

THE WOMAN IN THE HOUSE

EPISODE 101

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10.09.20
Second Netflix Draft

OPEN ON SHOTS of a quaint, coastal town on a clear, bright morning... The picturesque, old main street. The little elementary school. Leafy suburban streets. We land on one storybook house in particular...

...and SLOWLY MOVE IN on the large bay window that dominates the face of the house to see a woman, wearing a bathrobe, seated in a large, overstuffed white chair, staring out blankly. This is ANNA.

ANNA (V.O.)

My husband used to tell me I have an overactive imagination. That I drink too much. That I can't let go of the past. That maybe I'm just too fragile for this world.

(then)

He's right about all of it. That's why he left me.

A man passes, walking a dog. A few houses down an older woman is planting flowers. A woman pushes a stroller. Anna seems to take no notice. Until...

A moving truck loudly pulls in front of the house directly across the street. Anna watches as the movers get out of the truck, but her attention is suddenly diverted to the house next door to that house. Her neighbor CAROL (40, hair and makeup done. What time does this woman wake up?) is getting her boys into her car.

ANNA

(to self)

Shit.

Anna jumps up and calls out upstairs...

ANNA (CONT'D)

Elizabeth! We're gonna be late for school!

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

As Anna hurriedly makes a peanut butter sandwich for Elizabeth's school lunch...

ANNA

(calls out)

Elizabeth, c'mon!

Anna puts the sandwich in a ziploc bag and quickly stuffs it, a bag of chips and a juice box into a kid's lunchbox.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(called out)
I'll grab you a banana for the car!

EXT. MADISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LATER

Parents watch as their little ones file into school. Anna, standing apart, notices a small group of parents, including Carol, staring and whispering about her.

Anna looks down and realizes that she's still in her bathrobe. Classy, Anna. Self conscious, Anna heads toward her minivan but Carol follows.

CAROL
Anna!

Anna turns and puts on a fake smile.

ANNA
Oh hi, Carol.

CAROL
(significantly)
How are you?

ANNA
I'm great.

Carol gives Anna's robe and disheveled appearance a once-over. Anna cinches the belt on her robe.

ANNA (CONT'D)
The morning got away from me.

CAROL
Mark said you never called him back to confirm.
(off Anna's confusion)
For the date tonight.

ANNA
Oh.

CAROL
I know you must be nervous, this being the first one since the divorce, but you're gonna love this guy, I promise. He's terrific.

Anna stares at the ground, then...

ANNA
 You know, I actually don't think
 tonight's gonna work--

CAROL
 (firmly)
 Anna, you can't cancel the day of.
 He's a big client of Scott's.

Anna sighs.

CAROL (CONT'D)
 It's been three years. At some
 point you've gotta move on.

ANNA
 (resigned)
 Fine.

CAROL
 Great. I'll tell Scott to let him
 know!

As Anna gets in her car, Carol starts a voice text.

CAROL (CONT'D)
 (into phone, deliberate)
 Tell Mark Anna's in. Period. Also,
 your shirts are in my car, am I
 supposed to take them to the
 cleaners or what. Question mark.

Anna drives off.

EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LATER

Anna pulls in her driveway. She gets out of her car and for a moment watches the movers unloading the truck across the street. Still no sign of who the new neighbors are.

Anna starts toward her house when she spots her sweet, simple-minded handyman BUELL working on her mailbox.

ANNA
 How's the mailbox coming, Buell?

BUELL
 It's comin' Miss Anna. She's a
 tricky one, but we'll get there,
 don't you worry.

As Buell resumes working, Anna reaches the front door and digs into her purse for her house keys...

ANNA
 (to self, discouraged)
 God damnit.
 (then, to Buell)
 Hey, Buell? I think I locked myself
 out...

Buell picks up his tool bag and approaches Anna.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 I'm so sorry. I thought I took the
 car fob with the keys but I took
 the wrong one. We were just rushing
 to get to school...

Buell stares at Anna for a beat too long.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 ... I mean, I can call a locksmith
 if you--

BUELL
 Don't you worry, Miss Anna.

Buell digs in his tool bag and comes out with a small leather
 lock pick set. He takes out two little metal tools and puts
 them into the keyhole and easily unlocks the door.

ANNA
 Thanks, Buell.

Anna enters the house.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Anna enters and notices Elizabeth's lunchbox sitting on the
 counter. Goddammit.

ANNA
 (rueful)
 Fucking mom of the year.

Anna opens a pantry. There are a couple of cases of red wine
 on the floor. She grabs a bottle, uncorks it and pours it
 into her glass, filling it almost to the rim. Anna takes a
 long sip and heads to the living room.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Anna heads to her chair by the window, she checks her
 phone. There's a notification: "two missed calls from Sloane
 Moore".

Anna swipes the notification away and opens Instagram. She immediately goes to "search". At the top of her "recent searches" is "Douglas Whitaker". She taps on it as if by rote.

Douglas has still only ever posted four photos. A slice of thin crust pepperoni pizza with the hashtag #thincrust, a selfie of him with an exaggerated incredulous look on his face pointing at a Starbucks coffee with his name misspelled as "Dougles", a photo of a slice of thick crust pepperoni pizza with the hashtag #thickcrust, and a posed family photo of Douglas, Anna and Elizabeth.

ANNA

(to self)

Same four photos. At least I'm not the only one who hasn't moved on.

Anna taps on the family photo and stares at it for a beat too long, then puts her phone down and sits in her chair to see if she can catch a glimpse of the new neighbors. So far nothing but movers. Anna leans over and picks up her mystery novel (The Girl Across the Lake) and starts to read until something catches her eye...

A HANDSOME MAN stands in the open front door, directing the movers. He's joined by an adorable LITTLE GIRL. The handsome man goes upstairs with the little girl. Anna sees them in an upstairs window. The handsome man opens a box as the little girl looks on. He digs around then pulls out...a teddy bear. The little girl takes the teddy bear and sits on her bed hugging it.

The handsome man exits then appears in another upstairs window. He starts putting men's clothes in the closet. He's truly, strikingly handsome. Anna scans the other windows.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(to self)

No wife?

She takes a long sip of wine and continues watching the handsome man and the little girl. Anna's landline phone rings. She makes no move to answer it and keeps watching.

ANSWERING MACHINE (O.C.)

(Elizabeth's voice)

Hi! You've reached the Whitaker residence! We're not home, so please leave a message and we will definitely call you back!

Beep.

SLOANE (O.C.)
 (on answering machine)
 Anna, it's Sloane. Again...

Anna sighs.

INTERCUT:

INT. SLOANE'S GALLERY - SAME

SLOANE, busy, sits at a glass desk.

SLOANE
 (into phone)
 I know I'm stalking you, and I know
 you're thinking, "I told her a
 million times I stopped painting",
 but we've finally settled on a
 title for the new exhibit. We're
 calling it "Spring Has Sprung" and
 I know this is a huge ask but
 please have an open mind...

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Anna looks away from the window and toward the answering
 machine.

SLOANE (O.C.)
 (on answering machine)
 I would give anything to build the
 show around a new piece of yours.
 You know I'm your biggest fan. No
 one paints flowers like you do.
 Call me back. Please. Or I'll call
 you again! Okay, love you.

Anna gets up and approaches a wall with several framed
 paintings of flowers. She takes them all in.

Each one is of a single flower: A tulip, a sunflower, a
 peony. Somehow they're both simple and strikingly beautiful.
 All bear her signature. Anna takes another long sip of wine,
 thinking. Seems like a different life.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - CLOSET - LATER

Anna, now dressed for the date, is putting on a pair of
 heels...

ANNA
(called out)
Elizabeth, honey, keep your ears
open for the sitter, she should be
here soon!

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna goes over to her dresser, a half finished glass of wine sits next to her jewelry. She starts to pick out a bracelet and pauses, noticing her engagement ring. She picks up the ring and stares at it, remembering...

FLASHBACK:

EXT. BEAUTIFUL WEDDING VENUE - EVENING

CLOSE ON Anna and DOUGLAS'S clasped hands. Anna is wearing the engagement ring. Widen to reveal we are at their wedding reception...

D.J.
Ladies and Gentlemen, for the first
time, please welcome, Mr. and Mrs.
Whitaker!

Everyone claps as Anna and Douglas make their way to the center of the dance floor. The song "Unforgettable" begins as Anna and Douglas slow dance. After a few bars of the slow, romantic song, there's suddenly a record scratch abruptly stopping the song.

Anna and Douglas theatrically pretend to be confused when suddenly "It Takes Two" by Rob Base and DJ E-Z Rock starts playing. The guests cheer as Anna and Douglas begin an overly rehearsed and overly elaborate dance. They lip sync every word. The song ends with Anna and Douglas beaming and panting in their final "rap pose" to raucous applause.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

Anna puts the engagement ring back down. She looks at herself in the mirror over the dresser for a beat too long then exits.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Anna walks down the hall and pokes her head in Elizabeth's room.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - ELIZABETH'S ROOM - SAME

Anna enters to find ELIZABETH (9) on the floor playing with her dolls.

ANNA
How do I look?

Elizabeth doesn't answer. Anna rolls her eyes, smiling.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I know, I wish I was in my pajamas
staying home with you tonight too.

Anna watches Elizabeth play for a bit, smiling.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I love you.

Elizabeth doesn't say anything.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Can you at least give me a kiss
before I go?

Elizabeth stops playing with her dolls and looks up at Anna.

ELIZABETH
I can't.

ANNA
Why not?

ELIZABETH
Because I'm dead.

And with that... Elizabeth fades away.

Anna stares at the empty room that we now can tell has been un-lived in for years. A single tear rolls down her cheek.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Anna gets out of an Uber and approaches the restaurant. She pauses, apprehensive. The restaurant looks lively and full.

Couples on dates, people laughing. It's been so long since she's been in this world. She takes a deep breath.

ANNA
(to self)
Let's get this over with.

Anna goes inside.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - ENTRANCE - SAME

Anna enters, scanning the restaurant for her date. A HOSTESS approaches.

HOSTESS
Can I help you?

ANNA
Um, I'm meeting someone... I think
he made the reservation, Mark
Lacey?

The hostess checks her book.

HOSTESS
Yes. Doesn't look like he's here
yet. I could seat you or if you'd
prefer, you can wait for him at the
bar?

ANNA
I'll definitely wait at the bar.

INT. RESTAURANT - BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Anna sits, angled toward the entrance. She checks Douglas's Instagram on her phone. Her jaw drops. Douglas has posted a new photo. It's of him... with his arm around an attractive woman.

ANNA
You've got to be fucking kidding
me.

Anna taps on the photo -- the woman's not tagged. Anna stares at the photo in disbelief, which turns to deep hurt.

The bartender gives her a glass of red wine along with her credit card and receipt. Anna takes back her credit card, signs the receipt, then quickly drinks the entire glass.

Anna spots MARK enter the restaurant, looking around for her. He spots her and waves, smiling. Anna forces a smile back.

INT. RESTAURANT - DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

A waiter stands at their table as Mark scans the wine list.

MARK
(to Anna)
Are you a wine drinker?

ANNA
(shrugging)
Sometimes. Sure.

MARK
(to waiter)
Let's do a bottle of this one.

Mark hands the wine list to the waiter, who walks away. Anna hides in her menu.

MARK (CONT'D)
So Anna? What's your deal? Tell me everything.

ANNA
What's my deal... Uh--

MARK
You're Scott and Carol's neighbor, you're divorced... me too, I'm guessing that's why Carol set us up. That and uh, I'm a sucker for a beautiful woman.

Beat. Anna's not charmed.

MARK (CONT'D)
That was a compliment.

ANNA
(acidly, with a smile)
Right. Thank you.

The waiter brings over the wine and starts opening it.

WAITER
Any questions about the menu?

The waiter pours a taste for Mark. Mark quickly swallows it.

MARK
Yeah it's fine.

As the waiter pours Anna's glass...

MARK (CONT'D)
(to waiter)
What can you tell me about the
chicken?

The waiter pours Mark's glass.

WAITER
It's pan roasted, it's served with
green beans and mushrooms in a
madeira pan jus.

MARK
Huh.

Mark, totally absorbed in the menu, stays seemingly on the
verge of asking the waiter another question. During this Anna
finishes her wine.

WAITER
I can come back...

The waiter notices Anna's empty glass and refills it.
Finally...

MARK
(to waiter, still absorbed
with menu)
Yeah, maybe come back.

The waiter leaves, as the hostess approaches to seat another
couple at the table next to theirs. It's Carol and SCOTT.
Anna stares in disbelief. No fucking way.

CAROL
Ohmigod!

MARK
You're kidding me!

CAROL
(to Scott)
Did you know they were coming here?

SCOTT
No, how would I know where they
were going.

MARK

This is crazy.

SCOTT

I swear we were gonna go to the Chinese place and then last second I was like, I want a steak. I swear to god, Carol tell them.

CAROL

(to Mark and Anna)

We're going. Don't worry, we'll go somewhere else.

MARK

No, sit down! We haven't even ordered yet.

CAROL

Really? Anna...?

Anna takes a beat too long to answer.

ANNA

(big, fake smile)

Great.

(then, getting up)

I need to use the restroom I'll be right back.

Anna takes her purse and walks away from the table.

INT. RESTAURANT - WOMEN'S RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

It's a small, one person at a time bathroom. Anna, buzzed, stares at herself in the mirror for a beat too long. Her phone rings. She looks at it, it's Sloane.

ANNA

(to self)

Oh come on.

Anna answers.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(don't even ask)

I can't give you an answer Sloane, I'm sorry.

INTERCUT:

INT. SLOANE'S HOUSE - SAME

Sloane is at her dining room table, busy, her laptop open, a martini and a half-eaten dinner. Sloane sits up, concerned at the sound of Anna's voice.

SLOANE

You okay?

ANNA

I'm fine.

(then)

I'm just on a date with three of the worst people in the world.

SLOANE

(teasing)

Jesus, Anna, you go from not dating at all to multiple partners in one night?

ANNA

It's not that exciting, my neighbors just sat at the table next to us.

(then)

And I don't even know that this guy's terrible, although I'm pretty sure he's terrible.

SLOANE

Well, have an open mind. You never know what can happen. Remember when you first met Douglas and you were like, 'this guy is such a dork', and then six months later you were getting married?

Anna remembers...

FLASHBACK:

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

A casual party. Douglas and Anna arrive at the buffet table at the same time and both reach for the last pig in a blanket.

DOUGLAS

Woop... I'm a gentleman, I'll let you have the last pig in a blanket. Or as I like to call it, "hot dog in a towel".

ANNA
Wow. That's... bad.

They laugh.

DOUGLAS
I'm Douglas.

ANNA
Anna.

DOUGLAS
Who do you know here?

ANNA
I'm friends with Sloane.

DOUGLAS
Nice. I don't know Sloane, but I
don't know many people. Here. But
also out there. I'm not popular.

Anna is charmed.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Not to ask what you do, but... what
do you do?

ANNA
I'm an artist.

DOUGLAS
Wow. I don't know anything about
art. I get all of my paintings from
Z Gallery... have you heard of that
gallery?

ANNA
You're funny. What do you do?

DOUGLAS
I'm in the FBI.

Off of Anna's quizzical look...

END FLASHBACK.

INT. RESTAURANT - WOMEN'S RESTROOM - SAME

Anna is wistful. Then...

ANNA

I don't think this one's gonna end
in a wedding, but... fine. Open
minded. Open minded Anna.

SLOANE

Attagirl. Go get 'em.

INT. RESTAURANT - DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

As Anna approaches her table, Mark, Scott and Carol are laughing uproariously about something. Anna watches them, unable to mask her repulsion as they laugh. Finally as it dies down...

ANNA

(to self, sotto)
I can't do this.

CAROL

What's that, Anna?

ANNA

(furious, clapping after
each word)
I. Can't. Do. This.
(then)
That's my deal, Mark.

Anna storms out of the restaurant.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - LATER

Anna soaks in her bathtub, trying to wash the evening away. Suddenly a loud thud! Anna startles, terrified.

ANNA

(called out)
Hello?

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Anna, soaking wet, her robe hastily thrown on, tiptoes into the hallway, holding her breath. She looks around her. The house is silent. Anna looks up at the closed attic door, listening. Nothing. Finally...

ANNA

(to self)
I need a drink.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Anna, now in her pajamas, sits in her chair with her wine, staring out like a zombie. In the house across the street, a few lights are on, but Anna doesn't see anyone. She takes a sip.

Just then, Anna sees the handsome man enter his living room and turn off the lights.

A few moments later he appears in his bedroom. Then he takes off his shirt. He's undeniably sexy. Something stirs in Anna. She looks closer. He has a pair of scars -- one just above his pelvic bone and another on his chest. Who is this handsome man?

He pulls the curtains. Show's over. Anna takes a long sip of wine and closes her eyes...

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Anna is asleep in her chair, her empty wine glass still in her hand. She's spilled red wine all over the white chair at some time during the night.

Anna startles awake to a knock at the door. She looks down at the spilled wine.

ANNA

Shit.

She opens the front door. The handsome man from across the street is standing there, presenting her with a small, pretty flower arrangement.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(surprised)

Hi!

HANDSOME MAN

These are for you.

Anna takes the flowers, blushing.

ANNA

Oh my god, these are gorgeous.
Thank you!

HANDSOME MAN

Oh-- they're not from me. I saw
they got delivered awhile ago and
they were just sitting out in the
sun, so--

ANNA

(covering)

Oh. Right. That's what I meant. I was saying thank you for letting me know they were out here. That's why I said thank you.

He smiles. Anna smiles.

HANDSOME MAN

I'm Neil, we just moved in across the street.

ANNA

I'm Anna.

A beat of awkward silence...

NEIL

Well... enjoy your flowers. Very pretty.

As Neil starts back home. Anna smiles. (Was he looking at me when he said "very pretty"?)

ANNA

(called out)

Nice to meet you, Neil!

NEIL

(called out)

Nice to meet you too, Anna!

Neil gives a friendly wave and enters his house. Anna closes her door.

Anna reads the card that came with the flowers: "Hope the orgy was fun! In case you're feeling artistic, here's a little inspiration. xo, Sloane". Anna rolls her eyes but smiles.

She takes the flowers through the living room to a room with a pair of closed french doors. Anna opens them...

FLASHBACK:

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - DOUGLAS'S OFFICE/ANNA'S ART STUDIO - DAY

The room is sun-splashed and warm. There's Anna's easel with a half-finished painting on it. On a table under a window is a flower arrangement that she is painting. There's Douglas, working, FBI files open on his desk.

He looks up at her and smiles. There's Elizabeth as a toddler, playing on the floor. She looks up at Anna...

TODDLER ELIZABETH

Mommy!

END FLASHBACK.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - DOUGLAS'S OFFICE/ANNA'S ART STUDIO - SAME

Anna stands in the doorway. It's the same room but now there's no life in it. Anna's easel has nothing on it. Douglas's desk is mostly barren now. And Elizabeth... is gone.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

It's a typical, beautiful, old New England cemetery.

Anna sits beside Elizabeth's grave. The headstone reads: Elizabeth Hope Whitaker 2009-2018, with the inscription: "If love could have saved you, you would have lived forever".

ANNA

... what else can I tell you? Oh!
We have new neighbors! It's a dad
and a little girl. She's about your
age, or your age when you...

Anna looks away from the headstone, steeling herself. Then...

ANNA (CONT'D)

Anyway, they seem really nice.

Anna smiles, but tears well up in her eyes. She wipes them away noticing off in the distance, a STRANGE MAN staring at her. Anna looks around. Is he watching me? There's no one else in the cemetery.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Well, I should probably get going.
I love you.

Anna, unsettled, stands and kisses her hand then places it on Elizabeth's headstone. She hurry-walks to her car. The strange man watches her the entire time.

Anna, nervous, fumbles with her keys then finally gets inside her car and drives out of the cemetery, but the road out takes her closer to the strange man...

He steps towards her car as she passes, a hand raised menacingly. Anna speeds away, glancing at him in the rear view mirror.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - LATER

Anna pulls in her driveway to spot a little girl pulling a wagon knocking on her front door. Anna gets out of her car and approaches.

ANNA

Hi there!

The little girl turns, Anna recognizes her as Neil's daughter.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You must be my new neighbor! I'm Anna.

EMMA

My name's Emma.

ANNA

It's so nice to meet you.
(then, re: wagon)
Whatcha got there?

EMMA

I'm selling chocolate bars for my new school. I'm trying to sell as many as I can so that the other kids will like me. I don't really have any friends yet.

ANNA

Oh my goodness, well of course I'll buy some. How about five boxes?

EMMA

Really?! That's fifty dollars!

ANNA

My checkbook's upstairs, hold on one second.

Anna unlocks the door and we follow Anna as she heads upstairs.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As Anna grabs her checkbook from her dresser drawer...

ANNA
(called out)
You must have read my mind, I was
just craving chocolate!

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As Anna heads back down the stairs with her checkbook...

ANNA
So how are you liking your new
house?

EMMA
It's okay. My dad says the
kitchen's too small.

ANNA
Oh is that right? Is your dad a
good cook?

EMMA
Not as good as my mom.

Anna looks at Emma tenderly, then...

ANNA
Well I'll tell you what I'm gonna
do. I'm gonna bring you a yummy
chicken casserole for dinner
tonight!

EMMA
Really?!

As Anna starts to write...

ANNA
Do I make the check out to your
school?

EMMA
Yeah. Madison Elementary.

Anna pauses.

ANNA
(to self)
Elizabeth's school.

EMMA
Who's Elizabeth?

Anna's mind goes somewhere else for a beat too long, then...

ANNA
Someone very special.
(then)
Just like you!

Anna hands Emma the check. Emma pulls back a blanket that was covering boxes and boxes of chocolate bars in her wagon.

EMMA
What kind do you want? We have
chocolate caramel, chocolate
krispy...

ANNA
Do you have any with almonds?

EMMA
Oh. The lady next door to us bought
all the almond ones.

Anna looks over at Carol's house and rolls her eyes. Then...

ANNA
I'll take chocolate caramel!

Emma gives the five boxes to Anna and heads out with her wagon.

EMMA
If I get any more with almonds I'll
be sure to let you know!

ANNA
Thanks, Emma!

Anna watches wistfully as the little girl pulls the wagon down the sidewalk.

EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LATER

Anna exits the house holding the casserole. She passes Buell still working on the mailbox.

Anna gets halfway across the street when a small, dark spot appears on the pavement. Then another. Anna stops dead in her tracks. Raindrops. She looks up. Dark clouds. A low rumble of thunder.

ANNA
(terrified, to self)
No.

Anna looks back at her house. It's so far away. Now the raindrops come down faster and faster. Anna sways, dizzy. She spots Buell working on her mailbox. She tries to call out to him, but can barely make a sound.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 (almost whispered)
 Buell--

Buell keeps working, oblivious. As the rain comes down harder, the world starts closing in on Anna. She drops the casserole, the dish shattering on the ground.

From his house, Neil notices Anna collapse in the middle of the street. He rushes out and helps Anna up and back into her house.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Neil helps a breathless Anna to the couch.

ANNA
 (weak)
 I'm okay, thank you. I'm so sorry.

NEIL
 Do you want me to call someone?

ANNA
 No, please, I'll be fine. I'm just so embarrassed. It's my stupid ombrophobia.
 (off his confused look)
 Fear of the rain.
 (then)
 I was trying to bring you a casserole.

NEIL
 Aw, you didn't need to do that. Although, I bet Emma would have loved it. I don't think she likes my cooking anywhere near as much as her mom's.

ANNA
 You're divorced?

NEIL
 Widowed.

ANNA
 I'm sorry.

Neil sits next to Anna.

NEIL

It was a tragic accident. We were ice skating on the lake. The ice gave way and... my wife fell through... she drowned. Emma saw the whole thing.

ANNA

That's awful.

Through the window, Anna can see Emma playing in her room. Then...

ANNA (CONT'D)

My daughter died three years ago.

NEIL

(to self)

Jesus.

They sit together. Two people who have suffered unimaginable loss. Neil notices Anna's paintings.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Those are beautiful.

ANNA

Thank you.

NEIL

Wait. You painted these?

Neil gets up and approaches one of the paintings, impressed.

ANNA

M-hmm.

NEIL

Wow.

(then)

My wife was really into art. She took pottery classes forever, but she wasn't like a professional, like you.

ANNA

Well, I haven't painted in a long time.

NEIL

Aha.

Beat.

ANNA

Well, I can't thank you enough...

NEIL

Are you sure you're all right?

ANNA

Yes, I'm fine.

(then)

And I still owe you a casserole.

Neil smiles.

NEIL

Well, if you need anything, we're right across the street.

Neil smiles. Anna smiles back. Right before he steps out the door...

NEIL (CONT'D)

Totally unsolicited advice, but...

I think you should paint again.

You're too good.

Neil leaves. Anna watches him go, thinking...

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Anna reaches up and pulls down the attic door in the ceiling then pulls down the ladder and climbs up into the attic.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

It's crowded and dark. Anna pulls the chain on an exposed lightbulb. It flickers on for a bit but there must be a loose wire because it goes out. Anna surveys the attic.

A strip of sunlight illuminates dusty art supplies: stacks of blank canvases, paints, brushes, etc. She stares at them. Could I possibly paint again? She tentatively picks up a cobwebbed palette knife when she hears something over her shoulder. She turns, peering into the darkest part of the attic. Another sound. Anna, terrified, holds out the palette knife defensively, straining to see into the darkness...

Suddenly an explosion of movement! Anna screams and drops the palette knife as a pigeon flies at her, eventually finding its way out of the open attic window. Breathless, Anna shuts the window and hurries out of the attic, empty-handed.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - ANNA'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna, rattled, opens the medicine cabinet, chock full of various prescription pill bottles. She swallows a few pills and shuts the medicine cabinet. She stares at her reflection for a beat too long.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Anna sits in her chair reading her mystery novel, her wine next to her. She looks up from her book and glances across the street to see Neil, shirtless, riding his Peloton. Anna bites her bottom lip and forces herself to go back to her book.

After a few beats trying to read, Anna looks back at Neil. God he's sexy. Anna takes a sip of wine. Neil sits upright, pedaling slower now. It's the cool-down phase. He's wet with sweat.

Suddenly he locks eyes with Anna. Embarrassed, Anna quickly looks down at her book. After a few beats, she sneaks another glance. Neil is still looking at her.

ANNA
(to self, barely moving
her lips)
What is happening?

Neil gets off the bike and disappears somewhere into the house.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(to self)
What just happened.

Just then Anna sees Neil's front door open. It's Neil, still shirtless, walking straight across the street, his eyes never leaving hers.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(to self)
Ohmigod, ohmigod, ohmigod...

There's a knock.

Anna quickly tries to pull herself together and goes to the door. She takes a deep breath and opens it. Anna is tingling with anticipation. He stares at her hungrily, then... Neil passionately kisses Anna.

They stumble inside her house, shutting the door behind them, kissing their way to her chair by the window.

They hurriedly undress each other and make love in the chair. At the height of her ecstasy, Anna closes her eyes. When she opens them... she's alone in her chair! She looks across the street and sees Neil still riding the Peloton.

Anna, shaken by how real that just felt, takes a long sip of wine.

Neil finishes riding, gets off the bike and disappears into the house somewhere. Anna sighs and gets up then turns off the living room lights and heads to bed.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - THE NEXT DAY

Anna checks herself out in the mirror. She adjusts her hair, trying in vain to get it right.

ANNA

(to self)

What are you doing? You're dropping
off a casserole, this isn't a date.

Anna picks up the casserole off the entry table, opens her front door and steps outside.

EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Anna exits her house. She looks up at the sky. It's clear and blue, no rain in sight. Thank god.

She heads toward Neil's house, not noticing the remains of the previously dropped casserole in the middle of the street.

EXT. NEIL AND EMMA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Anna reaches the front door and rings the doorbell. Emma answers.

EMMA

Hi!

(then, noticing)

The casserole!

ANNA

I told you I'd make it!

EMMA

You look pretty.

ANNA

I do?

Neil appears.

NEIL
 Hey Anna!
 (then, re: casserole)
 Oh geez, you made that for us?

ANNA
 (teasing)
 No, I saw it got delivered awhile ago and it was just sitting out in the sun, so...
 (then)
 Kidding! Yes, it's for you!

Neil laughs.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 Well, I hope you enjoy it.

Anna turns to head back home...

NEIL
 You're not gonna stay and join us?

ANNA
 Oh--

Anna blushes. Is this really happening?

NEIL
 I just opened a bottle of wine. I don't know if you like wine...

ANNA
 (quickly)
 I like wine.

NEIL
 Great!

Anna, almost giddy, follows Neil and Emma inside.

INT. NEIL AND EMMA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Neil and Emma lead Anna to the kitchen. Anna instantly feels relaxed. The little girl, the handsome husband... it's everything she used to have.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NEIL AND EMMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

It's toward the end of dinner. Everyone is enjoying each other, laughing (the laughter goes on a beat too long).

It's almost overwhelming how comforting and familiar it feels to Anna. Could she really have something like it again?

Neil starts to pour Anna some more wine...

ANNA

No, I'm good. I'm perfect.

Neil smiles and fills his own glass.

NEIL

(to Emma)

Honey, did you know that Anna's an artist?

EMMA

I take art!

ANNA

You do?

NEIL

(to Emma)

Oh! Why don't you show her that drawing you did?

Emma jumps up and grabs a drawing off the door of the refrigerator and excitedly hands it to Anna.

EMMA

It's a duck!

ANNA

Well, it's not a duck...

Emma looks concerned, until...

ANNA (CONT'D)

... It's a perfect duck. It's the most perfect duck I've ever seen.

Emma beams. Neil watches them together, smiling. Emma points to the duck's feathers.

EMMA

I wanted this to be more light green, but my marker set doesn't have light green.

(then)

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

Oh! Dad! We're going on a field trip to the aquarium on Thursday, can you be the chaperone?

NEIL

Uh... do fish swim?

EMMA

(confused)
What?

NEIL

(laughing)
I'm joking! Yes, of course!
(then, to Anna)
I'm not much of a comedian.

He's not funny, but Anna is charmed by Neil.

NEIL (CONT'D)

(to Emma)
Is there a permission slip that I need to sign?

EMMA

Yup! It's in my backpack!

Emma runs off...

NEIL

Her mom used to chaperone all the field trips, so now I make sure to do it.

Beat as Anna and Neil both remember their separate tragedies.

ANNA

Death really sucks, doesn't it?

NEIL

It really does.

They look at each other, a small smile knowing the other knows how they feel.

NEIL (CONT'D)

But, truly this is the happiest I've seen Emma in a long time. She did so much talking at dinner.

ANNA

Well you're obviously doing a great job with her.

NEIL

Ah, I don't know what I'm doing.
I'm trying.

(then)

Honestly, I think a big part of it
is how much she likes you.

Anna and Neil look at each other warmly. After a beat, Anna looks away, the eye-contact almost too much.

Emma re-enters with the permission slip and gives it to Neil. As Neil signs...

NEIL (CONT'D)

Okay. Now... it's someone's
bedtime.

EMMA

Nooo!

NEIL

Yesss.

Anna gets up.

ANNA

I should probably get going, too.

EMMA

(to Neil)

Can you read to me?

NEIL

Yeah, lemme do the dishes real
quick and I'll meet you upstairs.

EMMA

That'll take forever.

NEIL

Emma--

ANNA

I can read to you.

The words come out of Anna's mouth before she even has time to think.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(to Neil)

I mean, if that would help...

EMMA
(to Neil)
Pleeease!

Neil looks to Anna.

NEIL
You sure you don't mind?

ANNA
I'd love to.

Neil smiles watching Emma lead Anna upstairs.

INT. NEIL AND EMMA'S HOUSE - EMMA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Anna sits in a chair next to Emma in bed, reading to her.

ANNA
(reading)
As day turned into night, Gwendolyn
fell sound asleep... dreaming of
her castle and the adventures
ahead.
(then, to Emma)
And that is the end of the chapter.

Emma yawns.

ANNA (CONT'D)
We should probably stop here so you
can get some sleep.
(then, playful)
Just like Gwendolyn.

Emma shuts her eyes. As Anna goes to turn off the lamp by Emma's bed she notices a framed photo of Emma holding hands with her mom, both of them smiling. Heartbreaking. Anna turns off the light.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Anna enters and closes the door behind her. She leans against the door, blissful, holding her clean casserole dish tightly to her chest.

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - ANNA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Anna's in bed reading her mystery novel, her almost finished wine on her bedside table.

After a moment, Anna yawns, puts in her bookmark and sets the book on the bedside table next to her phone. She looks at her phone, considering.

Anna picks it up and goes to Instagram. She searches: Neil Coleman. She scrolls through a few "Neil Colemans" until she spots the profile with our Neil's photo. He's private. Damn. Anna takes a sip of wine. A little liquid courage. She sends Neil a follow request. Anna smiles then quickly puts her phone down and turns off the light.

The camera drifts up into the attic...

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - ATTIC - SAME

It's pitch black except for a strip of moonlight from the open attic window. In the darkness, we can just make out the shape... of a large man.

END