

NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR BLUES

written by

Steven Sallie

stevensallie55@gmail.com

OVER BLACK:

THUMPING BASS through paper-thin walls.

INT. IAN & JESSICA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The music continues to penetrate the otherwise peaceful home.

IAN and JESSICA, both late-20s, sit on the couch. Their hands massage their temples, fighting migraines. Dark circles under their eyes, exhaustion showing on their faces.

JESSICA
We could call the landlord?

IAN
I called him four times last week.
He doesn't give a shit, as long as
he gets the rent.

Jessica sighs, slumping deeper into the couch. Desperate for peace and quiet.

JESSICA
Police?

Ian shakes his head.

IAN
They won't do anything unless it's
above a certain decibel.

JESSICA
Well they're useless.

IAN
Yep.

JESSICA
We could move.

IAN
Can't do that either. We're still
on lease for another four months.

JESSICA
I can't take another four months
of this!

IAN
So what're we gonna do?

Ian looks over at Jessica. His tired eyes pleading with her.

Jessica thinks for a moment. Then-- a lightbulb goes off in her head. Why didn't she think of this sooner?

She sits forward.

JESSICA
I've got an idea!

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Jessica knocks on the door of the neighboring apartment, then stows her hands in her pockets, waiting for an answer.

Ian stands behind her, arms folded.

IAN
This is the best you could come up with?

JESSICA
She probably doesn't like us going behind her back. Maybe if we talk to her, she'll listen.

IAN
Yeah, that's great, Mr. Rodgers, but that ain't how it works in the real world.

JESSICA
Will you shut up?

IAN
Fine, but you know I'm right.

Jessica sighs, ignoring him.

They wait a bit longer. No one answers.

Jessica POUNDS on the door, losing what little bit of patience she has remaining.

Finally--

The door swings open, revealing:

CRYSTAL, 50s, still in dirty pajamas. A box of cereal rests on her hip like an infant. She casually munches on her snack as she eyes the pair.

CRYSTAL
What do you want?

Jessica tries to put on her best faux smile. Doesn't quite accomplish it.

JESSICA

Hello, how are you?

Crystal doesn't respond. Only stares, devouring handfuls of cereal.

JESSICA

Okay. Well, um... we live in the apartment next door, and we were just wondering if there was any way you could turn down the music?

CRYSTAL

Oh, I'm sorry, is it bothering you?

JESSICA

Just a bit, yeah.

CRYSTAL

I'm so sorry. I didn't realize what an inconvenience I was putting you through.

Jessica looks over her shoulder at Ian. Smiles at him.

Ian shrugs. He can't believe it went that smoothly.

Jessica turns back to Crystal. Before she can get a word out--

CRYSTAL

I'm glad you told me I was being such an annoying neighbor. With all the misery going on in my life, I would hate to be a bother to a couple of assholes.

Ian and Jessica react simultaneously, dropping their jaws.

IAN

Hey!

JESSICA

Listen--

CRYSTAL

No, you listen! I worked my ass off for years trying to support a man who'd rather fuck my sister.

(MORE)

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

The last thing I give a shit about
is disturbing some little cunt and
her dick of the week.

Jessica takes offense to this, stepping closer.

JESSICA

Would you like to hear what I
think, bitch?

CRYSTAL

Not really.

Crystal SLAMS the door in their faces.

Ian and Jessica exchange looks. That face that asks if that
really just happened.

INT. IAN & JESSICA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The music continues to BLARE from next door. Sounds like it may
have gotten louder.

Ian sits on the floor, back against the couch, staring
hopelessly at the ceiling.

Jessica paces the floor, rage radiating from every pore. She's
mid-rant--

JESSICA

...call me a cunt? Who the hell
does she think she is? She's been
putting us through hell for weeks
and we're the bad guys?

IAN

I told you it was pointless.

JESSICA

Now isn't the best time for an I
told you so.

IAN

Just putting it out there.

Jessica rolls her eyes at him. Walks over to the wall-- POUNDS
on it-- THREE TIMES-- with everything she's got.

JESSICA

SHUT UP!

Amazingly, the music STOPS.

Jessica stares in disbelief.

Ian gets up from the floor and joins Jessica by the wall. He smiles at her, hopeful, yet skeptical.

Jessica smiles back.

A moment of peace?

The music STARTS AGAIN, louder this time.

Jessica and Ian let out guttural groans.

IAN

How has no one else complained?

JESSICA

Guess they don't care.

(beat)

I swear to God, I can't handle this anymore.

IAN

Same.

They retreat to the couch. Jessica leans against Ian's chest-- he wraps his arm around her. Trying to offer comfort.

IAN

At this rate, the only way we're getting any peace is if she moves...

(beat)

...or dies...

An idea crosses both of their minds.

Slowly, Ian and Jessica turn to face each other. Knowing what they're going to do, but neither wanting to say it out loud.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ian and Jessica stand outside Crystal's apartment, looking around to ensure no one is watching.

Ian holds a BASEBALL BAT behind his back.

Jessica bangs on the door.

The door flings open. Crystal stands there, looking pissed beyond belief.

CRYSTAL

WHAT?!

WHAM!

Ian BASHES Crystal over the head with the baseball bat. She COLLAPSES into a heap on the floor.

Ian and Jessica beam at each other, like a couple kids who just found out they're going to Disneyland.

INT. IAN & JESSICA'S CAR - NIGHT

Ian drives, Jessica rides shotgun. All smiles now, holding hands, like they're out for a Sunday drive.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

A small, rickety bridge over the foggy river.

Ian and Jessica's car pulls to a stop, the only vehicle visible for miles.

The lights go off, followed by the engine.

Ian and Jessica step out of the car and move to the trunk.

Ian pops it open, revealing:

Crystal's body, wrapped in garbage bags, secured with duct tape, cinderblocks tied around her neck and ankles.

Without a word to each other, Ian and Jessica grab the body and haul it out, making their way towards the guardrail.

Jessica's grip begins to slip-- she's about to lose it. She tries to readjust her hold on the body--

TOO LATE.

Jessica DROPS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, which slams onto the pavement.

Ian stumbles, almost losing his grip as well. In a hushed, agitated whisper--

IAN

What the hell are you doing?

Jessica keeps her voice low as well. As if someone is going to hear them.

JESSICA

I'm sorry!

IAN

Why didn't you get a better hold on it?

JESSICA

You're the one who gave me the heavy end. I'm sorry I don't know the proper way to carry a dead body.

IAN

I don't accept your apology.

JESSICA

Shut up.

Jessica grabs Crystal's head, making sure her grip is firm this time.

IAN

You wanna switch?

JESSICA

I got it.

IAN

You sure?

JESSICA

I got it!

IAN

Okay.

Jessica lifts her end of the body and the pair struggle to make their way to the bridge's guardrail, dragging the cinderblocks behind them.

They pause for a moment, catching their breath.

JESSICA

Should we say a few words or something?

IAN

Why? She fucking sucked?

JESSICA

True.

Without another word, they THROW CRYSTAL'S BODY OVER THE EDGE OF THE GUARDRAIL, QUICKLY SENDING THE CINDERBLOCKS AFTER IT.

Ian and Jessica lean over the guardrail, watching Crystal's body sink into the murky water below.

INT. IAN & JESSICA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ian and Jessica sleep peacefully, spooning. Finally, a quiet, restful night.

INT. IAN & JESSICA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Ian and Jessica sit at the table, eating their breakfast, enjoying the silence for the first time in weeks.

Jessica stops mid-bite. Looks up at Ian--

JESSICA
You hear that?

Ian tenses, freezing for a moment as he reaches for his orange juice.

IAN
No...?

Jessica smiles.

JESSICA
Exactly.

Jessica gets back to her breakfast.

Ian downs some orange juice.

They continue to eat their breakfast in glorious silence. A happy, peaceful, normal couple.

Except for the whole murder thing.

FADE TO BLACK.