In Sickness...

by
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INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

JAN GETERLING (40) enters from the back of the dining room followed by her hulking boyfriend STEVE (32). Oversized designer sunglasses cover her face. They're led to a secluded table next to the front window.

A WOMAN dining with her HUSBAND takes notice. She nudges him and covers her mouth as she whispers.

Her hubby watches the celebs walk by while chewing his food. He shrugs his shoulders, focuses back on his steak.

They sit. Jan stares out the window. She looks across the street as NATE (42) gets interviewed on the court house steps by a slew of reporters. Jan purses her lips.

JAN
That prick. What kind of a country do we live in where a single mother of eight has to pay palimony to her ex-husband?

STEVE
Well, you did get the rights to the show, and you got the kids and the house.

JAN
God, he makes me so mad.

She slams her sunglasses down on the table breaking loose a lens. It skids across the table onto the floor before Steve can catch it.

He springs into action to retrieve it rocketing the chair beneath him into an empty table. The whole dining room stares at them.

Like a mouse, he picks up the lens, slides his chair back over.

JAN
Seriously?

STEVE
Sorry.

After a beat she shakes her head and returns her gaze out the window. Steve holds his menu high covering his whole face.
JAN
That little asshole is gonna suck me dry. Somebody needs to do something. We need to do something.

Jan looks at the back of the menu while Steve mumbles through a few choices. She grabs the menu, slams it down.

JAN
Are you even listening to me?

STEVE
Uh, yeah. Yeah. He’s a real horse’s ass.

She continues waiting. Challenging.

STEVE
I wasn’t listening.

JAN
Don’t you have any like, thug friends or something? Someone who could, you know, fix things?

Steve squints his eyes and crumples his face.

STEVE
You mean, like a repair man? Washer on the fritz again?

JAN
No you moron. I mean like...

Jan leans in close and whispers.

JAN
Whack a guy?

STEVE
Oh, oh I get it. You mean, Nate?

JAN
No, Sister Mary fucking Francis. Of course Nate.

STEVE
Oh, I’m not sure. I can check around though.

JAN
Good. And do it quietly?
STEVE

Sure babe.

Jan looks out the window.

STEVE

Hun?

JAN

What?

STEVE

I love it when you swear.

She grits her teeth.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Nate works on his tie in front of full size mirror. Too short. He loosens and tries again.

DEANNA (20) is a dark haired beauty. She sits at a table in her underwear scanning her laptop.

NATE

Aren’t you gonna get dressed babe?
We’re gonna be late.

DEANNA

I will, it’s just...

NATE

Just what?

DEANNA

The things they’re saying. On the internet about you.

Nate gives up on his tie and approaches her.

NATE

Like what?

DEANNA

How your a C-list celebrity and nobody will remember you in a year.

NATE

C-list? What the hell does that mean?

He studies the laptop with her.
DEANNA
They say it’s someone who’s famous for no reason.

NATE
No reason? People love me. They should see all the fan mail I get.

He drudges back over to the mirror.

DEANNA
They also say the show won’t make it a year without you. That Jan doesn’t have the charisma to pull it off.

NATE
That part I can believe.

Deanna approaches him as he fumbles with his tie.

DEANNA
Then what will you do for money? With no show?

NATE
I still got the book that I’m writing. Plus, all these celebrity appearances right now. Who knows?

She wraps her arms around him. Takes charge of the tie.

DEANNA
But after that?

He stares into the mirror at her with no answer.

DEANNA
Imagine if you had to raise those kids alone. Every women in America would tune in to watch that.

NATE
What part of the divorce didn’t you understand?

She kisses the back of his neck.

DEANNA
Think about it. You could court me and national television.
She wraps her leg around his and slides her foot up his inseam. Her hands go south of the tie.

DEANNA (CONT’D)
We could get married and raise those kids together the way you always wanted. We would be the most famous couple in the history of reality TV.

Her hand finds its destination. Nate shivers.

NATE
I would, I just, how?

DEANNA
I know a guy... who knows a guy.

She slides a card into his pocket.

DEANNA
It’s just a number. Think about it.

She kisses him again and walks into the bathroom. Nate looks at the card. His reflection becomes more interesting.

NATE
C-list?

DEANNA (O.S.)
C-list.

INT. GETERLIN’S GARAGE — DAY

Steve’s legs protrude from underneath fancy sports car. He lies on a mechanic’s dolly with a book next to his feet.

UNDERNEATH the car, Steve works with a pair of needle nose pliers. He grabs hold of a hose and pulls on it.

STEVE
This must be it.

He punctures the hose. Green anti-freeze starts to drip on his shirt.

STEVE
(German accent)
I’ll have to shnope you on that v’one.

He laughs to himself. He studies the bottom of the car.
STEVE
Then it's gotta be this one.

He puts his pliers around the metal brake line and begins to bend it with all his might.

Jan walks out into the garage. When she shuts the door the noise of screaming kids and bustling crew members disappears.

JAN
Steve? Steve?

Steve hurries himself out from underneath falling off the dolly.

JAN
What the hell are you doing?

Steve stands and dusts himself off.

STEVE
Hun I figured it out. Well, I saw it in a movie once. You just cut the brake lines. When Nate comes to pick up his car and drives down the hill... Boom!

Steve smacks his hands together.

STEVE (CONT’D)
No more Nate.

JAN
Boom? No more Nate?

STEVE
I know. It's awesome.

SMACK! Jan's right hand leaves its print on his cheek.

JAN
I told you to hire a professional you nit wit!

STEVE
What?

Jan stomps off.

JAN
Clean up this shit and get back in the house. Want something done right...
Steve is left disappointed and shell-shocked.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jan stares at the ceiling while Steve makes love to her. Short, feverish pumps. She is not into it. She pushes him off when she has a revelation...

    JAN
    I’ve got it. Dammit, why didn’t I
    think of him sooner.

Steve’s disappointment is evident. He continues to stare at her bare breasts as he works his hand between his legs.

    JAN
    Antoine. Who owns the Italian
    restaurant we always eat at. With
    all those goombas hanging out, he’s
    gotta be connected or something.

She looks at Steve. Catches him staring at her breasts.

    JAN
    What are you doing?

He looks up.

    STEVE
    Huh?

She rolls over turning her back to him.

    JAN
    Turn off the lights.

Steve looks at the tent his prick makes in the sheets. He looks at her, then back to the tent. He motions his hands to it as he mouths words at her behind her back. He tries...

    STEVE
    Hun?

    JAN
    What?

    STEVE
    Can I hold your boob while I...

    JAN
    Go sleep in the basement.
STEVE
But hun I...

JAN
Na ah. Basement.

Steve gets up and gathers his clothes. He balls them up to cover himself walking out. Before he leaves he turns around to flip her the bird.

Like she has eyes in the back of her head...

KATE
I'll break that finger off and stab your eyes out with it.

STEVE
Going.

He opens the door and exits.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jan sits at the table alone on her phone. She looks distressed. The kids, crew, and nannies can all be seen playing at the pool through the glass door.

JAN
But Antoine if you would just...

ANTOINE (V.O.)
Jan, just shut up. Do not speak another word to me about this.

JAN
But I need your help. Please I...

ANTOINE (V.O.)
I said shut up! Are you on your cell?

JAN
Yeah, why?

ANTOINE (V.O.)
Jesus Christ, you are a complete idiot.

JAN
What do you mean...
She looks at her phone. He hung up. She slams her phone down and begins to whine.

STEVE (O.S.)
Psst.

She looks over at Steve who is peeking his head out of the bathroom door.

STEVE
Where is everybody?

JAN
They’re all outside.

STEVE
Cool.

Steve walks out of the bathroom cupping his package with his pants around his ankles.

He fumbles through the linen closet. Pulls out a roll of toilet paper. He walks back to the bathroom.

STEVE
Ran out.

He shuts the door. Jan, mouth agape, remains paralyzed.

Her phone rings.

JAN
Hello? Hello?

MR. BROWNSTONE (V.O.)
Is this Jan?

JAN
Yes. Who’s this?

MR. BROWNSTONE (V.O.)
Call me Mr. Brownstone. We have a mutual friend. He said you may have some work.

She pops up in her seat.

JAN
Oh, you mean...

She gets cut off by his calm, stern, southern accent.
MR. BROWNSTONE (V.O.)
Don't say another word. We're gonna meet you and I. Then we'll talk. Do you understand what I mean by YOU and I?

There is a long beat.

JAN
Am I allowed to talk now?

You can here the sigh on the line.

JAN
Oh, you mean come alone? I understand.

MR. BROWNSTONE (O.S.)

Jan pulls out her thick daily planner from her purse and thumbs through it.

JAN
Let's see... Tonight. Well, kids got to bed at eight so that's good... Oh, shit, I've got Rachel coming over for pilates tonight. How's about...

She thumbs through her planner then stops. Heavy breathing on the line.

JAN
I guess I could cancel.

MR. BROWNSTONE (O.S.)
Tonight. Nine.

JAN
Fine.

He's already hung up.

JAN
Dickhead.
INT. BAR - NIGHT

Nate sits at a large booth by himself. He looks nervous. He has on a baseball cap and large mirrored sunglasses. His collar is flipped up.

MR. BROWNSTONE approaches Nate. He is a tall man in a black trench coat and cowboy hat to match. It shadows his eyes.

MR. BROWNSTONE
You Nate?

NATE
Yeah. Um, Mr. Brownstone?

He sits.

NATE
Here, I brought...

Nate grabs the briefcase next to him. He begins to hand it over the table before Mr. Brownstone puts his hand up.

MR. BROWNSTONE
Leave it.

He puts it back down.

NATE
It’s fifty-thousand, just like you said.

MR. BROWNSTONE
I believe you.

NATE
I just have one request. That she doesn’t suffer.

He nods.

MR. BROWNSTONE
Help ya sleep better at night and all.

NATE
Yeah. Something like that. It’s just...
MR. BROWNSTONE
You don’t have to justify it. Just leave the money there and walk away. But, when you do, there’s no turning back.

Nate hesitates. He gets up then sits back down. He looks at Mr. Brownstone.

NATE
No suffering right? And it will look like an accident?

MR. BROWNSTONE
Trust me. I’m a professional.

Nate hesitates again, but gets up. He scurries out of the bar.

INT. WAREHOUSE – NIGHT

Nate has a gag in his mouth. His arms have been pulled through the back of his chair and zip-tied. A rope is tied around his chest to the back of the chair.

Jan sits five feet across from him. They face each other. She is in the exact same predicament. Her mascara runs.

A door opens off screen. They listen as Mr. Brownstone’s cowboy boots work their way towards them. He removes Nate’s gag first.

NATE
Wait, please. I want to call it off. The whole thing. You can keep the money.

MR. BROWNSTONE
What did I say about turning back?

He removes Jan’s gag.

JAN
Just who in the hell do you think you are? Don’t you know who I am? You can’t do this to me!

NATE
Jan, shut up.

Jan stares at Nate.
JAN
You shut up you little limp dick faggot.

Nate shakes his head.

JAN
That’s right. I’ll say it. You wet noodle. Couldn’t get it up anymore so I had to go find a real man. A man that could please me.

Mr. Brownstone spins a chair around and straddles it in between them.

NATE
Well maybe it was because I wasn’t interested anymore. Did that ever cross your mind?

JAN
Not interested? Not interested in this?!!

Jan looks at her breasts as she pushes them out.

NATE
Oh yeah. Your million dollar make-over?

JAN
My mill... I sacrificed my body to bare your children. Maybe if your little goddam machine-gun balls could just fire off one kid at a time. Noooo. Load me up with six and leave me with a fucking bean-bag chair for a stomach!

NATE
That’s six more factory workers for your little sweat-shop enterprise. So you can buy your $3000.00 hand bags and your $600.00 shoes.

Jan pauses for a moment, looks at her feet.

JAN
YOU bought me these shoes. You know what, here, you can have em’ back.

She loosens a heel with her other foot and flings it at Nate hitting him in the chest.
NATE
Oh yeah?

Nate struggles to loosen one of his boots while Jan’s other heel flies over his head. With his foot half out he attempts to shoot it at her. She leans back.

Nate kicks three times before it comes off, but it goes wide striking Mr. Brownstone straight in the cheek.

He catches the boot and spikes it into the ground in anger.

MR. BROWNSTONE
That’s enough god dammit!

NATE
Sorry.

JAN
He started it.

MR. BROWNSTONE
You two are a couple of first rate idiots. Now, it’s time to get down to business. I got a little something for ya’s to listen in on.

He pulls out a small recording device and hits play.

NATE (ON TAPE)
It’s fifty-thousand just like you said.

MR. BROWNSTONE (ON TAPE)
I believe you.

NATE (ON TAPE)
I just have one request. That she doesn’t suffer.

He stops the tape.

JAN
You son of a bitch. You were putting a hit out on me?

MR. BROWNSTONE
You just shut up now missy. Got a little something from you too.

He pulls out a duplicate recording device and hits play. Jan starts shaking her head.
JAN (ON TAPE)
Fifty thousand? Really, that's it?

MR. BROWNSTONE (ON TAPE)
Want me to raise the price?

JAN (ON TAPE)
No. No. That's great. Well. If I paid you a little more, like a tip, could you make sure he suffers a little?

Click. He shuts the recorder off. Nate is horrified.

JAN
Um. I was... Drunk. I was just kidding.

MR. BROWNSTONE
Here's the deal. I'm gonna go ahead and keep that 100k you's gave me. And, I'm not gonna kill no one. What's gonna happen is you two are gonna reconcile. Nate's moving back in.

JAN
No. Absolutely not.

MR. BROWNSTONE
This ain't no multiple choice question here. It's gonna happen exactly as I say. Or these tapes are goin' to the police. And you two are goin' to jail. Think about it. All those kids. No daddy. No mommy. Breaks my heart.

Jan starts to cry.

JAN
You son of a bitch. You can't do this! I have a life!

MR. BROWNSTONE
No. I have your life. Right here in my hands.

He waves the recorder at her. Then he stands up.
MR. BROWNSTONE
I’ll leave you too lovebirds alone
to get re-acquainted.

NATE
Why? Why are you doing this?

MR. BROWNSTONE
Apparently I must be the only hit-
man in this town. You both
contracted me. Figure it’s gonna be
easier to just blackmail you two.
As for the show, what can I say, my
wife’s a big fan.

Jan begins to sob like a child. Mr. Brownstone walks away.

NATE
For how long?

MR. BROWNSTONE
I don’t know. Till’ the ratings go
down I guess. Oh, one more thing...

He turns around.

MR. BROWNSTONE
No more sleeping around. For either
of ya’s.

Mr. Brownstone exits. They stare at each other for a beat.

JAN
What are we gonna do?

NATE
Exactly what he says. We’ve got no
choice.

JAN
Dammit. Me and Steve. We were going
to Barbados in a month.

NATE
Are you serious? At a time like
this, that’s all you can think of?

JAN
Don’t you play all high and mighty
with me. Why don’t you go pork your
little girlfriend. Seriously? What
is she like fifteen?
They continue to bicker at one another.

FADE OUT.

EXT. GETERLIN’S HOUSE - DAY

The frame encompasses the Geterlin’s million dollar home. The legend reads “ONE WEEK LATER”.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Jan and Nate sit next to each other on their love-seat being interviewed. An unknown women interviews them from off screen.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
So tell us Nate, why, after being officially divorced for less than two weeks, have you guys gotten back together?

Jan raises her eyebrows. She stares at Nate awaiting his answer.

NATE
I guess it was... when it was finally over. The divorce. It hit me like a ton of bricks. I missed her. She was my wife. This is our family. I just wanted to come home. For the first time I thought about us never being together again. I couldn’t live with that.

Jan bobs her head in astonishment. Good answer.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
And for you Jan? What was it that made you want to try again?

JAN
Oh, well, when Nate called me that night... I felt like a little school girl again. I actually had butterflies in my stomach. We talked for hours. I knew I would never care about somebody the way I cared for him. I missed him so much. I’m so happy he’s home.

She grab his hand. They fake smiles at each other.
INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Okay, I think that’s a good place
to wrap. Nicely done.

Nate rips the microphone from his shirt and storms off
crane. Jan sits there. She begins to sob.

She contorts her face in an awful way as the image pauses and
dances back and forth between frames. Pull back to...

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE – DAY

The image is frozen on a large plasma. VICK WELLS (55), a
well fed executive sits behind a desk the size of a Cadillac
with the remote in his hand. Mr. Brownstone at his side.

VICK
We’re obviously gonna edit that
part out.

MR. BROWNSTONE
Right.

Vick gets up and waddles over to a box of cigars.

VICK
Gotta hand it to ya. Once word got
out, we’re back up over ten million
viewers. But this, the reconcile,
look out Sopranos finale.

Vick hands over a cigar to an obliged hand.

VICK
How the hell’d you do it?

MR. BROWNSTONE
We bugged Jan’s house...

VICK
I knew that, but Nate? He’s got the
killer instinct of a retarded frog.

Mr. Brownstone bites off the tip of his cigar.

MR. BROWNSTONE
I had to reach out to his
girlfriend. Turns out she’s an
aspiring actress. Told her it was
career suicide to be with a C-list
on his way out.
VICK
Seriously? That’s it?

Mr. Brownstone lights his stogie.

MR. BROWNSTONE
Well, that and the $100k they gave me.

Vick smiles and nods his head. They both look at the frozen image on the TV.

VICK
We’re gonna burn in hell some day, you know that?

MR. BROWNSTONE
For this? Nah. After all, we did it for the kids.

They stare at each other for a moment before bursting into a raucous laughter.

Vick throws his arm around him. They walk off screen.

VICK (O.S.)
Come on. Let’s go over to Mort’s for a steak and a shot of Louie to celebrate.

MR. BROWNSTONE (O.S.)
Save that royalty crap for someone who appreciates it. Good ol’ J.D. for me.

The door shuts. The IMAGE remains frozen on the screen.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.