

TEDDY BEAR

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FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

A large removal truck pulls up.

A couple of MEN jump out and open the back; it's full of furniture and boxed possessions.

An OLDER MAN joins them at the back of the truck, reaches in and pulls out a teddy bear wrapped in rope.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

A small bungalow, number seven, a little run down but otherwise unremarkable.

Family houses line both sides of the street.

A milk van drives down the road, stopping occasionally for the MILKMAN to deliver.

He stops at the number seven, seeing lights on and movement behind the curtains.

He grabs a pen and some paper, scribbles on it and jumps down.

He opens the gate and walks up the path to the front door, pops the note through the letterbox.

He turns to leave, but something catches his eye.

Hanging from the porch eaves is a teddy bear, a bit worn, but cute still.

MILKMAN

What the...

He shakes his head and gets on with his rounds.

INT. UNTIDY KITCHEN - DAY

JANET BOND, late 20s but still trying to dress like a trendy teen, holds court before her sycophantic friends.

JANET

It's bloody odd.

DEVON MICKELS, early 20s, named after a porn star but no other similarities, stuffs a cake into her doughy face.

DEVON
(through cake)
Number seven? He moved in during
the night too.

HOLLY TRICKETT, early 20s, a horse in human form but talks like a chipmunk.

HOLLY
Foreign I hear.

They all nod.

Save one, PAT STROVER, early 30s, tired and weary, smoking a vape.

She shakes her head.

JANET
What, you don't think it's odd?

PAT
No.

She taps the vape, instinct; there's no ash to flick off.

Devon and Holly look expectantly at Janet, not used to anyone disagreeing with her.

JANET
No? But, but...

Janet doesn't have the intellect to form a coherent rebuttal.

PAT
He could have got delayed and been
forced to move in at night.

Devon and Holly look back to Janet, enthralled by the verbal tennis.

JANET
He's foreign, though.

Casual racism stated, Janet sits back in her chair, argument won.

Pat leans in to respond.

PAT
That's such bullshit.

JANET
(flustered)
No, he is, John knows the estate agent.

PAT
I'm sure he is, I'm calling bullshit on it mattering.

Devon and Holly sit open mouthed.

JANET
But --

PAT
Where's John from?

JANET
That's not import --

HOLLY
Australia.

Janet sends her a withering look.

PAT
Shit, another bloody foreigner!

JANET
But, he's not proper foreign, he speaks English.

PAT
Almost.

Devon and Holly laugh despite themselves.

JANET
Whatever.

Janet sits forward, leaning in for the coup de grace.

JANET
But what about the teddy?

EXT. NUMBER SEVEN - DAY

The four women stand outside shuffling their feet.

PAT
It was your idea, you do it.

JANET
Probably best it's someone maturer.

Devon giggles.

PAT
Four years between us you cheeky
cow.

Janet stands defiant.

PAT
But, if you are too scared.

She turns on her heels and marches down the path before
Janet has time to retort.

She knocks on the door, waits.

The door opens a crack.

PAT
Hi, I'm the welcoming committee.

The door swings wider and Pat enters.

The door shuts.

DEVON
Shit, what if he is?

HOLLY
A paedo?

Devon nods.

JANET
Won't be interested in Pat then.

INT. UNTIDY KITCHEN - DAY

Janet stands by the kettle.

Devon and Holly back in their seats.

DEVON
What do we do?

HOLLY
Should we call the police?

JANET
And say what?

Silence.

Devon fiddles with her nails.

DEVON
Any more cake?

JANET
No.

HOLLY
We could go back, rescue her.

PAT (O.C.)
Rescue who?

Janet drops her spoon theatrically.

DEVON
We were getting worried.

Pat enters the kitchen and sits.

HOLLY
So?

Pat smiles.

PAT
What?

JANET
Fucks sake Pat, what's he like.

Pat's smile widens.

PAT
Alfred? Oh, he's lovely.

HOLLY
Alfred?

Janet nods.

DEVON
That's not very foreign.

PAT
He's definitely foreign. Albanian,
refugee.

Janet's face sours.

JANET
Refugee?

PAT
Not recently, years ago.

HOLLY
Still...

Pat laughs.

JANET
(cold)
What's funny?

PAT
You three, you have him pegged as
an undesirable foreigner and a
paedophile.

HOLLY
So?

DEVON
(indignant)
We've all got kids.

PAT
No, what you've got is small minds
and too much time on your hands.

Janet starts to reply.

PAT
He's a lovely old man, polite, well
mannered, speaks better English
than John and moved here for peace
and quiet.

DEVON
Yeah, but the teddy.

EXT. NUMBER SEVEN - NIGHT

Devon stands outside the house, looks up at the teddy.

At her side, EBONY, six, bored and cold.

EBONY
Urgh, it's all old and dirty.

DEVON
Exactly, so there's no need to ever
go in there.

EBONY
We play in the garden sometimes.

DEVON
Not anymore, someone lives there
now.

EBONY
They might not mind.

Devon turns her daughter around and drops to her haunches,
locks her in an eye to eye stare.

DEVON
Mummy means it, never go in there,
ever. Do you understand?

Ebony nods, serious face on.

CREAK.

The door of number seven opens.

ALFRED (O.C.)
Someone there?

Devon grabs her daughters hand and scurries away.

ALFRED (O.C.)
Come back anytime.

INT. UNTIDY KITCHEN - DAY

Janet sits with JOHN, 40s, once beach tanned handsome but
now going to seed.

JOHN
So?

JANET
What do you mean, so? Weren't you
listening?

John shovels some food into his mouth. Holds His hand up to indicate he'll answer in a moment.

Janet waits, frown darkening her face.

JOHN
Not all old men are kiddie
fiddlers.

JANET
We need to keep Ben away.

JOHN
Thought Pat said he was okay?

JANET
What would she know?

It wasn't a question.

JOHN
Okay, it's not like he's out of
your sight normally.

JANET
What does that mean?

JOHN
Nothing.

JANET
You think I mollycoddle him?

John shovels more food in, holds his hand up again.

Janet fumes as she waits.

He finishes swallowing.

JANET
Well?

JOHN
Yes, I do, and the cotton wool
agrees.

EXT. BEN'S HOUSE - DAY

BEN, seven, throws a ball across the street to Ebony, she's not expected to catch it, they're playing Curby.

The ball drops just short of the curb, rolls to Ebony.

EBONY

Nearly.

She throws the ball back; it hits the curb.

BEN

Again, wow.

Ebony blushes.

Janet's head appears from behind the garden hedge.

JANET

I'm just going in the house to put
the dinner on. You two okay out
here for five mins?

BEN

It's fine Mum, we're not babies.

Janet laughs.

JANET

Okay, come inside if...

She looks down the street to number seven.

JANET

If you need to.

BEN

Mum!

JANET

I know, I just...

She turns and heads inside.

EBONY

Your go.

Ben picks up the ball and fires it over again. Misses the
curb yet again.

Ebony grabs it and throws it.

Curb again.

BEN

(exasperated)
Not again.

Ben hurls the ball with all his might.

His aim, not great to start with, is hampered by the anger in the throw. The ball hits the wall behind Ebony and spoons up into the air, flying high and to the side.

It lands in number seven's garden.

BEN

No!

EBONY

What shall we do now?

BEN

I'm gonna get my ball back.

EBONY

Mum said I'm not allowed in that garden.

BEN

So? I'll get it myself.

EBONY

You should wait for your Mum.

BEN

I can get a stupid ball.

He strides towards the gate.

BEN

You're just a scaredy cat.

Ebony shrugs, stays exactly where she is.

Ben huffs and pushes the gate open.

Ebony sits down on the curb and waits.

INT. UNTIDY KITCHEN - DAY

Janet clatters pots and pans onto the cooker.

Her mobile is tucked under her chin as she multi-tasks.

JANET

I don't care about your rules. I want to know if he's on the register?

BEAT

JANET
That's ridiculous, I pay my taxes,
you should tell me.

BEAT

JANET
For fucks --

She throws her phone onto the counter.

JANET
Idiot.

EXT. NUMBER SEVEN'S REAR GARDEN - DAY

ALFRED, 70s, sits at a small garden table and sips iced tea from a tall glass. He grabs a crisp from the large bowl in front of him, chews and then washes it down with more tea.

He wears a grass stained vest, damp with sweat from gardening exertions.

Against the hedge are a spade, a hoe and a couple of bags of weeds.

Ben 'ahems' from behind him.

Alfred turns to Ben and smiles.

ALFRED
Oh, hello there and who might you
be?

Alfred has an accent, but it's softened over the years.

Ben stares open jawed, not at the accent, but at the crescent moon shaped birthmark on his cheek.

Alfred tries again, enunciating.

ALFRED
Who, are, you?

Ben finds his voice.

BEN
I'm Ben from over there.

He waves his arm over the hedge.

BEN
I think my ball went over there.

He gestures some more.

ALFRED
Well, Ben from over there... It is
very nice to meet you over here.

Alfred holds his hand out to shake.

Ben looks at it, torn.

ALFRED
I don't bite.

BEN
Mum said... about strangers.

Alfred chuckles.

ALFRED
Good for her. But I'm not really a
stranger, I'm your new neighbour,
you'll see me all the time.

Ben ponders.

He reaches, takes Alfred's hand and shakes tentatively.

ALFRED
See, we've shaken now, not
strangers at all.

Ben grins.

ALFRED
So a ball you say?

Ben glances at the table, and the large bowl of crisps.

ALFRED
Hungry?

Ben shakes his head unconvincingly.

ALFRED
It's okay; you can have one.

Ben looks at Alfred once more; he nods.

Ben takes a crisp, holds it a moment under his nose to test
the smell, can't place it.

Takes a bite.

A look of pleasure crosses his face.

ALFRED

Good?

Ben nods enthusiastically.

ALFRED

Tzatziki flavour, I have to import them.

Ben finishes chewing and swallows, glances at the bowl again.

Alfred laughs.

ALFRED

Help yourself.

Ben grabs a handful and shoves them into his mouth.

He chews, then his eyes go wide in panic.

EXT. BEN'S HOUSE - DAY

Janet walks onto the street.

JANET

Grub's up --

No Ben, just Ebony sat on the curb.

JANET

Where's Ben?

Ebony points to number seven.

JANET

(panicked)

What?

EBONY

He's getting his ball.

Janet starts for the gate.

JANET

When'd he go in?

EBONY
Dunno, five minutes, maybe ten...

Janet runs.

EXT. NUMBER SEVEN'S REAR GARDEN - DAY

Ben splutters, eyes bulge, cheeks turn red - he's choking.

Alfred moves quickly, slaps him on the back.

Ben splutters some more, but not enough to dislodge the crisp stuck in his throat.

Alfred acts on instinct and spins Ben around, grabs him under the rib cage and yanks hard, again, again.

EXT. PATH TO THE SIDE OF NUMBER SEVEN'S GARDEN - DAY

Janet slows pace as she reaches the corner.

The sounds of GASPING, PAIN, STRUGGLING.

Janet steps round the corner.

EXT. NUMBER SEVEN'S REAR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Alfred has Ben over the table; he jerks hard trying to dislodge the crisp and save the boy.

Not what Janet see's at all, out of context her worst fears have come true.

She picks up the spade, charges Alfred.

With a primal SCREAM, she smashes the spade into his skull.

Alfred yanks one last time as the spade connects; crisps fly out of Ben's mouth, and he breathes a massive gulp of air.

Alfred turns, mouth a wide O, blood trickling down his face.

Janet swings again, blade of the spade into his nose.

Alfred drops to his knees, blood covers his face.

She swings again.

BEN
No, Mum, no!

The third blow sends Alfred to the floor, dead?
 Janet holds the spade over him, ready to go again.
 Her face contorted into a triumphant smile, spatters of
 blood dot her skin.

EXT. NUMBER SEVEN'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

A smarmy ESTATE AGENT stands by the door, keys in hand.
 A YOUNG COUPLE wait.

YOUNG WOMAN
 What's that?

She points to the teddy bear still hanging from the porch.

ESTATE AGENT
 Ah, yes... the previous occupier
 was from Eastern Europe.

YOUNG MAN
 And?

The Estate Agent shuffles uncomfortably.

ESTATE AGENT
 It's meant to ward off evil.

He swings the door open and ushers the couple inside.

ESTATE AGENT
 (quietly)
 Doesn't always work.

He enters the house and pulls the door shut.

FADE OUT:

THE END