

For the Children

Written by

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A woman running a charity organisation is forced to defend herself against accusations that she's collecting money for her own benefit.

Shooting Script

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. FARRINGDON STATION - DAY

1

Busy people move up and down the street. Into the station, out of the station, the normal pace of city life.

Lost among them is JULIA (38), joyful and easy going. She rattles a colourful bucket at the busy pedestrians, with the most inviting smile.

A PASSER-BY drops a coin in the bucket.

JULIA  
Thank you, sir.

The man moves on without stopping. Julia chases after him.

JULIA  
Oh, wait. Can I take a picture? For  
our poster. Will only take a second.

The man looks at his watch and shrugs. Julia reaches for her phone and points the camera at him.

JULIA  
A big smile. Come on, you can do  
better than that.

The man displays a big grin. She presses her phone's screen.

JULIA  
All done. Thanks. Have a lovely day.

The man nods politely and resumes his march, busy, as Julia puts the phone back in her pocket. It rings.

She's about to answer the phone when a shadow covers the sunlight: a policeman.

ERIC  
Julia Cox? Would you come with me?

2 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

2

Officer ERIC Shaw (36) leans forward. His face is almost on the opposite side of the table. His tone is intimidating.

ERIC  
You do know you just committed a  
crime, don't you?

Julia sits on a chair across the table, quite relaxed.

Eric doesn't talk to her. He talks to SHANNON (42), sitting beside Julia. Shame glues Shannon's eyes to the floor. She looks quite nervous, can't be quiet with her feet.

SHANNON

It was a misunderstanding.

ERIC

Which one? Accusing your colleague of fraud, based on an unsubmitted annual return, or the fact you called the authorities saying she was fleeing?

SHANNON

I said she was at the train station.

Julia chuckles. Eric turns his attention to her.

ERIC

Shouldn't you be more concerned?

JULIA

I was accused of a lot worse when I was at secondary school. Or college. Or at my local theatre--

Eric tries to be professional, conceals a grin.

SHANNON

You can't arrest me for this. Can you? I didn't mean any harm.

Eric stares at Shannon, makes her feel uncomfortable.

ERIC

Did you consider clearing things out with your friend before calling us?

SHANNON

She's not-- I was afraid for my daughter. Julia could hurt her. To keep me from talking.

ERIC

Yes, I saw how she behaved with your daughter outside. The smiles, the jokes, the stories-- a real menace.

Shannon scoffs, clearly offended by his comment.

JULIA  
Come on, Shannon, he's just trying to  
lighten up the mood.

SHANNON  
Some of us have real responsibilities  
and can't chat all day.

Shannon realises she was rude. She looks down, ashamed and  
afraid of repercussions. Eric simply stares, deadpan.

JULIA  
Ouch. Need me to get a first aid kit?

A beat. Then Eric breaks laughing.

ERIC  
Get out of here, both of you. But  
next time, you'll spend the night.

Shannon noisily gets up and runs out of the door.

JULIA  
Since we're already here-- would you  
like to support children in Cambodja?

3 EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

3

Shannon walks away from the building, talking to someone.

SHANNON  
I should report that man. His nerve--  
(beat)  
And Julia, playing innocent-- she  
completely fooled them.  
(imitating Julia)  
I worked at a local theatre.  
(her own voice)  
Explains how she became so good at  
fooling people.  
(beat, looks down)  
You believe me, don't you, honey?

We realise Shannon has been pushing a wheelchair, with an  
ALSA sticker on it. She speaks to ASH (16), who sits  
completely immovable. Her neck is bent, hanging out of the  
back support, her mouth drools, but her eyes... her eyes are  
well alive. And they look sad.

Shannon stops to straighten Ash's head. Her handbag slides  
from her arm and spills on the floor.

Shannon muffles a nervous shriek.

As Shannon starts collecting her belongings, Julia can be seen coming out of the door, at the distance.

JULIA  
Digging for clues, Sherlock?

Julia starts helping Shannon. She winks at Ash. The girl's face lightens up.

SHANNON  
Leave me alone, Julia.

JULIA  
What was the plan? Disappear in the night to never be seen again? No goodbyes, not even a letter? That's really lame and you would regret it. Besides, I know where you live. Kind of defeats the purpose. Right, Ash?

Ash looks away. She finds an apple juice pack on the floor.

Julia picks it up. Shannon snatches it from Julia's hands.

SHANNON  
You heard the doctor, honey. No more liquids, alright?

Julia regards Ash's feeding tube with a sympathetic smile.

JULIA  
I bet just a little bit would be OK.

Shannon ignores Julia and walks away with Ash. Julia chases.

JULIA  
You still think I'm Al Capone?

Julia's phone rings. She rejects the call.

JULIA  
Come on, Shannon, you know I'm terrible with computers. I made a mistake filling out a form. It happens. I'm glad you noticed--

Phone rings again. Julia seems annoyed, but answers it.

JULIA  
I can't talk right now. Don't move. I'll be with you in ten minutes.

Julia hangs up and keeps following Shannon.

JULIA  
Bernard Madoff. He wants my advice on  
how not to get caught.

Shannon chides Julia, but continues walking.

Julia steps in front of Ash's wheelchair to stop them.

SHANNON  
Get out of the way, Julia.

JULIA  
Look, I get it. You don't trust me  
anymore. But I know how much you love  
the work we do. Isn't that reason  
enough to stay? To be my policewoman?  
Keep an eye on me, make sure I don't  
do anything illegal-- check my sums?

Shannon looks away, doubtful. It sure makes sense, but...

She tries to circumvent Julia, but Julia blocks the way.

JULIA  
You worked so hard for six months.  
Isn't that worth one more week? Don't  
you want to be there when we give  
away the money?  
(beat)  
Don't you think Ash may want to see  
the result of our work? The happy  
faces of the children we'll help?

Shannon admires the tender looks between Ash and Julia. They  
have a complicity of their own. A decision is made.

SHANNON  
I guess-- I can do another week.

JULIA  
Great. Hopefully, you'll realise how  
silly you're being right now. So,  
will I see you and Ash tomorrow?

Shannon nods, not convinced she made the right decision.

JULIA  
Okay. Bye, Ash, see you.

Julia watches Shannon and Ash leave. Her smile disappears,  
almost immediately, as they turn around the corner.

Phone rings again. She answers it, more serious than ever.

JULIA  
Five more minutes. I'm almost there.

Julia hides behind a building, makes sure no one's around.  
She counts money from the bucket, sneaks it into her pocket.

4 EXT. NARROW ALLEYWAY - DAY

4

Julia hands a few notes and coins to RUDY (28). She is professionally dressed, with shirt and trousers.

RUDY  
Is this a joke?

JULIA  
It's all I have with me. I can't take  
any money from the account right now.  
It would be suspicious.

RUDY  
I'm not taking a risk for pennies.

JULIA  
You'll have your money.

Rudy walks away, disappointed. Julia pulls her clothes.

JULIA  
If I don't pay, you can easily revert  
your part. You can't lose.

Rudy studies Julia's face, thoughtful.

JULIA  
Do I have to find somebody else?

RUDY  
No, I'll do it. What was the other  
thing you needed me to do?

Julia gives Rudy a folded paper sheet. Rudy reads it.

RUDY  
How do you plan to get away with this  
anyway? Everybody will suspect you.

JULIA  
Not if somebody else transfers the  
money.

5 INT. "FOR THE CHILDREN"'S OFFICE - DAY

5

Shannon speaks on the phone. A computer is in front of her, it displays a bank account balance of £15.324.

Julia sticks photos of Eric and Passer-By on a wall covered with other photos. Above, the title "These people already helped. Join us". She's in fact eavesdropping on Shannon.

SHANNON

I'm sure we can help. You too. Bye.

Shannon writes "Priceless Children" on a white board, full of other names and contacts.

JULIA

What was that about?

SHANNON

They want our support. I'll run checks for them later today.

Julia adjusts a photo and steps back, in appreciation.

Shannon assembles sheets with the HMRC logo in a folder.

SHANNON

Looks good now. Documentation's here.

Shannon places the folder on the table.

JULIA

What would I do without you?

(beat)

Hey, where's Ash? Watching her shows?

Shannon nods. Julia opens the door and peeks inside.

6 INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

6

Ash watches cartoons. Her eyes react to the door opening.

7 INT. "FOR THE CHILDREN"'S OFFICE - DAY

7

Shannon is sweeping some paper clips and pieces of paper from the floor with a broom. She observes Julia carefully.

Julia catches Shannon staring at her. Shannon puts away the broom and sits at her computer, working.

Julia points to "Priceless Children" on the board.



JULIA  
I never heard of them.

SHANNON  
They support victims of human  
trafficking.

JULIA  
I hate to say this, but we already  
have a long list of organisations to  
help. We should focus on them. Okay?

Julia wipes "Priceless Children", it leaves a green blur on  
the board.

Shannon turns back to her computer. Silence becomes awkward.

JULIA  
You don't agree.

SHANNON  
It's your call. You chose all the  
other partners anyway.

JULIA  
Shannon, we can't help everyone.

SHANNON  
No, you're right.

Julia grabs the folder and her purse. She's about to leave.

JULIA  
Listen, why don't you go to the HMRC  
instead of me?

Shannon makes a doubtful face. Me?

JULIA  
You're right. I tend to take over a  
lot and I should delegate more.

SHANNON  
(suspicious)  
What about--

JULIA  
You can work on that later. Just go,  
before I try to take over again.

SHANNON  
Okay, I'll just grab Ash and--

JULIA  
Let her watch the cartoons.

SHANNON  
Sure. Call me if she needs anything.

Shannon accepts the folder from Julia, uneasy, and walks out, constantly peeping over her shoulder.

Julia's smile dissipates as soon as the door closes. She opens the front door, makes sure Shannon has left.

Julia searches for something in her handbag. She finds it.

8 INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

8

The door opens, Julia walks in. Ash's eyes react to the noise, as Julia approaches.

Julia holds an apple juice pack in front of Ash's eyes.

She puts the straw in Ash's mouth. Ash hesitates: she shouldn't...

JULIA  
Just a sip won't hurt. Come on.

Juice starts flowing through the straw.

JULIA  
Shannon almost ruined everything  
yesterday. Did you tell her anything?

Ash looks Julia in the eyes. Julia takes the straw away.

JULIA  
You know she wouldn't accept it.

That seems to make Ash sad.

JULIA  
I have great news. Rudy will do it.  
She'll sneak you into the trial next  
week. They will help you, reverse  
your disease. You'll live many, many  
years. You may even walk again.

Ash's eyes shine: hope. Tries to talk, only groans come out.

JULIA  
Shh. Don't talk. We'll have plenty of  
time once you get well.  
(MORE)

JULIA (cont'd)  
 You'll tell me all about you, about  
 your life-- every moment I missed for  
 the past sixteen years.  
 (regretful)  
 What you always wanted to tell me.  
 How I'm a terrible human being, for  
 abandoning you. A terrible mother.

A long silence. Let the words sink in.

JULIA  
 I want to hear it all. I don't care  
 how bad you think of me. I just want  
 to hear your voice.  
 (happier)  
 We should be celebrating.  
 (raises juice)  
 A bit more? Slowly. Careful.

Ash drinks, but expels the straw after the first sip. She  
 struggles to breathe.

JULIA  
 Ash? What's wrong? Ash?

Julia leans Ash forward and taps her back. Once.

Then again. Nothing seems to alleviate her.

JULIA  
 Come on, baby, get it out. Come on.

She presses again. A jet of phlegm comes out of Ash's mouth.

Ash breathes normally. Julia holds Ash's head.

JULIA  
 Shh. Shh. Mummy's here. Mummy's here.

Their relief doesn't last long: a door opens outside.

Julia cleans up Ash, then hides the juice. She takes a deep  
 breath to calm down. Puts on a smile and opens the door.

9 INT. "FOR THE CHILDREN" HEADQUARTERS - DAY

9

Julia's face quickly turns to surprise. Maybe a bit of fear.

It's RUDY.

Julia strides towards Rudy, grabs her arm. Rudy pulls away.

JULIA  
What are you doing here? What if I  
wasn't alone?

RUDY  
I didn't want to speak on the phone.  
A new team lead came on board and she  
moved the dates. The decision will be  
made today. I have to sneak Ash this  
afternoon or it won't happen.  
(beat)  
But not without the money first.

JULIA  
That's not what we agreed.

RUDY  
I'll be taking a bigger risk. I want  
the money upfront.

JULIA  
I can't transfer the money myself. It  
has to be Shannon. And doing it this  
week will raise suspicions.

RUDY  
Fine. If you think Ash will survive  
until the next trial, by all means.

JULIA  
I won't gamble on your honesty. Rudy,  
it's my daughter's life.

It has no effect in Rudy. Julia storms into the Break Room.  
She comes back with Ash in her wheelchair.

JULIA  
Look at her. Look her in the eyes and  
tell her your greed is more important  
than her life. Look at her.

Ash stares intensely at Rudy, makes her feel uncomfortable.

ASH  
Pw-- pwe-- pweeee--

Rudy averts Ash's eyes. She gathers her thoughts. Finally...

RUDY  
I want the money by four today.

Julia looks at the clock: 2:15.

Rudy opens the door: Shannon is on the other side.

Rudy manages to mask her concern. She smiles and walks out.

JULIA  
That was Rudy. She works with one of  
our partners.  
(beat)  
Back already?

SHANNON  
Priority queue.

Shannon lays down her bag. She takes Ash to the Break Room.

JULIA  
I brought Ash in so she wouldn't be  
alone all day. I hope you don't mind.

Shannon disappears into the break room without a word.

Julia looks at the clock. The computer. The Break Room door.

She sits at the computer, logs in into the bank website and  
clicks 'Make Transfer'.

Fills in a form to transfer £15.000 to one of the charities.

She clicks the 'Transfer' button. A confirmation page asks:  
'Are you sure?'. The mouse pointer hovers over the 'Yes'  
button. Julia can't make up her mind.

Shannon comes back from the Break Room. Julia hurriedly  
closes the browser and stands up.

Julia grabs her bag and the bucket.

JULIA  
Since you're back, I'll head to the  
station. Don't call the police again.

Julia chuckles. Shannon forces a polite smile.

Julia takes a last look at the clock before walking out.

Shannon tries to work on her computer, but often stops and  
turns her attention to Julia's computer.

She opens the browser on Julia's computer. When asked to  
restore session, she selects 'Yes'. The bank's website is  
opened, a header reads: "Log in to finish your transfer".

Shannon looks at the white board with organisation names.

She picks up the phone.

10 EXT. FARRINGDON STATION - DAY 10

Julia rattles the bucket, but absent of her well famous smile. She constantly looks at the time: 2:53.

Julia barely acknowledges when a woman donates a coin.

11 INT. "FOR THE CHILDREN"'S OFFICE - DAY 11

Shannon is on the phone, agitated.

SHANNON  
No. Rudy, I said Rudy.

Disturbing long pause on the phone.

WOMAN ON PHONE (O.S.)  
I'm sorry. No one with that name ever  
worked here.

Shannon hangs up. She looks at the white board: all names but one are strike-through.

12 EXT. FARRINGDON STATION - DAY 12

Julia is not even trying anymore: she just stands there, holding the bucket still.

She looks at the watch once again: 15:43.

Julia gathers her things and leaves in a hurry, completely ignoring a woman who was attempting to donate a coin.

13 INT. "FOR THE CHILDREN"'S OFFICE - DAY 13

The clock on the wall shows 15:56.

The office looks empty.

Julia walks in, straight to the computer. She logs into the bank account.

SHANNON  
What were you doing here, Julia?

Shannon sits on the floor, with her head between her arms.

SHANNON  
What did you get me involved with?

JULIA  
Are you crying?

Julia reaches out to comfort her, but Shannon moves away.

SHANNON  
Answer my question.

JULIA  
I don't understand your question.  
(beat)  
Where is Ash?

SHANNON  
With a friend. Why do you care?

JULIA  
You are not well. Let me take you to  
your daughter.

Police sirens are heard at a distance, closer every second.

JULIA  
You called the police again?

SHANNON  
You have nothing to hide, right?

JULIA  
Silly, another false alarm will get  
you in trouble. Come on, you have to  
leave. I'll find some excuse.

Shannon grabs the broomstick, blocks Julia's way out.

SHANNON  
B-- be quiet or I'll-- I'll hit you.

Sirens are closer. Julia looks at the clock: 15:58; the  
computer; Shannon, blocking her way out.

Desperation takes over. Julia grabs the broomstick, tries to  
take it away from Shannon.

They struggle, Shannon pushes Julia away, keeps the weapon.

The police car stops right outside the door.

JULIA  
Shannon, we want the same thing.

SHANNON

And what is that? To profit from  
someone else's misery? Is that why  
you asked me to work with you?  
Because I was already miserable?

JULIA

I'll explain everything. To you. Not  
to them. Send them away. Please. You  
have to trust me.

Too late. The door opens, Eric, the policeman, peeks.

ERIC

Hello?

He sees Shannon threatening Julia with the broomstick.

ERIC

Hey, give me that.

While he takes the broomstick away from Shannon, Julia runs  
to the computer.

ERIC

Get away from that computer.

She doesn't. What she sees freezes her blood...

The balance of the charity account: it's £0.

JULIA

What did you do? Where is the money?  
(beat)  
Where is the money?

For a split second, Shannon glances at the white board.

The green blur, the organisation Julia erased.

All strength seems to abandon Julia: she sits on the desk,  
her eyes get watery, but she's unable to actually cry. Maybe  
it's shock, maybe it's something else.

ERIC

Doesn't look good to either of you.

SHANNON

I did nothing wrong.

ERIC

No one ever does. Why don't we decide  
that at the station?



Julia turns her attention to Shannon. She holds a sob.

SHANNON  
Please, my daughter has no one else  
to take care of her.

Rage builds up. Julia's eyes become threatening, murderous.

Julia charges against Shannon, hits her a couple of times,  
before Eric pulls her away.

JULIA  
You stupid bitch. Do you have any  
idea what you've done?

Eric manages to lock Julia's arms, but she struggles.

JULIA  
I was so close. And you ruined it.  
You ruined everything. You took my  
money, you took my life-- my-- my--

Julia stops struggling. She bursts into tears.

Eric lets her go, Julia falls to her knees.

ERIC  
Are you alright?

Shannon massages her sore face, but nods.

Eric pulls Julia by one arm, tries to help her to stand up.

ERIC  
Come on, let's go.

She stays on the floor. Eric steps back, gives her time.

Julia calms down. Her cries turn to sobs. She realises  
Shannon is looking at her, somehow, with pity in her eyes.

JULIA  
I'm sorry. For everything I did to  
you-- for what I planned to do.  
(beat)  
I really wanted to do something good  
here. Even if you can't believe me.

She empties her pockets, lays keys and phone on the floor.

JULIA  
I know you want to same. Continue  
that work. Please. Don't let it all  
be for nothing.

SHANNON  
Can I wait outside?

Eric takes a moment to consider. He nods.

JULIA  
Take it. You'll regret if you don't.  
You can do so much good with it.

Beat. Shannon thinks. She slowly picks up the items.

Julia grabs her arm. Gently, non-threatening.

JULIA  
Tell Ash I send her a big kiss. She's  
an amazing girl and you're an amazing  
mother. You'd do anything for her,  
I'm sure of it. Anything.

Shannon walks to the exit in silence. Slams the door shut.

14 INT. BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

14

Shannon cradles Ash, her face looks sadder than ever.

SHANNON  
I know you liked her, but we have to  
forget her. She was a bad person.

Tears run down Ash's face. Shannon cleans them up.

SHANNON  
Oh, honey-- we can't be sad for her.  
We must be happy, because she didn't  
get away with it. Because so many  
children got the help they needed.

A phone rings: it's Julia's phone. Shannon answers it.

RUDY (O.S)  
Good evening. I'm calling from St.  
John's Research Clinic. I'm happy to  
tell you your daughter was accepted  
in the ALS reversal trial.

Shannon removes the phone from her hear. What does he mean?

RUDY (O.S)  
Hello? Miss Julia?

SHANNON  
(to herself)  
Julia?

She looks at Ash. She finally understands.

15 EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

15

Rudy stops next to a garbage bin, while on the phone.

She rips apart the paper Julia gave her earlier. The words "Priceless Children" are written on it.

Rudy puts the pieces in the trash and walks away.

16 INT. BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

16

Shannon is in shock. Ash's eyes are locked on hers, begging.

ASH  
Pw-- pweeee-- pweeazz--

SHANNON  
You knew.

Ash looks down, to her legs, then back to Shannon's eyes.

SHANNON  
Honey, I also want you to get well,  
but we don't know what else she did.  
We can't get involved. We would be as  
guilty as her. I'm sorry.

Shannon terminates the call. She remains quiet, doubtful.

Ash emits a sound that can only be a cry. Shannon cradles Ash, comforts her the best she can.

SHANNON  
It's only a trial. With little chance  
of success. What if it doesn't work?  
By accepting, we're condoning a  
crime, possibly hurting somebody  
else. What if it's all for nothing?  
(beat)  
We will find another way. An honest  
way. We just need you to hold on a  
bit longer. Okay?

Not okay. Ash stares at the infinite, with a hopeless look.

Shannon can't take her eyes from the phone, wondering if she made the right decision.

17 INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

17

Julia sits on the floor, reading a book. A sad expression.

PRISON GUARD (O.S)

Mail.

A letter slides under the door.

Julia remains motionless for a while. Then hurriedly grabs the letter and rips the envelope apart.

Julia sobs as soon as she starts reading.

She controls herself. Reads the rest in silence.

All of a sudden, she bursts to tears. She hugs the letter.

Her cries turn to laughter. She laughs and cries, both at the same time.

She looks at the letter again. It's hand written, with very clumsy calligraphy. We hear Ash's voice, struggling to speak the words below:

*"You must know I don't hate you. I forgive everything you've done. Because, in the end, you did for me what no one else did. Not even Shannon.*

*Thank you for everything, Mum.*

*Love, **Ash**"*

FADE TO BLACK