

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

VARIOUS SHOTS of an upscale suburban neighborhood on a hazy, sweltering August morning...

An old dog lies sprawled and sleeping on his front porch, already knocked out by the heat.

A sprinkler squeaks and swirls, wetting down a burnt out lawn...

Dousing the vintage Big Wheels that's been left tossed in the yard...

A desperate looking mother drives a '70s family van packed with hyper kids to day camp...

Yellow jackets swarm their nest high in the eaves of a garage beneath the TV antenna...

A WIDE ESTABLISHING SHOT of the neighborhood shows us that all the rooftops have antennas.

INSERT TEXT: "1977.... New Jersey"

MUSIC: faintly at first, the whistling theme from Sergio Leone's "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" played through tinny, toneless speakers.

In a LONG SHOT reminiscent of a classic spaghetti western, we see, through the heat shimmering off the asphalt, A MAN approaching, walking alone down the street.

THE MUSIC increases in volume and intensity...

As we CUT DIRECTLY to an EXTREME CLOSE-UP (also harkening to Leone) of a swarthy, sweat dripping face, his eyes concealed by dark glasses.

A WIDER SHOT REVEALS him to be... in his late 30s/early 40s, dark haired and chunky, wearing Bermuda shorts, white socks, comfortable shoes, a laminated identity card, and a lightweight pith helmet. He is a Public Service water meter reader. His name is WALTER.

He stops, flips up his sunglasses, studies his clipboard. Earphones connect to the transistor radio clipped to his belt. That is the source of...

The music, which ends, and is immediately followed by the caffeinated rant of a morning DISK JOCKEY.

VOICE OF DISK JOCKEY
Good, Bad, and Ugly, and it's gonna
get ugly out there today. Weatherman
says it'll hit one hundred degrees.

WALTER
Shit.

VOICE OF DISK JOCKEY
Which brings us to our favorite
sponsor...

SEGUES into a recorded ad...

VOICE OF JUNGLE BOB
(a Tarzan-like jungle
man)
Hi, this Jungle Bob. Summer here!
Time to float in pool like hippo.
Ahhhhhhh...

Walter keeps walking, mouthing Bob's words to himself (He's
heard this add a hundred times.)

WALTER & JUNGLE BOB
Cool off wife. Wrestle crocodile.
Be happy!

Walter enters a yard, walking past the old dog who woofs
half heartedly at him. Jungle Bob continues throughout...

VOICE OF JUNGLE BOB
Oh! No got pool in backyard? No
problem...

WALTER
Hey, killer.

VOICE OF JUNGLE BOB
You come visit Jungle Bob's Pools,
Route 46 in Totowa next to Shoe
Town...

Walter walks around the side of the house.

VOICE OF JUNGLE BOB (CONT'D)
Big pool. Little pool...

WALTER
(calling out)
Public Service!

VOICE OF JUNGLE BOB
Bob gottum. You gettem!

WALTER & JUNGLE BOB

Ooga-nooga!

The ***sound of the radio cuts out*** as Walter disappears around the side of the house...

CAMERA SWINGS across the street...

To the nicest house on the block.

ANGLE ON -

A small basement window.

CUT TO:

INT. REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is cool and dark, illuminated only by the light streaming in through the window.

We see dust swirling in the sunlight.

CAMERA EXPLORES THE ROOM, a classic mid/late twentieth century rec room with a tropical theme. Bamboo furniture. A nice bar with stools. A Beatles "HELP" poster. An old black and white movie still of Johnny Weissmueller as Tarzan. A stuffed toy monkey sits in a bean bag chair, gazing at the blank screen of a high end mid '70s television.

A light blanket covers someone on the couch. We see...

A PRETTY BARE FOOT sticking out from under the blanket.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BATH - CONTINUOUS

ROBERT, pushing forty, athletic and very good looking, studies himself in the mirror. New wrinkles. Mid-life is here.

He sighs, sucks it up, switches on his electric razor, and shaves.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The foot moves. The blanket stirs and moans.

CONNIE pulls the blanket from her face, emerging from a long, troubled night. In her late thirties, she's still very pretty, even beautiful, but very depressed.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Robert dresses efficiently. He looks in his closet for a clean dress shirt... but can't find one.

ROBERT
God damn it.

He sees yesterday's shirt tossed on a chair, sniffs it--it's acceptable--puts it on.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The monkey watches the blank TV screen...

As Connie, the blanket wrapped tightly around her, shuffles around, hunting for breakfast...

She finds a Coke can, shakes it to see if there's anything left in it... There is. She goes to the bar, retrieves an almost finished bag of Fritos.

CUT TO:

UPSTAIRS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Robert, dressed in a light summer suit, strides purposefully down the hall.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie, miserable, sits on the couch, munching a breakfast of stale chips and dead coke. She hears *heavy footsteps* crossing the floor above. She stops, listens.

CUT TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robert opens the breadbox. There's nothing in it but a couple of empty (except for the heels) bread bags. He opens the refrigerator. Desolation. He opens the milk carton, sniffs it, makes a face.

ROBERT
Jesus.
(dumps it down the
sink)

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie, listening...

CUT BACK TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robert stands at the closed door to the basement stairs,
also listening... Beat.

ROBERT

Connie?

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She doesn't respond.

CUT BACK TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ROBERT

Con!

No response... but he knows she's down there.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie just sits there, as we hear the door open.

The overhead light switches on. Connie wraps the blanket
around herself, says nothing, stares at the blank tv screen,
as Robert comes down the stairs. He reaches the bottom and
watches her for a moment.

She stares at the blank tv.

ROBERT

It's been a week of this.

She says nothing.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You know, Con, I go to work every
day. I pay the bills. I wear a
tie. I brush my teeth. I mow the
lawn.

She stares at the tv, munches a chip.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

By the way... for your information...
there's no food in the house. The
cupboard is bare.

(beat)

I said the fucking cupboard is bare.

She stares.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You know, Con, we said till death do
us part. Maybe it's time for one of
us to make the supreme sacrifice.

(beat)

Let's duke it out. Odds or evens,
Con? Loser dies... or lives.
Whichever.

She stares.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I'm through feeling guilty about
this. It's history. It's yesterday's
lunch.

(means it)

Get dressed!

She stares.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I'll give you 'til the count of three.
One... Two... Two point one... Two
point four... Don't make me say three,
Con... Don't make me do it...

(beat)

Okay, I'll bump it to four. For old
time's sake.

She stares.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

What do you want me to do?

(beat)

Do you want to just end it? Pull
the old plug? Because it's not like
there's anything holding us together
here. It's not like we have future
generations to think of.

CONNIE

(quietly)

Fuck you.

ROBERT

I wish you would.

Robert exits up the stairs, turns the light off, closes the door.

Connie sits in the dark, motionless.

Robert is heard singing upstairs...

ROBERT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Oh give me a home where the buffalo
roam...

CUT TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robert sings.

ROBERT
And the deer and the antelope play,
Where seldom is heard an intelligent word,
And my wife's in her pee jays all day.
Home, home sure is strange.
La da dee, la da da da da dee...

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Walter steps through the side gate, walks into the backyard and stops when he sees... Paradise.

A gorgeous top of the line, full sized, in ground swimming pool, blue and shimmering in the sunlight.

WALTER
Ohhh.

Walter FLINGS aside the clipboard and FRISBEES his pith helmet... He RUNS toward the pool... LEAPS through the air... and CANNONBALLS, fully clothed, into the water.

CUT BACK TO Walter, as before, gazing at the pool. The plunge was just his fantasy.

CUT BACK TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robert fills his travel mug with black coffee as he sings.

ROBERT
(to the tune of
"Norwegian Wood")
I once had a wife,
Or should I say,

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)
She once had me.
Bwong bwang bwong bong.

A *knock* at the backdoor.

WALTER (O.S.)
Public service!

CUT TO:

JUST OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Walter stands at the door. Robert appears.

ROBERT
Oh thank God.
(opens door)
Come on in.

CUT BACK TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Walter enters.

WALTER
Phew! Gonna be a scorcher out there.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie, listening

WALTER (O.S.)
Might set a record.

ROBERT (O.S.)
Really?

CUT BACK TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ROBERT
Right through there. Careful on
those stairs.

WALTER
Thanks.

ROBERT
She doesn't bite.

Walter stops, looks at him.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie, listening.

WALTER (O.S.)
Is there an animal down there?

ROBERT (O.S.)
No no no no...

CUT BACK TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ROBERT
Stupid joke. Love your hat.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie lies back down on the couch, disappearing back into it. Walter tromps down the stairs.

WALTER
(a whisper, meaning
Robert)
Dickwad.

Walter flips up his sunglasses and looks around in the half light, unaware that she is there. He takes a beat to enjoy the coolness of the place, then passes through the door into the basement.

CUT BACK TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robert flicks the basement light on and off.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie lies on the couch as the overhead light strobes.

CUT TO:

UNFINISHED BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Walter moves past the workbench, admiring Robert's impressive, very anally arranged and stored tools and power tools.

He reads the meter.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie sits up and listens as Robert's *footsteps fade into another part of the house*. Walter steps out of the basement, starts toward the stairs, sees her... and jumps.

WALTER

Oh, Jees!... Sorry... Were you there before? I didn't...

(beat)

See you.

(uncomfortable)

Hey, at least it's cool down here... 'cause it's subterranean. The earth always keeps things cooler... except in winter... when it keeps them...

(beat)

Warmer.

She says nothing.

He starts to leave as they hear *footsteps approaching* across the floor upstairs.

She holds up her hand. Walter stops. She listens. Walter says nothing.

CUT BACK TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robert, travel mug and briefcase in hand, stands at the top of the stairs, listening like a cat.

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie silent, listening. Walter just stands there, not sure what the hell's going on.

CUT BACK TO:

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robert, listening...

CUT BACK TO:

REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connie, listening...

ROBERT (O.S.)
(a whisper)
Connella?

She doesn't answer.

CUT BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THEM:

ROBERT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(louder)
Butterball?
(louder)
Love bite!

She doesn't answer.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I'm a goin'.

She says nothing.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Did the meter guy leave?
(beat, louder)
I didn't hear the door.

CONNIE
He climbed out the window.

ROBERT
What?

CONNIE
He fucked me. I gave him all your
power tools... and he climbed out
the window. He told me to tell you
"Thanks".

WALTER, *dying*

ROBERT
Great. Look, if the house burns
down, just stay inside.

He slams the door...

Connie listens to *his footsteps leaving the kitchen.*

WALTER, dying

WALTER

One of those days, huh?

She says nothing.

END OF SAMPLE