

Untitled Sardo Pilot

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- OVER CENTRAL PARK -- DAY

Moving downtown. Fast.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION -- DAY

ANN BROWN, 32, overwhelmed by her luggage, RUNS IN, slides past the lone JANITOR mopping the floor and crashes into the closed metal gate of a NEWSSTAND.

ANN

Damnit!

She kicks the gate.

JANITOR

Bus hit him.

ANN

What?

JANITOR

Hector. The owner. He died.

ANN

Oh. So he won't be coming in?

The Janitor slips on headphones and cranks his IPOD.

ANN (CONT'D)

Wait! Hey! Who else has the Sunday Times?

JANITOR

(shouting)

There's machines at the other end!
But they're all broken!

ANN

(shouting)

Thank you. That's very helpful.

Ann spots stacks of unopened papers off to the side. Tries to pull one out. Can't. She pulls a nail file from her purse. Saws through the plastic tie. A shadow falls over her.

ANN'S POV

A POLICEWOMAN looks down on her. An unhappy Policewoman.

ANN (CONT'D)

Oh. Hi. He's dead. Hector. Bus accident. Terrible. I need to see his obituary so I can send flowers to the...

Ann gets up.

ANN (CONT'D)

No, I should move on. That's what he'd want.

(gathering her bags)

Do you know what track the "Philadelphian" leaves from?

POLICEWOMAN

No. But I know it's one of the ones in Penn Station.

CLOSE ON ANN'S PANICKED FACE

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- OVER GRAND CENTRAL STATION -- DAY

Moving crosstown. Fast.

INT. PENN STATION -- DAY

Ann flies in. Spots a Newsstand. Heads for it.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Last call for the Amtrak
Philadelphian, departing from Track
Seventeen for Newark, Metro Park,
New Brunswick, Trenton and
Philadelphia.

Ann turns and runs to a long steep stairway. It's blocked off by yellow tape and a sign reading: "OUT OF ORDER."

She jumps on the escalator, walking as it goes down, until she gets to: a LARGE MAN, his LARGE WIFE and their THREE LARGE CHILDREN. Each with proportional luggage. Ann squeezes past the Man and his Wife. Then she's yanked backward. Her purse is caught on the man's suit bag. She reaches behind him, unhooks her purse and -- nothing. She's stuck, wedged between people and luggage. A WOMAN on the Up escalator rides by, staring. Ann smiles awkwardly.

INT. PENN STATION / TRACK SEVENTEEN -- DAY

The Philadelphian idles. Ann tears down the platform, dialing her iPhone.

ANN

(into phone)

Susan, it's me. Can I get the Sunday Times in Philadelphia?... It's not a stupid question. Try finding one in the Bronx...I don't want the one you get in Starbucks. I want the local... You promise?... Great. See you at the station.

The train doors start to close.

INT. AMTRAK PHILADELPHIAN -- DAY

Ann slips in and collapses on a seat. The train idles. She stands up.

ANN

(to the world)

Hey! I killed myself to get here!
How about we leave on ---

The train lurches forward. Ann falls backward out of frame.

ANN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Thank you.

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

EXT. AMTRAK PHILADELPHIAN -- DAY

CLOSE ON THE GRILL as the train slowly picks up speed and HEADS STRAIGHT TOWARD US.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. AMTRAK PHILADELPHIAN -- DAY

Ann stares out the window, back at Manhattan. It already seems so far away. Then it's gone.

CLOSE ON ANN'S iPHONE

Her finger taps "ADDRESS BOOK," then "HOME: 2 Fifth Avenue, Apt. 8B, NY, NY 10012." Then: "DELETE."

BACK TO SCENE

Ann watches New Jersey go by.

CLOSE ON ANN'S iPHONE

"WORK: 39 Grove Street, Suite 1C NY, NY 10014." "DELETE."

BACK TO SCENE

As urban North Jersey becomes a lush, green blur.

CLOSE ON ANN'S iPHONE

"EMERGENCY CONTACT: Mark Brown (HUSBAND) 2 Fifth Avenue, Apt. 8B, NY, NY 10012." Pause. "DELETE."

CLOSE ON ANN

Tough. Terrified. Starting over.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. AMTRAK PHILADELPHIAN -- DAY

The TRAIN SPEEDS TOWARD US. The SCREEN GOES WHITE.

END TITLES

FADE IN:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA -- DUSK

Moving across the Delaware River toward the skyline.

INT. 30TH STREET STATION -- DUSK

A man dressed as BEN FRANKLIN passes out flyers for Franklin Mills Mall. PASSENGERS ENTER in clumps. ANN RUNS THROUGH THEM. Spots MARTIN, burnt out from the 60's, at his pushcart, selling snacks and magazines.

ANN

Sunday New York Times, please.

Martin hands her a paper.

ANN (CONT'D)

This is the Philadelphia Inquirer.

MARTIN

It's the Sunday.

ANN

What's your name?

MARTIN

Me? Martin.

ANN

Let's take a look at this alleged newspaper, Martin.

(paging through)

See, here's an article on a prison riot. But they don't refer to the inmates as "Mr.," do they? The New York Times calls everyone "Mr." Some people might call that insane, but for me, it's familiar, and familiar is comforting, and comfort is what Sunday is all about, right?

MARTIN

I don't read the paper.

ANN

(plunging ahead)

There's no Sunday Styles. No Thomas Friedman. And in the back of the magazine, no pictures of wonderful estates where you could have four generations of your family over for a barbecue and a swim and some badminton -- hey!

Martin's wheeling his cart away.

ANN (CONT'D)

My sister swore that I could get
the New York Times here. The
local!

Martin keeps moving.

ANN (CONT'D)

I need my Times, Martin! I've
given up everything else!

Martin's at the station door.

MARTIN

You don't need a newspaper, lady.
You need a psychiatrist.

ANN

I am a psychiatrist!

MARTIN

(to himself)
Crazy is as crazy does.

Ann's phone rings.

ANN

I heard that!
(into phone)
Hello!...Susan, there's no Times
here....Starbucks sells the
national. I want the
local...That's not obsessive. It's
specific...You're still at the
hospital?...Susan? You're breaking
up. How long will it take you
to...Susan!

Ann kicks her luggage. WE HEAR GLASS BREAKING.

ANN (CONT'D)

Goddamnit!

She falls onto a bench. Buries her head in her hands.
Growls. Her fresh start's wilting.

MAN (O.S.)

I know how you feel. I bowl.

ANN

What?

REVEAL: WALKER HILL BLACKMORE, 35, the kind of guy men want to hang out with and women want to hug. Naked.

WALKER

You roll a plastic ball over strips of wood to knock over pins.

ANN

I know what it is. I hate bowling.

WALKER

I understand. The game itself is fundamentally ridiculous. You don't get any exercise, you don't make any business contacts. I should play golf, but I bowl. Some people think that's crazy.

Ann makes a "Can't argue with that" face.

WALKER (CONT'D)

But I don't care. I love it. And it doesn't matter if anyone else understands. Like you with the paper.

ANN

You were eavesdropping.

WALKER

You were yelling.

He smiles. Ann can't help but smile back.

WALKER (CONT'D)

(bowing slightly)

Walker Hill Evan Blackmore. Technically the third, but I don't use it. It's pretentious.

ANN

Unlike the nine names.

WALKER

New Yorker?

ANN

(nodding)

Ann Brown. Ann.

WALKER

Ann. Nice. Uncomplicated.

ANN
 (laughing)
 Yeah, well, names can be deceiving.

WALKER
 So, deceptive Ann, how long will
 you be in Philadelphia?

ANN
 I'm moving here. God help me.

WALKER
 You know what? You made a fine
 choice. It's a wonderful city.

ANN
 Yeah. I hear the bowling's good.

Ann's cell phone rings.

ANN (CONT'D)
 Excuse me.
 (into phone)
 You know what an emergency is? Me,
 at the train station with no Times
 and no ride!...I'M NOT
 YELLING!...SUSAN!

She hangs up.

ANN (CONT'D)
 My sister. She was supposed to
 pick me up. We're very close.

WALKER
 I can tell.

Walkers grabs his bags.

WALKER (CONT'D)
 Well, I've got to go. It was nice
 meeting you.

ANN
 Same.

Walker crosses off. Ann heads for the exit. She turns
 around. Walker's gone.

EXT. 30TH STREET STATION -- CONTINUOUS

Ann comes out. Martin's there, at his cart.

ANN
 Martin. Hi! Where's the taxi
 stand?

He's up and moving, heading back into the station.

ANN (CONT'D)
 C'mon, Martin. Conflict is
 healthy!

MARTIN
 Then you're gonna live forever!

Martin disappears into the station.

ANN
 (to herself)
 You're probably right.

Ann looks spots the line of taxis and walks toward it. Suddenly, a TAXI HOOKS A U-TURN, passes the line and screeches to a stop inches from Ann. The TAXI STAND SUPERVISOR and the waiting DRIVERS run to the maniac cab. JOE POMPILIO gets out. Baby face. Schwarzenegger's body.

JOE
 We're okay, boys. Thanks anyway.

The Drivers are not happy. But they walk away.

JOE (CONT'D)
 (to Ann)
 May I take your bags?

ANN
 Um...sure.

Joe loads the trunk.

JOE
 Anything fragile?

ANN
 Not anymore.

Joe opens the door for Ann. She gets in.

JOE
 Your friend asked me to give this
 to you.

Joe hands her a brochure: "WELCOME TO PHILADELPHIA: CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE". Handwritten underneath are the words: "*and bowling.*" Ann looks to the station. And smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. CAB -- DUSK

Ann stares out the window, clutching the brochure, the city of Philadelphia reflected in the glass.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAB -- DUSK

The University of Pennsylvania. Students toss frisbees, study/sleep under trees, laugh, play lacrosse.

Just beyond the campus, the HOSPITAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA looms. The cab heads toward it.

ANN (O.S.)
No. Around the back.

EXT. FIRST STEP -- ESTABLISHING

A magnificent example of anonymous concrete box architecture, it seems to be grafted on to the side of the hospital. There's no name or sign of any kind on it.

INT. CAB -- DUSK

Ann's counting out the fare. Joe eyes her in the rear view mirror.

JOE
You're going to First Step.

ANN
Yep.

JOE
That's a nuthouse.

ANN
(paying him)
It's part of the hospital. The psychiatric wing.

Ann gets out.

JOE
That's what I said.

EXT. CAB -- DUSK

Ann goes up the steps.

JOE
You don't seem nuts.

ANN
(without looking back)
You either.

She goes in.

INT. FIRST STEP / LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

Security cameras. An ARMED GUARD. Ann approaches the "RECEPTION" window. A nurse, INA, sits behind thick security glass, reading.

ANN
I'm looking for Susan Clark. The Dean.

INA
And you are?

ANN
Her sister, Ann Brown. I'm the new Chief of Staff. I'll be supervising the psychiatrists.

INA
ID.

ANN
Aren't most people trying to fake their way out?

INA
ID.

ANN
Call Susan.

Ina picks up the phone.

INA
Just so you know, I'm union.

ANN
I guessed that.

The GUARD APPROACHES, hand on gun.

GUARD
Everything okay, Ina?

ANN
Oh, Jesus.

INA
I'd think a real Chief Of Staff
would applaud my strict adherence
to safety procedures.

SUSAN (O.S.)
She's not one for compliments.
Giving or receiving.

SUSAN CLARK, 30, attractive, an easy laugher, hugs Ann.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
And she doesn't start until
tomorrow, so you don't have to be
nice to her.

Susan leads her away.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
She'll be worse tomorrow.

ANN
I got that feeling.

Susan puts her arm in Ann's.

ANN (CONT'D)
So what was the emergency?

SUSAN
Oh, this girl, she's a cutter. The
nurses found an open vein during
room check. They're still looking
for the knife.

Ann winces.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Not like celebrity psychiatry in
the Big Apple.

ANN

Well, that's a different kind of ugly.

SUSAN

Look, I'm pretty much done for the day. You want to go for a drink? Or you want the tour?

(into hand)

Drink. Drink. Drink.

ANN

Tour.

SUSAN

Yeah, I knew that.

Susan points Ann down three hallways in succession.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Intensive Treatment Unit. Open Unit, Outpatient Care, Rec Room, Art Studio. Children's Unit.

ANN

You're very thorough.

SUSAN

You've been here.

ANN

Once, for my interview. How do you get to the main hospital?

SUSAN

The door in the lobby.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

(walking)

Staff offices this way, right by Pharmaceutical Distribution, which is not an accident.

ANN

Don't tell the boss these things.

SUSAN

(laughing)

The boss's office is the closest of all. C'mon.

Ann follows Susan.

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

A couch, two chairs, an empty bookcase, a desk with a "Thanks For Not Smoking" sign. A door leads to a small patio.

ANN

I see you decorated it yourself.

SUSAN

C'mon, let's go get that drink.
It's been a long day.

RAY CHANG, 25, ENTERS, holding up a file.

RAY

Dr. Clark, we got a runner.

SUSAN

Damnit.
(to Ann)
You had to have the tour.

ANN

Yeah, that really held us up.

SUSAN

(to Ray)
How long?

RAY

Three hours.

Ray hands Susan the file and discreetly -- for Ray -- checks out Ann.

RAY (CONT'D)

(Mr. Cool)
Ray Chang, Psychiatric Intern.

ANN

Ann Brown. Doctor.

SUSAN

My sister. The new Chief of Staff.
Who's teaching your Clinical Psych
Seminar.

Undaunted, Ray looks Ann up and down.

RAY

Excellent.

ANN

Here's your first assignment.
Dress me with your eyes.

SUSAN

(reading file)

Checked in yesterday A.M...
preliminary diagnosis, bipolar,
manic...rapid cycling...

RAY

(to Ann)

This isn't actually my shift. I'm
covering for someone. Which I'm
happy to do.

ANN

Get your nose out of my butt. I
don't like it.

RAY

You're the boss.

SUSAN

This guy was a voluntary. He'll
probably go home. Notify the
family.

She hands Ray the file.

RAY

I'll make the call. No worries.

Ray leaves, smiling at Ann as he goes.

ANN

What should we do?

SUSAN

Nothing.

ANN

Nothing?

SUSAN

Well, we'll bill him for the
overnight. He had insurance.
(off Ann's look)
He checked himself in, he can check
himself out.

ANN

We're like the bizarro roach motel.

SUSAN

Exactly. And the dean of the motel
needs a drink.

Susan walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST STEP / LOBBY -- EVENING

Ray drops a file on Ina's desk.

RAY

The new Chief wants you to notify
the family that he's out.

CLOSE ON THE FILE

And the patient's photo: WALKER HILL EVAN BLACKMORE.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Ann's at her desk, her arm out the window. She pulls her arm in, takes a puff of a cigarette and exhales out the window.

ANN'S POV

A street light illuminates a WOMAN and a MAN on a bench. He puts his arm around her. She leans into him. They kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART -- NIGHT

Ann's in a black cocktail dress, at the entrance to a room of mummies, just off the Temple of Dendur Pavilion. There's a party in the pavilion. The music's loud. An extremely HANDSOME WAITER passes by. He smiles.

ANN PULLS HIM into the mummy room, kissing him roughly. He steps back, shocked -- then runs into her lips, pinning her against a case.

CLOSE ON A HYGROMETER

On its little glass shelf, next to a mummy, jumping as the bodies bounce off the display. Ann's foot comes into frame, then goes above it.

The hygrometer shakes, walking to the edge of the shelf. Teeters. Teeters.

We hear the Waiter, underneath the music, and Ann, threatening to rise above it. Her shoe falls through the frame. Her moan pierces through the music. The hygrometer stops moving. Ann's bare foot slides down across the case, to the ground.

PULL BACK

As the Waiter separates from Ann, zipping up.

ANN
I'm still hungry.

WAITER
(kissing her gently)
See you at home.

This is MARK BROWN.

ANN
I'll be waiting.

MARK RETURNS to work, not a hair out of place. Ann's a wreck. She reaches down for her purse. A GREY-HAIRED GENTLEMAN'S in the doorway.

GENTLEMAN
Dr. Brown?

Ann shoots up, red-faced.

MAN (O.S.)
Dr. Brown?

BACK TO:

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

PETER, an NBA-sized nurse, stands in the doorway with a balloon bouquet.

PETER
Dr. Brown?

ANN
Yeah.

Peter sets the balloons on her desk and walks out.

She looks outside. The Man and Woman are gone. Her hand's shaking. She takes a drag on her cigarette, then snuffs it out on the metal "Thanks for Not Smoking" sign.

SUSAN ENTERS. Ann quickly pops a Breath Strip.

SUSAN
C'mon, I'll take you home.

ANN
Did you find the runner?

SUSAN
That guy's not coming back. At least not tonight.

ANN
It's funny, my patients in New York, it was a badge of honor to go to therapy.

SUSAN

That was different. They didn't need it.

ANN

Everything's more fun when you don't need it.

SUSAN

Why don't you come out? I'm going dancing with Ron over in Old City.

ANN

Nah. Tomorrow's my first day. I want to be sharp when I meet the other doctors. And I'm still prepping for the seminar.

SUSAN

Blah, blah, blah, work.

ANN

Next week. I'll be as un-fun then as I would have been tonight.

SUSAN

Promise?

Susan hugs Ann.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Here's a key. I'll see you later.

ANN

Okay. Thanks. And thanks for the balloons.

SUSAN

I didn't send them. But you're welcome.

Susan exits. Ann opens the card on the balloons. It's blank.

INT. FIRST STEP / HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Ann turns the corner, heading for the double doors.

ANN

(into phone)

Yeah, hi, this is Ann Brown over at First Step. I need a cab to --

A POLICE OFFICER SHOULDERS THE DOOR OPEN, slamming Ann to the floor. He's got someone by the arm, but --

THE OFFICER'S PULLED OUT THE DOOR. Ann's on the floor, crawling, reaching for her phone, her purse --

THE DOOR EXPLODES OPEN. A SECOND OFFICER hauls in a kicking, screaming, MAN. The First Officer scrambles back in.

As Ann reaches the phone, the MAN KICKS HER HAND. HARD.

ANN (CONT'D)

Ow!

The phone flies across the floor, and shatters.

Ann grab's the man's feet. He goes down, on top of her, followed by the Officers, still holding him.

Ann looks up. She's inches from WALKER'S FACE.

OFFICER #1

Hey!

The Officers are up. They yank Walker to his feet. He's handcuffed, but raging out of control.

OFFICER #1 (CONT'D)

Hey! You! You work here?

ANN

Yes -- I --

OFFICER #1

Where do you want him?

ANN

(getting up)

This way. Consult room.

Ann leads them down a hall, and OPENS A DOOR. The Officers exchange a look.

It's a storage closet.

ANN (CONT'D)

We've got to get better signage.

(walking away)

I'll make a note.

Ina runs in.

ANN (CONT'D)

Get Ray. ITU.

Ann quick-walks down the hall. The Officers follow, holding Walker, his feet completely off the ground.

They turn a corner. They're at the Intensive Treatment Unit. The doors are locked. The Officers can barely hold Walker. Ann pushes the intercom. Nothing.

Walker makes a sound -- his face is bright red and it's -- as if he's trying to make EVERY SOUND. At once.

The doors open. TERENCE WINTERS, 30, in a wheelchair, is on the other side.

WINTERS

Terence Winters, doctor on call.
Follow me with the patient.
(to Ann)
Ma'am, doctors only.

ANN

I'm Ann Brown.

WINTERS

Way to make an entrance, Chief.

INT. INTENSIVE TREATMENT UNIT (ITU) -- NIGHT

The Officers slam Walker onto a bed. Winters straps Walker's wrists down. The Officers remove the handcuffs.

WINTERS

Dr. Brown --

Winters indicates more straps. Ann ties Walker's legs. Ray runs in.

ANN

Male, 190. Knock him out.

Ray runs out.

OFFICER #1

I'll send over the report in the morning.

ANN

What happened?

OFFICER # 2

He got aggressive with two passengers at the train station. They're pressing charges.

Walker makes the sound. The Officers stiffen.

ANN

Do me a favor. Leave their contact numbers at the front desk. I'd like to talk to them. Explain the situation. It'll help.

OFFICER #1

We can't do that.

ANN

Then leave the number of your commanding officer. I'll file a complaint.

OFFICER #1

Against us?

OFFICER #2

We're just following procedure.

ANN

I know. You need a new one.

Walker struggles against the restraints. Ann touches his face.

ANN (CONT'D)

(gentle)

Walker.

Again, the sound. The Officers head for the door.

ANN (CONT'D)

(to Officers)

Don't forget that number.

They exit.

ANN (CONT'D)

Walker. It's me. Ann. From the station. New in town. Hates bowling.

WALKER'S POV

Everything in the room is alive. Imagine that all the things we tune out -- the walls, the ceiling, the hinges on the doors, the fibers that make up the carpet -- are all intensely in focus, calling out for your attention at the same time, and there are people, and they're talking to you, and your brain tries to take it all in, racing faster and faster, trying to process all the information, but it can't handle it, there's too much, so it slows down for a second and it feels like you've been dropped from a plane, and the slowing down is just disorienting, it brings no relief, so your thoughts speed up, like a line of cars going from four lanes to one through a tunnel then shooting out the other end when four lanes are open --

RAY RUNS IN, with a bottle of sedative. Winters preps the syringe and hands it to Ann.

ANN (CONT'D)

I hate needles.

Winters injects Walker. He notices Ann's hand -- red and starting to bruise.

WINTERS

What happened to your hand?

Walker's face starts to relax.

ANN

Nothing.

RAY

Mrs. Blackmore is here. She wants to talk to the doctor in charge.

ANN

Got it.

(then; softly)

Walker. You're safe here. You're going to sleep for a long time. I'll be back.

RAY

My shift's over, but I don't mind pulling an all-nighter and staying with the patient.

ANN

Do it. Quarter hour observation. Call me when he wakes up.

(writing)

On my cell.

Ann walks out.

INT. FIRST STEP / HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Ina's there, holding a walkie-talkie.

INA
I've been calling you on this, but
you don't have one.

ANN
And that's my fault?

Ina makes it clear from her look that it is.

INA
Mrs. Blackmore's waiting for you.

Ina walks off. Ann mimics her silently.

INA (CONT'D)
(without turning)
Lot of mirrors in a hospital.

INT. FIRST STEP / ADMITTING -- NIGHT

LINLEIGH BLACKMORE, early thirties, Philadelphia society,
paces anxiously. Ina leads Ann in.

INA
This is Mrs. Linleigh Blackmore.

ANN
Mrs. Blackmore, I'm Dr. Brown,
Chief of Staff.

LINLEIGH
So you're the incompetent bitch who
lost my husband.

ANN
Would you excuse us, Ina?

Ina mimics Ann silently, to her face.

ANN (CONT'D)
(leading her out)
Must be one hell of a union.

Ina reluctantly exits.

ANN (CONT'D)
Mrs. Blackmore, I under--

LINLEIGH

Walker's been wandering this city all afternoon in God knows what condition while you've been sitting in your office sulking over HMO's and whatnot -- what the hell kind of hospital you running here?

ANN

Mrs. Blackmore --

Ann sits. Linleigh doesn't. Ann gets up.

ANN (CONT'D)

Your husband checked himself in voluntarily. Which means he wants help. But he also can check out, and he will, unless he gets support and understanding, without feeling judged. His problem's not being sick, it's not getting treatment.

Linleigh lights a cigarette.

LINLEIGH

You've heard of the Daughters of the American Revolution?

Ann was going to address the cigarette, but...

LINLEIGH (CONT'D)

My Great-Great-Grandmother was one of the founders. Her father was Colonel Ephraim Williams.

(showing it)

He gave her this cameo, she gave it to her daughter, and it was passed on to me.

ANN

(what's the point?)

Really.

LINLEIGH

My husband running around like a crazy person. How does that make me look?

ANN

Are you a patient here?

Linleigh takes a long drag of her cigarette.

ANN (CONT'D)

Because if you're not a patient of this hospital, I don't understand why we're having a conversation about you.

LINLEIGH

You need to learn some manners.

ANN

Yes, ma'am, I do. I can't curtsy, I don't understand couture and my palms sweat when I see more than one fork. But we could talk about who's sitting next to who at the next cotillion all night and your husband would still have a serious illness.

LINLEIGH

Walker's under a lot of pressure. He just blew off some steam.

ANN

It's a little more than that. He's got bipolar disorder. That means that without medication his moods will swing wildly --

LINLEIGH

That's not my fault!

ANN

It's not his either. People get cancer, people get hit by cars, people get a mental illness. It stinks, but it happens. Walker's got a chemical imbalance in his brain. And that's no one's fault. He didn't choose it. But now...now there's choice. Medication. Therapy. Counseling for your family and friends. Support. Understanding. Your husband can return to his life, but he needs help. He can't do it alone.

LINLEIGH

I'm ready to go.

Ann starts down the hall.

ANN
 Fine. I'll take you to him.
 (turning)
 Mrs. Blackmore?

LINLEIGH
 I've got a dinner party.

Linleigh goes the other way, out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST STEP / ITU / WALKER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Walker, tied to the bed frame, clothes torn apart, sleeps peacefully. Through the tiny window in the door, we see Ann, watching him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUSAN'S HOUSE -- LATER

Ann walks to the door. Joe follows, with her luggage.

JOE
 I saw this lady, Temple Grandin, on Oprah. She invented those pens that make life easier for cows.

ANN
 Yeah, I know. I watch Oprah.

JOE
 And she wrote a book.

ANN
 Several.

JOE
 But she's retarded, right?

ANN
 Asperger's Syndrome. She has difficulty with social interactions.

JOE
 Like my Uncle Lou. Man's a genius as a barber, but he's got no friends.

ANN

Yeah, it's kind of like that.

Ann pays him. Joe starts for the cab.

JOE

Maybe you'll be on Oprah someday,
talking about your problems.

ANN

It's only an hour show.

She sees a note on the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUSAN'S HOUSE -- EARLIER THAT NIGHT

Susan's writing the note, the paper braced against the door.

SUSAN

Dearest Ann, came home to check on
U -- U're not here! Having fun.
don't wait up! Room's ready.
Love, S

A handsome man, RON, leans into frame and kisses Susan,
pulling her out of frame.

BACK TO:

EXT. SUSAN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Ann pushes the door open.

INT. SUSAN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

An old Victorian mansion. If you put a lot of money into it -
and moved it across town - it would be worth a fortune. Ann
drops her luggage on the stairs and heads for the kitchen.
She gets a glass of water and gazes out the window, breathing
in the quiet.

SFX: KEY IN LOCK

We hear Susan's laugh, O.S.

SUSAN (O.S.)

(loud whisper)

I think she locked it. No, wait.
I locked it!

Susan laughs again. Ann opens the door.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You're awake.

(noticing bruise)

What happened to your hand?

ANN

Walker Blackmore came back. I cushioned his fall when the police wrestled him to the ground.

LAURA HARRINGTON steps in. Tall, thin, drunk.

SUSAN

Ann, this is Laura. Laura, my sister, Ann. She's gonna live with me for a while.

LAURA

Nice to meet you.

ANN

Same.

(to Susan)

When did Ron have a sex change?

LAURA

She's funny.

SUSAN

Yeah. Ron's got an early court date, so he took off. Then I ran into Laura. She used to work at First Step. She's an amazing pharmacist.

LAURA

Shoot! My headlights. One sec.

LAURA RUNS OFF. Ann watches her.

ANN

Is she staying long? I kind of, well, can we talk?

SUSAN

Sure.

LAURA RUSHES IN.

LAURA

Lights out. Bedtime.

Laura grabs Susan and kisses her on the lips. A good kiss.

SUSAN

Give me a minute. My sister needs
to talk.

Susan kisses Laura. A better kiss.

LAURA

You know where to find me.
(to Ann)
Nice meeting you.

LAURA GOES UPSTAIRS.

SUSAN

So, what's on your mind?

ANN

(in shock)
What?

SUSAN

You wanted to talk.

ANN

Oh, yeah, no. The balloon bouquet.
I already asked you. Forget it.

SUSAN

You sure?

ANN

Yeah, I'm....go.

SUSAN

Bang on the door if you need
anything.

Susan hugs Ann, then runs upstairs.

SUSAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Goodnight!

The bedroom door slams shut.

ANN

Philadelphia. City of Sisterly
Love.

Susan's laugh filters down to Ann.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. FIRST STEP -- MORNING

A Man in expensive jogging clothes walks by, eating a doughnut.

INT. FIRST STEP / CONFERENCE ROOM -- MORNING

MARK MADDUX, 38, sits at the table, reading the AMA Journal. Winters makes coffee.

MADDUX
"Identified by DNA."

WINTERS
"Strewn across the road."

MADDUX
"Tied to an anchor."

WINTERS
(shivers)
Good one.

Ray enters, in yesterday's clothes, shuffling toward the coffee machine.

RAY
I'm so hungover my balls ache.

MADDUX
Stop using your manhood as a straw.
(then)
C'mon, Winters.

WINTERS
I got nothing.

NANCY MARX BETTER, 27, Resident, all business, enters.

MADDUX
(to Nancy)
Word or phrase you wouldn't want
used in your obituary.

NANCY
"Survived by her husband, Dr. Mark
Maddux."

MADDUX

You know, disgust is often the mask of attraction.

NANCY

Except when it's the mask of contempt.

RAY

Can anyone cover my three o'clock Social Anxiety Group?

NANCY

I'll take it.

WINTERS

(to Ray)

Have you ever actually met your group?

(to Maddux)

"Charred."

MADDUX

"Survived by his longtime companion."

WINTERS

Is that a shot, you pedantic faux-mo?

MADDUX

Of course not. I love the gays. When your brethren moved into my neighborhood, they opened galleries and restaurants and antique shops. Property values shot up.

WINTERS

Glad we could be of service.

NANCY

What's the word on the new boss?

RAY

Decent rack. Great wheels. I'd do her.

NANCY

Get help, Ray.

RAY

Do I threaten your asexuality?

WINTERS
 "Castrated without anesthetic."

MADDUX
 Nice.

Ann enters.

ANN
 Morning, everybody. I'm Ann Brown,
 the new Chief of Staff. Thank you
 all for the balloon bouquet.

The doctors exchange confused looks.

RAY
 (lying badly)
 That was me, actually.
 (off their looks)
 On behalf of everyone.

ANN
 Good morning, Ray. Winters.

NANCY
 Nancy Marx Better. Psych resident.
 Welcome to First Step, Dr. Brown.

ANN
 Thank you. Ann's fine.

Maddux says nothing.

ANN (CONT'D)
 You must be Maddux.

MADDUX
 Dr. Mark Maddux.

ANN
 Yes. Okay, then. Enough about all
 of you, let's talk about me. I
 have intimacy issues, which may or
 may not have preceded my husband
 leaving me for his 20 year old
 scene partner from acting class.

Every jaw drops.

ANN (CONT'D)
 Maybe I shouldn't blame myself.
 Maybe the problem is Mark's
 borderline personality disorder
 with narcissistic tendencies.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

But then again I should have seen that coming when I married an actor, so, my bad. I have a temper. I drop things and I spill a lot, usually on other people, so don't wear silk. I'm embarrassed I smoke, so I'm obsessive about my breath. I don't like myself very much, and I will express that sometimes by not liking you. That's a lie. Often. Questions?

The silence is stunning.

ANN (CONT'D)

There was a time people wouldn't say the word "cancer." Mental illness still has that stigma. And we're part of the problem. We sit behind a desk, or stand next to a bed, listening, judging. We take our patients' secrets and give them back a number or a forty three letter "condition." I want to turn that process inside out. A person's psychiatric condition is inseparable from who they are. Even if we could get rid of it, would they really be better off? We are all, every one of us, the sum of our quirks and our fears and our shortcomings. Our patients, like us, are flawed beings to be understood, not pitied. Mental illness is a problem like diabetes or heart disease. It needs to be managed, not hidden. I want to bring what we do here into the light. And I need your help. Change starts here, with the way we treat our patients, with the way we train new doctors. It starts with us.

Dead silence. Then, applause. Maddux.

MADDUX

What a wonderful performance.

NANCY

Maddux...

MADDUX

No, really. I see the skills of your famous acting clients have rubbed off on you.

ANN

I doubt that. But there is an openness in the arts community to dealing with psychiatric issues.

MADDUX

Well, if it's good enough for Jim Carrey, it's good enough for me.

Nancy buries her head in her hands.

ANN

He was never my patient. Look, change takes time. But I think if we institute the open treatment model that's been successful in North Carolina --

INA

(over walkie-talkie)
Dr. Brown, please come to your office.

ANN

(walkie-talkie)
I'm in a staff meeting.
(then)
For instance, a man checked in yesterday morning. Walker Blackmore. He's a prime candidate for open treatment.

MADDUX

He's my patient. Unfortunately the bipolar has left the building.

ANN

The police brought Mr. Blackmore in last night. Hypomaniac, physically resistant, incoherent.

MADDUX

I'll check on him.

ANN

I'd like to step in on this one, if you don't mind.

MADDUX

Not at all.

ANN

Thank you.

MADDUX

You're better suited. He's a big man on the social circuit. Old money. A celebrity. For Philly.

ANN

Excuse me?

WINTERS

Susan told us you had a lot of famous patients.

MADDUX

Quite cutting edge, treating movie stars with trailer envy.

ANN

Let's get back on track.

RAY

The model. David Bowie's wife.

NANCY

You're an idiot. That's Iman.

WINTERS

Who's the one who throws phones?

RAY

Russell Crowe.

ANN

Hey!

MADDUX

No -- Naomi Campbell! Right? Tell us about Naomi Campbell.

RAY

I love her. Really.

NANCY

Do you need some private time with little Ray?

ANN

SHUT UP!

Everything stops.

INA (O.S.)
(walkie-talkie)
Dr. Brown, you really need --

ANN
(walkie-talkie)
I'm coming!

MADDUX
Great first meeting. Ann.

Ann glares at him, and exits.

NANCY
If disgust and loathing means
attraction, she's the next Mrs.
Maddux.

INT. FIRST STEP / HALLWAY -- MORNING

Ann storms down the corridor, colliding into a nurse, NATE HENRY, as she turns the corner. Nate's wearing a smock covered with badges.

NATE
Dr. Brown?

ANN
Yes.

NATE
Nate Henry, head nurse. Mr.
Blackmore's waking up.

ANN
Oh. Thanks. Do you have Dr.
Chang's report?

NATE
(confused)
I've been watching Mr. Blackmore
all night. Dr. Chang said the
order came from you.

Ann shakes her head, smiling. She notices his smock.

ANN
You collect badges?

NATE
Sort of. People just started
giving them to me. I don't know
why.

ANN
That happened to me with large
screen TV's.

Nate laughs. They're at the red ITU doors.

ANN (CONT'D)
Do me a favor. Keep an eye on the
lobby. Let me know when my
sister's here.

Ann pushes through the double doors.

ANN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
There's a big TV in it for you.

INT. FIRST STEP / WALKER'S ROOM -- MORNING

Walker's in bed, in restraints. Ann enters.

ANN
Good morning.

WALKER
Hello.

ANN
How are you doing?

WALKER
I need to get up. Please.

He nods his head toward the bathroom. Ann hesitates, then
removes the restraints.

WALKER (CONT'D)
You're new.

ANN
Why do you say that?

WALKER
You untied me.

Wobbly, he hurries to the bathroom.

WALKER (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I'm not suicidal.

He closes the door.

ANN

Oh. Then I didn't need to hide the
steak knives.

Walker snorts out a laugh.

WALKER (O.S.)

You sure you're a doctor?

ANN

Not always.

He laughs.

ANN (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something, Mr.
Blackmore?

WALKER (O.S.)

Please. You've tied me up.
Walker.

ANN

Walker. Do you know why you're
here?

WALKER (O.S.)

296.44.

The toilet flushes. We hear running water.

WALKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Bipolar Disorder 1, Most Recent
Episode Manic, Severe with
Psychotic Features.

The water stops. Walker comes out.

WALKER (CONT'D)

Sounds like me, doesn't it?

ANN

That's your diagnosis, that's not
why you're here. You're here
because you want help.

Walker considers Ann.

WALKER

Oh, I get it. You're one of those,
"all the great artists and thinkers
are crazy" doctors.

(MORE)

WALKER (CONT'D)

I want to stop thinking. I can't stop thinking. And I don't want to be a great artist or a good artist or any artist.

ANN

I know. You're a businessman, at the top of your game.

WALKER

Damn straight.

ANN

And you want everything to be just the way it's been.

WALKER

That's right.

ANN

Well, that's not gonna happen. Things change, usually when we least expect them to. And we have to adapt. But it's hard.

He stares off, lost.

WALKER

Do you know what it feels like to wake up strapped to a bed?

ANN

Not in a suit, no.

Walker turns to Ann. He smiles.

WALKER

I remember you. From the station.

Nate pops in.

NATE

Excuse me, Dr. Brown. She's here.

ANN

Okay.

Nate leaves.

ANN (CONT'D)

Let's talk. About yesterday. After I left the station.

Walker curls up in bed, facing the wall.

ANN (CONT'D)
That's my husband's technique.

INA
(walkie-talkie)
Dr. Brown --

Ann turns it off.

ANN
I'll be back.

WALKER
I don't want to be 296.44.

ANN
You're not. You're Walker
Blackmore. Successful businessman.
Husband. Bowler. And 296.44. You
need help. We all do. It's just
hard to admit. Really hard.

She opens the door. Linleigh Blackmore walks in.

LINLEIGH
Thank you.

ANN
Mrs. Blackmore --

LINLEIGH
Excuse us.

INT. FIRST STEP / HALLWAY -- MORNING

Linleigh closes the door, forcing Ann into the hall. From the other end comes Susan's laugh. She's with a group of DOCTORS.

ANN
Susan!

SUSAN
We were just coming to see you.
Dr. Ann Brown, the new head of
psychiatry, this is Dr. Hamid, head
of Cardio, Dr. Landres, Internal
Med, Dr. Tatasicore, Ortho Rehab.

They shake and exchange hellos.

DR. TATASCIORE

I have a couple of patients I'd like to send over for evaluation. They're just not getting better. Medically, everything seems fine, but --

ANN

Send them over. Susan --

DR. LANDRES

Forty percent of the complaints I see are psychosomatic.

SUSAN

Forty per cent? Do you think --

ANN

SUSAN!

(off their looks)

I'll be visiting all your departments later in the week.

(taking Susan's arm)

Excuse us.

DR. HAMID

Nice meeting you.

Ann pulls Susan around the corner.

ANN

You gossiped to the staff about my patients!

SUSAN

You're mad about Laura.

ANN

Don't turn this back on me.

SUSAN

So you're not mad about Laura.

ANN

Of course not. I'm thrilled. Is she coming over tonight? We can watch a Gina Gershon movie.

SUSAN

Do you talk this way to your patients?

ANN

You're not my patient.

SUSAN

That's right. So don't tell me how to live my life.

ANN

Don't undermine my authority.

SUSAN

Are we still talking about Laura?

ANN

Goddamnit, Susan, why did you even want me to take this job?

SUSAN

I didn't. I wanted Maddux.

(beat)

The Board wanted you, and like the good Dean that I am, I went out and got you.

ANN

Maddux.

SUSAN

He's a prick, but he's a great psychiatrist and he could run the hell out of this hospital. Nobody'll ever give him the chance. He knows that. Thirty people interviewed for your job. That open treatment program you love so much -- the guy who invented it came in. But the Board wanted you. They wanted you because you're the celebrity psychiatrist. So don't be so quick to distance yourself.

Susan walks away. Ann puts an unlit cigarette in her mouth.

INA (O.S.)

Dr. Brown.

Ina's at the end of the corridor.

ANN

No smoking. Walkie-talkie off. Someone in office.

Ann runs off.

INA

Gettin' harder to tell the patients from the staff.

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Ann runs in. A U.S. MARSHAL stands by the desk.

MARSHAL

Dr. Ann Brown?

ANN

What's this about?

He hands her an envelope.

MARSHAL

An attorney from Fischer & Klein
needs to take a deposition for your
divorce proceeding. At your
convenience.

ANN

Now's good.

MARSHAL

I'm afraid I'm not --

ANN

Once upon a time my husband loved
me. Now he doesn't.

MARSHAL

I'm sorry ma'am.

ANN

Me too. It's a lousy story.

He tips his hat, and walks out. Ann slumps into her chair
and lights her cigarette. She puts the match out on a
balloon, popping it.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Ann's at her desk. The cigarette's almost gone. There's one balloon left on the bouquet. She takes a drag, then puts the tip of the cigarette on the balloon.

ANN

I love starting over.

POP! No more balloons. She takes a breath strip.

ANN (CONT'D)

(into walkie-talkie)

Ina, would you please assemble the staff in the conference room?

INA (O.S.)

(walkie-talkie)

Sorry, I can't.

Ann sighs.

ANN

(walkie-talkie)

I said "please."

INA (O.S.)

(walkie-talkie)

Noted. But they're not in the building.

Beat.

ANN

(walkie-talkie)

Don't make me ask. Please.

INA (O.S.)

(walkie-talkie)

They're heading for the parking lot. The Bunny Man is here.

Ann presses "Talk," then thinks better of it.

EXT. FIRST STEP / PARKING LOT -- MORNING

Ann's wandering through the parking lot, squinting into the bright sun. Nancy walks by.

NANCY
The Bunny Man is here.

ANN
I know. I'm the Chief of Staff. I know everything. Way more than a resident.

Nancy smiles.

ANN (CONT'D)
Who's The Bunny Man?

Winters wheels by.

WINTERS
We're not sure.

NANCY
He shows up every six weeks or so, parks for a few hours, then takes off.

ANN
When his prescription runs out.

WINTERS
(never thought of it)
Yeah. Probably.

ANN
What else do we know?

NANCY
Twenty-something male. Probably schizo-affective. Appears to be in good health. That's it.

Ray runs past.

RAY
There he is!

Ray points to a gleaming white Volvo wagon.

ANN
We know he's a safe driver.

Winters and Nancy move ahead.

ANN (CONT'D)
 Why's he called The Bunny Man?

INT. CAR -- A MINUTE LATER

Looking through a window, at Ann.

ANN
 Oh.

Nancy's head pops into frame.

NANCY
 Yep.

EXT. FIRST STEP / PARKING LOT -- MORNING

THE BUNNY MAN, a good-looking twentysomething, is behind the wheel of a car packed to his shoulders with torn strips of newspaper. On the dashboard a live RABBIT sits, snuffling.

WINTERS (O.S.)
 Cute bunny.

ANN (O.S.)
 I'm not a rabbit person. I didn't even like "Goodnight Moon."

The Bunny Man stares at the rabbit. Nancy, Winters and Ray stare at The Bunny Man, five feet back from the car. Ann moves in.

ANN (CONT'D)
 It's a year old car. Someone's taking care of him.

NANCY
 Or he's taking care of himself, when he's on his meds.

ANN
 Write down his license plate number. Call the DMV. Find out who he is.

NANCY
 Is that legal?

RAY
 I'll do it.

ANN
I thought you might.

Ann walks around to the passenger side.

ANN (CONT'D)
Has anyone talked to him?

WINTERS
He's pretty skittish. We're not
even sure he knows we're here.

Ann opens the passenger door and presses herself in.

NANCY
He knows now.

INT. VOLVO -- MORNING

The Bunny Man stares at Ann. She stares at the rabbit.

ANN
Cute bunny.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- DAY

Ann's in her patio doorway, looking out at The Bunny Man, who's kneeling in front of Ann's desk. Which is now on the patio. The rabbit's on top of it, hopping around, snuffling. The Bunny Man's eyes are closed, his head is bowed. Nancy watches. Ann motions to her, and Nancy bows her head in prayer.

Ray comes in, with a sheet of paper.

RAY
Craig Guthrie, 26. Here's the
address.

ANN
Don't tell me how you got it.

RAY
(re: shoulder)
You missed some.

Ann brushes newspaper off her shirt. She goes onto the patio and leans down over Craig.

ANN
He's safe here, Craig.

NANCY
And you can visit anytime, right
Dr. Brown?

ANN
Always open. Like any church.
Well, not the one's in Manhattan,
there are security issues, but --
yes, always open.

Nancy leads Craig into the office.

NANCY
Let's get you to your room.

Nancy opens the office door. The patio door blows shut.

CRAIG
I think he's angry.

ANN
No. No. That's not true, Craig.
He wants you to take care of
yourself.

Craig looks to the rabbit. A long hard look.

CRAIG
You're right.

Nancy escorts Craig out. Ann walks out to the patio. Bends
down to look at the rabbit. And SNEEZES.

ANN
You want him to take care of
himself, but me...

She moves away. Sneezes again. And again.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST STEP / CHILDREN'S UNIT -- DAY

Nate's at the door. Maddux sits across the table from LISSA
and RILEY, both 7, and MASON, 9. The children's hands are
pressed tightly to the table, on brightly colored handprints.

There's a large...contraption...in the corner: two long
boards, v-shaped and padded, a control box off to the side.

MADDUX

This was a good session.

MASON

The Maytag Neptune is the most efficient front-loading machine.

LISSA

You're in love with washing machines.

MASON

The stainless steel inner basket has a lifetime warranty.

MADDUX

Mason, tomorrow we'll work on our listening.

RILEY

I was listening but not to your voice I listened to your thoughts and you had good thoughts you told me that all people should live with grace and dignity.

MADDUX

Your listening was good, Riley. We're done for today. Nate will escort you to the Art Studio.

Mason springs up and heads for the door. Lissa runs to the sink, to wash her hands.

MADDUX (CONT'D)

(to Nate; re: Lissa)

I'll take her.

Riley goes over to the contraption, crawls in, and pushes a button on the control box. The v-shaped wood panels press on him from his shoulders to his knees. He smiles.

NATE

C'mon, Riley.

Nate opens the door, startling Ann, who's on her way in.

NATE (CONT'D)

Hello, Dr. Brown.

ANN

Hi, Nate. Hello, children.

Mason walks by, without a word or a glance. Riley turns off the contraption, crawls out, and walks by Ann, silently.

NATE

It's not you.

ANN

For once, that's true.

Nate exits. Lissa turns off the water, and dries her hands.

MADDUX

Lissa, this is Dr. Brown.

ANN

Hi, Lissa. I like your nail polish.

Lissa turns on the water, and washes her hands again.

LISSA

"Where am I? I'm in Boise, Idaho; no, no, no, wait a minute: I'm in Anchorage, Alaska. No, no, wait: I'm in Casper, Wyoming; I'm in the lobby of a Howard Johnson's and I'm wearing a pink carnation."

ANN

I know that movie. "Midnight run."

LISSA

Directed by Martin Brest. Released July 3, 1998. Universal Pictures.

ANN

I've seen it twenty times. Benefit of a bad marriage.

(to Lissa)

"Why do they call you Red?"

LISSA

"It's short for Redwood. My last name's Wood."

ANN

"What's your first name?"

LISSA

"Bill."

ANN

You have good taste in movies. I knew a boy who liked "You've Got Mail" the way you like "Midnight Run."

(to Maddux)

You've got it easy.

Lissa continues washing. Ann walks over to the contraption.

ANN (CONT'D)

This is Temple Grandin's squeeze machine. I've read about it.

(touching it)

Fascinating. The same device that soothes cattle in a stockyard, comforts the human nervous system.

(re: Lissa)

Do they all have Asperger's Syndrome, like Temple?

MADDUX

Mason and Lissa. Riley's autistic.

ANN

Do they all use the machine?

MADDUX

Only Riley. The others can't be hugged. Even by the machine.

ANN

What other stimuli does Riley respond to?

MADDUX

Read the file.

ANN

Lissa, Dr. Maddux and I need to talk privately. We won't be long.

LISSA

(washing)

"I was thinking. After I turn in your ass and collect my money, I was going to open a restaurant."

Maddux follows Ann out.

INT. FIRST STEP / HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

ANN

Look, you don't like me because I got the job you wanted. Fine.

MADDUX

I don't like you because you're the kind of person I don't like.

ANN

Things will be changing here. You better get with the program.

MADDUX

Is that a veiled threat?

ANN

I don't wear veils.

Ann walks away.

INT. FIRST STEP / CHILDREN'S UNIT -- DAY

Lissa's drying her hands as Maddux walks back in.

MADDUX

Are you ready to go to Art?

LISSA

Yes, daddy.

They walk out.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- DAY

Ann's in her chair reading a file. The floor's covered with tissues. There's a knock on the door.

ANN

Yeah.

Susan enters.

SUSAN

Hi.

Ann doesn't look up. Susan walks to the glass door.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Remember when I wanted a rabbit?

ANN
Sure. Right before you wanted a horse and just after you wanted a wolverine. You never could declare yourself.

SUSAN
I was a child.

ANN
When's that going to end?

Susan thinks about responding, then...

SUSAN
Hospital directory. Introduce yourself.

She drops it on the floor where the desk should be.

ANN
So you're a lesbian?

SUSAN
I have a boyfriend. Laura's a lesbian.

ANN
But you --

SUSAN
Ron and I aren't exclusive.

ANN
You're not even exclusive to one sex.

SUSAN
Why are you so angry?

ANN
Why are you undermining me?

SUSAN
Oh, please. I got you the job.

ANN
Because you had to.

SUSAN
That's right. My brilliant sister.

ANN

You're a Dean! You've got a PhD!

SUSAN

But I'm not a real doctor. That's why you came here, isn't it? So you could remind me every day. That's what gets you off, isn't it? Knowing that I live in your shadow.

ANN

You don't live there. You hide.

Beat.

SUSAN

I don't even think you want this job. You're just running away. Well guess what? Wherever you go, there you are.

ANN

Thanks for the cliché. Can you put that on a poster for me? This room is kinda bare.

Susan starts out. Ann takes a long breath.

ANN (CONT'D)

I want this job. I'm tired of treating people who are sick with envy that their neighbor has a twelve million dollar duplex and theirs is worth ten. I want to change the way I practice psychiatry. To remember why I loved it. I want to change the way I do...my whole life. But more than anything...Susan, you're all I have...and I, I want to change the way the two of us do -- this.

SUSAN

Maybe we can't.

Susan walks out. A beat later, Ann runs for the door.

INT. FIRST STEP / HALLWAY OUTSIDE ANN'S OFFICE -- DAY

Ann runs out, almost colliding with a clean shaven, perfectly dressed Walker.

WALKER

I'm going home. I wanted to say...that.

ANN

Walker. No. Wait. I can help you.

WALKER

I don't want help. I want to be normal.

ANN

I don't know what that is. And even if I did, I'm not sure you'd want it.

He tries to get by. She blocks him.

ANN (CONT'D)

You don't want to deal with this. I understand.

WALKER

Don't tell me you understand!

He walks around her. She follows.

ANN

You liked your life, now you don't, and that's scary. I got it. I've been there. I am there.

Walker stops.

WALKER

I wish I was a diabetic. Or an alcoholic. Then I could tell people what I have. Hell, those AA guys, it's like a club.

ANN

You can tell people what you have.

WALKER

Sure. And what do you think happens when you say, "I'm manic-depressive. I have bipolar disorder."

ANN

It depends on the person.

LINLEIGH (O.S.)

Walker.

Linleigh's at the end of the hall.

WALKER

What do you think she said?

He walks away, and out of First Step. Ann slumps against the wall.

At the other end of the corridor, Nate walks with Peter, the NBA-sized balloon delivery man. Peter is clearly a patient.

Ann goes into her office, and locks the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- DAY

Ann's in her chair, staring at the ceiling. She glances back at the rabbit on the patio, on her desk.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- EVENING

It's dark. Ann's still in her chair, staring at the ceiling.

ANN

Alright. You win.

She wheels herself, in the chair, out to the patio.

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S PATIO -- EVENING

Ann's wheels herself over the threshold, stopping in front of the desk. She stares at the rabbit. He stares back.

ANN

This is stupid.

She gets up. Sits back down. Moves closer. Closer.

ANN (CONT'D)

I was raised Catholic. Lots of confession to a black screen. I mean, you knew a priest was there, but he could've been asleep. It was just having someone to listen that made you feel better.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

It could have been anyone. My science teacher, or the crossing guard or deaf uncle Frank.

(beat)

Crap. You're a rabbit.

She wheels to the door. Stops. She's crying.

ANN (CONT'D)

Of course, I don't have a person to talk to. My husband's gone. The staff hates me and it's only my first day. And you know what? They should. I'm supposed to be a teacher. A teacher!

She wheels right up to the rabbit, leaning in, like you would to a bartender.

ANN (CONT'D)

I had one patient and he's gone. My sister doesn't want me here, I'm talking to a freaking rabbit ---

She blows her nose and laughs through the tears.

ANN (CONT'D)

Anyway, thanks for listening. Stupid freaking rabbit.

There's a knock on the door. Ann jumps up, frantically drying her tears, as she runs into ---

INT. FIRST STEP / ANN'S OFFICE -- EVENING

--- flipping on the light as she unlocks the door. Susan's there.

SUSAN

You're not the worst choice for the job.

ANN

That's your apology.

SUSAN

It's the best I can do.

Beat.

ANN

It's pretty good. Thanks.

SUSAN
You scare me.

ANN
I scare me.

Susan hugs her.

SUSAN
I'm going home. You want to come?
We can watch "Showgirls."

ANN
Or "Bound."

SUSAN
I'll be out front.

Susan leaves. Ann looks back to the rabbit.

ANN
Wow. You're good. Sorry I called
you stupid.

The rabbit jumps off the desk and runs into her office.

ANN (CONT'D)
No!

She goes after him.

ANN (CONT'D)
No! No! Bad rabbit!

She's grabs him. And sneezes.

ANN (CONT'D)
You need to stay out here.

Ann turns toward the patio.

In the parking lot, there's SCREECHING, then ---

THE PATIO WALL EXPLODES

--- as a BLACK BENTLEY PLOWS THROUGH IT and into the office.

Ann's on the floor.

The driver's door opens.

Walker -- naked, cut-up, bloody -- falls out.

ANN (CONT'D)
Oh my god! Oh my god!

Ann crawls to him.

WALKER
(a whisper)
Help me.

She cradles him in her arms. The rabbit hops away.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Ann leans against a blackboard which reads: "Dr. Ann Brown: Clinical Psychiatry," as STUDENTS, eventually numbering six, file in. Nancy's the first to her seat. Ray enters last.

ANN

Good morning, I'm your teacher.
Follow me.

The class freezes, mid-unpack, as Ann walks out the door.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

The Students follow Ann.

ANN

People with mental illness live
among us, but they live in fear.
And because they live in fear, they
don't get help.

She leads them around the back of the hospital.

ANN (CONT'D)

Go out in the world for the next
hour and watch people.

A car whizzes by, the driver leaning on his horn.

ANN (CONT'D)

(re: driver)

Does he have road rage, or is he
just pissed about being cut off?

They pass a girl, sitting under a tree.

ANN (CONT'D)

She picked up a book and put it
down. Picked it up. Put it down.
Is she obsessive? Or nervous?
What is illness? When is a
personality quirk a disorder? What
do we lose if we medicate away all
our quirks in a quest to be normal?
What is normal? Who gets to
decide?

Ann stands at the entrance to First Step.

ANN (CONT'D)

We don't hide people away in state hospitals anymore, but we hide away their illness.

She slaps a piece of masking tape on the wall.

ANN (CONT'D)

There's nothing to be afraid of. Everything we are, good or bad, is a part of what makes us human.

She turns to the masking tape.

ANN (CONT'D)

Mental illness is all around us, but it lives in shadows and whispers, and that's wrong. We're gonna change that. We're gonna rethink crazy and redefine normal.

She turns to the class.

ANN (CONT'D)

See you next week.

She walks away. On the tape, she's written in bold letters: "**FIRST STEP.**" The letters morph into a brightly lit sign. Stay on it. Then...

FADE TO WHITE.

THE END