Untitled Sardo Pilot

written by

Michael Sardo

Executive Producer: Gerard Bocaccio

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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, unhook 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)

WALKER
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)

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

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.

**ANN (CONT’D)**
(to Officers)
Don’t forget that number.

They exit.

**ANN (CONT’D)**
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 curtsey, 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?
“Castrated without anesthetic.”

Nice.

Ann enters.

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

The doctors exchange confused looks.

That was me, actually. On behalf of everyone.

Good morning, Ray. Winters.

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

Thank you. Ann’s fine.

Maddux says nothing.

You must be Maddux.

Dr. Mark Maddux.

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.

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. Hypomanic, 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!

MADDX
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)
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

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

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 cliche. 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
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