

CUTTHROAT - SOPHIA

EXT. CHELSEA ACADEMY - DAY

We're looking into a cheery play room filled with toys and activities. There are five boys and girls, including Alex, playing nicely under the watchful eye of two teachers. Nina watches through a large window. She's whispering instructions under her breath.

NINA

(low)

Pick the book, pick the book...

Someone nearby chuckles -- it's another mom, SOPHIA.

SOPHIA

I've been coaching my son all morning. Do you think teaching a five-year-old the periodic table of elements is a bridge too far?

(Nina laughs)

Probably. Which one's yours?

NINA

(points)

Alex. Blue dinosaur shirt.

(double takes)

Is he wearing two different shoes?

SOPHIA

Mine is in the red t-shirt. William.

(then)

I think I've seen you before. You were on the tour back in May?

NINA

Yes -- I'm sorry, I don't remember you.

SOPHIA

That's okay. I just remember you were one of the few single moms. My husband couldn't stop staring at you.

NINA

(taken aback)

Oh. Uh... sorry about that --

SOPHIA

Don't be. You're very beautiful, and he's extremely unfaithful.

Nina just blinks. A long beat as Sophia just smiles weirdly. And then she suddenly bursts into tears.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)
(crying)
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Nina is at a total loss.

NINA
Um...

SOPHIA
(crying)
I'm so embarrassed. Ignore me. I'll stop in a minute.

Nina guides Sophia to a more secluded area (we can still see the window to the play room over Nina's head). She digs through her purse for a kleenex.

NINA
(checks the tissue)
There might be gum on this... it's fine. Here.

Sophia grabs it and wipes her eyes. Over Nina's head, we see the kids in the play room bouncing around -- evidently Alex is teaching them The Floor is Made of Lava.

SOPHIA
He's leaving me for his secretary. Which is bad enough. But he won't move out of the house! The bastard is divorcing me and refuses to leave until he finds 'the right place.' It's been four months! I'm living in the master bedroom and he's got the run of the rest of the house!

NINA
That's terrible --

SOPHIA
And I'm sure he's hiding our assets. He emptied our bank account already.

NINA
That's illegal. Your lawyer should be able to stop this.

SOPHIA

(tearful)

I don't have the money for a good lawyer. I don't even know if I can afford to send William to this school.

Nina considers Sophia for a beat. Then, she takes out a pen and a piece of paper, starts writing a list for Sophia.

NINA

Here's what you need to get your hands on: his tax returns for the past five years. Get his 1099s, and his 5452 filings. Look for any bank statements from other countries... also look for big expenses that seem unusual. Oil drilling equipment for instance...

Nina is scribbling fast. Sophia is amazed.

SOPHIA

Are you in finance or something?

NINA

Um... yeah. Pretty much. Another new way of hiding money is buying carbon credits through emissions trading...

SOPHIA

So can you help me?

Nina stops, taken aback.

NINA

Oh -- no, I'm sorry, I really can't --

SOPHIA

Because if I had somebody like you in my corner, it would be amazing. You're so smart, you know so much about this stuff --

NINA

I just don't think I should get involved --

SOPHIA

I'm begging you. You're the first bit of hope I've had in months. Please say you'll help. I can't do this by myself.

Nina closes her eyes briefly. She shouldn't... but how can she say no?

NINA

Okay. Yes, okay. I'll look over the documents.

SOPHIA

That's great! But... I don't actually have them. Ron took everything to his office.

NINA

(sighs)

I can get my hands on them. I know some people -- just tell me where he works. And get me a recent photo.

SOPHIA

Thank you. Thank you so much.

(thinks)

I don't even know your name. I'm Sophia.

NINA

Nina.

They shake and Sophia smiles gratefully. Over Nina's head we get a glimpse through the playdate window as Alex dives on another kid, and a five-year-old brawl seems to break out.