ALL ABOUT JANET

By

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SCENE: 1

(JANET RELAXES ON THE SETTEE IN FRONT OF THE TV, SIPS HER HOT DRINK GRATEFULLY)

SOUND: MALE GROANS THROUGH A BABY MONITOR

JANET: For God’s sake. Can’t I just have a moment to myself?

(EXASPERATED SIGH, JANET HEADS UP THE STAIRS, OPENS BEDROOM DOOR)

SCENE 2

(HUSBAND GROANS, GRUNTS AND GURGLES INTERMITTENTLY)

JANET: An hour a day, all they have to do is make sure you keep clean and they just leave it all to me, muggins.

(JANET REMOVES THE BED COVERS)

JANET: Dear God. She hasn’t bothered to changed your nappy.
(JANET GAGS, HEADS INTO THE BATHROOM. POURS WATER INTO A BUCKET)

JANET: (EXASPERATED) Why do I pay all that money, when I end up doing it myself anyway? It’s disgusting. Why can’t you hold it? You know how much it stresses me out.

(HUSBAND’S GURGLES BECOME ERRATIC)

JANET: Oh stop it, you pathetic bastard. It’s always about you, isn’t it. Selfish.

(JANET SLAPS AND PUNCHES HIM SEVERAL TIMES WHILE HE GRUNTS AND GURGLES IN PANIC)

JANET: (PANTING) Look what you’ve made me do. Now I’ll be awake all night worrying about how you’re feeling. You do this deliberately.
(JANET’S LIVING ROOM, SOFT MUSIC)

JANET: Finally, I get a moment to myself.

DONALD: Thanks for inviting me around.

JANET: I’ve always got time for a cup of tea and a chat. Just one rule. We don’t talk about work.

DONALD: Well, I’ll try. We’re there so much these days it’s difficult to think of anything else.

JANET: Overtime is always a good thing in my book.

(BABY MONITOR GURGLES, GRUNTS AND GROANS INTO LIFE THEN IS CUT OFF ABRUPTLY AS JANET TURNS IT OFF. AN AWKWARD SILENCE)

JANET: Best not have any disturbances, eh.

DONALD: Quite. How is he?
JANET: Same as always. Gets everything done for him, hasn’t got a care in the world. Not like us, eh Donald.

DONALD: (CHUCKLES) Isn’t that a little unfair?

JANET: I’ve taken care of that man for the past six years. I Feed him, clothe him, clean up his shit.

DONALD: I’m sorry, Janet. I didn’t mean...

JANET: No. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have gone off at you like that. It just... just... really gets to me sometimes.

DONALD: Hey... hey. Come on. You’re stressed. I think you need a night out. Let your hair down a bit.

JANET: I couldn’t leave him for long.

DONALD: Surely he’ll be OK for a few hours. You go to work, as you said the nurse is only here for an hour a day.

(PAUSE)
JANET: Maybe just one drink would be OK.

DONALD: That’s the Janet I know. So we have a date?

JANET: Well, er...

DONALD: Purely platonic, of course.

**SCENE 4**

(BUSY BAR, GLASSES CLANK, MUTED BACKGROUND CONVERSATION. DONALD ARRIVES AT THEIR TABLE WITH DRINKS.)

DONALD: I took the liberty, hope you don’t mind.

JANET: (SURPRISED) Another? I did say just one.

DONALD: We’ve only been here an hour. Seemed a little discourteous just buying myself one. If you don’t want it, I’ll drink it.

JANET: (CHUCKLES) Well, I suppose one more won’t hurt. Be a shame to waste it.
DONALD: (CHUCKLES) So what do you think?

JANET: Sorry?

DONALD: The evening?

JANET: It’s been great. really enjoying myself so far. You’re good company, Donald.

DONALD: The colour is back in your face. You should do this more often.

JANET: Maybe I should. I have to admit it’s good to be out again.

DONALD: I’m really glad you asked me to call around.

JANET: Well, you told me about your wife and I felt sorry for you sitting at home alone.

DONALD: Me too, in regards to your own husband. Thank you for reaching out to me. I want to be around for you, Janet.
JANET: (SUDDENLY TENSE) Don’t do that.

DONALD: I think we get along really, really well.

JANET: Please take your hand off my leg.

DONALD: We should take things to the next step.

SOUND: FACE SLAP.

(JANET GETS UP AND LEAVES)

DONALD: Janet! Wait.

SCENE 5

(TRAFFIC, REVELLERS, DOOR OPENS, MUTED SOUNDS FROM INSIDE THE BAR, DOOR CLOSES THEN SWINGS OPEN AGAIN)

DONALD: Janet wait! I’m sorry.

(DOOR CLOSES)

JANET: Just forget it, Donald. I’m calling a taxi.
(A SCUFFLE, JANET CRIES OUT)

DONALD: Please Janet, I just want to talk to you.

JANET: You’re hurting me. Let go of me!

DONALD: You can’t tell me that pathetic thing you call a husband can still get it up.

JANET: Please, stop.

(CLOTHES RIP)

DONALD: I love you so much, Janet.

JANET: No, No. Just stop.

(DONALD KISSES HER PROFUSELY DESPITE HER PANICKED STRUGGLES)

DONALD: We’re meant to be together.

DESDEMONA: (COOL, CALM, COLLECTED) I’d let her go if I were you.

DONALD: (PANICKED) It’s... it isn’t how it looks, it’s just a domestic. We’re a

(DONALD/CONT’D OVER)
DONALD couple.

JANET: That’s a lie!

DONALD: Now darling, tell the truth.

DESDEMONA: You have about five seconds before I call the police.

DONALD: But...

DESDEMONA: Five.

DONALD: Look...

DESDEMONA: Four.

DONALD: OK, OK. I’m going. Janet, will you be...

DESDEMONA: Three.

DONALD: I’m gone. I’m sorry Janet. I really am.

DESDEMONA: Two.

(DONALD HURRIES AWAY)
DESDEMONA: Desdemona. Des’ to my friends.

(JANET PULLS HERSELF TOGETHER)

JANET: Ja...Jan...

DESDEMONA: Janet. I heard your boyfriend. Calm down. Do you want me to call the police?

JANET: No... no, I’m... I’m OK. I just want to go home.

DESDEMONA: Want me to walk you?

JANET: If you don’t mind?

DESDEMONA: Wouldn’t offer if I didn’t.

SCENE 6

(BACK AT JANET’S OVER COFFEE.
MUSIC PLAYS GENTLY)

DESDEMONA: I can’t believe you work with him. He really had me fooled with the domestic thing.
JANET: Good job you came along when you did.

(CUPS CLANK, CHEERS)

DESDEMONA: So what are we going to do about it?

JANET: Sorry?

DESDEMONA: The rapist?

JANET: (CHUCKLES) Oh, he’s harmless. Just got a little excited. I probably gave off the wrong signals.

DESDEMONA: Hey! Don’t you dare go there, girl. He ripped your clothes. If I hadn’t have come along when I did he would have gone all the way. You know that, right?

JANET: I don’t know, Des. I just wouldn’t want to cause a fuss. He’s married, with kids. I couldn’t do that to him.

DESDEMONA: He doesn’t deserve any of that. We should tell his wife.

JANET: No, please Des. Let’s just...
DESDEMONA: I didn’t realise you had kids. There are no pictures.

JANET: (EMBARRASSED) No... that’s, er. It’s my husband.

DESDEMONA: Oh. Is he ill?

JANET: Severe arthritis. He got it just after we were married fifteen years ago. Confined to a wheelchair almost straight away and from there he’s gotten steadily worse.

DESDEMONA: That must be horrible for you.

JANET: Yes, yes it is. Thank you.

DESDEMONA: What for?

JANET: Nobody ever thinks of me. It’s always about him.

DESDEMONA: Well he’s on drugs, right. What relief do you get?
JANET: I... I better go and see what he needs.

DESDEMONA: Of course.

SCENE 7

(JANET IS TAKING CARE OF HER HUSBAND IN THE BEDROOM. OCCASIONAL GURGLES AND GRUNTS FROM THE HUSBAND)

DESDEMONA: Do you need a hand?

JANET: (STARTLED) Oh.

DESDEMONA: Sorry, I heard you struggling up here and thought I’d see if you need any help.

JANET: Well, it’s not very pleasant.

DESDEMONA: Poor you. How do you cope on your own?

JANET: I really don’t know. I pay a nurse to come in for an hour weekdays, but for all the good she does I might as well cancel it.
DESDEMONA: You should complain. Get her fired.

JANET: I’ve never been very good at taking care of myself. My own problems always come last if they ever get dealt with at all.

DESDEMONA: Well, I’m here now. Things are going to be a lot easier for you.

JANET: How do you mean?

DESDEMONA: You need me. While you’re at work, I can take care of him.


DESDEMONA: I will only help during the day. Night is your affair. For that, just give me a roof over my head.

JANET: If you need a place to stay, you don’t have to bargain for it.

DESDEMONA: It’s the least I could do.
SCENE 8

(MILD TRAFFIC NOISES, DES OPENS A GARDEN GATE, STROLLS TO THE FRONT DOOR AND RINGS THE DOORBELL, THE DOOR OPENS)

SHARON: Can I help you?

DESDEMONA: Hi. I’m here to talk about your husband.

(PAUSE)

DESDEMONA: It’s something you really want to know.

SHARON: Come to gloat have you?

DESDEMONA: I’m just the messenger.

(PAUSE)

SHARON: OK. You better come in.
SCENE 9

(JANET ARRIVES HOME)

JANET: Only me.

DESdemona: Hi, how was your day?

JANET: Great.

DESdemona: Was Donald there?

JANET: He avoided me. I think he’ll be fine. Just wants to forget it ever happened.

DESdemona: Tea?

JANET: Yes, please.

(JANET RELAXES ON THE SETTEE AND SIGHS CONTENTEDLY. SOUNDS OF TEA BEING MADE IN THE BACKGROUND)

JANET: Des’?

DESdemona: Yo?

JANET: Why isn’t the monitor on?
DESDEMONA: Oh, is it off?

JANET: Oh my God.

(JANET GETS UP IN A PANIC)

DESDEMONA: Calm down. I checked him like, two hours ago.

(JANET RUNS UP THE STAIRS. DESDEMONA CHUCKLES)

SCENE 10

(JANET STRUGGLES TO LIFT HER HUSBAND OFF THE FLOOR. OCCASIONAL GRUNTS, GROANS AND GURGLES FROM THE HUSBAND)

JANET: Des! Des!

SOUND: CIGARETTE IS LIT

JANET: You can’t smoke in here.

DESDEMONA: Of course I can.

JANET: How did he end up on the floor?
DESDEMONA: Maybe he’s trying to escape?

JANET: Are you going to help me?

DESDEMONA: I noticed bruising on his body when I changed him earlier.

JANET: He... he does it himself.

DESDEMONA: Come on.

(DESDEMONA AND JANET HEAVE THE HUSBAND BACK INTO BED)

DESDEMONA: All this is too much for you.

JANET: I sometimes wonder how I do it every day. Some days I just want to give up, lie in bed and to hell with everything.

DESDEMONA: You poor thing. It’s a terrible situation for both of you.

JANET: There’s nothing else I can do. If I don’t do it, nobody else will.

DESDEMONA: What about a home?
JANET: Never. I made a vow. I meant it.

DESDEMONA: Till death do you part?

JANET: Sounds silly.

DESDEMONA: No it doesn’t. I understand perfectly. What would people think if you put him in a home?

JANET: I know exactly what they’d think.

(HUSBAND GROANS IN PAIN. JANET RUMMAGES AROUND LOOKING FOR SOMETHING)

DESDEMONA: What is it?

JANET: He’s out of morphine. He’s in pain.

DESDEMONA: Sounds like he’s in agony

JANET: I don’t know what to do, the doctors are closed.

DESDEMONA: I can help.

JANET: How could you possibly do that?
DESDEMONA: Street grade.

JANET: You mean? No, no. I couldn’t.

DESDEMONA: Is it better that he lies there in agony?

**SCENE 11**

(DESDEMONA AND JANET RELAX OVER COFFEE, WATCHING A FILM)

DESDEMONA: What did I tell you. Not a murmer from him in over an hour.

JANET: It certainly seems to have done the trick.

DESDEMONA: I have my uses.

JANET: I appreciate what you’ve done. I just...

DESDEMONA: Wouldn’t want to repeat it.

JANET: Thank you, Des’.

DESDEMONA: Don’t mention it. I’m here to help.
DESDEMONA: Here to tell you all the things nobody else ever will have the guts to.

JANET: How do you mean?

DESDEMONA: Have you heard of those places in Switzerland that help move people on?

JANET: I... I, think so.

DESDEMONA: When an animal is in pain they put it down. It’s called being humane. Yet we allow humans, people we love, to suffer. How humane is that?

JANET: What are you talking about?

DESDEMONA: Come on, Janet. Do I really need to spell it out for you?

JANET: I... I...

DESDEMONA: I know you’ve thought about it lots of times.

JANET: I could never kill my husband.
DESDEMONA: You’d be helping him. It’s in his eyes. He wants you to help him.

JANET: I’m not selfish. I’m...

DESDEMONA: Afraid?

JANET: Look. This is just getting silly now. I’m tired.

(PAUSE)

JANET: You’ll still be here after work tomorrow?

DESDEMONA: Of course.

SCENE 12

(FRONT DOOR KNOCKS, DOOR OPENS)

DONALD: Who do you think you are?

DESDEMONA: What are you talking about?

DONALD: Don’t play games with me.

(DONALD PUSHES PAST DESDEMONA INTO THE HOUSE)
DESDEMONA: Hey, where are you going?

DONALD: I can’t believe you’d do that to me.

DESDEMONA: She’s at work.

DONALD: I know it was you. No point in denying it.

DESDEMONA: Did you really think I was going to let you get away with it?

DONALD: It was a mistake. I was drunk.

DESDEMONA: She deserved to know.

DONALD: You’ve destroyed my life, do you know that?

DESDEMONA: Yes.

DONALD: You hateful bitch.

DESDEMONA: (CHUCKLES) My, you do have a way with words. Charm the birds from the trees.

DONALD: What about my children?
DESDEMONA: You should have thought of that before you tried to rape my friend.

DONALD: Your friend? I thought we were friends?

DESDEMONA: Your wife had to know what sort of monster she was living with. You’re lucky we didn’t call the police.

DONALD: It doesn’t matter, my life is over now. Who cares.

DESDEMONA: Ah, diddums. Poor, poor little rapist.

DONALD: Stop saying that!

DESDEMONA: Rapist, rapist, rapist!

DONALD: Why are you being like this? I’m sorry, I really, really am.

DESDEMONA: Sometimes sorry isn’t enough.

DONALD: What do you mean? What’s that in your hand?

(THERE’S A SCUFFLE.)
DONALD: Put down the knife!

(DONALD GASPS IN PAIN)

DONALD: (IN GREAT PAIN) What... what have you done?

(KNIFE REPEATEDLY PUNCTURING FLESH, DONALD’S BREATHING BECOMES LABOURED AS HE DIES)

DESDEMONA: Like you said, your life is over. Let me help you with that.

SCENE 13

(FRONT DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES)

JANET: Des’, I’m home.

(SILENCE AS JANET REMOVES HER COAT AND SHOES)

JANET: Des’?

(JANET WALKS INTO THE KITCHEN. THE BACK DOOR OPENS AND DESDEMONA WALKS IN)
DESDEMONA: Hi. You’re back a little early today.

JANET: (LAUGHING) Look at the state of you, you’re covered in... what is that?

DESDEMONA: Thought I’d do a little bit of weeding for you.

(BACK DOOR CLOSES)

DESDEMONA: Tea?

JANET: Allow me, you look shattered.

DESDEMONA: Those weeds can be tough little buggers.

(RUNNING WATER INTO KETTLE, TEACUPS CLANG)

JANET: How is he?

DESDEMONA: Don’t worry, he’s fine. I took the monitor outside with me, and it was turned on this time.

JANET: Thanks Des’, these past couple of days have gone a lot easier since you’ve been around.
DESDEMONA: Will you stop saying thank you.

(KETTLE BOILS, POURING WATER, STIRRING CUPS)

JANET: Sorry, it’s just...

DESDEMONA: I’m your friend. You’ve let me stay here rent free, fed me... the least I can do, come on. Stop embarrassing me.

JANET: You’re right. Here.

DESDEMONA: (SIPS FROM THE TEA) Just what I needed, cheers.

JANET: Oh, has anyone called around today?

DESDEMONA: No... why?

JANET: Donald phoned up work looking for me, but the rota didn’t have me as being in. I thought he would show up here.

DESDEMONA: Nope. Not seen anyone. He may have knocked while I was in the garden.

JANET: Good. He probably just wants to apologise.
DESDEMONA: Typical man.

SCENE 14

(MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, HUSBAND IS GRUNTING AND GROANING IN PAIN. JANET ISN’T COPING WELL)

JANET: Please stop. There isn’t any left.

(CIGARETTE LIGHTER IGNITES, INHALE AND EXHALE)

JANET: He won’t stop. He needs something.

DESDEMONA: It’s the middle of the night.

JANET: Do drug dealers sleep?

DESDEMONA: I don’t normally visit them. I was doing you a favour, remember.

JANET: Please, Des’. He needs it.

DESDEMONA: I’m going back to bed. Turn off the monitor and you’ll hardly hear him.

(DESDEMONA WALKS OUT)
JANET: No! Des! Please!

(PAUSE)

JANET: I just can’t cope anymore.

(JANET SOBS UNCONTROLLABLY. AFTER A WHILE, DESDEMONA REENTERS, STILL SMOKING)

DESDEMONA: Look at the state of you, you’re falling apart.

JANET: I just want it to stop. I can’t take it anymore.

DESDEMONA: How much better would it be if he wasn’t in pain? No more crying out in agony. No more waiting to die just so that he can rest. Imagine how much better things will be... (SOFTER) for you.

JANET: Yes, I see it now. You’re right. It’s the best thing for him... for us.

DESDEMONA: Place a pillow over his head.
JANET: No, I... I couldn’t do it like that. Not with my own hands.

DESDEMONA: How can you stand him screaming like that?

JANET: I’ll use the stuff?

DESDEMONA: Stuff?

JANET: I’ve got money. How much would it cost to buy enough?

DESDEMONA: Enough?

JANET: Stop playing games, Des. You know what I mean.

DESDEMONA: You want to overdose him on heroin?

(PAUSE)

JANET: Yes. I’ve heard that its peaceful.

DESDEMONA: It’s going to take money.

JANET: Anything.
SCENE 15

(MUSIC PLAYS IN THE BACKGROUND AS JANET OPENS THE FRONT DOOR)

JANET: Oh my God. I was so worried.

DESDEMONA: Worried that I’d leave you alone.

JANET: That’s not true.

DESDEMONA: I had to go through a lot to get this. You better appreciate it.

JANET: I...

(FRONT DOOR CLOSSES. MUTED GRUNTS AND GROANS FROM HUSBAND UPSTAIRS)

DESDEMONA: He still screaming?

JANET: I’ve been listening to music. Just blanked him out. Like background noise now, a boiler, or...

DESDEMONA: How much longer are you going to let him suffer?
JANET: Des’, I’m not sure...

DESDEMONA: Don’t you dare bottle out again, Janet.

JANET: It’s just...

DESDEMONA: Look, it’s simple. You pour the contents of this bag into the syringe and inject him like normal. Easy.

JANET: It hardly looks like there would be enough.

DESDEMONA: It’s plenty.

JANET: What if they suspect something?

DESDEMONA: Why would they? You’ve taken care of him all this time. Come on, stop making excuses. He needs your help one more time, don’t fail him.

JANET: I’ll just have a cup of tea first.

DESDEMONA: Janet!

JANET: Honestly. I just need to settle my nerves.
DESDEMONA: Fine. I’ll prepare the syringe for you.

SCENE 16

(HUSBAND IS SCREAMING IN AGONY)

DESDEMONA: I’ll hold him down.

(SCUFFLING)

DESDEMONA: Now Janet!

JANET: I don’t think... Can you do it?

DESDEMONA: No. It has to be you. Come on, you’re making this worse than it needs to be.

(PAUSE)

DESDEMONA: In the vein.

JANET: (STRESSED) Yes I know what I’m doing!

DESDEMONA: Quickly, I think he knows what’s going on.

JANET: Hold him properly!
DESDEMONA: That’s it.

(HUSBAND’S SCREAMS DWINDLE TO WHIMPERS, THEN A SOFT SNORING NOISE, THEN QUIET)

JANET: I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.

(JANET SOBS SOFTLY FOR A WHILE)

JANET: Where are you going?

DESDEMONA: You don’t need me any more.

JANET: Don’t leave me on my own. Des! Des!

(DES WALKS DOWN THE STAIRS, THE SOUND OF THE FRONT DOOR SLAMMING SHUT)

JANET: No. I can’t cope on my own. Please, please come back.
SCENE 17

(BIRDS SINGING, SOUND OF A PHONE CONNECTING)

OPERATOR: Which service, please?

JANET: Ambulance... please. I believe my husband has passed away.

OPERATOR: Putting you through.

SCENE 18

(SOUND OF MUFFLED POLICE RADIOS WHILE JANET SITS ON THE SETTEE CONFRONTED BY A DETECTIVE)

JANET: But I don’t understand, I called for an ambulance.

DETECTIVE: Standard procedure upon report of a death. Toxicologist will give us a better idea, but for now we just have a few questions.

JANET: Toxicologist?
DETECTIVE: Is that a problem?

JANET: I’d rather you didn’t have to cut him open.

DETECTIVE: (LAUGHS) No, just a blood test.

JANET: Oh, well...

DETECTIVE: Just a few things. I understand he was on prescribed morphine for the pain?

OFFICER: (SERIOUS) Sir. You better take a look.

DETECTIVE: What is it?

OFFICER: In the garden, sir.

JANET: I... I just need some air. All this is too much.

DETECTIVE: Don’t go too far.
SCENE 19

(IN THE GARDEN, BIRDS SINGING, DISTANT TRAFFIC)

OFFICER: Over here, sir. It’s been freshly dug.

DETECTIVE: Oh... oh. Yes. I can smell it.

OFFICER: Should we dig, sir?

DETECTIVE: It’s probably just a family pet... but I can’t help thinking something is awry here.

OFFICERS: Couple of shovels just over there, sir.

DETECTIVE: Yes. Let’s get to work. Pass me one.

(THEY DIG FOR A WHILE)

OFFICER: Sir, I’ve hit som... Oh. It’s a human hand, sir!

DETECTIVE: Come with me.
SCENE 20

(LIVING ROOM)

OFFICER: Where is she?

DETECTIVE: I... I let her go outside.

SOUND: SCREECHING TYRES, DULL THUD

SCENE 21

(HOSPITAL, NIGHT, HEART MONITOR BEEPS CASUALLY AND THEN SLIGHTLY INTENSIFIES, JANET GURGLES AND GRUNTS)

DESDEMONA: Hello, Janet.

(PAUSE)

DESDEMONA: You were hit by a car. Doctors say you’re paralysed from the neck down. You’ll never walk, nor get out of bed, again. You can’t even look out of the window.
(JANET GURGLES, HEART MONITOR BEEPS FASTER)

DESdemona: Somebody is going to take care of you for the rest of your life.

(HEART MONITOR BEEPS EXTREMELY FAST. JANET GURGLES AND GRUNTS IN A PANIC)

DESdemona: (CHUCKLES) You poor, poor thing. What did you think Hell was like?