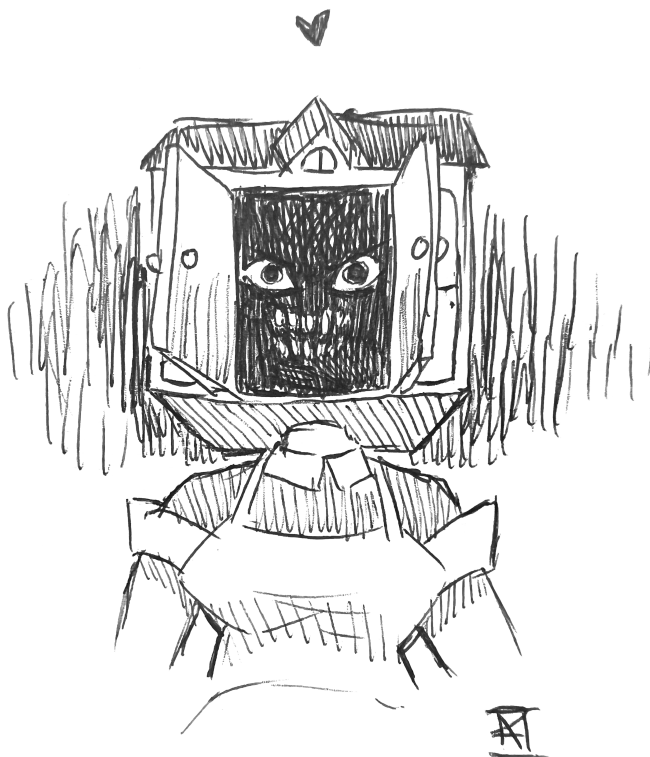




HOUSEWIFE

Written by

Greta Guthrie & Jake Lazarow

Based on the character "HOUSEWIFE" by Miranda Parkin

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY / STAIRCASE - NIGHT - 1990S

A THUNDERSTORM rattles a quaint, two-story house, lightning briefly illuminating family photos along the wall.

From somewhere below, the sounds of a historic FIGHT threaten to challenge the anger of the storm outside.

Around the corner, a set of stairs leads to the first floor. A light casts a long shadow on the wall of the staircase as the distorted shapes of a MAN and WOMAN swirl.

Suddenly, the pitter patter of little feet.

The figure of a LITTLE GIRL (6) in her PJs disappears into the darkness of her bedroom at the end of the hallway.

We follow...

INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1990S

Rain splatters against the window as A LIGHTNING STRIKE illuminates an every-girl's bedroom.

Stuffed animals cover the bed and litter the floor. A CRASH OF THUNDER follows.

A sob.

From somewhere in the darkness the girl cowers, willing her parents to STOP. She looks up from her tears.

Across the room, the outline of an odd pink and blue DOLLHOUSE sits in the dim light, jutting out from a shelf.

The shadow continues past the base of the house, almost forming the shape of a woman's figure in an A-line dress...

Another LIGHTNING STRIKE!

The rest of the shadow is gone (if it was ever there to begin with), leaving behind only the handcrafted dollhouse.

The girl wipes a mixture of snot and tears on her sleeve before crawling across her floor as--

--Thunder BOOMS again!

She pulls it from her shelf and slides to the floor, holding it close.

A pair of windows stretch from top to bottom, on either side of a set of double doors held closed by a golden clasp.

Undoing the golden clasp with a soft *click*, she opens the double front doors and stares inside.

LIGHTNING STRIKES, yet the darkness inside remains absolute.

CRASH-OOM!

A plate shatters against the wall below as the fighting intensifies, melding with the thunder outside.

The girl steels herself, then leans into the house's opening.

She whispers.

Quickly, she slams the doors shut, trapping her secret inside.

She sets it next to her and curls into a ball as the sounds of the storm continue to battle the fight below.

We creep to the unattended dollhouse.

Closer and closer as competing storms fade into nothing.

It's almost peaceful.

CLICK!

The clasp pops apart as the doors open wide. Two pinpricks of light glint off of... *something* inside. Deeper we go.

A strange, slightly modulated woman's voice from within. Like a mother lulling their child.

Are those screams just behind the droning?

HOUSEWIFE
Shhhhhhhhhhh...

All is quiet.

TITLE: HOUSEWIFE

INT. BEN & ANN'S APARTMENT - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

A cramped but well-loved studio apartment.

ANN (early 30s) sits on a couch and stares unblinkingly at a laptop propped eye level by a collection of books.

A scheduled GRAPHIC DESIGN POSITION VIDEO CALL INTERVIEW is on the screen. Her eyes focus on the LAUNCH button.

BEN (mid 30s) crosses behind the computer several times, dropping things into a messenger bag as he goes.

BEN
Ann.

ANN
(not looking away)
Hm.

BEN
Ann. Babe. Baby. Ann Ann Ann Ann.

He's so annoying it works. She looks up.

BEN (CONT'D)
You need to chill.

ANN
Don't tell me to chill! What I need
is for this to go well. *We* need
this to go well.

BEN
We are fine. They want chill!

ANN
Leave! You're really not helping!

BEN
Fine.

He kisses her on the forehead, then backs toward the door.

ANN
Have a good day!

Ben backs to the door.

BEN
Doubt it. Jimmy thinks they'll
officially offer him the promotion
tomorrow. Lucky asshole.

ANN
Doesn't he have to relocate to,
like, the middle of nowhere?

BEN
Just because it's the suburbs
doesn't automatically mean it's the
middle of nowhere.

(then)
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

But yes. And it's also enough money
to not care.

ANN

I don't know. I think I'd care.

Ben stops at the door. About to say what he's really
thinking, then pulls back.

BEN

Well, I guess it doesn't matter.

ANN

I guess not.

A charged moment. He puts on a smile.

BEN

Good luck with your interview, Ann.

ANN

Thank you, Ben.

He exits, the door closing after him with a resounding *click*.

Back to Ann, somehow dwarfed by her tiny studio apartment.
She starts the call. It trills to life.

ANN (CONT'D)

Hello!

An excruciating beat before a semi-robotic woman's voice
responds.

INTERVIEWER CHATBOT

Hi. Thank you so much for joining
the interview today.

ANN

Thank you so much for having me,
I'm really looking forward to--

INTERVIEWER CHATBOT

--I am so excited to talk to you
and get to know more about you.

The realization settles in.

INTERVIEWER CHATBOT (CONT'D)

For our first question, tell me a
time when you team player. Let's
circle back. Tell me a time when.
DESERT ISLAND.

(MORE)

INTERVIEWER CHATBOT (CONT'D)

Why do you want to work at --
greatest weakness? See yourself in
5 years, weakness? Let's when when
when.

The chatbot continues its endless loop. Ann ends the call,
the woman's voice mercifully silenced. She stares off into
the middle distance, her smile wavers but never falls.

EXT. PARK - MORNING

Ann walks alone, a foldable wagon in tow, soaking up the calm
of the sparse morning crowd. She pulls up to an empty spot
and gets to work.

Two foldable stools, a collapsible easel, and a large drawing
pad are pulled from the cart and quickly set up.

One stool behind the easel and one in front. From within the
drawing pad she pulls a worn poster board and props it
against the front of the easel.

It reads:

**RAITS! NO CATCH!
O DO IS TELL US
OU LIKE MORE
we promise you
our feelings.
is many times :)**

ANN

|||| |
|||| |

A jagged line down one side and the gibberish message
suggests a missing half.

A throat clears behind Ann before a woman's voice pitched
down like a man with a fake Mid-Atlantic spin calls to her.

DANI (O.S.)

Why, my stars. Did your husband
paint that for you?

Ann smiles and turns to face DANI (early 30s), her own
foldable wagon in tow.

ANN
With all that lithium for my
jitters he may as well have!

They giggle, then hug.

ANN (CONT'D)
Good to see you.

DANI
You too.

Dani sets up her half just as fast. She slips a CIGARETTE in her mouth, and pats her empty pockets, looking for something.

Ann reaches across into Dani's bag, pulling out a PINK LIGHTER, with a "DON'T STEAL MY FUCKING LIGHTER" sticker.

With a knowing smirk, she lights Dani's cigarette for her like they've done this a hundred times. Because they have.

The two sit at their respective easels, a second piece of poster board combined with Ann's to complete the message.

It now reads:

**TWO FREE PORTRAITS! NO CATCH!
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TELL US
WHICH ONE YOU LIKE MORE
Don't worry, we promise you
won't hurt our feelings.
We've done this many times :)**

<u>DANI</u>	<u>ANN</u>
### ### ###	### ### ###
### ### ###	### ###

MOMENTS LATER

A gruff looking TEAMSTER TYPE (60s) sits on the stool as the two women sketch, Dani looking significantly more relaxed than a hunched over, intense Ann.

DANI
You gotta relax. Fix your posture,
you look like Igor.

Ann obliges, then very quickly hunches over again, eyes flitting between Teamster and the drawing pad. Dani clocks her insane energy.

DANI (CONT'D)

I'm guessing the interview didn't go well?

ANN

What? It went fine. It went great!

Dani and Teamster share a look and a wry smile. Ann catches the look in between her flitting.

ANN (CONT'D)

Oh, now you're conspiring with our models?

DANI

I didn't say anything!

TEAMSTER

I plead the fifth.

The two laugh. Ann rolls her eyes.

ANN

No playing favorites when it's time to judge, sir!

The man puts up his hands.

TEAMSTER

No problemo.

A moment of silent sketching.

ANN

I just... I just really need to find a job. It's been all on him for so long, it's not fair.

DANI

I know, I know! But it went well! That's good news. Maybe this is it.

Ann buries her nose in the drawing, cheeks burning.

ANN

Maybe.

TEAMSTER

My daughter's in the same boat. Every job she's had the company restructures or downsizes or whatever they call it.

DANI

I'm sorry. That must be hard for her.

TEAMSTER

(shaking his head)

Can't even get someone on the phone anymore 'cause there's no one to answer it. Been trying to schedule a cardiologist appointment for weeks...

A somber silence between the three, the sounds of the park and the city beyond it fill the cracks.

TEAMSTER (CONT'D)

(nervous laughing)

Boy, you two are good! I can barely talk to my wife about this stuff. You sure this is about drawings?

The three share a laugh. Ann and Dani's eyes catch and a smile passes between the two of them.

BRIIIING! BRIIIING!

Ann's phone interrupts the moment with a CALL FROM BEN. She hastily picks it up and steps away. Dani throws up her hands.

DANI

Hey! What happened to no phones at the easel?

ANN

(over her shoulder)

No drawing!

(to Teamster)

Sorry sir, I'll just be a second.

TEAMSTER

Take your time. I'm in no rush.

She smiles at him, then turns. Out of their earshot, she answers the phone and puts on a new smile for no one.

ANN

Hey, what's up--?

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)

--Ann. Babe. Ann! ANN!

ANN

What! Is everything okay?

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
They offered me the promotion, Ann.

ANN
The what?! I don't understand--

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
--Jimmy's promotion! Well, I guess
it wasn't his. That smug asshole.
It was mine! They promoted ME, Ann!

ANN
Wait, wait, wait. Slow down.

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
They said I keep my head down, that
I'm a guy who "does what needs to
be done." That's what they said!

ANN
The -- is this the relocation
promotion?

A long, static silence on the other end.

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
Don't do this, Ann.

ANN
What do you mean don't do this! We
just talked about it this morning.
We'd have to uproot our whole life--

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
Ann, my life is only here because
of work. And because you're here.
And YOUR life is only here because
you, well--because you've never
tried to be anywhere else!

ANN
I... I'm so close to getting a job
here. My interview--

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
Ann, forget that bullshit.
(then)
We can finally start OUR life. A
real home, a place to raise our
kids.

Ann opens her mouth to argue, but has nothing to say.

BEN (CONT'D)
Please listen to me when I say that
this money will change our lives.
It'll change *your* life. You can
finally do--

Ann puts her head in her hand as the world spins around her.

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
--whatever you want to do.

ANN
It... it's such a big decision...
Do we need to decide... now? I'm,
like... my head's still spinning...

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
Sure. I know it's a lot. They don't
need an answer until tomorrow.

She takes a breath. She's okay. She'll be okay.

ANN
Okay. Tomorrow. Okay.
(then)
Okay.

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
Okay. Give it a real good think.
We'll talk tonight.

Click. He hangs up. The phone lingers at her ear, somehow
held up by her feeble hand, arm, body. She's all jell-o.

She closes her eyes. Breathes deeply.

INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1990S - VISION

LIGHTNING STRIKES, yet the darkness inside the strange
dollhouse remains absolute.

In place of the girl is Ann, staring into the depths and
white knuckling the house.

She leans in to the opening and *whispers into the darkness*.

Ann slams the doors quickly, trapping her secret inside.

EXT. PARK - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

Ann opens her eyes calmly, as if coming out of a trance.

MOMENTS LATER

Ann slides back onto her stool and picks up her pencil, casually returning to her sketch.

DANI
All good?

ANN
(not looking away)
Yep. Just Ben.

DANI
You tell him about your interview?

Ann suddenly goes pencils down a little too hard.

ANN
I actually think I'm just about
done. You?

Dani's cocks her head back and forth, inspecting her portrait from every angle.

DANI
Yeah. I think so too.
(to the Teamster)
Thank you for your patience, sir.
Are you ready to make your choice?

TEAMSTER
Are you sure I have to choose?

ANN
Unfortunately yes, those are the
rules. Corporate mandate.

TEAMSTER
(chuckling)
Normally I'd stick it to the man
but I guess I don't want you ladies
to get in any trouble.

The two portraits are presented to him, but still hidden from us. He inspects carefully, genuinely weighing the decision.

The Teamster looks up, a decision made. He opens his mouth--

INT. BEN & ANN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The front door opens and Ben steps in, feet heavy. Not ready for the long conversation. This is *his* day after all, right?

BEN

Ann?

We see her, standing in front of him. A glass of champagne in each hand. She holds one out to him, beckoning with a smile.

ANN

Okay.

A flash of confusion, then realization.

BEN

Yeah? Okay?

ANN

(nodding)

Okay.

He drops his bag and embraces her. She remains rigid, refusing to melt into him. He either doesn't notice or doesn't care. She forces her smile to stay.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DOLL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

From the BLACK, we turn in someone's POV, revealing a NEIGHBORHOOD STREET outside of a doorframe.

We step up to the frame and look down the road. A planned community of familiar DOLLHOUSES stretching infinitely.

Far, far off in the distance is a PLUME OF SMOKE.

Now we're in the smoke. A cacophony of confusion and terror, screams and wails of pain surrounds us. All-consuming.

INT. BEN & ANN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ann wakes with a start, gulping for air. She fights for control and steadies her breath quickly, aware of the unmoving mound next to her that is Ben.

An unfamiliar bedroom is fully furnished but currently without character. A mound of unopened boxes stacked near the door. The room itself is the size of their old apartment.

Welcome to paradise: Ben and Ann's new home in the suburbs.

Ann rolls on her side, makes a weak attempt to go back to sleep. As her eyes fall shut--

A near-imperceptible CLINK of a latch from downstairs.

A door CREAKS. Ann's eyes flutter open.

I/E. BEN & ANN'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Ann cautiously slips down the steps of her new home to find the front door ajar, swaying with the wind.

She steps up to the open door, the scale of the cookie-cutter house threatening to swallow Ann. For just a moment, she breathes in the night air and gentle breeze.

Closing her eyes, she imagines the sounds of the city just beyond her doorstep. She smiles, then opens her eyes again to a deathly silence.

She clicks the door shut behind her, locking it soundly.

INT. BEN & ANN'S HOUSE - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - NIGHT - MONTAGE

- Ann pads down the hall off of the foyer.

- She steps into the similarly bland main living area, with the living room to the right and the kitchen to the left.

On both sides are mounds of cardboard boxes -- the last remnants of her previous life.

- Ann opens a few closets in rapid succession, all empty.

- A first floor millennial grey half bath.

- A light pops on, illuminating a long dark staircase. She takes the first step with hesitation.

- She stands in an empty, unfinished basement. A lone, long chest freezer sits up against the wall.

END MONTAGE

The world goes quiet, save for the electric buzz of the freezer. Growing louder as Ann approaches, the hypnotic buzz builds... No, no longer only a buzz... *Shhhhhhhhhh*.....

The sound is everywhere. In her head. Her hand reaches--

She rips open the freezer. Empty and quiet.

She puts a hand inside for a moment, then presses it against her forehead and the back of her neck. She shuts it again.

LATER - THE NEXT MORNING

Ann sits on the floor, back against a couch, slumped. In front of her is her half of the art sign propped against the mound of cardboard boxes. A new tally mark etched at the end.

In the background Ben crosses in and out of the KITCHEN, gathering his things for work.

He stops for a moment, looking at *something* on the kitchen table hidden by the couch. With his back to us he picks it up and inspects it further, still hidden from view.

BEN

Did you start unpacking last night
after I went to bed?

Ann, still asleep. Ben sets whatever-it-is down and comes around the couch to stand over her, wearing a stupid tie with penguins on it. Eyes her half of the portrait sign.

He nudges her leg. Nothing. He sighs, then reaches down and pinches her nostrils.

She shoots awake with a cough, fighting to get her bearings in a confused panic. Ben towers over her.

BEN (CONT'D)

Morning! Late night?

ANN

Mmm. Yeah. Couldn't sleep.

BEN

Sorry, babe. But you started
unpacking? That's great. I maybe
would've started with the important
stuff, like our toaster or any of
our clothes, but it's a start.

ANN

I... What?

Ben leans down and kisses the top of her head, hand on her cheek. His smart watch pings and he pulls away quickly.

BEN

Ah shit, I gotta run.

(then)

DAY ONE, BABY!

He turns to exit, Ann's still grasping at consciousness. He turns back to her.

BEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I know this is overwhelming. But,
we'll figure it out. I love you.

He exits as Ann calls after him.

ANN
Love... you... Have a good... first
day!

BEN (O.S)
Can't wait to see all of the
progress on the house! You're gonna
do such a great job.

The front door opens and closes. Ann lets out an exasperated sigh and drops her head on the couch before shooting back up, grabbing at her neck and wincing in pain.

With great effort she claws her way onto the couch. We move up with her, peering over the couch to the kitchen table.

A pink and blue blob rests on the table, obscured by the deep background. Ann holds herself up momentarily, then collapses into the cushions.

HOURS LATER - LATE MORNING

The sun is higher in the sky as Ann rests at an awkward angle. *The kitchen table is empty.* Instead, a shadow is positioned between us and her.

Maybe it's just something near the window blocking sunlight--

It moves.

Click clack.

We can't see it anymore.

Click clack.

It's moving toward Ann.

Click. Clack.

A hand, feminine, with perfectly manicured, blood red fingernails, reaches for Ann's face and pinches her nostrils. Once again, she wakes with a start.

The hand quickly retracts, Ann none the wiser. With a begrudging stretch, she finally stands, body aching. Apparently alone.

The endless boxes look almost pretty in this light.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Boxes still litter the counter. Honeyed afternoon light drowns the kitchen. Ann muscles open the nearest box.

On top sits a small AM/FM radio. She yanks the antenna and clicks on a LATE 90s ADULT CONTEMPORARY POP SONG (a la "Torn" by Natalie Imbruglia).

Down to business. A box is emptied, spilling cups of every shape and size onto the dwindling counter space.

Another box, this one filled with pots and pans.

Another box, cookbooks.

Another, another, another. She's in the groove.

In the next one she unearths paints, pencils, brushes -- the works. She smiles fondly, greeting her old friends.

At the bottom is a CANVAS in a WOOD FRAME. On the back is a stylized signature reading ANN, but that's all we get as she takes it in.

She moves the empty box to the side to set the painting down, accidentally knocking a mug off the counter.

The *CRASH!* jolts her back to reality as the POP SONG fades.

Ann stares in agitation at the pieces.

RADIO DJ #1 (O.S.)
It's The Baby Bambino on 93.2
bringing you the best throwbacks to
your desk, commute, or any lucky
stay-at-home sons-of-Bs out there--

Ann clicks off the radio and takes in her surroundings. The kitchen is worse than when she started.

She wordlessly grabs a set of keys off the (*empty*) kitchen table and heads for the front door.

EXT. BEN & ANN'S HOUSE - DAY

Ann steps outside, pulling the door closed behind her and locking it without looking up. In the tempered glass, a funhouse mirror version of a FIGURE leers.

The figure waits a little too long before clearing their throat. Ann jumps out of her skin before turning.

ANN
Holy SHIT!

JOHN
I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY! I'M
SORRY!

Ann recomposes herself, turning to face the figure -- a heavier man who looks to have just rolled out of bed.

Bathrobe open, comfy shoes on, rocking a sleep shirt that reads "I left my beach bod in Cape Cod" riddled with stains. This is JOHN (mid 30s) in all his glory.

A covered tray in one hand and a bottle of wine in the other.

ANN (CONT'D)
Hi, hello. Can I help you?

He presents them both sheepishly.

JOHN
Name's John Hornberger. Welcome to the neighborhood! Sorry for the scare. I was walking up when you came out and, situationally, I wasn't sure the best course of action. Seems like I chose poorly.

ANN
A little, but, that's okay.

John extends the covered tray further.

ANN (CONT'D)
What're we workin' with?

JOHN
Eight layer bean dip. Old family recipe. I know what you're thinking, it's usually seven. That's what makes it makes it a Hornberger family recipe.

He winks. Ann's still reeling just a bit.

ANN
Wow, this is... ah, shit.

He's taken aback. She covers her mouth.

JOHN
Not a bean dip fan?

ANN

No, no! That's so nice! I just... I don't even know where the grocery store is yet. Or how to get to it. I don't even have any chips. Sorry, you caught me at a bad time, I'm a little overwhelmed but... this is so nice.

She takes the items from him.

JOHN

Most people don't like to do the whole neighbor-y thing. Feels like it's sort of dying out, right? I like it. I think it's important to know your neighbors. Cuppa sugar and all that, right? Happened to me once or twice. That's why it's good to know your neighbors. Barely know any of the other spouses on the street. Not for lack of trying.

They both glance down the street. Most curtains are drawn. The street is still.

ANN

Well, I really appreciate it.

JOHN

Ah, don't mention it.

An awkward moment between them.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, nice to meet you. Have a nice rest of the day!

With a bit of disappointment, John shuffles to leave. Ann holds up the wine bottle weakly.

ANN

Unless, you want to come in for a glass?

He turns back, overjoyed.

JOHN

What a thoughtful offer!
(squeezing past her)
Pardon me!

He bounds inside with the authority of a man who's lived there his entire life.

JOHN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You mind if I check out the
furniture they gave you?

Ann watches him go, stunned, before stepping back into the
eye of the storm.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - DAY

John ping-pongs around the minimal furniture, lifting
cushions, running a hand along the table surfaces. Precise.

Ann looks on, back to the kitchen.

ANN
Sorry about the mess.

JOHN
(ignoring her)
I've been gathering intel from my,
excuse me, our neighbors. When
they'll talk to me. Our housing
company, PropRes, LLC, says that
everything's brand new but I've
noticed minor imperfections that
lead me, and others, to believe
that they actually retained all of
this in bulk from a second hand
source in what I can only assume
was some sort of shrewd business
venture and now they're trying to
pawn it off on us, the consumer, as
new. Can you believe that?

ANN
No! They'd never take advantage of
the consumer!

John stares, not catching her sarcasm, then roars with
laughter, collapsing on a leather recliner and popping it up.

JOHN
I like you. Where did you move
from?

ANN
New York.

JOHN
City?

Ann nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, that explains it. Nothing those bastard landlords of yours won't do to save a buck. I guess you're right, we're lucky to have furniture at all!

ANN

I don't know. I prefer my own things.

John's lip curls in a devilish smile.

JOHN

As you should. And, if I may, what did you do in the greatest city on earth? Before you were so brutally uprooted for a life of luxurious corporate housing?

ANN

I'm an artist.

JOHN

An artist! What a relief, for chrissakes. Need a little bit of culture in this wasteland.

His eyes look past her and into the the kitchen.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I can see why you like your own things! One of your pieces?

He thrusts up, the recliner collapsing with a spring-loaded THUNK. Ann's gaze follows as he hustles around the couch and up to the kitchen table.

His body shrouds what caught his eye as Ann dances around his large figure to get a view of--

It can't be.

It can't be.

Time slows as John's body gives way to the unmistakable sight of a PINK DOLLHOUSE. Blue individual shingled roof.

Impossible two-floor spanning faux-ornate windows with red curtains.

And a set of double front doors, closed with a golden clasp.

ANN
But... that's not possible...

John ignores her, inspecting the dollhouse.

JOHN
Incredible craftsmanship! Truly
bizarre...
(looking over his
shoulder)
You have some talent!

Ann approaches with trepidation, as if the house might take off out the front door if she moves too quickly.

ANN
I don't... this isn't mine.

JOHN
Oh. I see. Well, remarkable, still.
You have some taste!

He reaches toward the clasp. Something... *primal*... bubbles up inside of Ann.

ANN
STOP!

John freezes in shock.

ANN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I mean, I didn't make
it. It's... My grandma made it for
my mom when she was a kid. I...
thought I lost it.

He softens. Ann sets John's welcome tray down on the table and reaches out, hands shaking. She gingerly picks it up and holds it close, running a hand across the craftsmanship.

ANN (CONT'D)
Funny enough my mom hated my
grandma. And she hated being a mom.
She gave me this one year when she
forgot my birthday.

John looks at her, mortified. Ann laughs.

She runs a finger across the individual roof tiles, her finger catching with a tiny *thud thud thud* as it goes.

ANN (CONT'D)
But, still. I loved it.

INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1990S - FLASHBACK

The same scene as before. The young girl -- Young Ann -- grips the dollhouse tightly.

CRASH-OOM! A plate shatters against the wall below as the fighting intensifies, melding with the thunder outside.

ANN (V.O.)

When I was a kid, I used to whisper my secrets into it.

(laughing)

I thought it would "keep them safe," which is definitely something a kid with a strong support system and lots of friends would do!

Young Ann steels herself, then leans in to the house's opening and *whispers into the darkness*. She slams the doors quickly, trapping her secret inside.

BACK TO SCENE

Click!

Ann's finger pops open the clasp, gently peeling open the two double doors.

Inside, only darkness. Darkness Ann loses herself in...

JOHN

--When I was little I thought I could solve the trolley problem.

Ann snaps out of it. Then chokes out a laugh of surprise.

ANN

What?

JOHN

You know, the old question -- do you let the trolley hit five people or make it switch tracks so it only hits one?

ANN

No, yeah, I know what it is. I've been on the internet before.

(then)

Did you solve it?

JOHN

No. I just kept taking the train off the tracks. Which appeared to be the solution to me for quite some time.

(then)

If only it were PropRes employees on the tracks. It would be the trolley *solution* to me. HA!

ANN

It sounds like they really deserve it.

Ann looks down at the dollhouse. Gears turning. The darkness inviting her. She leans in and--

Now we're inside the dollhouse. Darkness except for the two open doors, outside of which Ann breathes heavy and close.

ANN (CONT'D)

I hope that whoever from PropRes did this gets what's coming to them. And maybe unpack for me while you're at it.

(to John)

How was that?

He steps into the dollhouse's limited view. Through the doors, we see Ann and John, looking straight at us.

JOHN

Perfect. If only it were that easy.

She slams the doors shut, swallowing us in darkness.

We stay in the darkness. Losing all sense of direction as it suffocates us. Pressure mounting, until...

A... breath? A long, ragged, creaking, breath. Something stirring in the darkness. The TAP, TAP, TAP of fingernails...

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

The front door opens and a tired Ben enters, stupid penguin tie already undone. He drops his messenger bag and kicks off his shoes, calling out into the house.

BEN

Ann? I'm back!

No response. Already annoyed, we follow him.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Empty except for the mound of boxes. A few are open, their guts spilled across the floor in disarray.

Ben looks around, the room functionally the same as he left it. Or worse. Probably worse. The dollhouse still sits on the kitchen counter. Next to it sits a mostly eaten tray of BEAN DIP and a fork.

The sliding glass door is partially open, screen door closed and backyard light on.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Ann sits on a plastic lawn chair. In front of her is an easel with an empty page staring at her. She ignores it.

Instead, she ignites Dani's PINK LIGHTER, then extinguishes it. With a *click-hiss*, she repeats the cycle, over and over.

Her other hand holds John's now-open wine bottle loosely by the neck. She brings it to her lips and gulps, then burps.

Ben lingers at the screen door, watching her, before sliding it open and stepping outside.

Ann's head snaps around. The two stare at each other.

ANN

How was your first day?

Ben doesn't respond. He just stares. Eventually, Ann offers him the wine. He takes it wordlessly, takes a swig, and turns back inside, leaving the screen door open.

Leaving Ann alone with her thoughts and her empty easel.

Click-hiss, click-hiss, click-hiss.

Ann pulls out her phone, a MAP APP highlighting the location of something. She zooms in... in... in.... on a hole in the wall pizza place.

She switches to FaceTime and calls Dani. It rings a few times before she picks up with a droopy smile, swaying and drunk.

DANI

Heyyyyyyy.

ANN

What kind are you getting?

She takes the slice from the guy behind the counter and steps into the night.

DANI
Pepper. RONI!

ANN
Is it from that place under Marcy?

DANI
Mhm.

She takes a bite. FUCK! It burns.

DANI (CONT'D)
FUCK! HOT!

ANN
Blow on it.

DANI
Don't tell me what to do!

ANN
You're right. My bad.
(then)
Fun night?

DANI
Yeahhhhh it was alright. How's the
'burbs?

ANN
Big. Too big.

DANI
You just got there. It maybe might
get better?

ANN
That was your big pep talk? I have
even less pep now!

DANI
I can't do pep for things you do
that I think are bad and wrong!
(then)
I shouldn't have said that
probably.

ANN
No, probably not.

DANI
Just missing youuuu.

ANN
Miss you too--

The sounds of two girls passing by Dani interrupt Ann, diverting her attention.

GIRL #1 (O.S.)	GIRL #2 (O.S.)
Waitttttt where did you get that??	I'm soooooooo hungry!

DANI
(mouth full of food,
pointing behind her)
Izoverthere.

GIRL #1 (O.S.)	GIRL #2 (O.S.)
THANK YOU I LOVE YOU!!!	I will NEVER forget you!!

Dani blows them a kiss and turns back to her pizza and phone.

DANI
Sorry. What did you say?

Ann hesitates on the other end.

ANN
Forget it. Doesn't matter anyway.
I'm gonna try and go back to sleep
if I can.

DANI
Okay. I come visit soon and see
your little white picket fence?
Check out the little white picket
fence you got going on?

ANN
Ew. Or you'll show up and Ben will
be like "sorry she can't come out
and play she's busy" but I'm
actually--

DANI
--actually buried in the backyard.
I know the drill! Nighty night.

Ann, dwarfed by her sterile new home.

ANN
Nighty night.

The phone call ends and--

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

A legion of cubicles, all dark save one. A sigh, then the light turns off and a WOMAN (late 30s) makes her way through the darkness to the exit. Deep bags under her eyes.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A SECURITY GUARD plays a game on their phone as the shadow of the woman passes the front desk.

SECURITY GUARD
Night, miss. Get some sleep.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Yeah, you know. I'll try.

The door closes with a *click*.

INT. WOMAN'S CAR - NIGHT - MONTAGE

- A messenger bag is tossed on the passenger seat, followed shortly by an ID badge that she tucks into a pocket.

- Car turns on.

- Radio plays the same LATE 90s ADULT CONTEMPORARY POP SONG (a la "Torn" by Natalie Imbruglia) on the radio, the woman taps the steering wheel to the beat.

- Now the woman sings along at the top of her lungs.

- She pulls into a driveway and kills the radio before exiting the car.

END MONTAGE

INT. WOMAN'S FOYER / KITCHEN - NIGHT

The woman drags herself inside and shuts the door, kicking her shoes off and dropping her bag at her feet.

Her ID badge slips out, but we can't see what it says. She bends down to put it back when, a *light off the main hallway clicks on*. She freezes.

WOMAN

Kev? I thought I told you not to
wait up for me?

No response. She furrows her brow--

A shadow passes through the light. It makes her jump just a
little. She shakes her head in annoyance.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(louder)

Kev? Are you wearing your
headphones again? I don't want to
scare you!

She reaches out and knocks on the wall leading to the source
of the light. Gentle but firm.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Nothing, then--

KNOCK!

KNOCK!

KNOCK!

--in response. The woman smiles and drops her shoulders. She
makes her way toward the light.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm a little tired for games, but I
appreciate the effort...

She *knocks* as she walks, three times again. And again, a
three knock reply.

Smiling, she stops just short of the entryway, resting her
head against the wall. She knocks, much gentler this time.

...knock... knock... knock...

They're returned just the same. Almost... intimately. She
reaches a hand around the doorframe, searching until she
finds purchase. She smiles.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I missed you.

Silence. Then, voice. Distorted. Like it's still figuring out
how to replicate being human. It starts as a man, then
glitches female.

VOICE (O.S.)
I missed... you. Too.

Confused, she steps into the light, and immediately *screams bloody murder!*

We stay on her, unable to see what she sees. Until she remembers her *still outstretched hand*.

Shaking uncontrollably, she follows the length of her arm to her hand. Her fingers interlocked with another. Perfectly manicured, red fingernails, each sharpened to a point.

Flecks of blood splatter the back of the hand.

We follow the woman's gaze as she looks up... up... up...

Horror gives way to a flash of utter confusion. And then back to horror. Pure, mind-bending horror.

From down the hall, we watch as she's dragged into the kitchen, screams and the dance of shadows.

We turn away, back to her discarded messenger bag by the front door. And the ID badge that slipped out.

Closer... closer...

A logo.

PropRes, LLC.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DOLL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

From the BLACK, we once again turn to reveal the neighborhood street of dollhouses stretching infinitely.

In the distance, the plume of smoke has grown and spread closer to us.

We jump to the smoke for barely a moment. A nerve-shredding second of the same cacophony of screams and pain.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Ann shoots up in bed, gasping. Ben, mid getting ready, nearly jumps out of his skin.

BEN
Jesus, Ann! Are you okay?

Ann's eyes focus on him through the fog.

ANN

Mmhm.

She crashes back onto her pillow.

BEN

(sotto)

Okayyyy.

He finishes tying his tie -- a normal one this time.

BEN (CONT'D)

Thanks for digging this tie out.

I'll see you later.

Ann doesn't stir. Ben exits. We stay with Ann but hear him as he clomps down the stairs and (presumably) into the living room and kitchen area, quieter and quieter.

The steps stop. Then, very suddenly, louder and louder. Faster. Coming for us. Coming for Ann.

He comes back into the bedroom with purpose, crossing to the bed and crouching at Ann's level. She's fast asleep -- or, at least, pretending to do so.

BEN (CONT'D)

I don't even know what to say, Ann.
Amazing work. It looks great. I
don't know how you did it. It looks
like a real home.

He kisses her forehead.

BEN (CONT'D)

Sorry I woke you while I was
getting ready. You're probably
exhausted. Get some sleep.

He stands and exits for good. Thuds down the stairs. Front door opens and closes--

Ann's eyes pop open. She slips out of bed quickly.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - MORNING

Ann pads cautiously into the living room, scanning.

The boxes are gone.

It's all gone.

No, not gone.

Put away.

The living room and kitchen. Dressed and stocked and... designed? Somehow making something out of the corporate housing furniture. The throw pillows are *karate-chopped*.

Ben wasn't kidding -- it looks like a home. A little generic, a little old-fashioned, but a home.

She stumbles aimlessly through the alien setup.

INT. BASEMENT - MORNING

Ann stands in front of the previously-empty lower level. The boxes that plagued her are stacked neatly in a corner. Some have been emptied and broken down.

Propped against the boxes are a set of Ben's golf clubs. She pulls a club and gives a half-hearted swing, before walking the length of the boxes and continuing to the freezer.

Ann puts a hand on the handle, but *something* gives her pause.

In the darkness behind her, *the red-nailed hand appears from behind the boxes*, pushing the bag of clubs to the floor.

THU-CLINK!

She jumps and yelps, turning to the sound, then crosses to righten them and heads for the stairs. The freezer unopened.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - MORNING

On the kitchen table, the dollhouse sits patiently. Its two long, multi-floor-spanning windows stare as she takes it in. She passes in front of it on her way to the kitchen.

As if searching for the answer, she starts opening cabinets. Cups. Plates. Bowls. Mugs. Wine glasses--

Wait. Back to mugs. Hesitating, she reaches in and takes one out. Turns it over in her hand. Then holds it up to the morning light bleeding through the window.

Faint CRACK LINES spiderweb the mug. Someone delicately repaired it after she broke it the day before.

ANN

What is going on...

IN RAPID SUCCESSION:

- Ann splashing cold water on her face at the kitchen sink.
- Ann aggressively pinching her arm.
- Ann slapping her cheeks. Growls in frustration.

She drops into a chair at the kitchen table with a thousand yard stare that wanders to the dollhouse, still staring her down (wait, wasn't it turned toward the living room?)

Ann leans in, looking over it fondly. She runs a finger over the individual roof tiles.

A tiny *thud, thud, thud* as her finger catches each tile.

She stops, noticing something on one of the tiles. A little glob of... something. She picks at it with her fingernail. Then holds it to the light.

Little flecks of deep red on her finger.

Almost like dried blood.

She looks back to the dollhouse. Brow furrowed.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Ann jumps and yelps *again*, then growls in frustration *again*. She wipes the... "residue"... off on her pants and--

I/E. FOYER / PORCH - MORNING

Ann rips open the door to, once again, find John as sloppy as before. He vibrates with nervous energy.

ANN
Welcome back--

JOHN
May I enter? Thank you.

He squeezes past her before even finishing his own sentence. Ann watches, incredulous, as he nearly sprints inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - MORNING

Ann steps into the living room to find John already on his knees, looking under pieces of furniture.

ANN
What are you doing?!

He ignores her. He stands and starts to unscrew a light bulb from a lamp.

ANN (CONT'D)
JOHN.

He checks the fixture, then screws the bulb back in.

JOHN
Do you have any reason to believe
this place is bugged?

ANN
What the hell are you talking
about?

John whips his head around, frantically scanning the room, eyes landing on the dollhouse. A horrible realization sets in, eyes wide. He scampers over to pick it up.

JOHN
Is it real?

ANN
What? Is what real?! Give it to me,
it's not a toy!

JOHN
So you admit it!

ANN
What?! No--

She crosses quickly and pries it from his grasp.

ANN (CONT'D)
What is wrong with you? You can't
just barge into someone's house
like that!

John shrinks, then sinks into the chair she'd been sitting in moments before. He can't look her in the eye.

JOHN
I'm sorry. I don't know what came
over me.

ANN
Me neither! You wanna explain
yourself just a *little* bit?

He finally looks at her.

JOHN
You didn't see?

ANN
See what?

JOHN
An employee at PropRes and her husband are missing. A neighbor saw their front door wide open and went in and apparently there was a lot of blood. The powers that be aren't saying much, but they're asking the public to report any suspicious behaviors.

ANN
Jesus, that's terrifying.

JOHN
I know.

ANN
But also like... not to be insensitive... but why are you destroying my house because of it?

John shifts uncomfortably. Ann looks at him funny, then down to the dollhouse, then back up at him.

ANN (CONT'D)
You're joking.

JOHN
I just--

She holds up a hand.

ANN
John. I know we just met. I think you're a cool guy. Helluva eight layer bean dip--

JOHN
Thank you, it really is the eighth layer that brings it all together--

She holds up her hand more emphatically.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Sorry.

ANN

...But you gotta know this is one of the craziest leaps a person could make. Right?

John looks up at her with puppy dog eyes.

JOHN

I know... It's just... something like this? Here? Not likely. No one feels much of anything around here, let alone enough rage to do something like this.

ANN

Well, you did.

JOHN

I know! That's why I'm in such distress! I know I got ahead of myself, barging in like that, but you asked your not-a-toy for someone to pay and it looks like they did. But I didn't actually mean it!

Ann looks down at the dollhouse, and for a second she considers it. Could it be possible? A lot of crazy shit already happened today and she hasn't even had...

INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1990S - FLASHBACK

Ann's ripped back to the past. Young Ann, having just whispered her secret, is curled in a ball facing away from her dollhouse.

Behind her, the dollhouse starts to rise. Is something attached to the bottom of it--?

BACK TO PRESENT

ANN

Breakfast!

Now John looks at her funny. Ann shakes it off, plasters on a smile, and sets the dollhouse back on the table.

ANN (CONT'D)

This is a lot. For both of us. I haven't eaten yet. Have you?

JOHN

...I could eat. Might calm my nerves.

ANN

Great. You got a car to get us somewhere? I'm stranded on this rock and the fridge is still empty.

JOHN

Sure. No problem.

ANN

Great. Let's roll.

She heads toward the front door and John stands with a grunt. He does a once over of the space, finally recognizing its magical transformation.

JOHN

When did you have time to do all of this?

INT. DINER - LATE MORNING

A small town diner, a mounted CRT TV blasting static in the corner. Ann and John eat their breakfasts.

JOHN

I feel bad I even said anything. I don't want to hurt anyone. Not really. Even the ghouls over at PropRes. I know you don't know me well, but I feel like you know me enough to believe that.

ANN

John, you didn't have anything to do with that. It was a freak coincidence.

JOHN

I just feel wrong about the whole ordeal--

SMACK SMACK! Ann whips her head up. Behind John a slack-jawed employee is now hitting the CRT TV with a broom. Eventually the picture comes back.

News footage of the employee's house, now cordoned off with caution tape. A lower third reads:

**KIDNAPPING OR LOVERS' QUARREL GONE TOO FAR? PREDICTION
MARKETS ARE DIVIDED**

Ann looks down at her food, then around the restaurant.

ANN

So this is it?

JOHN

It's a little rundown, but its got charm.

ANN

I mean... this town. The 'burbs. My new reality.

JOHN

I guess that's all perspective.

ANN

What's another perspective?

JOHN

Stability. A partner that provides.
A roof over your head.

(then, with a smile)

Good company. Haven't had that in a long time. Outside of Julia.

That gets to Ann. Maybe he's right.

ANN

Ask me a question.

JOHN

About what?

ANN

Anything. I don't know. If we're on the run from the law together, we should probably get to know each other.

His eyes widen then crinkle with a smile.

JOHN

Okay, okay. What do you say to a little rapid fire ice breaker action?

ANN

Corporate town, corporate rules.
Shoot.

JOHN

How long have you and your fella
been together? And what's his name?

ANN

Four years. Ben. Any kids?

JOHN

Not yet. We're trying though.

ANN

That's great, congrats on the sex!

JOHN

Mm. No thank you. But thank you.
I'm terrified. Do you want kids?

ANN

I have recurring nightmares about
being pregnant.

JOHN

That's never stopped anyone.

ANN

You're not wrong! Employment
history?

JOHN

Nothing of note. Putzed around
doing odd jobs until Julia got the
promotion. Never really figured out
where I fit in. You?

ANN

Graphic design. Hated it. Didn't
really pay the bills either. Kind
of a huge waste of time and energy.
So you don't miss working?

JOHN

Do you?

ANN

Hey, my question! But no.

JOHN

I feel like I should. Breadwinner
wife working while I'm at home. She
likes it, though. She'd go insane
if she wasn't working. She's not
built like me. She can't sit still.

ANN
What do you like?

JOHN
Ah ah! My turn. Why an artist?

ANN
Why anything else?

He gives a thumbs down and makes a raspberry with his mouth.

ANN (CONT'D)
What do you like?

JOHN
Nature. A good cup of coffee.
Something else too, probably. Your
parents, are they nearby?

The temperature in the room drops. On a dime, Ann's not having fun anymore.

ANN
No.

JOHN
Oh, I'm sorry, are they--

Ann stands from the booth abruptly.

ANN
Actually, sorry. Will you take me
home? I forgot I have some work to
get done around the house today.

John looks up at her, confused and a little sad.

INT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

John drives as Ann stares out the window. Music drifts from the radio (maybe "Larry David" by Ok Cowgirl) and over the scene as we finally see glimpses of the town...

DRIVING MONTAGE

- MOTHERS with strollers walking on the sidewalk
- A humble yet inviting shopping center
- Houses with out-of-season patriotic bunting
- Various lawn signs a la "DRIVE LIKE YOU HAVE KIDS"

- A FRIENDLY MAILMAN gives them a wave
- A glass-windowed yoga studio filled with WOMEN
- A town green punctuated by a string-lit gazebo

END MONTAGE

I/E. JOHN'S CAR / NEIGHBORHOOD ENTRANCE - DAY

The car pulls onto a gated road with a faux-grand entrance sign: **COUNTRY HEIGHTS**. The song returns to playing from the radio as it fades out.

RADIO DJ #2 (V.O.)
It's time for your favorite midday
talk show with me, The Bigger
Bambino, and the story still on
everyone's mind is the terrifying
disappearance of two local--

Ann nearly punches the radio off. John tosses a look her way.

ANN
Sorry.

JOHN
(shaking his head)
Just a weird day.

ANN
(nodding)
Just a weird day.

I/E. JOHN'S CAR / NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

They take a series of incomprehensible turns. Every street looks the same.

ANN
How the hell do you ever get out of
this place?

JOHN
Julia and I always say, once you
find your way home without a U-
Turn, you're finally a local. Heh.

Turn, and turn, and turn. Ann spots something in the distance.

ANN
Wait, do you see that?

JOHN
Hm?

ANN
John, can you speed up?

JOHN
I don't feel comfortable doing
that. I'm supposed to Drive Like I
Have Kids--

ANN
Do you seriously not see that?

He briefly follows her eyes, and shrugs.

We finally see what she sees -- a PLUME OF BLACK SMOKE in the distance.

ANN (CONT'D)
John, please!

JOHN
All right, jeez!

They turn the corner and up to--

EXT. BEN & ANN'S HOUSE - DAY

Ann jumps out of the car, running a few steps before slowing to a stop.

It's her house. It's fine. No smoke.

She stands staring at the house, hands on her hips. John gives it an awkward moment before yelling through the still open car door.

JOHN
Everything... okay?

She's still dazed. She pinches the bridge of her nose before turning back, "silly me" all over her face.

ANN
Ahh... you know. Recurring
nightmare that I left the burner
on. Normal stuff.

JOHN
Sounds like you have a lot of
recurring nightmares.

ANN
Yeah...

She crosses back to the open car door and leans down.

ANN (CONT'D)
Everything's fine. Sorry for the
scare.

JOHN
Heart's racing. Feel like I could
run a marathon.

She smiles, then gestures to the car door.

ANN
Open or closed?

John laughs.

JOHN
Mmmm... you can close it.

ANN
You sure? Beautiful day out.

JOHN
You're so right, but I do think
we're going to go with closed at
this time unfortunately.

ANN
(shrugging)
Suit yourself.

Ann swings the door shut, but not before--

JOHN
See you at your shindig this
weekend!

ANN
Sounds good. Thanks, John.

SLAM! He drives off, and then his words click. She faux calls
after him.

ANN (CONT'D)
Wait... What shindig?

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - NIGHT

We watch from the dollhouse's POV as Ann and Ben argue. We can only see a sliver of the room through the open double doors, but it's enough.

ANN

How many people, Ben?

BEN

... I don't know exactly.

ANN

How many, Ben!

BEN (CONT'D)

20... ish.

ANN (CONT'D)

20... ish. That's awesome. And when were you planning on telling me about this?

BEN

I wasn't keeping it from you! We didn't talk last night. This is ridiculous, it's just a barbecue. It's not even a big deal, it's just a little tradition the company has that the newbie hosts. And look at all of the progress you've made on the house! I'll Uber to work and you can use the car to get stuff!

ANN

Not even a big deal. Yeah, everyone has to host their own welcome party. That's definitely not insane.

BEN

Jesus, Ann, have you ever heard of a housewarming party?

Wrong thing to say. He backtracks.

BEN (CONT'D)

Okay, it is insane. Of course it is. But it's just the culture here. I'm still adjusting, too, and...

ANN

What?

BEN

I just... I want to make a good impression.

This is killing him. She softens.

ANN

You will, Ben. You got the job.
That means something. And hey,
somewhere around here probably does
catering. Easy.

BEN

No I mean, like, I want *us* to make
a good impression.

Another wrong choice. She steps back incredulously.

ANN

Are you worried I won't make a good
impression?

BEN

Jesus, Ann, I didn't say that!

ANN

Well, now's the right time to deny
it.

BEN

... Of course not!

ANN

Oh my GOD, Ben. Message received.
Loud and clear. I'll get out the
Jello mold and the ice pick for my
lobotomy.

BEN

That's not--
(then)
I didn't say anything.

ANN

Okay.

BEN

I just want it to go smoothly. For
both of us.

ANN

Me too. Obviously. I just... I
don't know. I'm sorry.

BEN

It's fine. Is everything okay? You
look tired.

ANN
I haven't been sleeping well since
we moved.

BEN
We'll adjust. Eventually. Together.

ANN
I just wish it didn't have to be
like this.

BEN
No one is saying it has to. It's
just one party. Then the rest of
our lives, babe.

He rubs her shoulder, more awkward than reassuring. They
stand there, a chasm building between them. The dollhouse
watches, a fly on the wall.

LATER

Still in the dollhouse's POV, Ann sits on a chair in the
living room, scribbling on her drawing pad in frustration.
She throws the pad in anger, hitting the dollhouse.

ANN
No!

She rushes over, bending to pick up the drawing pad and
dropping into a kitchen chair in front of the dollhouse.

ANN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

She smooths out the damaged edges, then looks to us, giving a
once-over for any damage.

ANN (CONT'D)
You, too. I didn't mean it.

Ann stops, considering.

ANN (CONT'D)
Did you put the boxes away?

The dollhouse doesn't reply.

ANN (CONT'D)
I'm losing it. Wow. Less than a
week in the suburbs and I've gone
insane. And my dollhouse is on a
killing spree.

The dollhouse continues to ignore her. Rude.

She looks down at the drawing pad before holding it up to the dollhouse sheepishly. It's on a blank page. She hesitates, then leans in.

ANN (CONT'D)

I can't think of anything. Why
can't I think of anything? Is
something wrong with me?

Ann yawns a deep, bone-tired yawn. Then stares into the darkness longingly.

ANN (CONT'D)

I just want a good night's sleep.

She drops the pad on the table and stands, exiting the room.

Silence, then, a moment later she walks back in and up to the dollhouse.

ANN (CONT'D)

Just in case.

She closes the doors, shrouding us in darkness.

HOURS LATER

Darkness.

Darkness.

Darkness.

Then, the double doors slowly creak open.

The room empty and dark, lit only by moonlight. Still living in the dollhouse's POV.

A moment, and we *slowly rise from the table*.

Click clack.

That familiar sounds carries us as we turn back to the kitchen table, and the drawing pad sitting on it.

An outstretched hand with *razor sharp red nails* reaches for the pad--

HOUSEWIFE
Shhhhhhhhhhh...

The figure stands, motionless. Soothing Ann as she sleeps peacefully through the night.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The figure is gone. Ann rouses, looking well-rested for the first time since we've met her.

She smiles at the sunlight cutting through the blinds, then throws off the covers and slips out of bed, arching her back in a long and satisfying stretch.

She takes one step from around her side of the bed and trips, crashing to the ground *hard*.

ANN
DAMMIT!

She looks up from gripping her scraped knee, directly into the open doors of the dollhouse. A few broken shingles litter the floor around it.

ANN (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
You didn't put it there?

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE) (PRE-LAP)
No, Ann, why would I do that?

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - MORNING

Ann walks with her phone nestled between her shoulder and ear, holding the dollhouse with both hands.

ANN
I don't know, for fun?

She sets it down on the kitchen table on top of her drawing pad, placing the broken shingles in a pile next to it.

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
"For fun?"

She inspects the dollhouse, noticing imperfections and chipped paint she hadn't seen before.

ANN
Obviously, not what I meant, just
who else could have--

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
 (to the side)
 Yep, tell him I'm on my way!
 (back to Ann)
 Babe, I have to run. Maybe you're
 sleepwalking. How late were you up
 drawing?

She turns and paces the living room.

ANN
 Not late, I gave up after awhile--

BEN (V.O., ON PHONE)
 Uh huh. That's great. It's some of
 your best work. I think you should
 frame it.
 (to the side)
 I've got the report right here,
 staple on the bottom left like you
 asked!
 (whisper)
 I gotta go.

Click.

ANN
 Bye.

She lowers her phone. She sits with his words a moment.

Wait...

Her eyes dragging across the room back to the kitchen table.
 They land on the drawing pad, smothered by the dollhouse.

She approaches with trepidation, slowly lifting the dollhouse
 off of the drawing pad. Her eyes widen.

It's PENCIL SKETCH of a familiar young boy looking out at the
 neighborhood, ball at his feet. Their neighborhood, not the
 Doll Housing Development.

It's not particularly interesting. It's precise, it's clean,
 controlled pencil strokes right where they should be. It's
 just soulless. Devoid of heart or emotion.

But where did it come from?

Could this really have been her?

She'd remember it, right?

It was her dream, so it must be hers.

Right?

She traces the sketch with her finger. Is she... relieved? Good or not, *something* new is finally on the page...

An EMPTY SPACE in the lower right corner, and a pencil angled directly at the spot, waiting, enticing.

She picks up the pencil. A sick kind of wonder sets in. She looks to the dollhouse. It passes no judgement.

She puts the pencil and drawing pad to the side and stands.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Ann pulls a box labeled ART SUPPLIES from the stack.

She passes the unassuming chest freezer. We stay with it as she heads up the steps and flips off the light, throwing the basement into darkness.

A long pause, and then, almost imperceptibly...

...Knock... knock... knock... from inside the freezer.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - MONTAGE

- Ann throws NEWSPAPER over the kitchen table.
- A box of ACRYLIC PAINTS and BRUSHES is puked on the table.
- The dollhouse is set gingerly in the middle of the mess.
- A HOT GLUE GUN fires up.
- Ann gets to work. She painstakingly reattaches the broken shingles.
- A spot of STILL-DRYING BLOOD on a jagged shingle, left by her scraped knee. She licks her thumb and scrubs in vain.
- PINK and BLUE TUBES OF PAINT burst onto a PALETTE.
- She wets a brush in a MUG OF WATER -- the same mug from earlier.
- Delicately, she paints over the blood, new and old.
- All the while, murky, paint-mixed water seeps slowly from the cracks in the mug, soaking the newspaper.

END MONTAGE

She finds herself back at the drawing pad. She looks it up and down. Flips through the rest of the pad (we don't see her other drawings). Lands back at the new sketch.

MOMENTS LATER

She's on her computer, typing "sleepwalking but for drawing" and skims the AI Overview that generates above the search results before closing her laptop.

I/E. BEN'S CAR / NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

Ann navigates the confusing neighborhood, GPS directing her to her destination.

GPS (V.O.)
In 100 feet, turn right.

She turns right.

GPS (V.O.)
In 100 feet, turn left.

She turns left.

GPS (V.O.)
Rerouting. Rerouting.

ANN
That doesn't make any sense!!

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Ann meanders down the condiments aisle, dropping items in the shopping cart seemingly at random.

As she passes the various items, the digital price tags update. It makes no difference to her.

I/E. BEN'S CAR / NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

The GPS antagonizes her once more.

GPS (V.O.)
In 100 feet, turn right.

She focuses back on the road.

ANN
I don't believe you.

As soon as she turns right--

GPS
Rerouting. Rerouting.

She screams in frustration.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Ann wheels her wagon (previously for her art supplies) into the living room, now full of groceries.

She lets the cart go and plops down next to her drawing pad (was it there before?). She rolls her head toward the pad, the obnoxious sketch staring back at her.

Almost like a knee-jerk reaction, she pulls out her phone and -- CLICK! -- takes a photo. Looks the photo over, opens up a new text to Dani, and selects the photo.

Ann hesitates for just a second, then hits send. She looks around as if someone might've seen. It's just her.

Has the house gotten bigger somehow? She looks so small, so lost, so unsure of herself. She looks back to her phone--

HOURS LATER - NIGHT

It's pitch black except for her phone screen. The wagon of groceries sits untouched as she scrolls endlessly.

From down the hall, the sounds of a key turning in a lock.

Ann snaps her head that direction before shooting up, turning on whatever lights are within reach before sprinting with the wagon into the kitchen.

She busies herself putting things away as Ben enters the house, dropping his bag and kicking off his shoes.

BEN (O.S.)
Ann? I'm home!

ANN
In the kitchen!

Ben enters, all smiles.

BEN
Finally, we're fully stocked! I
love it!

Ann forces a smile back.

ANN

Should have everything we need for the barbecue. Are you hungry? Sorry, I just got back not that long ago so I didn't have time to make anything...

BEN

Oh, no. That's okay, I had a big lunch. Branch manager's treat for a great Q3, which I guess is a little stolen valor since I just got here but I think it's alright. Now I know what's at *steak* for Q4.

(he winks)

It was steak. They got us steaks.

Ann laughs too much. Ben joins her.

BEN (CONT'D)

Let me help you!

ANN

Oh, no, you don't have to do that--

He dips into one of the bags and pulls out some raw meat. He puts a hand on different spots of the packaging.

BEN

Weird. Little warm. Was the fridge working okay at the grocery store?

Ann takes it from him.

ANN

It was cold when I got it! The grocery store's probably just a little further away than we're used to. Not down the block anymore!

BEN

I can just pop these in the freezer downstairs--

ANN

No!

She's just as confused as Ben at her reaction.

ANN (CONT'D)

I'm serious, I got this. You worked all day. Go relax on the couch.

Ben relents and steps back, hands up.

BEN

I won't say no to the master of the house.

He crosses to the living room and drops onto the couch next to the drawing pad. He picks it up, eyes bouncing around the sketch. Soaking it all in. He runs a hand over the boy.

Ann notices Ben doing this and stops unpacking. Conflicted.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben's fast asleep. Ann stares at the ceiling next to him, wide awake. She snaps up and slips out of bed.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ann walks through the living room and into the kitchen, right up to the dollhouse on the table. Doors open wide.

She closes her eyes and takes a long, deep breath.

ANN

Is it really you?

Nothing...

ANN (CONT'D)

Hello?

Nothing...

Ann groans, throwing herself onto the couch.

Then--

The dollhouse silently *rises* from the table.

We see the shadow of the FIGURE rise, a gangle of limbs and bones and angles that can't possibly make sense. The shadow of the dollhouse sits on top, a grotesque Christmas star.

ANN (CONT'D)

What am I doing...

It moves silently toward her. As it does it morphs and changes, compressing and contorting into...

...A woman's figure in a shirtwaist dress and a white pinafore apron. Ann's dollhouse for a head.

HOUSEWIFE.

The dollhouse head faces forward, but the body beneath is backwards, revealing the apron cinched tightly in the back.

Ann sighs in defeat, oblivious as--

Her hands, red nails filed to a point, firmly grasp the dollhouse and *SNAP* it around, facing away from Ann.

Ann jumps at the sound, immediately regretting her choices. She lets out a shuddering breath as--

--*CLICK CLACK*--

This... *thing*... turns around to face her once more. What looks like two rows of teeth are suspended in the inky darkness within the dollhouse.

Ann steadies herself, still looking forward. Refusing to face the absurd incarnation of a children's plaything.

--*CLICK CLACK*--

She (we'll go with that) reaches Ann, leering over her. We can no longer see the dollhouse "head," only her torso.

ANN (CONT'D)

Hello?

Just as before, the sound is feminine, but distorted. Like it's still figuring out how to replicate being human.

HOUSEWIFE

It's nice to see you again, Ann.
It's been so long.

Ann fights to keep a calm tone as they converse.

ANN

...Again?

Ann holds her breath. Housewife says nothing, then runs a hand through Ann's hair.

HOUSEWIFE

Isn't that silly.

Ann nods slowly.

ANN

Why are you here?

Housewife laughs, sending a chill up Ann's spine.

HOUSEWIFE
That's funny. That's a funny question.

ANN
Why is it funny?

HOUSEWIFE
It's quite funny. I'm here because you asked!

ANN
I... I did?

Housewife's hand stops mid-stroke in Ann's hair.

HOUSEWIFE
Are we playing a game? It's not a very fun one.

ANN
What? It's not a game-- ahhh ahhh!

Ann squirms as Housewife digs into a clump of her hair, pulling at her roots.

HOUSEWIFE
If it's not a game then why are you pretending?

ANN
I don't know! I don't know!

As Housewife's anger grows, her voice distorts, almost like it's becoming unstable.

HOUSEWIFE
It would be impolite to ask for my help if you didn't need it. I don't tolerate lies, Ann. You know that.

Ann whimpers in pain and squeezes her eyes tightly, hiding from the pain as *flesh tears*.

HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)
You need me, Ann. You want this.

Ann's eyes go wide as the fear and realization set in.

EXT. PARK - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Ann holds the phone up to her ear after Ben just told her about the promotion. Knees weak.

She closes her eyes. Breathes deeply.

INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1990S - VISION

Ann white knuckles the dollhouse. She leans in to the opening and *whispers into the darkness*.

ANN

Please help me.

Ann slams the doors quickly, trapping her secret inside.

BACK TO PRESENT

Ann opens her eyes, a look of clarity on her face. No pain when she speaks. Almost surprised by her own realization.

ANN

Okay.

Housewife releases the tension on her hair. And just like that, she's gone. The dollhouse tumbles behind Ann and crashes to the ground, falling on its side.

It doesn't affect Ann.

INT. HOUSEWIFE

The darkness once more. When Housewife talks it rattles us from every angle. We're *inside* the dollhouse.

HOUSEWIFE (V.O.)

Then let's play.

EXT. JOHN & JULIA'S HOUSE - MORNING

John, rocking his usual bathrobe and tee combo, trots down to the mailbox at the end of the driveway with a whistle. He pops it open and sifts through the mail.

A blood-red card at the bottom of the stack catches his eye. He flips it over and tears it open, quickly reading the note.

It's written in generic, all caps handwriting. Almost like a typeface, but somehow in pen.

DEAR JOHN,

THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME FEEL WELCOME IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. THE TRUTH IS, I'M STILL FIGURING MYSELF OUT. AND YOU? YOU ARE A GREAT GUY — THAT MUCH I KNOW. TO PUT IT SIMPLY, YOU ARE NOT JUST A NEIGHBOR, YOU ARE A FRIEND.

FROM,

ANN

John looks off toward Ben & Ann's house, brow furrowed.

EXT. BEN & ANN'S HOUSE - MORNING

The front of the house is clean, plants and lawn manicured. Several BALLOONS are tied to the mailbox. A cheerful lawn sign reads "Welcome!"

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - MORNING

Ann opens the oven and slips a tray in. She's still dressed in sleep clothes, but looks well rested.

Ben thuds down the stairs as Ann turns around to meet him with her arm outstretched, perfectly timing delivering piping hot cup of coffee into his unsuspecting hand.

Their eyes meet and they share a smile.

BEN

Thank you.

ANN

Sure.

BEN

Good morning.

ANN

Good morning.

BEN

You been up for long?

ANN

A little. Getting a jump on things for later. Wanna see?

BEN

Sure.

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Ben and Ann stand at the open sliding glass door, the former's mouth agape.

The backyard is tastefully decorated: several more balloon bouquets, fresh cut flowers dot garden tables covered in red and white checkered tablecloths.

Coolers stocked, the grill sparkling and prepped for Ben. It's not overdone, but definitely more effort than needed to be put into it.

Some might see it as the American Dream.

ANN

Everything look okay?

Ben responds by pulling Ann in for a deep, passionate kiss. As long as we've known them, nothing's ever felt like this.

BEN

Thank you.

ANN

I just did what you asked.

BEN

I know. But... thank you.

(shaking his head)

I feel like the two of us aren't living the same 24 hours. I don't know how you've been getting all the stuff around the house done.

ANN

Perks of being a trophy wife.

She punches him in the arm playfully.

BEN

Is that how you see yourself?

ANN

Is that how you see me?

He smiles and walks over to his grill, running a hand along the meticulously laid out utensils. Lingers on the BBQ Fork.

BEN

I've been worried that you weren't going to see this as the gift it really is.

Ann's smile wavers for just a second.

ANN
I just needed some time, that's
all.

Ben nods, then looks around the idyllic backyard once more.

BEN
It's like there's two of you. When
do you sleep!

ANN
A woman never tells!
(then)
I'm gonna go get ready. You good to
hold down the fort while I'm gone?

Ben gives an exaggerated salute.

BEN
At your service, ma'am.

Ann returns the salute.

ANN
At ease, soldier.

She re-enters the house, leaving Ben to marvel.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Ann sits at her vanity. She can't stop looking at herself, entranced as she brushes her hair until--

Ann grimaces, flinching. She reaches back with both hands, gently parts her hair to reveal the sore spot, dried blood caked around it.

She pokes at it gently, wincing with each prod, before laying her hair back to cover the spot as best she can.

She runs the brush through the spot in a few fast-but-gentle strokes that clearly hurt.

MOMENTS LATER

Ann's finger, nail now meticulously painted a gentle pink, runs along a line of clothes in the closet. She stops at an option, and grabs the hanger to pull it out.

A familiar manicured hand snakes up her wrist in a half caress, half scold. Red nails sharpened to a point.

It pulls Ann's hand back a few options, directing her toward a different dress. Ann grabs it, and the hand retreats.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - MORNING

Ben inspects a living room wall now *covered* in drawings. Smack in the middle proudly hangs the DRAWING OF THE BOY.

Ann appears in the background, out of focus until she gets close to him. We catch the hint of a pastel dress. Even as Ben talks to Ann, he can't take his eyes off of the drawing.

BEN

You finally signed it.

Ann approaches. Sure enough, her signature fills the empty space at the bottom. A deal struck, signed in ink.

ANN

I did.

BEN

Were you waiting for something?

ANN

I don't know.

Ben turns, finally giving Ann a true up and down, as if he's seeing her for the first time.

She's wearing a PASTEL A-LINE DRESS and tasteful WEDGES. A department store mannequin come to life.

He pulls her into a TWIRL. Ann giggles like a teenager. After a few spins, he hugs her from behind. They look at the wall of art again together.

A closer look reveals the rest are in the same generic, inauthentic style. A lot of them feature the boy.

BEN

I bet he would be happy here.

Ann doesn't know what to say, but is mercifully saved by--

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

They both turn, startled, as the smoke detector wails in response to a PLUME OF SMOKE from the oven.

ANN

Shit!!!

She swings into action, yanking on an oven mitt and pulling a tray out of the oven. If at some point its contents resembled food, the resemblance is long gone.

Ben stands on a chair, fruitlessly fanning a dishcloth at the detector, before yanking it from the ceiling to silence it.

ANN (CONT'D)

Shit!!!

With a huff, he sits down on the chair.

BEN

Jesus. Hope that's not how the rest of the food is gonna turn out.

ANN

I'm so sorry, I must've forgotten to set a timer.

BEN

What were you even trying to make?

ANN

Doesn't matter now. We're down a dish. Do you think people will bring things?

BEN

They aren't supposed to, or, at least, they're not told to. But maybe someone will bring something.

He fails to hide an exasperated huff. Ann opens a window to air out the room when--

DING DONG!

Ann and Ben look at each other, both deer in headlights.

ANN

Who?

BEN

I don't know!

ANN

Ben! Why are people here *early*!!

BEN

I know! I don't know!

They both stare at each other.

BEN (CONT'D)
Should I--

ANN
YES! Obviously!

Ben tosses the dishcloth and smoke detector to Ann and rushes out to the front door. Ann drops the smoke detector on the counter and swats the swirling smoke toward the window.

The front door opens and Ann hears the muffled sounds of a greeting as she clocks the disfigured dish on the counter.

She crosses quickly, dropping it in the sink and shaking out her fingertips.

ANN (CONT'D)
Ow! Fuck! Ow!

She starts to rinse, the blackened mush bubbling over and funneling into the drain. It clogs almost immediately. She shoves the mush down and flips the switch by the sink on.

GRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!

The garbage disposal fires to life, unclogging the mess just as more takes its place. She flips it off.

The voices grow louder down the hall as--

Ann shoves again, hand down the drain and submerged in black gunk. She goes to pull her hand out when--

Housewife's hand grabs her arm at the wrist, forcing it to stay in the drain.

Ann freezes and looks up. Housewife's other hand is at the garbage disposal switch, finger hovering hungrily underneath.

Time stops. Ann breath shakes, as does her submerged arm, fighting against Housewife's supernatural grip. The voices down the hall vanish. It's just the two of them.

ANN (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Please... I'm sorry...

HOUSEWIFE (O.S.)
It took me a lot of time to make that, Ann. And now you can't even be trusted to take a dish out on time.

ANN
I know... I know...

HOUSEWIFE
This is why I have to take care of
you, Ann.

ANN
It won't happen again. Please...
I'm scared.

Housewife's horrible, jagged teeth are so close to Ann's ear.
A long string of thick saliva dangles from... somewhere
within the darkness.

HOUSEWIFE (O.S.)
I know you are. That's why I'm
doing it. Now say "thank you."

A shaky, strained breath.

ANN
Thank you--

GRRRRRRRRRRRR!

The garbage disposal grinds to life and Ann yelps, then looks
down to see her hand is out of the drain, safe.

A quick glance around. No Housewife. The voices from down the
hall come back into focus as Ann hurries to steady herself
and clean her filthy hands.

Ben steps in from the hall, trailed by John and a slender
woman we can only assume is Julia (40).

Ben and Julia are mid-convo, with John dutifully behind,
another covered tray in hand.

BEN
... Ann's done an amazing job
putting the house together while
I'm at work.
(calling out to her)
Ann! Come say hi!

Ann finishes scrubbing, tears mixing into the blackened,
soapy water pooling in the drain. Right hand bright red from
the hot water and vicious scrubbing.

ANN
One second!

Ann dries her hands, dabs her face quickly, and suddenly she's back on, turning with an award-winning smile plastered onto her face. She crosses to meet them.

BEN

Ann, I'd like you to meet my
project manager, Julia Horn--

JULIA

Ann! I've heard so much about you,
I feel like I already know you.

She pulls Ann in for a hug. Ben looks on, clearly thrown off.

ANN

You too! Excited to finally meet
the legend herself.

They separate and Ann steps to John, pointing at the tray.

ANN (CONT'D)

Is that what I think it is?

John shrugs.

JOHN

You got me. I'm a bit of a one
trick pony.

John looks to Ben, sheepish. Ben still confused. He doesn't like being the one out of the loop.

JOHN (CONT'D)

ANN

It's the famous Hornberger
eight layer bean dip. It's
really the eighth layer that
brings it all together.

It's really the eighth layer
that brings it all together.

Silence, then...

BEN

Well, okay! Sounds like I shouldn't
be the one making the
introductions!

ANN

John's the only neighbor who came
to introduce himself after we moved
in. And inspect our furniture.

Ann and John share a smile.

BEN
 Very kind, John. Very kind. Hey,
 I've got two beers with our names
 on 'em in the cooler outside. Yeah?

Ben takes the bean dip from John's hand and passes it
 thoughtlessly to Ann, who receives it awkwardly.

ANN
 Oh, yeah, sure.

JOHN
 Mmm, yeah. I think that's something
 I might be able to help you with.

Ann and Julia to watch them as they go.

BEN
 Is something wrong with our
 furniture?

JOHN
 We're both going to need a drink
 before I open that particular can
 of worms...

They step outside and their conversation fades out. The two
 stand awkwardly for a moment.

DING DONG! DING DONG!

They both look to the front hallway, then at each other.

JULIA
 You ready?

ANN
 I don't think I have a choice--

LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - LATER

We crash into full on party mode. It's just a lot of BUSINESS
 BROS in quarter zips and their BUSINESS WIVES (all late 20s
 to late 30s) in sundresses and rompers.

Maybe "full on party mode" is generous.

We stay in the POV of a DRINK TRAY being carried by a
 feminine arm, dipping in and out of conversations. None of
 them acknowledge the tray or holder when they take drinks.

BUSINESS BRO #1
You hear Guy Ritchie and Jason
Statham are doing another movie
together?

BUSINESS BRO #2
No way dude. "Wrath of Man" is so
fucking good.

Then:

JULIA
How old is your daughter?

BUSINESS WIFE #1
Three and a half. Her new thing is
begging us to go to Chili's every
time a commercial comes on.

Then:

BUSINESS BRO #3
My car's seat warmers are broken.

BUSINESS WIFE #2
Oh, that's not that big of a deal.

BUSINESS BRO #3
Well, I'd like them to work.

We pass by the bathroom as BUSINESS BRO #4 exits with
BUSINESS BRO #5 waiting. They fist bump.

BUSINESS BRO #4
(laughing)
We're all in the rotation.

BUSINESS BRO #5
The rotation is happening.

Then, to GAVIN (late 20s):

GAVIN
I made 3k on Kalshi last night
because they still haven't found
the bodies.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

We continue outside into the classic Norman Rockwell/Stepford
Wives adjacent barbecue.

BUSINESS WIFE #3 holds up her phone with the front facing camera on, beckoning BUSINESS WIFE #4 over.

BUSINESS WIFE #3
Come over here and look sad with me!

Then, to JOSH (late 20s) talking to a Business Wife:

JOSH
My grandpa has so much shit in his basement.

BUSINESS WIFE #5
Aw, cute!

JOSH
He's gonna fucking die and were gonna have to go through all of it.

Then:

BUSINESS WIFE #6
In January the school participated in something called a "simulation..."

The tray passes John in conversation. He smiles at the holder as he takes a drink.

JOHN
McCartney put out a new single off his album. Unbelievable.

We end with one drink left on the tray at a group of BROS and WIVES, including Ben. BRETT, the Business Bro Final Boss, stands with his arm around his wife, HEATHER (both late 30s).

BRETT
(gesturing to Ben)
...You'll love this one, Happy Feet.

BEN
Alright, Brett, you got me.

The group laughs and Ben joins in, loud enough to hide how annoyed the comment made him.

BRETT

Heather was out of town for the weekend visiting her sister in Franklin, so it was me alone babysitting the kids for the weekend.

BEN

Oh boy here we go!

BRETT

I know. I know. But you gotta do it for family!

Heather gives him a rehearsed eye roll and a smile.

BRETT (CONT'D)

We made it work, we had some fun, shot some hoops, but these kids... they were just hanging on me the whole time. Just touching me nonstop. And I'm not like that, you know, my old man shipped me off to boarding school the second he could.

It draws a huge laugh.

BRETT (CONT'D)

So, anyway, she *finally* gets back from her sister's on Sunday and, you know, we're in bed that night and she leans over to give me a kiss--

Some "Ooo's" and laughter in the group. A larger group has gathered to listen as Heather covers her face in embarrassment.

BUSINESS BRO #4 (O.S.)

Get it!

BUSINESS WIFE #3

Yeah Heather!

BRETT

--Buttttt! But! I still feel like I got fire ants all over me from the kids climbing on me for two days straight and I *freak*! I don't know what came over me but I shoot up out of bed, like, out of breath.

(MORE)

BRETT (CONT'D)

And Heather looks at me like I just
shot someone in front of her and
goes...

He gestures to a giggly, embarrassed Heather. She waves him
off. He turns back to the crowd.

BRETT (CONT'D)

"You've never said no before!"

It brings the house down. We see now that pretty much
everyone has gathered to catch the end.

He reaches over and grabs the last drink off the tray and
takes a huge swig.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Shit!

We swing around and see Ann holding the tray, eyes wide. We
swing back around -- all eyes are on Ann, with baited breath.

Brett forcefully swallows with a huge *GULP*.

He puts an arm around Ann and immediately BELCHES.

BRETT (CONT'D)

You make a *mean* cocktail. Where the
hell've you been hiding her, Ben!

The tension is snapped, the crowd heartily laughing. Ann
exhales with a weak smile. He gives her a few playful shakes
before releasing her.

JOHN

AND she's an artiste!

BRETT

No shit!

BUSINESS WIFE #6

Ben, you didn't tell us your wife
was an artist!

BEN

And a helluva one at that. I think
the move and the new space has been
good for the creativity, and all
that. Gave her some time to focus
on the things that matter.

Ann and Ben lock eyes for just a second. You'd swear his eyes
twinkled. He addresses the captive crowd -- it's his turn
with the spotlight.

BEN (CONT'D)

Honestly, between putting the house together and her art, I'm just lucky she has time for me at all!

BRETT

You'll have to show us some of her pieces, man.

BEN

I'll give you the whole tour when you and Heather come over for dinner.

HEATHER

What other little secrets are you hiding from us, Ben?

BUSINESS BRO #3

Ben, what's it like being married to an artist? Are you *deep* enough for her? HEH.

Guffaws all around, Business Wife #3 elbows her respective Bro in the side.

The conversation devolves into unintelligible chatter as Ann's physically edged out of the group.

She stands outside of the revelry as the writhing mass of upper middle class chugs on.

She slips the tray under her arm and backs away from the crowd, slinking to the back door. Something resembling pride settles on her face. If this was all a test, she passed.

She's about to step inside when Josh exits and IMMEDIATELY slams into her, drink in hand upending entirely onto the front of her dress.

ANN

Oh my God!

JOSH

My G&T!!

Ann stands there, soaking wet. She looks to the party, everyone now looking their way. A fake smile quickly pops back on Ann's face.

ANN (CONT'D)

So sorry about that, let me throw something dry on and I'll refresh that for you!

She takes the empty glass from him and steps inside. We stay with Josh as he snakes through the chattering crowd to Ben.

JOSH

Bro.

BEN

Hey, Josh. Sorry about that.

JOSH

Ah, all good. Managed to stay dry so we're chillin'.

BEN

Good, good.

JOSH

You said something last week about have a set of clubs...

BEN

Oh, hell yeah! They're in the basement, I'll grab them for you--

JOSH

Bro, don't even sweat it. Enjoy your party, I can run and grab 'em.

BEN

You sure?

JOSH

Totally, bro. Gotta christen the new house!

He dips back toward the house as Ben watches him go.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

The basement light POPS on as Josh thuds down the steps and straight to the clubs.

JOSH

That's what I'm *talkin'* about.

He picks the bag up and looks up. For a split second we see the DOLLHOUSE sitting on top of the freezer, staring at him. *Lines of red* run down the side of the freezer.

The overhead bulb flickers and then dies, throwing us into darkness.

He sets the clubs back down, stepping cautiously in the dark toward the faint outline of the dollhouse. The plastic tarp swishes underfoot until the last two steps to the freezer--

SQUELCH! SQUELCH!

JOSH (CONT'D)
What the hell?

He lifts up a shoe up but can't make anything out.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Damn... that's *not* what I'm talkin'
about...

He sighs, then turns his attention to the dollhouse. Running a hand along the one-of-a-kind craftsmanship...

GAVIN (O.S.)
Bro! You find the clubs?

Josh picks up the dollhouse and calls over his shoulder.

JOSH
Yeah, bro! I'm about to go sicko
mode on my short game.

GAVIN (O.S.)
Yessir!

JOSH
Yessir!

He turns and takes it with him, one handing it as he swings the clubs over his shoulder and thuds back up the stairs.

In the soft light from the first floor that manages to reach the stairs we catch the glint of deep red shoe prints...

The shoe prints are swallowed in darkness as the basement door closes with a TH--

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

--UD.

Ann leans against the now closed bedroom door in her soaked dress. Deep breath. She crosses to the window, blinds open, and looks out over the party.

Subconsciously, she pulls out and starts to fiddle with the Dani's lighter, absentmindedly sparking it over and over. Watching her new life play out in front of her eyes.

In the deep background behind her the door *slowly cracks open*. A figure slips in, soundlessly closing it behind them.

DANI
Yellow Wallpaper time already?

ANN
AH oh my GOD!

Ann whips around, anger immediately melting into excitement.

ANN (CONT'D)
Dani! What are you doing here?

She puts her hands behind her back, obscuring the lighter.

DANI
Ben invited me. Thought it might
help you get through this--

Dani steps up to the window next to her, surveying the scene.

DANI (CONT'D)
--shit show. What kind of freaks
make someone host their own welcome
party.

ANN
I know. It's a whole thing. Someone
spilled their drink on me so I came
up to change.
(then)
Ben really did that?

Dani nods.

DANI
Not such a bad guy.

ANN
There's probably worse.

Dani procures a joint from her pocket.

DANI
Got a light?

Ann holds up the lighter and sparks it. They both giggle.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Ben mans the grill while John keeps him company.

JOHN

... There's just some pretty noticeable wear and tear on basically every piece of furniture they've passed off to us as "new." It's an epidemic.

(then)

But I wish no harm on the employees. Just to be clear.

BEN

Mhmm. I see. I see. How do you want your burger?

JOHN

Oh, medium please.

BEN

Cool.

They stand together awkwardly for a moment.

JOHN

Where are your folks? Are they close by?

BEN

Nah. Florida. Classic sold the house off and flew south a few years ago once they were empty nesters.

JOHN

Mine did the same. Arizona.

BEN

Oh, yeah. Sure. You see them often?

JOHN

Holidays and all that.

BEN

Same.

JOHN

What about Ann's parents?

Ben makes a face, focusing hard on the grill.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What? Something wrong?

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - DAY

THUNK!

A golf ball **RICOCHETS** off of the front of the dollhouse, chipping away at some of the paint.

BACK TO SCENE

Ben thinks, then looks to John.

BEN

Ann's parents died. When she was a kid.

JOHN

Oh my God, that's horrible. I had no idea.

BEN

She doesn't talk about it. Ever.

JOHN

Do you know what happened?

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - DAY

THUNK!

Another puts a dent in one of the faux windows. The wood snapping with a tiny *POP!*

BACK TO SCENE

Ben shakes his head.

BEN

She was asleep in her room when it happened. Apparently her mom had a screw loose and they were having a blowout argument, so the police just assumed she killed him and herself when things got too heated. Ann bounced around foster care until she was 18.

(then)

Don't talk to her about it, though. I think it's one of those things that can't be fixed. You know?

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - DAY

THUNK!

Another takes out a couple shingles.

We see that they've set up the now beat up dollhouse in the living room. Around it lays a dozen-odd golf balls.

JOSH

Damn. Must be a par 4. Maybe I'd do better if we bet on it?

GAVIN

Nowwww we're talkin'!

The sliding glass door slides open and in comes John, a little shellshocked and surprised to not be alone.

JOSH

Sup, soccer mom. You wanna get in on this?

John smiles weakly.

JOHN

Oh, hey Josh. Gavin. No, I'm good. Just came in for the little boy's room. I'm not much of a golfer.

GAVIN

Neither are we, apparently.

The two dudes snicker. John puts his head down and continues on. Then stops and turns as Gavin lines up a shot.

JOHN

Did Ann say it was okay to use that?

JOSH

Who's Ann?

JOHN

Ben's... wife.

JOSH

Ohhhh right. Right. Yeah, totally. Ben said it was chill to try out his clubs.

Gavin SINKS ONE, straight down the dollhouse's gullet.

GAVIN
BOOYAH!

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Muffled whoops and cheers continue from downstairs. Ann and Dani lay on the bed, passing the joint back and forth.

DANI
What was that?

ANN
One of them probably found out they don't have to pay child support for some bastard child they had in high school.

DANI (V.O., ON PHONE)
I didn't know my dad got a new job!
Good for him.

ANN
Yeah, he's always not-asking about you. It's cute.

They both laugh.

ANN (CONT'D)
I missed you.

DANI
I missed you too.
(then)
Hey, what's up with this new art style you got going on?

ANN
Do you like it?

DANI
Do you?

Ann smiles, then pads her dress.

ANN
Pretty dry. I probably don't have to change. We should get back.

She slips off the bed toward the door. Dani rolls her eyes.

DANI
You're not slick. You know that, right?

ANN

What?

DANI

Do you actually think people don't notice when you just completely change the subject and bail mid-conversation?

ANN

That's not what I'm doing...

DANI

Okay. Then do you like what you're drawing?

ANN

Are you really hung up on this? That's so stupid. I'm going downstairs--

DANI

You just did it again!

ANN

Did *what*!

DANI

Bail! You bail when things get hard! You're always looking for the easiest way out instead of tolerating, like, one second of discomfort. It's why you agreed to move here instead of toughing it out, right?

Ann stares her down, then heel turns, throws open the door, and leaves.

DANI (CONT'D)

(yelling after her)

This is continuing to prove my point!

I/E. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN / BACKYARD - DAY

Gavin crouches at the dollhouse's entrance. He reaches inside and searches superficially, no dice.

He plops onto his stomach, eye level with the complete darkness inside.

His hand goes in. No luck. Then his elbow. Then his bicep. He's almost up to his shoulder in the house. Which shouldn't be physically possible. No ball to be found.

GAVIN
What the fuck...

JOHN
Uhm, I think something's wrong...

He continues wiggling around, arm fully inside, as Ann walks into the living room in a huff. She immediately clocks the scene in full-blown terror.

JOSH
Yo, bro, quit messing around it's
my turn--

ANN
STOP! TAKE YOUR HAND OUT OF THERE
NOW--

SQUELCH.

We watch Ann's face react to the inevitable.

A pained groan from Gavin, but he doesn't scream.

We bounce between Ann, John, and Josh as their eyes track something growing taller and taller. Horror and wonder on their faces. But mostly horror.

Housewife, in all of her glory. Gavin dangles in the air by his arm, still submerged in the never-ending dark.

Blood dribbles onto the floor, pooling at Gavin's suspended feet. No one moves. No one speaks. No one breathes.

SQUELCH.

CRUNCH.

THUD.

The body drops to the floor, arm severed below the shoulder.

The rest of the arm is lost to the darkness. Housewife's jagged teeth stained red.

Blood spreads fast and furious, quickly reaching Josh's shoes.

His singular brain cell kicks in as he looks at the blood, then the basement door, then his newly amputated friend, and finally Housewife.

As if woken from a trance, he turns heel and sprints for the door to the backyard.

He's almost made it. He's at the glass--

THWOOM-ACK!

Something SHOOTs across the room. Josh is still for just a moment before crumpling clumsily into the door, collapsing.

A perfect hole straight through his skull.

Lodged into the glass door is the GOLF BALL. Glass fractals branch through the splatter of blood.

Ann and John dare not move a muscle.

Through the cracks of the door, all eyes are on Josh's now folded body. Also stunned and unmoving.

HOUSEWIFE (O.S.)

Hole in one!

Ann whips around to face her. Housewife stands playfully with a club over her shoulder. She glances down at her now blood-splattered apron.

HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)

Oh well. Nothing a little peroxide and elbow grease won't fix!

She takes a step toward Ann. Ann takes a step back, slipping on the blood pooling around her feet.

HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)

I've been cleaning up a lot of your messes, Ann. Something must be done about that.

Ann fights to keep calm amidst the carnage.

ANN

I... I'm trying my best. That's all I can do. Right?

HOUSEWIFE

I'm not sure that's true, Ann--

The faint sound of the sliding glass door opening draws Ann and Housewife's attention.

John, caught in the act, stands half in and half out.

ANN

John. Please.

His gaze moves frantically between the two halves. Ann on one side, the party full of people, his wife included, on the other. Back and forth, back and forth. Agonizingly.

It's a moral dilemma.

Some might call it... the trolley problem.

ANN (CONT'D)

John?

His eyes focus on Julia. The lever has been pulled.

In an instant, John slams the door shut, grabs a chair and blockades the door, trapping Ann inside. Several of the partygoers join the cause, piling everything they can.

JOHN

I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY,
I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY!

Ann, runs to the glass and yanks the handle in vain as John steps backward, overtaken by partygoers setting up defenses.

ANN

Let me out! Let me OUT!!

Ann bangs fruitlessly on the door as Ben fights and shoves the sea of people to get to Ann. It's futile. The fight drains from Ann. Arms dropped, breathing labored.

Housewife leers behind her, impatient.

HOUSEWIFE

Mm. That's no way to treat your
host.

(sighs)

Our guests have overstayed their
welcome, Ann. I'll take care of it.

ANN

Wait, no, don't!

Ann whips around to an empty room as the golf club clatters to the floor.

John stands in the center of the mob. He takes one more step back, directly into the waiting bloody apron of Housewife.

In one slick motion, she reaches over his shoulder, and with her pointer finger nail, cuts his throat.

CUT TO BLACK.

**I.E. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN / BACKYARD - DAY - MASSACRE
MONTAGE**

We can't see much, but what we do see is soundtracked by all-consuming, nerve-shredding SCREAMS. In between stark silence. The same sounds of suffering from her dreams.

As the montage progresses, Housewife's prim and proper physique starts to become... undone.

Like we saw before, her limbs elongate at odd angles. An otherworldly, four-legged monster.

- Ann watching in horror through the barricaded glass, blood splatters in wet thuds.

- Julia holds John's body as he bleeds out.

- Housewife pulls the severed arm from the darkness within her and uses it to whack Brett's knee out.

- A Business Wife is stabbed in the abdomen by Housewife with a feminine and delicate flourish.

- A Business Bro is strangled by his tie. His neck snaps -- Housewife kindly fixes his tie after she's done with him.

- Ann vomits.

- Chaos of bodies pushing, bleeding, falling, dying.

- A pointed leather pump is lifted up, up, up, and brought down with terrifying force directly into Heather's eye.

- Ann falls to her knees, screaming, helpless inside.

- Ben picks up a BBQ Fork from the grill, giving a warning jab at Housewife.

- Housewife has Ben's face pressed onto the grill.

- Ann screams, but all we hear is RINGING.

- Dazed, she takes a step back and slips on the thick coat of blood on the floor, slamming her head. She's out cold.

END MONTAGE

A moment, then Housewife's head turns ever so slightly.

I/E. DANI'S CAR / BEN & ANN'S HOUSE / NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - NIGHT

Dani throws herself into her car, turns the key, and guns it.

DANI

What the fuck what the fuck what
the fuck what the fuck what the
fuck what the fuck what the fuck...

She makes a few turns and is immediately lost.

DANI (CONT'D)

How the FUCK do you get out of
here!!!

She digs her phone out of her pocket for directions. Dead.

DANI (CONT'D)

This is so CLICHÉ!!!

Throwing her phone down in anger, she makes a few more turns and, in the darkness, nearly crashes into--

Housewife, body elongated and disfigured, towering 10 feet tall, standing in the middle of the street!

Dani screams and swerves instinctually, crashing into a car parked... in front of... Ben and Ann's house...

DANI (CONT'D)

Fuck. Shit. Fuck. Shit.

Dani stumbles out of the car, wincing as she drags herself back into the house. Housewife follows soundlessly.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Dani stumbles into the foyer, slamming and locking the door before turning deeper into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dani surveys what little of the massacre she can see in the moonlight. From the foyer, the front door opens.

HOUSEWIFE (O.S.)
 Do you really think I don't have a
 key to my own home? That's so
 silly!

Dani panics, looking wildly for somewhere to go. Eyes landing on the basement door.

She shuffles as quietly as she can, slipping into the--

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Dani winces with every creak the steps make. She steps into the basement proper in complete darkness. Pads her pockets.

DANI
 (sotto)
 Fuck. Dead. Fuck.
 (then)
 Wait!

A spark! The trusty lighter ignites. She surveys the boxes... the freezer... the blood... running from the freezer and onto the floor... her look of horror mounting...

CLICK!

The basement door opens.

Then, the *CLICK CLACK* of Housewife's heels.

No other choice. Dani kills the lighter and slips the freezer open, lowering herself in and closing the lid just as--

CLICK CLACK.

Housewife's appears on the steps.

Inside the freezer, Dani shivers as--

CLICK CLACK.

CLICK CLACK.

Dani sparks the lighter, surveying. Her breath comes out in a cloud of vapor.

She moves the lighter around, bringing into the light behind her the *gaunt, nearly dead visage of the PropRes employee!*

WOMAN
 Ughhghhgh...

Dani immediately covers her mouth to stifle a scream, turning slowly to come face to face with the poor employee.

MAN (O.S.)

Ugggghh...

ANOTHER?? This one from the other end of the freezer. Dani struggles to not lose her shit as she holds the lighter out.

Sure enough, her poor husband, caught in the crossfire of corporate cost cutting, is nestled at the other end. His mouth and jaw completely removed from his head.

CLICK CLACK.

Much closer now. Dani kills the lighter.

CLICK CLACK.

We're in total darkness now.

CLICK CLACK.

Then, nothing. For a painfully long time.

ANN

Why are you hiding from me?

It almost sounds like Ann. But something's not right... When the voice talks again they meld together.

ANN/HOUSEWIFE

Was it something I said?

The freezer rips open.

Dani whimpers. From somewhere in the darkness...

HOUSEWIFE

Hello, Dani.

DANI

How... How do you know my name?

HOUSEWIFE

You almost ruined the surprise.
This won't do.

Dani SCREAMS.

Then, silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - MORNING

The scene as we left it. The bodies of Josh and Gavin strewn across the floor, submerged in a thick mix of their blood. Golf ball lodged in the screen door, barricade intact.

Bodies rotting in the backyard.

The quiet sound of running water as, in the kitchen, Housewife, elbow high rubber gloves on, finishes cleaning the grime off of the tray Ann burned the day before. In her normal form once more.

She sets the tray next to the sink to dry next to the unplugged smoke detector.

Then, as if in a trance, she watches as the rest of the blackened mush swirls down the drain. It's hypnotic, soothing, calming...

Housewife pulls herself away, looking into the living room. Much work to be done. She kills the sink.

Housewife clicks on the small AM/FM radio.

RADIO DJ #3

Happy Sunday folks. It's your pal,
The Biggest Bambino playing you
songs of yesteryear every Sunday
from now until forever. Here's
another classic. Who am I kidding,
they're all classics!

A Doo-wop like "Yakety Yak" by The Coasters kicks in.

CLEANUP MONTAGE

- Housewife open the door to the backyard, the poorly made barricade of folding chairs and tables toppling.
- She effortlessly picks up one of the bodies by the ankle and tosses it into the yard, landing with a *THUD*.
- The second body flies outside just as easily.
- A scrub brush is dunked into a bucket of soapy water.
- Housewife, on her hands and knees, scrubs and scrubs. The brush instantly stained red.
- Dunked back in the bucket.
- Bucket of bloody water dumped outside.

- Rinse and repeat.
- Peels the bloody golf ball from the sliding door.
- Drops the putter and the ball back into Ben's golf bag.
- From the basement, we see light as the door opens. The golf bag is CHUCKED down the stairs, landing carelessly at the base. The door shuts again.

END MONTAGE

If you weren't looking hard, you'd say everything was back to normal. Except for the bloody, golf ball sized hole in the glass door. And a neighborhood's worth of bodies outside.

The Doo-wop song fades as we find Housewife standing in the millennial grey bathroom off of the living room.

She inspects herself in the vanity mirror, running a hand over the damage wrought to her by Gavin and Josh.

She finds a partially broken broken shingle and finishes the job, tossing it in the trash can. Then back to the mirror.

Her other hand rests at her side, absentmindedly sparking Dani's lighter.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Outside, Housewife crouches in the sea of corpses. Ben looks up at her, unmoving. Grill marks pressed into half his face.

HOUSEWIFE

You won't mind if I borrow these,
will you, sweetie? How pretty they
are!

She digs *under his eye sockets*, methodically removing both eyes from his head with a horrifying SQUELCH.

Lifting her dollhouse head to the sky, she carefully slots the eyeballs in. As if putting in a pair of contacts.

We don't see what she looks like as she turns, surveying the rest of the carnage.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The final drone of Housewife's white noise rings out.

HOUSEWIFE (O.S.)
 ...Shhhhhhhhhh...

A red-nailed hand pinches a sleeping Ann's nose. Ann wakes with a deep breath and a cough.

Despite it all, she looks well-rested. Hair curled, makeup perfect. A porcelain sheen. Like a doll.

She sits up quickly, taking in her surroundings. She's alone. All is as it was. The blinds are still drawn.

Ann slips out of bed, revealing she's fully dressed in a 1950's vintage children's Sunday best dress.

She clocks it, picking at the light fabric and letting it fall delicately back against her body.

She looks to the window, then steps to it, fiddling with the lift cord. Knowing what's on the other side.

She lets the lift cord go, heel turning and exiting.

I/E. FOYER / ~~BEN~~ & ANN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Ann steps up to the wide open front door, a pair of work boots set neatly just inside.

On the front porch sits an abandoned mail cart, some of its contents puked onto the ground. The wind carries a few letters past a postal worker's abandoned hat.

Down the hall behind her, a flash of color as Housewife crosses from the living room to the kitchen.

Ann turns and just misses her. She pads toward the inevitable.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

We stay on Ann as she steps in. She gasps and covers her mouth in surprise and horror.

HOUSEWIFE (O.S.)
 Good morning, Ann. You're looking
 very well rested. I'm sure you're
 hungry.

And then we see it. Front and center, arranged carefully on the dressed kitchen table, is the MISSING COUPLE -- our PropRes employee and her husband.

Still alive, intentionally, cruelly.

Their stomachs are carved out, excavated to the core. Their organs, still pulsing defiantly with life, intertwine in a grotesque mosaic.

The emptied nooks where their organs used to be, are filled with bunches of grapes and olives. A selection of crackers is tastefully splayed around their figures.

A bottle of expensive olive oil begs to be poured. A jam-of-sorts lay waiting with a mother of pearl spoon. A slick, clean kitchen knife stabbed into the middle of the display.

Their jagged breaths pierce the silence.

A feast.

HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)

I know it's a lot, but we'll have
plenty of leftovers to get us
through the rest of the week!

Ann finally looks to Housewife, standing proudly over her magnum opus. She yelps, blinking back involuntary tears.

Housewife stares back with her two new eyes suspended in the inky darkness within the dollhouse. She blinks Ben's eyes. When she talks, the two rows of teeth move cartoonishly.

HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)

Oh, yes. I thought it might help
us... see eye-to-eye. I'm always
trying to better myself, to better
help you!

Ann's head is swimming as she scans the rest of the room. All of the blinds are drawn, white curtains pulls across the sliding glass door.

Outside, unnatural darkness mixes with a blend of oranges and reds. *Snapping* and *popping* comes into focus. A fire.

Housewife steps in front of the curtains, walking around to the living room and pulling Ann's attention.

HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)

Once your tummy's full, I thought
we could play your favorite game.

Housewife steps into a makeshift setup of Ann and Dani's art project. An empty stool in front of Ann's easel.

A terrified Dani sits at another, gagged and bound to a kitchen chair. She looks to Ann, pleading in her eyes.

In front of the easels sits a MAILMAN (50s), equally terrified and confused beyond words. His uniform bloody, and also bound to a kitchen chair.

Ann's half of the sign sits paired to another, wrong makeshift half of Dani's sign.

It reads:

**WE DRAW PORTRAITS! NO CATCH!
ALL TO DO IS TELL US
WHO YOU LIKE MORE
And then after we promise you
hurt our feelings.
So it is many times :)**

DANI

ANN

|||| |||| ||||
|||| |||| ||||

Ann's stunned into silence. Housewife narrows her eyes.

HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)
I worked very hard putting all of
this together. Where are your
manners, Ann?

Ann chokes on her words.

ANN
... Sorry. Yes. Thank you.

Smoke seeps under the sliding glass door.

HOUSEWIFE
Excellent. I just want to make your
life as easy as possible. I always
have. And I always will.

**INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT - 1990S -
FLASHBACK**

Young Ann pulls the dollhouse from her shelf and slides to the floor. Undoes the golden clasp and opens the front doors.

LIGHTNING STRIKES, then... CRASH-OOM! A plate shatters against the wall as thunder booms. Fearful, Young Ann leans in to the house's opening.

YOUNG ANN
(whispering)
I wish they would stop fighting.

She slams the doors quickly, trapping her secret inside, before setting the dollhouse aside and curling into a ball. The sounds of the storm continue to battle the fight below.

Behind her, the dollhouse starts to rise. Housewife stands to her full height, stepping over Young Ann and exiting.

From the bedroom we see Housewife *CLICK CLACK* down the hall and stairs until she disappears. The storm and her parents' fight rage on. The argument comes into focus just as--

ANN'S FATHER
What the fuck?--

Housewife dispatches him quickly. He sputters, then collapses with a *THUD*. Then, a woman's piercing scream is cut short. A second *THUD*.

We turn back to the bedroom and Young Ann still in a ball. Her eyes open, frozen in fear. She heard it all.

A BLOODIED Housewife steps back over her, then descends back into just a simple, handcrafted dollhouse.

The clasp on the double doors latches with a quiet *click*.

END FLASHBACK

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - DAY

The unplugged smoke detector still sits on the kitchen counter. In the background, the employee and her husband are finally dead. It looks like someone's taken a few bites...

Ann sits at her easel in a daze. Dried blood cakes the outside of her mouth.

HOUSEWIFE
You'll never have to worry about
anything ever again. Not while I'm
here.

Behind her, Housewife stands over one shoulder. Over the other, smoke actively pours into the house from outside.

Ann stares at the blank easel. Then to her right. A helpless Dani looks back, tears streaming down her face.

Behind Ann, Housewife bends to ear-level. Her eyes bulging. Teeth clicking. Weight heavy on Ann's shoulder.

HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)

I'm so excited to see what you
create, darling.

Housewife gingerly picks up Ann's hand, slots a pencil into it, and guides Ann's hand across the drawing pad.

Smoke continues to pour into the house. Then, a tiny spark on the curtain. It catches on fire and starts to spread--

CUT TO BLACK.

"Sunset for the Dead" by Tommy Newport over credits.

THE END