

PERSUADED

(AN ADAPTATION OF JANE AUSTEN'S PERSUASION)

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FADE IN:

EXT. PERSPECTIVE FROM LIMOUSINE - DAY

Tree-lined streets and sculpted hedges move past the moving limousine. The camera pans to a decorative rock wall sign reading "UPPER ESTATES." The car passes several large, beautiful houses.

EXT. ELLIOTT'S ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

Large house on East Coast (Annapolis?). Camera shows perspective of the same limo driving into a fountained entry in a circular driveway. LATINO WORKERS trim hedges. ANNE ELLIOTT stands tentatively waiting with back against a column at the top of the marbled stairway leading to the house entrance. Limo pulls up to steps and the CHAUFFEUR opens the door. MRS. NINA RUSSELL descends with a shitzu in her arms. Anne and Mrs. Russell lock eyes. Anne smiles and Mrs. Russell's face, lined with worry, relaxes to see Anne. Anne descends the stairs to greet Mrs. Russell.

ANNE

Nina! I'm so glad you're here. I didn't want to go into the lion's den without you.

They kiss each other's cheeks.

NINA

Anne, darling, did everyone make it?

ANNE

Yes, Mr. Shepherd even brought his daughter to help ease the blow. They're all in the library.

NINA

I just pray your father will listen to reason. The plan we've outlined would certainly lift your family's troubles.

Anne darts a skeptical look at Nina, who sighs. They walk up the stairs and toward the front door of the house.

NINA (CONT'D)

Regardless, Mr. Shepherd has devised a plan B that might appeal a bit more to your father's sense of Elliott pride.

ANNE

If only I could trust the Elliott pride meant we'd honorably pay our debts as quickly as possible instead of just saving face.

Nina stops at the top of the stairs, turning admiringly to Anne, who stops with her.

NINA

I couldn't ask for a better god-daughter. You are your mother's child. While she lived, she was able to keep your father's expenses in check. Unfortunately, he and your older sister don't have the same ideas of economy.

Anne rolls her eyes as she opens the door.

INT. ELLIOTT'S ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

Anne and Nina begin walking through the nice entryway and rooms of the house, showing a respectable level of riches.

NINA (CONT'D)

I know how you're feeling, Anne. I really do, but for a family like yours, it's just as important to maintain the appearance of dignity as it is to act honorably.

They stop in front of two large closed doors leading to the library.

NINA (CONT'D)

I do hope we can do both.

The shitzu whines.

INT. LIBRARY OF HOUSE - DAY

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT sits near Mr. Shepherd's widowed young daughter, PENELOPE CLAY, in plush chairs directly below a large, stately painting of Mr. Walter Elliott, which has the insignia, "Sterling and Elliott Jewels." Penelope seems to drink in every word Elizabeth says. MR. WALTER ELLIOTT and MR. SHEPHERD stand near a window by a bookshelf admiring the garden outside.

MR. SHEPHERD

(to Walter)

You do have the best garden in the

neighborhood.

WALTER

Yes, that's why God created
Mexicans...to take care of our
gardens.

Walter laughs at his own joke. Mr. Shepherd laughs nervously to placate his client and quickly changes the subject to Walter's biography, which is prominently displayed on the bookshelf.

MR. SHEPHERD

I was reading a passage from this.
I didn't realize your ancestors
started their jewelry business so
long ago.

WALTER

Yes, yes. You know, the best
pieces at Windsor were sold by my
great-great-great grandfather.
Apparently, it was his good looks
that won their royal hearts as
much as the jewelry. Luckily, he
was able to pass both legacies
down.

Walter strokes the biography like a comfort blanket.

MR. SHEPHERD

Impressive!

All eyes turn to the door as Nina and Anne enter.

WALTER

Ah, Nina! Come in. Come in.

NINA

How lovely to see you. Thank you.

Walter welcomes Nina with a salutatory kiss on the cheek. She shakes hands with Mr. Shepherd and Penelope. Anne stands back near the door until Nina beckons her to sit near her at the center of the room. Nina draws out a folder from her large handbag.

NINA

Thank you all for coming. With
your permission, Mr. Shepherd and
I have been discussing some of the
family matters, and I took it upon
myself to create a plan that would
improve things dramatically.

Nina hands stapled pages from the folder to Elizabeth and Walter.

NINA (CONT'D)
These would be the first expenses
you could drop.

Walter and Elizabeth glean over the first page. Elizabeth grows flustered as she rifles through the pages.

ELIZABETH
The 4th of July fireworks?... And
the lake yacht?... And the girls'
trip?...What would our neighbors
think if we stopped all these?

Elizabeth throws the paper down on a table near her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
We don't need to advertise our
financial troubles by getting rid
of all we have.

NINA
Please, Elizabeth. I consulted
with Anne and we really did list
all unnecessary...

ELIZABETH
Anne? Why Anne?

Nina looks with exasperation at Anne, who looks back at Nina as though she's not surprised. Elizabeth picks up the pages.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(Shaking them
vehemently)
This is impossible!

WALTER
(referring to the paper)
I agree with Elizabeth...I'd
rather leave this neighborhood
than suffer the ridicule of a
hundred neighbors counting our
dwindling assets. Quite
impossible!

Mr. Shepherd clears his throat with a small bit of trepidation as he sees his perfect chance to present plan B.

MR. SHEPHERD

You know there, Walter, you might have hit the nail on the head with this one. I see Nina's plan might be a bit...aggressive. When you say you'd like to leave, I wonder if there's a way to spare yourself the ridicule by taking a little...vacation, let's say, from such a scrutinizing community.

Anne looks curiously at Nina. Nina hides a quick, sheepish smile and then resumes looking at Mr. Shepherd in apparent innocence. No one else notices.

WALTER

What do you mean, Shepherd?

Mr. Shepherd acts as though this is just occurring to him.

MR. SHEPHERD

Well, this is such a desirable community, as you know. And as I'm known for having ties here in the Upper Estates, I get inquiries for people wanting to buy or rent here...Just last week, I received a call from a man who made it very big in the biotech field--I typically have to turn them down. None of these old families want to give up their estates, you know. But what if you were to loan your house to someone...just for a little while... until you could recuperate some of your debts?

WALTER

(a little indignant)

What are you talking about? Where would we go?

NINA

(pretending to just come up with the scheme)

You know, I do have a friend whose tenants have recently vacated her large place in Manhattan--the Upper East Side--I know she was letting it previously for cheap. She really doesn't need the money...

Elizabeth, previously annoyed, considers the idea and suddenly perks.

ELIZABETH

Oh, daddy, Upper East Side. That wouldn't be so bad.

NINA

I could call. I'm fairly certain it's available.

WALTER

(becoming persuadable)

So who would take our house?

MR. SHEPHERD

Well, this tech guru--the one who called most recently--would clearly be in a place to spend well.

WALTER ELLIOTT

Name?

MR. SHEPHERD

(hesitating)

Uh, a Mr. And Mrs. Castillo. No kids, though.

Walter shrinks back slightly while Anne's interest is markedly piqued.

WALTER ELLIOTT

Mexican?

MR. SHEPHERD

Oh, no, no, no. A Spanish last name, yes, but clearly born and raised on American soil.

Walter is skeptical. Anne almost looks afraid.

WALTER

How brown is his skin?

MR. SHEPHERD

I don't know, but we could always invite him to look at the house and vet him that way.

WALTER ELLIOTT

And what is this...technology thing he started? (rolling eyes)
"New money" as they say.

MR. SHEPHERD

Something that helps people who were previously paralyzed learn to walk--quite remarkable, really, and it's helped our military veterans immensely. I wish I could remember the name...

Whatever Anne seemed to fear previously is now certain and she becomes slightly agitated, coughing. Nina looks at Anne, puzzled. Anne can't communicate what she feels.

ANNE

(somewhat softly)

It's BioMovement.

WALTER

What?

Anne fidgets nervously and tries to communicate to Nina with her eyes as she explains.

ANNE

BioMovement is the name of the tech company. Victor Castillo started it and runs it with his brother-in-law, Freddie Valdez.

At the name, Nina understands Anne's behavior and shows a quiet shock.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Victor and Freddie were in the Navy before branching off to work on the technology. One used to live not too far from here.

WALTER

So how brown are they?

ANNE

(uncomfortable with the question)

I think their looks would even pass your standard.

WALTER

Not likely.

NINA

Well let's meet with them, shall we? I would very much like to get all of you to the city as soon as possible.

ELIZABETH
Yes, all of us...including
Penelope. I need some company.

Elizabeth smiles at Penelope, who is pleasantly surprised by the invitation. This perturbs Nina, who looks at Penelope with a little more scrutiny.

NINA
But Elizabeth, you'll have Anne
for company.

ELIZABETH
(with clear rancor)
No, I don't need Anne. Besides,
Mary will want Anne at her place
to help take care of the kids.
She's calling her every day as it
is. Mary needs her far more than
anyone in New York City would.

NINA
(turning to Anne)
Is this true, Anne? Does Mary need
you so much?

Anne nods.

ELIZABETH
Anne should go where she's wanted.

Nina sighs.

MR. SHEPHERD
(redirecting)
So let's meet with these tenants
and decide if they're the right
fit.

Nina nods, but still has her eye on Elizabeth and Penelope, who are now locked in a conversation about the benefits of being in the Upper East Side. Anne looks anxious, but no one notices.

INT. LIBRARY OF HOUSE - LATER

The rest of the party has left the conference room, leaving Anne and Nina to talk about what just happened. Anne finally speaks about her distress.

ANNE
Sofia Castillo is Freddie's
sister.

Nina puts her hand on Anne's.

NINA

I figured...but that's all in the past, right? It's not like *he's* coming. It's his *sister*. There's no need to relive those feelings. God forbid this puts you back in that...place. You won't be here, anyway...

Anne makes an effort to put positivity in her nod.

NINA (CONT'D)

(considering the point resolved)

Good. And when you do get to New York, Anne, could you please beg Elizabeth to let go of her tag-along friend, Penelope? I'm a little worried about her history of marrying older men and waiting for them to die so she can get money...

ANNE

I don't hold much sway on what Elizabeth does.

Nina sighs and looks away. Anne looks in the opposite direction, still reeling from the idea of Freddie's sister living in her house.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE ENTRANCE- DAY

Anne's cellphone rings just as she's about to open the door to MARY's house. The house is not quite as nice as the Elliott estate, but has its upper-class charms. Anne puts down her bags to answer the phone.

ANNE

Hi, I'm just walking into Mary's.

NINA

Oh, are you starting your indentured servitude?

ANNE

(smiling at the sarcasm)
Pretty much.

NINA

I don't understand why she doesn't
get hired help.

Anne speaks quietly so she won't be overheard.

ANNE

She's been through six nannies in
eight months. I don't think many
people know how to work with
her... unique parenting style.
Besides, they're applying for a
new nanny from Brazil, so it's
just temporary...and it keeps me
from New York a little longer.

NINA

I wish you didn't relate New York
to being sent off to boarding
school after your mother died.
There's so much more to it, you
know?

ANNE

(sighs and changes
topic)

I know. That's what everybody
says.
I don't think that's what you
called to talk about. How did it
go?

Anne enters the house. The entryway is open and large, but
not as nice as the Elliott estate.

NINA

I made a point of not being there,
but the report from your father
and Mr. Shepherd is very, very
good. The Castillos had just the
right amount of humility, good
looks, and deference to your
father. They were charming enough
that by the end, your father and
Elizabeth were actually singing
their praises. If you can believe
it, your father even said that the
brown skin was easy to overlook
because their faces were
attractive.

ANNE

Impressive!...Enough money, too,
I'm sure.

NINA

It helps, yes. Elizabeth sealed
the deal by telling your father it
will look like a charity to help
these people instead of your
father's need for money.

ANNE

(breathing deeply)

Wow, okay. So what's the plan?

NINA

Well, it looks like the Castillos
will be moving into your house in
three weeks...and I hope you don't
mind, but your father and
Elizabeth will already be in New
York, I'll be traveling, and Mr.
Shepherd has a conference. Could
you meet with them to pass on the
keys and give them instructions?

Anne is speechless for a moment. MARY comes around the
corner looking exasperated holding her youngest, little
WALTER, an 18-month old with chocolate covering his mouth
and sticky fingers.

MARY

There you are. I've been waiting
for you all morning. I'm not
feeling well and you're just
passing the time away jabbering at
my door. I need help!

Anne decides it best to conclude her conversation quickly.

ANNE

(to Nina)

Yes, we'll take care of it. I have
to go. Talk to you soon.

Anne puts her phone away with a small amount of visible
shock at what's transpiring, but Mary doesn't notice and
doesn't care. Little Walter starts beating on Mary, so Mary
hands Walter off to Anne.

MARY

Take him. He's so sticky. Was that
Nina? Why does she call you and
not me. She never calls me. She's

my godmother, too, but you
wouldn't know it.

Nobody has called me all day. I've
been alone with both boys and I'm
starting to get a migraine. These
two are going to put me over the
edge. And Charles doesn't care.
He's out golfing. I could be dying
and my husband wouldn't care.

Mary sits down on an entry chair and dramatically rests her
head on the side of it. Anne snaps out of her shock in
order to placate her sister.

ANNE

I'm sorry you haven't been feeling
well. I'm here now and can help
out like I always do. What do you
need?

MARY

Food. I need food.

Anne follows Mary to the kitchen, sets Walter down, and
begins to tidy the messy house as Mary pulls out several
large dishes from the refrigerator and begins to chow down.
Young CHARLIE, 4 years old, enters the room and begins
shooting at Anne with a nerf gun while she works.

ANNE

No, Charlie, you don't shoot
people who aren't playing back.

Charlie turns to start pelting his mother.

MARY

No. Stop. Charlie!

Charlie continues.

MARY (CONT'D)

Why does he listen to you, but not
me?

Anne changes the subject to avoid any discussion of
parenting.

ANNE

How are Lisa and Hannah?

MARY

How should I know? You'd think
they'd be proud to have an Elliott

for a sister-in-law, but they definitely don't show it. They haven't texted me in two days... I'm really upset at them right now, and I'd rather not talk about them.

Anne relents with a brief nod. Mary's hearty appetite shows that her portended illness must already be improving.

MARY (CONT'D)

So when do we meet the new tenants?...Not that I really want to meet the people taking over my childhood home.

ANNE

(trying to act chipper)
Nina mentioned she'd like us to pass off the key to them in about three weeks. Maybe we could ask them to come by here.

MARY

Here in the Lower Estates?...No. Maybe Charles' parents' place since they're in the Upper Estates, too. We'll have to make sure the new tenants understand the difference between the Lower Estates, the Upper Estates, and the secret "Upper Upper" so they know who to make friends with. It's too bad Nina's not around for them to see the Upper Upper.

CHARLES, Mary's husband, comes through the door and gives Anne a hug.

CHARLES

Anne, you're here. I'm so glad.

Charles gives Anne a look to indicate that Mary has been in a "mood." Anne smiles back with understanding.

ANNE

It's nice to see you, Charles.

MARY

(to Charles)
Take care of your son. He won't stop shooting at me.

Charles takes Charlie out of the room.

MARY
 (yelling to Charles)
 You can't do that! Then he'll
 think we don't want him near us.

Charles brings Charlie back in.

MARY
 Charles, we're going to have your
 mother invite us over to meet the
 new tenants of my family's estate.
 It only makes sense since your
 parents are in the Upper Estates,
 too, even if your parents' house
 isn't as nice as my family's.

Anne gives Charles a half smile, showing her discomfort with the way Mary insists on driving these points of hierarchy. Mary moves to the next room. Charles stays behind for a moment to chat briefly with Anne.

CHARLES
 While you're here, could you help
 your sister understand that she's
 really not as sick as she always
 thinks she is?

Anne nods and stays behind with Walter as Charlie and Charles follow Mary. Anne's face finally shows how perplexed she feels on the inside. She speaks to Walter though he can't understand.

ANNE
 Can I do this, Walter? Can I be
 this close to his family? What if
 he ends up visiting?

Walter snuggles into Anne and Anne sighs with the comfort this brings.

INT. MUSGROVE'S HOUSE GREAT ROOM- DAY

Another large home in the Estates. This house has a bit more "lived-in" feel than the Elliotts' more stately home. Anne, Mary, Charles, and the two boys have only just arrived, but already the boys are terrorizing the house. MR. CHARLES MUSGROVE, SR., is scrolling through social media on his phone and laughing at random posts. His son, Charles, goes to see what he's laughing at. MRS. BEVERLY MUSGROVE, a large-framed jovial woman, is chatting with Anne at the side of the room as they watch the boys in action. Mary is trying to wrangle them, but to no avail.

ANNE

Thank you so much for being
willing to invite us all, Beverly.
I'm afraid it will seem like a
tornado hit this room after the
boys finish with it.

Beverly laughs kindly, shaking her head.

BEVERLY

I would say I love having my
grandkids here, but they are a bit
much sometimes.

Beverly pulls out a handful of suckers and chocolates from
her pocket.

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

Here, give them some of this candy
and tell them to be good. They
mind you better than anyone.

Anne takes the candy and takes the cue to remove them to
another room.

ANNE

Come on boys! Let's start a movie
in the theater room.

The boys squeal and follow. On the way out, Mary stops
Anne.

MARY

Don't give them any more candy.
The boys would behave so much
better if their Nana didn't fill
them with all this sugar.

Anne pockets the candy and files the boys out the door.

HANNAH and LISA enter the great room in an excited flurry.
Anne returns and hugs each of them as a greeting. As
always, they're happy to talk to her. Mary approaches so
she's not left out.

ANNE

How is university life treating
you both?

HANNAH

Great! We're happy there.

LISA
Yes, especially Hannah. She's got
her boyfriend 24/7.

HANNAH
I don't know if I want to say
"boyfriend" just yet.

LISA
(sarcastically)
Oh, but just the guy she spends
every waking moment with.

Lisa and Hannah laugh. Anne smiles. Mary looks concerned.

MARY
What is this boyfriend's
background?

HANNAH
He's not necessarily my boyfriend,
but his family owns several farms
and a chain of great farm-to-table
restaurants called "Winthrop
Table."

MARY
(unimpressed)
I've never eaten at Winthrop
Table...I'm not so sure about
having a farmer and restaurant
chain in the family.

Anne, Hannah, and Lisa exchange looks. Lisa decides to
change the topic.

LISA
So tell us more about these
tenants. How much money do they
have if they're willing to throw
so much at rent? And are they
related to any rich younger guys
who might be in need of a
girlfriend?

Lisa and Hannah giggle. A brief flicker of fear passes over
Anne's face, but she quickly recovers.

ANNE
Well, they own a very successful
technology that helps paralyzed
people walk again...I know she has

two brothers, but I don't know
much about their relationship
status.

At this, the doorbell rings. Anne's nervousness increases.
SOFIA and VICTOR CASTILLO enter the house.

BEVERLY
Mr. and Mrs. Castillo, welcome.
It's nice to finally meet you.

SOFIA
Oh, please, call me Sofia. Thank
you. It's so kind of you to invite
us.

Anne watches Sofia carefully, studying her face and
demeanor.

VICTOR
Yes, thank you for the kind
welcome. Call me Victor.

BEVERLY
Well, Victor, Sofia, these are my
daughters, Hannah and Lisa. This
is my daughter-in-law, Mary, and
this is her older sister, Anne.
They both grew up in the home
you'll be living in.

They all shake hands and greet each other.

SOFIA
So nice to meet you.

VICTOR
Yes, thank you for being willing
to take the time.

MARY
We have plenty to tell you about
the house. Anne, do you have the
list?

ANNE
Yes, I...

As Anne turns to find the paper, the boys run into the room
yelling, which threatens to overwhelm the party, but Victor
is ready for the match.

VICTOR

And who are these two pirates? Ay mates. What ye be doin' thar?

The boys laugh and Victor kneels down to talk to them at their level.

VICTOR

State yer name, sailors.

CHARLIE

I'm Charlie and this is my brother, Walter.

VICTOR

Chapo Charlie and Wiley Walter, eh? If ye go find me a piece of paper, I'll teach ye to make a boat.

Charlie and Walter run to find a piece of paper. Anne follows to help them, which also gives her time to regain her composure.

In the time that passes while she's with the children, everyone begins to become familiar with each other. Anne re-enters in time to hear Sofia.

SOFIA

We stopped on the way here at my brother's house in Philly. He has two kids, so my husband has perfected his uncle skills--He's great with kids.

Anne's disappointment in the idea that Sofia's brother is married is evident, but no one is watching her.

LISA

Oh, so you have a married brother?

SOFIA

Yes, Miguel has his own online coding business there and he's a pastor on the side for a small congregation. We go there quite a bit to hang out with the kids. My family's really tight.

Anne realizes that Sofia is talking about a different brother and she perks up slightly.

Sofia smiles at Victor as he finishes making the boat. The boys seem happy playing with it. Although Victor was somewhat occupied, he has overheard the conversation, and speaks to all of them in general.

VICTOR

Speaking of visits, Sofia's other brother, Freddie, my CTO, will be visiting us soon, and we'd love it if you could help him feel welcome. He's been traveling quite a bit and we want him to settle down and stick around...Not to get your hopes up, ladies, but he's quite the catch.

Lisa is elated. Everyone laughs except Anne who goes unnoticed with her semi-shocked half-smile.

SOFIA

Stop! Victor, you know he hates it when we try to get him settled.
(to everyone) My brother has always been tight-lipped about his relationships. He doesn't want the family to get close to anyone until he's sure she's "the one."

Anne doesn't want to hear the conversation anymore, so she takes the kids out of the room to play with their boat.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE FAMILY ROOM - DAY

The family room is strewn about with toys, two large couches, and a large TV. Charlie is lying on one couch facing the TV looking pale with a sling around his arm. Juice is on an end table next to him. Anne is sitting near him putting a straw in the juice while a flustered Mary is sitting at the other side of the room.

MARY

I told Charlie to stop climbing that tree. I just don't understand why he doesn't listen to me.

ANNE

He'll be fine, Mary. It's only a dislocated shoulder. The doctor said he just needs rest and ice.

MARY

Yes, but what about me? I feel like I'm in shock. I have a

migraine coming on. And now I'll have to miss meeting the Castillo's brother at the clubhouse. You and Charles and the whole family will be there, but I'll be expected to stay here because I'm the "mom."

ANNE

No, no...I can stay here and take care of Charlie.

MARY

(brightening)

That's not a bad idea. It makes far more sense for you to stay here with him...I'm too traumatized by the whole thing.

ANNE

Say hello to everyone.

Anne turns her back to Mary and gives a sigh of relief.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE FAMILY ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Early the next morning. Anne lies asleep on a couch in the living area with Walter's foot near her face. Walter starts to cry, jolting Anne awake. Makeup is smudged around her eyes and her hair is tangled, clearly showing an ill-spent night. Charlie lies on the opposite sofa with his body propped up to rest his hurt arm. Anne's oversized sweatshirt is twisted. She picks up Walter and draggingly walks into the kitchen to keep him from waking Charlie.

As she's preparing some breakfast for Walter, Charles walks in the kitchen to fill his water bottle.

CHARLES

Rough night, huh? It's too bad you couldn't come last night. We all had a blast! And the brother, Freddie, is a great guy.

Anne tries to steel herself against the shock of hearing about him. Charles doesn't notice.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

You'll see in a second, I guess. He and my sisters are meeting us here to go on a run. I'm going to grab the dogs' leashes.

Charles leaves the room. Anne turns toward the microwave hardly knowing what to do. Mary comes in surprisingly dressed for so early in the day. Anne hears Lisa and Hannah coming into the hallway talking to someone. Walter is still fussing, so Anne clumsily prepares a sippy cup. She hears Lisa, Hannah, and FREDDIE enter the room and begin to talk to Mary, but Anne doesn't turn around. Instead, she sees Freddie's reflection in the microwave and her eyes widen in shock until Walter's cry snaps her out of it.

MARY

So Freddie, here's my sister,
Anne. You say you've met her
before.

Anne turns around, trying to be calm and nonchalant as she faces him. Their eyes meet very briefly. His gaze doesn't give any indication of curiosity or desire to see her. In fact, his face looks a little grave.

FREDDIE

Yes...Hello Anne. It's been a
while.

ANNE

(trying to hide her
shock)
Yes. Hello, Freddie.

FREDDIE

(to Mary)
Oh, is this the little guy who
fell?

MARY

No, no. This is Walter, my
youngest. My other son, Charlie,
is in on the couch resting.

FREDDIE

Well, I hope he's feeling better.
I've heard it's painful to
dislocate a shoulder. I'm lucky
I've never had to deal with it.

LISA

Alright, should we go?

FREDDIE

(to Lisa)
Sure! I'm ready. I'll let you set
the pace.

LISA
You'd better be careful. I might
run faster than you can handle.

FREDDIE
(laughing)
Then I'll beg for mercy.

Charles knocks on the window with two restless dogs in tow.

CHARLES
I'm ready.

Freddie, Hannah, and Lisa leave the room. Mary walks out after them to see them off. Anne is left stunned. She has to gather herself back together as Walter wails. She's finally able to calm him with the sippy cup.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE FAMILY ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Back in the family room where Charlie is now watching television, Anne sits on the sofa and watches Walter happily drinking from his sippy cup. Mary enters.

MARY
Isn't Freddie so nice? We had such
a great time last night. He's
quite the storyteller...He didn't
give you any praises, though. Just
now, I asked if you looked the
same and he says he hardly
recognized you. You really should
have showered before they came.

Mary leaves the room. Anne sighs and her gaze turns distant. She talks to Walter as if he understands.

ANNE
The worst is over, I guess. I've
seen him. Almost eight years...and
apparently those eight years have
not been my friend.

Anne sighs and continues her distant gaze.

EXT. PARK PICNIC TABLE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Anne sits at a picnic table in a park looking through a calculus book while Freddie orders tacos from a food cart nearby. He returns and sits across from her. He passes out the tacos.

FREDDIE

I'm excited to take advantage of your English help. I'm dying in that class.

ANNE

Well, if you're feeling at all like I'm feeling in calculus, I have total empathy. I'm so glad Molly introduced us.

FREDDIE

Yeah, great timing.

ANNE

Thank you for suggesting the place. It's perfect for our little tutoring swap.

FREDDIE

Sure! I don't think they'd let a guy like me through the gates to your place.

Anne dismisses the comment as a joke while Freddie laughs.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Kidding. You know why I love this taco cart so much? It's these little Mexican limes.

ANNE

Oh, I've always called them key limes. What makes them better than any other lime?

FREDDIE

Two reasons. One is because they're a little more tart than the average lime. And two is because my mom used to cut them up and give me extra for my tacos. It was like our thing, you know?

Freddie laughs and Anne smiles.

ANNE

After reading your essay, I can see how special your mom was.

FREDDIE

Yeah. Gone too soon.

Anne pulls out the paper.

ANNE

I didn't want to make any corrections on the paper...I almost felt like I was correcting your trauma or something.

FREDDIE

It needed plenty of help. I've been told I throw commas into the weirdest places.

Anne laughs and nods a bit, but then turns serious.

ANNE

How...how did you do it?...Without being able to say goodbye?

FREDDIE

I don't know. I often wonder if it's worse to have someone get taken from you quickly or long and drawn-out.

ANNE

I can't imagine losing both parents at that age.

FREDDIE

Yeah, it was awful. No doubt. I was barely 16. I have an older brother and sister. We're really close, so we just kind of rallied together. My sister was 19 and had just gotten married. She and my brother-in-law had a place for me and my brother to stay. And since it was the fault of a drunk driver, we got settlement money fairly quickly. We launched it into a programming business. It helped us stay afloat.

ANNE

(somewhat wistful)

It sounds like you have a great family.

FREDDIE

Yeah, I do. My sister's in Guam right now with her husband--he's in the Navy--but normally we're together all the time. Latino families, you know...I take it by the way you say that, though, your

family isn't quite as close?

Anne shifts in her seat as the conversation turns to her.

ANNE

Not so much, no. My mom kept the peace between us, but she passed almost five years ago.

FREDDIE

Oh, I didn't know. I'm so sorry...especially if you didn't have family to turn to. I can't imagine.

ANNE

Well, I have a godmother who was there for me--and still is--so I had some support.

FREDDIE

That helps, I guess. What happened to your mom if you don't mind me asking?

ANNE

No, you're fine. Breast cancer. I'm glad I got to say goodbye, I guess, but it was really hard to watch her. She suffered...

This clearly touches an emotional point for her.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Enough about that...on to a much brighter topic... tell me how horrible my math was.

FREDDIE

Ugh, not on that note, please. Ummm, how about you tell me what your favorite food was that your mom made?

ANNE

Oh, you'll laugh. She wasn't much of a cook.

FREDDIE

Try me.

ANNE

Saltine crackers and happy cow butter.

They both laugh.

FREDDIE

What?

ANNE

Well, you know Saltine crackers,
right?

FREDDIE

Yeah, I think so...white people
food.

They laugh.

ANNE

Well, you take a Saltine cracker
and butter it with a slab of Irish
butter...because the Irish have
the happiest cows, you know, since
they graze in the best
pastures...so happy cow butter.

FREDDIE

Aha!

ANNE

The taste of the two together is
like perfection.

Freddie looks skeptical.

ANNE (CONT'D)

My mom and I would eat it after
school all the time. She knew I
liked it, so it was her way of
showing me she loved me, I guess.
Kind of like your mom with her
limes.

FREDDIE

To moms!

Freddie lifts up his cup and taps it against Anne's drink.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Much better. And on that note, we
can look at math.

Anne laughs and winces at the same time.

EXT. PARK BENCH - LATE DAY (CONT'D FLASHBACK)

Same park, same picnic table. Freddie is already at the table. Anne walks up.

ANNE

Thank you for meeting a bit later today.

FREDDIE

(with concern)

Of course! How was the cemetery? 5 years, right?

ANNE

(trying to be stoic)

Good. But it's probably best if we just jump into the work today if you don't mind.

FREDDIE

Uh, okay.

Freddie glances at the bench to the side of him and looks up a little nervously. Anne doesn't notice as she sits down across from him.

ANNE

(business-like; avoiding emotion)

I actually didn't have much new stuff in math class this time, so I was able to take a little extra time with your essay.

FREDDIE

(playing along)

Alright. Do you want to show me the damage?

Anne hands him the paper stained with green pen.

ANNE

Now before you look at all the green marks, just know that I think it's an incredible piece--I mean what you're trying to say...about helping the veterans...

Freddie looks at all the green.

FREDDIE

Wow, well I guess at least you

don't use red ink. It'd be
dripping blood.

That breaks a smile on Anne's face.

ANNE

You didn't listen to what I said.
Let's not talk about the green
yet. The message was excellent.
You used great statistics and your
passion for it definitely came
through.

FREDDIE

Good, I guess.

Anne places her hand on Freddie's to stop him from rifling
through the pages. Freddie looks at her hand, which visibly
affects him. Anne doesn't notice.

ANNE

Stop. I mean it. It's good...Out
of curiosity, what makes you so
passionate about veterans'
affairs?

FREDDIE

Oh, uh, I think I told you my
sister and brother-in-law are
overseas now.

ANNE

Guam, right?

FREDDIE

Right. And he's been deployed to
some crazy places and seen some
crazy things, you know...and I
just think veterans deserve more
than the crappy care they're
getting.

ANNE

Definitely.

FREDDIE

Plus, I guess it's a bit of a
selfish thing, too, because I'm
thinking of enlisting.

ANNE

(brief disappointment)
Oh! But isn't it dangerous?

FREDDIE

My plan would be to stay for the minimum--four years--just to get to know a bit more of their needs. Experience it, you know? I really think I can make a difference, but I have to understand it all better.

ANNE

Wow, that's a risky reconnaissance mission. I agree, though, you're bound for greatness whatever you do.

FREDDIE

(smiling)

Thanks. It'll go by quick.

Anne nods her head but still has a concerned look. She decides to change the subject.

ANNE

So, are you ready to chat about the green?

FREDDIE

Ummm, I guess?

Time passes showing them talk but no voices. Freddie is interested in what she's saying about the paper, but steals longer glances when she's not aware, showing more than just academic interest. They finish and Anne begins to pack up her things.

FREDDIE

Seriously, that was so helpful. Thank you. And it wasn't nearly as painful as I thought. Are you sure you don't need my help with your math today?

ANNE

(prepares to leave)

No, no worries. Next week, I'll have a test the day after our study session, so I'll need all you can give me then.

FREDDIE

(looking to his side)

Okay, ummm...You got a minute?

ANNE

Sure.

Anne settles into her seat. Freddie pulls out a package of Saltine crackers, Irish butter, and a knife.

FREDDIE

Seeing that it's the five-year mark since you lost your mom, I thought you might like this.

Anne sits and stares quietly at the items for a minute to the point of it getting uncomfortable. Freddie gets nervous that he's done the wrong thing.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Uh, if you don't want them, I'm sure I can find someone else who...

ANNE

(holding back tears)
No, it's a perfect gift.

FREDDIE

I didn't mean to...

Anne shakes her head to stop him and clears her throat while biting back the tears.

ANNE

It's perfect.

FREDDIE

Umm, would you rather eat them alone or with someone?

Anne breathes deeply to overcome the emotion.

ANNE

With someone.

FREDDIE

Yeah?

ANNE

(smiling and nodding)
Definitely with someone...Here, I'll show you how to eat this white -people food.

Freddie smiles. She opens the packages and uses the knife to butter a cracker. She hands it to Freddie.

FREDDIE
Just like that?

ANNE
Just like that.

She prepares one for herself. Freddie waits to eat his until she's done.

ANNE
Ready?

FREDDIE
Ready.

They eat it at the same time.

FREDDIE
No way! Wow, that's good. I would have never guessed! It's like this perfect mix of bland and salty.

Anne laughs. She makes another.

ANNE
I'm so glad you like it. Consider it my mother's gift to us both today. (turning serious)
And...thank you. Thank you for bringing it. It really means a lot.

Anne starts to get emotional again and she stands to gather her things and regain her composure.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Well, I'd better get going.

Freddie packs up the remaining crackers and butter to hand to her and stands.

FREDDIE
Anne, can I...

Anne blinks back her emotions and faces him.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Can I give you a hug?

Anne's eyes start to fill up and she looks away again.

ANNE
I don't like to cry in front of people.

FREDDIE
But I'm not people. I'm
Freddie...and I don't mind.

He opens his arms.

ANNE
(hesitant)
Only if you promise to just let me
walk away afterward and you won't
make me look at you.

FREDDIE
Okay, I promise.

Anne and Freddie hug. It's clear she's sobbing into his chest, but she makes no sound. He enwraps her with great care, resting his chin on her head. They hold each other for a long time until Anne finally breaks away, picks up her things, and leaves without looking at him. As she walks away, she whispers just loud enough for him to hear.

ANNE
Thank you.

Freddie watches her walk away and puts both hands behind his head, which is his signature sign of feeling helpless when he really wants to do something and can't.

EXT. PARK BENCH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Freddie is sitting against the picnic table at "their spot." It's cold. He seems slightly nervous because Anne is getting her test results. He sees Anne walking toward him with a long face. It looks like she failed and his face drops, too. As she gets close, she lifts up the paper and smiles.

ANNE
I got an A!

FREDDIE
(joyfully relieved)
What? Seriously? You scared me! An
A? That's so great.

ANNE
There's no way it was me. I was
channeling your brilliance.

FREDDIE
No, you're the brilliant one. I'm
so happy for you.

Anne reaches inside her bag to pull out a small boxed gift.

FREDDIE
What's this?

ANNE
Just a thank you. It's nothing
much.

Freddie opens the box. It's Mexican limes. It stops him in his place and he's at a loss for words for a minute. He looks at the limes and then looks at her like he wants to reach past the walled reserve they both have. He wants to know if the meaning is superficial or deep. Anne gets nervous and looks at the limes.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Should we grab a soda and squeeze
some?

Freddie stops his gaze and placates her discomfort.

FREDDIE
Yeah. Sure. That sounds great.

They sit on top of the picnic table, talking, squeezing limes into their drinks, and sipping. Their legs dangle over the edge and the camera shows them laughing and chatting.

FREDDIE
So, what does Anne Elliott do when
she's not busy being brilliant at
math?

ANNE
(laughing)
Let's see. I like to read. I
write. I hike a bit.

FREDDIE
Have you ever gone salsa dancing?

SMASH CUT to next scene.

INT. SALSA CLUB - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Loud salsa music is playing in a packed dance space. The floor has several DANCERS of varying abilities. Freddie casually takes Anne's hand and leads her to the dance floor. Anne is affected by the held hand, but he doesn't see as he's navigating them through the crowd.

Several camera shots show them dancing and having a good time. Anne is an adequate dancer and a decent follower. Freddie is skilled, making it clear this isn't his first time.

FREDDIE
You're a natural!

ANNE
(laughing)
It's about time I put all of those
dance lessons to work. My mom
would be happy.

FREDDIE
I hope you're happy, too.

Anne smiles and nods. He tries a complicated move with her, but she can't quite get the footing down. STEFANI, a friend of Freddie's, approaches. She's a beautiful Mexican native with a slight accent. Freddie waves Stefani over.

FREDDIE
(to Stefani)
Can you help us here? I don't know
this one from her side.

Stefani takes Anne's hips from behind and shows her a better way to move the hips in order to control the feet.

STEFANI
Your hips have to be in the right
place for your feet to follow.

ANNE
Oh, got it. Thank you.

STEFANI
Of course! You've got a great man
here. Hold onto him.

Stefani walks away. Freddie is embarrassed by the praise.

ANNE
Who was that?!

FREDDIE
Stefani. We've been friends a long
time. She's got a great heart.

ANNE
(eyes raised)
And a great body. She's beautiful!

FREDDIE
(shrugs; pointedly)
I haven't noticed. My thoughts are
somewhere else.

A slow song begins to play.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Oh wow. Not this song.

Anne doesn't recognize the song and looks at Freddie
inquisitively. Freddie turns slightly bashful.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
It makes me think of you.

Anne listens for a minute and shakes her head.

ANNE
It's in Spanish. What does it say?

FREDDIE
Nope. Not going to tell you.

ANNE
That's not fair! You can't tease
like that!

FREDDIE
Okay.

Freddie nods his head as though he's going to give in;
then, he begins to quote the words verbatim in Spanish.

ANNE
No! You can't!

Freddie laughs. Anne looks at him with more expectation. He
begins to quote it again in Spanish, but this time his face
communicates more of the sentiment he feels for her. Anne's
eyes track back and forth from his lips to his eyes.

To avoid the emotion, Anne stops watching his lips and
holds herself closer to him. His chin brushes her hair. He
starts to move his chin across her forehead. The music
fades in the background and everything is slow. Anne lifts
her head to look at him. He looks at her. They kiss, long
and slow.

END FLASHBACK

INT. MARY'S HOUSE FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Anne's eyes are glazed over and she's sitting in the same position as she was before the flashback. Walter (the baby) hits Anne's face, bringing her back to the present. Anne takes a quick breath from the shock of the blow, and then focuses on Walter.

ANNE

Oh, I'm sorry. I'll pay attention.

Anne gives a half-hearted smile and begins to play with Walter.

EXT. WALKING PATH - FALL DAY

Lisa, Hannah, Mary, and Anne leave Mary's house, with Anne pushing Walter in the stroller behind the rest. The sidewalk turns into a walking path.

MARY

If Charles didn't feel like he had to spend every morning with Freddie, I wouldn't have had to beg you to walk with me.

LISA

(to Mary)

Does that mean you don't like Freddie?

MARY

(surprised)

Oh no! Freddie's great. It's just that my husband chooses to spend time with him over me. I don't see why I can't join them.

LISA

Well, I think Freddie is the best thing to come around since...Espresso. And you all know I love my Espresso.

Anne is in the background, but overhears Lisa and considers what this means. Hannah changes the subject.

HANNAH

(to Mary)

So how is little Charlie?

MARY

His preschool says he's back to beating on the other kids like usual. I hope they're keeping his

little arm safe!

As they turn in the path, they see Freddie and Charles who are returning early from their run. Charles has two DOGS on a leash.

CHARLES

The pup just wasn't having it today, so we had to come back early.

LISA

(looking at Freddie)

Oh, well we were just setting out on a walk to the upper pass if you want to join us.

FREDDIE

What do you think, Charles? Can you put the dogs in the yard and catch up?

CHARLES

Sure. Sounds great. Be right back.

Lisa, Hannah, and even Mary seem to file in to be as close as they can to Freddie. Anne hangs back talking only to Walter in his stroller, looking at the autumn leaves, and intermittently watching the flirtatious play between Freddie, Hannah, and Lisa.

LISA

So what was it like in the Navy?
Did you ever see any action?

FREDDIE

Yeah, sure. I was deployed twice.
It was as hard as you think it would be, I guess.

MARY

Did you ever get shot at?

FREDDIE

Yes, during my first deployment. I was an underling, and underlings are often front line. My second deployment was much better, though.

Anne is clearly affected by this, but turns away.

LISA

You military are so brave. I can't

even imagine.

FREDDIE

There are definitely a lot of good, brave souls in the Navy. It was great to be with them.

HANNAH

And now you work to help them recover?

FREDDIE

Yeah, my brother-in-law came up with the idea of bioengineering movement, and I added the technical assistance.

HANNAH

I don't know exactly what that means, but it sounds so smart.

Anne is watching Freddie drink in the awe and praise. She tries to distract herself by lagging behind.

Charles catches up and Mary starts to walk a little more slowly. Mary, Anne, and Charles group far enough behind the others that their conversation can't be heard.

CHARLES

I don't know. Which one do you think he likes most? Lisa or Hannah?

MARY

I don't know. I think Hannah is the better match.

CHARLES

You're only saying that because you don't like Hannah's current choice in men. You haven't even met Christian!

MARY

That's not the only reason I'm saying it...but I'll admit it would be nice to distract her until she comes to her senses, at least.

CHARLES

Mary, Christian Hayter's family owns several restaurants and farms and he's going to inherit a nice

chunk of land.

MARY

That's exactly it, Charles. A farmer? I can't be related to a farmer!

CHARLES

Farming is a perfectly respectable career. Besides, it's back in vogue with all of the organic and free-range movements. I think having a farmer in the family would be great.

MARY

You would think that.

CHARLES

Besides, I think it's pretty clear that Freddie prefers Lisa. Don't you see how they tend to stand a little closer to each other when they talk? It's all in the body language. I'd lay bets on it. What do you think, Anne?

Anne gives a half-hearted smile and shrugs her shoulders, and then pretends to adjust Walter. Anything to avoid the conversation. Freddie, Lisa, and Hannah stop to wait for the rest to catch up.

FREDDIE

I wonder if we'll see my sister and brother-in-law on the upper pass. They were planning on taking their convertible for a spin.

LISA

I just love to see the way your sister and brother-in-law look at each other. It's clear there's so much love between them. I hope I can have something like that someday.

Lisa looks at Freddie meaningfully, and his smile returns as encouragement. Hannah's phone rings.

LISA

(to Hannah)

Who's that?

HANNAH

No one.

LISA

Is it Christian?

HANNAH

Maybe.

LISA

Answer it. You've been ignoring him too long.

CHARLES

Yeah, Hannah. You don't want him to get the wrong idea.

Mary hits Charles on the arm. Lisa grabs the phone from Hannah.

LISA

If you don't answer it, I will.

Lisa answers the phone.

LISA (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Hello, Christian? Yes, sorry. My sister will be right with you. Give her a second.

Lisa mutes the phone.

LISA (CONT'D)

(to Hannah, peeved)

Hannah, you can't just ghost him. That's not right. You need to get your feelings out there. Talk to him. He's been too good to you.

Hannah seems hesitant at first, but relents as Lisa pushes the phone into her hands.

HANNAH

(unmutes and speaks)

Hi, Christian?

Hannah meanders out of the picture as she talks. Lisa beckons Charles to follow Hannah to make sure she has the right conversation. This gives Lisa time to have Freddie to herself.

LISA

She'll probably be on the phone

for a minute. They have a lot to talk about. Should we all take a look at those trees over there while we wait?

MARY
(finding a bench)
I'd rather sit here and give Hannah the evil eye. A farmer as a boyfriend...how embarrassing.

Mary looks toward Freddie for agreement, but he drops his eyes and looks away. Anne notices how Freddie feels about Mary's prideful display and looks away, too.

LISA
(to Freddie)
I hear there are some nuts on the trees over there. Let's see if we can find some.

Freddie and Lisa head off into the trees. Anne looks down to see that Walter is starting to drift into sleep.

ANNE
I'd better keep moving a bit so he falls asleep.

Anne walks in a different direction from the rest of them until she finds a small bench where she can rock the stroller back and forth quietly while Walter drifts to sleep. Her mind is clearly bothered by what she's seeing. When she stops rocking the stroller, she hears Freddie and Lisa approaching on the other side of the bushes from her. They don't know she's there.

FREDDIE
You know, that was good of you to keep Hannah honest with her boyfriend.

LISA
Hannah really does like him, but she gets a little wishy-washy sometimes. Not me. If I know I want someone, I don't let anything get in the way.

FREDDIE
That's such a good quality. I hope you stay that way forever.

LISA
I intend to. My man will never

have to wonder how I feel about him.

FREDDIE
He'll be a lucky man.

There's a pregnant pause. Even through the bushes, Anne can feel the flirtation and it affects her.

LISA
I have to say I get tired of Mary and her damn Elliott pride. It gets so awkward. We all wish Charles would have married Anne instead, but that didn't work out.

FREDDIE
Wait, Charles wanted Anne?

LISA
Yeah, he tried to go out with her. Things seemed to be going well until the night he tried to...hmmm, maybe it's crude to say...get her in the sack.

Anne is almost beside herself as she realizes where the conversation is going.

ANNE
(quietly mouthing and almost standing)
No, no, no...

Anne accidentally bumps the stroller. Walter starts to stir and Anne sits back down, rocking Walter so he won't attract Freddie and Lisa's attention. She remains tense.

FREDDIE
(clearly interested)
What happened?

LISA
She started to cry and said she couldn't. She ended it right there. Charles was crushed.

FREDDIE
Wow...When was this?

LISA
I guess it was about two years before he married Mary. We all kind of think it was their

godmother, Nina, who persuaded Anne to think he wasn't good enough. No one really knows why Anne reacted that way.

Freddie seems contemplative as he and Lisa continue walking along the bushes until Anne can't hear them anymore.

Anne breathes out and puts her hands over her eyes, shaking her head in agony. When she lifts her head again, her eyes glaze over in memory.

INT. ANNE'S CAR - DUSK [FLASHBACK]

Freddie and Anne are lying back in the front seats of Freddie's car (Audi or the like) looking at the stars through the moonroof.

FREDDIE
It's so beautiful!

He turns to rest his eyes on Anne.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
But I like this view better.

Anne looks at the stars briefly, but turns to Freddie with some anxiety.

ANNE
Listen, I'm sorry about the way my father and Elizabeth treated you.

FREDDIE
(smiling sweetly)
Don't be. Your dad caught you kissing a brown guy on the doorstep. It would shock anyone with his...ideology. Maybe he's the type of guy who needs a little time to warm up to someone like me. He'll see that I'm good to you and forget the rest.

ANNE
(disdainfully)
Don't get your hopes up. He's not that kind of father. He's all about pocketbooks and appearances.

FREDDIE
(laughs)
Duly noted. I'll try to work on

both.

ANNE
(wrapping her hands
around his arm)
I don't need you to change
anything.

FREDDIE
(smiles at her)
Well there you go. It's all about
you and me. We're the only two who
matter in this equation.

ANNE
(relaxing)
As always, your math is
impeccable.

Freddie kisses her and eases her tension. The kissing becomes and stays passionate for a while. Freddie's hand slides just under Anne's shirt near her navel. The feeling from this almost overwhelms Anne. She gasps and pushes herself away from him.

ANNE
(gasping)
Wait...I think there's something
you should know.

Freddie backs away and takes a breath, a little stunned.

FREDDIE
Umm, okay. Do I need to brace
myself?

ANNE
(fumbling)
Sorry, I didn't mean to be so
dramatic. No. I mean, I don't
think so. It's just that uh...Wow,
I'm so embarrassed...I think you
should know I've never...uh...

Anne is at a loss for how to say "had sex," but Freddie picks up what she's trying to say.

FREDDIE
(worried)
Oh, no...I wasn't thinking we
would...

ANNE
No, no. I wasn't think you were

thinking that...I was just...I
thought you should know.

Anne lies back on her chair completely embarrassed.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Ack! Never mind. Pretend I didn't
say anything.

They both stare up at the stars, at a loss for what comes
next. Freddie peeks over at Anne and takes her hand.

FREDDIE
No, I'm glad you told me.

Anne avoids looking at him through an awkward silence. Anne
finally peeks over and then turns away again.

ANNE
Does that change your opinion of
me?

Freddie faces her. Even though she doesn't look at him, she
knows he's looking at her.

FREDDIE
No. Not in the slightest.

ANNE
(feeling braver)
And...what if...someday...not
now...we do that and, you
know...it's my first time...

Freddie sighs and looks back out the moonroof. Anne takes
this as a bad sign and takes her hand out of his while
looking out her window.

ANNE (CONT'D)
You know what? Never mind. You
don't have to answer that.

FREDDIE
Stop.

Freddie's hand finds hers again. She turns slightly to
watch him. He looks at her intermittently as he tries to
explain.

FREDDIE
You know, there are a lot of guys
out there who love that kind of
thing...They think it's like a
notch on their bedpost or

something...but I don't feel that way. To tell you the truth, it would make me nervous.

Anne looks down, wondering if this is a deal breaker and perhaps the end of their budding relationship. Freddie takes another deep breath, turns toward Anne, and explains.

FREDDIE

Anne, the thing is...I don't want to just be your first...I don't want to be your notch... I want to be your last.

They look at each other briefly, and then he realizes how that sounds and gives a short laugh.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Wait, that came out wrong...not the last, but...I...

Freddie uses his free hand to stroke her cheek.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

I don't want to scare you, Anne Elliott...but I love you. I want to be your forever...

He points back and forth between them.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

I want this...to be forever.

With this, he looks at her with a vulnerable sincerity and she returns his gaze.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

So please don't have me do that with you unless that's what you're thinking, too...that it's forever. I don't think my heart could take it if not.

Anne gives a short sigh of relief and nods.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Deal?

ANNE

Deal.

FREDDIE

(smiling)

And since that's not happening

today, can we get back to what we
were doing before?

Anne smiles back, nods, and they start kissing again.

INT. ANNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Anne and Freddie are resting on a sofa in one of the wings of Anne's large house. They're looking at a photo album with pictures of Anne's mom.

FREDDIE
Your mom is amazing...and
beautiful!

ANNE
(nodding, a sad smile)
Inside and out.

FREDDIE
(softly)
I get it now...looking at what you
had...and now being here with your
dad and sister...I guess I don't
know Mary because she's at
boarding school, but...this house
must have gotten so much colder
when your mom passed.

ANNE
It took my world away. I don't
know that I want to introduce you
to Mary yet. She and I definitely
get along better...but she's got
the same Elliott mindset.

FREDDIE
You mean the one that makes us
sneak in through the back door?

ANNE
Ugh. I hate it! My family has no
right to feel so superior...
thinking somehow money has made
our flesh better. But we're not
better...Sometimes I feel we're
worse.

Anne gives Freddie a meaningful look, measuring what she's
saying.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Can I tell you a secret...
something I've never told anyone?

Freddie nods seriously.

ANNE (CONT'D)
I guess it's the reason I've
usually stayed away from men...

Anne looks at Freddie a bit nervously, building up her
bravery before speaking again.

ANNE (CONT'D)
My father cheated on my mom.

Freddie's face shows a dose of shock and pain.

ANNE (CONT'D)
There was this assistant... It's
so cliché... My mom and I were
supposed to be traveling to
England to visit my godmother, but
while we were in the car, we found
out our flight was cancelled, so
we came back home. My mom walked
into her room and...screamed...
this horrible scream... I got
there in time to see my dad's
personal assistant running down
the hallway, buttoning up her
clothes...and I heard my father in
the room telling my mom it wasn't
what she thought...but it was.

Freddie looks at her with concern.

ANNE (CONT'D)
(tearing up slightly)
My sisters never knew, but I
did...and my mom did. It took
something out of my mom...like it
broke her. I don't remember seeing
my mom truly smile after that. A
few months later, she found out
she had this aggressive breast
cancer...almost like the
experience planted this sad seed
in her heart that grew into
cancer.

Anne looks at Freddie briefly who considers her theory with
appropriate gravity. Anne looks away.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Is that weird?... That I think
that?

Freddie looks at her until she looks back at him.

FREDDIE
No, it's not weird.

ANNE
(vulnerable)
I've been scared of men ever
since...worried that one day a man
would break me like my father
broke my mom.

Freddie takes Anne's cheeks in his hands to focus his words
on her.

FREDDIE
I will never cheat on you, Anne.
You're a part of me. You're in my
soul...hurting you would hurt me.
I could never...I love you.

She kisses him; then, she looks deeply into his eyes.

ANNE
I believe you...and I love you,
too.

They kiss passionately until Anne rests her forehead
against his.

ANNE
Freddie?

FREDDIE
(eyes closed, not
wanting to move)
Yeah?

ANNE
I'm ready.

Freddie backs his head away enough to look at her,
searching in her eyes.

FREDDIE
You mean...?

Anne nods.

FREDDIE
(hesitating, vulnerable)
Do you...do you remember what I
said?

ANNE
(nodding confidently)
I do... Forever.

Freddie smiles and starts to kiss her interspersing his words.

FREDDIE
Say those words again.

ANNE
(smiling between kisses)
I do...forever

FREDDIE
(passionately)
I promise I'll make this good for
you.

The camera slowly fades as their kisses grow more passionate.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

EXT. WALKING PATH - FALL DAY

Anne comes out of her reverie as Walter stirs and she hears Mary calling for her.

MARY
Anne, where are you?

ANNE
(recollecting herself)
Sorry, Mary. I'm coming.

Anne walks back out to see everyone just returning. Hannah and Charles are smiling. Freddie and Lisa return looking coy.

CHARLES
I think we've figured it all out
for Hannah and Christian.

Hannah nods, somewhat bashful. Mary rolls her eyes, but everyone else seems congratulatory. They continue on their walk. Walter starts to fuss, so Anne takes him in one arm and pushes the stroller with the other.

While on a scenic trail near a road, Anne is clearly getting tired. They see a convertible (like a Ferrari 458 Spider) approach and slow down.

CHARLES
(admiring)
Wow, there it is.

They all walk toward the car. Victor and Sofia wave.

FREDDIE
Hey, how's the drive?

SOFIA
It's so beautiful this time of year!

CHARLES
Even better in a car like this, I'm guessing.

VICTOR
(laughing)
I have to agree. By the way, Sofia and I want you all to come to the house next week. We're getting a trio band to entertain and we'll have drinks and hors d'oeuvres. Would that work for you all?

Everyone gives a resounding yes except Anne, who simply smiles. Freddie approaches Sofia and whispers something in her ear. Sofia quickly moves toward the center of the vehicle.

SOFIA
Anne, you've been pushing that stroller the entire time. You must be tired. Freddie can man Walter and the stroller. We'd love to give you a ride back.

ANNE
No, I couldn't. There's not enough room.

VICTOR
Are you calling us fat?

Everyone laughs. Anne shakes her head with embarrassment. She feels Freddie's arms taking Walter.

FREDDIE

Come on, buddy. Will you let me hold you?

Walter doesn't mind--he's just happy to be out of the stroller. Anne feels Freddie's hand on her back, guiding her into the car.

SOFIA

See, I can scoot and we'll fit perfectly.

Anne gets in the car and they drive away.

ANNE

(to Victor and Sofia)

Thank you. This is so nice of you.

While driving, Victor strikes up a conversation with Sofia.

VICTOR

I don't know. I can tell Freddie is playing it, but I can't tell which sister he actually wants to be with.

SOFIA

I think he's just putting himself out there. He'd flirt with anyone as long as she's willing to give a few compliments.

Anne sighs quietly and looks at the scenery.

INT. THE ELLIOTT/CASTILLO ESTATE HOUSE GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

A large group in cocktail attire, including Mr. And Mrs. Musgrove, Charles, Mary, Anne, Hannah, CHRISTIAN HAYTER, Lisa, Sofia, Victor, Freddie, and other PARTY ATTENDEES are mixing and mingling in a large entertaining room. A trio plays softly while service staff carries hors d'oeuvres and drinks to the various clusters of people. Anne turns from talking to OLD NEIGHBORS to find Sofia, Victor, and Freddie nearby.

SOFIA

I hope it's not too difficult to come to a house that's yours but occupied by someone else.

ANNE

No, no. Not at all. I'm just happy it's being lived in by such great people. Your family brings a lot

of love to the home.

Anne only dares a brief glance at Freddie, but he seems distracted. Sofia and Victor need to greet another guest, so they excuse themselves. Anne finds her way to a chair next to Mrs. Musgrove.

MRS. MUSGROVE

What an excellent party! It's so nice of them to host like this. It seems we rarely gather at people's houses anymore--always the clubhouse. It's nice to be in a home. And they've made it feel so homey here!

Anne nods her head.

MRS. MUSGROVE (CONT'D)

(afraid she offended)

Not to say it didn't feel like a home before, dear.

ANNE

No, I didn't see it that way. I'm happy the Castillos are taking such good care of everything.

Mrs. Musgrove nods to say that's what she meant. The trio begins to play a lively song.

FREDDIE

Who's up for dancing?

Lisa, Hannah, Christian, Charles, Mary and a few others begin to move toward the center of the floor as the rest of the crowd makes space. Anne watches Freddie's hand touch Lisa's back as he leads her to the dance floor. This is too much for her. She makes a slightly audible gasp and Mrs. Musgrove turns to check on her.

ANNE

(to Mrs. Musgrove)

Sorry, I just realized I'd like to say hello to the kitchen staff.

Mrs. Musgrove nods with understanding. Anne moves quickly toward the kitchen and finds a pantry to hide in.

INT. THE ELLIOTT ESTATE HOUSE PANTRY - NIGHT

Anne's breathing is heavy as she crouches in the corner of the

dark pantry. Tears begin to leak from her eyes.

(FLASHBACK MONTAGE)

--INT. AIRPORT SECURITY LINE - DAY

Anne and Freddie are saying goodbye at the security line.
Freddie has Anne's carry-on bag in his hand. Anne is teary-eyed.

FREDDIE

Ugh, I'm hating this. England is
so far away.

ANNE

I know. I'm seriously
reconsidering this internship
right now.

Freddie acts like he's wheeling the bag back out the door.
Anne laughs sadly. Freddie turns back around.

FREDDIE

Kidding. You and your godmother
have had this planned for too
long. I want to be
supportive...but this kind of
sucks.

Tears start to trickle down Anne's face. Freddie changes
his demeanor to be more helpful.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

16 weeks...112 days. That's it,
right? And we'll talk a lot. It'll
go quick...And a couple of months
after you get back, my sister and
brother-in-law will be back from
Guam. I can't wait for you to meet
them. My sister will be so
surprised that I was able to keep
you a secret.

Anne nods and wipes a tear away, still crying.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(trying to cheer her)

Listen, my younger brother has
been doing the long-distance thing
for about a year with his
girlfriend... and it's been mostly
smooth.... Plus, it will give us a
taste test for what it's like when
I get deployed in the Navy.

ANNE

Ugh, don't even mention that right now. I can't stand this.

Freddie hugs her tight, and then backs away, arms on both of her shoulders, looking in her eyes with a serious expression.

FREDDIE

Just do me a favor, okay?

Anne nods.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

I don't think Nina likes the idea of me with you. She might try to convince you we're not good together. Just...don't let her get in your head, ok?

ANNE

It's not that...she just thinks we're young.

FREDDIE

Yeah, and that my bank account isn't at the Elliott standard...I'll work on that, but...

ANNE

You know that's not how I feel.

FREDDIE

(kissing her sweetly)

I know...just promise me?

ANNE

I promise...forever.

They kiss, tearfully and passionately. Anne gets in line and waves goodbye. Freddie waves and watches her walk away, putting his hands behind his head.

--INT. VIDEO CONFERENCE FROM NINA'S KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: THREE WEEKS LATER

Anne and Freddie are video-conferencing with each other. Anne is at a table in the kitchen on a laptop; Freddie is in his bedroom.

ANNE
This internship is nowhere near
what I romanticized.

FREDDIE
(sly smile)
Well, if romantic is what you
want, come back and I can do
something about that.

ANNE
(laughing)
As if I don't think of that all
day anyway.

FREDDIE
(covering his face)
Argh! This is so hard.

Freddie sits back, shaking his head. Nina comes into the kitchen where Anne is seated during this time, but Freddie doesn't see her.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
It makes me rethink everything
I've ever aspired to do.
Seriously, I just want to be with
you...That's it...Get me a simple
job coding some obscure whatever
and let me just be with you.

Anne smiles nervously.

ANNE
Nina's here. I'd better go. We'll
talk tomorrow. I love you.

FREDDIE
I love you, too.

Anne closes the computer.

NINA
(concerned)
I couldn't help but overhear. It
sounds like you're distracting him
from what he really wants to do in
life... That's definitely a sign
you're too young, darling.

Anne's eyes shift between Nina and the laptop as she considers what Nina is saying.

--VIDEO-CONFERENCE MONTAGE

A series of short shots show several laptop conversations on different days. The mood gradually turns from happy to unhappy. It's clear that their conversations become argumentative as their time away continues.

--INT. VIDEO CONFERENCE - DAY

SUPER: MONTH THREE

This time, Nina can be seen on the other side of the computer, out of Freddie's site, holding Anne's hand and encouraging her as Anne talks to Freddie. Anne is clearly upset.

ANNE

I'm tired of having the same conversation every time we talk. I think we need to just take a break and figure out priorities. I don't want to be the starry-eyed young lovers who end up making bad choices and giving up on great opportunities.

FREDDIE

We don't need a break, Anne. We just need to be in the same space again. It's impossible to figure it all out talking to a picture on a screen. I want to hold you and kiss you and...

ANNE

Stop. No. I can't, Freddie. We need a break...I need a break. It's just temporary. I've extended my internship two more months. We'll talk later.

FREDDIE

(flustered)

This is a bad idea, Anne.

ANNE

(crying, holding Nina's hand off screen)

I love you, Freddie. It's just for a little while so we can get our heads on straight.

FREDDIE
No, Anne. Love doesn't take
breaks.

ANNE
(crying)
It's not forever...just a little
while. Goodbye, Freddie.

Anne closes her computer.

--INT. ANNE'S BEDROOM IN NINA'S HOUSE - EVENING

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

Nina is holding Anne on the floor as she cries.

ANNE
I can't do this. I just can't. I
need to talk to him.

NINA
I know it's hard, darling, but
it's for the best. You're both
just so young...You need time.

ANNE
(between sobs)
No, Nina. It's not working. I feel
like my heart has been ripped out
from my body. I can't function. I
can't imagine life without him. I
have to talk to him.

NINA
(sighs)
I didn't want to have to show you
this, but...

ANNE
(tries to stop crying)
Show me what?

Nina walks over to a computer and casts a serious glance at
Anne.

NINA
It might change your mind.

(END FLASHBACK MONTAGE)

INT. THE ELLIOTT ESTATE HOUSE PANTRY - NIGHT

Anne is still crouched in the pantry with tears in her eyes, but hears the cook talking just outside the door. She stands to gather herself back together, wiping at her tears.

INT. THE ELLIOTT ESTATE HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Anne recomposes herself in the pantry before MITA, the house cook, opens the door and turns on the light. Mita is shocked at first. Their entire conversation takes place in Spanish.

MITA
(In Spanish with accent
from Mexico; subtitled)
Oh my! You scared me, my dear.

ANNE
(Wiping the corners of
her eyes. Also in
Spanish with accent from
Spain; subtitled)
I'm sorry. How are you, Mita?

Anne and Mita hug.

MITA
It's wonderful to see you!

Mita notices Anne's distress.

MITA (CONT'D)
No, my love. What happened?

Anne shrugs, unable to talk without crying.

MITA (CONT'D)
*Oh, I see. It's difficult to be in
your house again. Come, come.*

Mita gives Anne another hug.

ANNE
(wiping her eyes)
I don't want the others to know.

MITA
*No problem. Come cut an onion to
cover up the tears...like old
times.*

ANNE
Gracias.

MITA
It's nothing, my dear.

Anne starts cutting an onion while Mita turns on a loud blender. The blender stops.

ANNE
(recuperating)
How are things going here?

MITA
Very well, thank you. The family is so kind, and generous, and all of them speak Spanish... I feel so fortunate... And the brother is very handsome, too, hahaha.

Anne simply nods her head and continues to cut the onions.

MITA (CONT'D)
How is it going at your sister's house?

ANNE
Well enough, thank you. How is your grand-daughter at the new school?

MITA
She's doing very well. She's getting As in all of her classes.

CAMERA pans to see Freddie, standing in the walkway behind them, who clears his throat. It's not clear how long he's been there. Anne and Mita both look back. Anne nods a quick acknowledgement that he's there and returns to cutting her onion to mask her shock. Only Mita turns to face him. The conversation is still in Spanish.

FREDDIE
(to Mita. In Spanish with Mexican accent; subtitled)
Excuse me, sorry. I just wanted to tell you that the food is excellent like always. Thank you!

COOK
Oh, so kind. Thank you.

Freddie looks at Anne, who's still busying herself cutting the onions.

COOK (CONT'D)
(apologizing)
*Sorry, my friend wanted to help me
like she did before when she lived
here. I put her to work cutting
onions.*

Anne feels sufficiently intact to turn around.

ANNE
*Sorry, yes. The onions are
affecting me.*

FREDDIE
(to Anne)
So, you speak Spanish now?

ANNE
Yes.

FREDDIE
Where did you learn?

ANNE
*Umm...after living in England, I
went to Spain to teach English.*

FREDDIE
Ah, hence the accent.

MITA
*Yes, she speaks like a queen,
right?*

Anne gives a half smile. It's hard to read Freddie's face. Contemplative? Could care less? Lisa and Hannah's voices can be heard approaching, so all conversation stops. Lisa, Hannah, and Mary enter.

LISA
(to Anne)
*Oh, there you are, Anne! We've
been looking for you. We're going
dancing. Come with us!*

ANNE
*Oh, no. Thank you. That's really
nice of you to ask.*

MARY
(to everyone)

See, I told you she wouldn't come.
She hasn't danced in a long time.

Anne looks briefly toward Freddie to see his reaction, but he's looking stoically at the floor.

MARY (CONT'D)
(to Anne)
Will you go to the house, then,
and take over for the babysitter?
I've left money for her in the
kitchen drawer.

ANNE
Sure.

FREDDIE
(to the cook)
Gracias.

LISA
Yes, gracias!

HANNAH
Yes, thank you. I mean, gracias.

Hannah laughs. Freddie, Lisa, Hannah, and Mary say goodbye and retreat. Anne watches them go and sighs before returning to the onions.

INT. MARY AND CHARLES' HOUSE - MORNING

The weather is cold and stormy outside, so Charles, Mary, Freddie, Hannah, Lisa, Anne, and the two boys are all cooped up inside the house. Anne brings in a pot of coffee and sets it at a side table. Charles, Mary, and Freddie are scrolling through their devices. Hannah is reading a magazine. Lisa is pacing. Anne entertains the kids. The overall feeling is boredom.

LISA
Ugh, this weather. I don't think
there will ever be an end to it. I
can't stand not being able to go
outside.

HANNAH
I know! I have a total case of
cabin fever.

FREDDIE
Right? I'm so glad I had a little
getaway.

MARY

(with a little jealousy)
Oh, I wondered why I had my
husband back for a few days. The
'bromance' had a break.

CHARLES

(disregarding Mary)
What was the weather like in
California?

FREDDIE

Where I was, it's perfect this
time of year...nothing but
sunshine. You should go...
Actually, we should all go. I'd go
back in a heartbeat.

LISA

(very enthusiastic)
That sounds amazing. I'd love to
go. Where was it again?

FREDDIE

Not far from San Diego. Two of my
best friends from the Navy are
there. I usually stay at the
military hotel--it's right on a
great surf beach.

LISA

You could teach me to surf? That's
it. I'm getting myself a ticket.
Who's in?

HANNAH

But what about school?

LISA

We can miss a few days. If we tack
it onto a weekend, we can make a
nice little vacation out of it.

CHARLES

We're in.

MARY

We are? We can't leave the kids
that easy, Charles.

CHARLES

We'll leave Charlie with my
parents and only take Walter.

MARY

But I don't want to be stuck with Walter while everyone else is having fun.

CHARLES

Then we'll bring Anne so that we can pass Walter back and forth a bit. We owe it to Anne anyway. It will be her parting gift before she heads off to be in New York with your dad.

Mary can't find another complaint. Anne smiles a little nervously and tries to steal a glance to see how Freddie feels about this. Freddie and Lisa are entranced in a conversation about pictures of San Diego that Freddie is scrolling through on his phone.

EXT. CALIFORNIA AIRPORT - EARLY EVENING

Perfect California weather evening with palm trees lightly blowing in the breeze. Freddie, Lisa, Hannah, Charles, Mary, and Anne are standing on the sidewalk in front of the airport terminals. Walter is asleep in his carseat at the side.

FREDDIE

Harville and Bennick will meet us here in just a couple of minutes. You'll notice Harville limps from an injury--grenade shrapnel--and Bennick might not be the most talkative. His fiancée, Felicity, passed away unexpectedly last year while he was deployed. He was hit hard.

LISA

Oh, how sad! It's nice of them to pick us up.

A large SUV and a smaller sedan pull up. TRAVIS HARVILLE limps out of the SUV and BOBBY BENNICK hesitantly steps out of his sedan to greet everyone.

FREDDIE

There they are. Two cars to carry us all.

Freddie bro hugs both of them.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
(to Harville and
Bennick)
Here I am taking advantage of your
hospitality again.

TRAVIS HARVILLE
Hey, life is short. We'd pick you
up anywhere, anytime, man.

FREDDIE
Harville, Bennick, these are my
friends, Charles, Mary, Lisa,
Hannah, Anne, and Mary and
Charles' boy, Walter.

TRAVIS HARVILLE
(laughing)
You'll probably have to remind us
of the names again, but nice to
meet you. Call me Trav. And he's
Bobby. Last names are a military
thing, but we are real people,
too.

Everyone laughs. NATALIE HARVILLE exits the SUV and opens
her arms wide to Freddie.

FREDDIE
(hugging Natalie)
And Harville's better half,
Natalie.

TRAV
Best three-quarters that is. She
at least has two working legs.

Everyone laughs and greets Natalie. Bobby maintains a
little distance. It's easy to see he's not as comfortable
in the larger group. Bobby and Anne catch each other's eye
for an extended moment.

NATALIE
We're so glad you're here! Welcome
to what I hope is much better
weather! I had to come tonight to
meet you all because I'm working
full shifts the next couple of
days at the hospital...I'm a nurse
there.

TRAV
(to Natalie, joking)
You should go on and tell them why

you're really here--you know, to see if they're all worthy of being Freddie's friends.

FREDDIE

Natalie is the least judgmental person I know...if she's accepted me, she'll accept anyone.

Everyone laughs again.

NATALIE

(pointing to Freddie)

Really, I'm trying to spread the word that we need to get this man a girlfriend so I don't have to be alone when they all go on their man-trips.

Lisa smiles through everyone's laughter and looks meaningfully at Freddie as Freddie shakes his head at the comment. Anne looks toward Walter to avoid the exchange.

MARY

We're really tired. That flight was brutal.

TRAV

Oh, yes, of course. Here, let's load you up. I can take several of you in my car.

ANNE

I can take Walter in the smaller car if Bobby doesn't mind. (to Bobby) I'm sure your car will be a bit quieter so he can sleep.

BOBBY

Sure, that works.

Everyone begins to load their belongings into the vehicles.

INT. BOBBY'S CAR - LATER

After getting the bags and the Walter situated, Anne and Bobby enter the car.

BOBBY

You were kind enough to see that I don't do well in loud crowds. Thank you.

Anne smiles and nods. The two are silent for a moment as they get on the road. Anne eyes a copy of a book with the title "Go Grieving Rhymes of Mine" in the center console.

ANNE
(pointing to the book)
Petrarch?

BOBBY
The title, yes, but it's actually
a group of poems about grief by
different authors.

ANNE
I heard about your fiancée...
Felicity, right? I'm so sorry.

BOBBY
Yes. Everyone is. It doesn't bring
her back...Thank you, though.

Anne gives him an earnest look.

ANNE
Could I look at the table of
contents?

Bobby nods his head. She picks up the book and finds the title of one that strikes her.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Oh! One of my favorite lines comes
from this poem where Hugo speaks
to God. "...that I could
blaspheme, and throw my cries at
you like a child who throws a
stone at the sea..." Just the
visual on it gets me...

BOBBY
"...Consider that one doubts, Oh
God, when one suffers, and that
the eye that cries too much
finishes by going blind..." Yes,
At Villequier. One of the best.

ANNE
(still perusing)
Yes, it is. Wow, so many great
poems here.

BOBBY
Only for those who've suffered.

Bobby locks eyes with Anne for a brief moment. Anne concedes.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
I've actually thought of writing
my own poetry...might be
therapeutic or something.

ANNE
That's a great idea. Have you been
considering it for long?

BOBBY
Only since Felicity died. Before
she passed, we had it all planned
out...life goals, careers...but
now I'm at a bit of a loss. "I'm
blown by winds of grief from the
course I ought to steer."

ANNE
(points to the title)
I get the allusion.

BOBBY
(smiling)
Impressive.

They continue in silence, but both smiling out the window.

EXT. HOTEL DROP-OFF - LATER

The group has just exited their respective cars and everyone is unloading their bags. Bobby helps Anne to lift Walter's car seat carefully. It's time for the group to go into the hotel.

BOBBY
You know, I actually really
enjoyed that ride. Thank you for
the great conversation.

ANNE
(smiling)
I did, too. Thank you for the
ride.

BOBBY
I hope I get to see you tomorrow.
You'll be at the beach?

ANNE
Yes. You're coming, I hope.

Bobby nods. Unbeknownst to them, Freddie has been watching their interaction keenly, realizing what might be happening.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A beautiful, sunny California day. Everyone is congregating at the beach. Freddie is bare-chested with only the lower half of his wetsuit on. Lisa is in a bikini, but getting her legs in a wetsuit. Charles is laying out towels near some of the hotel beach chairs and Walter is "helping" him. Anne, Mary, and Hannah walk down from the hotel with beach items.

LISA

Wow! The air is perfect here.

FREDDIE

And the beach is relatively empty since it's not tourist season.

CHARLES

How's the water?

FREDDIE

(laughing)

Cold. Very cold. But we've got wetsuits. (to Lisa, pointing)
It looks like it's breaking on that side, so we'll want to get in that spot there. There are areas that have rocks, so I'll make sure to keep us in the right areas.

As he faces the ocean, Anne sees Freddie's bare, well-cut back and her eyes linger. Then, her eyes shift to Lisa's sleek, bikini-clad body. Although she has no reason to be self-conscious, Anne readjusts her own sun dress. She turns to see Bobby coming with his guitar toward them and her face brightens. Freddie turns in time to see her reaction to Bobby, too, and seems distracted by their exchange.

ANNE

You brought your guitar!

BOBBY

Yes, but I'll sit solo if it's going to bother you.

ANNE

No, I'd love to hear you play.

BOBBY

Great, let's sit on the chairs
farthest down so we don't bother
anyone else.

ANNE

(nodding)

Right...Oh, Mary, I need some
sunscreen.

MARY

Ok, but I need it right back.

Mary hands a lotion bottle to Anne. Anne starts to put it
on her arms and face.

BOBBY

Here, I can help you with your
back.

Freddie picks up some spray sunscreen near him and hands it
to Bobby.

FREDDIE

(to Bobby)

Here, this is easier. Are you
coming in?

BOBBY

Not yet, I'll sit back and watch
for a bit.

Bobby sprays Anne's back and then himself. Freddie turns
back around to get his wetsuit on and helps Lisa zip hers.

FREDDIE

(to Lisa)

Alright, ready then?

LISA

Absolutely!

Lisa and Freddie walk toward the waves with surfboards
under their arms. The camera focuses back on Anne and Bobby
who find chairs to sit in.

BOBBY

(starts to strum)

What would you like to hear?

ANNE

Hmmm. I don't know...Who's your
favorite?

BOBBY

Ben Harper. No question.

ANNE

Oh no!...you know Ben Harper? I could wallow in his sad songs for years...and have actually...but maybe something lighter?

BOBBY

So you think singing the happier songs will heal the inner wounds?

ANNE

(considering)

No, those will always be there, but we don't have to sit with our fingers in them all the time. It's okay to be happy.

BOBBY

(looks at her in earnest)

Maybe someday I'll believe that.

Bobby begins to strum a song. Anne smiles and looks in Freddie and Lisa's direction, proud of herself for being so adult.

HANNAH

(excited)

Look, she caught her first wave!

Everyone turns to see Lisa surfing briefly before getting pummeled by a wave. Lisa regains her bearing and stands triumphant, raising her arms in the air. Everyone whistles and claps, including Freddie who is standing at her side.

INT. HOTEL CAFE - NEXT MORNING

Anne, Hannah, and Freddie descend the stairs in that order at the same time for breakfast. On their way, they pass an unknown man (ELLIOTT STERLING) in a narrow stairwell. Elliott stands to the side and doesn't mask his interest in Anne. Anne smiles somewhat shyly, but as they get around the corner, Hannah has to comment.

HANNAH

Well, Anne, I think California is the place for you. You're turning all the heads.

Anne glances briefly back at Hannah and Freddie. Freddie smiles briefly at her, the first smile she's had directly from him, and then looks away. Anne is happy--and she does look radiant.

Lisa, Mary, Charles, and little Walter are in the café having breakfast as Anne, Hannah, and Freddie approach. There is only room at one side of the table, so the latecomers sit there.

MARY
(handing Walter to Anne)
My sleep was awful again. I need
my memory foam. And they don't
even have waffles here.

Anne puts Walter in the high chair near her to feed him.

ANNE
I'm sorry to hear that.

A WAITER comes to take their orders. While they're chatting, a nice car pulls up outside the window.

CHARLES
Wow, what type of car is that?

Charles, Mary, and Hannah go to the window to look. The waiter overhears.

WAITER
It's a new model of the Mercedes
G-class. About \$150K. The guy
comes here every now and again
with some military friends...can't
remember his name.

CHARLES
Wow!

The man (Elliott Sterling) is paying the valet and walks toward the car.

HANNAH
Oh, is that the guy? He's the one
we saw on the stairs--the one
making eyes at Anne.

Anne looks out the window just in time to see Elliott get in. The car begins to drive off.

MARY
Wait, the license plate says S & E
JWLS. Do you think that's Elliott

Sterling?

WAITER

That's his name. I knew it was something to do with silver.

MARY

(excited, to Anne)

That's the son of dad's business partner!

ANNE

I guess you're right.

MARY

You guess? I *am* right. I wish we could have said something to him. (to everyone) Our parents were so close, his father named him after us...If my dad had a boy, I'm sure he'd be named Sterling.

ANNE

Well, it's not like the son has been on the best of terms with our family.

MARY

No, but he can't be doing the same stupid things he was doing before if he can maintain a car like that.

ANNE

I don't think that's any proof. Actually, it could pretty much mean the opposite.

CHARLES

(explaining to Freddie)

The man's father, my father-in-law's business partner, passed away unexpectedly several years ago. The son was barely an adult and suddenly inherited all of this money, so he started partying and gambling. In the end, the jewelry company cut him off from any future relationship and holdings. He maintained the family inheritance, though, and even got some extra from some old Cougar in Las Vegas. It looks like he must have done alright for himself.

MARY

He also dated my oldest sister,
Elizabeth, for a bit. Daddy wasn't
too happy when Elliott left my
sister for this Vegas woman. He
vowed never to talk to him again.

FREDDIE

(looking at Anne)

Sounds like a good idea.

Freddie looks away and Anne is left to wonder what he meant. The waiter approaches the side of the table where Freddie and Anne are sitting.

FREDDIE

I'll take the fish, actually...get
some protein for another morning
of surf.

Anne stands to get some extra napkins on a counter near the kitchen. While there, she sees a small plate of Mexican limes. The waiter begins to walk toward the kitchen.

ANNE

Could you please bring those over
to the man on my end of the table?

WAITER

Sure.

Anne sits back down. The waiter comes with the limes.

WAITER

A little bird told me you'd like
these.

Freddie looks at Anne to question, but Anne busies herself with Walter. His eyes move between her and the limes.

EXT. BEACH - LATER SAME MORNING

Charles, Mary, Hannah, and Walter walk on a small beach trail not far from where Lisa and Freddie are suiting up in wetsuits for surf. Anne and Bobby walk toward them all from a different direction.

ANNE

I'm going to miss this weather.

BOBBY

I've really enjoyed our chats.
It's nice to feel like someone

understands.

ANNE

I'm glad you're comfortable
sharing with me. I hope things
start feeling better for you soon.

BOBBY

I still can't say I believe that
will happen, but I appreciate your
optimism.

ANNE

It's like growing a new heart...
not all of the pain will go away,
but I see a rebirth in your
future.

She smiles and he laughs.

BOBBY

(softly)

Thank you, Anne...for listening.

Anne nods and sees the rest of the group.

ANNE

Oh, there they all are.

Lisa is entirely suited up, but Freddie is still getting
his on. Bobby and Anne approach them.

LISA

I beat you. See, I've got this
wetsuit thing down. Pretty soon
I'll be shredding it like a pro.

FREDDIE

I believe you! You seem to be
pretty determined.

CHARLES

I thought "shredding" was a
snowboarding term.

FREDDIE

Are you a snowboarder, Charles?

CHARLES

(faux humility)

Well, I can hold my own, I
guess...
I can do a jump with a flip on my
good days.

FREDDIE

Really? We'll have to plan a trip
to the mountains so I can learn
from the master.

Freddie laughs; Charles smiles proudly. Freddie turns around to find that Lisa has run off and started without him.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

What is she doing?

He's laughing at first as he watches, and then his face turns to concern as he realizes where she is and the waves that are coming.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(yelling to Lisa)

Hey, don't go that way. Get under
the wave...it's rocky right
there...That wave is too big.

LISA

(yelling back)

What? I can't hear...

A large wave comes over Lisa's head. Everyone watches attentively for a moment to see if she recovers, but the set of waves is large and pounding and she is struggling to come up. Hannah gasps. Freddie runs into the ocean to help her. Mary begins to scream, which upsets Walter, who starts to cry. Charles and Bobby run to the edge of the water to watch and help, if necessary. Freddie is able to get Lisa in a lifeguard hold, but they both get pounded by the relentless set of waves. Freddie maintains hold of Lisa and begins navigating toward the shore. Anne comforts Mary and Walter as they all watch attentively until she realizes that Lisa isn't moving. It's clear that Lisa is not conscious.

ANNE

(grabs a surfboard and
starts yelling orders)

Stay calm, Mary. Hannah, come with
me to the water...Charles, help
Freddie. Bobby, run and grab a
lifeguard.

Everyone moves to the orders. Freddie is clearly struggling, one arm holding Lisa and the other dangling at his side, but is able to carry her out with Charles' help. Anne runs out waste deep in the water as Freddie and Charles get close enough, and she stabilizes Lisa's head as they work to bring her in.

ANNE (CONT'D)
 Here, bring her to the surfboard
 to lay her down.

Freddie is breathless and does as he's told. He and Charles place Lisa gently on the board. Hannah aligns the surfboard to help. Once Lisa is properly laid on the board, Freddie collapses on the beach, coughing. Anne begins to triage the clear scrape on Lisa's head and other possible injuries. Anne gives more orders.

ANNE (CONT'D)
 Okay, Charles and Hannah, we're
 going to make sure her neck stays
 straight with her spine, but we
 want to turn her to the side to
 get the water out of her mouth.

Anne places Hannah's hands to stabilize Lisa's neck and head. Anne and Charles count down and rotate the surfboard sideways. Lisa vomits and coughs.

ANNE (CONT'D)
 (soothing)
 That's it. Clear that out.
 Good...good. Okay, stay with her
 this way until it's all out.

Once Lisa is finished coughing out water they lay her carefully back down on her back. Mary is yammering in sobs.

ANNE (CONT'D)
 (relieved)
 She's breathing. Let's see what
 the lifeguard has to say.

A lifeguard jeep pulls up with Bobby. The LIFEGUARD inside radios for more help and an ambulance. Anne turns to Freddie, who is out of breath but conscious.

ANNE (CONT'D)
 (same soothing voice)
 Okay, I think we need to do
 something about your arm.

FREDDIE
 (looks at her,
 exhausted)
 Is she going to be okay?

Anne looks over, contemplating.

ANNE
 She's breathing and the lifeguards

are here. I think she'll be fine.

Freddie looks pained, both physically and emotionally.

ANNE (CONT'D)
I'm guessing you have a dislocated
shoulder. Do you feel pain
anywhere else?

FREDDIE
No, that's it.

Freddie winces in pain as Anne touches his shoulder.

ANNE
(to the lifeguard)
With a dislocated shoulder, do I
hold it shoulder high and away
from the body?

LIFEGUARD
(does a quick
assessment)
Level with the shoulder. Exactly.
The other lifeguard will be here
in just a minute.

Anne takes Freddie's arm and holds it the way indicated.
The ambulance drives up.

ANNE
(to Freddie)
The ambulance is here.

FREDDIE
(breathing heavily, but
with sincerity)
Thank you.

Anne nods her head and wraps her fingers around his hand as
she continues to hold.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

Mary, Hannah, Bobby, Trav, Anne, and Walter are all waiting
in the hospital emergency room. Anne is trying to entertain
Walter. Mary and Hannah are crying and holding each other.
Bobby and Trav are conversing near the entrance to the
admitting rooms. Charles and Freddie enter the room
speaking to Natalie, who has been helping with Lisa's
diagnostic tests. Freddie's arm is in a sling.

FREDDIE
(to Trav)
Thank you for bringing my friends
here.

TRAV
Of course!

MARY
Charles?

CHARLES
(to Natalie)
Thank you for all your help.

Charles turns to his group in the emergency waiting room.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
We have good news and bad news.
The good news is that she was
conscious and responsive for a
bit. An MRI confirmed her spine is
intact, and she can feel all
limbs.

Sighs of relief are heard in the emergency room.

MARY
And the bad?

Charles is a bit emotional, so he gestures to Natalie to
take over.

NATALIE
Well, we had to put her back into
an induced coma.

Mary gasps and begins crying again.

ANNE
It's okay, Mary. That's not always
a bad thing. Let her finish.

NATALIE
She has a concussion and some
swelling on her brain that we want
to stabilize. She also has a
broken pelvis, a broken arm, a
broken femur, and we're watching
for internal bleeding.

HANNAH
(gasping)
Oh my God! So much!

MARY
(crying)
Too much!

Natalie puts her hands on Hannah and Mary to comfort them.

NATALIE
She'll have quite a road to full
recovery. We have to wait until
she's stable to send her home.

HANNAH
But what about school?

CHARLES
She won't be back in school this
semester, Hannah. We'll need your
help getting her deferments from
her professors.

NATALIE
I'll make sure I'm staffed on her
floor as much as possible.

Hannah nods, but starts crying again. Walter is upset by the crying, so Anne brings him out of the room for a moment to soothe him. As she walks back in, with Walter in her arms, she overhears Freddie talking to Charles. They don't notice Anne in the room.

FREDDIE
I think it's a great idea for you
to stay back. She's in good hands
with Natalie, too.

MARY
(overhearing)
Charles, you can't stay without
me!

HANNAH
I can't leave her like this!

CHARLES
We need your help with her
professors at the school,
Hannah...and Mary, you need to get
home to little Charlie.

FREDDIE
I'll stay here with you, Charles.
If anyone else stays, I think Anne
is most equipped. She's so capable
and level-headed in these types of

situations.

Anne is slightly taken back by this positive assessment.
Freddie turns at that moment to see her.

FREDDIE

(to Anne)

Would you have the time to stay
for awhile? Just to make sure you
can help them through any
decisions?

Anne nods, but Mary is unhappy with what she sees as a
judgment on her character.

MARY

(raising her voice)

But I can be level-headed! And who
is Anne to Lisa? She's not even
family! Lisa needs family here
with her. No, I'll stay with
Charles.

CHARLES

Quiet, Mary. It's a
hospital...What about Walter? He
needs to go home.

MARY

(becoming more animated)

Don't hush me. Anne can take him
with her, especially since she's
so "capable." She can pick Charlie
up from you parents and stay with
both of them until we get home.

Freddie looks at Anne and sighs.

ANNE

Sure, whatever's most useful.
You'll keep us updated, right?

Freddie is defeated. Charles relents with a nod.

BOBBY

Listen, Trav and I will take these
guys to the hotel to gather their
things and then the airport. It's
probably about time.

FREDDIE

(to Bobby)

No, no. I'll take them. If you
could help out here and text us

updates as they come in so Charles doesn't feel like he has to, that would be great.

BOBBY

Sure thing. Anything to help.

Bobby looks at Anne, a little disappointed. Anne gives him a half-hearted smile.

INT. AIRPORT IN FRONT OF SECURITY CHECK-IN - DAY

Hannah, Freddie, Anne and Walter are standing at the entrance to the security check-in. Freddie has his good arm around Hannah, consoling her as she cries. Anne is rocking the stroller with Walter inside.

FREDDIE

She's going to be alright, Hannah. I promise we'll take the best care of her.

HANNAH

But I hate leaving her.

FREDDIE

I know. We'll give you updates. I think you can even get texts on the plane... I'm so sorry, Hannah. I feel like it's my fault.

HANNAH

It's not your fault. She's so damn headstrong...If only she'd just waited for you...

Hannah begins sobbing. Freddie holds her with his good arm until she calms down. He looks at Anne.

FREDDIE

(to Hannah)

Hannah, could you take the stroller and watch the bags for a minute? I want to talk to Anne.

Hannah nods. Anne is a bit surprised but follows Freddie when he motions to her. They walk to a more private area.

FREDDIE

(to Anne, with emotion)

First, I just want to thank you...for all of your help there...and after...you were

amazing.

ANNE
(shaking her head)
I'm just lucky I've kept up on my
CPR.

FREDDIE
(nodding)
Yeah, we all are.

ANNE
I'm glad your injuries weren't
worse.

Anne realizes this might convey too much emotion to him, so she looks away a bit embarrassed.

FREDDIE
So, you're going to New York? If I
remember, you didn't like New York
before.

ANNE
(shakes her head)
It's not my favorite place.

FREDDIE
Where will you be?

ANNE
Upper East Side.

FREDDIE
Well, that's the place to be, I
guess.

There's a pause in the conversation. Freddie seems to be struggling for something to say. Anne looks toward Hannah and Walter to see if she needs to join them.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
(nervously)
Wait, Anne...I have so much more I
want to say to you...Lisa...I
never...She's not the one...

Anne feels like he's trying to apologize for falling for Lisa, so she puts her hand on his good arm to stop him.

ANNE
(trying not to tear up)
Just take care of her.

Freddie stops talking and sighs, looking at her meaningfully and nodding.

FREDDIE

I will.

Anne nods and walks away, holding back tears. Freddie turns around to wave to both of them as they enter the security line. Once they're out of sight, Freddie, frustrated, raises his good arm to cup his hand behind his head.

INT. THE LOBBY OF ELLIOTT'S PENTHOUSE BUILDING - DAY

Anne is rolling her luggage and is on the phone with Nina at the lobby level of their penthouse building.

ANNE

Okay, I'll give the receptionist my license and get the pass. Thank you, Nina.

NINA

And Anne, remember...this time living in New York is not like the last time you lived there.

ANNE

(trying to be positive)
I know. At least I still have a friend from boarding school living here--Maddie. She's wheelchair-bound now, so I'll make sure to see her while I'm here.

NINA

There you go. See? Plus, I'll need you to get the scoop on Elliott Sterling! I can't believe he's searched your father and sister out after all he did.

ANNE

Sure. I'll find out what's up and pass on the details.

NINA

I'm hoping your sister will finally send her friend home now that you're there. I don't like that she's there. Not at all....Okay, I'll talk to you later, darling.

ANNE

Okay. Bye.

Anne hands her license to the receptionist.

INT. DOORS TO THE PENTHOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Anne stands at the door of the penthouse with her luggage. She gives a big, unhappy sigh before ringing the bell which sounds out a melodious tone.

WALTER

(from a speaker)

Yes, oh Anne, I can see you on the video feed. I'm so glad you're here.

In the background, she can hear Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

(to Walter)

Is that Anne? Oh perfect!

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(to Anne)

Come in. We have such great news!

Anne is a little shocked at the cordial reception as she hears the door click open.

INT. THE PENTHOUSE GREAT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The penthouse is as luxurious as everyone says. Beautiful views, rich decor, and expensive furniture. Walter, Elizabeth, and Penelope are all in the great room as Anne walks in.

ELIZABETH

(rushing to greet her)

Anne, guess what star is in town.

ANNE

(taken back)

Uh...I don't know.

Anne notices Penelope at the side of the room and gives her a quick wave. Penelope waves back.

WALTER

Think of the one person in the Upper East Side that we would most want to have in our social circle.

ANNE
 (befuddled)
 I...I really don't know.

PENELOPE
 (having pity)
 Give her a clue.

ELIZABETH
 (frustrated with Anne)
 Think, stupid! She has a house
 back in the "Upper Upper" Estates,
 near Nina, but spends most of her
 time in her amazing penthouse
 here. She's acted in more Broadway
 shows than anyone can
 count...she's basically Broadway
 royalty.

ANNE
 (looking at Walter)
 Oh! Lady Dalrymple! But I thought
 there was a falling out...

WALTER
 No, no. That's all been cleared
 up. I told her we were in town
 and would love to reconnect. She
 seemed to remember you, Anne, for
 some...literary discussion or
 something... She said she hopes to
 see you when we all get together.

Anne realizes why she's suddenly seen as an advantage.

ANNE
 (forcing a smile)
 Oh yeah, she likes to get quizzed
 on Shakespeare quotes. Well,
 that's very nice of her. Maybe
 we'll run into each other.

ELIZABETH
 (flustered)
 You don't just "run into" Lady
 Dalrymple. We'll let her know
 you're here and we'll hope she
 invites us.

PENELOPE
 (to ease Elizabeth's
 frustration)
 Oh, and there's another person
 coming around...

Penelope looks at Elizabeth to let her continue. Walter walks to the next room.

ELIZABETH
(a conspiring smile)
Yes, he is coming around quite a bit, isn't he?

PENELOPE
I think we all know what...or should I say who...he's after...

ELIZABETH
(laughs almost flirtatiously)
You might be surprised, Anne, to learn that Elliott Sterling is back in our good graces.

ANNE
Oh, Nina mentioned something about it. I actually saw him in passing when I was in California.

ELIZABETH
(unimpressed)
Maybe you did, maybe you didn't. But you'll definitely see him here.

Penelope and Elizabeth give a confederate giggle.

ANNE
But I thought he was disowned for all of his...indiscretions.

ELIZABETH
He was...but he's very repentant, very honest about what he's done and how wrong he was. His Vegas whore is no longer in the picture. You need to be more forgiving, Anne. Let the past stay in the past.

Anne nods but her eyes belie her awe at the change. They all join Walter in the main room.

WALTER
What have you been using on your face, Anne? Vitamin E? It looks so much better than before.

ANNE
(pleasantly surprised)
No. Nothing. I guess I've just
been getting more sleep.

WALTER
Oh, you should try Vitamin E, too.
I swear by it. It's what keeps me
looking so young. I suggested it
to Penelope and do you see how her
looks have improved?

Anne looks at Penelope who smiles admiringly at Walter.

WALTER
(trying to reel himself
back in)
I will say, though, sleep looks
good on you, Anne.

ANNE
Thank you.

WALTER
Maybe that's what's wrong with
this town. I swear all of New York
needs some extra sleep. They all
look so haggard...it's wearing on
their faces. That and the fact
that there are so many mixed
races. God didn't intend for that
kind of mixing. Sometimes I look
at a person and I swear the
forehead is Egyptian, the eyes are
Asian, and the lips are African.
It's all so confusing and
so...unattractive. Hardly a good-
looking person in the whole city.

ANNE
I disagree. I think it adds to the
beauty.

WALTER
(rolls his eyes)
You would.

The doorbell rings. Walter, Elizabeth, and Penelope run to
the video monitor showing them Elliott Sterling at the
door.

ELIZABETH

(to Anne)

There he is. Didn't we tell you
he'd come by?

PENELOPE

(to Elizabeth)

He can hardly keep himself away
from you!

Elizabeth opens her phone camera to make sure she's looking
her best.

WALTER

Come in, Elliott. Come in!

The door clicks open and Elliott walks in. He's on hugging
terms with Walter and he offers cheek kisses to Elizabeth
and Penelope respectively before he notices Anne.

ELLIOTT

(astonished)

Wait, this isn't...it can't be!
Didn't I see you in California?

ANNE

You did. Hi, I'm Anne, Elizabeth's
sister.

Anne offers a handshake and Elliott takes it heartily.

ELLIOTT

What a strange and small world
this is.

Anne laughs and nods while Elliott shakes his head.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

And I hear we can now count on
being invited to Lady Dalrymple's.

WALTER

Oh yes, I'm going to email her now
to let her know our entire party
is ready for whatever she'd like
to do with us. We'll make sure to
get Nina an invitation, too.

Anne's face shows the slightest disdain for the social
high-stepping that only Elliott sees. Elliott gives her an
understanding smile.

INT. THE PENTHOUSE GREAT ROOM - LATER

Anne and Elliott are sitting near each other on a sofa while Elizabeth, Penelope, and Walter are at a nearby table, eating. Elliott is all smiles and kindness.

ELLIOTT

So Anne Elliott, Fate knew we missed our chance the first time and has brought us together again to meet.

ANNE

(chuckles)

I guess so.

ELLIOTT

What is Fate trying to say?

ANNE

Ah, there's historical evidence that suggests it's a bad idea to read too much into the fates.

ELLIOTT

(laughs)

So you mean I shouldn't take it as a sign? I'm too much of an optimist. I always listen to what Fate might be saying.

Elliott looks at Anne intently until she gets slightly uncomfortable.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

(changing the subject)

I noticed your...disapproval...when your father was talking about Lady Dalrymple.

ANNE

(laughs at her own weakness)

Sorry, I need to stop advertising things like that on my face.

ELLIOTT

(smiles)

I get it...groveling for social status isn't your thing.

ANNE

Not at all. I'd prefer to be around people who have more to talk about than what so-and-so is wearing and how many likes so-and-so got on their social media feed.

ELLIOTT

Diversity of thought is definitely preferable, but you can't overlook social capital.

Anne shoots Elliott a chagrined glance.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Oh and she has yet to keep those inner thoughts from surfacing...

Anne laughs with him.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

Let me guess. You'd prefer to feed the homeless in a shelter than spend a night of wining and dining with the elites of New York.

ANNE

Absolutely.

ELLIOTT

But who could you get to fund the food at the homeless shelter?

Anne realizes the point Elliott is trying to drive in and shrugs her shoulders, relenting.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

The value of social capital is not something to ignore...and I have a feeling, Anne, that the fates know I have a lot to gain by knowing you.

Elliott's eyes search Anne's, but she returns an arched eyebrow.

ANNE

You are a smooth talker, Elliott Sterling.

They both laugh.

ELLIOTT

I have a gift for gab, I admit.
But I'm pretty sure you and I can
agree on one aspect of social
capital...Sometimes it's not a
good idea to sink below oneself to
lift another.

Elliott looks back at Penelope who is feeding cantaloupe to
Walter and then lifts his eyebrows to Anne. Anne sighs.

INT. THE PENTHOUSE GREAT ROOM - DAY

Nina and Anne are sitting at the table drinking coffee.

NINA

Your father was livid that you
decided to visit your friend
instead of coming with us to the
backstage party.

ANNE

I know, but I had a prior
commitment to see Maddie and he
sprang the Dalrymple event on me
last minute. I've been to Lady
Dalrymple's three times this
month, so he shouldn't be so
upset.

NINA

It was nice to spend a little time
with Elliott--to get a feel for
his character. I *do* think he's
changed.

Nina casts a very loaded glance at Anne. Anne doesn't
react.

NINA (CONT'D)

He had so many good things to say
about you. It seems like you've
been spending quite a bit of time
together.

ANNE

He's been coming around quite a
bit, yes, but I think more for
Elizabeth.

NINA

(clearly pleased)

He most definitely talked about

you more...I'm no matchmaker,
but...

ANNE

Stop! Don't let your imagination
run wild. He and I have some
similar interests. That's all.

NINA

Yes, I heard he secured funding
from Lady Dalrymple for this
charity gala you're volunteering
for...

Nina smiles as if this further justifies her own thoughts.
Anne looks at Nina and shakes her head.

ANNE

There's just
something...suspicious about it
all, don't you think? I mean, why
does he suddenly have an interest
in the family? He's a very
strategic person, so I don't
believe he's doing this purely to
make amends...I'm pretty sure he
wants something.

NINA

(smiles knowingly)
Or someone...

ANNE

(scowling)
You're impossible.

NINA

(dismissive)
My only worry is that Elizabeth
will have it out for you when she
figures out he's not there for
her. He was so disheartened when
he realized you weren't coming.

Nina continues to smile. Anne shakes her head and gives up.

ANNE

(changing topics)
Lisa Musgrove is doing much
better. Mary says she's being
coddled by the men around her.

NINA

The men?

ANNE

I'm sure she means Freddie and his Navy friends...She got out of the hospital, but didn't feel up to flying, so one of Freddie's friends offered his house. Everything is on one floor. She's mostly chair-bound with a little physical therapy, so she rests a lot. I feel bad for her. She was so active before.

NINA

Well it sounds like she's on the road to recovery. And how are you with it all?

Anne knew the question was coming and had prepared for it.

ANNE

You mean Freddie? I'm fine. I can only guess how things have progressed between them. I've had plenty of time to get used to the idea...

NINA

(large smile)

Right. Time for you to move on.

Nina strokes Anne's cheek in a motherly way. Anne rolls her eyes at Nina's attempt to redirect back to the previous discussion.

ANNE

Insufferable.

NINA

(laughs)

Well, I best get going.

Nina stands to gather her things. Anne receives a text message and leaves it just long enough to give Nina a quick kiss on the cheek. Two more text buzzes can be heard as they say goodbye.

ANNE

See you tomorrow.

NINA

Goodbye, dear.

Anne reads the texts.

MARY (TEXT 1)
 I have a secret, but don't tell
 anyone... Lisa is head over heels
 in love. We all kind of suspected
 it, but she just confirmed.

Anne stops reading even though there are more texts. As much as she didn't want to be affected by the news that she knew would come, she's clearly upset by it. She takes several heavy breaths to calm herself.

ANNE
 (talking to herself)
 I can do this.

Anne breathes one last deep breath and returns to reading.

MARY (TEXT 2)
 And who you might ask?...She's in
 love with Bobby!...The morose guy
 whose house she's staying in! The
 one you seemed to get along with
 so well! I mean, I can see him for
 you, but Lisa? We're all shocked!

Anne scoots back in her chair as the shock of the news runs through her entire body. She stands and walks around the table as she tries to process the news. When she finally regains herself, she returns to the phone on the table.

MARY (TEXT 3)
 We're planning a little welcome
 back party for Lisa and Bobby
 (!!!) when she returns...that is
 if I feel up to it.

Anne finishes the text and sits back in her chair somewhere between shocked and pleased.

EXT. NEW YORK COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

Elliott, Anne, Elizabeth, and Penelope are walking outside when it begins to rain. They take cover in a coffee and macaron shop.

INT. NEW YORK COFFEE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In the coffee and macaron shop, Elliott helps the ladies find a table near a window. The rain quickly turns into a downpour.

ELLIOTT
 It's going to be awful trying to

find a taxi in this. I'll do my best...wish me luck.

Anne pulls an umbrella out of her purse.

ANNE
Here, take this. It looks like you'll need it.

ELLIOTT
Ah, thank you. I'll come get you when I find a ride for us.

Elliott walks out the door.

ELIZABETH
I've heard this place has amazing crême brûlée macarons. Penelope, let's go grab one.

ANNE
I'll save a table.

As Anne is looking outside the window, she thinks she sees Freddie walking up the street. Feelings rush through her as she realizes it's truly him. She looks around her, confused about what to do. Penelope and Elizabeth walk toward the table with their coffee and macarons in hand.

ELIZABETH
Elliott popped in to say that he has a driver who'll have two seats free in about five minutes after he drops someone off up the street...probably a premium. I think Penelope and I should go since you have better shoes for walking if you need to.

Anne nods, but her face is a little dazed.

PENELOPE
Are you okay?

ANNE
Fine, yes. I thought I saw someone...I'll be right back.

ELIZABETH
(to Penelope)
Whatever. I can't wait to try this.

Anne heads toward the window on the other side of the door

to see where Freddie went. She notices just in time that he's walking in the door.

ANNE
Freddie!

Freddie is stunned to see Anne there in front of him.

FREDDIE
Anne!

ANNE
I didn't know you were coming to New York.

FREDDIE
(awkwardly)
Oh, yeah, I, uh, had some...personal business...How are you?

Freddie fidgets a little. It's clear Anne has better hold of her emotions for once.

ANNE
It's been alright, I guess. Are you in town for long?

FREDDIE
(still undone)
I'm not sure.

ANNE
Oh, how's your family?

FREDDIE
They're doing well...Yours?

ANNE
They're great, yes.

Anne looks over at Elizabeth who is watching her. Freddie's eyes follow Anne's. It's clear that they recognize each other, but Elizabeth rolls her eyes and turns away. Anne sighs lightly but continues to engage Freddie in conversation.

ANNE (CONT'D)
We've all been really happy to hear that Lisa's doing so well.

Anne scrutinizes Freddie a little to see how Lisa's name may affect him.

FREDDIE

(smirking)

Yes, she is recovering well...with
a little help from my friend...
You were probably surprised to
hear the news.

ANNE

I'll admit I didn't see it coming.

FREDDIE

Right? I think we were all
blindsided, especially since they
have such different personalities.
I wouldn't have guessed Lisa could
sit through all of Bobby's sad
songs, and Bobby actually has
taken on an air of positivity like
I haven't seen in him. I guess
differences can be overcome.

Freddie stops talking for a moment, almost wanting to
search Anne's eyes, but stops himself.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Apart from those few differences,
though, they don't have any real
barriers. Their families like each
other, his family has enough money
that status won't be an issue,
they have the same skin
color...even the same
religion...all boxes seem to check
off.

ANNE

(disheartened)

Yes...all the boxes. It sounds a
bit boring when you boil love down
to that.

Their eyes rest on each other in an extended gaze. Finally,
Freddie breaks the silence.

FREDDIE

It's true. In my heart of hearts,
I know that Bobby and Felicity
didn't have the boxes checked, but
there love was...something more.
It exceeded all of the
differences...You could see it in
the way they looked at each other,
the way they talked to each
other...It was the type of love a

man just doesn't recover from.

Freddie stops for a minute, struggling.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

I know what that feels like...

Anne is entranced and waiting for what Freddie has to say, but at that moment Elliott walks in the door. Anne steps back and looks at Elliott, breaking her gaze with Freddie.

ELLIOTT

(to Anne)

I'm so sorry to keep you waiting.
I'll get your sister and her
friend all situated and then you
and I can start our walk?

ANNE

Yes, sounds good. Elliott, this is
Freddie Valdez. Freddie, this is
Elliott Sterling.

Freddie recognizes Elliott and shakes his hand, trying not to look thrown.

FREDDIE

Nice to meet you.

ELLIOTT

Yes, same. Anne and I
are...business cousins, I guess,
but just recently reacquainted.
Have you known each other for
long?

FREDDIE

(looking at Anne)

Yes, quite a while, but we've had
a little hiatus.

Anne blinks back the feelings of what his term, hiatus, could mean. Elliott turns to Anne, clearly showing an intense desire to cater to her needs.

ELLIOTT

I'll let you two catch up. I'll be
right back.

Anne nods as Elliott turns to help Elizabeth and Penelope navigate their way to the taxi. Elizabeth passes by Freddie but refuses to acknowledge him and heads out the door without a word. Anne is embarrassed, but engages Freddie back into a conversation.

ANNE

If you're at all interested, I'm volunteering for a gala tomorrow night that is helping some brilliant youth from some rough neighborhoods to get their art noticed. I think you'd really like it. I can give you the details if you'd like.

FREDDIE

Sure!

ANNE

Is your number the same as before?

Freddie seems to weaken when he realizes she still has his number.

FREDDIE

(with feeling)

Yeah. It is.

ANNE

(happy she has
permission to
communicate)

Good. I'll text you.

Elliott returns and offers Anne his arm.

ELLIOTT

Ready to get wet?

ANNE

(to Freddie)

I'll see you then?

FREDDIE

Yes, see you.

Freddie watches both of them walk out the door and he ponders what just happened.

INT. FUNDRAISING GALA EVENT - EVENING

The gala hall is as luxurious as it needs to be for the richer crowds it attracts. It has a space for paintings and a stage for singing and dancing acts along with a space for patrons to dance. There are balconies for a birds-eye view and a main banquet space for wining and dining. Anne, dressed in gala gown and makeup, is near the entrance door with Walter, Elizabeth, Penelope, and Elliott. All are dressed in their finest.

WALTER

(quietly to the group)

The best thing about this event is that you have to pay a fair amount to get in the door. It weeds out the "dross."

ELIZABETH

(nodding)

Exactly. Look over there.

Elizabeth points and Penelope and Walter all join in an admiring nod. Anne just looks and smiles. As the rest of the group busies themselves with ogling the other attendees, Elliott takes advantage of Anne's ear.

ELLIOTT

(reading a received text on phone)

Lady Dalrymple will be here in a few minutes. She had to spend a little extra time getting ready.

ANNE

It was so kind of her to pay for this venue. She's definitely not one to go for the cheap.

ELLIOTT

(in a low voice so only she hears)

Yes, the venue is almost as beautiful as you are tonight.

Anne smiles but shakes her head at Elliott's over-the-top flirtation. Suddenly, she realizes her good friend, MADDIE, has arrived being pushed in her wheelchair by her caretaker, NURSE RUIZ. Anne rushes over to greet them at the door and she ushers them to a place they can talk.

ANNE

Maddie! You made it! I'm so glad you're here.

MADDIE

Thank you for the free tickets! It feels great to get out. I thought I would have to beg Nurse Ruiz here to put in some extra hours, but she was almost as excited as I was to come spend time with the high rollers.

ANNE
 (in Spanish; subtitled)
Oh, I'm very happy you brought my friend.

NURSE RUIZ
 (in Spanish; subtitled)
Of course! I'm excited to be here! Now, you need to tell me who everyone is.

They all laugh. Suddenly, an announcement is made over the speaker.

ANNOUNCER
 Our beloved benefactress has arrived. Please line the sides of the red carpet to welcome Lady Dalrymple.

NURSE RUIZ
 (in Spanish; subtitled)
Wow, impressive!

Maddie's wheelchair impedes them from moving far, so they watch the line-up from where they are. The CROWD cheers to see Lady Dalrymple. Lady Dalrymple, a large, black drag queen, walks in as though royalty. Nina is with her and walks at her side. Walter immediately steps up to greet them both and takes Lady Dalrymple's arm in his.

MADDIE
 (smirking slightly)
 For a man who feels his eyes are burning if he sees pigment or wrinkles, your father sure shows a lot of deference to the rich and famous.

ANNE
 (smirking and nodding)
 Yes, you remember my father well. Fame and fortune always trump... Unfortunately, I'll have to leave you to go give my own deference seeing that this venue was paid for by her ladyship. I'll meet up with you later, though.

MADDIE
 Oh don't worry about us. We're going to have a great time people-watching. This is the best entertainment we've had in...

NURSE RUIZ
 (finishing Maddie's
 sentence; in Spanish)
...all our lives.

Anne smiles and takes her leave of Maddie and Nurse Ruiz, going to the end of the line of people to wait for Lady Dalrymple with Elizabeth, Elliott, and Penelope. She greets Lady Dalrymple and Nina with cheek kisses. The crowd disperses and Anne leads the small party to their table.

INT. GALA BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

The ballroom is elegantly decked out. At Anne's table, Lady Dalrymple sits in the prime spot to view the stage, and she is flanked by Nina and Walter. Elizabeth sits next to Walter, Penelope next to Elizabeth, and Elliott next to Penelope, leaving only one chair between Nina and Elliott.

ELLIOTT
 You're sitting next to me, right?

Elliott pulls out the chair next to him. Anne doesn't sit.

ANNE
 I won't be sitting just yet, but
 I'll come when I can.

At that moment, Anne sees Freddie walk into the room decked out in a tux that complements all his good features. He heads in their general direction although he hasn't yet noticed them. She excuses herself from the table and meets Freddie at a little distance away, still within direct view of her group.

ANNE
 You made it!

FREDDIE
 (struck by her beauty)
 Uh...yes. Quite the...place.

ANNE
 I'm glad you could come. I could
 have gotten you a free ticket,
 though.

FREDDIE
 (laughing)
 No, no. I didn't mind paying--
 especially for a cause like this.

ANNE
 (smiling)
 I figured it would be your type of
 charity. I put your table near
 some paintings that I think you'll
 like.

Motioning to the other side of the room where Freddie will
 be seated.

FREDDIE
 (he turns briefly to
 look, but doesn't leave)
 Thank you. Uh, I understand I'm
 going to see you again this
 week...at the Musgroves' welcome
 home party for Lisa.

ANNE
 Yes, yes. I'm excited to see her.

FREDDIE
 Me, too. My friends will be there.

ANNE
 So I've heard. It's nice of them
 to come all that way to accompany
 her.

As Anne speaks, Freddie's eyes track to somewhere behind
 her. Anne turns to catch her father standing at their table
 and giving a wave and nod to Freddie. Elizabeth gives a
 nod, as well. Anne turns back to Freddie who waves and nods
 back. Freddie and Anne look at each other for a moment,
 both realizing how momentous that was. Freddie's eyes then
 track to Elliott who is staring at Freddie with less
 kindness. Freddie notes the look and returns a more
 reserved expression to Anne. She notices the change in
 Freddie, but isn't sure where it's coming from.

FREDDIE
 (somewhat distracted)
 Yes, I'm excited to see my
 friends.

ANNE
 (trying to maintain the
 conversation)
 How are they, anyway?

Elliott strides up behind Anne. Freddie glances at
 Elliott's hand as it touches Anne's arm, almost caressing.

ELLIOTT
Sorry to bother you, Anne, but I
think Lady Dalrymple has some
questions about the program. Would
you mind?

Elliott gives a brief, cold nod to Freddie and returns back
to his seat. Freddie watches Elliott walk away,
understanding the message.

FREDDIE
(coolly)
I'm not sure how long I'll be able
to stay.

ANNE
(trying to recharge his
changed mood)
Oh, I think you'll like the
performances. And there's dancing
during intermission and
afterward...

Anne is trying to hint her hopes for a dance, but Freddie
is starting to turn away.

FREDDIE
Sounds nice. I'll find my table.

ANNE
(almost desperately as
he walks away)
I hope you enjoy it!

Anne watches Freddie maneuver toward his table, then
returns to her table. It's clear that her mind is caught up
in thoughts of Freddie. As Anne sits, the opening act
begins.

[PERFORMANCE MONTAGE]

A series of performances follow, only brief snippets shown
on screen. During the performance, Anne is constantly
tracking Freddie, hoping to get a glimpse of his reaction.
She never captures him looking back at her.

Act I: Dance routine

Act II: Theater piece

Act III: Song

[END OF MONTAGE]

ANNOUNCER

After that beautiful piece, we'll follow up with an intermission to make you move. Please join us on the dance floor for salsa lessons from our professional team of dancers.

Penelope and Elizabeth leave the table to find a ladies' room. The crowd is slow to stand, but Anne sees Freddie and stands automatically. Freddie, who has just ordered a drink at the bar, sees her across the room. She smiles at him as an invitation. He gives a guarded smile back, but then turns away. Anne's face drops in disappointment.

FREDDIE

(to the BARTENDER)

Actually, I think I'll have you hold that drink. I might try this dancing thing out.

BARTENDER

(showing him a hip swing)

Alright buddy. You know, it's all in the hips...like this.

FREDDIE

Ah, thanks for the tip.

The bartender continues to give unrequested advice. Lady Dalrymple stands and moves toward the dance floor, which effects a mass movement of others following her lead. While Freddie is talking to the bartender, Elliott stands in front of Anne, unlocking her gaze.

ELLIOTT

Let's dance.

Elliott takes Anne by the hand, who leaves her clutch at the table. He leads her to the dance floor. She glimpses Freddie whose back is still turned and decides her hopes were ill-wrought. Elliott does all he can to entertain.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

(softly in Anne's ear)

I was hoping for a minute to get you to myself.

Anne gives a half-hearted smile. Elliott continues to talk in order to keep his lips near her ear.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

Maybe you can translate this song

for me?

ANNE
(tries to listen, but
not overly interested)
Uh, it's about a man who thinks a
woman is beautiful and talks about
how her body moves...typical salsa
song.

She gives an apologetic laugh.

ANNE (CONT'D)
That's a poor translation. Sorry.

It's clear that salsa is not in Elliott's repertoire of
capabilities. Anne tries to focus and ends up leading.

ELLIOTT
Wow, you're great at this. What
can't you do, Anne Elliott?

ANNE
(trying to be chipper)
Plenty, Elliott Sterling.

ELLIOTT
If that's true, I haven't seen
it...I know one thing I hope
you'll learn to do in the future.

ANNE
(distracted, but
listening)
And what's that?

ELLIOTT
Learn to love me.

Anne stops in her tracks as Elliott looks at her intently.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)
I think we would make a very happy
couple, Anne.

Anne is shocked.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)
Consider it, at least.

Anne nods, almost numb. She looks at the door in time to
see Elizabeth and Penelope enter and Freddie slip out.

ANNE
(points her head toward
Elizabeth and Penelope)
Maybe we should spread the joy for
a bit. Why don't you see if one of
them wants to dance.

Elliott nods and walks toward Elizabeth and Penelope. Anne
rushes toward the door to see if she can catch Freddie
before he leaves. She doesn't see him, so she goes to the
NAME COLLECTOR at the door.

ANNE
Excuse me, did a man just leave
the building?

NAME COLLECTOR
No one has left the building, but
there are plenty of people in the
hallways.

Anne begins to search the hallways but finds nothing.
Losing hope, she climbs to the second floor to a balcony
overlooking the main room. Maddie is sitting on her
wheelchair watching the crowd below.

INT. GALA BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

MADDIE
Well, hello! It looks like you're
enjoying yourself out there.

ANNE
(dropping into a chair
near Maddie, dejected)
It's a nice program, yes.

MADDIE
And Elliott?

ANNE
(surprised)
You know Elliott?

MADDIE
Yes, we go way back. I hear
through the grapevine he has his
eyes on you...you would be a great
catch for him.

ANNE
(surprised again)
Wow, who's saying this?

MADDIE

(laughs)

Let's just say Nurse Ruiz gets around...most of her clients don't realize she understands English. She's helping one of Elliott's friend's wives who's on bed rest.

Anne raises her eyebrows. Impressed.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

(turns slightly serious)

So are you interested?

ANNE

(sighs)

He's definitely kind to me. He has a lot of great qualities...and he's been fairly open about how he feels. My family would probably be happy if I chose that path...Sorry, I'm rambling.

MADDIE

I'm not sure who you're trying to convince. He's definitely got all of the acceptable traits for your family's standards...So what's stopping you?

Anne looks at Maddie for an extended moment and her reserve drops.

ANNE

It's my heart, Maddie. I planted someone there, years ago...I changed the shape of my heart to fit him and then I let it solidify. That person is all my heart knows, and no matter who else comes knocking...that mold is only formed for him.

MADDIE

Tragic! What happened?

ANNE

I was young. Only a couple years after boarding school. I let my family...mostly Nina...persuade me that I was ruining his future by even thinking of having a relationship with him before he'd figured himself out, so I told him

we needed to take a break. I regretted it immediately, but waited a few weeks to clear my head. Just when I was going to call him and beg him to get back together, I found out he'd already moved on with someone else...I was devastated. I still haven't recovered and it's been almost eight years...

MADDIE

Ouch. Is there any hope of revival?

ANNE

(sighing)

That's the problem. I have one of those hearts that holds on to hope when all hope is gone. I need to let it go...I need to break the heart mold...I'm sure Elliott would be more than happy if I just ran down and planted a long, passionate kiss on him. Maybe I should just do that.

MADDIE

(looking intensely serious)

Before you do that, Anne. I need to tell you something...

Before Maddie can speak, Nurse Ruiz runs onto the balcony, agitated.

NURSE RUIZ

(panting; in Spanish)

Come quickly. You need to see!

Nurse Ruiz takes Maddie's wheelchair to maneuver her through a door at the side. Anne follows. As they leave, the camera pans to a separate hallway behind the balcony, separated only by a curtain, where Freddie is sitting on a bench. His astonished face and body position show that he has overheard everything. He's breathing heavy. He pulls out his phone.

INT. GALA HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nurse Ruiz rushes Maddie and Anne to a dark hallway, but motions

for them to be quiet. They are able to hide themselves near a dark corner. Nurse Ruiz peeks around the corner and motions for Anne to come do the same. The hall is empty except for a door behind which there are clear sounds of passionate joy. The corner where they stand is dark enough they won't be noticed. Anne is surprised and smiles questioningly at Nurse Ruiz, but Nurse Ruiz motions for her to keep watching. Soon, Anne sees the door open and Elliott come out zipping up his pants. Anne's jaw drops. She then sees Penelope follow, giggling and straightening her hair. As they watch the two walk in the other direction down the hallway, she sees something slip from Elliott's pocket. When it's clear the two are out of hearing distance, Anne goes over to find a wallet and an open condom wrapper. She is stunned.

ANNE

I can't...I can't believe this!

NURSE RUIZ

(In Spanish)

What a horrible man!

MADDIE

I'm glad you saw this.

ANNE

(looking at Maddie)

Did you know?

MADDIE

I know the type of person he is...Elliott Sterling is one of the most underhanded, calloused souls I've ever encountered. If not for him, I would have been able to pay for a ticket tonight...and I might have been able to come with my husband, may he rest in peace.

Nurse Ruiz crosses herself.

ANNE

What do you mean?

MADDIE

He was best friends with my husband. My husband had more money than he did, so obviously that was a factor in their friendship. The man uses people for money.

ANNE

But I thought Elliott had his own money--his inheritance.

MADDIE

Oh yes, he's careful with his own but helps others squander theirs. He basically used my husband's bank account like it was play money, introducing my husband to bad investments and gambling.... When my husband went under, he begged Elliott for loans, but Elliott stopped taking his calls. In the end, my husband couldn't handle it--he took his own life.

NURSE RUIZ

(In Spanish)

Such a horrible man!

ANNE

(gasps)

Maddie! I didn't know all of this. I'm so sorry.

MADDIE

I know. When Nurse Ruiz told me Elliott was interested in you, I have to admit my first hope was that you could influence him to pay me back...It was a selfish thought. Really, though, I wouldn't wish that man on you in a million years. Think of it, Anne. Why do you think he stepped back into your family's lives when he clearly wasn't interested before?...I can tell you why. Money. He wants back in the safety net of the family business and there's no better way to solidify that than to marry the partner's daughter. And based on the way your father was looking at that girl, I'm sure Elliott's wanting to keep her out of the money pot, too.

Anne is horrified and considers everything Maddie has told her.

ANNE

He's awful!...I might not be able

to change that, but I can make
sure he doesn't touch my family.
I'm going to go confront him.

MADDIE
(a conniving smile)
Can I watch from the balcony?

ANNE
(hugging her)
Yes, thank you. Enjoy the show!

Anne walks toward the exit with a determined look in her
eye.

INT. GALA GRAND BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

The entire group, Lady Dalrymple, Walter, Elizabeth, Penelope,
Elliott, and Nina, are seated at the table. The second half of
the program is minutes from starting. Anne strides behind
Elliott and Penelope boldly.

ELLIOTT
(upon seeing Anne)
Oh, there you are! I wondered
where you went.

ANNE
That's funny. I know exactly where
you were.

Penelope and Elliott exchange a quick glance.

ELLIOTT
(trying to act cool)
You do?

ANNE
Yes, you somehow wandered to a
room in a dark hallway on the
second floor...Isn't that right,
Penelope?

Penelope looks at Elizabeth, who looks confused. The
nervous tension attracts the attention of the rest of the
table.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Oh, and Elliott, you lost your
wallet while you were there.

Anne lays the wallet down.

ANNE (CONT'D)
And you really shouldn't litter in
such a beautiful place.

At that, Anne drops the ripped condom wrapper on top of the wallet.

Elizabeth gasps, Walter's jaw drops, and Nina's eyes shoot darts at Elliott. Penelope rushes out the door.

LADY DALRYMPLE
(smiling)
Well this is getting good!

Anne picks up her clutch and strides away. She looks at Maddie in the balcony, who is beaming, and blows her a kiss.

Anne opens her clutch to look at her phone and sees a text from Freddie.

FREDDIE (TEXT)
(to Anne)
I didn't mean to, but I overheard
what you were saying to your
friend. Can we talk? Even if you
choose to be with Elliott, I just
want to talk to you. I'll be at
the top of the stairwell, near the
balcony.

Anne's breathing quickens. She realizes the text has been sitting there awhile. She's anxious that he's left. She darts off.

INT. BALCONY STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

FREDDIE stands on the top of the steps alternating his hands in his pockets and cupping his hands behind his head. Anne sees him before he sees her. She takes a deep breath and walks to the bottom of the short stairwell. Freddie finally sees Anne and watches her approach in silence. He speaks when she's close enough to hear.

FREDDIE
I was worried you wouldn't come.

Anne is entirely nervous and afraid of her vulnerability. She feels like what he overheard has laid all her cards out and she doesn't know what to say.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
(tense)

I've been wanting to tell you how
beautiful you look tonight.

ANNE
(uncomfortable, clearly
not believing him)
Listen, I know what you overheard,
but you don't have to...

Freddie walks down a few steps to be closer to her.

FREDDIE
(intense)
Anne, I didn't cheat on you.

Anne is slightly taken back, but recovers. She replies
humbly.

ANNE
I know. I said we were on a
break...It was my fault.

FREDDIE
No...I mean, I wasn't with anyone
else during our break.

ANNE
(dismayed)
No, Freddie, you can blame it on
me, but don't lie. It's not who
you are.

FREDDIE
(flustered)
I'm not lying, Anne! Who was I
with? When?

ANNE
Your friend from the salsa club. I
have pictures of you with her.

FREDDIE
(shocked)
Pictures? What pictures? Where?

Anne isn't happy to have to dredge this out further. She'd
prefer that her words alone would be enough.

ANNE
(points to her phone)
I can get them on my phone.

FREDDIE
(eager)

Please...I want to see them.

Freddie steps closer. Anne hesitates, confused, but then looks for the pictures on her phone. She finds the images and turns her head away as Freddie scrolls through them.

FREDDIE
(mutters)
Oh my God...Anne...these
pictures...

Freddie stops scrolling and looks intently at Anne, who has faced him again.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
This might look like her, but...

Freddie's face shows the weight of realizing it was a misunderstanding that has caused so much pain.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
(almost stuttering)
Wait...is this why you wrote me
off? Anne...this isn't Stefani...
This is my sister-in-law.

Anne looks at Freddie briefly and then down at her phone, trying to grasp what he's saying.

ANNE
I don't understand.

FREDDIE
(trying to convince)
This is my sister-in-law, or I
guess she was my brother's fiancée
then... They were going through a
rough time. They'd argued...she
flew out to visit him, but he
wouldn't talk to her. I spent a
few days consoling her...but I
promise there was nothing...no
romance. I mean, I wiped her
tears, and I held her while she
cried, but it was nothing more
than consolation.

ANNE
(struggling)
Your sister-in-law?

FREDDIE
(almost desperate)
Yes, I promise you. We can call

her now.

It begins to dawn on Anne that she had based her decision on faulty information. Tears begin to well up and she can't fight it back.

ANNE
(beginning to sob, turns
away)
I'm sorry...

FREDDIE
Don't turn away, Anne. We can talk
about this. It's me, Freddie.

Freddie cups his hands behind his head, despairing, and sits down on the stairs next to Anne's side.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Only how would you know that? I've
been such an ass to you. I'm so
sorry. I didn't want to let you
hurt me again, so I...

Freddie begins to play with the hem of Anne's skirt, as it's the only part of her he dares to touch. Anne's sobbing is stifled by her hand.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
I thought you left me because you
didn't think I was good enough. I
wanted to show you that I would
have been worth it, but I've been
so cold to you...All I've done is
proven that I'm not worthy...

Freddie is eye-level with Anne's fingers. He stares at them for a minute, crawling his fingers up her dress toward her fingers.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
(touching her fingers)
Can you forgive me, Anne?

Anne's reaction is swift. She jerks her hand away, turning to face him, still crying.

ANNE
I can forgive you, but I don't
think I can forgive myself.

FREDDIE
(standing, fearful)
Please tell me you're not with

him.

ANNE
(confused)
With...? Oh, Elliott?

Freddie nods with baited breath. Anne wipes her eyes and composes herself.

ANNE
No. We're not together. Actually,
I just caught him shagging my
dad's new eye-candy.

Freddie's shoulders drop in relief. He tries to act concerned although he's inwardly rejoicing.

FREDDIE
Oh...were you disappointed?

ANNE
No... He's not my type.

FREDDIE
I know.

They hold each other's gaze for a moment.

ANNE
(tears spilling again)
No, I'm sorry for hurting
you...hurting us. I'm sorry I let
my insecurities blind me from the
fact that we were perfect for each
other... We were. It's one of my
greatest losses.

Freddie looks at her for a long moment.

FREDDIE
(In Spanish; subtitled)
*I'm somewhere between agony and
hope.*

ANNE
(In Spanish; subtitled)
Sometimes hope is the agony.

Anne's eyes run over. Freddie steps closer and is near enough to her that she can feel him breathe.

FREDDIE
(In Spanish; subtitled)
If it's possible, my heart is more

yours now than before.

Freddie takes a strand of Anne's hair and moves it behind her ear.

ANNE
(through her tears; in
Spanish; subtitled)
*If I touch you, I won't be able to
let you go.*

FREDDIE
(passionately; in
English)
Then don't let go.

Anne reaches up and puts her hands on his cheeks.

ANNE
I love you.

Freddie and Anne kiss...and kiss...and kiss.

INT. GALA GRAND BALLROOM DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Freddie and Anne are wrapped in each other's arms on the dance floor. Lady Dalrymple is also on the dance floor leading a group of people in a line dance. Walter is sitting next to Nina. Elizabeth is clearly unhappy. Elliott and Penelope are gone. Walter watches Anne and Freddie with concern.

WALTER
I'm not sure I like this. How much
is he worth?

NINA
(a little vindictive)
Far more than you, Walter. In
money and all things...Far more.

Nina watches the dancing couple and smirks.

INT. THE MUSGROVE ESTATE GREAT ROOM - EVENING

The camera pans around a room full of happy people and a large banquet table of food. Mr. And Mrs. Musgrove are helping to care for little Walter and Charlie with candy. Hannah and Christian are sitting on chairs talking to Mary, who is seated next to them, eating. Charles is directing the WAIT STAFF. A large "Welcome Home, Lisa" sign hangs above the table. OTHER PARTY

ATTENDEES are moving around the room, greeting each other. Lisa, with a cane, and Bobby are sitting in the center of the room with big smiles on their faces as various people come to greet them. Sofia, Victor, Trav, Natalie, Anne, and Freddie talk on the side of the room near where Mary is sitting with Hannah and Charles. Bobby has a guitar at his side. Freddie's arm is around Anne.

SOFIA
(hugging Anne)
I had a secret hope he would
choose you, but I had no idea that
you were "that" person he was with
so long ago!

Anne smiles at her.

FREDDIE
I'm just glad we finally figured
it out.

Freddie gives Anne a quick kiss as they lovingly gaze at each other.

NATALIE
So am I!

Trav pats Freddie's back. Camera moves to Mary, Hannah, and Christian. Mary is chewing heartily.

MARY
This food is really good. I'll
have to ask your mom who catered
it.

HANNAH
It's from Christian's restaurant,
Winthrop Table.

Mary looks surprised and almost impressed. She walks back over to the serving table, gathering a large load of food.

Bobby uses a spoon against his glass to call people to attention.

BOBBY
Thank you all for being so
welcoming. Lisa and I are grateful
for your warmth, as are Trav and
Natalie. I want to give a special
toast to Freddie, who brought Lisa
to me, and Natalie, who not only
served as Lisa's main nurse but

also suggested that Lisa stay with
me, which ended up...well...let's
just say it sealed our fate.

Bobby lifts his glass and everyone follows then takes a
quick swig.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
And now I'd like to sing a little
something for Lisa.

Bobby lifts the guitar from his side. Lisa smiles.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Forever, by Ben Harper.

ANNE
(nodding)
Aha, yes. Of course.

Bobby starts playing the guitar. Freddie and Anne dance at
the side of the room while Bobby finishes out the song.

CAMERA pans out and cuts.