

FADE IN:

INT. JOSEPH'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

JOSEPH SCHMOE is asleep on a couch too small for his body. His right leg dangles out from underneath his blanket to the floor revealing his law school sweatpants, which go along with a basic white T-shirt.

His right hand hangs to the side grazing his manual alarm clock. The clock stands on a wooden bar stool taken from the kitchen area across from the couch. Also, an open aspirin bottle and a half empty beer glass rest on it.

Slightly to the right, the television tuned to the local news is on from the night before.

A NEWS ANCHOR reports on the lead story.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Prosecutors are still reeling the from stunning decision handed down yesterday by Nassau County District Judge Adam Martin granting defense counsel's motion to dismiss all sexual assault charges made against 22 year old Mario Rossi by his alleged victim, 18 year old Rebecca Lyons. Here is Public Defender Joseph Schmoe coming out of court alongside Rossi yesterday afternoon.

The morning newscast shows video of Joseph leaving a courthouse surrounded by a mob of reporters yelling out questions.

Beside Joseph, MARIO ROSSI wears a used suit and a proud smirk.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Neither Schmoe nor Rossi were available for comment, however, victims rights advocates as well as spokespeople for the Lyons family are reportedly appalled by the decision.

The doorbell obnoxiously buzzes. Joseph mistakes the alarm clock for the door bell, grabs the clock and tosses it at the door without lifting his head from the pillow. The buzzing stops.

Seconds later, the doorbell buzzes again. Joseph opens an eye and slowly turns his head to the TV. The WEATHERMAN flails his arms around in a state over an impending storm.

Joseph glances at the rubble that was his alarm clock and realizes he busted it for nothing.

From outside the hallway, ROSA, his 66 year old neighbor, knocks. She is short and round wearing an olive colored nightgown and hair remover over her lip. Tucked under her arm is a round fish bowl with rosary beads tied to it.

ROSA

Senor Schmoe! Senor Schmoe!

Joseph tries to ignore her but her forceful knocking continues.

ROSA (O.S.)

Me needa you help Senor Schmoe!

He struggles to sit up and wipes the side of his mouth. He swallows aspirin with the warm beer.

ROSA

Por favor, Senor Schmoe!

Finally, Joseph finally loses his temper, marches to the door and swings it open. Rosa looks up at him like he is God. He is more a disheveled mess than a Messiah.

JOSEPH

Rosa, for the last time, it's Joseph Ska-moe.

ROSA

Me wake you? Forgive me Senor Schmoe.

Rosa continues to mispronounce it.

JOSEPH

It's fine. Sleep's only the best part of my day but...

Joseph's eyes wander to the fish bowl. She tenderly holds it. Upon closer examination, a tiny orange fish floats in the food cloudy bowl.

JOSEPH

Oh Rosa, will you ever learn?

Rosa gets hysterical and falls to her knees.

JOSEPH

For Christ sake, relax. Not like this hasn't happened before.

Embarrassed and slightly regretful, Joseph lifts her up off the floor. The morning newspaper is near her knee. He notices his picture on the front page under the headline, "TRAVESTY." He tosses the paper into his apartment and welcomes her in.

JOSEPH

Rosa, it'll be OK.

Joseph reaches out for the fish bowl. She steps back clutching to the bowl.

ROSA

Me no lose Fugi.

JOSEPH

Well if you don't want Fugi to head to the big fish bowl in the sky,
hand him over.

(comforting)

He'll be alright.

Rosa smiles and nods. She gingerly rests the bowl in his open palms.

JOSEPH

Wait here.

He turns toward the bathroom a few feet behind the television.

JOSEPH

(whispers to himself)

Big fish bowl in the sky?

INT. BATHROOM

Joseph steps in and closes the door before flicking the lights on. The bathroom is dimly lit and ordinary.

He stares at his reflection in the medicine cabinet mirror. His face, though handsome, is tired and worn down.

A sharp, sudden headache causes Joseph to double over. He lowers the fish bowl over the sink. The loud clang is heard by Rosa in the living room.

ROSA (O.S.)

Está usted bien Senor Schmoë?

Joseph leans over the sink with his hand in his hand.

JOSEPH

It's Ska-moe! And it's English!

Angry, Joseph opens the cabinet.

It is full of pain medications. The only other items in it are razors, shaving cream, and Dixie cups. He takes a bottle of pills, opens it, shakes a few into his hand, fills a Dixie cup with tap water and downs them.

The pain subsides. He puts the bottle back and closes the cabinet. He lifts the fish bowl to eye level and scoops the very dead fish up with the Dixie cup. He pours the fish down the drain.

JOSEPH

Lucky bastard.

Dixie cup in hand, Joseph turns and heads to the toilet bowl. On top of the bowl there is a large rectangular tank full of Fugi fish. He scoops one up with and into the cup.

INT. JOSEPH'S LIVING ROOM

Joseph walks back in and holds the round bowl up for Rosa. A new Fugi is happily swimming around. She jumps up and down crying tears of joy.

ROSA

Fugi! Dios Mio!

She makes the sign of the cross as Joseph hands her the bowl. She kisses the bowl and grabs Joseph.

JOSEPH

Personal space Rosa.

She kisses him on the cheek. Joseph wipes hair removal cream off his cheek. Bowl in hand, Rosa turns it so Fugi faces him.

ROSA

(to Fugi)

Mira Fugi. Senor Schmoe is you angel of mercy.

Joseph sighs and moves her toward the door.

JOSEPH

Remember, go easy on the fish food. There are people starving in Ethiopia.

He softly pushes her into the hallway.

ROSA

Si Senor. Me no believe el periodico. They is full of shit.

Joseph smirks and swings the door shut. He breathes a sigh of relief and accidentally kicks the paper aside.

In that instant, his timed coffeepot percolates. He glares at the pot as it drips to welcome in a new day. Disheartened, he picks up the paper. He takes note of the date on the top right hand corner.

EXT./ INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

The state seal of the Office of the Public Defender hangs over the doorway.

Joseph stands in the hall and glares at the seal. His stare is so intense that he doesn't notice someone approach him until a cupcake with an unlit candle is put in his hand. He looks up to see NIKKI, his secretary.

JOSEPH

Oh hey Nikki.

She waves at him even though she is right next to him. He glances at the less than appetizing cupcake.

JOSEPH

Is this a paperweight?

Joseph examines the cupcake passing Nikki into the office.

NIKKI

I slaved over those. Happy 30th!

JOSEPH

Is that today?

NIKKI

Went to three bakeries and waited on a very long line.

The office is a cubicle filled, drab space.