

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBS - NIGHT

It's a nice little neighborhood, with clean homes and tended lawns.

All's peace and quiet until...

From one immaculate home...

Come screams as a father, JOHN, throws out his daughter Juliette's ne'er-do-well boyfriend, FREDDIE.

JULIETTE (O.S.)
(pleading scream)
Daddy!

JOHN (O.S.)
(furious)
Get out! Get out of my house you greasy looking--!

JULIETTE (O.S.)
Daddy, no! Mom!

Juliette's mother, GWENDA, pleads.

GWENDA (O.S.)
John--

JOHN (O.S.)
I!

The door hauls open.

JOHN (O.S.)
Said!

Freddie, a grub, grease ball looser, stumbles out.

JOHN (O.S.)
Out!

JULIETTE (O.S.)
Daddy!

A lamp shatters against the door.

Freddie scrambles OFF FRAME.

JULIETTE (O.S.)
Daddy!

John runs out next, in bathrobe, boxers and t-shirt, carrying a vase, a shot gun, and a box of shells. He stops to throw the vase.

Freddie trips leaping the hedge. The vase whooshes overhead.

SFX: VASE SHATTERS.

John drops the box, bumbles for shells, and runs OFF FRAME.

SFX: CAR DOOR OPENS AND SLAMS.

Juliette stops in the door, screaming. Sixteenish, she's seen Romeo and Juliette WAY too many times, and her performance is so way melodramatic you'd think she was in a first time audition.

SFX: CAR ENGINE ROARS.

JULIETTE
Daddy! Daddy no! No! Freddie!
Freddie!

Gwenda rushes past Juliette.

GWENDA
John!

John racks a round and tracks SQUEALING TIRES.

GWENDA
John, no!

Gwenda shoves the barrel up.

The blast takes a tree limb as the car rounds the corner.

Juliette bounces on tight feet, fluttering wrists and choking on sobs.

JULIETTE
Freddie eeeee! Freddie eeeeeee!

Juliette bawls after the FADING ENGINE, over the top and so insanelly melodramatic.

Gwenda wrestles the gun from John.

GWENDA
I'm calling the police.

She storms into the house.

John turns his wrath on Juliette.

JOHN
I forbid you to see that. That.
Creature again. Ever.

Juliette's shrieks soar another pitch.

JULIETTE
He's not. He's a good person!

JOHN
Ever! You hear me? He's a no-
hoper.

JULIETTE
He's not. He has dreams. Plans.

JOHN
Not for my daughter, he doesn't!

JULIETTE
I love him!

JOHN
Never say that! Ever! You hear
me? Ever!

Juliette wails like she's being tortured.

JULIETTE
I love him! I love him! I love
him and we'll run away!

JOHN
As long as you are not married you
are my daughter. He has no legal
say--

JULIETTE
Then we'll get married! We'll get
married and you can't stop us!

She sobs past her father.

JULIETTE
(fading)
Freddie! Freddiiiiie.

John waits.

And waits.

Then listens.

And finally sags in relief.

JOHN
Gaoaaaah.

SFX: RUSTLING BUSHES.

John turns.

JOHN
You okay?

Freddie fumbles through the bushes, fighting clingy branches.

John checks Freddie with rough, fatherish concern.

JOHN
Didn't nick you anywhere?

A bit uncomfortable and embarrassed, Freddie makes a dry joke.

FREDDIE
Sorry, sir. No cigar.

John laughs, bats Freddie clean.

FREDDIE
(re: Juliette)
You don't think. Maybe. Ought to?

GWENDA (O. S.)
Oh.

Both turn as Gwenda approaches

GWENDA
Let the little drama queen'll get over it.

John huffs agreement.

Freddie seems the only one concerned.

FREDDIE
Yeah, but. I wish I didn't have to do--

John clamps a counseling hand on Freddie's shoulder.

JOHN
Trust us, son. If she had a clue?

GWENDA
That we like you?

John and Gwenda scoff and roll tired eyes of agreement.

Freddie looks back and forth between the two schemers, then sighs and nods acquiescence.

JOHN
So. How's work?

FREDDIE
Great sir, thank you for asking. I made shift change supervisor.

JOHN
Yeah? Raise?

FREDDIE
No, not really. But I need to know the position, all of them, if I expect to get a franchise.

John stares at Freddie like he's just been shot.

Freddie wonders if he said something wrong.

FREDDIE
Sir--

John mashes Freddie in a bear hug, like he were the son he always wanted.

Gwenda puts a hand to mouth. Tears well, and her voice wobbles as she speaks to John.

GWENDA
And you said there's no hope.

John shudders a nod, struggling to hold back tears and sobs.

Freddie's eyes shift back and forth. He's getting a bit uncomfortable with the mauling.

FREDDIE
Um? Sir?

GWENDA
(gently)
John.

John nods, reluctantly releasing Freddie. Embarrassed, tries to mash eyes dry.

Gwenda scowls around for nosy neighbors.

GWENDA
We better get inside. Before
someone sees.

John and Gwenda escort Freddie like they're taking a spy into
hiding.

GWENDA
So. How's your mother?

FREDDIE
Fine, Mrs. A. Fine.

GWENDA
I'll make a sandwich while you
clean up.

FREDDIE
Thanks, Mrs. A. Mr. A. I come
home like this my folks'll kill me.

John laughs, clamping Freddie and closing the door.

FADE OUT.