie blows out her meditation candle.

NORA
Weird. I had one yesterday. Must've taken it off in my sleep. Ugh! Man, it was my only red one! Coffee?

ANNIE
No. Even better I made some amazing herbal green tea. But you have to sip it REALLY slowly to enjoy it.

Annie gives her a mug. Nora tries to slow down. Impossible.

NORA
Mmm. Thanks but I don't think I have the time for enjoyment.

ANNIE
Tell me about it. I have midterms all week. Upped my self-care regimen to keep my stress down. Meditation in the mornings. Yoga at night. Non-negotiable.

NORA
You'll be in constant negotiation when you get a job. Every day is midterms.

ANNIE
Nope. That's just YOUR job. Are we still on for dinner tonight?

NORA
Of course! Wouldn't miss it!

ANNIE
Mom and Dad are hounding me about when they should come over. I told them six.

NORA
What's the absolute latest I can get here without upsetting people?

ANNIE
Six.

NORA
Six-Thirty! Done! Can't wait!

ANNIE
Six-Thirty. Hold on. You took your bra off in public? Gross!

Nora exits into...

INT. NORA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Disaster. Looks like a criminal lives here. She rushes to her bathroom. Bumps right into...

JEREMY
OW!

WHAM! He spills mouthwash all over both of them.

JEREMY (early 30s), Nora's long-time boyfriend, is a great guy with an even better future. Med school graduate with a fellowship at a Manhattan hospital.

NORA
Oh my gosh your shirt!

JEREMY
Oh my gosh your face!

They embrace and kiss. During the following dialogue, they alternate brushing their teeth, washing their faces, changing their clothes (ala that scene from Working Girl). These are two very busy people. But in sync with how busy they are.

NORA
Sorry I didn't come home last night.

JEREMY
Sorry I spent all night with my other girlfriend.

NORA
Oh the imaginary one that looks like Mila Kunis?

JEREMY
No. The real one named Rachel Maddow. I also kicked Annie's ass in Super Smash Brothers.

NORA
Was this before or after her yoga? Ugh. I hate that you watch Maddow. It makes me feel like you're smarter than me.

JEREMY
But I am smarter than you.

He takes her in his arms. They slow down for this...

NORA
Ugh. Stop. I smell like nickels and sadness.

JEREMY
You look great. You smell even better. No bra?

NORA
Lost it.

JEREMY
I hated that red one.

They kiss again. This time for longer. Awesome. Nora could do this all day but Jeremy pulls away...

JEREMY (CONT'D)
I'm gonna be late. Will you hand me the floss?

She opens the medicine cabinet and on one of the shelves...

A Silence of the Lambs DVD. Nora drops her toothbrush.

NORA
Is that what I think it is?

JEREMY
What do you think it is?

NORA
An out-of-print Spine #13 Criterion Collection "Silence of the Lambs" with the commentary that made me devote my life to film backslash haunted my nightmares forever.

JEREMY
Happy Birthday Nora.

NORA
I've been looking for a copy of this DVD since my mom threw out my laserdisc when I was fourteen.

JEREMY
I tried to get the laserdisc but some nerd outbid me on Ebay.

Nora is in love with this guy. They kiss.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
This is just a mezzo-present. You'll get the real present tonight. I got off early today so I could make it by six.

NORA
Six thirty.

JEREMY
I still can't believe Daniel gave you the night off.

NORA
About that...

JEREMY
You didn't ask him?!

NORA
You know how Daniel works. You say "yes" now. Work out the details later. I'll be here. I promise.

JEREMY
Daniel has two assistants. Why doesn't Seth cover for you?

NORA
It doesn't work like that. I can't leave him with the baby. Working for Daniel is like team-parenting.

JEREMY
Maybe you'd rather spend your birthday with your work-husband.

NORA
Stop it. It's more like we're amicably divorced. You can't be jealous of my job.

JEREMY
No one in their right mind would be jealous of those hours.

NORA
When you worked over eighteen hours a day during their residency, I was unquestionably supportive.

JEREMY
And I am unquestionably supportive of your film-equivalent residency. However, you aren't saving lives. You're making movies.

NORA
Details. You're not saving lives either. As an orthopedic surgeon, you're, at best, saving knees.

JEREMY
(smirks)
Details.

NORA
You're lucky I'm late or I'd give YOU a mezzo-present.
(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)
That’s a euphemism for the thing we do with the whipped cream and Oscar trivia. LOVE YOU BYEEEEEE!

She’s out the door and gone.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

TITLE CARD: 10 AM

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Nora leans, eyes closed, against the wall of the elevator.

An EMPLOYEE shares the elevator with her. He hold some take-out with ketchup packets. He stares at her. He listens...

Nora is lightly snoring. She's fallen asleep.

Her own snores wake Nora up.

NORA
I'm here! I love you! I'm sorry!

She glances at the Employee. She tries to make a joke.

NORA (CONT'D)
Wednesday, right?

EMPLOYEE
It's Tuesday.

NORA
It is? Wow. Brutal. You gonna use all that ketchup?

She grabs a bunch of his ketchup packets.

She opens the ketchup packets with her teeth and rubs them against her shirt. It looks like she's bleeding.

The Employee is aghast. Nora explains:

NORA (CONT'D)
No one hassles an injured man. Am I right?

Finger-gun snap to Employee.

DING! Doors open. She exits into...

INT. WEISINGER BUILDING - 4TH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Barely controlled chaos. A living breathing mess.

Rows and rows of cubicles and desks. Full of ASSISTANTS. Offices with frosted glass doors. Behind them are EXECUTIVES.

Nora makes her way toward DANIEL'S OFFICE through the labyrinth of stress...

JENNY (20s), British beauty with a sleek body and a head for numbers, intercepts her. They walk and talk.

JENNY
We need to talk. Several expense reports are behind. Daniel's Amex--
(re: ketchup)
Oh my god! What happened!

NORA
I was stabbed on my way here! I can't talk! I'm bleeding to death!

JENNY
Daniel needs to sign his alimony checks. We've gotten two warnings--

Nora hands her executed alimony CHECKS from her purse.

JENNY (CONT'D)
These better not be back-dated. That's illegal.

NORA
Arrest me. Seriously. Arrest me. I could use the break.

She flags down **VINCE** (20s), a slick frat boy.

NORA (CONT'D)
Hold me up. Hold me up. I only want to talk to you. Make it look like you're taking me to the hospital.

Vince supports Nora. They walk and talk.

NORA (CONT'D)
We need you to notarize those Kellerman contracts by 4 today.

VINCE
Why would I do that?

NORA
Cuz being a notary public is your only redeeming quality as a human?

VINCE
I get to charge lunch to Daniel's tab at Cipriani. For a month.

NORA
Fine. Could've gotten more out of that. Try for an iPad next time.

She walks smack into **ZACH** (college-age), a nervous intern.

ZACH
So I went to Daniel's apartment--

NORA
Weird. Okay.

ZACH
-- I dropped off the printer and walked the dog--

NORA
Don't care. I've been stabb-- WAIT!
(intensely)
Did you spray his orchid?

ZACH
(cringes)
Please don't fire me.

NORA
I've told you: I don't have the authority fire you. So I'm going to pretend you don't exist.

Nora enters...

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

An anteroom outside Daniel's private office.

TWO DESKS face each other. Each desk is like the messy cockpit of a private Millennium Falcon. Both are buried in paperwork, old coffee cups, and take-out containers. Awards and expensive art adorn the walls.

At one of the desks, is **SETH CAMPBELL** (20s).

Seth is good-looking in that "office" way. He has the smug assuredness of either a soulmate or an arch-enemy.

He is on the phone, shaking a gold-plated martini shaker.

NOTE: Whenever Nora or Seth make a phone call, they use a headset that can mute/unmute their voices.

SETH
Last four digits of Daniel's social are 8735. He just signed the lease yesterday. The make of the car is, oh, hold on a second I'll check--
(mutes himself)
GOOD MORNING VIETNAM! Love the fake blood.

NORA
I did it so no one would give me more work. Didn't pan out.

SETH
(re: shaker)
Can you believe this? His accountant sent it! I never had the heart to tell him Daniel quit drinking two years ago.
(unmutes)
Yeah, Doug? Thanks for holding. The car is a BMW 7 series. M750i as in "India". M as in "Thumb".

NORA
Zach killed the orchid.

Seth points to an orchid on Nora's desk. Note attached.

NORA (CONT'D)
You didn't.

SETH
(mutes)
Nope. I didn't. They're from Jerome.

NORA
Jeremy. How sweet!

SETH
Whatever. Orchid reeks of trying too hard. What's the special occasion, Napalm? You finally let him go to second base?

Nora checks the card from Jeremy. A sweet birthday greeting. She smiles to herself. She saves the card in her pocket.

NORA
No occasion. At least nothing you would care about.

SETH
My not caring is what you find most sexually intriguing about me. Admit it. Admit it. Admit it. Admi--
(unmutes)
Right. The deductible. Yep. Yep. 500 against the third party--

Nora leans over his desk and hangs up his call. CLICK!

NORA
You need to prioritize. Daniel just leased that car. You can finalize his insurance over the weekend. We have bigger fish to fry namely--

She holds up “The Heater - New Cut” DVD.

SETH
Screening room ready to rock but ten bucks says he doesn’t even watch your pet project.

NORA
I have a good feeling about this new cut. Once Daniel sees it, he’ll definitely want to release it.

SETH
Our job isn’t movies. Our job is Daniel. Let’s stay focused here.

NORA
It’s a good movie. It’s just a bad title. With a smart ad campaign--

SETH
Stop caring, Nora. It’s dangerous. I say let it die. All your sleeping was for nothing!

NORA
If I hadn’t slept there, you would’ve forgotten. Don’t hate me for being successful.

SETH
There is no success in this job. Just sustained failure. The last thirty minutes of Goodfellas over and over.

NORA
"Success is moving from one failure to the next with no loss of enthusiasm." Winston Churchill.

SETH
"The way to screw up somebody's life is to give them what they really want." Patrick Swayze.

NORA
Don't bring Swayze into this. He's pure. He made great movies.
(suddenly emotional)
I just wanna make great movies.

RING! RING! Nora answers Daniel's phone.

NORA (CONT'D)
Daniel Weisinger's office.

INTERCUT W/

INT. WHOLE FOODS - DAY

Annie strolls through the gluten-free aisle. Her cart loaded up with groceries and party supplies.

ANNIE
I'm thinking pasta with a starter salad 'cuz you haven't eaten a vegetable since the 90s.

NORA
Why in Mohammad's holy unutterable presence are you calling me on Daniel's line?

ANNIE
You didn't pick up your cell. Just checking: Are you still doing gluten-free? Or was that phase over before it began?

Seth makes motion at Nora like "Everything okay?" Nora gives him an annoyed thumbs up.

Nora prepares piles of Daniel's paperwork for him.

NORA
I'm pro-gluten! And your pasta is the answer to everything.

ANNIE
Okay. I was thinking for drinks we could do... What are those cocktails called? They're orange juice and gasoline.

NORA
(distracted)
Napalm.

SETH
(hurt)
Someone else calls you that?

Nora waves him away like "Shut Up".

NORA
(to Annie)
Yeah. Sure. Whatever.

ANNIE
You just okayed poisoning everyone. You're not listening to me.

NORA
Some shiny things distracted me.

ANNIE
Why am I doing all this work if you don't even care?

Nora dances a little.

NORA
Annie, I care SO much I'm break-dancing. You just can't see it 'cuz we're on the phone.

WHAM! The office door slams open. Nora and Seth freezes.

NORA (CONT'D)
Gotta go forever.

CLICK! She hangs up on Annie. Into the office, waltzes...

DANIEL WEISINGER (early 60s), a powerful self-made baby boomer. His stature is stout but his presence palpable and large. A thick intensity follows him everywhere.

He is on his iPhone on a call. His voice drips with charm.

DANIEL
(on his call)
Of course, Ben. But we'll only need you for six weeks and you can spare that. You can give me six precious weeks out of your year.

Nora puts some documents in front of him to sign.

Daniel slams his fist. WHACK! Then points to his eyes.

His face is furious but his voice level and sweet.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(on his call)
We go way back. Don't we? I mean, I practically started your career. No offense. JUMP-started. Yes.

WHACK! Daniel slams his fist again and points to his eyes.

Nora doesn't know what his gestures means. She's scared.

Seth slips Daniel's READING GLASSES on his face.

Daniel reads and signs documents as if the glasses had just appeared. Nora breathes with relief. Seth winks at her.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(on his call)
Exactly. Hmm-mm. Six weeks. For me. Okay. Lovely. Music to my ears. I'll call your agents then? Great.

Daniel snaps his fingers in Seth's face. SNAP! SNAP!

He makes a cutting motion across his head. Like a haircut.

Seth gets out some scissors. Nora gets on the phone. Dials.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(on his call)
Well, that's wonderful. You are a peach, Ben. Yep. Excellent.

Daniel snaps in Seth's face again. SNAP!

Seth tries to cut Daniel's hair. Daniel knocks the scissors out of Seth's hands. Seth silently reacts with pain.

NORA
(sotto; on the phone)
This is Nora from Daniel Weisinger's office calling to schedule a haircut for Daniel today. What do you have available?

DANIEL
(on his call)
Great, Ben. Talk soon. By the way, I know we're not telling anyone but the new hair looks great.
(hangs up, to Seth)
What's wrong with you?

Seth wraps his hand in paper towels. Some blood.

SETH
Nothing. I'm fine.

DANIEL
(deafening yell)
NORAAAAH!

NORA
(mutes)
I'm making you a haircut appointment. The only time they have today is in an hour. So--

DANIEL
I'll take it.

Nora's face falls a little. Seth warns her with a slashing motion across his neck. She pushes through.

NORA
You have the screening room set up for the new cut of The Heater.

DANIEL
(deafening)
I HATE THAT TITLE.

NORA
We could screen the film now then--

DANIEL
Why are you trying to make me do that? Do you run this company? Do you make any decisions at all? No. You do what I tell you to do. You are the flailing arm on the body of a giant and if you don't stop spazzing out, I will cut you off and grow another one.

Nora and Seth exchange a look. That was both terrifying and confusing. Daniel snatches her orchid.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Is this my new orchid?

Behind Daniel, Seth holds up a sign that reads:

"Yes Now. Details Later."

NORA
Yes.

DANIEL
I mean, thank you. Fix my car.
Smells like ketchup in here. Bye.

He exits. Nora and Seth watch him go. Both dazed.

His blood real. Her blood fake. Nora snaps out of it.

NORA
(unmutes)
Yes. I'm still here. Daniel will
take the 11 AM slot. Thanks.
(hangs up)
I've spent my entire adult life
trying to become that man.

Seth pours bright yellow drinks out of the martini shaker.

SETH
Well, you can't blame him for that.

He hands her a drink.

NORA
It's too early.

SETH
It's non-alcoholic. It's a mixture
of Red Bull and Five Hour Energy.

NORA
Here's to Tuesday!

SETH
It's Wednesday.

NORA
Already?

They cheers. Seth drinks. Nora thinks.

NORA (CONT'D)
Did he say "Fix my car"?

They rush to the window. Look out...

Nora and Seth's POV: A busy New York street. On the curb...

Daniel's brand new BMW is COMPLETELY TOTALED.

NORA (CONT'D)
(stunned)
Please tell me you insured this car even after I told you doing it today was a waste of time.

SETH
Nope. I didn't.

NORA
(terror)
Jiminy Crickets.

She slams her drink and gives Seth ten bucks.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CAR RENTAL COMPANY - DAY

Florescent and sleek. High end place. Luxury rides on display.

Nora and Seth haggle with **RENTAL EMPLOYEE**, blue-collar stiff.

NORA
Yes. It MUST be a BMW 7 Series. M750i. M as in “Mike”. I as in “I will throw myself out this window.”

SETH
We’re on the ground floor.

NORA
I will throw myself THROUGH this window.

RENTAL EMPLOYEE
We have one of those models left but the last three cars we rented to Daniel Weisinger were returned with severe damage. We’ll approve only if he isn’t the driver.

SETH
What does that mean?

RENTAL EMPLOYEE
It means one of you will have to be the primary driver and, if something happens to the car, you will be held responsible.

SETH
Okay. We need a conference. Nora, will you step into my office?

Nora and Seth step about ten feet away.

NORA
I can’t drive him to Long Island tonight.

SETH
I can’t do it! I don’t have a driver’s license.

NORA
That can’t possibly be true.

SETH
Born and bred in Manhattan. Why would I need a license?

NORA
I have plans!

SETH
What are these “PLANS” you speak of? Is it Christmas? I thought we agreed to work all “other tier holidays” together. You and me in the trenches. Arbor Day last year was magical.

NORA
Seth, please it’s really important that I go to this dinner tonight--

SETH
Is this about Gerald?

NORA
His name is Jeremy! Stop pretending you don’t know his name. Also, my sister, my parents. I have familial obligations.

SETH
Since when?

NORA
Since always. I’ll have you know I’m a well-adjusted adult. I have a normal life on top of this job.

SETH
I’ll drive Daniel tonight if you answer the following question.

NORA
Fine. Yes. What?

SETH
I don’t think you WANT to go to this dinner. I think you’re addicted to this job just like I am. And you’d rather spend YOUR BIRTHDAY with me. So the question is: Do you actually WANT a normal life on top of this job?

Nora shocked. He remembered. She falters for a moment then...

NORA
Maybe I don't WANT a normal life.
But I definitely NEED one.

Seth understands. He marches back over to the Rental Employee.

SETH
I'll be driving Mr. Weisinger.

RENTAL EMPLOYEE
Okay. Driver's license.

SETH
Don't have one. But I do have this.

WHAM! He breaks out the gold-plated martini shaker.

SETH (CONT'D)
I have no idea how much this is worth. But my guess is it could fund a much needed vacation at the very least via an Ebay auction.

Seth makes magician-like flourishes with his hands.

The Rental Employee eyes him.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: 4 PM

FADE IN:

INT. WEISINGER BUILDING - 4TH FLOOR - DAY

Nora and Seth walk and talk through the maze of cubicles.

NORA
You remembered my birthday. I'm impressed.

SETH
I'm impressive.

NORA
You aren't regularly. That's why I'm impressed.

Vince approaches them. They all walk and talk.

VINCE
Still bleeding?

SETH
She's PMSing. She'll be bleeding next week. I have her menstrual cycle highlighted on my iCal.

NORA
(to Seth; earnestly)
Thank you for remembering. I can't afford to lose any more underwear.

Vince hands her notarized contracts.

VINCE
Notarized contracts. I charged my lunch to Cipriani.

SETH
Why didn't you go for the iPad?

VINCE
I didn't know that was an option!

SETH
Title of your memoir!

Nora and Seth leave him in the dust. Zach intercepts them. He carries a FedEx package. They walk and talk.

ZACH
I forgot to FedEx this last night. Is there anyway we can courier it to San Diego--

SETH
(to Zach)
You're fired!

Zach bursts into tears.

SETH (CONT'D)
Just kidding! I don't have the authority to do that.

Seth takes the FedEx package. Nora and Seth enter...

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jenny, the British assistant, has been covering for them while they were out.

The office has vastly improved in their absence. It's cleaner. The stress level is low. Jenny's voice calming.

JENNY
Daniel Weisinger's office. He's unavailable right now. Can we return? Thank you.

SETH
Oh my god. She cleaned. How am I going to find anything?

Jenny ends her call and reads off a legal pad of notes.

JENNY
Welcome back. I scheduled Daniel's crown replacement for Friday.

NORA
I've been trying to get him to the dentist for SIX MONTHS!

JENNY
I fixed the fax machine and a singing telegram came three times. We had security throw him out. He left the message from Jeremy:
(as if it were in a foreign language)
"I love you"?

SETH
Awww. Jerry! What a guy!

NORA
(deflated; childlike)
I love singing telegrams.

Jenny gets a little close to Seth. These two have a history.

JENNY
(to Seth, flirting)
Let me know when you need me to run things a bit more smoothly in here.

SETH
I'd rather choke on my own tongue.

JENNY
If memory serves, you enjoy a light choking.

SETH
I thought the British accent was just a role play thing. Looks like you're serious about keeping it.

She backs off. Slightly.

JENNY
(to Nora)
You know, this job doesn't have to be an emergency all the time.

NORA
Yeah. It's that sort of attitude that really helped you guys stick it to the colonies.

DANIEL (O.S.)
NORAAAAAH!

Everyone stiffens. Daniel enters from inside his office.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I want to screen the film now.

NORA
The Heater? Okay. Well...

Behind Daniel, Seth makes a motion like "The screening room is still set up."

NORA (CONT'D)
The screening room is still set up. I'll walk you down now.

DANIEL
I want you to watch it with me.

SILENCE. Seth and Jenny's mouths ajar.

NORA
What?

DANIEL
I want your opinion on it.

NORA
(shocked)
I... Uh...

DANIEL
Cuz you're smart and knowsomethingsabouttheotherstuffcallBensagentlater.

Seth drops the FedEx package he was holding. THUMP!

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(to Seth)
I mean, did you know you just dropped something?

Daniel exits. Seth and Jenny are in awe of Nora.

NORA
(to Seth and Jenny)
He complimented me. I've waited a whole year for him to compliment me and I couldn't even hear it.

Nora rushes after Daniel thru...

INT. WEISINGER BUILDING - 4TH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Daniel snakes his way through the labyrinth. Nora follows.

This time through the maze is practically silent. ASSISTANTS sit at attention. EXECUTIVES stealthily close their doors. No one wants to catch Daniel's attention or his ire.

Daniel arbitrarily snatches paperwork off desks, reads it, then throws it at Nora. She pockets it in her canvas bag.

Nora's iPhone vibrates. It's Jeremy.

She answers and speaks in a strained whisper.

INTERCUT W/

INT. CIRCO PASTRY SHOP - DAY

Bakery with that Brooklyn blend of "Mom and Pop" style and "Yuppie" prices. Jeremy picks up Nora's birthday cake.

NORA
What's up?

JEREMY
Did you get the singing telegram?

NORA
Yes. I loved it. Thank you.

JEREMY
Your voice has a hostage vibe to it. You okay?

Daniel dumps five or six scripts in Nora's hands.

DANIEL
(to Nora)
I wanna read all these tonight.

JEREMY
Are you with him?

Daniel swerves into an EXECUTIVE's office and rampages at an UNPREPARED SUIT.

DANIEL
(screams)
WHAT is the HOLD UP, moron! Why do I have to do everything mysel--

Nora goes to follow him in but he SLAMS the door in her face.

NORA
Yes. I'm with him.

JEREMY
So I hear.

NORA
(rapturous)
Jeremy! He complimented me. He asked me to watch The Heater with him. I think I can convince him to release it.

JEREMY
Tight! How long is the movie?

Nora's face falls. Crap.

She checks a wall clock: <u>It's 4:15PM.</u> Cutting it close.

NORA
I can make it home by 6:30.

JEREMY
Can you?

NORA
(not sure she can but...)
I REALLY want to have this party. I have planned and tried to arrange the whole day around it.

JEREMY
Well, you "want" to but it doesn't sound like you can.
(MORE)

JEREMY (CONT'D)
You should be up front with people. And when I say “people” I mean me.

NORA
I don’t want to say “no” to you.

JEREMY
You gonna say “no” to Daniel? Did you suddenly grow six testicles? You wanna be part of that craziness? Fine.

NORA
I don’t! I want to be home.

Daniel storms out of the EXECUTIVE’s office and towards...

The Elevators. Nora presses the DOWN button.

Nora looks at Daniel. He SCOWLS. Who can say no to that face?

JEREMY
I don’t care who you say “no” to but sooner or later you have to say it to someone.

She turns away from Daniel and discreetly pleads...

NORA
(sotto)
Please let me try to do both.

Jeremy may be doubtful but agrees...

JEREMY
Break a leg, baby. I love you.

NORA
(muffling her response)
Iluffewtool.

She hangs up and rejoins Daniel at his side.

DANIEL
(peeved)
Are you done finally?

DING! The elevator door opens.

A MAN IN A CHICKEN SUIT gets off. He’s the singing telegram.

SINGING TELEGRAM
(sings)
“Isn’t She Lovely?/ Isn’t she won-
der-ful / God I’m so happy--”

Nora doesn’t know what to do. Daniel is stone-faced.

DANIEL
Call security.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: 6:50 PM

FADE IN:

INT. SCREENING ROOM - NIGHT

A good film ends. The lights come up.

Nora loved it. Daniel fell asleep. Nora wonders how she can wake him up without touching him. She turns on her iPhone.

DING! DING! The sound of multiple texts flood Nora’s phone.

Daniel snorts awake, sort of like an animal who has no idea he was just sleeping.

DANIEL
So... Thoughts.

NORA
I loved it.

She scans them. From Jeremy: “What happened?!” “U okay?”

DANIEL
Well, I thought it was crap so I’m
waiting for you to dazzle me.

DING! DING! She scrolls down. Increasingly annoyed texts from Jeremy, Annie and Mom: “You’re LATE!” “WHAT’S HAPPENING!” Nora starts typing a response.

NORA
Sorry. Just a sec--

DANIEL
(louder)
What are you doing? Pay attention
to me. THOUGHTS! THINK! BRAIN!

NORA
I'M SORRY! I'M LATE! AND MY FAMILY--

DANIEL
STOP YELLING!

NORA
I'M NOT YELLING! YOU'RE YELLING AND I'M MATCHING YOUR VOLUME!

DANIEL
WHAT DID YOU THINK, NORA!?

NORA
I thought...
(gathers courage)
It's a wonderful movie. It's original. Good conflict. With a clever ad campaign and a better title, the audience it's meant for will find it. That's what I think.

Beat. Daniel narrows his eyes at her. Nora braces herself.

DANIEL
I disagree and I don't think we should release it. SHELVE IT!

He stands to leave. Nora confronts him.

NORA
Do you even care about movies?

DANIEL
Excuse me?

NORA
Were you actually interested in my opinion or did you ask just to screw with me?

DANIEL
Johnson, you can't expect me to take you seriously when you're just trying to get out of here.

NORA
I'm not!

DANIEL
Then why are you're texting while you're talking to me?

Nora looks down. **She has been blind-texting her family through all of this.**

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Read them to me.

NORA
It's my birthday. There's a party. I had to get back to them--

DANIEL
READ WHAT YOU JUST SENT! OR I WILL FIRE YOU THEN DROPKICK YOUR PHONE!

NORA
(reads)
"Wrapping up with Crazy Pants. Be there soon." Okay. For the record: I meant "Crazy Pants" in a totally respectful way.

DANIEL
Do YOU care about movies? Or maybe birthdays are more your passion?

NORA
That's not fair! My birthday means a lot to the people who love me. I don't have to choose between the people I love and the work I love.
(pause)
Wait. Do I?

He shakes his head. Disappointed. He takes a beat then...

DANIEL
You're right about this film, Johnson. It's got a good conflict. That's what makes great drama: Conflict. You know where conflict doesn't work? In life. That's why you're right about this but you're wrong about me. I made a choice a long time ago that this--
(he points to the screen)
--is the most important part of my life. So, yes, I care about movies. I chose them over every other aspect of my life. You can't have both. Choose. Then there's no conflict. No drama. You're welcome.

NORA
So you're gonna shelve this?

He contemplates her for a moment. For the first time, his demeanor melts to an almost paternal vibe.

DANIEL
We'll release it in March. I want you to schedule a marketing meeting in the morning. A lot of work to do. It's your movie now.

NORA
My movie?

DANIEL
With opinions come responsibility. You gonna get good at this. In the meantime, you know who celebrates birthdays? Little kids. Grow up, Johnson.

He exits. Nora sits with this. He's curt but he's not wrong.

EXT. WEISINGER BUILDING - NIGHT

Seth waits by a brand new BMW rental. Daniel and Nora enter.

DANIEL
(to Seth)
Good. Yep. You drive. I'll sleep. Nice work today, Seth. I'll most likely fire you in the morning.

Daniel gets into the back of the car. Seth closes the door.

SETH
(nostalgic)
He says that to me every day!

NORA
He wants to read ALL of these tonight.

She gives Seth the pile of scripts Daniel tossed at her.

SETH
Good thing I booked him that speed-reading course later.

NORA
He's releasing it. Looks like all my caring paid off. You should try it sometime.

SETH
I'll look into it.

He hands her the FedEx package from earlier.

SETH (CONT'D)
Drop this off on your way home. Tell normal I said "Hello". See you tomorrow, Napalm!

Nora takes the package and watches Seth speed off in the BMW. Right thru a red light. She smiles.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: 7:30 PM

INT. NORA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lights dimmed. Birthday decorations. About a dozen GUESTS, including NORA'S PARENTS (both late 50s). On a cake, candles have burnt all the way down to the "Happy Birthday Nora" frosting. Some guests watch...

Jeremy and Annie play a high-stakes round of SUPER SMASH BROTHERS. Jeremy wins.

JEREMY
I AM INVINCIBLE! You owe me a free Transcendental Meditation class.

Nora enters like a hurricane.

NORA
Birthday! NAILED it!

ANNIE
(to guests)
She's here, everyone! Finally!

Guests applaud and gather around. **NORA'S MOM, SUSAN**, nice but sorta dark, and **NORA'S DAD, ALAN**, a square but super smart, approach with a gift. Nora hugs them both.

ALAN
Busy day at the office?

NORA
Sure, Dad. “Busy” like a hooker on Friday.

SUSAN
Oh honey. Don’t talk about sex in front of your father.

NORA
You’re the one who just said “sex” like super loudly at a birthday.

ALAN
All these late nights. Bet you’ll get that promotion soon.

NORA
Little more complicated than that but yeah. That’s the idea.
(shakes her present)
Thank you! What’s this?

SUSAN
Well, we did get you wireless headphones but I heard they give you brain cancer so I returned those and got you bath salts. Don’t eat them. That’s how people are getting high now. I heard that on NPR.

Jeremy hugs and kisses her.

NORA
(under her breath, to Jeremy)
Thank you for dealing with my family for an hour solo.

JEREMY
You ready for your present?

NORA
Wait. First. Everyone! I wish I had a more interesting way of saying I’m sorry. But I don’t. So I’m sorry for being late tonight.

ANNIE
It’s okay! Stop the verbal diarrhea. If you can. For a second.

JEREMY
This is why I wanted to make sure you'd make it tonight.

Jeremy gets on one knee. He opens a small box. BLING! A gorgeous ENGAGEMENT RING.

NORA
Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh.

JEREMY
I had it made. There isn't another like it in the world. Just like you.

NORA
(tears up)
That's so lame. It's so beautiful.

JEREMY
I love you. I know we run a fast race. And I know we won't always be able to run at the same pace or even the same direction. But I figured this way, when we limp over the finish line, we'll do it together. Whatya say? You wanna do this?

Nora looks around at...

Annie. So excited for her big sister.

Her mother. Might cry from happiness.

Her father. Giving a geeky thumbs up.

All the guests. They wait for her response. Nora feels the pressure. Finally she looks back at...

Jeremy. Smiling, loving and, most of all, HAPPY.

NORA
Yes.

Details later.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. NORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later that evening. Nora enters. From the living room we can hear that there's an awesome birthday party under way.

Nora stops on her way to her bathroom to admire her ring. She notices...

Her canvas bag on her bed. Inside it, the FedEx package she was supposed to drop off.

NORA
Oh CRAP!

She takes it out of her bag and looks closer at it.

There's a note:

"THIS ISN'T A FEDEX! IT'S A BIRTHDAY PRESENT, STUPID!"

She opens it. It's a Criterion collection Spine #13 "Silence of the Lambs"...

...the laserdisc.

"Enjoy! Some nerd drove the price way up for this sucker on Ebay. Happy Birthday. xx Seth"

NORA (CONT'D)
Oh crap...

END OF SHOW