ROCK THE BOAT IV: "NO OTHER CHOICE"

INT. INGRID'S HOME - DAY

INGRID, a graduate student, sits in front of her computer. Her phone dings - we see the text displayed:

MOM (SCREEN TEXT)
How did the meeting go?

Ingrid picks up her phone and shoots a text back -

INGRID (SCREEN TEXT)
It's about to happen! I'll let u know in a few minutes :)
(*a* BEAT, *then*)
How are you feeling today?

A moment as her Mom's text bubble types...

MOM (SCREEN TEXT)
Fine....Not too much pain.
(*then*)
I'm just missing my daughter. See you soon. <3

Ingrid sends a heart emoji back, and puts her phone down. She opens up her window to Zoom and takes a breath...

CUT TO:

INT. JUDITH'S HOME - DAY

Judith sits in front of her computer. She wears a chic top and has a few pieces of sophisticated decor adorning her desk.

She opens up her Zoom, and seeing herself, she adjusts her hair a bit. Quickly, she practices her smile.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. INGRID'S HOME - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Back to Ingrid, setting herself up. She takes a breath - a lot is riding on this conversation.

Option - does she look at the camera at this point (to set up final monologue to camera)?

The conversation starts - we can see both women in their respective Zoom screens.

There is a surface warmth between the two of them, though Judith has always made Ingrid slightly uncomfortable.

JUDITH
Ingrid!

INGRID
Hi, Judith.

JUDITH
How are you? Wow, what a great top, where is it from?

INGRID
Oh, just, H&M, I think?

JUDITH
Huh... Well, good find.

INGRID
Thank you.

Greeting over, the women smile at each other - that awkward moment at the beginning of a Zoom call - who will take the lead?

JUDITH
Well! It is so good we're connecting. I had meant to check on you, how have you been finding everything?

INGRID
I've been okay. The research has been going really well, actually.

JUDITH
Good! Good. Are you still feeling, you know... isolated?

INGRID
Oh... Um, it's been okay. It's hard, I miss my friends back home. My family, too...

JUDITH
You know what it is? It's Vancouver. It is so *unwelcoming*. I did grad school in Montreal -

INGRID
You mentioned...

JUDITH
-and that was, well, it was completely different. Way better than here. People are - it's a big party. I'm amazed I graduated! Ah... you know, *you'd* do great in Montreal!

INGRID
(*confused*)
...Thanks.

Meetings with Judith usually start with a certain amount of chatter, but Ingrid really isn't in the mood today.

INGRID (CONT'D)
Judith, I um... Thanks again for meeting with me, on short notice.

JUDITH
My pleasure. I will need to run off in not too long, but I'm glad we can connect.

INGRID
Great. It won't take long, but there is something I need to talk to you about.

JUDITH
Is everything all right?

INGRID
I... sort of, I... My Mom's health is not very good right now.

JUDITH
Oh, dear. I'm sorry to hear that...

INGRID
Thanks, yeah, it's been... hard. For her, and just, it's been on my mind, and-

JUDITH
I completely understand. Mothers are... (*sudden emotion*) well... they're *everything*.

Judith grabs at a tissue, dabbing her eyes. Ingrid tries to get back on track.

INGRID
They... really are. Anyway, I wanted to check in with you about-

JUDITH
Whatever you need, I'm happy to help. Let's revisit your deadlines.

INGRID
Thank you for the offer. But, I really think I need to be with her right now. It's too hard to be so far away. I'm about to finalizing a leave of absence with the advising department.

A moment - this harkens back to the first scene, the "Did You Freeze?" moment. Ingrid is wondering how this is all landing. Eventually, this is broken by Judith -

JUDITH
So... delaying the completion of your degree?

INGRID
That's right.

Judith is trying to choose her words carefully -

JUDITH
I completely understand.

INGRID
(*pleased*)
Oh, thank you. I'm so relieved!

JUDITH
Is it... feasible?

INGRID
Well, it throws things up in the air, for sure. My funding will be frozen, but I think I've worked it all out.

JUDITH
I mean, it's up to you.
(*a* BEAT, t*hen*)
Of course, part of me wonders if finishing up sooner may be helpful?
(MORE)

JUDITH (CONT'D)
With the way your dissertation is shaping up, I am sure employment prospects will be promising for you.

INGRID
I appreciate your encouragement. I also don't want to interrupt my rhythm - but I have to believe that things will be okay if I delay things by 6 months, or even a year.

JUDITH
A year! What about some of the projects in the lab we've been doing? Nobody else has your skillset. I'd hate to see all your work just shelved.

INGRID
But can't I just come back to them?

JUDITH
I wouldn't be so sure.

Ingrid is thrown - the conversation is taking a detour she hadn't expected.

INGRID
I really appreciate the concern. But I have thought about this a lot, and it feels important that I go home.

JUDITH
I really do empathize with your situation, Ingrid. I do. I just... I don't want you to kill this momentum you have. I also don't want any of this unfinished lab work to result in less-than-enthusiastic letters of reference.

INGRID
(*shocked*)
Do you really think that could happen?

JUDITH
It's hard to say.

Judith checks her watch/her phone dings.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Ah! I do have to run off, now, Ingrid. I'm so sorry to hear about your Mother. I'll be sending good thoughts your way.

INGRID
Thanks...

JUDITH
Anyway, let me know what you decide!

She vanishes. Ingrid is floored by what just happened...

Her phone dings. It's her Mom -

MOM (SCREEN TEXT)
So?? How'd it go?
(*then*)
Can't wait to see u.

Ingrid puts her phone down. Still processing, she speaks into the camera - addressing us.

INGRID
I have to go. I have to.
(*then*)
But, at the same time... I've worked so hard to get here. My research is going well, I finally feel like I'm on the brink of something!
(*then*)
But I was sure that my projects in the lab could be paused. She made it sound like they'd be cancelled outright. All of the work I've done... and it wouldn't even result in strong letters of reference?
(*then*)
But if I stayed... what could I say to my Mom? If something happened and I wasn't there, then I...
(*then*)
What do I do?