

Sc 1 INT – OFFICE RECEPTION AREA

TONI is flustered and over-dressed in a tight suit and uncomfortable heels, carries a work bag with a broken strap, and a folder with her resume. She is busy looking down at her phone, talking to herself, as she gets out of the elevator.

TONI

I think it's this floor. Suite number... 3?

Toni looks up from her mob at the office reception.

TONI

Now, remember not to say anything...

She turns as if to talk to someone nearby. She looks down, then suddenly all about her to discover she is alone. She looks back in the elevator, behind her again, turns around, and begins to panic.

TONI

(whispering hysterically) Izzy! Izzy Bell!

RECEPTIONIST

Can I help you? Do you have an appointment?

TONI

Agh. Hi. No thanks. I mean yes. I'm here to see a Gertrude?

RECEPTIONIST

Trudy.

TONI

Toni.

RECEPTIONIST

Trudy is ready to see you now. (To herself) Or more like 5 minutes ago.

TONI

Sorry? Have you seen a small...

RECEPTIONIST

(into intercom) That Toni lady is here, Mam. *(Under breath)* Finally.

TONI

Mam? *(To receptionist)* She's only 7. And she's wearing...

Receptionist gives Toni a look of disinterest and gestures towards GERTRUDE's door.

Toni sheepishly walks off towards door, trying to maintain some grace, but still looking around.

TONI

(earnestly whispering) Izzy! Izzy! Belly Baby....

Sc 2 INT - GERTRUDES EXECUTIVE OFFICE

TONI enters backward, turns and sees GERTRUDE sitting in an exec chair facing her, waiting calmly.

GERTRUDE

Ah, punctuality isn't your strongest suit, I see?

TONI

Sorry, I seemed to have lost my um... I know this isn't the best start, but I'm a... I'm a

IZZY

Mum!

TONI

Izzy!

Izzy has been sitting in a chair spinning around in Gertrude's office. She now runs to her Mum and hugs her with a force that almost knocks Toni off her heels. Toni drops her bag and resume, clambering to collect her belongings.

TONI

(to Gertrude) Sorry. *(to Izzy)* Bella!

IZZY

The witch lady made me answer questions, but then she gave me some of her lollies.

TONI

Oh. Again Sorry. Um thank you. Darling, why don't you...

GERTRUDE

(Interrupts talking into intercom) Michelle.

TONI

...wait out in the um... *(To Gertrude, referring to lollies)* Are they colour-free?

Michelle stands by doorway.

GERTRUDE

Michelle. Take...um?

TONI

Izzy. Bella...I mean...

GERTRUDE

Isabella with you, please.

Michelle reaches out her hand and without hesitation Izzy leaps up and goes with her.

TONI

She likes to draw. And don't let her eat anything please, especially...

They leave together and Michelle closes the door.

GERTRUDE
Now.

TONI

I'm sorry about that. After School Care rang and... and my husband has a lot on his plate...

Sc 3 INT – UNI LECTURE THEATRE

MARCUS stands behind the lectern, wearing a cardigan/hoody and glasses. At first glance he is an old man but is only in his 40s. Marcus stares forlornly out to space and sighs. There are only 2 students in the lecture theatre. Suddenly the upper stairs swing open. Marcus looks expectantly, but only one other STUDENT enters. They slowly walk down the stairs. The floor creaks. Someone coughs, and finally the STUDENT finds a seat and settles. Marcus looks at his watch and the clock on the wall.

MARCUS

Well, let's begin then. I'm Marcus. Welcome to this semester's unit on Social Psychology in Early Childhood Development. Now for those who've read my paper on...

The STUDENT begins to nosily pack up their belongings and goes to leave.

MARCUS

Oh. Was it that bad?

STUDENT

Sorry I'm in the wrong room.

The other 2 students mumble to each other realising the same, also begin to pack their things.

MARCUS

Of course! Everyone is. Me too. Thanks for...nothing.

Marcus starts to pack up his things too.

Sc 4 INT - GERTRUDES EXECUTIVE OFFICE (the same as before)

GERTRUDE
Here.

Gertrude hands Toni an espresso coffee.

TONI

Oh. No, thanks. I don't really...drink...

GERTRUDE

I've already had a look at your resume, and now (*referring to Izzy*) I can see why you've have had a break...

TONI

Yes, but I feel ready to work again.

GERTRUDE

Are you truly interested in this job?

TONI

Oh. Um. Yes. Well! Yes, of course I'm...I'm ready. I'm focussed. No distractions...

Door flies open. Izzy sticks her head in.

IZZY

Mum! The grumpy lady gave me an ipad! And some sherbet!

Michelle silently sheppards Izzy back out and closes the door instantly. Toni begins to shrink in her chair looking distressed towards the door. She drinks the coffee and almost gags at its strength.

GERTRUDE

Toni. I'll be honest.

TONI

(deflated) I know. I know. It's just, normally...

GERTRUDE

No one from Sydney wants to move to Canberra for this job. I mean, it's Canberra, am I right?

TONI

Well actually I'm from...

GERTRUDE

But, the job's yours, if you want it, and if you're husband's on board. Of course, you can't commute, you'll have to move there. But at least it's only for 3 *(looks at contract)*... oh 6 months... at the most. I think this might be a good journey back for you. You have 'til the end of the day before I re-advertise it.

TONI is overjoyed and speechless. She gathers her things and attempts to shake Gertrude's hand but Gertrude has already opened her laptop and is busy typing. Toni slides out of the office, almost bowing with gratitude, then punches the air with excitement, then composes herself, and suddenly runs out, almost forgetting to collect Izzy.

Sc 5 INT – TONI & MARCUS' KITCHEN / DINING / FAMILY ROOM

JOEL (teenager) sits at the dinner table with his feet up on the table, looking at his mobile with ear pods in. MARCUS enters, knocks Joel's feet off the table.

MARCUS

What's this I hear about you hating school, and missing class? You're in high school. You're supposed to hate it, but you turn up, right? No one wants to do school. Trust me. Just...

JOEL

(Taking out ear pods) Wha?

IZZY

(calling from off) DAD!!! Do you find the magic wand?

MARCUS

I'm coming. Just getting it now.

Marcus grabs a wooden spoon or spatula from kitchen draw. He waves it threateningly at Joel who doesn't care. Joel rolls his eyes and puts his pods back in his ears. Marcus exits towards Izzy on the deck.

TONI enters from a different part of the house. She is still dressed partly in her ill-fitting suit but bare feet. She is on the phone to her Mum. She sees Marcus leave and calls out, but he has gone.

TONI

(talking into the phone) Well you and... *(calling out to Marcus)* Marcus! *(to phone)* No, Mum. I didn't mean Marcus, I meant Dad of course. I was talking to... Can I call you back? Yes, of course I will. Sorry... I just I ...have to talk to him first. Yes, I mean Marcus. We have to talk about...

(Doorbell rings)

TONI

(shouts) Pizza! *(into phone)* Sorry. No, not talk about Pizza... Can... *(Shouts)* can someone get that? I gotta go. Yes, we're eating square, rounded meals, Mum... Bye. Love you *(she hangs up)* Pizza's here! Joel! You were supposed to set the table.

Joel sluggishly gets up to assist. Marcus re-enters making zooming noises. He is partly dressed up as a Fairy Princess, with Izzy on his shoulders. Izzy is screaming loudly with joy.

TONI

Can you please get the.... *(she sees how he is dressed)* I'll get it.

Toni heads to the door. Marcus plonks Izzy and himself down at the table and assists Joel with plates etc. Toni returns carrying boxes of pizza.

TONI

They forget the garlic bread.

JOEL

Again!

IZZY

Idiots!

MARCUS

(to Izzy) Hey. Ok. Go wash your hands, young lady. Soap this time!

Izzy skips off. Marcus starts placing hot pieces of pizza on a plate and blowing on them for Izzy.

MARCUS

(to Toni) I need to talk to you about something.

Joel rolls his eyes. He grabs some pizza.