

"UNCOMFORTABLE"

FADE IN:

INT. INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORE - DAY

Six days before Christmas, the place is packed: SHOPPERS sip cider, STAFF wear Santa hats, CAROLERS sing a too-loud *Joy to the World*. Everyone is festive EXCEPT...

JANICE WEBER, 56, wearing "fun" earmuffs that belie her melancholy. She hides in the Self Help section absorbed in the revealingly titled, *When Things Fall Apart - Heart advice for Difficult Times* by Pema Chodron.

Janice really reads the book. If she had a pen she'd be underlining. Her engrossment feels awkwardly intimate in a retail outlet.

We hear THE WOMAN before we see her.

THE WOMAN (O.C.)

Jan! Oh my god, Janice!

Janice emerges from her "book fog" to see, BRITISH DEB, late 40's, tall, sophisticated in a wonderful bespoke suit. She's everything you don't want to see when you're depressed with dirty hair in a car coat.

JANICE

Deb! Oh my -- you look amazing!

They hug. Janice makes a silent wish to disappear.

BRITISH DEB

You too. You've lost weight.

JANICE

You're here. I mean, obviously --

BRITISH DEB

Just back for the holidays.

JANICE

Of course. How's everything in London? How are Matt and (searches for names but then) the kids?

BRITISH DEB

Brilliant. We're all positively thriving.

JANICE

Do I detect a hint of a british accent?

BRITISH DEB

I know. It's crazy isn't it? Me and Madonna. But it has been two years. How are you? And the kids? --

JANICE

Good. Yeah. Annie stayed in Chicago, Stephen is still all about music.

BRITISH DEB

Oh lovely. And how is Ron?

Janice hesitates. Does she tell the truth? Or does she lie?

JANICE

Oh (Decision made, lie) He's great. Everyone is great. We're all great. Great.

BRITISH DEB

Good to hear. And how is everyone at Book Club? I miss you all.

JANICE

We miss you. That's why I'm here actually, Christmas party tonight.

British Deb is suddenly confused.

BRITISH DEB

But isn't it bring a book you've already read?

JANICE

No, yes. I'm just buying a fresh copy. (re: When Things Fall Apart) Not this one. Obviously.

BRITISH DEB

Maybe I'll pop in?

The Carolers stroll closer, singing, "It's the most wonderful time of the year". Janice and British Deb talk OVER them.

JANICE

Everyone would love to see you!

BRITISH DEB

(re: Carolers) I'll take this as my cue. Lovely to see you, Jan.

British Deb escapes through the Carolers who are suddenly singing only to Janice.

CAROLERS

(singing)

It's the hap-happiest season of all  
With those holiday greetings and gay  
happy meetings  
When friends come to call...

The songs continues under...

INT. JANICE'S HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER

Janice reads a thick document titled, "Divorce Agreement".

CAROLERS (V.O.)

It's the hap-happiest season of all

Janice tries to make sense of the legal-ease. But soon LAUGHTER distracts her.

ANGLE ON THE LIVING ROOM:

Where RON WEBER, 56, Janice's charming (almost ex) husband has a hushed conversation with SHARMIN, 30's, the Divorce Mediator. They laugh again.

SHARMIN

Oh my god! You're hilarious!

Janice shoots them a look!

JANICE

(passive aggressively) I guess I'll  
have to read these changes later.

Ron responds like he's hosting a game show.

RON

Okay, well if you're going to be  
thorough. (laughs) No reason to keep  
"Charming Sharmin" any longer. (to  
Sharmin) You're costing me a fortune.  
Not that you're not worth it.

They rise from the couch.

RON (CONT'D)

Before you go though --

Ron grabs a gift bag and gives it to Sharmin.

RON (CONT'D)

After all it is the holidays.

Janice stands, wondering why her divorce looks like a party.

SHARMIN

Oh, thank you. As long as it's from both of you.

RON

Always the mediator!

They look at Janice who thinks "Fuck, no!" but says,

JANICE

Sure, yes.

NOTE: This happens a lot, Janice NOT speaking her mind. It's habit, 25 years of not saying the hard things. But we SEE and FEEL Janice's inner conflict. When she finally speaks her mind it'll feel like a win.

Sharmin opens the gift.

SHARMIN

Oh my god. HOT HANDS! These are sold out everywhere.

RON

Must be a Christmas miracle.

SHARMIN

Thank you!

Sharmin hugs Ron. Then Janice, who gives an awkward pat.

SHARMIN (CONT'D)

(to Janice) May I use your bathroom before I go?

JANICE

Sure. Yes. Through the arch, turn left. Excuse the tile and wallpaper samples, I'm --

RON

Maybe you can mediate the Powder Room for Janice, Sharmin. She started it over a year ago - can't make up her mind.

Ron laughs. Sharmin exits. Janice burns.

Now that Sharmin is gone, Ron drops the schtick.

RON (CONT'D)

I wanted to get this wrapped up before the holidays. It's costing me a small fortune.

JANICE

I have to read the changes --

Ron looks at the room, sloppily decorated. The tree is bare.

RON

What is up with this place? Usually you've got it looking like a magazine. And this tree, it needs a Brazilian.

Ron laughs. The Christmas tree is shaggy.

JANICE

I tried. But everything reminded me of my Mom or...

Janice doesn't say "us".

Ron places wrapped gifts on the dining room table.

RON

Put these under the tree when it's ready. Just a few things for you and the kids to open on Christmas.

JANICE

You got me a gift?

RON

Just a little something.

JANICE

Well (struggles to find the words) if you get me something then I need to get you something and --

RON

Well if you do, I'm a size Medium now because Brittany is a vegan.

Janice is hurt by the mere mention of Brittany's name. But then something else occurs to her.

JANICE

So, you're not going to be here on Christmas?

It's a question and a realization at the same time.

JANICE (CONT'D)

I mean, the kids, you've always seen them on Christmas --

RON

They're 25 and 17, I think they get it. Besides we're doing Christmas Eve right? For our usual nap during the sermon. And Stephen's band in the talent show.

Janice is caught off guard by the realization that her family will never be together again on Christmas.

JANICE

They're not in the show. They're just backing up the kids.

RON

Yeah, yeah. I was also thinking it'd be good to start a new tradition: the kids could come to my place on the 23rd. Celebrate with Brittany and I. We'll do dinner, game night sort of thing. I'll give the kids their big gifts then.

JANICE

You never liked game night before.

For once, this is exactly what Janice meant to day. It's Ron who now avoids.

RON

So you get 'em on Christmas. For the big day. And the four of us will do church on the 24th and "Dad's Christmas" on the 23rd? How's that sound?

Janice wants to say a thousand things - all of them nasty.

But Sharmin enters drying her hands. Janice bucks up.

JANICE

Fine. Sure. The 23rd. I've got something to do anyway. Big plans.

SHARMIN

Thank you again for the gift.

The front door opens and STEPHEN, 17, Janice and Ron's music nerd son, enters. He's immediately in a bad mood by being met by adults.

RON

Hey bud! There he is. It's officially winter break now. (to Sharmin) This is our son Stephen. Stevie, this is Sharmin.

Stephen reluctantly plays nice, pleasantries are exchanged.

RON (CONT'D)

Steve's applying to Whitman, Sharmin. You're old stomping grounds right? Maybe I'll hook you guys up for a talk.

SHARMIN

Sure, great.

STEPHEN

Fine. I guess.

Sharmin exits as "Happy Holidays" are exchanged. The door closes. The mood shifts. Stephen drops his backpack.

RON

Nothing like winter break huh, bud?

STEPHEN

Except summer break.

Stephen shoots a cold look at Ron and exits to the kitchen.

RON

(to Janice) Wow, boys and their dads huh?

A beat.

RON (CONT'D)

Hey, do you know where my tux is? I've got the office party tomorrow and it's not at my place.

Janice gives Ron an "Are You Serious?" look.

JANICE

Do I know where your tux is? Are you kidding me? I know where everything in this house is. I know that Stephen's sock is under the ottoman behind you.

Janice tosses the ottoman AND the sock!

JUMP CUTS THROUGH NEXT: BAD ASS music plays as Janice TOSSES everything she mentions DESTROYING the house! Ron is afraid.

JANICE (CONT'D)

I know there's an ipod and Canadian loonies in the piano bench.

She tosses the bench!

JANICE (CONT'D)

I know the deck of nudie playing cards my dad gave you, that Annie found offensive are in the crystal bowl your Aunt gave us for our wedding.

Janice CHUCKS crystal bowls! Crash! Crash!

JANICE (CONT'D)

I know there are no D batteries in the emergency kit but there are 4 in my Dad's golf bag in the hall closet!

Janice DRIVES D Batteries at Ron! He ducks, gets hit!

JANICE (CONT'D)

I know there's a condom and a lighter in Stephen's Bob the Builder lunchbox.

Janice takes out the lighter.

JANICE (CONT'D)

And if I know where all that is, of course I know where your tux is! Upstairs in the hall closet, in a blue suit bag, right beside the leather coat I only wore twice because you said it makes me look masculine.

Janice drags Ron up the stairs. Opens the closet, pulls out his tux, throws it at him and puts on the leather coat!

Janice lights a nudie card and tosses it behind her. She walks down the stairs, lighting cards and tossing them.

JANICE (CONT'D)

If you opened up my head right now you'd find a map of this house and dotted lines to every single thing and memory. Including the moment you sat closer to me than you had in a long time and told me you loved someone else!

Janice walks out the front door. The house EXPLODES behind her!

JANICE (CONT'D)

So you wanna ask me where your fucking  
tux is?

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY -- AS BEFORE

Janice gives Ron an "Are You Serious" look. Only a second has passed since he asked her about the tux. We see it's been a fantasy sequence.

JANICE

It's in the upstairs hall closet.

Ron passes her to get it.

Janice hates herself for a moment. Then turns towards the kitchen. Stephen is standing there with a plate of food.

STEPHEN

(quietly) Why don't you tell him to  
fuck off?

He ascends the stairs leaving Janice.

JANICE

I don't know.

INT. MANSION -- LATER

Janice laughs with the 7 members of her Bookclub (all middle aged but diverse) including SUZANNE, 56 admits to 48, Janice's well heeled best friend. They sit in Suzanne's designer home eating designer cheese.

SUZANNE

Everyone has a creepy uncle. I think  
it's a rule.

DANA, 40's finishes her story.

DANA

Yes. So now I've got 21 people coming  
for Christmas dinner and no one wants  
to sit beside Uncle Paul.

JANICE

21?! My record was 19 and I thought  
that was crazy.

SUZANNE

I had 38 once. When Ari and Mena's  
entire family came from Iran.

MENA, 30's, Suzanne's caustic sister-in-law retorts.

MENA

But you also had a caterer and a three person staff.

The doorbell rings. Suzanne nods to Mena to get it.

MENA (CONT'D)

I stand corrected. Four person staff.

Mena exits. Suzanne turns to LUCY, 50's.

SUZANNE

What did you guys decide about your cruise?

LYNN

We're going. After I swore we wouldn't. But my Mom, my sisters, their families, no one else has a problem getting on a ship with two thousand other people. Last time my kids passed the time by making a list of all the ways we could die.

Mena re-enters with British Deb, who looks BETTER in an even more amazing suit.

BRITISH DEB

Surprise! Happy Christmas! You didn't tell them did you, Janice?

Everyone rises to hug, say hello. Janice is tipsy.

JANICE

I didn't even remember.

CONTACT WENDY FOR MORE. THANKS FOR READING.