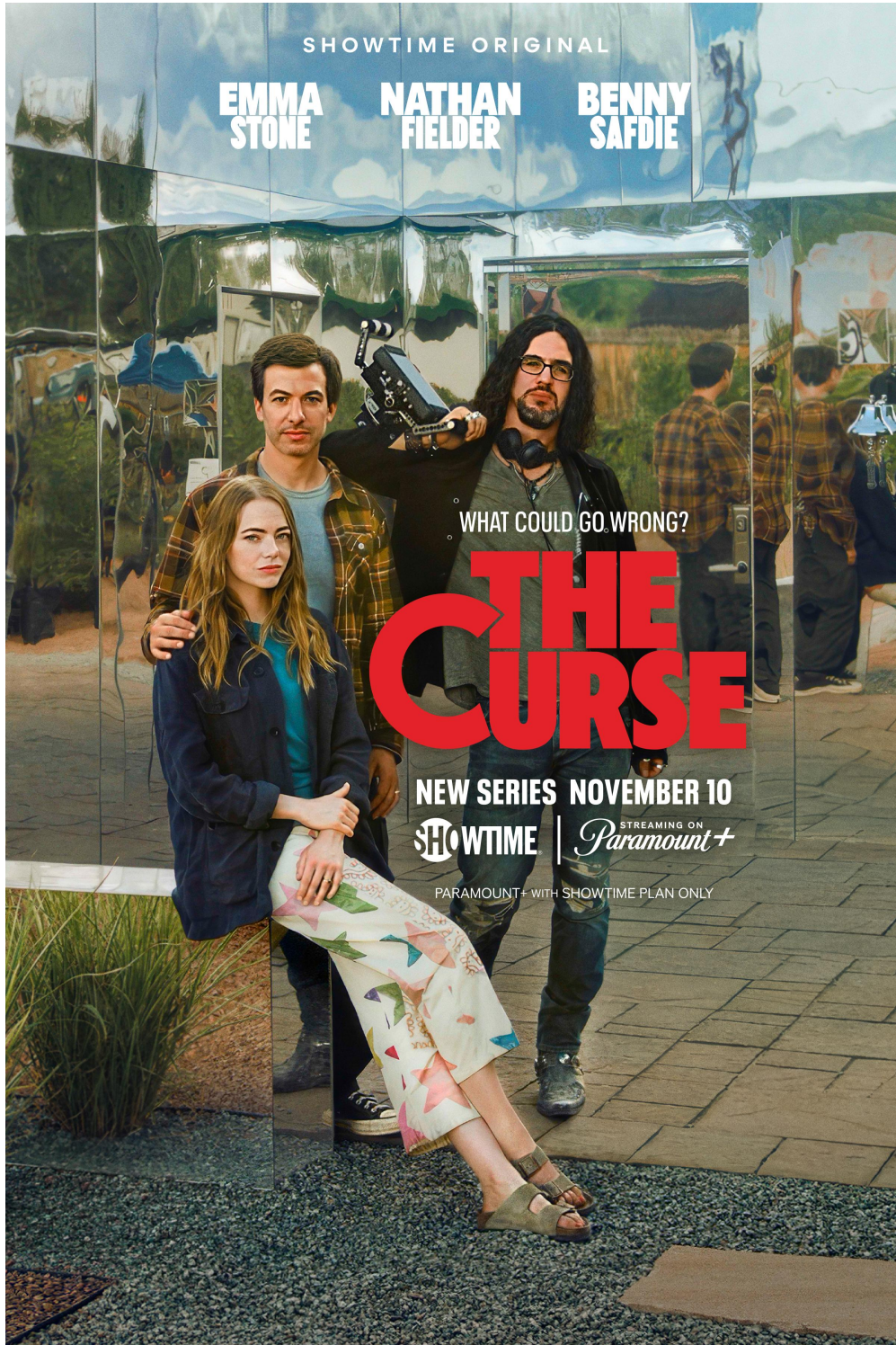


The Curse Episode Guide

Episodes 001-010

Last episode aired Sunday January 14, 2024





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Season One

Land of Enchantment

Season 1

Episode Number: 1

Season Episode: 1

Originally aired: Friday November 10, 2023
Writer: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie
Director: Nathan Fielder
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schecter)
Guest Stars: Constance Shulman (Elizabeth), Hikmah Warsame (Nala), Dahabo Ahmed (Hani), Christopher D. Calderon (Fernando), Barkhad Abdi (Abshir), Corbin Bernsen (Paul), Oscar Avila (Remi), Tessa Mentus (Monica Perez), Alexander Poncio (Vic), Jose Rivera (Van PA), Maria Conforme Farias (Yadira), Torsten Rohde (Hans Feist), Josh Horton (Todd Lobo), Emma Burnside (Australian Barista), Elizabeth Aragon (Elizabeth), Michael John Lopez (Shop Clerk), Benjie T. Lobato (Shop Patron #1), Jim Cochise Sarabia (Shop Patron #2), D.J. Arvizo (Jose), Cristian Madrid-Estrada (Pathways Employee), Jesus Banuelos (Father Manny), Dan Cortese (Dan Cortese), Timothy Oakes (Alejandro), Hans Christopher (David Burn), Michelle Campbell (Carmen), Crystal Mayes (Restaurant Patron)
Summary: Newly married couple Whitney and Asher Siegel set out to make a show.



The episode begins at the house of Fernando Castillo. He is a local who hasn't worked for nine months. Medical bills for his cancer-ridden mother are piling up as the Siegels play their part to help out. A new joint, Barrier Coffee, is coming up in the city.

Whitney and Asher have had a part in opening the café and have arranged for Fernando to get a full-time position. When his mother, Mary, doesn't look overtly happy for the camera, Dougie, who is the producer of the show, forcibly

applies menthol and some water to give the impression. Even though they have good intentions, all parts of the Siegel couple do not add up. For instance, the owner of Barrier Coffee has taken a lease of only six months, something they have failed to mention to Fernando or the other employees.

Whitney is outraged and confides in Asher about it. She says that if Dougie is allowed to keep on doing things like these, they won't work together anymore. Their passive housing initiative is a joint tie-up with the German Passive Housing Society group. Its president, Hans Feist, is involved with the filming of the show as well. Their company doesn't merely flip houses for a profit but to have a net-positive impact. However, Dougie is apprehensive about the kind of style the show is going for. He compares the current state to that of an infomercial; a comparison that has merit.

However, the couple refrains from letting him take charge and ruin their image. During the opening of Barrier, Whitney and Asher are interviewed by Monica, a journalist with the local news station. She is straightforward in her questioning and poses tough queries. They are genuine as

well. It is a clear example of gentrification where the new homes are egregiously unaffordable for the local, displaced residents in an inflationary environment.

Monica also brings up the Bookends Building, owned by Whitney's parents in a different region. They are notorious for ruthless evictions and being indifferent landlords. After evading the question once, Asher tears into Monica by questioning her intentions. Everyone is taken aback and the interview is abruptly ended. Whitney doesn't like what Asher has done... it is potentially a public faux pas that can hurt their reputation. Hence, she asks him to patch things with her.

Instead, to reach an agreement, Whitney pushes him to offer another story to Monica... the one about unethical practices by the Gaming Board at the Whistling River Casino owned by the Pueblos. It seems affiliated to the family but the connection isn't clear yet. Dougie wants to film the interaction but Whitney strictly puts it off-limits. She doesn't want this to come out in any form of video, even if it is a B-roll.

As Monica agrees to meet with Asher and asks him to wait before the meeting, Dougie suggests that they film Asher doing some "charitable stuff." He spots a small girl selling Sprite nearby and asks Asher to give her some money as he films it. This is a ploy by Dougie to get the mic on Asher that they later use to hear his interaction with Monica. Asher only has a hundred-dollar bill in his wallet and is forced to give it away. However, as soon as the camera stops rolling, he snatches it out of her hand and promises to buy her merchandise for a 50% markup.

But things aren't that easy... the girl gets mad and her sister joins in. She curses Asher, which freaks him out and he tries his best to convince the family to wait for him as he withdraws money from a convenience store. By the time he comes out, the family is gone... and the curse remains. He proceeds to meet Monica. She agrees to hold off the story until Tuesday but wants credible evidence backing up Asher's story. Dougie tries his best but fails to get anything on the feed.

Whitney is annoyed when she gets a call from a company associating her with the Bookend business. She confronts her father, Paul, when Asher and she go to her parent's house for lunch. The meeting with the parents is strange, who are themselves unconventional, to say the least. Paul gives Asher wisdom about people and business when they're alone. This conversation includes Paul urinating in the home garden and comforting Asher about his insecurities about his small genitalia.

Asher is miffed and confronts Whitney on the way back. She gets defensive and says she only shared it with her mother when they started dating. To make up, Whitney indulges Asher in an extremely weird yet hilarious oral sex session, which is too perverted and revealing to describe. While editing the pilot with the Siegel couple, Dougie shows them an abysmal final cut of his unreleased show, "Love to the Third Degree." Whitney is outraged and cannot believe Dougie is seriously considering giving his touch to their show.

She is even more concerned when she sees the clip of the little girl cursing Asher. Whitney loses her marbles and compels Asher to find the family and apologize. He drives around different parts of the city. Asher's main focus is homeless people but he doesn't find the exact family. He even asks at an underfunded housing facility and leaves his number with the caretaker. Asher gives a hundred dollars to another homeless woman living in a tent. Dougie praises Whitney's ability to hold the camera and how the room lights up when she walks in.

It is clear he likes her and given his character, it won't be a surprise if he makes a move. Given Asher's character, an offbeat and ridiculous arrangement might materialize. When Asher comes back, he lies to Whitney about having met the girl and the curse being lifted.

Pressure's Looking Good So Far

Season 1
Episode Number: 2
Season Episode: 2

Originally aired: Sunday November 19, 2023
Story: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie, Carrie Kemper
Teleplay: Carrie Kemper
Director: David Zellner, Nathan Zellner
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schecter)
Guest Stars: Gary Farmer (James Toledo), Marcus LaVoi (Wandall), Nizhoniya Austin (Cara Durand), Sidni (Luisa), Edward Martinez (Freckle), Tessa Mentus (Monica Perez), David DeLao (Bill), Tiff Abreu (Jambo Server), Adrienne Chalepah (Laura), Ramona DuBarry (Dr. Jensen), Elizabeth Katz Sperlich (Marjorie), Marco Fuller (Art Patron #1), Ryan Rox (Gallery Assistant), Dashika Wijegooneratne (Art Patron #3), Ricardo Aguilar (Casino Dealer)
Summary: Whitney attempts to forge new alliances.



The episode begins with good news. Whitney is pregnant. She hasn't told Asher yet but he will be happy when she does. For now, Asher is squarely focused on Monica. And ensuring that the interview doesn't air. He meets with her to give evidence for the casino's misgivings and failings to protect vulnerable gamblers. However, when she sees the document, she says it is public information. To make a credible story, she needs security footage, which Asher claims he had access to when he worked there.

Without it, Monica cannot do the story and she will have to air the interview. Asher asks for some more time. He goes back to the casino and meets with his friend, Bill, who works there in Marketing. Despite his best attempts to get a foot in, Asher isn't able to achieve his goal. He makes a plan for next time, though, when their boss Randall comes to the office.

Whitney meets the Governor of San Pedro Pueblos, James Toledo. He is a big deal around these parts. Whitney wants his vote of confidence and endorsement for their next redevelopment project. The Native land is apparently checkerboarded. To further her cause, Whitney invites James to her "friend" Cara Durand's exhibition in Santa Fe. She is an up-and-coming Native artist whose paintings the duo use in their houses for staging, without her permission. James agrees due to Whitney's sincere gesture.

The Siegels meet with Cara for dinner to discuss hiring her as a "cultural consultant" for their bid. But when the time comes, Whitney shoots down Asher's attempts to ask Cara, who is clueless. It turns out that Cara and Whitney aren't friends at all. They are at best acquaintances without any real connection. Cara is so disinterested in the conversation that she leaves citing a work emergency. She even asks them to deliver the food she ordered to her home.

Although they are devastated, to redeem the situation, Whitney reveals to Asher that she is pregnant... a whole day after she found out. Asher is happy, excited, and nervous, even asking Whitney if she "still loves him." But the general sentiment is that of happiness, for now. We turn our focus toward Dougie, who is on a date with a woman in Santa Fe. She curiously asks him

about "the accident." Dougie was involved in a brutal car crash which killed his wife. Another car T-boned them and although that driver jumped a red light, the fault rested with Dougie since he was over the drinking limit.

He is in denial of any responsibility and still misses her. After the date, he insists on giving the woman a lift. She is hesitant due to his trauma but gets in anyway. About a mile from her house, Dougie asks her to take out the blow machine from the glove box. When he finds out he is over the limit, Dougie abruptly pulls over and they walk the rest of the way home. It is indicated he is an alcoholic and has other addiction issues as well.

Randall finally agrees to a meeting with Asher but isn't impressed with his idea. Asher's desperation reeks out from the screen as he tries to get a foot in. However, Randall is firm in his stance. As Bill is showing him out, Asher resorts to Plan B. He first tells Bill that he has something to show him — a funny video. But he won't do it on the phone. To throw Bill off, Asher tells him they are pregnant. It works and Bill takes him to his office, reluctantly. Asher purposely spills a bottle of Gatorade all over the carpet and over Bill. He even spills a generous amount on himself, forcing Bill to go out and get some paper towels.

In the meantime, Asher transfers all the security footage from his computer to a flash drive. On his way out, Asher runs into Dougie, who is blowing away steam playing Blackjack. Dougie mentions that he is flying out of New Mexico for "another job," which momentarily worries Asher. That night, Whitney and Asher visit Cara's show. It is quite difficult to put into words what exactly happens there. It involves Cara inviting guests into a tent and offering them turkey. Irrespective of whether or not they eat it, she screams and the guests' turn is then over.

James shows up, forcing Whitney to say gibberish until she spots Marjorie, who works with Cara. James is also left unimpressed with Cara's show. The episode ends with more evidence that "the curse" hasn't lifted. When Whitney and Asher go to their gyno, they learn that Whitney's pregnancy isn't viable. It is also revealed that Whitney has undergone an abortion twice before. They can try again for a baby — after six weeks. Both are left devastated and sit in silence in the car, not sure how to process the news.

Questa Lane

Season 1
Episode Number: 3
Season Episode: 3

Originally aired: Sunday November 26, 2023
Writer: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie
Director: David Zellner, Nathan Zellner
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schecter)
Guest Stars: Hikmah Warsame (Nala), Dahabo Ahmed (Hani), Christopher D. Calderon (Fernando), Barkhad Abdi (Abshir), Sidni (Luisa), Teagan Ireland (Stephanie), Aspen Martinez (Josie), Paul Blott (Dr. Brown), Tara Levine (Auction Bidder #1), Meagan Billy (Auction Bidder #2), Frankie Roy Sandoval (Assessor), Walter Anaruk (Focus Group Moderator), Diana Gaitirira (Focus Group Member #1), Alyssa L Harbottle (Focus Group Member #2), Guia Peel (Focus Group Member #3), Carl Bailey (Focus Group Member #4), Audrey Morrison (Focus Group Member #5), Jimmy Jones (Focus Group Member #6), Jodi Balsamo (Teacher), Bennie Taylor (Neighbor), Jerry G. Angelo (Officer)
Summary: A focus group gets into Whitney's head.



The episode begins with an auction. Asher is participating in it to bid for a vacant lot called "Questa Lane." After some intense bids, he finally gets the winning one for \$62,500. Whitney isn't as pleased about getting the lot for that price. But Asher feels it can be great for the redevelopment project.

While sitting with Dougie in their living room, the pair watch a clip from a focus group HGTV pulled together. Many networks do this to test out the waters and get first impressions from people

about the shows in production.

Most of the comments aren't flattering. The scepticism is mostly directed towards Asher, whom one particular member does not find "neither funny nor good-looking." The design of the passive homes also comes under scrutiny. The general consensus is that the houses do not look good. One of them also remarks that buying such a house is worthless since it can take hundreds of years to get your money back in energy cost savings.

After watching the clip, Dougie expresses his reservations about the show being picked up. Ash is immediately concerned since the pair have a lot of hopes pinned on it. In other news, Nala and her family are back in focus. We get a glimpse of her sitting in class and hear whispers rising from the corners of the other kids that nastily bring out her race. It is not as sinister as it sounds but little things like these can have big effects on small children.

As fate would have it, the lot that the family is squatting on is Questa Lane. Hani encourages Nala to make a run for it when Asher tries to drill his way in. When he sees her, his eyes light up. He instantly takes out a crisp hundred-dollar bill to give to her but the sister runs away. He chases them and eventually catches up. But before he can hand over the money, a good Samaritan steps in to stop the perceived threat. When an officer is called, things get cleared up. Asher has the right to kick the family out but given the unresolved curse, he allows them to stay on for as long as they like.

Whitney is pleased and professes her intention to perhaps do more for the family by undertaking petty repair works. Asher is in agreement as well. Dr Brown is back at the clinic, where the pair are headed next. Whitney gets her shot and for the foreseeable future, she cannot have the baby and the duo cannot have intercourse.

In a strange sequence, Asher receives a call from Dougie. The latter asks him if he is home to hang out together. Dougie's loneliness came up in the previous episode and this is a continuation of that. Asher avoids him, which prompts a very upsetting reaction from Dougie. He actually breaks down in tears while lounging in his bed.

When they pull into the plaza, Whitney is shocked to see Barrier Coffee sporting a sign saying "Coming Soon." She immediately asks Asher to call Jamie, its proprietor, who holds the lease. He points out that their contract did not state that the place had to be open except during the production of the show. There is nothing much that the pair can do since those were the agreed terms.

Whitney is later seen calling Fernando, who was "promised" a full-time job at the Barrier in Episode 1. Since he features on the show, she wants to make sure that he doesn't have a bitter taste. To do that, she offers him a temporary job as the security guard for the plaza. Next, they head to Questa Lane in order to assess the nature of the repairs required. Abshir, Hani and Nala's father welcome them in, fully understanding that his family's security rests on pleasing them. He is warm and pleasant, unlike Hani.

Asher installs a sturdier lock, one that won't be picked or drilled into easily. Whitney talks to the girls as they watch videos on TikTok. When the curse comes up, Nala remarks she did it following the online trend. But Asher is shocked when Nala casually mentions she cursed him that his chicken spaghetti wouldn't have any chicken. Whitney doesn't seem to make a lot of it but Asher is surely shaken.

The couple have a hilarious moment that they both enjoy when Asher tries to take off a sweater stuck around Whitney's head. They laugh out loud and Whitney gets the idea to film a reel by reenacting a version of it for Instagram. This way, the network would see how charming the pair are together and it could positively affect their decision. However, things do not go according to plan. Since they cannot use the same sweater, the exact moment cannot be recreated. The reel looks falsified like most social media does. Whitney tries to plough through it as Asher wonders if Nala went through their garbage that night.

How else could she have guessed what he had for dinner? Whitney disregards his theory and asks him to stop making "assumptions" about the family. This triggers a nasty reaction — nay, outburst — from Asher. Whitney also doesn't back down and they have an ugly spat over how she never gives him the benefit of the doubt in such situations. All of it is recorded on the reel, which Whitney ends up deleting later. The episode ends with a glimpse of Fernando guarding the plaza with his rifle.

Under the Big Tree

Season 1
Episode Number: 4
Season Episode: 4

Originally aired: Sunday December 03, 2023
Writer: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie
Director: David Zellner, Nathan Zellner
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schechter)
Guest Stars: Hikmah Warsame (Nala), Dahabo Ahmed (Hani), Christopher D. Calderon (Fernando), Barkhad Abdi (Abshir), Sidni (Luisa), Edward Martinez (Freckle), Alexander Poncio (Vic), Doug Montoya (Jeff Robinson), GiGi Erneta (Martha), W. Brad Jarman (Comedy Student #1), Michael Pridham (Chiropractor), Hari Rai Khalsa (Sikh Musician), Marjorie Crary (Sikh Woman), Diana Navarrete (Maria), Leo Rodriguez (Neighbor), Ethan Woodall (Kalvin), Kathryn Price Garson (Kalvin's Mom)
Summary: Good news for the Siegels is dampened by tensions in the neighborhood.



The episode begins with good news for Asher and Whit. HGTV has ordered a full season of their show "Flipanthropy"! Dougie is the first one to receive the call. He picks it up on the second time of asking. He can't say much as his phone's battery dies and Dougie has no charger handy. He also doesn't know where he is. Besides his own car, there are two more in the vicinity. All three cars are parked near a river stream on a giant land mass. Dougie reads the back of his hand, which says "Under the Big Tree."

Naturally, he looks under the biggest tree for the next clue but finds none. Respecting the sense of irony, he finds success under the shortest tree — the keys to all three cars. The other two belong to people named Kalvin and Wyatt. Dougie follows the address written on the accompanying note to a large house. Kalvin is a minor, whose mother is confused about the whole thing. It is revealed that Dougie offered to buy beer for Kalvin and Wyatt outside their school, trying to teach them a lesson about drunk driving... or something. You can't tell with Dougie sometimes.

Kalvin tries to spill all the blame on Dougie as his mother threatens to phone the police. Dougie smartly weaves himself out of the situation by citing how tough it would be for Kalvin to shrug off a criminal record while applying for colleges. Martha Donovan, who earlier called Dougie, then calls the couple, who are excited beyond belief. She also mentions how the network has decided not to portray the new occupants of houses as "displaced people," something that slightly irks Whitney. However, she is able to convince herself — and Asher — that it is all for good.

Nothing will change their "mission" to help the people of the community. Asher's business acumen quickly comes into action, as he mentions the possibility of flipping houses for a larger profit after the show has aired. Whitney floats the idea of Asher joining a "comedy class" to shore up his humour skills before the shooting begins. He is a little offended but there's no denying

the need for it. The doorbell invites them to talk to Maria Whit, a neighbour living nearby. She shows them a note from Victor, another neighbour in the community.

The tone is harsh and accusatory, which has made the members of the community uncomfortable. Vic accuses "someone" of stealing his packages. Maria implies that the note is racist and that the other native members aren't alright with it. Whitney reassures Maria she will talk to him and immediately leaves to see him. Vic is in no mood to apologize or take back the note. He has lost precious packages and is convinced "one of them" has taken it. Whitney leaves disappointed, even more so when she sees the stove appliance — that they pre-installed in the house — removed by Vic.

This essentially goes against their "passive home" principles... but Asher is more concerned that a perfectly good \$7000 appliance is just sitting out in the open. Asher visits Questa Lane, bringing food and other supplies for the family. He also performs a mould test and makes small talk with Hani about the curse trend on TikTok. His real intention is to test what Nala knows about different kinds of pasta... which she doesn't. When Abshir hears it, he takes Asher into another room and requests him to stop the "curse talk." Their culture takes the issue very seriously and he has worked hard to convince Hani not to talk about it.

Whit, while sitting at the plaza, instructs her assistant to ask Fernando not to bring his gun belt to the store anymore. The coffee shop will be open soon so he will be reverting to being a barista.

Asher wants to take the appliance from Vic's house. He employs the help of one of his employees, who is uncomfortable with loading it all by himself. But Asher convinces him to do so and as expected, he drops it. The stove breaks into two with the other half remaining near the house as the duo leaves in a panicky state. While discussing strategy with Dougie, Asher asks him to remove Vic from the show.

Dougie tries to mend old ways by apologizing for "bullying Asher at camp." Asher is clueless about it happening and Dougie is relieved. Asher tries to unburden himself by talking to him about the curse, which prompts Dougie to show him the footage from that day. He asserts that curses are real and that he lost Melanie, his wife, due to a curse. It is conjecture at this point but Asher takes it seriously.

The episode ends on a whimsical note. Dougie, who found a shard from Native pottery near the tree, is trying to discern its larger meaning... where there is none. And Whitney has a soulful experience listening to hymns and chants coming out of a religious gathering.

It's a Good Day

Season 1
Episode Number: 5
Season Episode: 5

Originally aired: Sunday December 10, 2023
Writer: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie
Director: Nathan Fielder
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schecter)
Guest Stars: Constance Shulman (Elizabeth), Dean Cain (Mark Rose), Christopher D. Calderon (Fernando), Nikki Dixon (Lucinda), Eric Petersen (Dennis), Corbin Bernsen (Paul), Nizhoniya Austin (Cara Durand), Sidni (Luisa), Oscar Avila (Remi), Samantha Ashley (Tonya), D.J. Arvizo (Jose), Alexander Adrian Gibson (Pascal), Aliyah Lee (Janice), Rosie B. Molina (Enola), Jose Rivera (Van PA), Christopher Luciano Rael (Officer #1), Joseph Raul Perez Jr. (Officer #2), Melissa Edwards (Jean Thief), Akiko Stacy (Winona), Alejandro Reyes (Courtyard Man), Erica Yvette Velasquez (Dandy Burger Employee)
Summary: Whitney and Asher struggle to see eye-to-eye in the hunt for a home-buyer.



The episode is entirely set at a passive home that Whitney and Asher are selling in the New Mexico neighbourhood. Not only do they have real buyers — Dennis and Lucinda — they are also shooting for their show. Cameras are set up all over the place to get footage for HGTV.

For now, what takes Whitney and Asher's attention is a contract... which, although non-binding, has great significance. It basically shows support for the Native American tribe who own all the public roads and lands.

They are in a tussle with the federal government as to the right of easement for the roads. But the tricky part about the contract is that Dennis and Lucinda would effectively be consenting to give away the title of their house to the community if they lay claim to it. Whitney puts Asher to the task of convincing the couple to sign. He tries hard to bring it up but just can't do it. It is a delight for fans to see all of this play out. There is so much in *The Curse* recaps that gets lost in translation. Anyway, they begin shooting and the conversation turns away from the point.

Lucinda and Dennis joke about how the home is more like a prison with its waste management system. Asher joins in on the fun, heeding the advice he got from the focus group. Whitney does not partake and refutes their remarks. When Dennis brings up the idea of installing air conditioning in the house, Whitney gets even more flustered. Doing so would take away the passive certification of the house.

Although it maintains a comfortable temperature, that state is achieved only when all the doors and windows are kept shut. Whitney talks to the couple off-camera as they blow off steam in their car. However, the conversation doesn't go according to plan. Lucinda is especially belligerent and straightforward in asserting they don't care about the certification. And that they will do with the house as they like. Whitney brings up the papers in retaliation. It seems more like an attempt to fend them off as buyers since they don't share her vision.

The duo now scamper to find a new buyer for the house. There are two things they discuss. First, shooting the episode with actors who might not end up buying. Second, shooting with potential homeowners, which is the harder of the two. They do have a backup buyer — a college girl — but Whitney shoots down the suggestion as it wouldn't look homely on television. Whitney calls her "good friend" Cara to pretend on camera. She seems enthusiastic about it. But when she gets in front of the camera, it is almost as if she is mocking Whitney.

Her sarcastic pretence is borderline insulting. Now they have to look for other options. Asher mentions Mark Rose's name. But Whitney isn't keen on him given his political inclinations. Instead, she takes Tonya, the AD, with her to Santa Fe to street-cast ordinary people. They settle on three people — a couple and a single woman with her newborn. In between, they make a pit stop at the plaza where a lady is being arrested for shoplifting a pair of jeans.

Whitney goes into the jeans store and gives Enola, the cashier, her own credit card. She asks Enola to charge the card whenever someone does something like this. She is also perturbed by Fernando's gun when she has coffee at the shop, which is now open for business.

Whitney wants to pair the male pedestrian with the single lady. But none of them are comfortable with this setting. She wants to portray a family on camera which would make for better television.

Eventually, she allows the couple to be themselves but adds the fine detail of the woman being pregnant. It is a small victory for Whitney, who has had a tough day. Right before this, she had to literally wave off her parents, Paul and Lizzy, from the property. It is also revealed that they own all of this land and have given Whitney the opportunity to develop it on her own. But they still try to assert their superiority over her, which bothers Whitney.

Whitney is miffed with Asher, who contacts Mark to visit the house and have a chat with him. He beseeches Whitney to let go of her preconceived notions about him. Asher reasserts that if Whitney isn't convinced even after this meeting, he will drop the idea. To her utter surprise, Mark isn't what he seems like. He donates to charities, is enthusiastic about the house, and has Apache lineage as well.

He is the perfect home buyer and in all honesty, a great character for the reality show. Whitney, though, feels emasculated having lost this "contest" with Asher. It is obvious she is upset over this and hardly pays attention to anything Asher says as they go to bed.

The Fire Burns On

Season 1
Episode Number: 6
Season Episode: 6

Originally aired: Sunday December 17, 2023
Writer: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie
Director: Nathan Fielder
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schechter)
Guest Stars: Hikmah Warsame (Nala), Barkhad Abdi (Abshir), Oscar Avila (Remi), Samantha Ashley (Tonya), D.J. Arvizo (Jose), Alexander Adrian Gibson (Pascal), Aliyah Lee (Janice), Edward Martinez (Freckle), David DeLao (Bill), Michael Pridham (Chiropractor), Louis Schiffman (Louis), Ruben Velazco (Volunteer Neighbor), John Wickersham (Fire Chief), Zack Logsdon (Murray), Freddie Martinez (Martinez), Alexander Suazo (Firefighter #3), Enrico Trujillo (Firefighter #4), Vic Montoya (Firefighter #5), Zachary Enriquez (Handsome Firefighter), Sorén D. Harvey (Sorén)
Summary: A plan is hatched to spice up the show.



The episode begins with footage that will feature in the first episode of Flipplanthropy. The fake home-buyer couple from the previous episode features centrally. Whitney watches the final cut with Dougie before it is sent to HGTV. The footage shows the couple expressing their delight at joining a full community with warm people. They are given an art piece by Whitney and Asher, which is also somehow given a "sustainability" spin. The whole point of the show is to portray the strength and social function

of the Espanola community.

From a central perspective, the footage looks way too manufactured and synthetic. Whitney doesn't like it. She calls it "lifeless or something," remarking that the footage feels like it is missing traction. Dougie is apprehensive to comment but certainly has an idea. He waits for the opportunity when Whitney finally asks him. She is made to work a little bit but Dougie starts explaining his vision.

In this current format and style, the episodes are bland and narrativeless. He says there is no drama or conflict in the show but mentions a possible way to introduce these ingredients: Asher and Whitney. He replays the part of the footage where Asher is offering the art piece to the couple. Whitney looks at him and rolls her eyes, clearly frustrated. She explains that it is because Asher held his phone against the piece as he was handing it over.

Dogie records a small clip of Whitney expressing this frustration and plays it in the footage. He also makes changes to the background music to introduce an element of goofy humour. Although Dougie paints it as creative instinct, there is more to this suggestion than just that. His plan might be to sow seeds of disagreement that will exacerbate the tension between the couple. Dougie assures Whitney that this would help the audience connect more with the show.

He will also prevent Asher from making such comments about Whitney, citing the focus group's consensus, "Why is she even with this guy?" Whitney is encouraged to tell him about

a new title she thought for the show: "Green Queen." Dougie tries to overlook the suggestion, hinting that it won't materialize with HGTV.

Meanwhile, Asher has a strange encounter with Bill, his casino friend, at the department store. He had talked to Bill about three days ago but now the guy is ignoring him, Asher cannot put his finger on why this is.

Asher and Whitney shoot at the Espanola Fire Station, where they have installed solar panels as endeavours of sustainable energy. Dougie is again on point with his earlier suggestion, telling one of the firemen to flirt with Whitney on camera.

Asher is shocked to find shreds of chicken on the sink in the washroom. He tries to commend Dougie for his practical joke. However, Dougie washes his hands of it, refuting his involvement. Asher is more scared than confused and is determined to find who placed it.

During the next scene, the fireman takes Dougie's advice and flirts with Whitney, who reciprocates it. Asher is lost in the thought of figuring out who placed the chicken. He doesn't stop there. Next, he enquires about who prepares the food at the station. When he learns Martinez's name, Asher goes to him. Martinez doesn't mention chicken as one of the ingredients he is using that day. This leads Asher to talk to another foreman, who goes over the footage from the CCTV camera placed near the washroom's door.

As all of this is going on, Whitney talks to Dougie about Cara. They struck up quite the chemistry the other day on set. Dougie calls her ugly and also cites how she smokes. Both are big turn-offs for him and that is why he won't date her. Whitney is also concerned that she has yet to sign the release form for HGTV to use her paintings on the show. To introduce some tension between them, Whitney texts Cara about Dougie's unaired burn victim dating show (which we saw in Episode 3).

Asher does not find any evidence of Dougie — or anyone — placing the chicken in the bathroom. The shooting at the station wraps up and Asher goes straight to Abshir's house, Questa Lane. Abshir gets a chiropractic realignment since his neck has been hurting for a long time. Asher once again has a strange run-in with Nala, which bookends the episode.

He talks to her about the tiny curse, which Nala professes to have stopped. To test if she is telling the truth, Asher plays a game where he holds certain nails under a bucket. When Nala gets it right a few times, Asher tries clenching a bunch in his hands. He holds on so tight that he starts bleeding, worrying Nala. As he washes his hand, Nala comes up to him and says, "I'm sorry."

Self-Exclusion

Season 1

Episode Number: 7

Season Episode: 7

Originally aired: Sunday December 24, 2023
Writer: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie
Director: Nathan Fielder
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schecter)
Guest Stars: Hikmah Warsame (Nala), Corbin Bernsen (Paul), Nizhonniya Austin (Cara Durand), Oscar Avila (Remi), Samantha Ashley (Tonya), D.J. Arvizo (Jose), Tessa Mentus (Monica Perez), Teagan Ireland (Stephanie), Aspen Martinez (Josie), Nizhonibaa' (Nala's Friend), Doug Montoya (Jeff Robinson), Danielle Todesco (News Anchor), Joan Elizabeth Tuohy (Rachael), W. Brad Jarman (Comedy Student #1), Abby Townsend (Comedy Student #2), Bucket Siler (Comedy Student #3), D'Artagnan G. Balink (Comedy Student #4), Greg Fernandez (Gym Teacher), Bertha Benitez (Joanna Hernandez), Martin C Patterson (Conwin), Kirby Leigh (Casino Security Guard), Arthur Valencia (Bank Teller), Ricky Macias (Makeup Artist)
Summary: Whitney and Cara become closer as Asher's past comes to light.



The episode begins with Nala trying to practice her cursing. We saw earlier that the little girl feels she has special powers. Nala doesn't feel comfortable about them when it comes to strangers. However, if they are for the class bully, like Josie, Nala doesn't think it is problematic. She curses the climbing rope that Josie is on to "fall." But nothing happens. When it is Nala's turn, she is unable to climb the rope. Josie offers words of consolation but Nala isn't receptive, which prompts Josie to keep the divide between

them. Nala goes to their teacher to complain. But he simply throws it under the rug and asks her to keep a positive attitude.

Whitney drives to the mini-golf course with the intent to pick up the offensive Native American decoration outside. She buys the thing, puts it in the backseat, and goes to Cara's home. Cara is surprised, offended, and confused but lets both Whitney and the decoration in. Whitney immediately brings up the release form issue. And Cara refuses to sign it.

This has been a long time coming but perhaps Whitney kept on hanging to the last sliver of hope. She is thrown off when Cara says her refusal to sign is because of Paul and Lizzy, Whitney's parents. They do unjust things to poor people. Whitney knows the accusation is true but tries to distance herself from them. She even tries to emotionally manipulate Cara by bringing up her "unhappy marriage" with Asher. Although it is for show, there is a hint of truth in it as well. Whitney explains how Asher doesn't let her artistic side take precedence, worrying only about money.

She offers Cara the job of an art consultant, something that Asher came up with in Episode 3. Cara is instantly taken by the amount being offered but is reluctant to have her name attached to the show. Things get even more uncomfortable as we switch our attention to the comedy class that Asher has been taking. The teacher uses Rodney Dangerfield's class self-deprecating

humour to show how people are attracted to other people who are self-aware. Asher had earlier told him in private about his "small penis." And now the teacher has brought it up.

When Asher cannot make a proper joke, the teacher uses it to tell a joke. This offends certain people in the group, who say he has "crossed a line." The buck is turned on Asher and he is essentially expelled from class. Asher has an outburst as he exits the room. When he reaches home, Whitney gives him a stare and walks into another room. Asher plays a clip from Monica's report on the casino gaming board on the TV, where we see footage that he stole.

In one of those moments, we see Asher laughing at the woman who was wronged by the casino. Whit is disappointed that Asher partook in that entire sequence. We also see a moment where she checks her phone with notifications about the credit card being charged by the jeans shop. The next day, Whit reports to the set for filming. But the shoot is not about flipping homes; instead, Dougie interviews Whit about Asher and the marriage.

This is when Whit really delves into the questions around the marriage. She seems unsure if it will last or if they are strong enough to withstand obstacles. The next sequence playfully forebodes the chinks getting wider and a new entrant in the equation. Whitney laughs her socks off on some dumb Dougie story as Asher walks in, clueless. She then refuses to go to Shabbat dinner with Asher.

When it is Asher's turn to face the camera and lay some of his frustrations on the table, Tonya whispers to Dougie that they don't have time. Just like that, the shoot ends and Asher is left with the embarrassment of having never invited Dougie for Shabbat dinner... even though he knows Dougie is Jewish. Whitney goes with Paul the next day to get 40k in cash. She makes it clear this is another "loan" and that it has to be paid back. She gives half of that to Cara, who is surprised by the promptness.

Very slyly, Whit slips in the question of Cara's art featuring on the show. Only this time, Cara agrees. Whit gives her the release document and Cara signs it. Not just that, the girls also play basketball together, thus cementing their unusually crafted friendship.

Asher reviews the fight he had with Whitney at the start of the episode to make notes. He really wants to work on their fraught relationship. Meanwhile, Nala casually chats with another classmate as we learn her "curse" has finally worked. Josie falls down and hurts herself while playing, giving Nala food for thought in relation to her "powers."

Down and Dirty

Season 1
Episode Number: 8
Season Episode: 8

Originally aired: Sunday December 31, 2023
Story: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie, Carrie Kemper
Teleplay: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie
Director: Nathan Fielder
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schechter)
Guest Stars: Hikmah Warsame (Nala), Dahabo Ahmed (Hani), Christopher D. Calderon (Fernando), Barkhad Abdi (Abshir), Nizhonnaya Austin (Cara Durand), Brett Mooswa (Brett Mini), Oscar Avila (Remi), Samantha Ashley (Tonya), Rosie B. Molina (Enola), Antonio Weiss (Vivi), Morse Bicknell (Wyatt Singh), Robert Russell (Friend of Vivi), Matthew Gay (Clyde Camera), Elizabeth Katz Sperlich (Marjorie), Collin Blackford (Teen Driver), Kylie Howell (Teen Girl), Preston Gage (Teen Guy #1), Finnegan McKelvey (Teen Guy #2), Seff Awwad (Cashier)
Summary: Asher and Dougie have a boys night out. Whitney explores her artistic side.



The episode begins with four teenagers. They are well-to-do and stop by Iosheka Jeans. One of them tells the others that her brother took three pairs for free the other day. Once they get their foot in, the teenagers simply ransack the place. The employee only notes down the itinerary of the items to charge Whitney's credit card. She couldn't care less. Next, we see Fernando and his little "militia group" bang at Whitney and Asher's door. They are armed with rifles and mean business.

Fernando mentions the increasing "thefts" at the jeans store and how it is spoiling his reputation. The couple invite him in. Whitney explains the whole gig to him but Fernando isn't ready to listen. He wants the gig to stop immediately, accusing the couple of trying to "get him into trouble." Asher tries to be tough and stands up to him, which is quite uncharacteristic. Fernando just laughs in his face and leaves. Whitney makes fun of Asher when he says that they promised Fernando a job.

It is a shocking moment where Whitney's true, ugly face emerges from her sweet pretence. Asher is stunned into silence. He cannot believe her reaction. Next, he has the opportunity to bitch about her on camera, like she has been doing to him till now. Dougie tries to instigate him but Asher holds firm. He even calls Whitney a "better person than him," which is clearly not true after what we have seen. Dougie continues to scrape intimate details from Asher's life.

It is revealed that he came to Santa Fe for his former girlfriend. Asher is visibly uncomfortable and is stretched to the brink when Dougie brings up yet another private conversation they had earlier. This revelation is a direct attack on his masculinity and by far the most hurting one. Asher still keeps calm and goes ahead with the shoot. And after the wrap-up, Asher buys him dinner. How strange! Not just that, Asher enjoys his company and talks to him "like a friend." Asher starts apologizing to him for not prioritizing their friendship before.

Whitney calls her "friend," Cara, who reluctantly picks up and listens to her yap about the incident. Cara is only interested in the money she will get as a consultant and wants to limit her

relationship with Whitney to that. However, since she is near the diner, Whitney invites herself to Cara's lunch with her friend, Brett. They make fun of Whitney and her like, especially white folks, who are ultra-careful about saying anything to offend "the Natives." Brett mocks Whitney to her face as Cara tries to hold her laughter in. He invites himself to a soiree at a collector's (Vivi) place as well.

Vivi, it turns out, is also a military contractor. Whitney is annoyed when Dougie sends an ill-prepared staff for what he calls a "B-roll" to Vivi's house. However, it is Dougie and Asher's dinner that gets the more interesting set piece to follow. The two men talk frankly about the curse, among other things. One ominous development that emerges at the fag end of the dinner is Dougie pushing to get both of them drunk and insisting he "drive" them home. Along the way, they stop at a convenience store to pick up batteries.

Asher received a text earlier from Abshir telling him that the house's smoke alarm wasn't working. Dougie plays another practical prank on Asher by buying a gay porn magazine for him from the store, which he doesn't appreciate. Asher gets even more nervous as Dougie insists that he will ask Nala to "curse him" and see if the chicken they received from the restaurant disappears. Dougie, despite Asher's requests not to indulge in the curse topic, asks Nala about it when he is in her room.

Nala gets very serious and really quiet when he does. Dougie pleads with her to curse him and starts crying. But Nala shouts something in Somali and Dougie panics and leaves. When they get back into the car, it is revealed that Dougie didn't have extra batteries. He pretended that his Kleenex tissues were batteries and Asher went along with it, hinting at the reality that even he is "cosplaying to be a good man." Asher wanted Nala to curse Dougie to verify the theory.

Hearing the accusations, Asher lashes back by talking ill about Dougie's accident that killed his wife. He remains quiet for the entire journey. As he drops Asher off at the house, Dougie mutters "I curse you," and leaves.

Whitney continues to film herself, going around the house pretending to appreciate Vivi's art. Somewhere along the way, she meets a stranger, who seems to fancy her. They even go into a bathroom alone for a few seconds, although he prefaced the room as an elevator. Next, Whitney proctors an entire conversation with Cara for the camera, forcing her to call Whitney "artistic" and her homes beautiful. Cara's expressions change as the conversation goes on. She just wants it to be over and even articulates her frustration at the treatment.

The episode ends with Cara's revenge on Whitney as she throws away the art sculpture from the mini golf course.

Young Hearts

Season 1
Episode Number: 9
Season Episode: 9

Originally aired: Sunday January 07, 2024
Writer: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie
Director: Nathan Fielder
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schecter)
Guest Stars: Constance Shulman (Elizabeth), Gary Farmer (James Toledo), Christopher D. Calderon (Fernando), Corbin Bernsen (Paul), Nizhoniya Austin (Cara Durand), Samantha Ashley (Tonya), Sidni (Luisa), Edward Martinez (Freckle), David DeLao (Bill), Alexander Adrian Gibson (Pascal), Aliyah Lee (Janice), Elizabeth Aragon (Elizabeth), GiGi Erneta (Martha), Lejend Yazzie (Phoebe), Chris Wright (Patrick), Alvin A. Flowers (Alvin), Arthur Martinez (Guy in Apartment), Bridgette Renee Smith (Spa Receptionist), Victoria Elena Sanchez (Spa Manager)
Summary: Dougie gets a surprise visit. The Siegels go bowling.



The episode begins with a first-person POV shot. We have no inkling about the person in the car stationed outside Whitney's house. We do not know why he waited for her to emerge, only to drive past her nonchalantly to the Plaza.

Whitney is heading toward Iosheka Jeans. The store has been of prime importance in these last few episodes. And the spree continues here as well. Martha, the HGTV exec who informed Dougie and the couple about the show getting picked up, is present on set.

She sits behind the camera with Dougie as they shoot the fake pedestrian couple sharing a joyous moment. While the man tries on a pair of jeans that don't fit, the woman tries her best to make it work. It is cinematically manufactured but feels very organic and natural. Martha lauds Dougie for his vision and the energy he has brought to the show. But she wants Asher and Whitney to recreate this.

Dougie explains they have another sequence planned for them but Martha is clear in her instructions to get them to do this bit. Before Whitney can make her way to the set — because she would rather walk a mile than run up her car — Martha is gone.

Dougie informs her that Martha has invited the couple for dinner. HGTV is impressed with the progress the show has made. However, the network doesn't like what's happening with Whitney and Asher in real life.

They have reviewed the footage that Dougie and the crew recorded of the couple talking about each other on camera. And they have decided that it is not a "positive spin." Dougie clearly lays down the bottom line: "There is no show without Asher." This is after Whitney hints that the marriage is crumbling and that she would rather use the natural progression of the show to end things in a reality television high. Before she can rework her "chemistry" with Asher, Whitney has to deal with a couple of issues.

Tonya informs her about a disgruntled employee named Patrick. He has been fired from the crew for leaving a derogatory note on Whitney's windshield. It reads "slumlord," which refers to

the infamous Bookends Building that her parents own. Whitney is stunned into silence. Carrying on from her saint-like approach and self-image, Whitney asks Tonya to reinstate him and call Patrick.

He is in no mood to talk with her, even though Whitney offers her charming optimism. The real reason for Patrick's actions is because of how unjustly Phoebe's uncle Gordon was ousted from the Bookends. Phoebe is a driver working around the set. Naturally, Whitney sets up a quick meeting and assures Phoebe that she has nothing to do with her parents. Whitney also promises to get Gordon reinstated, making Phoebe remark that Whitney is a real-life hero.

After the meeting, Whitney Googles her name with the Bookends and finds the provenance of the title that Patrick gave her. Honestly, it is a perturbing moment. She has tried hard to get out of her parents' shadow, to the extent of not allowing them on the set. This is a major blow that threatens to undo the "good work" she has been doing for Espanola. Whitney then turns her attention to Asher. Now that she knows there is no show without him, she tries her best to "cheer him up."

She suggests going bowling, which Asher loves, later in the day to get him in the mood for dinner. In a brief yet impactful psychological warfare moment, we see Asher trying to catch Whitney's hypocrisy. When she starts a countdown to get him to agree to go bowling, Asher uses a separate countdown asking Whitney if she loves her. Whitney is surprised but still dismissive as Asher agrees to go. But his question goes unanswered.

They recreate the jeans scene, which is lifeless. They have no chemistry together, unlike Janice and Pascal. However, Asher's face lights up, probably for the first time in the series, as he crushes the bowling set. He scores a brilliant 195 and exudes confidence. Whitney looks happy as well. Just as the couple is finishing up, Bill, Asher's friend from the casino spots them. He comes up to Asher and greets him. But Asher is in no mood to respond.

Bill explains that everyone thought Asher was the traitor who leaked the footage to the press. But now, they have found out it was some other guy. He apologizes profusely, only for Asher to accept he did leak the footage. He says it proudly, taking Whitney in his arms, in a bid to impress her with his moral virtuousness. During dinner, Martha praises Whitney and her approach. The sustainability tagline underscores the entire show, which sits well with the viewers.

However, when Whitney tries to advance her agenda of a "holistic approach," Martha shoots her down. She also greenlights the "Green Queen" title, playfully calling Asher her "jester." When they come back to the house, Whitney overhears Asher talking to himself in the bathroom. The contents of his speech are darkly disturbing but a familiar character trope. Whitney is truly shocked and has a blank look on her face. Asher is imagining a sexual scenario where he is tempting Bill to have sex with her. I dare you to watch the entire scene. I couldn't bear to watch it and ended up forwarding some bits.

The next day, Whitney goes to Bookends to visit her parents. Paul and Lizzy are staying in one of the apartments — temporarily — on advice from their lawyer. It helps with some tenancy issues that can be nipped in the bud.

Whitney is quite ferocious in her confrontation. She tears apart her parents' supposedly high-handed dealings with the tenants, forcing Lizzy to counter with a levelling accusation. She rightly points out that many people from the poor Espanola community come to their apartments because they cannot afford Whitney's egregiously expensive green homes. They had offered Whitney to run their business in the way she wanted, which could have made a real difference. But she had other ideas. She comes off worse from this conversation in the idealistic battle.

Whitney's list of unusual encounters grows as she goes to the spa for a relaxing day. However, tensions flare when she finds out that Cara is her masseuse! She explains that after the night at Vivi's, she is rethinking her priorities and life goals. It is highly uncharacteristic for an artist of her stature to be doing this. Whitney tries to act like it is normal. At first, she pretends to be comfortable with Cara servicing her. But ultimately, Whitney chickens out and cancels her appointment, still paying for it in full and even leaving a tip.

In the episode's extended climactic scene — which is terrifying, brilliant, and a tip-off to the show's compelling cringe — Asher and Whitney visit Dougie's house to watch the first cut for the show. Whitney is completely pissed after having two really bad days. But Asher is excited, akin to a kid, to watch the footage. The five-minute long cut is very well put together and the show genuinely looks good. Of course, the viewers in the cinematic universe do not have the benefit of BTS like we do... so they will never know the ironic falsity in everything.

Midway, Whitney asks Dougie to skip to the "pottery section." But Dougie says that the network decided to cut it out. She insists that Dougie play it for Asher's sake and he reluctantly agrees. We have seen this being recorded in the previous episodes. The gist is Whitney bashing Asher as a life partner and calling him a true life jester who worships "an idea of her" as opposed to the person she really is. Asher doesn't say anything and storms out, making Whitney teary. She perhaps senses that this might be the final nail in the coffin of their marriage.

However, against all odds, Asher gently knocks on the door and comes back in. His impassioned plea to Whitney completely goes against reason but is true to his character's interface. Asher declares that he wants to be with Whitney for the rest of their lives. Whitney is confused, disgusted, and utterly shocked by his confession. She nods her head in approval but the expressions on her face say something else entirely.

Green Queen

Season 1
Episode Number: 10
Season Episode: 10

Originally aired: Sunday January 14, 2024
Writer: Nathan Fielder, Benny Safdie
Director: Nathan Fielder
Show Stars: Emma Stone (Whitney Siegel), Nathan Fielder (Asher Siegel), Benny Safdie (Dougie Schecter)
Guest Stars: Vincent Pastore (Vincent Pastore), Barkhad Abdi (Abshir), Rachael Ray (Rachael Ray), Oscar Avila (Remi), Edward Martinez (Freckle), Paul Blott (Dr. Brown), Elliot Berlin (Moses), David Alexander (Diego), Neil Antonio (Construction Worker), Freddie Martinez (Martinez), Jodie Esquibel (Firefighter #2), Alexander Suazo (Firefighter #3), Jody M. Archuleta (Neighbor #1), Telesfor J. Montoya (Neighbor #2), Melissa Chambers (Camera Operator), Debbie Salazar (Confused Neighbor #1), Benjamin Sandoval (Confused Neighbor #2), Glen Curtis (Confused Neighbor #3), Miguel Trujillo (Surgeon), Adriana Leon (Nurse #1), Angel Gutierrez (Nurse #2)
Summary: Newly married couple Whitney and Asher Siegel set out to make a show.



The episode begins with a cold open on the sets of *The Rachael Ray Show*. The celebrity cook is accompanied by Vincent Pastore of *The Sopranos*' fame. In this instalment, he is cooking meatballs from *The Wise Guys* cookbook.

While all of this is going on, Rachael introduces the "green queens" to the studio crowd and those watching on TV. Asher and Whitney prop up on a screen, visibly excited. However, Rachael doesn't share too much of that enthusiasm. They navigate an awkward interaction where it

is clear that she has no idea what the show is about and who the couple are. The start-stop introduction probably forebodes how the first season will fare with viewership numbers — it won't do well. And yet, the show is renewed for a second season.

Whitney has a hand on her stomach the entire time in a pretend non-obvious way to get attention. But Rachael doesn't bite, not once mentioning the pregnancy. After the interview is over, Whitney even shares her frustration with Asher, who reciprocates the sentiments. During dinner later that night, Whitney inadvertently makes an awkward joke about *The Holocaust*. And what does Asher do in response? Make it weirder to the extent that it becomes offensive.

Asher has a gift for his pregnant wife. Whitney's eagerness to see what's under the sheet drains out pretty quickly as Asher presents a miniature model of *Questa Lane* and begins to explain it. "I am gifting this to Abshir." Whitney is confused and ultimately disappointed when Asher says he is "doing it for her" because she finds "happiness in making other people happy." Oh, you poor disillusioned dud. Asher's blindness and aversion to his wife's long-standing selfishness elevates this interaction.

But what's even more intriguing is Asher's description of the *Holocaust*, which is apt to characterize this beautiful show. "We thought it was a sad thing, and it is a sad thing, but it's also

funny, too. Or there's humour that could be found in it. Because art is about... really, art is about, um... sometimes you have to go to extreme lengths to make your point."

The next day, when the couple goes to execute this wild thought, the situation is even more chaotic. Abshir thinks they are there to move them out. He opens the door, doesn't let them in, and talks about involving his cousin who is a lawyer. He is defensive and understandably so. But Asher and Whitney try to assuage his fears by handing over the spare keys. Abshir, surprisingly, isn't grateful... or perhaps does a poor job of expressing it. He is still suspect about the move — and the financial responsibilities that come with owning a house. His first question: "Who will pay the property taxes this year?"

Asher assures him the payment will come from his pocket. He says it in anticipation of Abshir breaking down or getting emotional. It does happen — and Whitney instantly points it out — but Abshir quickly dismisses the speculation, blaming dust. The end is anticlimactic and the couple is left to bemoan that everything cannot happen in the traditions of Reality TV.

Next, the duo move on to adjustments in their house. They are giving up the passive certification to accommodate the incoming family member. For that, they get the baby's room installed with a controllable temperature unit. The worker offers a gift for the baby's crib but Whitney returns it as soon as she reads the "Made in China" label. In another inspired moment of creative genius, we see later that night, an intimate moment between Whitney and Asher.

She lies on the bed, exposing her pregnant stomach. And Asher shines a light on it, talking to the baby, remarking "There is another Asher inside of you." Whitney has a blank look on her face. Eight months hence, she is still trapped. And soon enough, there will be "two of them." Could it get any worse for her? Uh... yes. The next morning, Whitney is aghast to see Asher against the ceiling when she wakes up. Asher has no inkling of what happened. He doesn't realize he isn't on the bed.

Panic starts to settle in once Whitney fails to get him down. It is obvious that the pressure in the house isn't a problem. Why would Whitney not get sucked up? For some reason, gravity is working against Asher. To ensure that she is safe, Asher asks Whitney to step out of the house. In an elaborate scene, we see Asher trying to crawl across the room and get down. At this point, it wouldn't be erroneous to call him a "real-life apparition", due to the way he navigates this situation.

Asher, unable to get down, asks Whitney to get him the Dyson vacuum. She remains tethered to the ground on her knees, making a laborious effort... and inducing labour. Whitney powers her way through the pain and gives Asher the vacuum, which he attempts to use to retrieve his phone. However, that doesn't work. The contractions start coming in fast as Asher counts the seconds between them. Whitney retrieves the phone and rushes outside. Whitney calls Moses, their "doula" (even after Asher asked him to call Dr Brown, her gyno, first).

Moses informs her that the delivery will have to be done in Espanola, which freaks Whitney for a second. How many deaths will irony endure in this episode? Since the masks have come off, everything has been chaotic. Asher — who is now outside, by the frame of the door — still insists he will drive her. When the doula arrives, Asher asks him to help him down. However, as soon as his legs leave the ceiling of the facade, Asher is inexplicably sucked upward.

If Moses lets go, he will fly away like a balloon. This is a terrifying moment where the stakes are "sky high." Moses cannot hold any longer and lets go. Asher thumps into the branch of a tree and holds on for dear life.

All this while, he pacifies Whitney, asking her to "focus on herself," like she needs an invitation to do that. Moses calls Dougie to be present in their absence and drives away with Whitney. The locals catch wind of the unfolding situation and look upwards puzzlingly. Dougie arrives shortly and even invites Remy, his cameraman, to film it. He thinks Asher climbed up there because he is "fearful of embracing fatherhood." Dougie's own father abandoned his family and that is why he thinks this is the case.

Dougie remains relaxed, refusing to believe Asher's dictum that he is being sucked upwards. A fire truck is soon called in to help. They don't believe Asher either and install a large inflated pillow on the ground. Asher frenetically repeats that they install a net over him to prevent him from flying away. But no one listens. While this is going on, Whitney learns at the hospital that she will have to undergo a c-section surgery.

Back at the tree, Dougie makes all attempts to film the rescue, using a mic and a drone. But as soon as one of the fighters cuts the branch, Asher is launched into the sky and the branch

falls with a thud.

No one can quite believe it... including us. As Asher leaves the mortal realms, Asher Jr is born, healthy and safe. Whitney gets teary and has a smile plastered on her face when she holds the newborn. It is the first instance of genuine, selfless happiness that we have seen with Whitney. Asher keeps flying upwards, ultimately reaching space. There is no coming back for him. Dougie collapses in disbelief, constantly apologizing to Asher — perhaps for the curse and also because he has lost another person close to him. As the show ends, we see some bystanders near the house discussing how this is a "stunt for television."

The episode ends with "the curse finally being lifted." There are so many nuances to this ending that is virtually impossible to list every single one of them. The Curse is really about Whitney, even though the story doesn't unfold from her POV. Her failing marriage has her trapped with a man who worships her but is way too clingy. They are not a good match and the picture gets uglier as the season progresses. The finale fulfills Whitney's wish for a new start. Remember the line, "I'd be gone, and you wouldn't have to say it. I would feel it, and I would disappear" from Episode 9?

This is why I guess Safdie and Fielder don't need to even explain Asher's bizarre end. Whitney professed quietly for it to happen... and it did. The firefighters not putting the net around Asher also has its own meaning. Although it wouldn't have made a difference anyway, it is a clever metaphor for the empty promises that the duo made to the Espanola community and what they got back. This false illusion of security drove away the show's entire purpose. The well-intentioned positioning quickly lost momentum and as the layers were peeled back, everything became more bleak.

Actor Appearances

A

Barkhad Abdi	6
0101 (Abshir); 0103 (Abshir); 0104 (Abshir); 0106 (Abshir); 0108 (Abshir); 0110 (Abshir)	
Tiff Abreu	1
0102 (Jambo Server)	
Ricardo Aguilar	1
0102 (Casino Dealer)	
Dahabo Ahmed	4
0101 (Hani); 0103 (Hani); 0104 (Hani); 0108 (Hani)	
David Alexander	1
0110 (Diego)	
Walter Anaruk	1
0103 (Focus Group Moderator)	
Jerry G. Angelo	1
0103 (Officer)	
Neil Antonio	1
0110 (Construction Worker)	
Elizabeth Aragon	2
0101 (Elizabeth); 0109 (Elizabeth)	
Jody M. Archuleta	1
0110 (Neighbor #1)	
D.J. Arvizo	4
0101 (Jose); 0105 (Jose); 0106 (Jose); 0107 (Jose)	
Samantha Ashley	5
0105 (Tonya); 0106 (Tonya); 0107 (Tonya); 0108 (Tonya); 0109 (Tonya)	
Nizhonniya Austin	5
0102 (Cara Durand); 0105 (Cara Durand); 0107 (Cara Durand); 0108 (Cara Durand); 0109 (Cara Durand)	
Oscar Avila	6
0101 (Remi); 0105 (Remi); 0106 (Remi); 0107 (Remi); 0108 (Remi); 0110 (Remi)	
Seff Awwad	1
0108 (Cashier)	

B

Carl Bailey	1
0103 (Focus Group Member #4)	
D'Artagnan G. Balink	1
0107 (Comedy Student #4)	
Jodi Balsamo	1
0103 (Teacher)	
Jesus Banuelos	1
0101 (Father Manny)	
Bertha Benitez	1
0107 (Joanna Hernandez)	
Elliot Berlin	1
0110 (Moses)	
Corbin Bernsen	4
0101 (Paul); 0105 (Paul); 0107 (Paul); 0109 (Paul)	
Morse Bicknell	1
0108 (Wyatt Singh)	
Meagan Billy	1
0103 (Auction Bidder #2)	

Collin Blackford	1
0108 (Teen Driver)	
Paul Blott	2
0103 (Dr. Brown); 0110 (Dr. Brown)	
Emma Burnside	1
0101 (Australian Barista)	

C

Dean Cain	1
0105 (Mark Rose)	
Christopher D. Calderon	6
0101 (Fernando); 0103 (Fernando); 0104 (Fernando); 0105 (Fernando); 0108 (Fernando); 0109 (Fernando)	
Michelle Campbell	1
0101 (Carmen)	
Adrienne Chalepah	1
0102 (Laura)	
Melissa Chambers	1
0110 (Camera Operator)	
Hans Christopher	1
0101 (David Burn)	
Dan Cortese	1
0101 (Dan Cortese)	
Marjorie Crary	1
0104 (Sikh Woman)	
Glen Curtis	1
0110 (Confused Neighbor #3)	

D

David DeLao	3
0102 (Bill); 0106 (Bill); 0109 (Bill)	
Nikki Dixon	1
0105 (Lucinda)	
Ramona DuBarry	1
0102 (Dr. Jensen)	

E

Melissa Edwards	1
0105 (Jean Thief)	
Zachary Enriquez	1
0106 (Handsome Firefighter)	
GiGi Erneta	2
0104 (Martha); 0109 (Martha)	
Jodie Esquibel	1
0110 (Firefighter #2)	

F

María Conforme Farias	1
0101 (Yadira)	
Gary Farmer	2
0102 (James Toledo); 0109 (James Toledo)	

Greg Fernandez 1
 0107 (Gym Teacher)
 Alvin A. Flowers 1
 0109 (Alvin)
 Marco Fuller 1
 0102 (Art Patron #1)

G

Preston Gage 1
 0108 (Teen Guy #1)
 Diana Gaitirira 1
 0103 (Focus Group Member #1)
 Kathryn Price Garson 1
 0104 (Kalvin's Mom)
 Matthew Gay 1
 0108 (Clyde Camera)
 Alexander Adrian Gibson 3
 0105 (Pascal); 0106 (Pascal); 0109 (Pascal)
 Angel Gutierrez 1
 0110 (Nurse #2)

H

Alyssa L Harbottle 1
 0103 (Focus Group Member #2)
 Sorén D. Harvey 1
 0106 (Sorén)
 Josh Horton 1
 0101 (Todd Lobo)
 Kylie Howell 1
 0108 (Teen Girl)

I

Teagan Ireland 2
 0103 (Stephanie); 0107 (Stephanie)

J

W. Brad Jarman 2
 0104 (Comedy Student #1); 0107 (Comedy Student #1)
 Jimmy Jones 1
 0103 (Focus Group Member #6)

K

Hari Rai Khalsa 1
 0104 (Sikh Musician)

L

Marcus LaVoi 1
 0102 (Wandall)
 Aliyah Lee 3
 0105 (Janice); 0106 (Janice); 0109 (Janice)
 Kirby Leigh 1
 0107 (Casino Security Guard)
 Adriana Leon 1
 0110 (Nurse #1)
 Tara Levine 1
 0103 (Auction Bidder #1)
 Benjie T. Lobato 1
 0101 (Shop Patron #1)
 Zack Logsdon 1
 0106 (Murray)
 Michael John Lopez 1

0101 (Shop Clerk)

M

Ricky Macias 1
 0107 (Makeup Artist)
 Cristian Madrid-Estrada 1
 0101 (Pathways Employee)
 Arthur Martinez 1
 0109 (Guy in Apartment)
 Aspen Martinez 2
 0103 (Josie); 0107 (Josie)
 Edward Martinez 5
 0102 (Freckle); 0104 (Freckle); 0106 (Freckle); 0109 (Freckle); 0110 (Freckle)
 Freddie Martinez 2
 0106 (Martinez); 0110 (Martinez)
 Crystal Mayes 1
 0101 (Restaurant Patron)
 Finnegan McKelvey 1
 0108 (Teen Guy #2)
 Tessa Mentus 3
 0101 (Monica Perez); 0102 (Monica Perez); 0107 (Monica Perez)
 Rosie B. Molina 2
 0105 (Enola); 0108 (Enola)
 Doug Montoya 2
 0104 (Jeff Robinson); 0107 (Jeff Robinson)
 Telesfor J. Montoya 1
 0110 (Neighbor #2)
 Vic Montoya 1
 0106 (Firefighter #5)
 Brett Mooswa 1
 0108 (Brett Mini)
 Audrey Morrison 1
 0103 (Focus Group Member #5)

N

Diana Navarrete 1
 0104 (Maria)
 Nizhonibaa' 1
 0107 (Nala's Friend)

O

Timothy Oakes 1
 0101 (Alejandro)

P

Vincent Pastore 1
 0110 (Vincent Pastore)
 Martin C Patterson 1
 0107 (Conwin)
 Guia Peel 1
 0103 (Focus Group Member #3)
 Joseph Raul Perez Jr. 1
 0105 (Officer #2)
 Eric Petersen 1
 0105 (Dennis)
 Alexander Poncio 2
 0101 (Vic); 0104 (Vic)
 Michael Pridham 2
 0104 (Chiropractor); 0106 (Chiropractor)

R

Christopher Luciano Rael 1

0105 (Officer #1)	
Rachael Ray	1
0110 (Rachael Ray)	
Alejandro Reyes	1
0105 (Courtyard Man)	
Jose Rivera	2
0101 (Van PA); 0105 (Van PA)	
Leo Rodriguez	1
0104 (Neighbor)	
Torsten Rohde	1
0101 (Hans Feist)	
Ryan Rox	1
0102 (Gallery Assistant)	
Robert Russell	1
0108 (Friend of Vivi)	

S

Debbie Salazar	1
0110 (Confused Neighbor #1)	
Victoria Elena Sanchez	1
0109 (Spa Manager)	
Benjamin Sandoval	1
0110 (Confused Neighbor #2)	
Frankie Roy Sandoval	1
0103 (Assessor)	
Jim Cochise Sarabia	1
0101 (Shop Patron #2)	
Louis Schiffman	1
0106 (Louis)	
Constance Shulman	3
0101 (Elizabeth); 0105 (Elizabeth); 0109 (Elizabeth)	
Sidni	5
0102 (Luisa); 0103 (Luisa); 0104 (Luisa); 0105 (Luisa); 0109 (Luisa)	
Bucket Siler	1
0107 (Comedy Student #3)	
Bridgette Renee Smith	1
0109 (Spa Receptionist)	
Elizabeth Katz Sperlich	2
0102 (Marjorie); 0108 (Marjorie)	
Akiko Stacy	1
0105 (Winona)	
Alexander Suazo	2
0106 (Firefighter #3); 0110 (Firefighter #3)	

T

Bennie Taylor	1
0103 (Neighbor)	
Danielle Todesco	1
0107 (News Anchor)	
Abby Townsend	1
0107 (Comedy Student #2)	
Enrico Trujillo	1
0106 (Firefighter #4)	
Miguel Trujillo	1
0110 (Surgeon)	
Joan Elizabeth Tuohy	1
0107 (Rachael)	

V

Arthur Valencia	1
0107 (Bank Teller)	
Erica Yvette Velasquez	1
0105 (Dandy Burger Employee)	
Ruben Velazco	1
0106 (Volunteer Neighbor)	

W

Hikmah Warsame	6
0101 (Nala); 0103 (Nala); 0104 (Nala); 0106 (Nala); 0107 (Nala); 0108 (Nala)	
Antonio Weiss	1
0108 (Vivi)	
John Wickersham	1
0106 (Fire Chief)	
Dashika Wijegooneratne	1
0102 (Art Patron #3)	
Ethan Woodall	1
0104 (Kalvin)	
Chris Wright	1
0109 (Patrick)	

Y

Lejend Yazzie	1
0109 (Phoebe)	