

Scene 1

MRS. BRADY's office in Los Angeles, California. Time: The present. SETTING: The large, spacious office of MRS. BRADY, founder and president of the first dedoption agency in Southern California. AT RISE: It is early afternoon. COCO CHILDS, TOM RIDER and their children's nanny, SYLVIE, have just arrived for their appointment with MRS. BRADY.

ASSISTANT Please take a seat. Mrs. Brady will be right with you.

COCO Thank you.

TOM Thanks very much. *(To SYLVIE)* Sit.

(SYLVIE sits, taking a blackberry out of her pocket. She nervously begins to text, looking sulky and tearful)

(To COCO) Are you sure you want to do this?

COCO Are you kidding me? What choice do we have?

TOM I don't know. *(He runs his fingers through his hair)* There are other options.

COCO Like what? And don't tell me your sister –

TOM Hey, my sister came through for us during a very bad time –

COCO I don't care. She's still your sister.

TOM What's that supposed to mean?

COCO It means she's still your sister!

TOM So what?

COCO She can be hurtful, that's all.

TOM My sister has always been a big fan of yours. A big fan

COCO She's an even bigger fan of yours.

TOM We're family!

COCO Exactly.

TOM And what does this have to do with the kids?

COCO It has *everything* to do with the kids, Tom. Everything.

TOM Do you have to start? Can't you just stop sniping for once?

COCO I am *not* sniping.

TOM Listen to yourself! 'I am *not* sniping'. You *are* sniping.

COCO How is that sniping?

TOM I don't like your tone.

(*Door opens. MRS. BRADY walks in.*)

MRS. BRADY Hello. Deborah Brady. Please to meet you. (She extends her hand)

TOM Tom. Tom Rider. And this is my wife –

COCO Ex-wife.

TOM Ex-wife –

COCO Actually, not until I sign the papers, darling. (*COCO, TOM and MRS. BRADY laugh, nervously*)

TOM CoCo Childs.

MRS. BRADY Tom. CoCo. A pleasure. And – I just want to say to both of you, that I am a huge fan. Huge.

TOM Thank you.

COCO (*Smiles and nods coldly*)

MRS. BRADY And – (*points to SYLVIE*) - is this one of the children?

COCO No! Are you kidding me?

MRS. BRADY I'm sorry. I didn't –

TOM This is – uh, the nanny. Daisy. Daisy, this is –

COCO Daisy was two nannys ago.

TOM What? Nobody told me -

COCO Sylvie.

MRS. BRADY Nice to meet you, Sylvie.

SYLVIE *(Nods. COCO gestures at her)* Nice to meet you. *(SYLVIE begins texting on the blackberry, after casting a wary eye on the adults)*

MRS. BRADY Is she –

TOM We thought that Daisy –

COCO Sylvie.

TOM *(Laughs)* Sylvie might be able to share what she knows about the children. After all, she's been the children's primary caregiver for about - *(To COCO)* When did Daisy leave?

COCO Daisy left March of last year, followed by Fatima, who left in September, followed by Sylvie.

TOM Okay. September, October, November, December – *(TOM counts quietly on his fingers)* Wow, has it already been nine months? Time flies.

MRS. BRADY Who's with the children now?

TOM The secondary nanny – uh, what's her – *(To COCO)* You tell Mrs. Brady, darling. I can't do all of the talking.

COCO *(Glaring at TOM)* Honor. Honor is with the children.

MRS. BRADY That's nice. Will she be bringing the children in later?

COCO Yes.

TOM That's right.

MRS. BRADY Okay. Let's start by talking a little bit about the children, okay? There are - *(MRS. BRADY glances at her file)* - two of them, correct?

COCO Yes.

TOM Walter and Clover.

COCO Chloe.

TOM Chloe?

COCO She wants to be called Chloe now.

TOM Since when, CoCo?

COCO Since – *(COCO looks in appeal at MRS. BRADY)*

MRS. BRADY Let's see what we have on file. (*MRS. BRADY peers into their folder.*) Ah. It says here the girl is called Clover.

TOM Clover. I told you.

COCO I thought Chloe would be more – I don't know – appealing, you know?

TOM It's not her name.

SYLVIE She hates it.

COCO Sylvie, dear, when we need you to comment, we'll ask you, okay? (*SYLVIE glowers and reluctantly goes back to texting*) Why can't we call her Chloe? (*To MRS. BRADY*) Don't you think that Chloe sounds more marketable, more – mainstream?

MRS. BRADY Oh, I don't know, CoCo. Clover has a nice, old-fashioned ring to it. A little Noel Coward-ish, don't you think?

COCO I don't know him.

TOM No. Film or TV?

MRS. BRADY A little before your time, maybe. (*clears throat*) So tell me about the children. Walter and Clover.

COCO They're nice kids.

TOM Real nice kids.

MRS. BRADY Walter is – twelve?
(TOM and COCO look at each other)

TOM That's right – twelve.

COCO He's part Eskimo.

MRS. BRADY How unusual!

TOM But you wouldn't know it. I mean, he's a sharp dresser. He looks – he looks – well, like us.

COCO Tom!

MRS. BRADY Do you mean he resembles you?

TOM Not really.

COCO He means he looks white. Walter looks white.

TOM That's not – yeah, he looks white.

COCO What's that got to do with anything?

TOM Well, Miss Marketability, I think it has a lot to do with everything!

COCO You didn't think so when we got him.

TOM Oh, yes I did. We deliberately picked him for that reason. Our manager at the time –

COCO I don't remember this.

TOM (*Glares at her*) Our manager at the time said it would be good PR.

COCO I don't remember.

TOM Of course not.

MRS. BRADY Okay. So Walter is a nice boy, part Eskimo, a sharp dresser.....what else?

COCO He, um – he shares well.

MRS. BRADY He shares well?

TOM What's that supposed to mean? CoCo?

COCO He shares well. He's a *sharer*. He – he brings things home from school. Pictures. Books. And he shares them. He likes to talk about them.

TOM That's not really a quality.

MRS. BRADY I think we can work with that. (*Writes on notepad*) Shares well. I like that. That's good.

COCO Thank you.

MRS. BRADY Sylvie? Do you have anything to add?

SYLVIE He's really interested in astronomy.
(TOM and COCO stare at her)

COCO We knew that.

TOM I think it's because of that movie I made in '92 – "Intergalactic Armageddon." That may have had something to do –

SYLVIE No, it's Mr. Weintraub, his science teacher. He took the class on this really cool -

COCO Sylvie, you're interrupting.

SYLVIE Sorry.

MRS. BRADY So Walter is a boy with hobbies! This is all very good, very good indeed. *(She writes something on a pad)* Now tell me about the other one. Clover.

COCO Are you sure you don't want to call her Chloe?

TOM You heard Mrs. Brady, darling. Clover is very Noel Cowers.

MRS. BRADY Coward.

TOM Are you calling me a coward?

MRS. BRADY Oh no, no. It's Coward. Noel Coward.

TOM Oh. Coward. *(Pause)* Did you say he was in film, or television?

SYLVIE He's a playwright. *(TOM, COCO and MRS. BRADY stare at her)* My high-school drama club did one of his plays.

MRS. BRADY Well. Let's get back to Clover, shall we? How old is she?

COCO Sixteen.

TOM Fifteen.

COCO Sixteen.

TOM Fifteen.

COCO I thought she was –

TOM Fifteen.

COCO How do you know?

TOM *(To MRS. BRADY)* She's very pretty.

MRS. BRADY Uh-huh.

COCO I thought she was sixteen.

TOM Fifteen. Don't you think you should know how old your daughter is?

COCO May I remind you that the girl is not my real daughter? I am far too young to have a fifteen year old, never mind sixteen!

TOM If she were sixteen, I'd know it. *(To MRS. BRADY)* The girl is beautiful.

MRS. BRADY *(Encouraging)* Tell me more.

TOM She's a beauty. A stunner.

COCO She's okay.

TOM Seriously? Can you look me in the eye and tell me that that girl is just 'okay'?

COCO She's okay! I mean, she's sixteen. She's awkward.

TOM Fifteen.

MRS. BRADY Sylvie, do you want to weigh in on this?

SYLVIE *(Tears herself away from Blackberry)* What?

MRS. BRADY How old would you say Clover is?

SYLVIE I thought she was like, older than me. I mean, hasn't she had surgery? *(TOM and COCO stare at her)*

TOM Who hired this girl?

COCO Relax, Tom, we won't be needing her after today.

MRS. BRADY Let's stay on track. I know you're anxious to get this done. Anything else you want to tell me about Clover?

TOM She loves film premieres of any kind. I think she's much better with the press than Walter is.

COCO She's like her father.

TOM We don't know her father, CoCo.

COCO Oh, very funny. You know who I mean.

MRS. BRADY How old were the children when you adopted them?

TOM Ooh, that's a toughie.

COCO Tom. *(Pause)* Clover was three months, and Walter was two.

MRS. BRADY Months?

COCO No. Two years. Two years. He was very cute. *(She looks as if she's going to cry. She composes herself)*

MRS. BRADY I'm sure he was. Did you bring your family photo history with you?

TOM Yup. All of our albums, just like you said. *(TOM pulls forward a large cardboard box and slides it toward MRS. BRADY, who lifts four photo albums out of the box)*

MRS. BRADY My, this is a lot! Let's see - *(MRS. BRADY starts to leaf through album, frowning)* There aren't too many of the children alone, are there?

(SYLVIE leans in, her phone in her hands.)

COCO No. We're two of the most photographed people in the world! Why would we want pictures of just babies? I mean – who really cares?

MRS. BRADY Well, in terms of each child's personal physical development, they'll want to have a few photos of themselves as babies. Ah, here's one of – is it Clover? It says 'C, six months'.

TOM Yup. That's Clover all right.

MRS. BRADY Wonderful. *(She pulls photo out of the book.)* Oh, and this must be Walter? 'Boy, around two and a half, on swing' –

COCO That's him. That's my – that's Walter.

MRS. BRADY These will do fine. *(MRS. BRADY flips through the rest of the album and throws it in the wastebasket without closing it)*

TOM Whoa!

COCO What are you doing?

SYLVIE *(looks up)*

MRS. BRADY We can't possibly use these.

COCO Can't we take them home?

MRS. BRADY I think that's a bad idea, dear.

TOM But why?

COCO They're our children –

MRS. BRADY No, dear. No. I'm sorry, but it has to be this way.

TOM *(Slumping back in seat)* I see your point.

COCO I don't understand.

MRS. BRADY You'll have your memories.

COCO But I want the photos.

MRS. BRADY I'm afraid it's not possible. It won't be good for you, or for the children.

COCO They won't even know!

MRS. BRADY You and Tom live in the public eye. If these photos were ever to come under scrutiny, it would ruin everything we're attempting to do today. For you and for the children.

TOM She's right, CoCo.

COCO Fine. Dammit.

TOM It's not a big –

COCO It is a big. Very big. I'll never have any shots of me as a young mother again.

(There is a small thump. Everyone turns to look at SYLVIE, who has dropped her blackberry into the wastebasket)

SYLVIE Sorry. *(She takes a minute to retrieve it)*

TOM Who knows, CoCo? Maybe your next husband will *want* kids. And as far as young goes, there's always surgery.

SYLVIE Me-ow.

COCO That's very amusing, Tom. Very amusing. I'm surprised you're letting the photos go so easily.

TOM Why is that, dear?

COCO I believe you still had all of your original hair when this one was taken. *(COCO grabs album from wastebasket and snatches a photo)*

SYLVIE No way! *(SYLVIE leans forward to see)*

MRS. BRADY *(Tugs photo from COCO's hand)* CoCo, dear – may I call you CoCo?

COCO *(Coldly)* Of course.

MRS. BRADY I know this is hard. If this were easy, more people would be doing it. But believe me, when I tell you that in a year from now, maybe even a few months from now, when you see photos of the children at premieres, or shopping with their parents, or attending sporting events, you won't even recognize them.

TOM Does your fee include surgery?

MRS. BRADY Well, no, that's not what I –

TOM Because if it does, well, we might want to rethink this. I mean, for 15, the girl is really beautiful. And Walter, well, maybe a little around the nose, but –

COCO Walter is adorable. You leave him alone.

MRS. BRADY Tom, CoCo, I assure you, the children won't be getting surgery. There's no need to alter their faces.

COCO Then why won't we be able to recognize them?

MRS. BRADY Well, the fact that you're here today means that you've already taken the first step towards distancing yourselves from the situation. As I've said before, this is not something that every parent can afford to do. In a few moments I'm going to ask you a series of questions that are actually cognitive exercises designed to help ease the transition. By the end of today's session, you will regain a much stronger, more independent sense of direction which will set you both firmly on your individual paths.

TOM *(Nods enthusiastically)*

COCO What if my individual path involves someone else?

MRS. BRADY Um...well, that's fine, as long as that someone else isn't Tom or one of the children.

COCO No. I wasn't planning on that.

TOM Why, baby? Who have you got your eyes on this time?

COCO I'm not saying I have my eyes on anybody.

SYLVIE Maybe not your eyes.

COCO What's that supposed to mean?

SYLVIE Nothing. (*SYLVIE goes back to texting*)

COCO Is it really necessary that she be here? (*indicates SYLVIE*)