

optical diffusion

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. - THE STUARTMANS DRIVEWAY - AROUND TWO IN THE MORNING

The white noise of an empty suburban neighborhood dissipates into the screeching of speeding cars and police sirens. Flashing lights can be seen crisscrossing through nearby streets as the sound of reckless driving increases.

The Stuartmans' two story home looks over a manicured lawn, and a Statue of Paul the Apostle. At the apogee of tires squealing and squeaky brakes trying to keep up; a 90's BUICK drifts around a corner and onto the front lawn of the Stuartmans house. The statue is crushed.

A senior in high school, GARTH, exits the Buick. He stumbles onto the lawn, then over to the garage door. A DOG jumps out of the car and starts barking at the broken Statue. Garth leans against the garage and pukes on the Stuartmans lawn, the Dog starts to eat it.

The police car, following close behind, screeches to a stop in front of the Stuartmans house. The sirens go off, the red and blue lights stay on. Two cops exit their car. Garth looks at the surrounding Officers, and seems to finally realize they were chasing him. He squints at the lights and waves them off.

GARTH

(Drunk)

It's okay! She is just eating my puke, usually she's on a strict diet, but today's her cheat day. So, you know, party? Please, don't try to pet her though, she is a service Dog and technically, she is at work right now.

The two cops are a bit confused, they look at each other and try to get a handle on the situation. OFFICER KEPLER starts to yell condescendingly, he seems fed up with everything going on before it's even started. While his partner, OFFICER DURK radios something intelligible.

OFFICER KEPLER

Shut up and lie flat on the floor!
Put your hands behind your head
and nobody gets hurt.

Garth, not listening, pulls off his shirt then starts taking off his pants. He is getting completely naked.

GARTH

(Trying not to burp)

I am pretty sure you guys are real cops, because of the flashing lights and the dickhead tone of your voice. But I've never seen a police person before, so? To prove I am not- Hiccup... A threat to the general public, I have gotten completely naked. I am not armed. I mean, I am armed, but with regular human arms. That's it.

Covering his private parts with his jacket, Garth almost falls as his Dog begins to urinate on the driveway. Chaos ensues as Officer Durk, desperately attempts to take charge and de-escalate the scene, he is trying very hard not to appear nervous.

OFFICER DURK

Listen, Son! Let's just talk for a second. You can put your clothes back on! We are here to help. What's your name?

OFFICER KEPLER

(Agitated)

He's taking something out of his jacket! Let go of whatever you're reaching for and drop to the floor!

Garth keeps glancing over at the Stuartmans side gate. He needs to get through their backyard and over the wall to get to his own house. He is reaching around inside his jacket for something he can't seem to find.

GARTH

It's a beer, see! Nothing else.
Sorry, just a little thirsty.
Unless, you two want some? I know
Dog does, but like I said, she's
working. And look how cute she is
in her little vest. I thought she
was going to look like she smells,
but she doesn't look like shit,
she looks adorable.

Garth pulls a beer from his jacket and cracks it open. He starts to walk backwards, intermittently chugging between breaths and snide remarks. The Dog is walking backwards with him, and the odd pair look at each other deeply for a moment. Garth has a lump in his throat, he smiles softly.

OFFICER DURK

Put down the beer and come have a
quick chat with us. You seem like
a good kid, do the right thing.

OFFICER KEPLER

(Sadistic)

Pay attention, Sport. By
California law I am only allowed
to respond with lethal force when
it's absolutely necessary. And I
am about to feel very necessary,
right now.

Garth stops walking, so does the Dog. Officer Durk edges closer to Garth with both hands extended to his sides. Officer Durk looks like he is trying to herd a scared animal. The other cop, Officer Kepler, has one hand pointed towards Garth and the other twitching over his holstered gun, like he is waiting to use it.

GARTH

Thanks again, for escorting me
home, but your lights are very
angry, at least the red one is, I
think. Anyway, I have some urgent
business that demands my full and
immediate attention. Likewise,
there's gotta be more important
things on your radar. Aren't there

GARTH (cont.)

like 200,000 unsolved murders in
America?

Garth starts edging closer to the side gate again, it leads to the backyard of the Stuartmans house. Officer Durk continues to reach out to Garth. He is the closest to Garth, literally and metaphorically reaching out to him.

OFFICER KEPLER

Young man, you have been caught driving recklessly, damaging property, speeding! And you are clearly intoxicated. This isn't a joke. You are under arrest. For the last time, facedown on the ground, hands behind your head!

Garth finally finishes the first beer, tosses it haphazardly, and pulls out another beer which he starts drinking. It is unclear where the second beer came from as he is naked except for the jacket covering his privates and neon colored socks.

GARTH

Seriously, any other day, I'd love to, but this is my last beer, and I really need to watch this video in my room. It's not, like a gross video, it's from the early two thousands- But not, like a gross part of the early two thousands...

The two Officers are hesitantly approaching, like house cats stalking about to strike. As Garth nears the side gate, a flimsy wooden thing, that leads to the Stuartmans backyard. Officer Kepler lunges for Garth who easily dodges the out of shape cop and sprints off.

GARTH

Oh, fuck! Well, good night officers! Please, go home now. I don't need your protection and service anymore! Sorry, for breaking the law. I swear this is a one time thing and I will let the Stuartmans know I broke their

GARTH (cont.)
gate when they get back from
Costa-

Garth runs through the side gate, slamming his shoulder into it and shattering the flimsy lock. Stumbling through the broken gate and sprinting through the Stuartmans backyard, Garth disappears. Officer Kepler pulls his gun out, Officer Durk pulls him back.

OFFICER KEPLER
The kids fast. Get some back up in here, I'll go after him before he hurts someone!

OFFICER DURK
(Smirking)
He's not that fast, just faster than you. Most things are faster than you Kepler, including me. Wait by the car, and don't touch anything.

Officer Durk is the first to follow through, chasing Garth in the dark. Officer Kepler holsters his gun and slinks back to the car.

CUT TO:

EXT. - STUARTMANS BACKYARD - AFTER TWO IN THE MORNING

Officer Durk runs into the Stuartmans backyard and watches the Dog jump over the wall into Garth's backyard. Garth pulls himself onto the wall, straddles it and sits there for a moment, just managing to balance himself.

GARTH
(Sprinting)
My parents live next door, I am just going to climb over this wall. You don't need to follow me. I promise, I'll text you when I get home! Whoa... Agh!

A powerful motion light turns on, it startles Garth, he covers his eyes and falls off the wall, into his backyard. We hear him scream and something break on the other side.

Then he peeks over the wall and speaks directly to Officer Durk, before running off again.

GARTH

(Excited)

Did you see that light? That was so bright! Fuck, I am going blind again and I spilled my beer. Shit, shit, shit. Shapes and colors, focus! Shapes and colors. Everything is so close!

Garth takes off running towards his own house, and trails off near the end. Officer Durk pulls his shoulders and head over the Stuartmans wall and peeks into Garth's backyard. He sees two legs slide through a doggy door, as Garth breaks into his own home.

OFFICER DURK

Shit...

Officer Durk drops back down and readies himself, a light stretch and a deep breath, to scale the wall. He jumps up to try and climb the wall. After pulling himself halfway over he tries to steady himself and immediately slips, falling ass first over the wall into Garth's backyard.

CUT TO:

INT. GARTHS HOUSE - STILL AFTER TWO IN THE MORNING

Garth is running around his own living room and kitchen. He is still naked, searching haphazardly for something to cover himself and more alcohol. He is in awe of all the things in his home and very disoriented, like he is seeing it all for the first time.

GARTH

That's the wrong room.. Shit. Mom! Stepfather! Where is the fucking light switch? I could use some help! Dog! Oh, you're right next to me. Good. You look for beer, I'll look for pants!

Garth is about to turn and run away, but he stops himself.

GARTH

You don't know what beer is. Okay,
you get pants, I'll get beer. Go.

Garth runs around the first floor of his house, not sure what he is looking for until he gets into the kitchen and before opening the fridge he sees a picture of his whole family when they were younger, a drawing he made when he was a kid, and a recipe for Mexican Casserole.

GARTH

Is that my drawing? Why would they hang that up? It's terrible. And this? The old Christmas card, is that what we looked like? Mom! You never told me I was such a sexy ten year old!

Garth drops his jacket and opens the fridge, he sees a six pack of beer and smiles. After opening a beer he sees that his dog has returned dragging a pair of pants. He drops down, then jumps up struggling to pull on the pants while making his way upstairs to his parents bedroom. He trips and stumbles on the stairs, yelling for his parents, followed closely by his Dog.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENTS BEDROOM - BEFORE THREE IN THE MORNING

Garth's MOTHER and STEPFATHER are in bed trying to sleep as noises can be heard outside. It sounds like a car chase, the sirens and screeching reach a peak, then suddenly stop. An elevated exchange can be heard, but it's very muffled. Mother wakes up and nudges her husband.

STEPFATHER

(Half-Asleep)

It's probably just a homeless getting arrested. If they didn't want to get arrested they should buy homes. Go to sleep, Booboo.

MOTHER

What did you just say?

Without moving a muscle or opening her eyes, Mother makes Stepfather scrunch up his eyes and sigh, then recant his entire statement while trying to snuggle his wife.

STEPFATHER

I said uh- I meant, homelessness shouldn't be systematically criminalized, and so many other things, but there is nothing we can do about it now. So, sleep.

MOTHER

That's what I thought you said, now bring that ass over here. Booboo wants to be Big Spoon.

They try to ignore it. Half asleep they both start stirring around more as the volume increases. Suddenly, it becomes quiet. Then they hear a dog barking, rummaging downstairs, and someone stumbling against the walls.

They sit up in bed, clearly someone is inside their house, both look fairly alarmed. The Stepfather turns on the light and starts getting out of bed and reaching for a robe, when Garth bursts into their room. The Stepfather screams.

MOTHER

(Pissed)

Garth! What are you doing home?
(Scared) Are you okay? Have you been drinking? I have work tomorrow morning! And you're drinking my beers, you don't deserve those beers.

Mother jumps out of bed and starts yelling in her pajamas, while Stepfather begrudgingly puts on his robe. Content to let his wife handle this, after his initial startled scream. Garth and his Mother talk over each other, but still seem to understand everything being said.

GARTH

(Sloppy)

Mom! Whoa. Okay, well, I can see- Everything. Because of alcohol! I don't have a lot of time. Or beer- Look at you! You're beautiful, and

GARTH (cont.)
you could totally do better. No
offense, Stepfather.

Stepfather peeks out his window, then walks back over,
tying up his robe.

STEPFATHER
None taken. Mhm, so, well, there's
police outside and I don't want to
understate the seriousness of the
circumstances. Just, timeout for a
second? You should really knock.
We're all adults here-

Mother is holding Garth by his shoulders, inspecting every
inch of him. She opens his eyes wide and looks at them,
slightly startled when she feels them looking back at her.

MOTHER
(Exasperated)
Shut up! Are those police here for
you? We trusted you to go away for
the weekend and this is what you
do? Where's Wayne? I hope you know
we won't be extending you this
freedom again! Who drove you home?

GARTH
I did. I mean, Dog helped. I mean,
I borrowed Wayne's car! Which by
the way, he is still in there,
when we left he was asleep in the
backseat. Whatever, that's not
pertinent to the situation! What
is pertinent? I drove! All by
myself! Here, watch this. I can
dance now. I am not afraid to
dance anymore!

Garth starts trying to dance, but mostly he is flailing his
limbs and shaking his body around until he starts to slip
and falls into a mirror above the dresser.

MOTHER
You drove! Drunk? What the hell,
Garth! Why would you think you

MOTHER (cont.)

could do that! You're going to
kill someone- Including yourself!
Where's Dog? Dog!

GARTH

Look at my arms, watch the arms. I
just learned what "flossing" is!

STEPFATHER

He's not bad.

The mirror cracks, but only a few small shards fall to the dresser. Garth gets a couple scratches on his body, but doesn't seem to notice. Garth sees his reflection for the first time and can't stop staring at himself. He touches his face and his messy hair, then blushes hard.

GARTH

Whoa. This is what I look like. We
have the same color hair Mom... And
I am- Not *that* ugly! Am I? I
haven't seen a lot of people yet.

MOTHER

What? What did you just say? How
do you know that? Garth what are
you looking at?

Dog happily struts into the parents room.

STEPFATHER

(to Dog)

This is your fault. How could you
let him do this? You're supposed
to make sure this kind of stuff
doesn't happen!

Dog looks ashamed and hides behind Garth, who sits on the floor bleeding from a few cuts and grinning from ear to ear while he starts to play gently with his dog.

GARTH

(Oblivious)

I can see, Mom... Which is great
because your face right now, well
alcohol poisoning isn't usually

GARTH (cont.)

worth it. But I'd call this the exception to the rule. Now, where is the VCR? I need to get the tape. I can actually see Dad...

Stepfather is watching Garth closely, he pokes Garth, then tries to poke him again and Garth grabs his hand before he can. His Mother's jaw is still hanging just inches above the floor. Officer Durk is banging on the door downstairs. Garth's Stepfather sticks three fingers in the air.

STEPFATHER

Garth, how many fingers am I holding up?

GARTH

(Obviously)

Three. Now, where are the old tapes? Because the cops downstairs aren't here to hangout. And it's fading. My sight I mean, it's going away, I don't know how much time we have left

Garth's Mother looks at her son in disbelief, she realizes her son can actually see. Garth starts to tear up and she starts to cry as she hugs him tight. Then pulls away as they look at each other and smile, almost laughing through the tears at the incredulous miracle before them.

MOTHER

How? Did something... How baby? I am very- Look at me, Gar. You can actually see me... And I can see you. What do you mean you don't have time? I just, I can't- Are we sure I am not dreaming right now? I mean, why?

Garth takes a sip of his beer again, and starts laughing as his mother is crying on his shoulder. The Stepfather leans in around them both as he weeps silently. Garth starts trying to calm his Mom and focus her attention.

GARTH

You don't always need to know why something happens, you just need to do the right thing with it.

(Gurgle) Ew, there's a little throw up in the back of my mouth. It'll go away, give it a second.

CUT TO:

INT GARTH'S HOUSE - ALMOST THREE IN THE MORNING

The back door is beating, the rhythmic pounding from the outside makes it look as if it's almost breathing. It is being hammered by Officer Durks closed fist. With one hand he begins to deftly pull his taser as he looks around suspiciously. It's eerily quiet now.

Officer Durk

This is the police, please open up. You are obstructing justice. If you don't open up my foot of justice will obstruct through your door. Please.

With his taser in his hand, Officer Durk takes a step back and looks as if he is about to kick the door down. He takes one last look at the doggy door, and considers it for a moment before giving one more warning.

OFFICER DURK

There is no way out, we have the house, um... Surrounded. Just come out and we can talk? Your son will be going to jail. He could have killed someone!

Suddenly, the back door is pulled open. Garth's Stepfather is standing there very casually in his robe, holding what's left of the six pack.

STEPFATHER

Yeah, but he didn't... Right? If you put the gun down, you can come inside and we can talk about this, because it's a little unusual.

Officer Durk points his taser gun at the Stepfather who motions for the Officer to follow him and flicks on a light so they can see. Officer Durk watches him for a few seconds then follows, taser pointed down but still in hand.

OFFICER DURK

It's a taser, actually- Sir, I am going to need you to set down the beers and put your hands against the wall.

The Stepfather looks skeptically at the police officer and grabs a beer. He cracks it open and takes a big sip.

STEPFATHER

I'll set down my beer, once you tell me why my step-son was naked.

OFFICER DURK

He is drunk- He was trying to prove he was unarmed!

STEPFATHER

If he's unarmed, why do you have your *taser-gun* out?

Officer Durk doesn't say anything for a moment, while the Stepfather takes another long sip of his beer. Finally, he holsters the taser, puts his hand to his forehead and makes a face like, 'What the fuck am I doing?'

STEPFATHER

Look, Garth is upstairs. He will come out in a minute. I was just stalling so his Mom could get the VCR set up... And, don't worry. He gets naked a lot, so that's not the weird part.

The Stepfather slowly walks upstairs. Officer Durk follows him until he stops at Garth's room and leans against the doorway. For a brief moment we see Garth and his Mother sitting together, she is holding him and they are both crying. The two are watching an old home video VHS tape.

OFFICER DURK

Sir, if he is in there I will need to arrest him, now. And if you try to stop me-

STEPFATHER

(Whispering)

I won't. Just let him watch a little more.

Officer Durk peers into the room. He sees Garth and his Mom tearfully watching an old family video on a dingy VCR. Even the Dog is curled up next to Garth, giving them support as the light flickers across their empathetic faces.

On the tape: a young child, Garth, is playing with his Mom and Dad. It is hard to tell at first, but the Younger Garth on the tape is blind. His father is teaching him to read braille, and he is blind too.

MOTHER

That ringing was the little bell you carried. It was the only way Dad could keep track of you. One time he couldn't find you-

GARTH

When I locked myself in the dryer?

Garth is leaning against his mother's leg while she sits on the bed and he sits on the floor in front of her. They are staring at the TV and Garth turns to look at his Mom just for an instant while they talk, afraid to miss even a second of the old home movies.

MOTHER

(Crying)

Yes... Aha, and that was your favorite book, he would read it to you every night before bed, and you wanted to know what the animals looked like so bad... He would spend hours describing them, and everytime he thought you were asleep and would try sneaking out of your room, you would ask him

MOTHER (cont.)
about another animal... And he would
start all over again.

GARTH
(Wonderstruck)
Oh, that's when I took Dad's cane!
I broke his tooth with it, right?

MOTHER
He spoke with a lisp for a week,
and you thought it was so funny.
He couldn't even get mad at you,
because you would laugh every time
he tried to talk.

Garth has tears welling up in the corners of his eyes, and he whips them away everytime they are about to stream down his face. There is a frog in his throat when he is talking. His mother is playing with his hair, weeping while she watches her son and her dead husband together again.

GARTH
I miss him so much, Mom.

MOTHER
Me too, baby bear.

Officer Durk looks back at the Stepfather startled by the delicate honesty of the scene before him.

STEPFATHER
Garth was born blind.

OFFICER DURK
(Stubborn)
I saw him drive. He saw me- Your
son, er- Step-son is not blind.

STEPFATHER
I can't tell you why... He says it's
the alcohol. Something called
Optical Diffusion... Swollen
capillaries, his retinal boundary-
I don't know how, but- He can
actually see... We know what he did
was very illegal. He's not all

STEPFATHER (cont.)

that bright sometimes, but he never got to see his real Dad, before... And, well, he figured lightning doesn't strike twice.

OFFICER DURK

Am I supposed to feel bad for him? If he's blind, then he was driving drunk and blind! The law isn't sentimental-

Garth walks between Officer Durk and his Stepfather, his mother behind him holding his shoulders gently. Garth looks innocent, he smiles while tears slip down his cheeks.

GARTH

(Cheerful Crying)

Excuse me. I really am sorry, Officer Durk? Hah, that's a stupid name. Sorry, again. Um, it's just my real Dad was blind too and he never- We look a lot alike. The same eyes. Hah. Kind of ironic, right? Or, whatever, this is my service dog. Her name is Dog.

Dog runs up and sits down at Garth's side with a loyal thump. Officer Durk is even more confused, he looks at Garth suspiciously.

OFFICER DURK

You're really blind?

GARTH

Not yet. I got a couple more of these short boys.

Garth takes another sip of beer, staring at Officer Durk in front of him. Officer Durk doesn't know how to proceed, he hesitantly calls on his walkie.

OFFICER DURK

I got him. Everythings... okay? Meet me in the front and call in another unit to stay with the

OFFICER DURK (cont.)
parents while we take the kid to
the station.

GARTH
My name is Garth, by the way.
About, uh, tonight. I've never
driven a car. You know, because...
Blind? Overall, it feels like
things could've been a lot worse
given the context- Mhm. Well, I
knew what I was getting myself
into. Take me downtown, Mister
Commissioner.

Garth hugs his Mother and Stepfather then sticks both hands
out in front of Officer Durk, ready to be arrested.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARTH'S FRONT LAWN - BASICALLY THREE IN THE MORNING

At this point Garth is put into handcuffs and walked
outside by Officer Durk. When they open the front door,
Garth has to close his eyes because of the bright and
shining chaos in the street ahead of him.

There are five cop cars on the street in front of his
house, two with their lights still flashing. The night is
actually quite loud, as neighbors stand on their porches
and driveways, curiously watching the scene unfold.

Garth looks away at first, it takes him a moment to get
used to the lights and the motions, but once he does he
takes it all in with a smile. Overwhelmed yet inspired by
everything going on, even though this should be a stressful
even demoralizing moment, Garth is in awe at the portrait
of cop cars, houses, and movements he feels are being
performed for him. He stares for a moment, dumbfounded.

Before taking him any further, his Mother gives him a hug
and whispers something to him. We can't hear what's being
said over the police chatter, cars, and general noise. She
grabs his face and looks at him again, they stare into each
other's eyes and she cries one more time before kissing him
on his forehead and sending him off.

Officer Keplar and some other cops are waiting to speak with Garth's parents. They block them from following Garth as he is escorted into the back of one of the cars.

Garth's Mother starts to whimper in his Stepfather's arms before she straightens up and starts verbally antagonizing Officer Kepler, who is not trained to deal with a strong willed, angry woman, who has just witnessed the impossible.

GARTH

(to Officer Durk)

You know my real Dad looked a lot different then he felt. My favorite part was when I broke the mirror, what about you? Remember the motion light? It was off and then all of a sudden... Brightness! Never seen anything like it. I mean, I've never seen a lot of things. So, my standards are probably pretty low. I can't believe this is all for me. I've never felt so special my whole life. You don't happen to have a phone charger back there? Do you?

Once put in the back of the cop car Garth can be seen opening another beer. It's not clear where this one came from either. Then he starts to slurp it and smile as Officer Durk begins to drive him away. Garth's parents are waving goodbye. Then they get in their own car to follow them to the station.

FADE OUT