

FADE IN

EXT. SHARED BACKYARD - DAY

A SCREEN DOOR SLAPS shut. The yard is sparse, concrete, no grass. Near the door, a single beach chair leans against the peeling wall. In the corner -- in a tiny raised-bed garden, a single sunflower tries to grow.

Behind the door an INAUDIBLE HEATED DISCUSSION.

On the other side of the yard, MRS. SMITH(66 - African American), sneaks out a second screen door wearing a floral apron. She slowly steps closer to the first screen door to listen in.

HEATED DISCUSSION becomes audible. BOBBY(34) talks to his father, ROBERT (66).

BOBBY (O.S.)

I mean Jesus, Dad. It's a disaster zone in here. You can't keep living like this.

(beat -- yells)

And can you put some pants on?

Surrounding houses hover closely -- other yards against other yards, all nicer than this yard. Mrs. Smith chuckles.

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Robert stands at the stove, wearing only tighty-whities, and drinks coffee from a tin cup. Bobby wears a shirt and tie -- just out of the office. The cabinets over the stove show previous fire damage.

ROBERT

You know I'm not deaf, right?

BOBBY

You're not wearing any pants.

ROBERT

I don't go naked in your house. You don't go naked in mine -- and society runs.

BOBBY

Dad.

ROBERT

What?

(beat - suspiciously eyes
the window)

That you who sent the white van
I've been seeing?

Eggs burn and smoke on the stove.

BOBBY

Oh Christ. What van?

(beat)

And where's the fire extinguisher I
got you?

Robert grabs a pair of pajama pants from the kitchen chair
and puts them on.

Bobby shuts the eggs.

ROBERT

I've got to water my garden.

BOBBY

So pants, got it. Good -- social
pact.

ROBERT

I don't want to dazzle the ladies.

BOBBY

(laughs)

Look, Dad I just came to check in
on you -- make sure you're alright.

ROBERT

Lil old me? You didn't check on me
when I was in 'Nam, did you?

BOBBY

I wasn't even born.

ROBERT

And somehow I survived. Good for
me.

Robert opens the back door -- stops and turns back.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(softly)

Why don't you bring the kid
anymore, Bobby?

BOBBY
 (softly)
 Dad.
 (beat)
 I never know what I'm going to see
 when I get here.

ROBERT
 Your future.
 (exiting)
 Soak it in.

EXT. SHARED BACKYARD - DAY

Robert enters and the SCREEN DOOR SLAPS behind him.

Mrs. Smith's SCREEN DOOR SLAPS SHUT an instant after. Robert
 eye's her door.

ROBERT
 An audience!

Robert laughs. He grabs a rusty watering can and overwaters
 the sunflower.

INT. MRS. SMITH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mrs. Smith sleeps on her couch with a book on her chest. She
 SNORES. Her SCREEN DOOR CREAKS OPENS -- VOICES GIGGLE. She
 opens one eye.

EXT. SHARED BACKYARD - MRS. SMITH'S DOOR - NIGHT

JOHNNY (16), wears a mask and carries a can of shaving cream.
 He sprays Mrs. Smith's door. Behind Johnny, ANOTHER BOY
 sprays her yard.

The door swings open. Mrs. Smith stands, shotgun pointed at
 Johnny.

MRS. SMITH
 You with UPS mother fucker?

The boys run towards the back fence. Mrs. Smith fires into
 the air. The boys freeze.

MRS. SMITH (CONT'D)
 The next one goes into your skinny
 white ass.

Robert comes running out into the yard in his tighty-whities.

ROBERT
What the fuck?

Mrs. Smith eyes Robert and shakes her head. The shotgun turns towards him. The boys inch away.

Robert slowly pushes the barrel back towards the boys.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Keep your eyes on the prize.
(to Johnny)
Look over here son.

Johnny turns to Robert.

JOHNNY
Come on, we were just screwing
around-

ROBERT
Pull up that mask. I know you --
your mother know you're over here?

JOHNNY
Your mother know you're friends
with -- that?

ROBERT
I don't have any friends.

JOHNNY
(to Robert)
I'm sorry, man, but she don't
belong here.

Robert Groans and narrows his eyes.

ROBERT
Don't apologize to me. Look at her
you dumb shit.

MRS. SMITH
Save your words.
(beat - to Robert)
Hold this.

Mrs. Smith hands Robert the shotgun and approaches the boys.

OTHER BOY
(backing away)
Ma'am-

MRS. SMITH
Shut up.

Mrs. Smith grabs the can of shaving cream and sprays Johnny's face.

MRS. SMITH (CONT'D)
There that's better.

The boys run and hop the fence. Mrs. Smith takes her shotgun from Robert and hands him the shaving cream.

MRS. SMITH (CONT'D)
You don't have any friends?
(beat)
That was the best you could do?

Robert smiles, embarrassed. Mrs. Smith goes inside. Robert stares at the door for a few seconds.

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT/FRONT PORCH - NEXT MORNING

A KNOCK on the door. Robert exits his bathroom brushing his teeth. He swings the door open.

ROBERT
What now?

HECTOR (28), slightly overweight, wears a shirt and tie. A badge hangs on his neck. A white van passes slowly, takes a U-turn in front of the house, and parks up the block.

HECTOR
(brightly)
Hello Sir, my name is Hector.
I'm with Social Serv-

ROBERT
-Congratulations.

Robert slams the door and heads towards the back yard.

Another KNOCK.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Go home Hector.

EXT. SHARED BACKYARD - DAY

Robert enters -- crosses over to Mrs. Smith's door and knocks gently.

Mrs. Smith opens the door.

MRS. SMITH

You lost?

ROBERT

I was wondering... If I could possibly exit through your front door.

MRS. SMITH

You what now?

ROBERT

Can I go out your front door? Mine is currently blocked.

MRS. SMITH

(reluctantly opens door)

Don't touch anything.

(muttering)

Goddamn Grand Central Station.

INT. MRS. SMITH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Robert enters and walks through the apartment. The kitchen table is lined with bills. More late notices and eviction letters block the front door. Robert kneels down and shovels them out of the way to open the door.

MRS. SMITH

Go on. Keep Movin'.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Hector stands by Robert's front door trying to listen.

HECTOR

Sir?

(beat)

I should have been a DJ.

Robert exits a few feet from Hector. Hector half raises his head -- not noticing Robert.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Hello Sir, good afternoon.

ROBERT

(grinning)

Yep.

Robert leaves. Hector KNOCKS again.

INT. MRS. SMITH'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Mrs. Smith peaks through her blinds into the yard. Robert waters his sunflower and goes out of sight towards his door.

Mrs. Smith opens her back door -- Robert comes back into sight. Mrs. Smith retreats inside and shuts her door.

EXT. SHARED BACKYARD - DAY

Robert lights a cigarette and begins a series of stretches. The cigarette dangles from his lips. He tosses the cigarette and drops to push up position. He does three push ups, drops to his chest then rolls over and stares at the sky.

INT. MRS. SMITH'S APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Mrs. Smith peaks through the blinds into the empty yard. She carries a pitcher of iced tea and a glass into the yard.

EXT. SHARED BACKYARD - DAY

Mrs. Smith sets the tea on a small table by her window and pours. She sits and drinks.

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON - DREAMY

Robert sleeps on the couch.

A LOUD SERIES OF KNOCKS on the front door. Robert startles, confused and worried. He rolls off the couch and army crawls across the living room.

Robert sits up against a wall shielding himself from the front door. He peaks his head around the corner and looks for enemies.

ROBERT
(shouting)
Stay back.

Robert takes several dirty drinking glasses from a nearby table and lines them up by his side.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I've got live ones.

The front door slowly opens and Hector peaks in.

HECTOR
Mr. Mancusco? The door is-

Robert hurls a glass at the door like a grenade and it shatters onto the floor. Hector retreats.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
Sir? Are you okay in there?

ROBERT
Who are you with?

Hector peaks his head in.

HECTOR
Sir, I am with Social Services. Are you okay? Something broke.

ROBERT
Fuck off. Do not cross the line.

Robert hurls another glass -- a misfire hits the wall and shatters across the rug.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
God dammit.

INT. MRS. SMITH'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Smith listens -- ear against the wall.

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Robert's eyes dart around the apartment. He spots his old army helmet and crawls back along the rug. The glass cuts into his arms. He gets to the opposite wall, grabs the helmet and throws it on.

HECTOR
Sir. I'm coming in.

ROBERT
You'll get nothing out of me.

Robert gets to his feet as Hector opens the door.

HECTOR
I just need to ensure you are okay
or I gotta call-

Robert charges Hector.

ROBERT
YELLOW DEVIL!

Hector backs away and closes the door as Robert slams his shoulder into it. Robert hops on one foot and then the other -
- the glass stabs at his feet.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
God Dammit.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - LATE AFTERNOON

Hector dials 911.

EXT. SHARED BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

Robert limps out his back door, helmet on. Mrs. Smith opens her back door.

MRS. SMITH
Psst. Hey over here. Get in.

INT. MRS. SMITH'S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

Mrs. Smith leads Robert to the bathroom.

BATHROOM

Robert sits on the toilet -- confused.

MRS. SMITH
You ok?

ROBERT
(lost in thought)
Yeah. I just...

Robert's feet bleed.

MRS. SMITH
Well? Let's hear it.

Mrs. Smith cleans and bandages Robert's foot.

ROBERT
They were breaking past the
defensive perimeter, infiltrating
the line, but-
(beat)
(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I was throwing glasses. Does that seem right?

MRS. SMITH

No, but you're just a little cloudy. Don't worry I used to be a nurse. You remember?

SIRENS start low and rise. Robert eyes Mrs. Smith suspiciously.

MRS. SMITH (CONT'D)

Well they'll be coming for me too soon, I guess. With all these goddam bills.

Robert smiles and taps his helmet and smiles.

ROBERT

Don't worry, I'll have you covered next time.

Sirens stop outside. LOUD KNOCKING next door. Mrs. Smith gets up and slowly puts her ear back to the wall.

A beat.

MRS. SMITH

They just got in.

Robert limps over and puts his ear to the wall.

ROBERT

You got a peep hole in here too?

Police KNOCK on Mrs. Smith's front door. Mrs. Smith startles, pushes Robert back into the bathroom, and goes to the door.

FRONT DOOR

Hector and a POLICEMAN stand at the door. Behind them the two men from the white van lean against the van smoking. Mrs. Smith cracks the door open.

POLICEMAN

Ma'am, we're looking for your neighbor.

MRS. SMITH

Why would that old bag of dust be here?

BATHROOM

Robert stands up and limps around the bathroom.

POLICEMAN (O.S.)
We just want to check he's alright.

MRS. SMITH (O.S.)
That guy's not *alright*, but he
ain't in here neither.

Robert peaks into the medicine cabinet. He finds and sprays a lavender perfume bottle and sniffs the air happily.

FRONT DOOR

POLICEMAN
Ok thanks Ma'am. Sorry to-

MRS. SMITH
(smirking)
-Mm-hmm.

Mrs. Smith shuts the door.

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

A series of ropes crisscross the room blocking the front door and window. Robert ties a knot around a heat pipe and runs the rope across the hall way.

VOICES outside approach Robert's door. He looks up.

A KNOCK.

Robert slips over to the window and peaks through the blinds. Outside Bobby and Robert's granddaughter, EMMA (9) stand at the door.

ROBERT
Shit.

EMMA (O.S.)
(through the door)
Poppa?

ROBERT
Sunflower? That you?

BOBBY (O.S.)
Dad? Open up. You alright?

EMMA (O.S.)
Yeah Poppa, lemme in.

Robert opens the door a bit to reveal Bobby and Emma. The door gets stuck on the ropes.

ROBERT
(embarrassed -- to Bobby)
Sorry, I got things a bit tied up here.

Emma pushes through the gap and into Robert's apartment. They hug.

BOBBY (trying to stop her) Emma!	Hey kiddo!	ROBERT (CONT'D)
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BOBBY (CONT'D)
Dad. Open up.

ROBERT
(sarcastically)
Sorry kid, told ya it's tied up in here.

Robert eyes the white van parked outside. Two men sit in the front seat. Robert looks at Bobby. Bobby takes a quick glance behind him.

Bobby and Robert struggle with the door.

BOBBY
Em! Don't touch anything in there.
(beat)
Dad, let me in.

LIVING ROOM

Furniture is piled up almost to the ceiling -- forming a barricade. At the top of the heap, Robert's old army helmet sits on top of a lamp, like a shade.

EMMA
Woah. It's like a fort in here.

Emma climbs on the furniture. Robert struggles at the door.

ROBERT
Yeah. I'm hiding out.

Emma climbs unsteadily higher -- reaching for the helmet. Robert finally gets the door shut and locks a dead bolt.

EMMA

I like to hide out too.

Bobby BANGS on the door. Emma grabs the helmet with her fingertips and starts to fall. Robert grabs her just in time and swings her into the air. They laugh.

Emma puts the helmet on. Bobby BANGS again.

ROBERT

At your age, I'd hide out in anything -- a box, a closet. Good to be alone sometimes, you know?

EMMA

That why you won't let daddy in?

Robert rises an eyebrow and nods.

EMMA (CONT'D)

But you let me in.

ROBERT

I'm a good judge of character.

Emma giggles.

EMMA

Daddy says you need some help or something.

ROBERT

Who me? Nah, I'm fine.

(beat)

Hey, I want you to see something.

EXT. SHARED BACKYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Robert and Emma enter.

ROBERT

See there, Sunflower? That's for you.

EMMA

Wow! Cool.

ROBERT

Did I ever tell you why they're called sunflowers?

EMMA
I know, I know. It's cause they
follow the sun.

ROBERT
That's right. Just like you and me,
right?

EMMA
Right.

ROBERT
Come on.

They go back inside.

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Emma takes Robert's hand as he walks her to the front door. Robert opens the door, kisses Emma's hand and squeezes her out to Bobby.

ROBERT
(to Emma)
Love you kiddo.
(to Bobby)
Nice try Bobby.

He slams the door.

BOBBY (O.S.)
You have to come out someday.

ROBERT
Yeah I know, but not today.

EXT. SHARED BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

Mrs. Smith enters with a pitcher of iced tea and two glasses.

Robert peaks through his blinds, wearing his army helmet. He comes out, inspects the perimeter of the yard, and approaches Mrs. Smith.

ROBERT
Any sign of trouble?

MRS. SMITH
Not today.

Mrs. Smith pours a second tea. Robert takes his helmet off and sits. They look off in an easy silence.