

FRANCIS

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FADE IN:

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - MORNING

FRANK, a pudgy 16 year old, scans the airwaves on his CB radio. Earphones block out everything except the CHATTER OF TRUCKERS.

He's part nerd and part geek. Uncool in every way -- glasses -- K-mart clothes -- block haircut -- baby fat. He's far from hideous, but far from the Prom King. Looks a little young for his age.

Frank carefully dials each frequency with the utmost care. He listens to each trucker like a safe-cracker. Not that one. Next. No, not that one either.

A KNOCK at his bedroom door. He can't hear a thing with those headphones on.

OUTSIDE THE DOOR

Frank's MOTHER (late 30s) knocks louder.

MOTHER

Frank! You're gonna be late for
your first day!

INSIDE

Frank thinks he's found the right frequency. A MAN'S VOICE -- garbled -- faint.

His mother barges in.

MOTHER

Frank!

He sees her. Rips off the headphones.

FRANK

Mom!

MOTHER

I know it's a new school, but they
still frown on tardiness.

Frank reluctantly turns off the CB.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Frank and his brother ALVIN (20) pull up in a tacky, tricked-out Japanese car. Alvin looks at all the high school kids hurrying to class with disgust.

Frank looks worried.

ALVIN

Bunch a suckers.

(to Frank)

High school sucks man. Let your ol' bro give you a tip: just keep your head down and suck it up till it's over.

FRANK

I got two more years. That's a lotta time with my head down.

ALVIN

I'm just sayin', nobody cares about it when you're out anyway. Best years of your life my ass. Wait till you get out and get a real job. Then you can have all this.

He caresses the gaudy leather design on the dash.

From the back seat, CINDY (18) -- attractive -- trailer park -- chimes in.

CINDY

Uh, hun? I gotta get to work, ya know.

Frank takes the cue and let's himself out.

FRANK

Thanks Al. See-ya Cindy.

ALVIN

(annoyed - to Cindy)

Well then get in the front seat. I ain't your chauffeur.

She rolls her eyes and moves up.

ALVIN

(under his breath)

You think I don't got work too? Shit.

Drives off.

INT. ALGEBRA CLASS - LATER

The TEACHER writes equations on the chalk board. Frank tries to keep up.

TEACHER
...X times A divided by 326...

A KID tries to get Frank's attention.

KID
Psst. Psst.

Frank doesn't answer.

KID
Yo, glasses. Help me out with this.

Frank shakes his head and goes back to work.

KID
Come on, she's going to fast for me.

Frank looks at the teacher. She's not looking. He slides his paper over so the Kid can see. The Kid copies as fast as he can.

Too late. The teacher sees them.

TEACHER
You two. If you have questions, ask me.

She looks at her roster.

TEACHER
Frank Brewster. Congratulations.
It's your turn at the board.

Frank sighs as he goes to the front.

At the chalk board, he muddles through the equation. Hesitant. Uncertain in his writing.

The Teacher looks at the equation.

TEACHER
(puzzled)
Are you sure you want to do that?

FRANK
Umm... no... I guess not.

He erases his work. Tries again.

TEACHER
 Wrong again.
 (concerned)
 You don't know the answer to this?
 It's real basic stuff.

FRANK
 (shrugs)
 I don't know it.

TEACHER
 Really??

Frank stares blankly.

TEACHER
 (giving up)
 Ok, go sit back down.

KID
 (to a friend - sotto)
 We know which nerd not to cheat off
 this year.

Frank tries to hide in his notebook.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

Frank eats at a table all alone despite the flurry of activity around him. Doesn't seem fazed by it. Chomps away at his sandwich.

EXT. TRACK - LATER

Frank is trying his best to run around the track, but fading fast. Some JOCKS run up to him. They poke him in the gut and make fart noises as they run past.

Frank gives up and collapses on a bench.

The COACH comes over. He looks at his roster.

COACH
 Brewster, comma, Frank. New kid, right?

FRANK
 Yeah.

COACH
 You can't just give up like that.

FRANK
 (defeated)
 Yeah, I know.

COACH
 Doesn't really matter if you can
 run the full 10 laps. Just matters
 that you try. Girls like a guy who
 doesn't give up, you know.
 (beat)
 I bet you're a real lady-killer.
 Bet you've got lots of girlfriends,
 right?

Frank looks at him like he's crazy.

FRANK
 Uh, yeah. Something like that.

COACH
 You wanna look good for your ladies
 right? Burn some of that baby fat,
 right?

Frank tries to hide his fat the best he can.

FRANK
 Can I go to the nurse?

COACH
 (puzzled)
 You feelin' alright?

FRANK
 I'm feeling kinda nauseous.

COACH
 (sighs)
 Ok, Brewster. Go see the nurse.

Frank slumps off.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

It's a modest home. Low income, but not poor. Not much stuff
 on the walls. Essential furniture only.

Frank eats dinner on the couch. Flips channels on the TV.

His Mother joins him with a plate of her own.

MOTHER

Two months and I still can't get used to this new job.

Frank flips another channel.

MOTHER

So, how was your first day?

FRANK

Alright.

MOTHER

Classes any good? How many asshole teachers you got?

FRANK

Just a couple I guess. Same as the last school.

MOTHER

You know, I'm really sorry we had to move so fast. I know you were getting to like your old school.

FRANK

It's ok, mom. I know you gotta move where the work is.

MOTHER

I wouldn't have to if your Dad's alimony would come in on time for once --

FRANK

-- Mom.

MOTHER

Alright, alright. I don't want to get into it either.

(beat)

You got homework?

FRANK

A little.

MOTHER

Homework on the first day!? Jesus Christ! I know we're trying to beat the Japanese and all, but gimme a break. They need to give you kids some time to get settled at least. Sheesh.

FRANK
I'll get it done, don't worry.

MOTHER
I know you will, honey. 'Cause
you're smarter than any of those
asshole teachers think you are.

She finishes her last bite and leans over Frank. Kisses his forehead.

MOTHER
Don't stay up late tonight, hun.
Not too much time on the CB, k?

She walks into the kitchen.

MOTHER
'Cause tomorrow's gonna be a better day.

Frank flips another channel.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

Frank rides his K-mart bike up to the local truck stop. Truckers pull off the highway to gas up. Frank watches them all. Looking at each trucker carefully.

He goes into the mini-mart.

INT. MINI-MART - CONTINUOUS

He makes a b-line for the candy aisle. His eyes light up at the massive selection before him. Chocolate it is.

BACK OUTSIDE

Frank sits on a curb across from the trucks happily munching on his chocolate bar.

Some SKATERS come racing up and do tricks right next to Frank like he's not even there.

JIMMY (17) -- long hair -- wild -- cool -- grinds to a halt in front of Frank who's suddenly in his way.

JIMMY
He kid, this is our skate spot.
Move it.

Frank gets up and moves over a few feet. The other Skaters are still doing their tricks.

JIMMY

Nah, man. Git on that shit bike and take off.

FRANK

I just wanna watch the trucks. I won't get in your way.

Another skater, VIC (16) -- skinny -- weasel -- jumps in.

VIC

That's not the point, chubbs. God made this concrete for us, not you, doughboy.

Frank gets up and is about to leave when Vic swoops in and snags the last piece of his chocolate bar.

VIC

HA. HA.

Jimmy gets in Vic's way.

JIMMY

Gimme that, dick.

Vic hands it over. But instead of handing it back to Frank, Jimmy wolfs it down. Vic and Jimmy have a laugh and go back to their skating.

Dejected, Frank walks off with his bike.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Frank is sitting alone at a table as usual eating away.

OVER AT THE LUNCH LINE

STEPH (16) -- punk goddess -- short hair -- her own style -- looks around for a table with her friends: VANESSA, JEN, RACHEL. Everything's full.

Jimmy, Vic and the other Skaters wave them over to their table.

Steph rolls her eyes.

RACHEL

Just ignore him, Steph. Keep walking.

There's no room anywhere. They come to Frank's table. They all stare at Frank. He just stares back like a deer in the headlights.

STEPH
Let's just sit here. Who cares.

The girls shrug.

STEPH
Is it cool if we sit with you, kid?

Frank almost chokes on his sandwich.

FRANK
Yeah, sure.

The girls have already sat. They chat like girls do. Frank's hardly noticed.

He eats more slowly now. Looking at the girls without looking like he's looking at the girls. Scared. Curious. Especially Steph. She's obviously the popular one -- happy -- full of life -- laughs easy.

She looks at her cafeteria veggies -- mush.

STEPH
(to friends)
Grrross. How can they expect us to eat this crap?
(to Frank)
You like this? This is disgusting, huh?

FRANK
Y-yeah, disgusting.

Back to her friends. They chat away. Frank hides a secret smile as he takes another bite of his sandwich.

Behind them on the wall, some students put up a huge sign: "HARVEST BALL. DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY. HURRY! GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!"

Steph and her friends look on with disgust.

RACHEL
(scoffs)
When are those losers going to give that shit up?

VANESSA
"Harvest Ball" -- it's so like... 50's, or something.

Jen mimes a debutante.

JEN

Ooo. Look at me. I spent 500 dollars on a hideous dress and a limo.

Steph picks up the mime.

STEPH

And all so my lame-ass boyfriend can get drunk and feel me up.

They all have a laugh.

Frank has stopped eating and is now blatantly staring at them.

The girls notice. A bit weirded out... then burst out laughing.

Frank isn't sure if he's embarrassed or supposed to laugh with them.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

The BELL RINGS. School's out. Frank waits in a corner just outside the main doors. He watches intently as all the kids flood out.

Finally, Steph and her girlfriends come bounding out. Frank smiles, but keeps his distance. Not sure what to do.

Just then, Jimmy, Vic, and the other Skaters come flying out behind them on their boards. Steph and the girls are enveloped by them and squeal with delight and annoyance.

Jimmy tries to steal a quick kiss from Steph. She fends him off with a mix of flattery and annoyance. They all head out to the parking lot.

Frank's smile is gone.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - SAME DAY

Frank walks past his brother's room. The door's open. He's playing video games.

ALVIN

Hey, Frank. Come here.

Frank pops his head in. Cindy's on the bed reading a magazine.

FRANK

What?

ALVIN

Come check this out.

FRANK

I don't feel like it.

ALVIN

Come on. Come in here.

Frank sits with Alvin against the bed playing video games on a setup that's way to expensive for this neighborhood.

Alvin revels in his new gear.

ALVIN

New controllers, new headsets. I can play with some dude in Pakistan. For real. Here, try it out.

FRANK

Nah, I don't know how to play.

He puts the headset on Frank anyway.

ALVIN

Come on, put this on.

(hands him the controller)

A - to fire, B - to run faster,

Then arrows - move you around.

That's about it. Ok, they're starting up.

(into the headset)

Ok, we're ready Scotty, let's go.

Frank and Alvin play a military game on his High Def TV.

FRANK

Like this?

ALVIN

No, shoot him. Shoot him! A! A - left! Now - B!

Frank's character gets wasted on screen.

ALVIN
Ouwvwch!
(into headset)
Relax! It's my kid brother.

FRANK
I suck.

Frank takes the headset off.

ALVIN
No, it's ok.
(into headset)
Then get outa here!

Frank thinks he's talking to him. Alvin sits him back down.

ALVIN
Not you. Just sit here and watch
how I do it. You'll learn.

CINDY
He doesn't want to play. Let him go.

ALVIN
I didn't ask you.

CINDY
He obviously has better things to
do with his life than play video
games all night.

Frank resigns to his fate.

ALVIN
Is that some kinda comment about
somethin'? You trying to say
somethin'?

CINDY
I'm just sayin'.

ALVIN
Well quit sayin'. Go back to your
magazine.

CINDY
Whatever.

Frank looks over at Cindy -- an idea forming in his eyes.

FRANK
(to Cindy)
How did you and Al meet, Cindy?

She drops her magazine.

CINDY
You wanna know, you really wanna
know?

Frank nods.

CINDY
He came in stinkin' drunk when I
worked at Burger Hut back in Cali.
You remember that place?

FRANK
Yeah.

CINDY
Him and his loser friends were all
loaded and giving me shit at work.

ALVIN
She loved it. She thought I was so hot.
I was the highlight of her night.

CINDY
Huh. Please. You were lookin' all
ratty and scrawny. I never dated
guys lookin' like you.

She goes back to her magazine.

FRANK
I don't get it. How did you two end
up with each other then?

She smiles.

CINDY
He came in everyday that week after
that. Sober, of course. He was nice
to me. Walked me to my car after
work. It was real sweet. Showed me
he really cared.

ALVIN
Then I banged her in the back seat
that Friday.

Cindy wops him upside the head with her magazine.

CINDY
And he wasn't such an asshole back then.

ALVIN
Oww! You could've broke my new
headset!

CINDY
You see? That's all he cares about
anymore. Never takes me out or
anything.

ALVIN
You're my fiance, I don't have to
take you out anywhere anymore.

She hits him upside the head again.

ALVIN
Quit that!

FRANK
I gotta go. Thanks Cindy.

CINDY
For what?

Frank leaves.

ALVIN
(into headset)
Scotty? Scotty, you're breaking up? Shit.

He rips off the headset.

ALVIN (CONT'D)
Are you happy? You're not getting a
ring now.