

The Dreamer

by

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FADE IN:

1 INT. LIVING/DINING ROOM - MORNING (DAY 1)

1

BIRDSONG can be heard from outside. The morning sun streams through the window of a modest living room with a 4-chair shabby chic dining table that could do with another makeover and a fruit bowl in the middle with BRUISED AND AGED FRUIT; a couch that has been pummeled into submission over the years. There are picture hooks on the wall but NO PICTURES. An old mirror hangs, the GLASS IS CRACKED. A couple of smiling feline china statues on the shelf have been GLUED BACK TOGETHER more than once.

FIONA, 40, thin almost to the point of unhealthy, blonde hair tied up in a messy bun, stands at the window in her dressing gown, looking out but seeing nothing. We see her in PROFILE ONLY. She is a little gaunt beneath the cheekbones, but otherwise she appears just as ordinary as any other just-risen adult.

A THUMPING from somewhere in the house upstairs. FIONA looks up at the ceiling and swallows.

Footsteps drum on the stairs and OWEN, 40, appears behind her in a cheap suit. He is not a tall man, but he is broad across the shoulders with thick arms and neck.

FIONA turns with a DOUBLE-BARREL SHOTGUN in her hands and shoots him square in the chest. The force of the blast throws OWEN backwards.

He lies on the floor, his eyes in a glassy stare, blood pooling around him.

Footsteps drum on the stairs, and FIONA is back in her original position, still staring out of the window. She blinks back to reality.

OWEN appears behind her with a mug of coffee.

OWEN
Morning, darling.

FIONA stiffens, continues to stare out of the window.

OWEN slugs down the last of his coffee, puts the mug on the table and picks up his briefcase from a writing desk in the corner.

OWEN(CONT'D)

I've got a golf day with the guys tomorrow. Polish my clubs, will you? Don't let me down, okay?

FIONA

I won't.

OWEN

That's my girl.

He goes to kiss her goodbye on the cheek, but hesitates. He tuts and smiles, as if with a lovable child who has been caught with chocolate all over their face. He holds her chin and moves her face to the side so that he can kiss her other cheek. Only then do we see the black bruise along FIONA's cheekbone.

OWEN leaves. The door slams shut and FIONA breathes out. She turns away from the window and drifts through the house like a trauma victim.

2 INT. LIVING ROOM - NOON (DAY 1)

2

FIONA is dressed. She wears a long-sleeved blouse and floor-length skirt. Her hair is washed although has little style to it. She stands at the mirror and dabs make-up over the bruise expertly using more than one concealer. This isn't the first time she's done this.

Finally, she turns each way so that the light runs across her face as she compares her cheekbones. Apart from a slight swelling, no one would guess she was hiding a bruise.

She gazes at herself in the mirror. She appears vulnerable, wide-eyed and as startled as a fawn. She takes a couple of deep breaths, hardens her expression then turns away to the door.

3 INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON (DAY 1)

3

FIONA bustles in through the door, carrying shopping bags and mail. She dumps it all on the table and goes through the mail. They are all addressed to "Owen Pietersen". There are a couple of Final Demands, which she pauses over briefly. She holds one up to the light but can't see anything.

She flicks through the usual junk mail of pizza takeaways, roofing services and garden maintenance. She pauses over a small flyer stuck to a burger joint advert. It is nondescript, the imagery is serene, comforting even. It

reads:

"Overstreet Shelter for Abused Women"

FIONA reads it then shoves it in with the rest of the junk mail and takes it with the shopping through to the kitchen.

4 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON (DAY 1) 4

FIONA sits at the table with a damp rag and toothbrush cleaning Owen's golf clubs. A tub of soapy water and a bottle of chrome polish sit on the table alongside a dozen shining clubs. She works hard to get the mud and dried grass out of the crevices.

She looks up at the clock on the wall. It is nearly six o'clock. She closes her eyes and sighs.

5 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING (DAY 1) 5

It is past nine o'clock.

FIONA sits in silence at the table and eats her stir fry dinner. Every mouthful looks an effort. Eventually, she gives up, over half the meal left uneaten. She looks over at the place set for Owen.

She heads for the kitchen and can be heard clearing everything away.

She reappears and settles down on the couch under a quilt to watch TV.

6 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (DAY 1) 6

The room is in darkness, the TV off. FIONA sleeps on the couch, on her side facing the backrest, covered in the quilt.

The door is unlocked and OWEN stumbles inside.

OWEN
(slurring)
Stupid, fucking...

He wobbles into the room, we don't see him as much as hear him, grunting, sniffing, breathing, belching, knocking into the table. He gives a snort of laughter and trips over to the couch where he is faced with FIONA's back.

He unzips his flies and urinates on her. The sickly sound of urine hitting the soft quilt is deafening in the silence.

FIONA appears to go on sleeping. We see, however, in the darkness, her face turned away from Owen, that she is wide awake.

7 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING (DAY 2)

7

FIONA stands at the window, birds tweeting outside, the sun streaming in.

Footsteps drum on the staircase as OWEN comes down. FIONA looks at the shining golf clubs in their bag resting against the table.

OWEN
Morning, darling!

In one swift movement, FIONA withdraws a 9 wood with a graphite head and swings at OWEN's head.

OWEN hits the ground with a thump, his eyes in a glassy stare, blood seeping from a head wound.

Footsteps drum on the staircase.

FIONA, still standing at the window, blinks back to reality.

OWEN appears behind her with a cup of coffee. He slugs it down, sets it on the table and picks up his briefcase from the writing desk.

OWEN(CONT'D)
Morning darling.

He tenderly moves her hair to the side and nuzzles her neck. His expression changes to disgust.

OWEN(CONT'D)
You stink.

FIONA
(whispers)
Sorry, Owen.

OWEN
You need to learn to take better care
of yourself. Have a little dignity.

FIONA keeps quiet, awaiting the storm.

OWEN appears angry for a second then contains himself.

OWEN(CONT'D)
Never mind.

He pulls out his wallet and peels off a couple of tens. He rolls them into a cylinder and flicks it against FIONA's ear.

FIONA flinches.

OWEN grins. He pops it down her cleavage.

OWEN(CONT'D)
Buy me some ties, will you? These ones are falling to pieces if you haven't noticed. Nothing with green and nothing too plain. Nothing too eccentric either. Okay?

FIONA nods.

OWEN picks up his clubs and heads for the door.

The door slams behind him and FIONA sighs with relief.

8 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE MORNING (DAY 2)

8

FIONA walks through from the kitchen carrying a laundry basket and a clothes horse. She pulls out the damp quilt from the basket and hangs it up to dry. She stands staring at it for a moment then holds up a fold to sniff.

She turns on her heel and heads back to the kitchen. She can be heard going through the trash.

She reappears carrying the Overstreet Abuse Centre flyer and sits at the table and grabs the cordless telephone.

FIONA hesitates then dials the number on the flyer.

She cuts the call as soon as it rings.

She rests her head on her folded arms and stares into oblivion. The flyer falls from her BLUNT-NAILED fingers.

9 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON (DAY 2)

9

The front door unlocks and FIONA enters with a couple of shopping bags. She takes out half a dozen ties for Owen then gingerly takes out a SILKY BLOUSE.

10 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING (DAY 2)

10

FIONA sits in the living room, watching TV and WEARING HER NEW BLOUSE, when the door is unlocked. She immediately stiffens. She gets to her feet, smooths out the blouse. She takes a deep breath and pastes a smile on her face.

OWEN enters, dressed in GOLFING CLOTHES and hefting his clubs over one shoulder.

FIONA

Did you win?

OWEN

Fucking Randall was cheating again.
Nobody hits five birdies in a row, not
unless you're Tiger fucking Woods.

He dumps the golf bag on the floor and FIONA rushes to pick it up.

OWEN inspect the ties that FIONA has neatly arranged on the table. She nervously awaits his verdict.

FIONA

Nothing too outlandish, nothing too
plain. Just like you said.

He grunts in disapproval at the first two, throws them on the floor, gives a grunt of reluctant approval of the third, chucks the fourth, keeps the fifth and holds up the sixth.

OWEN

I said nothing green.

FIONA wrings her hands.

FIONA

The sales assistant said it was teal.
More blue than green.

OWEN

Does that look fucking blue to you?
Jesus, I give you one thing to do
while the rest of the time you sit on
your ass all day doing nothing. One
thing to do and you can't even get
that right.

FIONA

I'm sorry, Owen. I tried. There wasn't
(MORE)

FIONA (CONT'D)
much choice. They were-

OWEN narrows his eyes at her.

OWEN
What are you wearing?

FIONA gulps and gives a weak smile. She shakily displays her new blouse to him.

FIONA
I thought I'd surprise you. Do you like it?

OWEN
I give you my hard-earned money to buy me ties and this is what you come back with?

FIONA
(faltering)
I thought you'd like it. You said to take better care of myself. I-I-

OWEN
You look like a cheap whore. Is that what you were after? Thought you could give the girls down on East Street some competition, huh?

FIONA
No, no, no, no.

OWEN
You not getting enough at home? Thought you'd go out, give the neighbours something to think about? I bet George at number 35 liked it. That what turns you on? Giving your old neighbour a boner? Is that what you're after?

FIONA
No, no, no, no. That wasn't what I wanted. I didn't think.

Her words are lost on OWEN. He's busy unbuckling his belt. FIONA backs away from him, but he grabs her and pulls her close.

11 INT. LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE WHILE LATER (DAY 2) 11

FIONA lies on the couch. Tears slide from her eyes as she is moved up and down against the armrest with each of Owen's thrusts. OWEN breathes heavily on top of her. FIONA squeezes her eyes shut.

12 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING (DAY 3) 12

FIONA stands at the window. The birds sing. The sun shines. Her expression is numb.

Footsteps drum on the stairs. OWEN appears behind her in his suit. He nuzzles into her neck.

OWEN

Sorry if things moved a bit fast last night. You're just so damn sexy.

FIONA spins round and wraps one of his discarded ties around his neck. She trips him up and strangles him as he fights for breath on his knees, scrabbling at the tie.

The fight leaves his body and FIONA releases him. He falls to the floor with a thud, his eyes a glassy stare.

Footsteps drum on the stairs and FIONA is back standing at the window. She takes a revitalizing breath back into the present.

OWEN appears behind her with cup of coffee. He slugs it down, puts it on the table and picks up his briefcase from the writing desk. He doesn't attempt to touch her. He is filled with disgust at the sight of her. He tosses a twenty dollar bill on the table.

OWEN(CONT'D)

My dry-cleaning needs to be picked up.

He leaves and FIONA turns to stare miserably at the twenty on the table.

13 INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON (DAY 3) 13

FIONA pushes the door open with her shopping bags and dry-cleaning and enters the room. As usual, her make-up is immaculate, showing no sign of injury and her clothes are LONG-SLEEVED. She throws the dry-cleaning over one chair, plonks the shopping on the table and looks at the mail she has brought in.

As per usual, there is a couple of Final Demands all addressed to "Owen Pietersen". She pauses over one letter addressed to "Mr O. and Mrs. F. Pietersen". The return address is stamped "Emporium Life Insurance".

FIONA hesitates then gets up to fetch a letter opener from Owen's writing desk. Carefully, she teases the letter open without tearing it.

Inside are two life insurance policies. One for Owen valued at \$40,000. Fiona's is valued at \$750,000. FIONA gasps and drops the papers. Frantically she stuffs it back in the envelope and presses hard to reseal it.

She takes a deep breath and composes herself. Her eyes dart around. She is thinking.

She reaches out a hand, withdraws it, then reaches out again. She extracts the Overstreet Abuse Shelter flyer from beneath the fruit bowl and picks up the cordless phone.

FIONA dials the number. She steels herself when it begins to ring; click as someone picks up.

OVERSTREET OPERATOR
Overstreet Shelter for Abused Women.
How can I help you?

FIONA opens her mouth to speak then loses her nerve and cuts the call. She drops the phone on the table and crumples the flyer into a ball and throws it across the room.

She covers her face with her hands, her eyes desperate. But she doesn't cry. Instead she stands up and takes the dry-cleaning upstairs.

14 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING (DAY 3)

14

FIONA sits alone at the table eating. Again, she can hardly eat. OWEN's place remains empty. FIONA gives up and disappears into the kitchen. She is heard scraping the food into the bin.

DISSOLVE TO:

15 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING (DAY 3)

15

FIONA sits on the couch watching the news when the door is unlocked and OWEN walks in, drunk.

FIONA quakes. She is quick to her feet and disappears into

the kitchen to fetch his food.

She reappears with chicken casserole in sweet chilli sauce which she places on the table for him.

FIONA

Good day?

OWEN grunts. He lets FIONA take his coat, then sits down to eat.

FIONA(CONT'D)

I got you your dry-cleaning.

OWEN ignores her, cuts into the chicken.

FIONA(CONT'D)

And here's the change.

She places it on the table then steps back, unsure what to do next.

OWEN takes a mouthful and his face creases in disgust.

OWEN

This is like the hide off an old elephant.

FIONA

I'm sorry. It's been in the warmer for... a while.

OWEN thumps the table, making FIONA and the plate jump. He grits his teeth in an attempt to keep his temper.

OWEN

I work my ass off on a twelve-hour shift and all I ever ask is that you keep a home for me to come back to. And a decent dinner.

His face turns red as his voice rises.

OWEN(CONT'D)

That's all I ask of you, Fiona. Just two things! What is this?

FIONA

I didn't know you'd be late...

OWEN

I was working! Where I usually am! And
I come home to this? To this
disgusting...

He picks up the chicken between two fingers then drops it
with a splat into the sweet chilli sauce.

OWEN(CONT'D)

I work ten, twelve hours a day, six
days a week to keep a roof over your
head and food on the table. I've got
the bank breathing down my neck over
mortgage repayments and I've just had
to cut our insurance to third party.
My life is just one churning mass of
stress and exhaustion. Why can I not
have a wife who can actually keep a
home? All the other guys' wives seem
to manage it. Why can't you?

FIONA

I'm sorry, Owen. I know you work
hard...

OWEN throws the plate at the wall. It smashes and leaves an
ugly red stain.

FIONA flinches and backs away. OWEN gets up, red with anger.
FIONA holds her hands up conciliatorily.

FIONA(CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I didn't
think...

OWEN

That's the problem. You never think!
Why are you so stupid?

FIONA

I'm sorry. Please, Owen. I won't do it
again. Please don't.

We focus on the red chilli sauce staining the wall and oozing
onto the floor, amongst the fragments of china plate and
lumps of chicken, as we hear OWEN's slaps and punches finding
their mark and FIONA's cries of pain and fear.

The oozing chilli sauce forms a puddle. FIONA's hand lands in
it as she hits the floor, splattering bits everywhere. Her
hand is dragged away, streaking the sauce across the floor as

her fingers cling for purchase.

16 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING (DAY 4)

16

FIONA stands at the window in her dressing gown, looking out at nothing, not hearing the birds outside, not feeling the warmth of the sun streaming in. Her nose is broken, her lip split and her left eye blackened. There are bruises visible around her throat. Her chin trembles and her eyes fill with tears.

OWEN thumps down the stairs in his suit in a good mood.

OWEN
Morning, darling.

FIONA turns to him, but she has no weapon. This is no fantasy. He slugs down his coffee, puts the mug on the table and picks up his briefcase from the writing desk.

OWEN(CONT'D)
I'll see you tonight.

He goes to give her a kiss and notices the bruises on her face. He sighs, like it's her doing.

OWEN(CONT'D)
I'm sorry, darling. It's just - it's just that sometimes you do such stupid things and it gets me mad. You know?

FIONA gives a brittle nod. She can barely make eye contact. He tenderly cups her face in his hand and kisses her on her right cheek.

OWEN(CONT'D)
I love you. Remember that? That's why I put up with the stupid things you do. No one will love you more than me.

FIONA tries to smile.

FIONA
(whispers)
I love you too.

FIONA takes the money. OWEN winks at her and leaves. She watches from the window. A tear runs down her face.

17 INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON (DAY 4)

17

FIONA opens the front door and comes in with a couple of shopping bags. She wears a LONG-SLEEVED POLO-NECK to hide her bruises, her make-up is done well enough to hide most of her facial injuries. She takes off her SUNGLASSES.

She takes out a five-minute microwave meal and a tub of ice-cream.

Finally, from NUMEROUS SMALL PHARMACY BAGS she takes out HALF A DOZEN BOXES OF PILLS.

Her expression is regretful, desperate.

She goes to the kitchen and comes back with a PESTLE AND MORTAR. Methodically, she opens each box of pills, pops each out of their foil cover into the bowl. One by one until all six boxes and their empty foil trays are lying scattered on the table.

FIONA bites her lip and gets to work, crushing the pills into a powder. Tears run down her cheeks unchecked.

18 INT. LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE WHILE LATER (DAY 4)

18

The mortar is now full with a fine white powder. FIONA gets up and takes a pad of paper and pen from Owen's desk.

She returns to the table and sits down to write. Her hand trembles and she hesitates. Her lip trembles. Then she begins to write.

"To my darling, Please forgive me. I just can't take this any more. I've tried but I can no longer live in this prison any more.."

19 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING (DAY 4)

19

OWEN sits at the table guzzling down the last of his microwave meal. He appears alone until:

FIONA

Dessert?

FIONA sits opposite him, smiling sweetly at her husband. OWEN grunts an affirmative and FIONA excuses herself to the kitchen.

She reappears with a bowl of ice-cream which she places in front of her husband and removes his dinner plate.

OWEN takes his ice-cream and goes to sit in his armchair and switches on the TV. Cheering can be heard from the football game about to start. He stares at the screen, slurping his ice-cream.

FADE TO BLACK.

20 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER (DAY 4)

20

BLACK SCREEN. The commentary plays over the following two scenes.

COMMENTATOR 1 (O.S.)

For all you just joining the telecast, you have missed a crazy game. The Titans were down 21-nothing to the Patriots in the first half and everyone had all but given up on them. And yet here we are, watching what seems to be the impossible happen right before our eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

21 INT. LIVING ROOM - A WHILE LATER (DAY 4)

21

OWEN's empty dessert bowl hangs limp in his hand. Gravity pulls it out of his lax fingers and FIONA is quick to step in and catch it before it falls to the floor.

COMMENTATOR 2 (O.S.)

Can you believe this, Henry? I haven't seen a team that was a 17 point underdog come back on a team like the Patriots since the Dolphins back in the 1976 play-offs. This was all over, Henry, but these guys must have gotten one helluva pep talk from Coach Brown in the locker room. It's like a completely different team came out the tunnel for the second half.

FIONA stands over her husband, looking curiously at his lifeless body slumped in the chair.

COMMENTATOR 1 (O.S.)

I still can't believe it either, Jack. And yet here we are! The final seconds winding down and the Titans sideline is going crazy. I can only imagine the energy in Tennessee right now.

FIONA puts the bowl on the table and withdraws an envelope from beneath the fruit bowl. It is addressed to "*Fiona*".

COMMENTATOR 2 (O.S.)

Well, Henry, like with any good comeback, it all starts with the quarterback. After throwing three interceptions, Culver has come back and completed 21 out of 24 passes for 254 yards and 3 touchdowns, completely picking apart the top-rated pass-defense in the league.

Carefully, she slides the 'suicide note' into OWEN's breast pocket and sets about clearing the table.

COMMENTATOR 1 (O.S.)

They may have been the underdog coming into this game but they sure didn't play the victim, Henry.

The football commentary continues in the background as we fade to black.

COMMENTATOR 2 (O.S.)

That's right, Jack! This is a true underdog story. There are no victims here.

FADE TO BLACK.