

BREAKING FREE

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1 INT. ANNABEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

We see a young woman in a large, comfortable room, slightly hunched over her spacious, luxurious desk, typing away. Her name is ANNABEL and she's 22.

A small pile of reference books is perched beside her laptop. The only source of light in that room is a beautiful Tiffany lamp on her desk. Later we see Annabel has fallen asleep at her computer with her desk lamp still on, while there's thick snow falling outside.

2 INT. OFFICE - DAY

Annabel is photocopying some documents and then later on we see her at a computer, doing a spreadsheet. Then the phone rings. She picks it up and suddenly her expression changes.

She stands up very quickly and then goes to a smaller office to speak to somebody, then grabs a coat and runs out.

3 INT. CORRIDOR OF A HOSPITAL - DAY

Through the internal window of a hospital room, we see a nurse nodding to an old sick lady, MARIE (92), and then the nurse walks out of the room to meet her relatives. They are ROSE (49), TONY (55) and their daughter Annabel.

NURSE

Marie just wants to speak to
Annabel for the moment...

ROSE

But we want to be there as well!

TONY

She's my wife's mother!

Annabel is silent and doesn't say anything.

NURSE

I'm sorry, but we must respect
the patient's wishes (beat).
She's very ill.

ANNABEL

Mum, dad. Let me go in. I won't
be very long.

Annabel goes into the hospital room. We see through the internal window of the room that they are having a deep discussion and then Annabel puts her head on her grandma's chest and starts crying.

4 INT. ANNABEL'S BEDROOM - EVENING

A day later, Annabel is sitting by her desk, trying to work on her novel, but words are failing her. She can't concentrate and decides to go downstairs to the kitchen to make herself a hot drink.

5 INT. KITCHEN - HOUSE OF ANNABEL'S PARENTS - THE SAME

In the kitchen, Annabel is confronted by her thin & dour looking mother, while her dad is quite the opposite. He's quite a portly sort and likes harmony in the house, so doesn't like to contradict his wife and therefore ends up agreeing with her, even when he thinks otherwise.

TONY

Annabel, for Pete's sake, just tell your mother what she wants to know...

ROSE

You still live in my house, so show me some respect!

ANNABEL

Mum, what grandma and I discussed is private! And I'm sorry, but it's none of your business.

ROSE

But it is my business! You're my daughter and live under my roof, so just tell me!

ANNABEL

No mum! I'm paying rent, ok, so I've earned the right to be under this roof! So surely I'm also entitled to some privacy!

Rose pours herself a glass of neat whiskey & drinks it.

TONY

Rose my love, let's change the subject, shall we?

ROSE

(Sarcastically)

You and your grandma... Thick as thieves... Inseparable, like Siamese twins, eh?

ANNABEL

(Annabel cuts in)

Stop it mum! I'm close to gran, ok! In fact very close (beat) 'cos she's the one person who actually gives a shit about me!

Annabel grabs her coat to leave, while her dad tries to make light of the situation.

TONY

(Cheerfully, ignoring the argument)

So, what's for dinner? Or how about I take you both out? The business is doing so well!

ANNABEL

Dad, that's nice, but I'm not really hungry...I just need to get out for a bit!

Tony nods sympathetically at Annabel and Rose sees it & storms off into the living room, while Annabel leaves the house. Tony is left by himself, looking rather unhappy.

6 EXT. STREET - EVENING

Annabel is on the way to the hospital to be with her grandmother again. The wind is very cold and is going right through her as she's walking briskly to get there.

7 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Annabel is by her grandma's bedside, holding her hand.

GRANDMA MARIE

Good that you're here, my angel!
I haven't got long now. (beat)
Just promise me you'll do what we agreed yesterday!

ANNABEL

Of course I will nan!

Annabel starts crying.

GRANDMA MARIE

Be strong! Dying is only part of life. Remember what I taught you? The spirit lives on, because we're all made of energy and energy can never be destroyed. It only changes form, that's all!

ANNABEL

But nan please! You're everything to me! Everything I know is because of you! Mum and dad don't really give a toss about me...Maybe dad does a bit, but not mum!

GRANDMA MARIE

I hate to say this, but my daughter hasn't really been a very good mother to you. I know how much she undermines you.

This acknowledgement makes Annabel stare at her grandma.

GRANDMA MARIE (CON'T)

It's not right the way she treats you, but she's ill... The sooner you leave them though, the better! Don't hesitate my child. You have to become your own best friend, that's the only way Annie...

Marie speaks her last words and passes away and Annabel collapses on top of her.

8 EXT. GRAVEYARD - MORNING

People, including Annabel and her parents, are gathered around a deep grave, paying their last respects.

9 INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Marie's will is being read by her solicitor. The solicitor proceeds to hand Rose and Tony each a book. Rose's book is on Self-Mastery & Wisdom, by the 14th Dalai Lama. Tony on the other hand gets a book called: *How to Stand Up To Your Wife & Be Happy at last! By Dr. Margo Denning*. He looks really embarrassed when he

examines it.

SOLICITOR

This is for you Mrs Langley, and
this book is for you Mr Langley.
Apart from the books, my client
Marie Faraday left everything
else to your daughter Annabel.

10 INT. TONY AND ROSE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Rose is making a cup of tea for everyone and as she puts
the cup of tea in front of Annabel, she starts on her.

ROSE

Is this fair you getting
everything? The old bitch! And
you knew this all along!?

ANNABEL

Mum! I didn't know this would
happen and grandma is not a bitch
- don't ever call her that!
You have no right to call her
that, d'you hear?! She was my
everything! She actually cared!

ROSE

What do you mean? I care about
you, you're my daughter!

ANNABEL

So why don't you show it more!

ROSE

(Choses to ignores
Annabel's response & turns
to Tony)
We ought to fight this. This
ain't right!

TONY

It's hardly worth it my love!
It's only a small council flat,
needing a lot of refurb and three
and half grand in the bank.

ROSE

It's a matter of principle Tony!

ANNABEL

(To her mother)

Like you need the bit of money
grandma left me.

ROSE

How dare you speak to me like
that, after everything we've done
for you!

ANNABEL

Everything you've done for me?!?
I have a huge student loan and as
soon as I started working, you
made me pay rent, though you
don't need the money!

Rose is looking daggers at Annabel.

TONY

Ladies please!

ROSE

She should've given me at least
half of what she had. I'm her
daughter! Not Anna!

Rose pours herself a large glass of whiskey while Tony
looks at her with dismay. Annabel shakes her head:

ANNABEL

It's all about money with you,
isn't it mum?! Grandma just died
a few days ago! Don't you bloody
care?! (Beat) Look mum, grandma
decided to help me out a bit,
what's so wrong with that? 'Cos
you never would! I work in an
office, all day long. Doing soul-
destroying paperwork. Most of the
time I work until very late - I
hardly have any time left to do
any writing.

ROSE

Your writing! Don't be so
ridiculous! Who do you think you
are? Jane Austen?! Get real!

Upon hearing this, Annabel sits down dejectedly in the
corner of the kitchen. The words really hurt. Then Rose

picks up some of Annabel's writing from the counter.

ROSE (CONT)

Pathetic... Just be glad you can hold down a decent job and forget about this pie in the sky! You'll never be a writer! Never!

When hearing this, Annabel slowly stands up.

ANNABEL

Is that what you really think Ma? I see... Well, we shall see about that. (Beat) Do you know what grandma's last words were? To get away from you as soon as possible, because you're poison!

Rose's jaw drops and Annabel resolutely steps out to leave and go to her bedroom. Tony shoots a worried look.

11 INT. ANNABEL'S PARENTS' HOUSE - HOURS LATER - NIGHT

It's eleven o'clock at night and bitterly cold outside, but we see Annabel going down the stairs, laden with two large, heavy suitcases. Her father is just exiting the sitting room and notices Annabel on the stairs.

TONY

What are you doing, poppet?!

ANNABEL

Dad, I can't be here... You saw what happened this evening - what she said to me?! Mum hates me, or at least thinks so little of me.

TONY

(Pleadingly)

But poppet, she didn't mean it! You know how grouchy she can be. That's just the way she is sometimes and you know she has a certain problem...

ANNABEL

(Annabel cuts in)

Dad, just say it! Mum has a drinking problem and needs to own up to it and then get help! She needs to sort herself out dad...

At the door, Annabel kisses her father on the cheek and her father looks at her sorrowfully.

TONY

I'm so sorry... I'm sorry about everything.

Annabel acknowledges what her father says with a gentle nod and then gives him a big hug.

TONY

Where in God's name will you go Anna, in this weather?!

ANNABEL

(Smiling)

I'll figure something out dad.

Annabel turns around and is already by the gate, heading for the nearest bus stop. Her father looks worried as he goes back inside the house. Rose is also watching as her daughter leaves, but from the top bedroom window. She momentarily puts her hand on the window pane as if to want to stop her, but she doesn't. There are only tears welling in her eyes. She takes a large gulp from her glass containing whiskey and moves away from the window.

12 EXT. YOUTH HOSTEL - NIGHT

Annabel is standing outside a youth hostel and then walk in.

RECEPTIONIST

How can I help you?

ANNABEL

Can I have a room for tonight or even for longer?

RECEPTIONIST

All we have available at the moment is a bunk bed in a dorm with five other people...

ANNABEL

(She hesitates)

I'll take it... thank you.

The receptionist throws a disapproving glance at her luggage.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm afraid, those won't fit in!
It's not a very large room!

ANNABEL

Can you please make an exception,
at least for tonight? I've got
nowhere to go!

The receptionist studies her for a brief moment and then
nods at her and points in the direction of the dorm.

13 INT. INSIDE THE DOORM - NIGHT

Annabel is lying on the top bunk, tucked in, but unable
to sleep or relax. The girl below her is snoring very
badly. Her mind is racing. She's wondering if she made a
huge mistake. Then she remembers the afternoon in the
hospital - the day before her beloved grandma passed away
and what she said to her. Flash back to:

MARIE

You have only one life, so use it
well! Time is your greatest
asset! I wasted so much time on
things that really didn't matter.
So you must do otherwise! What is
it that matters to you the most,
my precious?

ANNABEL

You staying alive!

GRANDMA MARIE

That won't happen my precious...
it's just my time... But tell me
what do you really want?

ANNABEL

I want to write gran! I want that
more than anything!

Grandma nods her head with approval and squeezes the hand
of her granddaughter.

MARIE

Remember? I was a book seller
for most of my life, so I read
quite a lot in my time and I know
when I see a talent! Annie, you
have what it takes! Just keep

pushing through and you'll get there!

ANNABEL

But nan, I work long hours and when I get home, mum usually makes me do chores. I hardly have any time to write!

MARIE

Are you telling me you stopped writing?! How about your degree in English Lit? Does that count for nothing? You were born to write Annie! Promise me you'll carry on, no matter what!

ANNABEL

I promise! When I write, I forget about everything! I'm free and feel so happy! That's when I realise I love my life gran!

MARIE

Right, so you hang onto that feeling, do you hear me Annie?! And never let it go! Do what you were meant to do and the universe will take care of the rest! You'll get the help you need...

Annabel looks at grandma quizzically.

MARIE

I will always be there for you! Even when I'm gone...

As she remembers that, she finally falls asleep.

14

EXT. GRAVEYARD - AFTERNOON

A few days later, we see Annabel laying some flowers on her grandma's grave and then planting a little windmill in the corner of it. Then she squats beside it and starts speaking to her grandma.

ANNABEL

I did it, I'm free of mum and her disease... Another thing - guess what gran, I went part-time, so I can start writing properly!

And as she says so, the little windmill starts turning, though there is no wind, or even a breeze. Annabel stares at it for a few seconds and then her eyes start welling up. She looks around herself and whispers:

ANNABEL

I know it's you... Thank you for everything!

15 EXT. POPLAR DOCK MARINA - DAY

2 months later, Annabel is signing a contract for her own boat at Poplar Dock Marina. We see the boat from across the common area! It's a small pea-green canal boat.

16 INT. ANNABEL'S NEW HOME - A CANAL BOAT - NIGHT

Later, we see Annabel in her small, basic room, at her much smaller desk, writing into the night. There is a little windmill planted in a pot next to her, along with a collection of cacti. She looks quite cold, but also at the same time seems very happy in her new surroundings.

Suddenly we see the little windmill start turning as Annabel is writing. Again, there is no draft or breeze and Annabel notices that and smiles warmly, but carries on writing.

17 EXT. DECK OF ANNABEL'S BOAT - MORNING

Annabel's handsome neighbour JACK (25) is introducing himself, as his boat is moored just next to hers.

JACK

Good morning, I'm Jack!

ANNABEL

Nice to meet you, I'm Annabel!
Wasn't it freezing last night?

JACK

Oh, I was actually pretty warm last night. Isn't your stove working?

Annabel shrugs her shoulders.

JACK

They normally keep the place nice and warm if they're working properly! Let me take a look!

Annabel smiles gratefully at him and lets him board the boat.

ANNABEL

(She says shyly)

Thank you, that's very kind.

JACK

Don't mention it! You've got to keep warm if you want to survive the winter on a canal boat!

(Beat) So, what brings you here?

ANNABEL

Oh, just the desire to write and be free of having to live with my parents.

JACK

Know the feeling... I wrote something myself actually. Not sure it's any good though...

Annabel looks at him in amazement. Jack smiles at her and then proceeds to clean and fix the stoves, while Annabel makes cups of tea and gets out some chocolate biscuits and some crisps.

Jack then loads the stove with some wood and tinder, which he ignites. After a short while, the boat is beautifully toasty and feels very comfortable indeed.

ANNABEL

Thank you so much! This feels a lot better! How can I repay you? Would you fancy dinner at mine tonight?

JACK

Yeah, that would be great, thanks! Makes a change from my usual baked beans and fried egg!

ANNABEL

(She grins)

What makes you think you'll be getting anything else here?

Annabel & Jack giggle; and then we suddenly see Annabel's little windmill turning happily in its little pot on her writing desk, though there's no wind or draft present.

