

them

"Pilot"

Written by

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Mark Gordon Pictures

FADE IN

on soft, dewy, glistening GRASS, framed by a pristinely manicured HEDGEROW. The morning SUNLIGHT gives the greenery a warm, comforting GLOW.

In SLOW MOTION, a CHILD RUNS through the grass. This is YOUNG NOAH, age 6. He wears a cheap black CAPE and a pointy black HAT to match. He has a plastic BROOM between his legs and is GRINNING as he RUNS -- a little kid, PLAYING PRETEND.

A GROWN-UP pops out of the hedges, startling Young Noah and ending the SLOW MOTION effect.

NORA

Hi!

This is NORA, 28. Nora is transgender/non-binary, uses they/them pronouns, and wears a combination of traditionally feminine and masculine clothing, along with subtle makeup. They catch Young Noah off-guard -- he STUMBLES back and drops his broom.

NORA (CONT'D)

Whoa, sorry! Didn't mean to scare you. I'm Nora.

(picks up the broom, hands
it back to Young Noah)

Are you having fun?

YOUNG NOAH

Mhm.

NORA

I love your cape. Who are you dressed as?

YOUNG NOAH

The Wicked Witch.

NORA

No way! From *Wizard of Oz*?

YOUNG NOAH

Uh-huh.

NORA

That's so cool. Well, I think you look awesome. And it's great you're having so much fun as Margaret Hamilton.

YOUNG NOAH

I'm- I'm the witch...

NORA

Right, yeah, well, she's not real,
and Margaret Hamilton's the actress
who played her. You'll know that
when you're older and less stupid.

YOUNG NOAH

I'm not stupid!

NORA

Noah, look at yourself. You're
alone playing dress up, totally
unbothered by the fact that you
don't have any friends 'cause
you're such a weird little kid. And
that's fine! You do you. It's a
good thing to be yourself, okay?

YOUNG NOAH

Okay...

NORA

Just know that you'll always be
alone, and no one will ever truly
love you.

YOUNG NOAH

Huh?

MOM (O.S.)

Noah!

Young Noah and Nora both look off in the direction of MOM'S
VOICE.

NORA

Mom's calling. Make sure you give
her a big hug. She's gonna die in
three months.

Scared and confused, Young Noah starts to cry.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Nora, in pale blue SCRUBS and no makeup, sits cross-legged on
a twin bed in their room in a PSYCH WARD in Manhattan. Their
eyes are closed and they have EARPHONES in their ears --
they're listening to an Irish-accented FEMALE VOICE lead a
GUIDED MEDITATION.

GUIDE

(on Nora's iPod)

It's time to leave your inner child
and start your day. Consider the
last thing you want to say to your
younger self.

BACK TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Young Noah stands in the sunny backyard, now fully SOBBING.
Nora gives him a kiss on the forehead.

NORA

Don't cry. You'll get dehydrated.

Nora crawls back into the hedge and DISAPPEARS.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

With their eyes still closed, Nora cracks a faint SMILE.

GUIDE

And what last words does your inner
child say to you?

BACK TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Young Noah, tears still on his cheeks, leans forward and
SHOUTS into the hedge...

YOUNG NOAH

Fucking cunt!

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Nora's brow furrows in confusion. Their meditation has taken
an unexpected turn.

BACK TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Nora's head and torso pop back out of the hedge.

NORA
I'm sorry, what?

Young Noah clenches his fists and doubles down.

YOUNG NOAH
FUCKING CUNT.

NORA
Hang on-

YOUNG NOAH
FUCKINGCUNTFUCKINGCUNTFUCKINGCUNTFU-

BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Nora opens their eyes and pulls out one of their earbuds. Across the room, in another TWIN BED, is their roommate -- a disheveled OLDER WOMAN who is rocking herself back and forth and quietly repeating...

OLDER WOMAN
-cunt... Fucking cunt... Fucking
cunt...

Nora SIGHS. Then, a KNOCK on the door.

ORDERLY (O.S.)
Nora Miller?

Nora looks up, says nothing.

INT. PSYCH WARD - MOMENTS LATER

Nora, accompanied by the ORDERLY, steps out of their room and into the hallway. Nora looks well put together compared to some of the other PATIENTS in the hall.

DR. KHOURY (PRE-LAP)
Scale of one to ten-

INT. EXAM ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Nora sits in a folding chair in the middle of the room. A few feet away is a table with THREE PSYCHIATRISTS on the other side. DR. KHOURY, Nora's primary psychiatrist, speaks to Nora, while the other two SCRIBBLE notes.

DR. KHOURY
-rate how hopeless you feel. Ten
being most hopeless, one being not
hopeless at all.

NORA
Zero.

DR. KHOURY
One to ten, how inclined do you
feel towards suicide?

NORA
Zero.

DR. KHOURY
One to ten, how prepared do you
feel to be safely discharged?

NORA
Zero.
(beat)
No! Ten. Sorry. Ten.

The other two psychiatrists exchange glances. One of them jots something down. Dr. Khoury looks at Nora's FILE.

DR. KHOURY
I see you went to a lot of the
group sessions -- music therapy,
CBT... Did you find those helpful?

CUT TO:

INT. FLASHBACK, MULTIPURPOSE ROOM - DAY

A GROUP of PSYCH WARD PATIENTS are WALKING around the room in a CIRCLE, while a NURSE stands in the middle, holding her phone up, which is playing "When the Saints Go Marching In." Many of the patients are DANCING as they walk.

Nora is not participating. Nora is sitting in the corner.
Nora is FUCKING MISERABLE.

BACK TO:

INT. EXAM ROOM - MORNING

NORA
I will remember those sessions for
the rest of my life.

DR. KHOURY
You reported feeling 'exhausted.'
Do you feel rested now?

CUT TO:

INT. FLASHBACK, HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The OVERNIGHT ORDERLY wakes Nora up by shining a FLASHLIGHT
in their face.

OVERNIGHT ORDERLY
(strapping a blood
pressure cuff on Nora)
Vitals check. What's seven times
seven?

NORA
(with genuine exhaustion
and despair)
Please, no, I majored in English.

BACK TO:

INT. EXAM ROOM - MORNING

NORA
Haven't slept like that in a long
time.

DR. KHOURY
Do you have a clearer understanding
of why you attempted?

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

RAPID SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Nora POURING the contents of a PILL BOTTLE out on a counter
- Nora GUZZLING VODKA straight from the BOTTLE

- Nora tearfully PUNCHING the GLASS on a LARGE FRAMED PHOTO

BACK TO:

INT. EXAM ROOM - MORNING

NORA
(very casually)
Just stress.

DR. KHOURY
Stress?

NORA
Yeah, just... life stress.

DR. KHOURY
(moving on)
Any tools you learned in case you
feel 'stressed' in the future?

NORA
(after a beat
thoughtfully)
I like the meditations.

Dr. Khoury looks to the other two psychiatrists. They both lean toward her and WHISPER inaudibly. Nora leans forward slightly, trying to hear them. When they turn back around, Nora sits back in their chair, back straight, as if they weren't just trying to eavesdrop.

DR. KHOURY
Okay. If you feel ready, we can
discharge you today-

NORA
Great.

DR. KHOURY
-with a few caveats.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCH WARD - LATER

Nora stands at the NURSE'S STATION, while an orderly rummages through the CLOSET. He finds a CUBBY labeled "MILLER," pulls out a black cloth BAG, and hands it to Nora.

DR. KHOURY (POST-LAP)
I know you don't have a regular
therapist. You'll need to find one.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nora dumps the contents of the bag out on their bed. CLOTHES
tumble out -- a RED turtleneck and something that's BRIGHT
GOLD. Nora starts to take off their shirt... until they
notice their roommate, the disheveled older woman, standing
WAY TOO CLOSE for comfort.

DR. KHOURY (POST-LAP)
We can give you a list of names --
help you find someone who
specializes in LGBT patients.

INT. PSYCH WARD BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The BATHROOM offers no privacy -- a translucent door with no
lock, and a NURSE sitting in a folding chair nearby. We see
Nora's SILHOUETTE as they change into their own clothes.

DR. KHOURY (POST-LAP)
Lastly, and this is important, I
need to urge you not to be alone in
your apartment until you've found a
therapist.

BACK TO:

INT. EXAM ROOM - EARLIER

Nora, still in their patient scrubs, sits across from the
panel of psychiatrists, listening intently.

DR. KHOURY
Is there someone you can stay with
until then?

NORA
Yeah, I have a friend I can call.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Another SERIES OF SHOTS, but this time they're SLOWER and
SAPPIER. Maybe the theme from "Cheers" is playing. Anyway:

- A SMALL, FRAMED PICTURE on a bookshelf of TWO BEST FRIENDS -
- JAMES, then age 20, and NOAH, the pre-transition Nora, also 20, laughing together in their DORM ROOM

- A black and white POSTER from a concert at an underground music venue taped to the inside of a CLOSET DOOR -- with James, 25, shredding it on an electric guitar

- Sitting on an END TABLE somewhere, a FRAMED PICTURE of Noah and James in matching TUXEDOS at somebody's wedding, clearly having the time of their lives

From this last image, we PAN TO REVEAL James and Nora -- not in a photograph, but together in the apartment. Pietà-style, James CRADLES Nora, who is wearing a wild and flamboyant outfit and slipping in and out of consciousness, while James, FREAKING OUT, has called 9-1-1.

JAMES
(on the phone)
I need an ambulance! FUCK!

BACK TO:

INT. EXAM ROOM - MORNING

DR. KHOURY
(not needing to look at
her notes)
That would be James?

Nora pauses for half a beat, thinking of James, and unable to suppress a small smile.

NORA
Yeah.

Dr. Khoury inhales sharply, but otherwise masks her reaction.

DR. KHOURY
What about a family member?

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Nora's father, BRIAN, 55, sits anxiously. He lightly TAPS his foot while he waits.

A terrifying-looking male PATIENT with a gigantic PENTAGRAM tattooed to his bald head is escorted into the psych ward by a SECURITY GUARD. Brian makes brief EYE CONTACT with the patient, but quickly AVERTS his gaze and involuntarily CLEARS HIS THROAT.

Nora STEPS OUT wearing a GOLD SEQUIN PANTSUIT with a skintight RED TURTLENECK. Brian, who is still looking down at his jittery feet, doesn't see them right away.

NORA

Hey.

Brian, caught off guard clutches his chest in surprise.

BRIAN

Oh my- I wasn't- I didn't-

He looks up and SEES Nora -- and their outfit. He rises to his feet and forces a nervous smile.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Wow. You look... shiny.

Nora wearily puts on a pair of oversized SUNGLASSES. Brian notices a large STAIN running down the front of Nora's shirt.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

What's this?

NORA

(non-plussed)

Puke.

(beat, off Brian's
confused/repulsed look)

The vodka.

Brian EMBRACES Nora tightly and CRIES -- the mere suggestion of what almost became of Nora is too much for him to bear.

NORA (CONT'D)

Dad. You're embarrassing me in
front of the other crazy people.

BRIAN

(taking Nora's face in his
hands)

You are not crazy.

NORA

What if I identify as crazy?

BRIAN

Is that a- an actual thing- or?

NORA

It's a joke, Dad.

(beat)

I identify as dead inside.

EXT. MOUNT SINAI - DAY

As Brian and Nora step out of the hospital, Brian starts to take off his TRENCHCOAT.

BRIAN
Here, take my-

NORA
That's okay.

BRIAN
It's a bit chilly-

NORA
I'm fine.

Brian reluctantly puts his coat back on, and they continue walking. When they get to the STREETCORNER, they wait for the LIGHT to change. Nora immediately looks down at their phone.

BRIAN
(after a beat,
uncomfortably)
Was it a positive experience?

NORA
Yeah.

BRIAN
Good.
(beat)
The doctors were... helpful?

NORA
(looking up from their
phone)
Yeah, they were great. I'm leaving
a good Yelp review.

BRIAN
(discerning whether or not
that's another joke)
You're not.

NORA
No. I'm not.

BRIAN
But when you say "they" were great,
you mean multiple people?

The PEDESTRIAN SIGNAL changes, and Nora immediately starts crossing the street. Brian hustles to catch up.

NORA
Do we really have to do this now?

BRIAN
Do what?

NORA
I told you two months ago-

BRIAN
You told me you were thinking about it.

NORA
I thought about it. My pronouns are they-them.

BRIAN
Even though grammatically-

NORA
Singular they is a thing. It's been a thing.

BRIAN
It's not a thing I'm familiar with.

NORA
Shakespeare used singular they.

BRIAN
Shakespeare wrote in iambic pentameter, but I don't hear you slipping into blank verse.

They arrive at Brian's car, which is conveniently parked on the street. The lights blink as Brian unlocks the door.

NORA
I just don't have the energy to educate you right now.

Nora gets into the passenger seat and closes the car door behind them -- not quite a SLAM, but harder than necessary.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Brian gets into the driver's seat and closes the door.

BRIAN
(after a beat)
I'm sorry. I don't want to say the
wrong thing.

Nora looks out the window, but says nothing. Brian glances at them, then back at the steering wheel. He turns on the car, and they drive off in silence.

Nora takes out their phone again and texts James.

The TEXT: *hey. they discharged me - can we talk?*

They pocket their phone, lean their head against the car window, and close their eyes.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - LATER

CLOSE-UP on a FRAMED PHOTO of BABY NOAH wrapped in his BABY BLANKET.

CLOSE-UP on another FRAMED PHOTO of Young Noah in his FIRST COMMUNION SUIT.

CLOSE-UP on yet another framed photo of TEENAGE NOAH in his BLUE high school CAP AND GOWN.

CLOSE-UP on Nora's face as they stand in the DOORWAY of their CHILDHOOD HOME -- a split-level in Connecticut. Brian is already hanging up his coat, as Nora SLINKS inside, shuts the door behind them, and takes off their sunglasses.

BRIAN
Home, sweet home! How about some
lunch?

NORA
Hey, can we go to my apartment?

BRIAN
To your- your apartment?

NORA
Sorry, yeah, I know we just got
here. Maybe later tonight, but I
want to pick up some stuff.

BRIAN
Oh. Well, maybe tomorrow night?
After I finish work, we can-

NORA

That's gonna be too late. I'm going to James' show tomorrow night.

BRIAN

That's not-

NORA

I can take the train if you don't want to-

BRIAN

No, I'm sorry, but you- you cannot go to that- that show. It is not a good idea. For you. To do that.

NORA

Okay... Well, I'm going to do that.

BRIAN

No, I said no, I mean no. I understand you're an adult, you're almost 30, but you're in my house-

NORA

What the fuck. I am 28. I am not almost 30. Jesus Christ.

Nora storms off, putting in their earbuds as they head upstairs. Brian is left, shocked and speechless, in the living room.

INT. CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Nora steps into their old bedroom, which has hardly changed since they moved out TEN YEARS AGO. Posters from popular movies and musicals in the mid-2000s adorn the walls.

Nora glances at the *Wizard of Oz* snowglobe on their bedside table, before their gaze drifts to a FRAMED PHOTO on the wall -- TODDLER NOAH blowing bubbles with his MOTHER. The frame hangs ever so slightly ASKEW. Nora straightens it, then melodramatically THROWS THEMSELF onto the TWIN BED.

They take out their phone to see if James has texted them back. He hasn't.

Nora puts their phone on the table next to the snowglobe and looks at the ceiling numbly.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

Nora LIES in bed, fast asleep, when the RADIO ALARM CLOCK (circa 2005) goes off on the nightstand. Nora WAKES UP.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

CLOSE-UP on the SHOWER turning on.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Nora is out of the shower, drying themselves off with a towel. They look at their BODY in the MIRROR, staring at their non-existent BREASTS. They push the skin on their FLAT CHEST together, SIGH, and let go.

INT. KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Nora, in an OLD BATHROBE, hurries into the kitchen, where Brian is eating his morning OATMEAL.

NORA
Where're my clothes?

BRIAN
They were dirty, so I threw them in
the-

Before he even finishes the sentence, Nora's left the room.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nora opens the DRYER and pulls out the warped remains of their gold sequin pantsuit.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - MORNING

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the local METRO NORTH STATION later that same morning. A train RUSHES BY.

BRIAN (PRE-LAP)
I think you look quite dashing,
actually.