

INT. NEW YORK FAMILY COURT - MID-AFTERNOON

RICHIE and LEO TOZIER stand side by side behind a lectern at the center of the courtroom, hands clasped.

MAGGIE and WENTWORTH TOZIER are seated behind them in the gallery, surrounded by both RICHIE's and LEO's friends.

At the bench, the JUDGE shuffles her stack of papers before setting them on the desk in front of her, folding her hands on top of them.

JUDGE

Seems like our last item on the docket before the court breaks for the afternoon is a celebration of sorts.

(RICHIE and LEO laugh nervously, joined by a murmur of laughter from the gallery)

JUDGE

Mr. Tozier, I'm impressed. Not only with the clarity of your petition, but your reason for filing it in the first place. So many people love a child that wasn't necessarily born to them, and to give them the environment they need to grow and to thrive is no easy feat. But from what I can gather from our previous meeting, you've been adjusting well?

RICHIE

Absolutely, your honor. Although I have had to thank my parents for the chaos I caused when I was her age.

(the JUDGE, LEO, MAGGIE and WENTWORTH, and LEO's friends all laugh)

JUDGE

And, you, Eleanor? How has the adjustment been for you?

LEO

Great. Richie has been nothing but supportive since the second I called him. He's sacrificed so much of his own life, put so many different things on hold, all to make sure I was okay. He's done everything a father should and then some.

(RICHIE snuffles and puts an arm around LEO. LEO takes a tissue from the pocket of her dress and hands it to him.)

JUDGE

I think, sometimes, we give too much credit to biology. Biology can make you a parent, but it doesn't give you the title of 'mother' or 'father'. That title must be earned, kept with promises and support given to a child. Even though you were not born to him, he has treated you as if you were. That is a love that nobody can change.

(The JUDGE picks up her papers, adjusts her glasses.)

JUDGE

Nothing I do here today changes that. It happened naturally. No matter how you cut this, and I'm sure by most appearances, he is your father. The only thing that needs to be changed about that is the legal side.

(The JUDGE smiles, pushes her glasses up to rest on her head.)

JUDGE

Eleanor, could you raise your right hand please?

(LEO raises her right hand, her left still firmly clasped in RICHIE's.)

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth on your honor and by the state of New York?

LEO

(choked up) I do.

JUDGE

(smiles) I can see by your signature on the adoptee forms, but I have to ask - do you accept the terms of the petition filed by Mr. Tozier to make you his legally adopted daughter?

LEO

(nodding, crying) God. Fuck. Yeah, yes, I do.

JUDGE

As I said before, nobody can order the love you two hold for each other, but is my honor, as is bestowed on me by the state of New York, that it shall be known and recognized that Richard Wentworth Tozier is now legally and formally the father of Eleanor Margaret Tozier. Congratulations.

The JUDGE sets her papers down and hits her gavel, signaling the end of the trial. In the gallery, the friends and family of the TOZIERS cheer and hug in celebration.

After both RICHIE and LEO sign the final forms for notarization, RICHIE hugs HIS DAUGHTER, lifting her into the air.

