

FADE IN:

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Stacks of NEWSPAPERS, dusty BOOKS, empty PIZZA BOXES, and a huge bowl of CIGARETTE BUTTS shroud the floor.

GEORGE (50), unkempt, in a ratty bathrobe over pj's, snores on his couch -- head back, jaw wide open.

BANG. The front door jolts him awake. He staggers over and opens it --

EXT. FRONT DOOR -- CONTINUOUS

Blinding sunlight. His tearing eyes spot the rolled up NEWSPAPER, five feet from the door. Paper-boy's long gone.

GEORGE

Idiot.

George clings to the door frame. Sweating, trembling, he stretches for the paper with his toe. His head spins. He rushes inside.

INT. GEORGE'S TOWN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

He stoops, panting. Wobbly, he pulls a rake from the closet.

EXT. FRONT DOOR -- CONTINUOUS

Defeated, George rakes in the newspaper.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

George hunches over the newspaper, searching for --

INSERT - CROSSWORD PUZZLE PAGE

A PUZZLE with caption: "Puzzles by George". Also on the page is a WORD JUMBLE. The caption: "Jumble Jim".

GEORGE (O.S.)

Miscreant.

BACK TO SCENE

CLOSE ON scissors slicing between the two puzzles. A HAND scrunches the word jumble into a PAPER BALL.

It flies across the room onto a four-foot pile of paper balls.

George carefully snips around his puzzle, when --

RUTH (O.S.)

GEORGE!

Startled, he cuts into his puzzle. Outraged, he hurls himself at the window, tearing open his drapes.

Neighbor RUTH (47), chipper type, kneels next to a small DOG. She scoops poop in a baggy, from their communal lawn.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Good boy, Georgie Worgie George.

EXT. GEORGE'S TOWN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

George glares through the front window. He throws it open.

GEORGE
George is the name of kings and
presidents, and not for...
(contemptuous)
Doggies!

He slams his window shut and draws the drapes. She lobbs the steaming poop on his side of the lawn.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

He scowls and lights a cigarette. RING. He grabs his phone.

GEORGE
Where's my money, Malcolm?

INT. MALCOLM'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

A neat, Ikea home office. MALCOLM (43), fidgety, talks on the speaker phone while calm MARSHA (35), prepares coffee.

MALCOLM
Nice phone etiquette, George.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION -- GEORGE AND MALCOLM

GEORGE
My money.

MALCOLM
George, George, George... no puzzles,
no money.

GEORGE
They're ready. Come get them.

MALCOLM
I'll send a courier.

GEORGE
You're my manager. You haven't been
here in a year.

MALCOLM
You haven't bathed in a year.

GEORGE
You can't even visit me on my fiftieth birthday?

MALCOLM
(lies)
Right, that's today. I was just telling Marsha.

MARSHA
Happy big five-o, George.

MALCOLM
And I have an offer from a new magazine. How's that for a birthday present?

O.S. SOUND of Ruth's dog BARKING.

GEORGE
Shut up, shut up.

Malcolm scowls. He whispers to Marsha --

MALCOLM
Ungrateful bastard. Watch me give him a heart attack.
(to George)
George, if you don't want the job, Jim will take --

GEORGE
-- JUMBLE JIM! You're letting that illiterate monkey-brained jumbler of words create crossword puzzles?

MALCOLM
He's good --

GEORGE
-- I'M IN TWO HUNDRED NEWSPAPERS. I GET FAN MAIL FOR CHRIST'S --

MALCOLM
-- FAN MAIL! Don't start that again. Everyone knows you sent that letter.

GEORGE
Lies. Character Assassins. I bet Jumble-brained Jim's behind --

MALCOLM

-- Jim's a nice guy, with friends,
and a life. Unlike you, he actually
goes outside.

GEORGE

I am an artist. I don't need to go
outside.

MALCOLM

I don't have time for this. Marsha
and I need to get ready for our Vegas
weekend. Do you want the contract
or not?

GEORGE

Yes, okay...

MALCOLM

I'll send a courier --

MARSHA

-- Malcolm will bring you the
contracts himself. And a gift.

Malcolm gives Marsha a filthy look. She reciprocates.

GEORGE

Well, if you insist.

George hangs up.

MARSHA

He's lonely.

MALCOLM

If he'd been mugged or something,
I'd be sympathetic -- but he just
stopped...living.

MARSHA

Well we're all he has.

MALCOLM

How did we get so lucky?

MARSHA

You were very bad in a past life.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

George takes a deep drag from his smoke.

RUTH (O.S.)

GEORGE!

George chokes and coughs. O.S. BARKING. George flips out.

GEORGE
I cast the evil eye upon you. Curse
you, dog. Die, I say. Die.

INT. GEORGE'S BATHROOM -- HOURS LATER

George snores in the tub, HEADPHONES on, ashtray on his chest.

EXT. GEORGE'S TOWN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Malcolm approaches George's door. He's surprised to see Ruth sitting on their shared stoop, sobbing.

MALCOLM
Are you alright, ma'am?

RUTH
George. He's dead.

MALCOLM
What?

RUTH
He had a heart attack. He died in
my arms.

MALCOLM
Oh my God.
(collapses onto stoop)
Poor George... I was just...

Malcolm steadies himself. He glances behind him and whispers.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
His body... Is he still inside?

RUTH
He's being cremated. I'm holding a
service for him on Sunday at three,
in Sunset Park. By his favorite
tree.

MALCOLM
Wow. You've taken care of everything.
How long have you and George...

RUTH
Fifteen years of bliss.

MALCOLM
I had no idea. That old dog. He
still had a few tricks in him.

RUTH
He was so smart.

Ruth bawls. Malcolm awkwardly pats her shoulder.

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