

BUONA FORTUNA

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FADE IN.

EXT. MARINA BOAT DOCK - EVENING

A sleepy seaside fishing village.

Commercial FISHING BOATS saunter in from the long day's fish. Scattered among them, a few PRIVATE BOATS whose large wakes threaten to swamp one SMALL SKIFF. Old, creaky and tired-looking could describe both the boat and its pilot, JOHN MERRITT (50s) who scowls and shakes his fist at the offenders, while struggling to keep the boat aright.

JOHN  
(shouting angrily)  
Down my boat and there'll be hell  
to pay!

He pilots the hobbling boat into a slip, its fishing nets piled haphazardly on the stern, obviously empty. The boat sputters, backfires and becomes silent as it floats the remainder of the distance into the slip.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
[to the boat]  
Dammit Estelle! You old worthless  
hunk of lard.

He tries in vain to restart the now hissing engine, to no avail. From the STERN side of the boat, the name "ESTELLE" withers, half faded away in peeling paint.

John wipes sweat from his weathered face, reaches into his pocket and pulls out a CELL PHONE. He attempts to dial, fails. Attempts again then looks at the phone screen in defeat. From John's POV...

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(reading message)  
*"Phone service suspended. Please  
contact us about payment".*

John mutters another curse and throws the phone overboard. It hits the water with a dull SPLASH.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(looking after the phone)  
Good riddance. Worthless piece  
of...

John throws the anchor rope around the pier and hoists himself onto the decking.

He stomps away a few steps and then returns, gives a swift kick to the side of the boat, hesitates, remorse clouding his face.

A beat.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Sorry old girl, you know I didn't mean that.

He shakes his head, turns once more and walks up the pier toward...

A weathered STATUE, one hand extended, holding a...

PLAQUE: "WELCOME TO FORTUNA".

The smiling female GODDESS, the town namesake, seems to leer as John walks by. He tosses the contents of a THERMOS CUP he carries at her, leaving dark liquid to drip down the face like tears.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(muttering to himself)  
Bitch.

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Ahoy, John!

John turns to see another fisherman, his long-time friend, DUB (60s) struggling with a net teeming with his catch.

DUB  
(puffing)  
If you're done with your catch, I could sure use a hand with this.

JOHN  
(considering the writhing fish)  
Done? I'm done alright. I didn't catch one damned thing all day other than a few beer cans and couple pieces of plastic.

He pulls a crushed beer can from his pocket and tosses it aside as Dub looks toward John's boat and empty nets.

DUB  
Ah gee, John. That's some tough luck, I guess I was just blessed today. I couldn't even haul them all in. I had to cut one of my nets loose or risk sinking my boat!

He shakes his head in disbelief at his good fortune, but then considers John.

DUB (CONT'D)  
I tell you what pal, you help me  
get this load into the dock market  
and we'll call half of it yours.

He smiles and nods at John.

JOHN  
I don't need your charity, Dub.  
There'll be other days.

Dub nods understanding.

DUB  
I didn't mean it as charity, John  
but it does seem like you've had a  
run of back luck lately and I know  
you'd do the same for me but...

He looks back at the loaded net.

DUB (CONT'D)  
I could still use a hand.

John sighs.

JOHN  
Sure ...sure. Let's get those fish  
outta there before they start to  
stink up the whole place.

Dub pats him on the back in gratitude.

DUB  
(chuckling)  
You know John, you ever think about  
asking old Fortuna over there to  
change your luck?

He nods toward the stone statue.

John rolls his eyes.

JOHN  
Pfft. That old beat up piece of  
quarry?

DUB  
Legend has it she watches over us  
fishermen. A lot of folks around  
here believe in it.

JOHN

Yeah, I know the legend. Never set much store by it. The last thing I need is to be asking for favors from a piece of rock.

DUB

Well, you can think about it. All she requires is an offering, you know. What would it hurt?

Dub winks playfully at John, looks up to the sky.

DUB (CONT'D)

Moonless night tonight. That's part of the legend. Might be worth a try.

John isn't buying it.

JOHN

Yeah well, moonless night or not, it's not me. I'm a lot of things, but I'm no gambler and I'm no believer in fate or fortune and especially old Roman goddesses.

He pauses in thought.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Besides, I just threw a cup of cold coffee in her face. That probably doesn't bode well for me.

Dub shrugs and shakes his head.

DUB

Probably not pal, probably not.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

John sits at the kitchen table of his modest, bare-bones home. A whiskey bottle accompanies stacks of envelopes and other papers littering the surface. From John's POV he flips through them: "PAST DUE" "ATTENTION NEEDED" "LATE NOTICE" and the like as he tosses each one aside, only to reveal another: "EVICTION NOTICE - CONTACT IMMEDIATELY". John flings the envelope across the room and slams his fist onto the table.

JOHN

Money, money, money. That's all life is about.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

If you don't have money you don't  
have a life. You don't have  
nothin'. Nothin'!

He grabs the whiskey bottle and takes a long draught from it,  
wincing as its burn sears his throat.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

John lies asleep, still at the kitchen table his head resting  
atop the pile of envelopes. Dead drunk. He stirs, moans and  
lifts his head.

JOHN

Why not? What do I have to lose?

EXT. MARINA DOCK - NIGHT

John staggers toward the statue of Fortuna, stops directly in  
front of her. Her face holds the same timelessness ...and  
disinterest. John looks up to the dark, moonless sky then  
back to Fortuna.

JOHN

(slurring his words)

You need an offering do you? Is  
that it? Pay to play?

He leers drunkenly, fishing in his pocket. He pulls out  
several one dollar bills and some change and dumps it in her  
outstretched hand.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's all I've got, your highness.  
Will that buy me any of your good  
fortune?

The statue gazes ahead, unhearing.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hmmph. Not impressed are you? Well,  
I'm used to that. I'm not a very  
impressive man. Never have been.

He stands for another couple moments, righting himself as he  
nearly falls over. Finally, he pats the statue and staggers  
back up the gangway into the darkness.

EXT. MARINA DOCK - DAY

John makes his way down the dock, obviously nursing a hangover. Haggard, still clad in the previous day's clothing, holding a hand to his head and squinting into the mid-day sun. Most of the berths are empty, the fishermen leaving long before daybreak. John stops at the slip where "Estelle" remains moored.

JOHN  
[bitterly]  
Good morning you old bucket of  
lard. I see you remained afloat  
over night.

John gingerly steps aboard, still holding one hand to his head and steadying himself with the other. He spies a PAPER NOTE wedged between the wheel and frame of the boat. He is perplexed but retrieves it.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(Reading aloud)  
*"Your boat has been repaired.  
Wishing you fair winds and  
following seas."*

John looks around for who could have left the note, sees no one. Looks back incredulously at the piece of paper, then lays it aside.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(shaking his head)  
Dub. Has to be.

He attempts to start the engine, which fires immediately to life. Lacking the hissing noise of the night before, it settles into an even purr. John then spies his fishing nets, left haphazardly piled on the stern. They now lay neatly folded and stored in their appointed bin. Again, John looks around. Still no one. He shrugs, plops behind the wheel and backs the boat out of her slip.

MONTAGE:

AFTERNOON passing into EARLY EVENING. John hauling in net after net, brimming with fish. CLOSE on John's face.

FADE TO:

FLASHBACK

The smiling face of Fortuna.

BACK TO PRESENT

John shakes his head in disbelief.

JOHN  
Nah, it couldn't be.

EXT. MARINA DOCK - EVENING

"Estelle", engine still purring quietly, glides easily through the water, squatted with the day's catch. John guides her expertly into her slip. Other fisherman, unloading their own day's work, stop to stare at the mother lode. John hops gleefully out of the boat and throws the tie rope over the pier.

JOHN  
(smiling to himself)  
Wait til Dub sees this.

Another FISHERMAN, HENRY (grizzled, 60s) stops to admire the catch and whistles his approval.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Hey, have you seen Dub?

HENRY  
I guess you haven't heard.

JOHN  
Heard? Heard what? I've been out all afternoon.

Henry gives a downward glance, remorseful, then looks to John.

HENRY  
Dub's boat went down this afternoon.

John is taken aback.

JOHN  
What? Where?

Henry points a gnarled finger.

HENRY  
Just up the Sound there.

John hesitates. Speechless.



HENRY (CONT'D)

Boat's gone but the Coast Guard got Dub. He's over at the hospital now. A little beat up but gonna be okay, or so I hear.

John is stunned. The note announcing the repair of his boat lays on the seat. He stares at it, disbelief clouding his face.

EXT. MAIN STREET - EARLY EVENING

John makes his way home on foot. His joy at his day's fortune overridden by his concern for his friend. Suddenly, he spies something on the sidewalk, a small slip of PAPER, green in color. He stoops, picks it up, turns it over. A LOTTERY TICKET with selected numbers printed across the front. John looks around to see who may have dropped the ticket, sees no one. He studies the ticket again, shrugs and places it in his shirt pocket.

FLASHBACK:

Again, the smiling face of Fortuna.

BACK TO PRESENT

JOHN

(to himself)

No way, just no way.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

John sits at his littered kitchen table studying the ticket. He reaches for the remote and flicks on the small TV on the countertop. As the reception flickers, a NEWS ANCHORMAN, (30s, TV handsome) is finishing up the evening news.

TV NEWS ANCHOR

And finally in local news, we apparently have a winning lottery ticket sold at a local supermarket! The winning numbers were 7, 9, 13, 29 and 37. No one has come forward at this time, but stay tuned and we will inform you when we know the lucky winner. State Lottery officials say whomever holds the ticket, is \$100,000 richer this evening!

John stares at the screen dumbfounded. He looks down at the ticket stub in his hand. From John's POV the numbers: 7, 9, 13, 29, 37.

EXT. MARINA DOCK - EARLY MORNING

The eastern horizon brightens revealing John sitting at "Estelle's" helm. He holds the ticket in his hand, still staring at it in disbelief. Henry approaches.

HENRY

You're out early. Figured you'd take the day off after the landfall yesterday.

John looks up.

JOHN

Any news about Dub? I was going to go by and see him at the hospital last night but ...something came up.

He glances back down at the lottery ticket.

HENRY

Dub's doing okay. Family's with him, but apparently he's had another stroke of misfortune.

John furrows his brow.

JOHN

Oh no, poor Dub. What now?

HENRY

Guess you've heard someone in town won the State lottery last night.

John nods, inconspicuously sliding the ticket into his jacket pocket.

HENRY (CONT'D)

As luck would have it, Dub's wife bought that ticket. Said she's been playing those same numbers all year, the ages of their two kids and three grandkids. Trouble is, she can't find it. Thinks it fell out of her purse on the way to the hospital to care for Dub.

John shrinks a little further.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Lord knows they could use that money with all the hospital bills coming and Dub being out of work for no telling how long, not to mention the loss of the boat.

John looks away, unable to look Henry in the eye.

JOHN

(barely above a whisper)  
That's terrible.

Henry nods and lingers for another minute.

HENRY

Well, gotta be going on. Those fish aren't going to catch themselves today, now are they?

John looks up, trying to force a smile.

JOHN

No. It takes work...and a little luck sometimes.

Henry nods in agreement and gives a parting wave as he walks away down the pier.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

John, again parked at his kitchen table. His companion, the whiskey bottle, stands half full within arm's reach. John holds his head in his hands. The lottery ticket, unredeemed, lays atop a new batch of late notices littering the tabletop.

JOHN

(to himself)

I just needed a little luck to get me going. That's all. Just a little luck.

He reaches for the TV remote. The TV alights to a MESSAGE across the screen:

TV SCREEN

(on screen)

*"Service interrupted. Please contact us to settle your account."*

John throws the remote forcefully at the TV, takes a large swig of whiskey from the bottle, stuffs the lottery ticket in his pocket and stomps out of the house, SLAMMING the door with force.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

John exits the hospital, head down, hands in his pockets. He strides toward the street ahead with purpose.

EXT. MARINA DOCK - NIGHT

John walks toward the head of the gangway and approaches the ever-watchful statue of Fortuna. He carries an OBJECT not fully visible in the darkness. He stops directly in front of the figure. The money he had left in her outstretched hand is gone, but for one DIME. He picks it up.

JOHN

(to the statue)

You're not what they think you are.  
I know the truth now. Not just the  
Goddess of Luck, but also the  
Goddess of Misfortune. We call  
that "running hot and cold" around  
here. I gave you every last cent I  
had just hoping for a little favor  
and yeah, I got that favor ...but  
it turns out you robbed someone  
else to give it to me.

John appears to await an answer. None comes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I may have nothing of value in this  
world, but I'm an honest man. I  
needed that money, but it wasn't  
mine. To keep it would be to steal  
...from a good man and a friend at  
that. So here I am. Empty pockets  
but a clear conscience. I won't be  
asking any more help from you, or  
anyone else for that matter.

A beat.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And just so you won't be granting  
any more wishes, here's a little  
parting gift from me.

He lifts the object he carries that is now evident in the dock lighting as a SLEDGE HAMMER. He swings it with all the power he can muster. The statue, rended in half, topples. John smirks in self-satisfaction.

A beat as he stares in contempt.

He spies something that catches his eye. He stoops to the base of the statue now partially upended. He scrapes away the debris only to discover CHISELED WORDS, long buried in sand and sea salt. He runs his finger over the long forgotten caveat.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(reading to himself)  
*"Whatever Fortune has raised on  
high, she lifts but to bring low."*

John stands, raises the sledgehammer once more and gives a final crushing blow to the statue of Fortuna.

FADE OUT.

THE END