

FISH BOWL
By
Brandon Schinzel

brandonschinzel@yahoo.com

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

GEORGE (70s), skinny, gray hair, lies motionless alone on one side of a double bed.

Warm light floods in through a half cracked window on a red beta fish in a small bowl. A large painting of an old gray woman hangs on the wall over the bed. George SNORES, ducks QUACKING outside.

The noise wakes George. His wrinkly hands search for glasses on the night stand. Inconvenienced, he places his glasses on his long nose and squints at the window.

Two ducks in a neighborhood pond outside his window.

GEORGE
Quite, Quite down!

Sitting up, he WRAPS on the window with his knuckles. The QUACKING halts. He slams the window shut.

He slips his feet into his slippers and looks to the painting of the old woman.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

BIG BAND music plays on a restored record player. The small dated kitchen is kept neat and bare.

Tapping his foot to the music, George opens the near empty fridge taking out a prepared plate of bacon and eggs.

Moving to the rhythm of the music he dances his way across the kitchen. His stiff joints won't allow him to keep up.

George sets the fish bowl on the table as if it were his guest. A large completed puzzle sits on the table.

He eats his breakfast quietly watching the two ducks play in the water through the window. He takes a bite of bacon and holds a small piece in the fish tank. The beta fish plucks the bacon from his fingers.

INT: LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The aged, neat 1970's living room has two worn leather chairs. The beta fish sits on a wooden nightstand.

George nervously arranges the pillows on the couch. He adjusts them ever so slightly.

He paces back and forth on the carpet trail worn from his pacing habit. He frequently checks the clock on the wall and peers out the front window.

GEORGE

He's here. Twenty minutes late!

He looks to the door and makes a last minute adjustment to the pillows on the couch.

George opens the front door to find a restless heavy REPAIRMAN standing before him wearing a Bluetooth headset.

REPAIRMAN

You George?

GEORGE

You're late.

REPAIRMAN

Sorry I had to pick my son up from kindergarten, you mind if he waits in here on the couch?

GEORGE

I can't have a terrorist running around in here.

REPAIRMAN

He'll be fine out there for a while.

Repairman enters scanning the room. George closes the door and follows.

GEORGE

It's by the window.

A 20 year old television balances on a beta max player in a cheap entertainment center. Repairman stops in his

tracks and looks to George.

REPAIRMAN

I can't fix this. It isn't worth fixing.

GEORGE

It's a good television set.

REPAIRMAN

I can't work on a TV this old, I don't have the tools.

George presses the power button on the TV.

Repairman studies the back of the TV set.

GEORGE

It won't turn ON when I push the button, it just needs a little adjusting.

Repairman closes the tool box.

REPAIRMAN

It is not worth fixing. You could buy two or three new ones for the price it would cost for me to fix it.

GEORGE

I don't need two or three television sets and I certainly don't need a new one. My set worked fine for twenty years.

(beat)

Just needs adjustments.

REPAIRMAN

It's a dinosaur, doesn't even have cable hookups.

(beat)

Listen, there are some great TV's out there, cheap too. I'll give you the name of a few stores..

GEORGE

Don't need a new one. It's a perfectly good TV set. I'm not gonna just throw it away.

Repairman looks down at his watch. George shakes his head.

GEORGE (CONTINUE)

(raising his voice)

Buy new, he says, bigger and better. I don't want some cheap plastic television set with a hundred buttons. I want my television set.

REPAIRMAN

I can give you the name of someone who might.

Repairman quickly reaches for a cell phone.

GEORGE

Be careful!

Turning he knocks the fish bowl off nightstand to the ground SHATTERING to pieces. The fish flops on the ground.

George's eyes widen.

REPAIRMAN

Oh, I am sorry. It was an accident..

Shocked, George glares at him.

REPAIRMAN

I'll replace it. I'll buy you a new one.

GEORGE

(steaming)

Get out!

KITCHEN

With haste, George sets the fish in a glass of water.

He adjusts his glasses and moves his head in for a closer inspection.

He looks over the fish as if a surgeon and carefully dips his finger in the water.

REPAIRMAN

Is it gonna be ok?

GEORGE

Just get out.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

George sits hunched over in an old wooden chair at the kitchen table. The dark window provides an isolated backdrop. Silence fills the room.

Before him is a glass of milk and a plate of bacon and eggs. The beta fish floats motionless in the glass of water.

George finishes his plate of food and takes a drink of milk. Sour faced and disgusted he spits the lumpy milk back into the glass.

BEDROOM

In a daze, he views his reflection dressed in a baggy decorated marine uniform. He finishes tying his tie and shoe laces.

He twists a wedding ring on his finger.

George turns off the thermostat along with the rest of the lights in the house.

LIVING ROOM

In uniform George rests calmly sitting in the leather chair.

The clock on the wall STRIKES nine o'clock.

A KNOCK at the door.

He displaces a revolver from his lap.

He checks the peephole and unlocks the dead bolt on the door. Concealing the revolver in his pant pocket he opens the door with safety chain attached.

A short, round, smiling hunched over MAILMAN (80s) wears a

mailbag and holds a few letters in his hand.

MAILMAN

(excited)

Good morning George... Nice uniform.
Special occasion?

GEORGE

What are you so cheery about?

MAILMAN

My son just had another baby girl.

(beat)

9 pounds 4 ounces. I am going to go
see her today after..

GEORGE

Maxine is dead.

MAILMAN

Maxine?

GEORGE

My beta fish.

MAILMAN

I'm sorry to hear, George.

GEORGE

Kid came to fix my television and
knocked it over. I tried to save
her. Their not cheap either.

MAILMAN

He should replace it and buy you a new
one.

Through the chain locked door he abruptly snatches the
letters from his hand.

They are interrupted by a loud QUACKING SOUND.

MAILMAN

You hear that?

GEORGE

My ears work perfect, unfortunately.
Damn things won't let me rest.

Mailman notices a box of bullets sitting on the coffee table.

MAILMAN
Everything ok?

GEORGE
Fine.

He shuts the door before the Mailman can say another word.

George tosses the letters on the coffee table.

Sitting in the chair, George's hands shake as he reaches for the weapon. He looks to the letters sitting on the coffee table.

He rips through them opening each one.

GEORGE
Bills.

George signs his name with an "X" on two checks.

INT: LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

George slumps in the chair and retrieves the gun from his pant pocket.

His finger reaches for the trigger as he draws the gun to his temple.

His eyelids peacefully slide shut.

A LOUD TELEPHONE RING cuts the silence.

George waits.

The phone continues to RING several times.

George grabs the phone from the nightstand while holding the gun to his head.

GEORGE
(angry)
Hello.

TELEMARKETER
Hello, is George available?

GEORGE
Speaking.

TELEMARKETER
Hello George, this is Mike calling with
Navigation telephone service. How are
you doing today?

George's eyes point towards the gun barrel resting on the
side of his head.

GEORGE
Fine.

TELEMARKETER
That's great George because I'm calling to
tell you about a special deal we're
offering only today. Let me ask you George,
are you interested in saving money each month?

George
No.

TELEMARKETER
Let me just explain exactly what I am
talking about.

GEORGE
People hang-up on you a lot don't they.

TELEMARKETER
Not once I tell them about how much money
I can save them every month. They usually
thank me.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

George's lifeless body rests in the chair with the gun lying in his palm. His arm is braced by the chair that holds the phone to his ear.

TELEMARKETER

You would be paying less than \$29.95 a month, if you went with this package we are offering only today.. Hello?

George lies motionless.

TELEMARKETER

Hello, are you still with me George?

George opens his half caulked eyes.

GEORGE

Yes, I'm still here.

TELEMARKETER

Should we go ahead and sign you up for the discount package?

GEORGE

No.

TELEMARKETER

OK, is there another plan that interests you?

GEORGE

No.

TELEMARKETER

Ok

(beat)

Well, my shift is getting over pretty soon.

George is interrupted by SCRATHING noise from the door.

TELEMARKETER

Is there any questions you have for me?

George hangs up the phone. SCRATCHING outside his front door. He exhales in anger and closes his eyes.

SCRATCHING continues.

GEORGE

Can't I have one moment.

He walks to the padlocked door and spies through the peephole seeing no one.

SCRAPING stops him in his tracks.

He flings open the door with gun drawn.

George looks down to find an injured duck sitting on his front step.

George lowers the gun.

GEORGE

(scolding)

You're the one making all this noise.

He closes the door as if he did not see the bird and makes his way back to his chair.

The SCRAPING continues.

George stops and looks to the door.

GEORGE

Awe, hell.

FADE OUT

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A wrinkled hand flips the button on the record player.
BIG BAND MUSIC plays.

The duck sits as a guest in a basket on the table across from him. George sits quietly eating his bacon and eggs staring into the basket.

His foot underneath the table taps to the music.

A single duck in a pond is seen through the window.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

QUACKING is heard. Leaves blow against the half cracked window.

George awakes peering down at an empty basket sitting next to the nightstand. He looks up discovering the duck perched on the open window seal.

He scrambles for his glasses.

The duck hops out the window flying away.

GEORGE
No Maxine!

He charges the window sliding it open. The sun bursts through the shades blinding him, the duck flies towards the light, feathers fill the air.

FADE OUT

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MORNING

A "Do Not Disturb" sign hangs on his front door swaying slightly back and forth.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is dark with shades drawn. The sound of a PHONE OFF THE HOOK.

George, dressed in his uniform pulls a bottle of prescription pills from his pant pocket.

FRONT LAWN

The Mailman stops in front of George's house.

LIVING ROOM

George empties the full bottle in his palm.

His eyes close.

FRONT LAWN

The Mailman walks up the cement stairs.

LIVING ROOM

The clock on the wall STRIKES nine o'clock.

A KNOCK is heard at the door.

George shoves the handful of pills in his mouth.

A tear rolls down his cheek.

FRONT PORCH

The Mailman RINGS the doorbell.

The door remains motionless.

The door slowly opens with chain attached revealing George.

MAILMAN

Good morning George.

GEORGE

You know, you can just leave the mail in my mailbox. That's what its there for. Besides its not Tuesday.

The Mailman continues smiling and holds letters out to him.

MAILMAN

Why are you still wearing your uniform?

GEORGE

Why are you so damn noseey?
What about you. Why are you here?
You are older than me shouldn't you be retired by now?

MAILMAN

I am retired.

GEORGE

From what? Professional pain in the ass.

MAILMAN

(laughs)

Some would say that. I'm a retired judge.

GEORGE

Liar.

MAILMAN

Served twenty-six years.

George accepts the letter handed to him.

MAILMAN

I have a picture of my grand daughter if..

Mailman holds the wallet size photo.

MAILMAN

Her middle name is Maxine.

(beat)

Thought you would like to know that.

George takes the chain lock off to fully open the door, looks closely at the picture.

GEORGE

Congratulations.

George slowly closes the door. Mailman stops the door with his foot and picks up a cardboard box.

MAILMAN

Wait, there's one more. Need you to sign for it.

George opens the door and looks at the Mailman curiously.

GEORGE

Who's it from?

Mailman examines the label on the box.

MAILMAN

Doesn't say.

George signs for it, closes the door.

He carries the box to his chair and sits down.

He opens the box as if it were his first time receiving mail.

He peers inside.

A small live tortoise crawls around in the box.

GEORGE

This doesn't make sense.

He rushes the box to the door as fast as his stiff legs will carry him.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A mail truck creeps away from the curb. George hurries down the front steps.

GEORGE

Stop!

The mail truck halts.

GEORGE

Somebody screwed up.

The Mailman looks down to George and nods his head.

MAILMAN

Take care George.

The mail truck drives off.

George holds the tortoise up to his eye level.

A slight Grin forms on his face.

He pulls his pants pocket inside out. A handful of wet prescription pills stick to his hand and fall to the ground.

BIG BAND MUSIC

George walks up the stairs with the cardboard box.

Two ducks sleep on the shore of the nearby pond.

FADE OUT