

SCREWING UP A SURE THING

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

A faucet pumps hot water into a steaming bath. A woman's hand pours bubble bath from a plastic bottle. In the distance we hear a door slam.

FRANK (O.S.)
(Shouting)
Joan?

The woman doesn't answer.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Joan? Where the Hell are you?

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

CLOSE on boots as they walk up the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - BEDROOM - BATHROOM - FRANK POV

We move through the bedroom and into the master bath. Rounding the corner, we see the woman, JOAN, sitting calmly. Her thin features are drawn, bored. She is wearing a bathrobe and perched on the edge of the tub, waiting for it to fill.

JOAN
Is there a problem, Frank?

LOW ANGLE on FRANK standing in the doorway. He is a man of medium build in his mid-thirties. His shirt is faded and disheveled.

FRANK
You're goddamn right there's a problem.
Just where do you get off calling
Drummond?

Joan stirs the water idly with her fingertips.

JOAN
(In a biting tone)
Someone had to talk to him. You
certainly weren't showing any
initiative.

FRANK

Did it ever occur to you that you talking to my boss could actually hurt my chances for a raise?

Joan looks up at Frank, only to roll her eyes and return her attention to the bath.

JOAN

(Sneering)

We have payments to make, DEAR. What am I supposed to do, just wait for you to grow a spine and ask for a promotion? You've been working three years for the same measly wage.

FRANK

You think I don't know that? Now I'll be lucky if Drummond doesn't fire my ass. You think he doesn't have enough crap to deal with, he's got to take calls from some guy's bitching WIFE during his lunch hour?

JOAN

(Raising her voice)

A bitching wife who should have never married YOU! Remember when we had plans? Remember that sure thing you screwed up? With MY money? How do you screw up a sure thing? Leave it to my husband, he'll find a way!

FRANK

(Seething)

You're going to hold that over me forever...

JOAN

That's right. Why should I forget? You owe me.

Joan turns off the water. She stands and walks to Frank.

JOAN

You will work for me till you drop, because I say so. Maybe your true calling is to make money on disability. Why don't you go break something? I'm going to take a bath.

She starts to close the door in Frank's face.

Furious, Frank slams the door inward, hitting Joan in the temple. She shrieks. Frank grabs her by the throat and barrels into the room. Joan claws at her neck, but Frank's grip is too tight.

FRANK

Take a bath? Take a bath?

He pushes Joan's head into the tub. He lifts her head out and dunks her repeatedly. Blood runs down her temple. Her arms flail out behind her.

Soon, Joan stops struggling. Frank sits back, breathing hard.

Seconds tick by. Frank looks at his motionless wife.

Finally, he kneels over her body, still draped over the edge of the tub. He takes a handful of hair and pulls her head out of the water. From a LOW ANGLE just above the water, we see her lifeless expression. Water and blood pour off her face, dripping into the suds of the bubble bath. Disgusted, Frank lowers her into the tub again.

FRANK

God, no...

Realizing what he has done, Frank starts to shake. He looks around the room, flailing for an answer.

Frank takes a large towel and gently wraps it around Joan's head and shoulders. He lifts her corpse in his arms and carries it out of the room.

INT. BEDROOM — HALLWAY — STAIRS — DOWNSTAIRS — TRACKING

We TRACK with Frank through the bedroom into the hallway, down the stairs, and to the back door of the house.

EXT. BACKYARD — NIGHT

Frank crosses the small yard in semi-darkness to where his car is parked in the gravel driveway. The summer evening is quiet except for the singing of CRICKETS. Frank sets his wife on the ground behind his rusted sedan. He unlocks the trunk, then rests the body inside. He slams the trunk and turns to look around.

FRANK'S P.O.V.

We take in the backyard and the empty yard next door. A single car drives by on the residential street. Somewhere in the distance, a DOG BARKS.

BACK ON FRANK

He wipes his brow and returns to the house.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Frank surveys the mess. There is blood on the tiles around the tub and the bath mat. The small garbage can is overturned. Frank scoops the trash into the can. He pauses for a moment, then rolls the bath mat up and shoves that into the can as well.

Looking into the cupboard under the sink, he pulls out a sponge and some scouring cleanser. Frank sets to work on the spray of blood on the tiles. Soon the floor and tub appear clean again. Satisfied, he tosses the sponge into the trashcan.

Frank reaches into the tub to pull the stopper from the drain. He pulls his hand out of the water quickly, as though stung by something.

Breathing raggedly, Frank watches the suds recede. There is something in the tub. Slowly the water level lowers. The drain gurgles ominously. A form takes shape under the bubbles. The form of a body.

Unbelieving, Frank inches closer to the tub. He reaches in and smoothes the suds away from the face. It is a woman. It is his dead wife, Joan.

Frank recoils, falling to the floor. He stands slowly and gets another look at the body. Still wearing the bathrobe, still with a gash on her forehead, still dead.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Frank runs out of the house, fumbling with his keys. He gets the trunk open. The dim interior light shines on the contents: one wet towel. No body.

LOW ANGLE ON FRANK. A lit upstairs window glows behind him. The bathroom on the second floor. Frank turns and looks towards it.

INT. BEDROOM - HALLWAY - STAIRS - DOWNSTAIRS - TRACKING

Frank carries Joan to the car a second time. He places her in the trunk and gently wraps the towel around her, covering her unfocused stare.

A SERIES OF SHOTS: Frank leaves the house with the small trashcan. The can in the trunk. The trunk lid slams. Frank's hand turns the ignition. The taillights come on as the sedan backs out onto the street.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

A scraggly field of grass. Frank's sedan is parked on a service road a short distance from the lake. The headlights shine out across the dark, quiet water. Frank carries the body to the embankment. He pauses, then flings her into the depths.

Frank stands at the edge for a moment, then returns to the car. He closes the trunk and drives off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - NIGHT

Through the windshield we see the brightly lit facade of RICK'S LIQUOR. Frank pulls the car to a halt.

EXT. RICK'S LIQUOR - NIGHT

Frank steps out of the store carrying a bottle in a brown bag. He walks back to the car, looking around the parking lot. His gaze falls on the dumpster next to the building.

Frank reaches through the open window into the car, sets the bottle on the seat, and pops the trunk. He gathers the towel and garbage can. He closes the trunk with an elbow.

Looking around one more time, he lifts the lid and drops the evidence inside. Frank returns to the sedan, starts the engine, and drives off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLOSE on the liquor bottle thumping down on the counter. Vodka. In the background, Frank takes a glass from the cupboard. The only light comes from the hallway.

ANGLE ON FRANK:

He opens the full-length freezer door and takes a handful of ice. Drops it into his glass with a satisfying CLINK CLINK CLINK. He closes the freezer, revealing a shape behind the door. He stops cold. There is someone standing in the shadows next to the fridge.

Frank slaps the wall, trying for the light switch. The overhead unit comes on, glaring ugly fluorescent light onto the wet corpse of Joan. She leans, propped against the wall, staring at Frank.

Frank comes undone.

FRANK

God! God, no! You're gone. You're...

He takes a step toward the corpse. Her shifting weight causes her body to collapse jerkily to the floor. Frank gasps and drops his glass. Ice skittles across the floor.

He turns away from the impossible sight and staggers to the bottle on the counter. He twists the cap off and takes a long swig. Too long. Frank coughs as he tries to swallow the alcohol. His cough turns into a manic giggle.

FRANK

We'll just have to try again, won't we?

(Turning to Joan)

Won't we?

She doesn't answer.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

CLOSE on Frank's fumbling fingers as he ties a cinder block to Joan's ankle. We PAN along the length of her body to see there are four cinder blocks, one tied to each limb.

FRANK

That oughta hold ya.

He drags the weighted body to the edge of the embankment.

FRANK

In you go!

Frank's face twitches with fear, then with glee as he watches the body sink into the lake.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - NIGHT

LOW ANGLE on Frank as he drives. He sweats uncontrollably. His eyes are bleary and sunken. Frank reaches out of frame and finds his bottle of vodka. He takes a drink.

CLOSE on the speedometer. The needle creeps towards 70 mph.

EXT. BACKROAD — NIGHT

Frank's sedan flies by a police car parked on a turn-off. The trooper pulls onto the road and turns on its flashing lights.

INT. FRANK'S CAR — NIGHT

The sound of a siren squawking on and off gets Frank's attention. His eyes flit to the rearview mirror.

ANGLE on the rearview mirror. We see the police lights blinking back at us.

FRANK

Cripes.

Frank slows and pulls the car over.

EXT. BACKROAD — NIGHT

The two cars pull onto the shoulder in a wooded area.

INT. FRANK'S CAR — NIGHT

Frank looks to the mirror again.

ANGLE on the mirror. The cop car sits on the road behind him, the lights flashing.

BACK ON FRANK:

As he quickly stashes his vodka under the seat. Sitting up again, he takes another look in the mirror.

ANGLE on the mirror. A passing car's headlights shine into the car, illuminating an occupant in the back seat.

BACK ON FRANK:

He spins around, insane with fear. The camera SWIVELS to the back seat, where Joan sits with cinder blocks tied to its limbs. Bits of algae and pond scum cling to her skin. We slowly PAN back to Frank, who grips the seat and simply stares. We hear the steps of the trooper's boots as he approaches the car.

TROOPER (O.S)

Would you step out of the car, please sir?

Frank's expression turns from shock to resignation.

FADE OUT.

END