

FLAGSTONE

FADE IN:

INT. SMALL FLAT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The shades are pulled down completely. Only the slivers of light stabbing around the edges provide illumination. In the shadows a door frame is visible, a dinette, a sideboard.

No one is seen. Only the sound of BREATHING, forceful rhythmic, urgent. Slowly a MAN rises into frame doing a pushup. Over and over his white t-shirt rises like a ghost, his face unseen.

He finishes, stands and goes to a chin up bar in the door frame. He's 50ish, and appears well toned even in the shadows. He begins a series of pull ups as...

AUDIO OVER:

MAN

Whoa. We're getting small arms fire.

2ND MAN(ON A RADIO)

There's civilians all around there...

MAN

Copy. I see cammo and...there's a pickup truck moving...

2ND MAN (ON RADIO)

Delta had a scout party out there this morning. Hold off, still checking...

MAN

Ten four. Are any of our guys still down in there? Over.

2ND MAN (RADIO)

Hold your fire...Delta says their unit left there an hour ago. Over.

MAN

Copy that!...(muffled)Here we go MFers!

The sound of a bomb EXPLODING.

2ND MAN (ON RADIO)
 Holy shit, Hold your fire! Do you
 read me?! Hold fire! They're still
 in there!

BACK:

INT. SMALL FLAT - LIVINGROOM

MURDOCH wipes his wet face on his T-shirt. All the time the audio is going over, he twists his face and speeds up his effort lifting, as if he could change the event. He disappears around a wall. WATER RUNS.

INT. MURDOCH'S FLAT - LIVINGROOM - MINUTES LATER

Murdoch pulls up each window shade to precisely half level. He crosses to the kitchen. He carefully lays out a spoon, bowl, measuring cup, his cereal box, a banana. He measures out exactly three fourths of a cup of cereal and expertly cuts the banana over it.

Suddenly he hears LAUGHTER outside his door. He freezes, goes to his door and peers out the viewing hole, then the door itself.

INT. DUPLEX HALLWAY

An attractive woman, NATALIE LISTON, mid to late thirties, shuffles under the weight of two boxes, followed by a young man, ELLIOT, about eighteen hefting a trunk. Another woman, DENISE MARQUEZ, African American, in her thirties, carries two lamps and they're huge. She loses her footing, stumbles and recovers.

DENISE [REDACTED]
 Aaghay! I'm okay.

NATALIE
 There's a guy next door there.

DENISE
 You know these friggin' things are
 so big they're going to shrink your
 room right down...What guy?

Elliot DROPS the trunk as Natalie tries to key the door.

NATALIE
 Elliot! I just said there's a
 neighbor living right there.

ELLIOT
 Mom, it's mid-morning, we're gonna
 make noise.

INT. MURDOCH'S FLAT - DOOR

Murdoch watches until Natalie finally drops her boxes and
 opens the door, their voices fade.

DENISE (O.C.)
 How'd you find this little place
 Nat?

NATALIE (O.C.)
 Bartender Dean at the restaurant.
 He's always finding excuses to talk
 to me.

DENISE (O.C.)
 He loves you.

Her door SHUTS loudly. Murdoch winces slightly. He turns back
 through the dinette area and kitchen. As he polishes the
 cereal spoon, MUSIC comes jangling across the shared hall
 that divides them. He pauses a moment, then continues.

INT. DUPLEX HALLWAY - LATER

Murdoch emerges from his apartment with a whistle around his
 neck and a belly pack. He locks the door, eyes the other unit
 and leaves.

INT. NATALIE'S FLAT - LIVINGROOM - SAME TIME

Natalie, Elliot and Denise unpack boxes.

ELLIOT
 She's amazing mom!

NATALIE
 How old is she?

ELLIOT
 Twenty-eight.

NATALIE

That's ten years older. Where's my other saute pans and big kettle?

ELLIOT

Nine years. They're already in the kitchen.

Natalie heads into her small kitchen. Frowns. It's not clear whether it's the size of the tiny kitchen or what her son has just said.

DENISE

What does she do?

ELLIOT

Window designer. Lots of style. You guys will meet her. You'll see.

DENISE

Where'd you meet her?

ELLIOT

A bookstore.

Natalie calls from the kitchen

NATALIE (OC)

Tottie's very well read for his age. More than his father will ever be.

Denise and Elliot glance at each other.

ELLIOT

Dad was more into magazines.

NATALIE (O.C.)

Don't use past tense Tottie.

ELLIOT

Don't call me Tottie.

Denise looks at Elliot again but he looks away.

INT. YMCA CLUB - SWIMMING POOL - LATER

Murdoch strides along the pool edge BLOWING his whistle.

MURDOCH

Reach. Reach! That's it. Kick
lower!

The five YOUNG TEENS finish their lap and look up at him.

MURDOCH

All right.

He bends down and pats each boy's head.

MURDOCH

You were listening this morning.

INT. DUPLEX HALLWAY - MUCH LATER

Murdoch walks up the hall to his door. Boxes are stacked outside Natalie's flat. He sniffs the air, eyes the unit and enters his own.

INT. MURDOCH'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Murdoch collects his mail and pulls down the shades. He does five pull ups and goes back to his mail.

INT. DUPLEX HALLWAY - DAY

Murdoch exits, locks his door and glances at the growing stack of empty boxes leaning by Natalie's door. Two smaller boxes have tumbled down. He picks them up, quickly straightens the pile and leaves.

INT. YMCA CLUB - POOL

Murdoch teaches his charges how to make better under water turns.

MURDOCH

Legs! You get real torque here.

INT. DUPLEX HALLWAY - NIGHT

Murdoch hurries up the hallway with a single bag of groceries. He notes his new neighbor hasn't thrown out the boxes yet but has crushed the bigger ones. He sniffs the air. A ripple of recognition crosses his face. He goes inside his flat.

INT. NATALIE'S FLAT - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Natalie is doing what she does best. Cooking. Elliot watches a basketball game in the living room. She moves with ease and joy. Rapturous steam unfurls over a sauce she stirs and smells.

She turns off the heat, goes to her room and emerges with her chefs pants and white shirt on. She moves to the living room and kisses her son.

NATALIE

For tonight honey? Spoon it over the rice and don't forget the string beans in back.

ELLIOT

Thanks. Bye mom.

INT. MURDOCH'S FLAT - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Murdoch dumps a frozen entree PLUNK on a plate, tosses it into the microwave. He then machetes a wan head of iceberg lettuce in half and drops one into a bowl, tossing in cherry tomatoes and black olives. He carefully wipes up after every move and washes his hands.

INT. DUPLEX HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Natalie exits, glances at Murdoch's door and steps half way to it. She HEARS a television, pauses, then turns away down the hall.

INT. DUPLEX HALLWAY - DAY

Murdoch emerges with a broom and dust pan. He notes the boxes are still there and restraightens them. He sweeps the hallway and as he does, Natalie peeks out unseen for a moment.

INT. MURDOCH'S FLAT - NIGHT

Murdoch eats a sandwich at his dinette, devoid of any clutter, wiping his mouth after every bite. He realigns a perfectly aligned place mat. MUSIC plays from across the hall.

He takes another bite and suddenly a loud THUMP snaps his back up straight. He hears ARGUING. A door SLAMS.

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