

Open House With An Empty Heart

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FADE IN:

EXT. WINSLOW HOUSE - DAY

Neo-Gothic in design, The Winslow House dominates a modest suburb with its large cast iron fencing and unkempt appearance. Storm clouds swirl overhead.

Wind challenges the stability of a real-estate sign planted out front. It reads: Open house, Tuesday and Wednesday.

INT. CAR (DRIVEWAY)

Void of expression, KAREN WEAVER, mid 30's, loses herself inside a clenched photo.

PHOTO:

All smiles, a man paints the side of a house with a little girl riding high atop his shoulders, her own paintbrush in hand.

BACK TO SCENE

Karen glances at the dashboard clock. It reads: 5:30pm

She flips her visor down and places the picture in between the mirror and flips it back up.

EXT. WINSLOW HOUSE (DRIVEWAY)

Karen steps out of the car and buttons her knit jacket. She folds her arms and walks up to the withered

PORCH

She runs her hand over the cracked paint of a support pillar causing it to flake.

KAREN

Why am I doing this?

Karen brushes her hand off and attempts to peer through one of the large bay windows.

REALTOR

Good question. Why are you?

Alarmed, Karen spins around to meet a peculiar middle aged man wearing rimmed glasses, a dated suit and holding a halliburton aluminum briefcase.

KAREN

Jesus!

REALTOR

Terribly sorry. I Didn't mean to startle you.

The realtor moseys up the steps to greet her properly.

KAREN

No, it's fine. I just didn't hear you pull up.

REALTOR

Actually, I was showing another house down the street; thought I could use the walk.

He pats his slim belly.

REALTOR

Sorry I'm late.

KAREN

I was kinda off in my own little world anyways. You must be the realtor Dan spoke about.

REALTOR

Must be.

Karen extends her hand.

KAREN

Karen. Karen Weaver.

He clasps both of his hands around hers.

REALTOR

Same initials.

KAREN

(confused)

What?

REALTOR

Our initials. They're the same.

KAREN

Oh... And your name?

He flips Karen a business card. She gives it a once over.

BUSINESS CARD:

A single thumb print on an all white card.

BACK TO SCENE

REALTOR

So, you wanna take a look
around the yard first or start
inside?

Karen compresses a deep breath between her lips.

KAREN

I shouldn't even think about
doing this on my own.

REALTOR

Yes, well the house is rather
large and given your unfortunate
history of loss I can clearly
see your concerns.

Interest Piqued, Karen confronts him with a shift in
posture.

KAREN

I'm sorry... Did Dan disclose --

REALTOR

Just the basics. We try to
avoid touching upon sensitive
issues, but like to be prepared
should they arise.

KAREN

I see.

He reaches into his pocket and produces a large key
ring with a single key on the loop.

REALTOR

It's not uncommon to have
second thoughts, Mrs. Weaver.
A house like this one, with the
history that it has, can almost
consume a person. I see it far
too often.

KAREN

I already feel consumed. But
I'm still interested, so...

The realtor nods and ushers her to the front door with a gentle hand upon her back.

REALTOR
Better than a welcome mat. It
even works.

He draws attention to an obscure carving whittled out of the door - a human skull with a brass door knocker pierced through its nose protrudes.

The realtor test the knocker with a gleeful smile. He unlocks the door.

KAREN
Doesn't matter, it'll all be
reworked anyways. Ground up.

The realtor stops cold - turns to her with slight disappointment and shoves the door open.

REALTOR
After you...

Apprehensive, Karen enters.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (MAIN HALL)

Wide open space covered in dust, cob webs and other debris. Floors marred with years of grime and sediment.

Karen evaluates the immediate area with disdain.

KAREN
How many years has this been
off the market?

She test the banister with a slight tug - it wobbles back and forth.

REALTOR
It'll be twenty six on
Wednesday. Time sure doesn't
do us any favors does it.

Karen pokes her head around a nearby corner.

KAREN
And how many rooms?

REALTOR
Oddly enough, there are twenty six.

The realtor plops his briefcase down on a nearby table and clicks it open.

KAREN

The sign said open house,
generally in my experience that
entails a bidding war.

He looks up from the briefcase.

REALTOR

Tomorrow, Mrs. Weaver. Today
is Monday and you're the only
one looking.

He sorts his briefcase.

REALTOR

You hinted at a possible remodel.

Karen checks the flooring with solid stomps.

KAREN

It's what I do. My husband and
I would buy these older houses,
usually much smaller, and flip
them for an insane profit.

REALTOR

You are aware this is a very
historic house you've found,
Mrs. Weaver. There's a
tremendous amount of history here.

She presses firmly against the wall.

KAREN

My husband found the place. He
wanted it.

REALTOR

So it's a letting go project.

KAREN

A moving on one. And maybe we
should do the same.

The realtor closes his briefcase and snatches it up.

REALTOR

Very well... But I must warn
you, there's always baggage
with any house that you buy,
Mrs. Weaver.

KAREN

It's been two years and the house is still here. I need to do this. For me. Besides, if I wait around someone might snatch it up tomorrow, right?

REALTOR

I'm simply trying to help.

The realtor walks to an adjacent doorway that leads into a large dining room. He turns back to Karen.

REALTOR

You buy a house, you buy the stories that live inside the walls. Good or bad.

The realtor moves into the dining room.

KAREN

I hope that isn't your sales pitch.

Karen follows.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (DINNING ROOM)

Tattered wallpaper hangs from moldy walls, a skewed chandelier over an enormous oak table covered in web. Chairs over turned.

The realtor gone.

Karen creeps to the edge of the table.

KAREN

Hello?

She peers into the next room, a dark living area with narrow stained glass windows.

Karen spots a small white door, center of the dining room, cracked open. A light shines from within. She advances towards it.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (WINE CELLAR)

A string attached to an uncovered lightbulb swings back and forth in front of Karen's face. Encased in brick, a constricted staircase leads several feet down.

KAREN

Can we hurry this up? I've got
a long drive back.

She test the first stair for stability.

O.S. a noise: like loose change tossed down a stairwell.

Karen stops her decent into the cellar.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (MAIN HALL)

Karen reenters the main foyer.

Scattered across the floor, dozens and dozens of
wedding rings.

She stoops down and separates them with her fingers.

The giggles of a little girl echo throughout the upstairs.

KAREN

Hello?

LITTLE GIRL (OS)

Come see what I painted.

Karen follows the call up the stairs.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (2ND FLOOR)

Wet foot prints lead Karen down a hall to a well lit
bedroom.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (GIRLS BEDROOM)

Various paintings done by a children are plastered all
over the walls.

Karen reaches out to one in particular and rips it down.

PAINTING:

Crude depiction of a family of three in front of an
old house. It is signed by Maddy Weaver.

BACK TO SCENE

Blood drips onto the painting. Karen glances up.

In a uniformed pattern, it streams off the ceiling and onto the dingy white carpet behind her.

Painting in one hand, she uses her other to trace out what it says.

BLOOD STAIN:

To live here is to not live.

BACK TO SCENE

Panicked, Karen charges into the hallway.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (2ND FLOOR)

She runs headlong into the realtor.

KAREN

Where the hell have you been!?

REALTOR

I had to flip the power on.

KAREN

What the hell is going on around here?

LITTLE GIRL (OS)

Mommy... Mommy help me!

KAREN

Did you hear that?

REALTOR

Are you sure you're alright, Mrs. Winslow?

Braced, Karen holds her hand up.

LITTLE GIRL (OS)

Mommy I'm in the cellar.

Karen bolts down the hall.

The realtor grins with sinister intent.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (MAIN HALL)

Karen comes off the stairs - her eye caught by one of the rings. She draws closer and closer.

LITTLE GIRL (OS)
Mommy, this way. The cellar.

Several rotted hands burst through the floor.

Karen pulls back. The little girl's cries grow louder.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (DINNING ROOM)

Positioned around the table, a large gathering of decayed corpses. Each feast upon large portions of human entrails.

Lighting strikes outside -- a strobe of light illuminates the room.

They turn to Karen.

LITTLE GIRL (OS)
Mommy, I can't move. Help me.

One by one they start to get up.

KAREN
I'm coming, Maddy. I'm coming.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (WINE CELLAR)

Karen barges through the door and secures it from inside with a wooden beam.

Solid thumps from outside challenge her security.

LITTLE GIRL (OS)
I'm down here.

Karen takes a step down and falls through the weakened plank. She hits her head.

EXT. CREEK BED - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Rain showers down on a muddy creek bed. A large SUV is flipped upside down in the water. Police and paramedics scramble.

In hysterics, Karen sits in the back of an ambulance being looked after.

Two body bags are wheeled past her on gurneys.

INT. WINSLOW HOUSE (WINE CELLAR)- PRESENT

Karen awakens in a flooded cellar. An SUV submerged belly up idles feet away. Maddy's lifeless body floats in the murky waters.

Karen latches onto her, crying.

REALTOR

It's no good for you here, Mrs. Weaver. I had no other choice but to show you why I simply could not let you obtain it.

KAREN

You're crazy.

REALTOR

The evil within these walls is very real and it does consume the living... Only the dead can live amongst it. What you've witnessed is a mere sideshow compared to what others have experienced.

KAREN

I want out of here.

Karen, now holding a baby doll, drops it in the water.

REALTOR

By all means... I just hope it's not too late.

Karen rushes up the stairs.

EXT. WINSLOW HOUSE - DAY

Heavy rain and high winds batter the dead foliage.

Karen storms out of the house in a frenzy. Soaked within seconds, she rushes to her car and fumbles for her keys.

DAN (OS)

Karen, I'm sorry I'm late.
I've been trying to call.

She is met by DAN, 45, holding an umbrella over his bald head.

KAREN

I'm not interested. Leave me
alone!

Karen jumps into her car and revs up the engine. Dan grabs the door before she can shut it.

DAN

Karen, just tell me what the
hell is going on.

KAREN

I've seen the house and I don't
want it.

DAN

How? I'm the only one with a key.

Karen pulls out the business card given to her - now a newspaper clipping.

OBITUARY:

Keleman Winslow, 53, a family orthopedist and real estate broker was found murdered in his estate on October 22, 1986.

BACK TO SCENE

DAN

Yeah, I was gonna tell you
about this when we did the tour.

Karen barrels out of the driveway in reverse.

DAN

Is this a maybe!?

EXT. CAR (TRAVELING) - DAY

Karen speeds through the narrow lanes of a quiet neighborhood.

A sharp right, over the curb, lands her in a main street drag populated by small businesses and fast food chains.

In the distance, a four way stop - GREEN - YELLOW - RED

Karen PLOWS head on into a large semi. Twisted wreckage scatters through the rainy street.

Traffic at a stop.

Upwards, through the mist and haze, through the clouds looking down at the accident.

CUT TO:

EXT. WINSLOW HOUSE (PORCH) - NIGHT

The eccentric door knocker. A hand grabs the brass ring and knocks.

Karen's husband answers, her daughter looms in the background with curiosity.

Emotionless, they invite Karen into the foyer and embrace one another.

The door slams shut.

The real estate sign now reads: SOLD.

FADE OUT.

THE END