

No Pain, No Gain

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The personification of "opposites attract", EMILY and RYAN (30s) lounge on the couch, content.

Ryan scarfs potato chips - crumbs tumble down his aspiring "Dad Bod" waist.

Emily cradles a tablet like an infant. Despite the hint of love handles, she seems far more fit.

The door BUZZES. The couple exchange looks - perk up.

EMILY

Is that what I think it is?

RYAN

The email said they'd deliver
"sometime between 6AM - 11PM" so it's
sorta in that window. Yeah.

Another BUZZ.

Emily jumps to her feet, like a kid who's just heard reindeer feet on the roof.

EMILY

Don't just sit there, Ryan. Put down
the Pringles. This is soooo cool!

Ryan rocks, does his best to get off the sofa. But he's too sunk in. He ends up rolling to his side. Flails.

On a third attempt, Emily grabs his arm, pulls. Ryan's butt clears the cushion. He dangles off balance - in limbo between straining Emily and the couch.

EMILY

That's why the \$4,000 investment was
so worth it. You know how many pounds
you'll pack on if you live on that
couch the rest of your life?

RYAN

I'm not overweight. It's my knees!

Emily shoots a pointed look across the room at:

An EXERCISE BIKE covered with dust. JACKETS hang from handle bars.

EMILY

That was your excuse then, too.

RYAN

I'm not the only one. When's the last time you went for a ride?

EMILY

Uh, recently? Unlike you, I have a membership at the gym.

RYAN

Don't lie. You haven't gone since COVID hit. I'm the one who wanted to download Pilates couple videos. But you claimed....

(mimics her vice)

Mat work tones, but it's not enough!

Both jump at a KNOCK on the door.

Emily lets go of Ryan - who falls back to the couch.

RYAN

Oooof!

Emily toggles an APP on the tablet. The front door lock releases. CLICK.

As it swings open, an excited Emily helps Ryan to his feet. He grumbles, brushes off potato chip bits.

RYAN

For someone into exercise, you like automating stuff a bit too much.

Emily squeals and claps. Ryan turns to look.

Grimaces as a buff DELIVERY GUY wheels an enormous BOX in.

The label on it reads" "Reflection Whole Body Exercise System 2000: SLIM-INSTALL-DELUXE."

The Delivery Guy waves. He eyes Emily, likes what he sees.

Ryan notices, clears his throat. Delivery Guy gets the drift and course corrects - switching demeanor to polite. He checks an invoice roster.

DELIVERY GUY

This one's got installation included.
Where do you want this bad boy to go?

Emily and Ryan exchange looks. Oooooops! That's something they forgot to discuss!

RYAN

My vote's for the living room.

EMILY

That didn't work for the exercise bike. Did it, hon?

RYAN

Or the treadmill. Or the Bowflex. You've got a point.

EMILY

Both big fat dust collecting no's.

Delivery Guy snickers at the word "fat", tries not to look at Ryan. But watches amused as the couple's debate rolls on.

RYAN

How about the bedroom?

EMILY

Where we won't see it all day, until right before we go to sleep? That's a recipe for self-sabotage. But speaking of recipe... I've got an idea! Why don't we psych ourselves out and put it near the kitchen? That'll be a reminder about the calories we have to burn off?

RYAN

Guilt trips only work if there's real estate. Outside, there's no wall space. And inside - gadgets and counters get in the way. Listen - no rush, let's decide this later?

Delivery Guy arches an eyebrow.

DELIVERY GUY

Uh, the Slim Deluxe is bleeding edge high tech, but it won't install itself. And I got other deliveries to make. It's not like I have all day.

RYAN

Excuse me? 6AM to 11PM is the DEFINITION of "all day"...

EMILY

Ryan, we have to think outside the box.

She lights up, suddenly energized.

EMILY

I know. The bathroom!

RYAN

Wait, what? That little place with a toilet and a shower? There's barely enough room for extra Charmin rolls. You want to stuff a whole exercise system in there, too?

EMILY

No!! Right outside the bathroom. I mean, it's practical. We go in there several times a day. If we cultivate the habit of doing a few reps as we pass by, we'll both get buff in no time! And it's better than reading the paper or Twittering, right?

Delivery Guy thinks it over. Nods.

DELIVERY GUY

Unconventional, but genius.

EMILY

Thanks!

(beams at Ryan)

Admit it - you KNOW that'll work!

RYAN

You really want work out right next to-

Delivery Guy sighs, taps his watch. Ryan rolls his eyes.

RYAN

Fine. Install it there.

EMILY

Yay! This is going to be so much fun!

Delivery Guy appreciates her bouncing, high fives her.

He rolls the box past a scowling Ryan, towards the bathroom and a blank wall...

LATER

No longer undecorated, the wall now sports:

A HUGE reflective monitor. Hydraulic arms sprout from each side with hand grips - good for bench pressing, squats, curls and more.

The screen glows with a logo: Reflection Whole Body Exercise System 2000.

Underneath, a prompt blinks: Input user, Exercise Routine.

Delivery Guy tightens one last screw, steps back and points.

DELIVERY GUY

All done. Congrats on life changing purchase.

RYAN

(grunts)

You might think it is, but past experience shows...

DELIVERY GUY

It even gives you inspirational messages. You know, like "Keep going, no pain no gain!" Your very own spotter, AI style! I got one of these at home. Trust me, it's worth four grand. Way more.

He nods at Emily.

DELIVERY GUY

You're worth it, no?

Slapping an INSTRUCTION MANUAL into Ryan's hands, Delivery Guy blows him off, heads for the door.

RYAN

You're not gonna even give a demo?

DELIVERY GUY

This stuff's a no brainer-

RYAN

(mutters)

Fortunate for you, Steroid Dude...

DELIVERY GUY

Just sign up like you do any membership.

EMILY
(giggles)
I'm the techie in the house. Ryan's
more... old school.

DELIVERY GUY
Then keep it in family mode, and pick
the exercises you want.

RYAN
Which exercises?

DELIVERY GUY
Whatever floats your boat. You've
been to the gym, right?

CLICK - the door shuts. Ryan eyes it, a bit pissed off.

RYAN
No. And Emily hasn't either. Since
the pandemic, so I'm told...

EMILY
Who cares? Now we've got THIS!

Enthused by her "toy", Emily tip-taps on the Reflection's
screen, adds two new usernames.

Tests out a quick bicep curl.

EMILY
The negative resistance is awesome! I
already feel the burn!

RYAN
Honey, buying exercise equipment
always starts OUT good. But once the
novelty wears off, we'll be hanging a
decorative sheet over it. Guaranteed.

EMILY
(pumps out more reps)
No! We bought it. And drilled holes
in the wall. So we're BOTH gonna use
it this time! Pinky swear?

Ryan stares at his glum reflection in the screen.

RYAN
OK. I promise. But I'm starting slow.
Don't expect me to go Schwarzenegger
in one week.

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER.

Holding a PEPSI CAN, Ryan beelines for the bathroom.

On the couch, Emily cradles her tablet - frowns, watches...

Ryan skirt PAST the Reflection 2000 (the glass already covered with dust.)

As he opens the bathroom door, Emily clears her throat.

EMILY

Uh-uh. No cheating, now!

RYAN

But I have to go. Logging in my username takes too much time!

EMILY

You know there's a hand sensor option. You drink too much soda anyway. On New Years, you swore you'd cut that out!

RYAN

Water tastes like... nothing. And not everyone digs Starbucks espresso, Em.

EMILY

Stop stalling, start pumping. One itty bitty curl won't hurt.

RYAN

Later. Pinky swear!

Ryan runs into the bathroom, slams the door.

EMILY

(mutters)

Where have I heard that before?

Glaring from the couch, she waits. Listens with annoyance to Ryan's unseen - and seemingly unending - stream of pee.

Emily sighs, and turns to her tablet. Downloads apps.

Eventually, Ryan emerges. He slips past the machine again. Doing his best to not look guilty, he plops down next to Emily, pats her knee.

RYAN

There - emergency averted. Wanna watch Netflix, honey buns?

He scootches closer, turns on the charm. But gets the cold shoulder from Emily. Nose in her tablet, she snarls.

EMILY

Don't pretend I didn't see you.

RYAN

See me? Gross. The door was closed!

EMILY

No, I mean see you NOT exercising.

RYAN

You can't see something that didn't happen, Em.

EMILY

Don't try to Plato your way out of this! I saw you blow off exercising - again! I knew this was gonna happen.

RYAN

You know, that expensive doorstep has a thirty day return policy.

Ryan perks up. And picks the instruction manual off the coffee table. Emily slaps it dow, crosses her arms.

EMILY

We're keeping it. And adding this.

She shows him the tablet. On it, an Amazon order of some strange device...

RYAN

A digital lock?

EMILY

It syncs with my tablet, via app. It's like a remote control; you can trigger it from anywhere in the apartment!

RYAN

What for?

Emily eyes him, stern.

EMILY

To enforce the rules we BOTH agreed to. From here on in, bathroom breaks shall be earned!

RYAN

You're fucking kidding me.

EMILY
(grins evilly)
I'm so not!

SUPER: WEEK TWO

Emily hovers at the bathroom door - the new digital lock installed. She tests the app on her tablet.

Locks the door. CLICK. Ryan shakes his head, dubious.

RYAN
Talk about authoritarian. You've gone
over to the dark side, sweetie.

EMILY
It's called self-discipline, and it's
good! After awhile, exercising will
be instinct. You won't even remember
the lock's there!

RYAN
I don't know your password. What if
you're not home, and I have to go?

Emily turns, SYNCs her tablet. The Reflection monitor BEEPS.

She grins, grabs the handles - pumps out six bicep curls.

The bathroom door instantly unlocks. CLICK.

RYAN
IT'S gonna control when we can go?

EMILY
Six reps minimum. That's not a
hardship, right?

Ryan flicks a Reflection 2000 handle with his finger.

RYAN
Speak for yourself. Exercising's not
my thing.

SUPER: WEEK THREE

Emily pedals on the cleaned off bike, her tablet streaming
video from the handlebars.

Ryan runs for the bathroom, carrying a POWDERED DONUT
wrapped in paper towel. White dust trails in his wake like
snow. He darts past the Reflection 2000.

No surprise, finds it locked.

Ryan remembers. Grunts. And gently places the donut on the floor (protected by the paper towel, of course.)

Holding out a hand, he presses a palm to the Reflection 2000's screen. Which unlocks the gadget. But also leaves an outline of powdered residue on the glass.

Emily notices, yells his way.

EMILY

Don't forget to clean that when you're done!

RYAN

Yes, Dear.

EMILY

There's electronic safe towelettes in the bathroom-

RYAN

Honey, we've been through this. I gotta actually get IN there first!

Ryan half-heartedly cranks out six military presses at a low weight. The Reflection BEEPS. And...

The bathroom unlocks.

Ryan drops the handles, darts inside. Closes the door.

Pee stream sounds once again announce what he's up to. Emily stops pedaling, waits until Ryan emerges.

She watches as Ryan scoops the donut off the floor. He starts to clean the hand print with the paper towel. Which leaves yet MORE smudges.

Emily tsk-tsks. Points.

EMILY

No, the towelettes!

Ryan droops, heads back into the bathroom. Extracting a towelette, he polishes the machine - glares at his reflection in the murky glass.

RYAN

This BETTER be my surprise Christmas present...

Emily resumes pedaling, calls out.

EMILY

I saw you only lifted 10 pounds. If I can press 20, so can you!

RYAN

The program says I gotta increase reps first.

EMILY

You half-assed it. Don't lie.

She shoots a look at the donut.

EMILY

With all those processed carbs, you should have plenty energy for more.

RYAN

Fine.

He turns his frustration on the machine. That's safer.

RYAN

If you guilt me, Reflection - I'm gonna nickname you Hal, just from spite!

SUPER: Week Four - 24 hours left on the Return Window

In the living room, a sweat clad Emily swings a KETTLEBELL. She goes full throttle, with expert form.

Holding a DIET PEPSI CAN, Ryan hightails for the bathroom.

He "dances" past the Reflection 2000. Tries the door. Of course, it's locked.

RYAN

Fuck!

EMILY

Honey, today's leg day. Just do a few squats, and open sesame! You know the routine.

RYAN

I can't. That's not an option!

EMILY

Sure it is. There's a terrific HIT program that burns your glutes...

Ryan runs back to the couch, grabs Emily's tablet. He pokes buttons desperately, but doesn't know the password.

Emily sets the kettlebell down on a table, stares.

EMILY
What are you doing?

RYAN
Bypassing the system.

EMILY
In my world, that's called cheating.

RYAN
Just tell me the password. Please!

EMILY
Honey, you've come so far. It's
almost a month. Don't burn out now.
Just do the damned squats!

She grabs the tablet - a tug of war ensues.

RYAN
Trust me, that wouldn't be good.

EMILY
The Reflection corrects your form.
Just watch the screen!

Ryan whines, crosses his legs. Realization crosses Emily's
FACE.

RYAN
I don't always have to pee, you know?

EMILY
Oh. Ew. You mean -

Ryan pulls harder on the tablet.

RYAN
Unless you want a bio-hazard zone
next to our \$4,000 "investment",
you'll drop the drill sergeant
routine and unlock the door!

EMILY
Well, if you put it that way...

She lets go of the tablet. Surprised, Ryan drops it.

EMILY
Careful, that's an Ipad Pro!

Emily lunges for the device; accidentally brushes the kettlebell, which falls - right onto the Ipad. CRACK.

EMILY

Shit!!

RYAN

Literally!

The broken tablet sparks. Ryan stares: what to do?

RYAN

I gotta get in there.

EMILY

Not with the app. That's toast.

RYAN

I TOLD you this "incentive" exercising plan was doomed!

EMILY

It's not my fault you went to Taco Bell. You promised to eat clean, but no...

RYAN

Honey, bathroom now. Fight later. Deal?

EMILY

Just do a few quick exercises. Something light. No stress involved.

She watches, alarmed, as Ryan waddle-strides to the Reflection 2000. He palms the sensor.

RYAN

What should I do?

EMILY

No squats for sure. Maybe a bench press?

RYAN

Equal and opposite reaction? No!!!

EMILY

Then Tricep Presses. Anything. Just don't wait. Crank something out!

Ryan grabs the grips. Cords tangle as his desperation escalates. He pushes down.

His eyes grow wide. Horrible NOISES ensue from his stomach. Emily gasps. Covers her eyes so she won't see.

RYAN
I hate to say I told you so!

EMILY
Don't stop now. Push through!

RYAN
Excuse me?!?

EMILY
I mean, with the exercise. You can't get in without six reps. Just do it!

RYAN
Now's not the time for an Adidas commercial, HONEY-

Emily peeks through her fingers - realizes one workaround.

EMILY
Wait. Stop! I could exercise FOR you-

Too late! Ryan pushes again. More noises. Wet SPLATTERS. Emily sees the results (we don't.) GAGS.

Over the sound of vomiting, the door BEEPS. Ryan rushes into the bathroom. Ducks his own reflection in the 2000's screen.

From the closed bathroom, his guilty voice echoes.

RYAN
So much for that return policy.

EMILY
Maybe you were right? Tomorrow we'll download that Pilates video. Something gentle, with an absorbent mat.

RYAN
Too late!!

Emily groans. Gags...

As the Reflection 2000 beeps and text scrolls: "It seems you're having problems with the exercise. No pain no gain. Try again!"

FINAL FADE OUT: