

INT. LOS ANGELES COURTHOUSE, HALLWAY. MORNING

A man and woman are shouting at each other. The lawyers trying to separate them. Various benches are filled with the other divorcing couples, men and women sitting apart from one another with their individual representatives.

In their midst, Nora and Nicole sit on a bench in the wide, dingy hallway. Amir sorts through documents nearby.

NORA

I think we're mostly finished.  
Bert and I hammered out ninety-percent of the details, there's a couple minor things hanging that should be easy and then the judge will make your divorce official.

NICOLE

OK, good--

NORA

I hear the tracking for your show is off the chain--

NICOLE

Oh, I don't even know what that means, but good I guess--

NORA

I made sure the date of separation came AFTER the pilot pick-up to protect that money--  
(suddenly)  
Fuck me.

NICOLE

What?

She follows Nora's gaze to Jay Marotta who marches down the hallway, conferring with Charlie.

JAY MAROTTA

It's not television. It's not a wise judge played by a great character actor. These are just people open to manipulation like anyone else. You think it's justice, but it's not.

NICOLE

Who is that?

NORA  
Charlie shouldn't have done this.

NICOLE  
What do you mean? Where's Bert?

NORA  
It means everything we've agreed upon is now off the table.

Jay and Charlie take a bench a ways away. Jay says Hi to some other lawyers.

NICOLE  
But, we've got LA, right--

NORA  
Not with Jay Marotta representing him. This is a street fight now. And I'm going to have to ask for things we wouldn't normally ask for. We'll need as much leverage as possible to negotiate with.

Nora rises with a pinched smile--

NORA  
This system rewards bad behavior.

--and greets Jay.

Nicole looks over at Charlie who doesn't meet her eye.

INT. COURT ROOM. DAY

The low hum of a copier machine and periodic mouse-clicks from a computer.

JAY MAROTTA  
A little history.

Jay speaks in front of the judge who clearly has a bad cold. Charlie sits at the end of the table with Ted, the associate. Nicole is at the corresponding end of an adjacent table next to Nora and Amir.

JAY MAROTTA  
Ten years ago, Charlie takes a risk when he first hires Nicole as an actress in his play in New York City.

(MORE)

JAY MAROTTA (CONT'D)

He's a well regarded, up and coming director of the avant garde and she's known as the girl in that college sex movie who takes her top off.

NORA

My client will not be slut-shamed for an artistic choice.

JAY MAROTTA

Ten years on and many prestigious theater roles later, she's become an actress of great credibility. And because of this credibility, she's offered a lead roll on a major television show. This new opportunity in her life is thanks to Charlie. Your honor, I don't see why we should be paying any support money at this point. In fact, Charlie should be entitled to half of her TV salary, present and future earnings on the show.

Nora takes a moment.

NORA

Charlie has just received the enormous sum of six hundred and fifty thousand dollars in the form of a MacArthur grant for the theater work he has conducted during the marriage.

JAY MAROTTA

Of which he gets in 125 thousand installments over five years, money that is used to employ actors and crew members and to pay back debts he's accumulated with his theater company that stars his wife.

NORA

By Jay's same logic, this is work that Nicole contributed to in numerous ways. Not only did she give up a lucrative and successful career in movies to perform in his little theater, she also supplied Charlie with a loan early on to help out.

JAY

Which he paid back--

NORA

She lent her name to the marquee and was the principle reason people came to the theater.

JAY  
That may have been true ten  
years ago--

NORA  
She, in turn, helped  
establish Charlie's  
reputation.

Charlie looks over at Nicole. She looks down.

NORA  
Over the next ten years she was  
subsequently offered parts in  
movies, TV shows, most of which  
she turned down at Charlie's  
bequest to be a mother and to act  
in his plays. Now, while we're  
willing to be flexible on support  
we contend that half of Charlie's  
grant money should be split  
between the parties.

Charlie looks at Jay.

JAY MAROTTA  
I don't see how you can claim that  
she gets half a grant dedicated to  
his genius.

NORA  
He became a genius during the  
course of the marriage.

JAY MAROTTA  
Oh, come on, Nora.

NORA  
Charlie, himself, upon  
hearing he received the  
prize, told Nicole it  
belonged to her too.

JAY MAROTTA  
That's something people say when  
they win awards.

NORA  
No, he was implying what was true:  
his genius was an intangible asset  
built during the marriage.

Charlie and Nicole both stare at the floor.

JAY MAROTTA

Nora, I like how you refer to Charlie's theater as a ramshackled downtown dump when you're arguing custody, but when you want more money, Charlie's a big rich genius Broadway director. You can't have it both ways.

NORA

Why not? And whether you think it's fair or not, Jay, the first monetary installment from the MacArthur grant was then put in a joint marital account and thus became community property so this and any further installments should be split between the parties.

Jay whispers to Charlie.

JAY MAROTTA

Fuck. You shouldn't have put that money in the joint account.

CHARLIE

There's not going to be anything left anyway, I'm using it all to divorce her...

Jay turns back to Nora.

JAY MAROTTA

Nora, I have to say your account of this marriage takes place in an alternate reality. By suddenly MOVING to LA, and insisting on an LA residence, Nicole is withholding Henry, alienating him from his father. This has turned Charlie's world upside down. It amounts to an ambush.

NORA

Withholding, Jay? Really? Alienating. Those are fighting words and it is simply false and does nothing to further our settlement. Your recap of this situation is outrageous.

(MORE)