

DIRTY DISHES

Written by

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INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The fireplace mantle is lined with photos: A mom stares lovingly at the baby she's holding. A dad smiles while a little girl (5) sits on his shoulders. The girl (12) beams from ear to ear as she holds her dad and mom around the shoulders and pulls them close. A girl (19) stands in a graduation gown and shows off her high school diploma.

On a coffee table, there are two dirty plates and two pairs of silverware, along with a glass of merlot.

The woman from the photos, DONNA (50s), sits curled at the end of a loveseat sofa. She types away on her laptop, occasionally looking up to watch the TV.

Next to the far side of the couch, WALTER (mid-40s), the man from the photos, slouches in an armchair, drinking whiskey and watching the movie. His feet rest on the coffee table. On the television, a SON (16) and his parents argue.

MOM

Really? Cocaine? I thought we raised you better than that.

The dad holds out his hands.

DAD

Give me your keys.

SON

I look forward to the day when I can kiss this place goodbye. I hate this house, I hate this city, and I hate you!

Donna watches the TV, wincing.

DAD (O.C.)

You listen here -

DONNA

We got so lucky with Dove.

Walter gives a self-satisfied smile.

WALTER

Yeah, the only real issue she has is her mom.

Donna pauses the TV and slowly turns her head to look at Walter.

DONNA  
Are you fucking kidding me?

WALTER  
What? I was agreeing with you.

DONNA  
You could have said anything. 'Yes, we have a great child.' 'You did such a good job raising her.' Instead, you choose to say that?

WALTER  
Oh, come on. I'm just joking.

Donna rolls her eyes, disgusted. She pulls her legs in closer. She grabs her wine and takes a long sip.

DONNA  
(muttered)  
A true wannabe Ricky Gervais.

She presses play, and the movie resumes. Walter takes a sip of whiskey.

DAD (O.C.)  
-- here. We have done our best to raise you right. But clearly, there is nothing we can say or do to show you -

Donna pauses the movie again.

DONNA  
What gives you the right to talk to me like that? I spent 18 years raising our kid -

WALTER  
Donna -

DONNA  
Am I really such a terrible person that you can't go one night without saying shitty things?

WALTER  
I'm not saying 'shitty things.' You need thicker skin.

DONNA  
Thicker skin? Do you talk to your friends like that? Make jokes at their expense?

WALTER  
My friends know how to take a joke.

DONNA  
Well, maybe your friends find it  
cute, but I don't.

WALTER  
Just play the movie.

DONNA  
(under her breath)  
I don't know why I bother.

Donna slams her computer shut and stands up. She throws the remote at Walter before grabbing her plate.

WALTER  
What the hell.

DONNA  
Finish the movie on your own.

She storms upstairs. Walter downs his whiskey and presses play.

There's a clatter of dishes being dumped into the sink upstairs. Walter sighs. He pauses the movie again.

There's more stomping. Walter turns off the television. He stands, goes up the stairs, and down the hallway into the bedroom.

WALTER  
Don't be like that, Donna.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Walter steps into the bedroom. Donna emerges from the closet, buttoning the top of her striped pajama top.

DONNA  
You haven't thanked me for dinner  
yet.

WALTER  
I told you it tasted great.

DONNA  
That's not the same.

Donna turns away from Walter and into the ensuite bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Donna yanks her hair up into a messy bun. She turns on the faucet and splashes her face with water. Through the doorway, she watches Walter take off his jeans.

DONNA

I wish you would say something nice. Something that shows you appreciate everything I do for this family, instead of making me feel worthless.

WALTER

They're just jokes. And what about everything *I've done*? Where's my appreciation?

Donna sneers.

DONNA

Like what? You sit on your fat, jobless ass all day and wait for me to come home and make you dinner.

WALTER

I have a job. And I --

DONNA

Uber doesn't count.

I take out the trash. I buy groceries. I wash the pile of dishes *you* leave. I mean, do you really have to use three pans to make one meal?

DONNA (CONT'D)

You liked dinner tonight, didn't you?

WALTER

You're inefficient. You can easily cook with --

DONNA

Oh, because you know sooo much about cooking now.

WALTER

I know how to cook without leaving a fucking mess.

DONNA

Fine, tomorrow night you cook and I'll wash the dishes.

WALTER

I'm surprised you know how to use the dish washer, seen as its so new for someone your age.

Walter gives a small laugh at his own joke.

DONNA

Seriously?! Does it never once cross your mind to shut your mouth before you say something mean?

WALTER

I don't know what you want me to say, Donna. This is just who I am. I make jokes.

DONNA

Grow. Up. The only joke here is you and this relationship.

Walter shakes his head.

WALTER

And you say I'm mean.

Walter leaves the bedroom.

Donna's eyes start to water. She grabs a washcloth and angrily scrubs at her face. She turns off the sink, slamming the knob back into place.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Walter scrubs angrily at dishes, practically throwing the plates into the dishwasher.

Donna enters from the hallway, her eyes are red.

DONNA

Maybe you should move out.

WALTER

What?

DONNA

You don't contribute to this household anymore.

WALTER

I took care of Dove while you were off playing CEO. I was the one who dropped off and picked up Dove. I went to all her volleyball games and concert recitals.

DONNA

Because you have nothing better to do with your life. Now that she's gone, all you do is sit and watch football all day.

WALTER

That is not true.

DONNA

I asked you to fix the garage door four months ago.

WALTER

I've been busy working on my resume and applying for jobs.

DONNA

Please. You ask Grok to write you a resume, and then you hit submit.

WALTER

Only because you won't help me.

DONNA

I don't know how many times I can explain it to you before it gets through your thick skull.

Walter scoffs and returns to the dishes. Donna opens her mouth to say more, but then just turns and leaves.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Donna, now in reading glasses, lies in bed under the covers, reading a book. Walter enters the room.

DONNA

(not looking up)

Uh-uh. You sleep in the guest room tonight.

WALTER

(tired)

Are you kidding?

Donna sets down her book and takes off her readers. She looks up and meets Walter's stare.

DONNA

We do this every time. You treat me like shit. You can't come in here expecting me to love you when you give me nothing. I have no reason to even want to be near you right now.

Walter looks away. He leans against the doorframe.

WALTER

You treat me like shit, too.

DONNA

Fine. We treat each other poorly. Something needs to change. Maybe if we went to couple's therapy -

WALTER

I told you I'm not seeing a shrink.

DONNA

Well, until you do, you're not sleeping in this room again.

Donna picks up her book and finds her page.

WALTER

Why can't you sleep in the guest room?

DONNA

Because it's my house.

WALTER

Fine.

DONNA

Fine.

Donna returns to her book.

Walter lingers in the doorway. He grabs his pillow.

WALTER

Fine.

Walter leaves.