

**SCANNING REACHING DREAMING:
a 3 part mini-series**

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PART 1: SCANNING

In the basement of a public library.

DOUGLAS, a young librarian, early 30's, close cropped beard, He is scanning through all the donated books, locating personal notes that might have been left inside. Also there is ANA C, a custodian also in her early 30's, with her mop and bucket. She is done mopping, watching Douglas.

It is late at night.

DOUGLAS

First look at the spread. Just look. Go slow. As far over as is comfortable, then back again.... Go up with your eyes... then down... let your eyes touch the spines, don't linger too much, just feel them. With your eyes. Feel your leg muscles as you squat. Breathe through your nose so you can take in the smell. Which of them feel comfortable? Which feel... hard? Which feel like they've been touched by a lot of hands over time? Which feel like they were on a night stand for many years? Look at this one. I'm going to choose this one.

He pulls it out of the stack and begins to look through the pages.

I read a lot when I was a kid. Did you ever read All of a Kind Family? Are you Jewish? It's about this Jewish family of 5 girls growing up on the lower East side in the 1920's. Lots of gentle misadventures.

Holds up a scrap of a note he's found in the pages. Gently sing-songs:

Yep. Here's one.

Puts the note into a special envelope and puts the book back. As he talks, he performs another scan, pulling out his next book and thumbing through it like the first.

Charlotte burns her apron, Sarah won't eat the bean soup. Henny secretly borrows Ella's special-occasion party dress and spills tea on it.

Oh. *Holds up another note. Sings:* Here's one.

Oh and here's another one! Don't you love it in the basement down here? You're new, right? Do you come clean down here a lot? It always seems clean.

ANA C

About once a week.

DOUGLAS

It's dark, but. *Sings*: "Turn on your heart-light..." Do you know Neil Diamond? One time Neil Diamond was coming to my town and I begged and I begged to go but my parents didn't buy the tickets. My Dad told me later he didn't realize it was that important to me. Unbelievable. ET had just come out. *Referring to the scanning*: Try it.

Puts them into the envelope. Starts another scan. Ana C also reaches out for a book

So anyway, Ella is starting to think about dating. And she starts seeing this guy at the library, where she goes every week. And he has a dip in his hair. Like a wave.

Demonstrates.
Ana C holds up a note she found.

Hey you're a natural! Here give it to me. No don't read it—I don't read them until I get home. *He puts it into the envelope.* Here you do that stack now.

They continue.

So one day this guy with the hair dip sees Ella hide a book in the shelves that she wants to check out but can't, because she has her weekly limit of two, so she hides it there to get the next week. So Jules, that's the boy's name, sees her put it there, and then HE goes and finds it, and puts a note in it for her. And later the librarian is straightening up the shelves and she finds the book AND the note, and SHE decides to leave them both there, so Ella will find them the next week.

Finds another. Ok! Here we go! Envelope.

ANA C

What do you do once you read them?

DOUGLAS

What?

ANA C

The notes.

DOUGLAS

I read them.

ANA C

After you read them.

DOUGLAS

Do?

No. That's what they're for. Because of *what if*. What if: time travel. Compression. Messaging. Connection. Some day I might find one that is meant for me. Call the number, and it is *the* person.

ANA C

You're a real freak.

Walks to the elevator, pushes the button. Waits.

DOUGLAS

In book 3, Ella and Jules get married.

ANA C

Elevator up.

DOUGLAS

If it can happen to them...

ANA C

Elevator out.

DOUGLAS

Finds more 3 more. Sings: Gold mine.

PART TWO: DREAMING

Back in the basement.

Ana C is there with her mop and bucket.

She turns on a hand held tape recorder and sets it down.

ANA C

I am supposed to be recording my dreams for this class, but I am recording myself talking right now because I don't really dream, I mean I know I do, everyone does, but I don't remember my dreams and also I work nights, so I'm hoping that just recording what I'm doing at night might be an ok substitute. Please accept this as a substitute for my recording my dreams. So what I'm doing right now is cleaning this facility. It's a library. It's the middle of the night. I always work in the middle of the night. I like cleaning basically. It's orderly. Except the bathrooms, and there are 3 every fuckin'—excuse me—fricken' floor—one men's one women's one shared. The men's ones gross me out but I leave the door open and put a thing around my nose. A scarf, you know. I spray it with perfume before I leave home and then I can smell that instead of men's bathroom smell. What else can I tell you. Most of the lights are on, I like turning on all the lights when I work. I do that in my house too. I don't know, it feels cozy. Well and it makes it easier to see the dirt. Also you know I'd just rather have everything all out there in the open. No surprises. I'm a pretty practical person. Not always but. I take breaks in the staff lounge. That's my own private joke, don't share that with anyone.

Douglas walks in.

DOUGLAS

Hey / back again

ANA C

Jesus fucking

DOUGLAS

Hey, hey / sorry to scare you

ANA C

Mary / mother of

DOUGLAS

I'm sorry, I didn't know you were / down here!

ANA C

What the fuck are you doing?!

Turns off recorder.

DOUGLAS

Why do you have all the lights on?

ANA C

Why do you fuckin' creep up on people while they're working?

DOUGLAS

Why are you so jumpy?

ANA C

It's the middle of the frickin' night.

DOUGLAS

Well you shouldn't really be surprised. I was down here last week at this time. I won't bother you. *Goes to the stack of donated books.* I know you're working but. Do you mind if I turn some of these off?

ANA C

Why.

DOUGLAS

Well remember last week? It's better for the... you know.

ANA C

For the what.

DOUGLAS

Well, you know. Increasing the potential.

ANA C

Uh huh.

Douglas turns the lights off.

Leave those on!

He turns them back on.

DOUGLAS

Come on.

ANA C

No! Jesus. You can do your thing. Later.

DOUGLAS

I can't later. I have to be home for. An appointment.

ANA C

Well then I guess you'll have to just come back next week.

DOUGLAS

Why can't you clean upstairs first and come back down here when I'm gone.

ANA C

Because that's not my routine.

DOUGLAS

If you always stick to a routine nothing surprising can happen to you.

Beat.

Ana C begins to mop.

Douglas really wants to go to the books but won't let himself with this negative energy floating around.

ANA C

Plenty surprising things happen to you when you have a routine. Because no matter how much you control yourself... People. Start intruding.

DOUGLAS

Like what?

She looks at him.

DOUGLAS

You're talking about me? I'm the intrusion?

ANA C

Well you are.

DOUGLAS

You could consider it an opportunity for growth.

ANA C

For what?

DOUGLAS

Self-discovery? Meaningful conversation? Engagement? Two strangers encounter each other in a library basement. We could be anyone.

ANA C

First of all, we're not strangers because I met you here last week. And second of all, we can't be anyone because we are just. Who we are. We can't do anything about that.

DOUGLAS

Sing-songs softly to self: Maybe.

ANA C

Shut up talking that way. You make me so nervous. Just like my frickin' psych professor.

DOUGLAS

You're taking psychology?

ANA C

Yeah. And you interrupted me doing my assignment so I'd appreciate it if you would leave and come back when I'm done.

DOUGLAS

When was the last time you just enjoyed a chance encounter.

ANA C

One time, I gave a woman a dollar. On the street. She said a man hit her in the face, and then she had cancer. She was screaming after me. "Do you want to see my cancer?"

DOUGLAS

Why do you think she picked you to say that to?

ANA C

She probably thought I would give her more money.

DOUGLAS

Maybe it was it a message of some kind.

ANA C

Doubt it.

DOUGLAS

Like a test from god? Like a chance to reach out to the lepers and the lame.

ANA C

Well then I messed that shit up.

DOUGLAS

But maybe you did actually want to see it.

ANA C

I don't think so.

DOUGLAS

Did you ask yourself that?

ANA C

No.

DOUGLAS

Well ask yourself now.

Ana C has finished mopping.

ANA C

You know what I'm gonna ask myself? To go clean the frickin' bathrooms.

DOUGLAS

Maybe if you had looked at it, your whole life would have changed.

ANA C

Yeah like maybe I woulda seen the face of the Virgin Mary in her cancer, and then I woulda taken her home and charged people admission to see it and made a million bucks and not had to come to this job and be freaked out by you?

DOUGLAS

Saying it makes it true.

ANA C

Yeah. That's just stupid.

DOUGLAS

It's not stupid. It's hopeful.

It could be happening, right now. In a bubble-verse. Another version of you.

ANA C

Well. That would be nice.

DOUGLAS

It would be nice.

ANA C

Well. Oh...Elevator up.

DOUGLAS

Really nice talking to you.

ANA C

Elevator out.

DOUGLAS

And lights... camera... action.

He turns off the light, squats, breathes, and begins his scan.

PART THREE: REACHING

*Douglas is back in the basement, scanning.
ANA C enters without her mop and bucket.*

ANA C

Hi.

DOUGLAS

Oh. Hi.

Where's the mop?

ANA C

I did it earlier tonight.

DOUGLAS

Well that was really nice of you.

Holding up book.

You want to know where this one comes from? See these water marks? Some guy is taking a bath in his kitchen.

ANA C

You can't tell that.

DOUGLAS

It's an old kitchen. The bathtub is in it. There's a board over the tub that he uses as a counter but then he takes the board off and he can get into the tub.

ANA C

What does he do with the board?

DOUGLAS

Leans it up against the stove.

ANA C

Does he live alone?

DOUGLAS

He does but he doesn't want to. He's in love with someone.

ANA C

With who?

DOUGLAS

What's your name?

ANA C

Ana C.

DOUGLAS

He's in love with someone named Ana C.

ANA C

Well that's bad news for him.

DOUGLAS

Why, you like women?

ANA C

What do you mean?

DOUGLAS

I mean, do you like women? Sexually?

ANA C

No. No I like men sexually.

DOUGLAS:

Me too.

ANA C

Oh.

Beat.

DOUGLAS

Pulls a note out of the book. Look! Sings lightly: From the man in the bathtub...

ANA C

How come if you want someone so bad you're doing it that way?
You should just go online.

DOUGLAS

No.

ANA C

1 in 5 couples who meet on match.com get married.

DOUGLAS

Then you get on match.com.

ANA C

No thanks.

Beat.

DOUGLAS

Hey. ...I was a girl growing up.

ANA C

What?

DOUGLAS

I used to be a girl.

ANA C

Why are you telling me that?

DOUGLAS

I thought it might make you more comfortable.

ANA

No. That doesn't make me / more comfortable.

DOUGLAS

Oh. Sorry. I just thought...

ANA C

So what does that make you, one of those drag queens that shows up in big hair and dresses and shit? You gonna sing me a song now?

DOUGLAS

No. It doesn't make me that. I'm not a cross dresser. I'm just. I transitioned. From one gender to another.

ANA C

So you had one of those operations.

DOUGLAS

Oh sure. I had a bunch of things. Do you want to see?

ANA C

No!

DOUGLAS

I'm kidding. Yeah.

Beat.

ANA C

Do you remember being. The other? Being a girl?

DOUGLAS

Yeah. I changed my body, I didn't erase my mind.

ANA C

Well did you always do things like... *gestures to the book scanning.* This?

DOUGLAS

Yeah.

ANA C

Like what?

DOUGLAS

Oh, like every time when I left my bedroom I just knew that all my dolls would come to life and start doing their own thing, and the second I opened my door back up they would end up back where I left them, quicker than I could see.

ANA C

You only thought that.

DOUGLAS

Sometimes the line between thinking and knowing is really thin. Wanting and being. You kind of have to go there... Especially in North Dakota. Which is where I grew up. It's hard to grow up in North Dakota as a girl. Especially when you're really a boy.

I remember hitting my head with the hairbrush because my hair wouldn't behave.

ANA C

What else?

DOUGLAS

I remember getting my period and telling my dad about it. I told my dad first.

ANA C

Try that one.

He does. No note.

DOUGLAS

A disappointed game show sound. Wah wah... Here, this one I bet. He hands it to her to look. She finds a slip of paper. Sing song: Told you...

ANA C

You're good at that.

DOUGLAS

Talent. Imagination. Destiny. Practice.

ANA C

Yeah?

DOUGLAS

Wanting, Hoping. Knowing.

ANA C

Uh huh.

DOUGLAS

Sometimes when I'm down here and I'm really on a roll, the books stop being books at all. Just men. Waiting. I just wish for that. I want them all here. With me. Down in the basement. I *want* that.

ANA C

That's not real. Life.

DOUGLAS

Sometimes I come down here at night and they're already waiting for me. Behind the shelves, around the corner, sitting against the wall. They're watching. Waiting for me. Wanting to talk.

ANA C

Can I record you?

DOUGLAS

What?

ANA C

I am supposed to be recording my dreams for my psych class, you know, and I think this—this is *good*. I mean you're not sleeping but you're clearly dreaming in some way. And. Oh. But it will probably still count for extra credit.

DOUGLAS

No thanks.

ANA C

Jesus Christ! You've been fuckin' running your mouth about this crazy shit since the moment I met you, and now when I want you to keep talking you want to stop? This is like prime dream-life here.

DOUGLAS

I am not dreaming!

ANA C

No you are. I studied it. Dreams: waking dreams, delusional dreams, fantasies...

DOUGLAS

I am not fucking dreaming. I am not dreaming! You know what I am doing? I am being HUMAN. I am *wanting*. I am *trying*. I am *believing*. In what might be possible in this world if we lead from our hearts. From our spirits. Instead of our dumb brains, instead of our lame desire for safety and routine, for not rocking the boat. Come *ON*. You're a janitor, for Chrissake. Rock the fucking boat! Take a frickin' *chance*. Don't you want something better? Because I do. I do! And I will get it. But you can't just sit back and wait for that thing to find you. You have to go find *It*. When someone asks if you want to see their cancer, you say *YES*.

ANA C

Yeah. Or you say: thanks for the chat but. I should get back to work.

No answer.

No answer.

Walks to the elevator and pushes the button.

You know why I like my job? I like it. Things always get dirty. And then when you clean them, they always get clean. Very straight forward. When I clean something I know that I exist. Because something has changed.

Elevator arrives.

See you next week.

She gets in.

Elevator Out.

She is gone.

Douglas talks to the books.

DOUGLAS:

I want you to read out loud to me. I want you to make me fruit shakes and soy lattes and maybe little quiches because they are savory and you think I will like

that. I want you to be thinking of me when you are with your wives or lovers or children. When you travel I want you to hunt for gifts for me, things you think I will like. Chocolate. Basil chocolate from Amsterdam. Or Argentinian chocolate. Expensive watches. Silk ties from Paris. I want you to go look at the glaciers and send me pictures saying: I wish you were here. I want you to play your games with me. Have secrets with me. Leave me notes on slips of paper hidden between pages tucked down in my bedside table. I want you to brush my hair, fuck me hard and then soft and then play me the music you love and tell me why. You are so. In love with me. C'mon. C'mon. I know you're there. *He calls out to the books like to a little dog.* Come here! Here I am! Here I am!