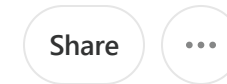
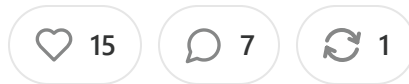


In the K-drama "Anna," A Lie Begets More Lies

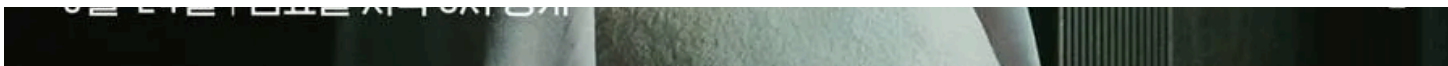
Bae Suzy stars as an overly-proud young woman determined to carve out a 'successful' life for herself

JAE-HA KIM

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☆☆☆ (out of ☆☆☆☆)

By Jae-Ha Kim

Lee Yu-mi (played by Bae Suzy)

Lee Hyeon-ju (played by Jung Eun-chaе)

↑*Note: Korean names denote the surname followed by the given name.*

A lie begets lies. That's how I would describe the K-drama "Anna" (안나).

Yu-mi (Bae Suzy) is smart and talented. Unfortunately for the overly-proud young woman, she hails from a working class family. Her parents own a small tailor shop. At a young age, she learned sign language to communicate with her mother, who is unable to speak. Although none of this is shameful, the class-conscious little child *does* feel shame throughout her life because of her family's difficult circumstances. Of course, it doesn't help that the girls at her school and dance class point out that her family — and therefore *she* — is insufficient.

Still, Yu-mi is confident and does well at school. She even has a secret boyfriend, who's a music teacher at her high school. He buys her lunch, which they eat together in a secluded area hidden away from other students and faculty. He even drives her home. They are clearly dating. But when they are caught, the teacher says *she* approached him and he was too weak to say no.

Even if that had been the case, the person in the wrong is the adult manipulating the child. He apologizes and receives a slap-on-the-wrist suspension, while she is forced to transfer high schools four months before the excruciating testing period to enter South Korean universities.

Expected to be accepted at a prestigious university, but rejected, she tells her parents what she thinks is a small white lie. *Yes*, she was accepted. She goes so far as to live in a boarding house with coeds and continues to passively perpetuate the lie by *not* correcting others' assumptions about her life. At a school mixer that her friend invites her to, her beauty makes her immensely popular and draws the attention of a rich boy who falls in love with her.

But as the two are about to move together to New York to attend school — he to attend a real university for him, and her to pretend she's attending college — his mother learns that everything Yu-mi has said is a lie.

From here, the plot moves quickly. Yu-mi is hired to work for a rich family as an assistant for their daughter, Hyeon-ju (Jung Eun-chaе). Unable to take any more of their abuse, Yu-mi quits and reinvents herself as Hyeon-ju, thanks to the latter's passport and college diplomas that she *borrowed*. With her fake credentials, Yu-mi gets a job as a college professor, lands a rich husband (who may or may not be a sociopath) and essentially fools everyone into believing that she is who she says she is: *Anna*, the name Hyeon-ju went by in the United States.



갖고 싶은 이름, 훔치고 싶은 인생

쿠팡플레이 시리즈



So how did a high school-educated woman fool academics (and students) into believing that she was a qualified professor? Yu-mi was always bright and studied before tackling any role. But this is where perception also comes in play. Because she dressed the part... because she behaved like she was born into the upper class... people *wanted* to believe she was who she claimed to be. Yu-mi faked it until she made it.

But her success also proves that higher education doesn't necessarily mean you're smarter than those who didn't attend college. It just means that you were able to enjoy a benefit that's not a given for everyone else.

In some ways, Anna reminded me of the real-life German-Russian con artist Anna Sorokin, who convinced the New York elite that she was socialite Anna Delvey.

Though "Anna" isn't a perfect series, it's very good with a taut storyline that is unbelievably believable. Suzy's portrayal of the titular character is meaningful and nuanced, giving depth to a liar who knows she can't continue to live her life this way.

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Controversy: The series was originally supposed to be eight episodes, but director **Lee Zoo-young alleged** that Coupang Play made changes to the final version without her consent. She and six other staff members demanded that their names be removed from the credit, because the product that aired isn't what they had signed off on. The streaming site ultimately apologized and agreed to release the original Director's Cut.

Airdates: Six episodes, ranging from 45- to 61-minutes each, aired on Coupang Play from June 24 to July 8, 2022. (It's currently airing in the U.S. on Prime Video.)

Spoiler Alert: Though it's not spelled out, the fourth episode implies that the high school music teacher impregnated Yu-mi. She is seen in a flashback crying to one of her former teachers, saying they had only been together two or three times. (If I got this part wrong, please comment and let me know!)

When Anna agrees to go on a blind date with Ji-hoon (Kim Jun-han), he seems nervously charming. He's a businessman with his eye on politics and seems like the perfect husband material. But he's also a power-hungry man who physically abuses his

employees for being slightly tardy. Watching him repeatedly kick his much older driver in the shins was excruciating.

But all of that is in character. As skeletons are revealed, we learn he killed the mother of his autistic son, who he keeps hidden away. And when the real-life Hyeon-ju contacts him to say she knows that Anna is a fake, he has Hyeon-ju killed, because revealing that secret will ruin the perfect couple image that the two have.

When they were younger, Hyeon-ju had magnanimously gifted Yu-mi with a watch that she implied was expensive and rare. But in reality, the watch was a knockoff worth less than \$100. Hyeon-ju was a bitch, but she didn't deserve to die.

The longer that Anna lives her lie, the more she begins to recognize that she has become someone she despises. When a housekeeper meekly asks for permission to take two days off to care for her child after surgery, Anna shrieks at her. Though Anna had previously been in the same position, and denied, she screams at the apologetic woman. How dare the servant put *her* in such a predicament. Eventually, she come to her senses, apologizes and grants the days off. But the damage has been done.

The finale was kind of glorious. Her husband, Ji-hoon, takes her to the United States under the pretense of bringing home his young son. And while he's at it, he takes away her passport. His plan is to lock her away in a mental institution. Just as he's about to (accidentally) hit a deer, Anna pulls the emergency brake, which sends the car careening into a utility pole. As she starts to walk away, she realizes Ji-hoon is still

alive and ordering — *rather than begging* — her to save him. She lights her scarf and purse and sets the car on fire.

The difference between Ji-hoon and Anna, though, is that while both are murderers now, she has empathy for her part in his death. She cries knowing what she has done.

The final scenes show her running a modest guest lodge somewhere in an English-speaking country.

Finally, she is alone and content — perhaps the truest version of herself.

*It has been a busy few months, but I am going to work on scheduling another Zoom meet-up in the upcoming weeks. This will be open to all paid subscribers.
(I'll try to work it around everyone's concerts this summer.)*

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