

CUDDLES

By

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INSERT - Title typography: "CUDDLES" written in white bubble letters appended by a typographic heart on an entirely black background, dead center.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

FADE IN to the facade of an everyday-looking house in a rural area. A realtor sign posted on the lawn has a sticker covering the details, reading "SOLD."

A single pickup truck sits in the driveway, its cargo completely loaded with cardboard boxes, but has an empty exception in the leftmost rear corner.

A MAN walks onto the driveway carrying a fairly-sized box. He is in his mid-20's and of an unassuming build. He slides the box into the empty corner, perfectly completing the cargo as if it were a game of Tetris.

He walks around the truck to the passenger side, glancing over all the boxes and some large implements of domestic life as he passes. He looks inside the truck interior, where another tall stack of boxes occupies the seat.

He sighs and wipes his forehead.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room is unnaturally clean with only major furniture like couches and cabinets. All other small fragments of resident life are gone, and its place are more and more cardboard boxes stacked along the walls.

The MAN walks in through the foyer, fishing a cell phone out of his pockets. He dials a number while passing through the living room and walking into the hallway.

EXT. CITY NEIGHBOURHOOD - DAY

Another house in a city-like setting, with more boxes and furniture littered alongside the front porch.

A WOMAN tries, ineffectively, to pull another large box (marked "fragile") out of a car trunk too small to fit it in the first place. She is also in her mid-20's and has an entirely assuming build.

She stops and feels around to her back pocket, pulling out a vibrating pager phone. She brings the earpiece to her head.

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN

What?

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The MAN, in another room emptied of all personality and filled with more boxes, speaks into the cell phone while shaking his head and shrugging at all the luggage around him.

MAN

There's too much stuff.

EXT. CITY NEIGHBOURHOOD - DAY

The WOMAN, now sitting on the box jammed in the trunk, responds bluntly with a bored expression on her face.

WOMAN

Then what are you calling me for?

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Next to a sheetless bed with a pile of laundry and an open suitcase on top, the MAN sandwiches the phone between his left shoulder and the side of his face, answering her while folding up a pair of jeans in his hands.

MAN

Come by with the car so we can get more in one trip.

WOMAN

(through phone)

Forget it. The new place isn't as big as your old house.

MAN

Please.

EXT. CITY NEIGHBOURHOOD - DAY

WOMAN

Look. I'll come, but throw out anything not worth taking. I don't want any of your crap, got it?

(CONTINUED)

MAN
(through phone)
Alright.

She hangs up, and looks down at the fragile box beneath her with a mild look of disdain.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The MAN puts the last pair of jeans into the suitcase already filled with clothes. He zips it shut, but with a little friction as the contents barely fit inside.

He goes over to his closet, opens it. He unrolls a large black garbage bag and begins to fish through the lower end of shelves. He pulls out a trinket, inspects it, deems it useless, and throws it into the bag. Repeat.

INSERT - From an alternate perspective within the darkness of the cluttered closet, something unknown and unnoticed watches him go about his business. There is a faint GROWLING sound.

He pulls out what looks to be old-fashioned baseball memorabilia. He inspects it as if considering its worth, but ultimately throws it into the garbage bag anyway.

INSERT - The alternate perspective sees him return to looking through the shelves in the closet. He uses his arm to slide an entire array of standup action figures and old toys into the garbage bag. The growling sound grows louder.

He yanks up the sagging garbage bag and checks his wristwatch. He looks about the closet, as if looking for anything worthwhile at all.

INSERT - From the alternate perspective, the man notices the thing looking at him. As he reaches out to grab it, the audible grumble explodes into a loud SNARL, like some sort of caged animal, provoked.

In assumed SILENCE, the man pulls out of the closet, a rugged TEDDY BEAR that looks as if it has seen better days. He looks at it, somewhat surprised by his discovery.

INT. INTERIOR - NIGHT

The picture quality turns grainy. Against a wall, a SMALL CHILD holds up the TEDDY BEAR from a recently opened birthday present in ribbon shards on the carpet.

He hugs the teddy bear with a smiling squeeze to the home-movie camera.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The appearance of the TEDDY BEAR differs from the last scene. Cobwebs stick behind its ears, which the MAN tries to pick away with a free hand.

The cradles the teddy bear in his arms with a faint smile. A ghostly echo makes the quiet sound of a newborn baby, BABBLING.

He looks to the suitcase on the bed. Already packed, it bulges upward, as if it could burst.

He looks over to the stacks of boxes against the walls. All of them already have their tops duct-taped shut.

Shrugging, he picks the garbage bag back up and slides the teddy bear in.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

A tin trash can sits at the side of the driveway.

The MAN walks up to it with a full trash bag in tow. He opens the trash can's lid, lifts the bag inside, and shuts it.

He walks back from where he came.

INT. FOYER - DAY

The MAN walks in through the front door and closes it behind him. He motions to go and walk ahead, but stops, noticing something on the floor.

The TEDDY BEAR from before sits on the ground and stares up back at him. The BABYISH sound resumes.

He picks it up, scratching his head and squinting out the window.

He opens the door to head back outside, but while almost through the doorway, he stops, and for a moment, gives the Teddy Bear another reconsidering look.

He heads out the door.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

At the trash can.

The MAN walks up to it, drops the TEDDY BEAR in, and leaves.

The trash can REVERBS a confused, childlike noise.

INT. FOYER - DAY

The MAN walks in through the door and closes it behind him. He walks ahead in the hall, but slows his pace down to a stop as he notices the same TEDDY BEAR again, sitting on a nearby table.

It has a semi-rotten banana peel on its head.

He looks away, shakes his head, and continues forward.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The MAN passes through the living room into the hallway, fishing his cell phone, but along the way, he passes by the same TEDDY BEAR sitting on a lone end table. He tries not to notice it.

EXT. CAR IN TRAFFIC - DAY

The WOMAN sits in her driver seat, the car barely moving in the middle of a traffic jam. She picks up her pager phone.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The MAN stops in front of a closed door.

MAN

I'm almost cleared out. Where are you?

EXT. CAR IN TRAFFIC - DAY

WOMAN

Traffic.

MAN

(through phone)
Uh, will it be much longer?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

WOMAN
(through phone)
How should I know?

MAN
Alright, that should be-

He listens, nodding his head a bit, but looks down to the floor to see the TEDDY BEAR at his feet. The quiet BABBLING resumes.

He becomes annoyed and kicks the teddy bear away. At the moment of the hit, the babbling interrupts as a HICCUP.

EXT. CAR IN TRAFFIC - DAY

The WOMAN immediately pauses speaking and eyes her phone, a bit unnerved.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The TEDDY BEAR lies on the ground, nose-first. There is a faint WHINE.

The MAN shrugs.

MAN
That should be fine.

He hangs up.

EXT. CAR IN TRAFFIC - DAY

The WOMAN looks directly at her phone, confused.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The MAN pockets the phone, and opens the door.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The MAN opens the door and walks inside, but a look of shock washes over him.

The boxes that were once stacked against the walls are now toppled over, taped tops ripped open and their various contents rolled along the carpet.

(CONTINUED)

The suitcase, previously packed and zipped up, is torn open and its contents are strewn over the bed.

The TEDDY BEAR sits innocently in the center of the disarray.

He grows angry and advances.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

At the trash can.

The MAN walks up to it with the TEDDY BEAR in tow. He opens the lid, tosses the bear inside, and leaves.

The man returns, gripping the teddy bear again. He opens the lid, forcefully throws the bear inside, and stomps away.

The man, looking a bit disheveled, with the teddy bear once again, runs up to the trash can and furiously dispatches the bear inside. He shuts the lid and turns to leave, but after a few steps, he pauses, and looks back at the trashcan. He goes to the lid and takes a small peek inside. He quickly shuts the lid and makes one reassured nod. He turns to leave again, but barely two steps before he trips over something and falls with a thud.

He stands back up, with the teddy bear in his fist. He opens the trash can, takes out the trash bag, violently spikes the bear inside, shuts the lid, and puts the garbage bag on top. He leaves.

The man comes back and gives the trash can a moderated kick on the side. He screams at it, and leaves.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room is a mess. All the boxes are torn open, and their broken contents are thrown about the house as if a tornado ran about indoors.

INT. FOYER - DAY

The MAN walks in and slams the door behind him. He then leans against it and breathes a heavy sigh.

The GROWLING sound returns. He notices something on the ground.

(CONTINUED)

In the same position, the TEDDY BEAR - wearing another banana peel on its head - stares back at him, perfectly still.

On the floor, next to the bear, is a shiny kitchen cutting knife.

He takes a moment to interpret the meaning of the stuffed animal's gesture, and turns angered again. He hastily grabs the teddy bear, opens the door, and throws it outside. He slams the door, locking it. An exasperated sigh, and he walks over towards the hallway.

Along the way, he passes the teddy bear, sitting on the same table again. He slows to a stop while noticing it.

Beside the teddy bear, hacked right into the table, is an impossibly large steel machete.

After not moving for a bit, he backs away, slowly, then quickly.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The MAN runs inside the room, but screeches to a stop.

A very shocked and confused WOMAN abrasively gestures towards the mess around her.

WOMAN

What the hell did you do here?!

The mn sighs a breath of relief at seeing her, but when he opens his eyes again, sees the TEDDY BEAR has appeared on the coffee table behind her. It holds up the machete, as if to strike the woman while she is too busy madly shouting at him.

He rushes for her, dives, pulls her down onto the floor by force of gravity, and rolls her to safety as the machete lands in the ground beside them and falls on its blunt side.

On the floor, he gasps for air.

MAN

Are you all right?

The woman jumps up to her feet and yells.

WOMAN

That's it! We're through!

(CONTINUED)

She flings her arms about as she bolts over to the Foyer, and turns back to scream at the man one last time before darting out the door.

WOMAN

Keep all your stuff! I've had
enough of this! Don't ever call or
come near me again!

The man, on his knees, stares agape while the woman storms away. Once she's gone, he turns, and sees the teddy bear sitting innocently in the middle of the wrecked room. The teddy bear, making perfect eye contact, does not move.

He stays frozen in position, breathing heavier and heavier, his hands shaking into fists and his teeth gnashing together. Suddenly, he lunges forward. He grabs the teddy bear by the nonexistent neck, forces it over, and begins to strangle it. The teddy bear trembles in his throttling hands. The GROWLING peaks into a bear or tiger SNARLING in the attack, but begins breaking up, growing weaker into silent fragments of brief noise.

The charade of murder continues until his grip on the teddy bear begins to loosen, and he turns his head upright. A strange emotion arises on his face, like he just realized that he was seriously trying to strangle an entirely inanimate stuffed animal.

He holds it up limp for a moment, to make sure it is entirely dead or not quite alive in the first place, and tosses the stuffed animal away like a forced discard. He then stands up and holds his forehead as if feeling a sudden headache. He laughs a bit and slowly lightens up as his own disbelief melts away. He breathes in deeply and looks at the mess around him, nodding.

Suddenly, he notices something. His eyes widen.

The teddy bear is holding a gun.

CUT TO:

INSERT - Sound of a GUNSHOT. Title typography: "CUDDLES" written in white bubble letters on an entirely black background appended by a typographic heart, bloodstained, dead center.