

Cushioned
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1 INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - SLOW-MO/NO SOUND

JACOBINA, JOE, SALLY, JACK, & PHYLIS (all mid to late 20s) sprawl comfortably on a large couch. All are laughing to varying degrees at something on an offscreen TV.

Sally has a medical boot on her foot.

Phylis & Jack playfully throw a pillow at Joe who bats it away with a smile towards Jacobina who play-acts being wounded.

SALLY checks her phone and her face falls.

Jack inquires. Sally tries to play it off, but motions that she's going to get up and step outside. Sally picks up a cane and unsteadily steps away. Jack leaves with her.

Jacobina takes their place on the couch and laughs at the TV again.

2 TITLE CARD

3 INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

Phylis - now sweaty and panicked - takes cover behind the end of the couch. She is holding her face in pain and shaking with fear.

PHYLIS
(whispered)
O God, our master. You are the
eternal life and everlasting peace
by Your essence and attributes--

Jacobina's voice interrupts her prayer.

JACOBINA (O.S.)
Oh what? You're going to hide now?
It's not a big place. I'm going to
find you!

Down the hallway, a door is heard opening.

JOE (O.S.)
What's goin on? Where's Phyl?

JACOBINA (O.S.)
Hiding somewhere. Being a little
fucking bitch? Did you hear what
she said to me?

(CONTINUED)

JOE (O.S.)

Uh..no?

JACOBINA (O.S.)

I'm not going to repeat it, but it was not okay.

JOE (O.S.)

Do you want me to talk to her about it?

JACOBINA (O.S.)

No, we're done talking about it. She's in here somewhere. I'm going to find her and beat the shit out of her.

4 EXT. BEAUTIFUL CITY OVERLOOK - SAME NIGHT

Sally pulls out a cigarette. She feels around for her lighter.

JACOBINA (V.O.)

She doesn't even know what's about to happen.

Jack lights the cigarette for Sally. She takes a draw.

SALLY

Ok, say what you just said again.

JACK

I said if you want me to quit so that I can help you job search, I'll do that.

SALLY

Right, but, Sweetie, that doesn't make any sense. Then we'd both be unemployed.

She is looking in wonder at him. Something has changed.

JACK

Yeah, you're right. It was a stupid idea, Sal. Forget I said anything.

SALLY

(empathetically)

No.

5 INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM

Phylis peeks around the edge of the couch to see Jacobina & Joe at the other end of the room.

Jacobina is peering around the room looking for hiding spots.

JOE
I still don't understand what she
could have said that's so awful.

JACOBINA
What? My word it was fucked isn't
enough?

JOE
No, I just, I was in the bathroom,
I didn't hear what happened.

JACOBINA
We've known each other how long and
you still don't trust me.

JOE
No, I do. I just...

Joe makes eye contact with Phylis. He nods in an "I got you" way to her. Jacobina doesn't see this.

JOE
...I think it's important to know
everything before--

JACOBINA
And what about the last time, I
told you someone was fucking me
over and you didn't believe me?

JOE
C'mon, that's not fair. I'm always
there for you.

JACOBINA
Yeah, six months too late maybe.

Joe has no answer.

JACOBINA
So, how about this time, you trust
me, your friend, and help me look?

Phylis ducks back behind the couch as Joe struggles to find words.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY (V.O.)
Why is that something you'd be okay
with?

6 EXT. BEAUTIFUL CITY OVERLOOK

Jack looks away from Sally and out to the city. Sally keeps scrutinizing Jack.

JACK
I don't know. It just seemed like a
thing to do. I thought it would
make you smile.

SALLY
So you weren't serious?

JACK
Sure, yeah. Let's, yeah. Sure.

SALLY
Cause it, it felt like you meant
it.

JACK
I don't know, maybe. Baby, I was
just trying to help.

SALLY
But you see how that doesn't help,
right?

JACK
Yeah! I get it, I...Yeah, I do.
Okay? We should probably start
heading back soon.

He starts to move back the way they came. Sally softens and steps closer to him.

SALLY
No, no, don't. Don't check out on
me. We need to talk about this.

JACK
Ok, we can. I'm just...

7

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM

Phylis tries to crawl silently around the back of the couch.

JACK (V.O.)
...I'm feeling kinda trapped right
now.

PHYLIS
O our Sustainer! Grant us the life
of true peace and usher us--

Jacobina stands on the couch and tries to see where Phylis is.

JACOBINA
You can't hide forever, pal!

JOE
Phyl? If you can hear me. Come on
out. We'll talk.

Jacobina walks along the couch as Phylis moves to avoid her gaze.

JACOBINA
I should have seen this coming when
I let her move in with me.

JOE
Wasn't she living here before you?

JACOBINA
Uh, no! I was here, then I had to
move away because of that *thing*.
And when I came back, they'd leased
it to her. Doesn't make it her
place.

JOE
Get down from there? You're making
a mess.

Jacobina looks down at her feet.

JACOBINA
Yeah, she hates when I'm anywhere
near her couch with shoes on.

An idea strikes her and she hops off the couch.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

What are you doing?

Phylis peeks over to try and make eye contact with Joe, but he's following Jacobina out of frame. Phylis drops back down and looks over at the door to the apartment.

SALLY (V.O.)

Ok, I can give you some space but we have to get through this, Jack.

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EXT. BEAUTIFUL CITY OVERLOOK

Sally takes a gentle step back from Jack. He breathes deeply.

JACK

I just don't get what the big deal is.

SALLY

Jack, Baby, the big deal is, I don't think this is the only time you've done this.

Jack looks at her confused.

SALLY

You always let me shower first. Even when I take too long and use all the hot water and how many times have you driven me to the airport? How many Ubers have **you** taken? How many of Phylis's Game Nights have we missed because I was in a mood? How many times have you made me breakfast before work and then not had time to eat?

JACK

I like making you feel loved.

SALLY

But I don't feel loved if you're hurting yourself for me.

JACK

It's not hurting me, I can handle it.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

Well, y'know I could handle it too.
It doesn't have to all be on your
shoulders. We aren't fragile.

JACK

No, but it... I mean, kinda.

It's Sally's turn to look at him confused.

JACK

I mean, it's just, y'know, baby,
you're perfect. You are. And I want
you to feel perfect. And just
sometimes you need a little help.

Sally realises the bomb Jack dropped a second before he
does.

JACK

Um...I, um...

JACOBINA (V.O.)

I'm just doing what you would do.

9

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM

Phylis's inching toward the door stops when she hears
Jacobina & Joe in the kitchen. Jacobina is rummaging around
in the fridge.

JACOBINA

You're always the one pushing
everyone to go the extra mile and
not take shit from anybody.

JOE

Yeah, other people. Not our
friends.

JACOBINA

Oh, she and I have never been
friends.

She straightens up and raises her voice.

JACOBINA

You hear that, Pal? Knew you were
going to do something like this
eventually. Well, listen to this.

Jacobina holds up two little vials.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Wait, is that her insulin--

Jacobina cuts him off by popping the caps off and pouring the medicine down the sink.

Behind the couch, Phylis hyperventilates.

JACOBINA

(to the room)

How's that? Huh!? And oh look.

She picks up Phylis's cell phone from her desk.

JACOBINA

You have a call with your family tomorrow, don't you?

She lets the cell phone drop to the floor and starts aggressively stomping on it.

Joe looks defeatedly from the phone to the rest of the room.

JOE

Phylis, please come out, okay. You don't want to make this worse.

JACK (V.O.)

I'm just trying to help you.

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EXT. BEAUTIFUL CITY OVERLOOK

SALLY

Do you think I need help with everything?

JACK

No, but, I mean...my career is a little more stable than yours and I've got the time and money to support you and help you be as perfect as I know you can be.

Sally is taking this in.

SALLY

Have you felt this way our whole relationship? That I'm perfect, but I need help?

(CONTINUED)

JACK

I don't know when it started. I've always thought you were perfect.

SALLY

What about last week? When I called that guy the r-word for cutting me off in traffic?

JACK

We were running late, you were having a bad day. It happens to all of us.

SALLY

And the rent I owe you from 3 months ago that I still haven't paid back?

JACK

You had to pay for treatment on your ankle. I get it. You'll get it to me when you can.

SALLY

And when we moved in together and I told you I was trying to quit and asked you to help me.

JACK

Right, and I have been--

Sally holds up the cigarette he lit for her.

JACK

Well that's just...you...today...

SALLY

Jack, I'm not perfect. And you can't keep cushioning the blows when life clocks me one.

JACK

No, I can. Because you are. You have to be.

SALLY

Why?

JACK

Be...because...I feel that you are. And if that's not true, if this feeling is wrong then...then I'm

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACK (cont'd)
worried that loving you is a
mistake.

Silence. They stare at each other. A whole city between
them.

PHYLIS (V.O.)
So, this is where we're at?

11 INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM

Jacobina and Joe look at each other. Between them, Phylis
stands up. They both turn and look at her. Jacobina is
panting.

JACOBINA
Well look who decided to grow a
pair.

PHYLIS
What am I supposed to do when
you're...

She gestures to the destruction Jacobina has caused.

JACOBINA
And how do you think I feel?
Everything I've been through and
you're still acting like I'm not
justified--

PHYLIS
What about what you put me
through? I set boundaries, you
ignore them. I try to--

JACOBINA
Who gave you the right to set
boundaries in my apartment--

PHYLIS
This isn't your apartment! It's--

JOE
That's enough! Stop it!

Phylis and Jacobina stop arguing. Joe takes a few breaths.

JOE
Ok. Now, Phylis, we will hear your
side in a second. Jacobina was
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOE (cont'd)
talking so let's let her finish,
can we?

JACOBINA
Thank you, Joe.

PHYLIS
Are you kidding!? After all this,
you're still listening to her. Look
what she did.

Phylis gestures to the bruise on her face.

JOE
That's not great. But she says you
gave her good reason.

PHYLIS
I did?? Do you even know what
happened?

JACOBINA
Fuck you!

Jacobina lunges at Phylis and pushes her backwards over the
couch. Jacobina advances around the couch.

JACOBINA
I'll show you what good reason
looks like.

The sounds of Jacobina pummeling Phylis fill the room as Joe
looks on helplessly. Phylis is screaming for help.

JOE
Um...Jake...you shouldn't...

12 EXT. BEAUTIFUL CITY OVERLOOK

A violent punch/scream combination echoes over the scene
change.

SALLY
Do you really believe that, baby?

JACK
No, I don't. But I'm scared. I'm
scared of spending my life with
someone who isn't right for me.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

Do I have to be perfect to be right
for you?

JACK

Perfect for me, yeah?

SALLY

Do you think you're perfect?

JACK

No, I...

SALLY

I don't either. But you're the
person I've been with the longest.
And I don't see that changing. But
we can't chase things that aren't
real. We can't hurt ourselves for
things that aren't real. The thing
is, Jackiebear, you had to be
imperfect for me to be ok sharing
my imperfections with you.

JACK

That's why you love me?

SALLY

I've lost count of the reasons.

Jack fights back tears.

SALLY

But one of the big ones was we
pushed each other. We held each
other to a higher standard. Is that
something we can do again?

JACK

Can I hold you in person while
we're holding each other to higher
standards?

Sally takes his hand and he pulls her into a hard embrace.
They hold each other as if they'll never let go. Jack's hand
tightens on Sally's shirt and he pulls her closer.

13 INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM

Joe's hand grabs Jacobina's collar and pulls her back.

JACOBINA
What are you doing? Let go!

Offscreen, Phylis is gasping for air.

PHYLIS (O.S.)
Please. Please. Thank you. Please.

Joe looks at Phylis and then back at Jacobina.

With a tiny nod, he hands her a cushion from the couch.

Jacobina meets his eyes and takes it.

PHYLIS (O.S.)
Joe? What are you...

Jacobina takes the pillow and steps offscreen.

JACOBINA (O.S.)
Now keep your mouth shut!

PHYLIS (O.S.)
No, no. Stop fucking please--

Her words are muffled as Jacobina presses the pillow down and keeps punching.

14 INT. APARTMENT ENTRANCEWAY - NIGHT

Jack and Sally enter. At the foot of the stairs, Jack steps to the side to let Sally go first.

SALLY
Not going to offer to carry me?

JACK
Nah, I'm done with that. You're on your own.

SALLY
What if I'm really cute?

JACK
I don't know, maybe if you were perfect.

They smile and kiss.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
Now, come on. Keep up.

He jokingly elbows past her and goes first. Sally mockingly gasps in shock.

JACK
Hey, I'll help you back up if you
fall down.

SALLY
I can live with that.

She smiles and climbs the stairs behind him.

He is waiting at the top pretending to check something off on a clipboard.

JACK
Higher standard: Achieved.

SALLY
(laughing)
You know, you just might be
perfect.

JACK
Nah, I still have a long climb to
go.

SALLY
I'm right there with you.

Arms around each other, they walk to the apartment door.

SALLY
We've been gone a while. I wonder
what the others have gotten up to.

FADE TO BLACK