

FADE IN:

INT. KINGDOM MARKET AISLE - DAY

The store is old and small. It appears as though it saw its most recent remodeling take place in the 70's. The aisle is wide, stocked with salad dressing, condiments and such on one side with a deli and meats section extending the length of the aisle on the other side.

An OLD MAN wearing an old pin-striped three-piece suit waddles down the aisle, slowly pushing his carriage full of oranges.

Coming up the aisle is WILLIAM, a forty-something man with finely cut and combed black hair, parted perfectly on the left. He wears a dark blue smock with a name tag. With him is JOHN, a small and wiry teenager. His hair is black, stiff and shiny with too much mousse, and he wears a smock similar to William's.

WILLIAM

Now, John, since this is only your first day here, I will not hold it against you if you forget your responsibilities regarding the salad dressing. But just remember, the dates on the bottles are extremely important. I will not have this store selling bad dressing to our very appreciated and respectable salad eaters. You have to remember, the customer is ALWAYS right. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Do you understand me Jonathan?

JOHN

Yes. Yes sir. I understand.

WILLIAM

Good. We can conclude your training later, for now, I would like you to tidy up this aisle and make sure everything is facing forward.

JOHN

Okay, sir.

WILLIAM

Alright, go to the dressing!

William laughs a weak laugh at his own attempt at humor.

John just turns and starts on his work.

William's laugh dies immediately; he clears his throat and walks away briskly.

As John works, DENNIS DENSON a tall, thin man in his early twenties barges out of the deli doors. He carries a large platter filled with cold cuts. Eying John, who doesn't notice him, he puts the platter down and begins arranging it, impaling rolled-up bologna with toothpicks.

DENNIS

So, you're the new one, huh?

John turns toward Dennis.

JOHN

Huh?

DENNIS

You're the new guy, the young blood, the whelp, the future of Kingdom Market.

JOHN

Uh, yeah, I guess so. Hi, my name is John.

John walks over to Dennis, hand extended. Dennis quickly reaches over the counter and slaps a piece of chicken loaf into John's hand.

DENNIS

Eat that, it's good for you. Name's Dennis Denson, most just call me Pope Louis III, though. Long story. Anyway, did Willie show you the ropes yet?

JOHN

Yeah, he has a few more-

DENNIS

Forget everything he said, you're with me now. I'll teach you everything you need to know to survive in this kingdom.

As he speaks, Dennis continues putting the tooth picks in the cold cut platter.

DENNIS (CONT.'D)

First of all, stay away from Lucy Jenkins, I saw her first. She doesn't speak to me-yet, but I'm wearing her down. Once she gets a look at my masculine toes, and my grandfather's downright sexy ears, she'll be like butter, melting away on a hot potato.

Dennis reaches behind the counter and pulls out a plastic container, plopping it on the counter.

DENNIS

Do you know what this is, Johnny?

JOHN

No.

DENNIS

It's called Head Cheese. It's basically gelatin with a bunch of animal parts in it. But I see it as so much more.

JOHN

You do?

DENNIS

I see it as a God-given metaphor for women.

John stares at him in utter confusion.

DENNIS

Think about it. With Head Cheese, you never know what you're gonna get. Now, most people would just walk away from this stuff, but with a little understanding and curiosity, you've got yourself a great meal.

Dennis dips his finger into the gelatin and licks it off.

DENNIS

And the same goes with women. Treat them like Head Cheese, and they'll be gelatin in your hands.

Dennis takes a moment to reflect on what he just said.

DENNIS

Oh, yeah...

He snaps out of it.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Okay, next. When you're taking the trash out, watch out for Jacques.

JOHN

Jacques?

DENNIS

He's the resident homeless guy. He lives out back in the dumpster. He likes to give everyone advice, like he's some kinda Yoda or something. Like, he keeps telling me that my singing career will never take off until I can actually learn to sing. But I think that's all bull poopie. I still don't know how to clean the deli and look where I am now.

There is a long; awkward pause between the two.

DENNIS (CONT.'D)

Anyway, I suppose you've already been warned about old Ms. Avil.

JOHN

Avil? The old bat that lives down on Charon lane? She shops here?

DENNIS

Oh, you don't know. She practically owns the place. She's got Willie right in the palm of her creased hand. He'll do almost anything she tells him to.

JOHN

I heard she killed her husband because he didn't act rich enough. Why does she shop... here?

DENNIS

Because she can control everyone. She can be as evil as she wants to be and everyone just cowers before her. Not me, though. I never cower...I hide in the deli.

Dennis now begins putting olives on the ends of the toothpicks.

DENNIS (CONT.'D)

Stay away from her if you want to live. And don't dare talking back to her or disagreeing with her. God, I remember Jason Mcleary. Poor kid still can't even look at meatloaf.

Dennis stops what he was doing, looks off into the distance and shakes his head slowly. He then snaps out of it and puts the last few olives on the toothpicks, the platter now resembles a tray of little people.

DENNIS (CONT.'D)

That's all you need to know for now, young Jedi. Go forth and fight the dark side, as long as it's not Ms. Avil.

Dennis spins around towards a radio behind him and turns it on. Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Proud Mary" begins blasting throughout the aisle. Picking up a stick of pepperoni, he uses it as a microphone and begins singing, quite badly, to the platter.

John slowly turns back around and returns to his work.

INT. KINGDOM MARKET - LATER

The automatic doors swing open.

A pair of plump legs stomping across the linoleum tile.

MS. AVIL enters to store. Avil is quite old and quite large. Her icy blue eyes survey the scene around her.

A LARGE MAN, mid-twenties, with large, pronounced muscles tugs at a carriage that is stuck onto the rest. He looks at Avil and moves out of her way, bowing his head slightly and looking at her, then away, not wanting to meet her gaze.

Behind the man, two TEENAGE STOCKBOYS break up their conversation and walk away quickly. A third TEENAGE STOCKBOY walks up the aisle towards Avil. He does not notice her.

She walks into the store, chin held high, like a queen gazing down on her subjects. She ignores the large man, walking right by him. She steps on a cracked floor tile. Her foot stops immediately. Avil looks down, and then up.

The teenage stock boy is walking right towards her, oblivious. He WHISTLES as he walks. Avil is bearing down the frail boy. She leans into his face. Her face contorted in rage.

AVIL

Excuse me, young man! You! Fix this floor tile immediately! I almost died just now! I almost died! Do you want me to fall and shatter my skull? Well? Do you?

The stock boy is like a deer caught in the headlights. He looks to the left and to the right, trying to find a way out.

AVIL

I'm talking to you! Listen to me when I'm talking to you! Shattered skulls are the number one cause of death in the United States, you know!

STOCKBOY

I-I-I'll fix it r-right now M-Ms. Avil.

AVIL

Good. See that you do.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Avil walks down the crowded dairy aisle, like Moses parting the Red sea, everyone moves out of her way.

She turns into the detergent aisle and notices a baby in a carriage. Avil leans into the carriage and smiles at the child. Her smile is little more than a forced lip-twist. The baby starts screaming. Avil storms away, her smile now a scowl.

On a sale display rack, Avil is about to take the last can of Tuna fish when a YOUNG WOMAN grabs it first. After a glare from Avil, the woman hands her the can and quickly walks off.

Avil walks down the cereal aisle; William approaches her and talks excitedly to her. She barely listens, giving him an occasional nod. She walks by him, and he follows her like a lost puppy.

END MONTAGE.

INT. REGISTERS - LATER

As she walks by the checkout lanes, Avil spots LUCY JENKINS. A pretty young cashier in her early twenties, she is busily handling a large order. Her top button is unbuttoned.

Avil quickly approaches her, barging her way through the people in line that didn't see her initially.

AVIL

Young lady, button yourself up this instant! If you'd rather be naked, you'll have ample opportunity when you're burning in hell with the rest of the harlots!

Lucy runs away, beginning to cry and buttoning her top button.

INT. PRODUCE AISLE - LATER

John is sweeping. In the distance behind him Avil slowly strolls into the aisle, carefully looking for sales. As John continues to sweep Avil gets closer and closer, glancing at him occasionally. She rummages through a pile of pomegranates; picking out one, she stomps over to John.

AVIL

Young man, this pomegranate is bad.

She grabs John's finger and shoves it into a soft spot in the fruit.

AVIL

See? Now throw them all out now.

JOHN

I'll talk to the Produce Manager, but I don't think we'll have to throw all of them out, ma'am.

Avil stops, stunned for a moment, she stares at John. Her eyes narrow and she moistens her cracked lips. Her face takes upon the shade of the pomegranate.

AVIL

I don't care what the Produce Manager says! I say throw them all out! If one goes bad, it infects all the others like a plague! Do you want to poison the whole county with bad fruit? Food poisoning is the number one killer in America you know!

JOHN

(weakly)

I thought it was heart disease.

AVIL

Shut up! You have no opinion here! I'm the customer and I'm right! You are all just ants! Ants!

JOHN

But, ma'am, if you'll just listen-

AVIL

I will not have you talk back to me! You're...you're FIRED! Well, you will be as soon as I talk to William about your criminal behavior!

Avil throws the pomegranate at John's feet and storms off. She then turns back towards John.

AVIL

And clean that up!

Avil storms off again.

INT. WILLIAM'S OFFICE - LATER

William's office is meticulously cleaned and arranged.

On one wall, he has family pictures, on another, store pictures; on another wall, calendars and schedules. Nobody in any of the pictures seems to be smiling.

His desk is arranged neatly as well with papers stacked perfectly in one corner, with a paper weight placed exactly on the center of the pile.

William sits behind his desk wiping sweat off his brow and doing his best to keep himself calm. Across from him sits John, his head and shoulders stooped. He doesn't look William in the eye.

WILLIAM

I'm not sure I buy that story, Jonathan. Everyone knows Ms. Avil as soon as they see her. She is a matriarch of the town and she's rather...well, it's hard not to know who she is.

JOHN

I swear, sir, I was just doing my work and, well I just didn't recognize her.

WILLIAM

Ms. Avil wants me to fire you. Can you give me a good reason why I shouldn't?

JOHN

I'll be a great worker for you.
I'll be on time, I'll be quiet and
I'll never cause trouble again.

WILLIAM

As you know, Ms. Avil is quite
wealthy. This store really needs
customers like that. We can't
afford to lose her. You understand
that, right?

JOHN

Yes sir, yes I do.

WILLIAM

Good, because I'm going to give you
another chance. But I don't want
you ever talk to her again unless
it's regarding store business. Do
you understand me?

JOHN

Yes sir.

WILLIAM

Good. Now go west young man...and...and
stock aisle six.

John leaves without even smiling at William's joke. William
sits at his desk quietly for a moment; he bows his head.

WILLIAM

(sighing)
I'm not funny.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - DAY

Two half-full dumpsters stand on the left side. The back
doors burst open and John comes out with a box filled with
trash. He dumps the trash into the dumpster and begins to
beat away at the box.

JOHN

(to himself)
Why certainly Ms. Avil, you can
have the last bottle of Lactaid. I
saved it all for you. Let me just
kick you in the head first!

John kicks the box violently.

JOHN
(to himself)
Oh, you wanted the bananas to be more ripe? I'm sorry, I'll just magically ripen them for you...after I punch you in the gut!

John punches a hole in the box.

JOHN
And then, let me body slam you into the dumpster!

John throws the box into the dumpster and stands there, for a moment, catching his breath. Suddenly, the trash begins to move and shift. JACQUES, an old man dressed in a stained civil war confederate uniform, crawls out of the dumpster. He sits down on the edge of the loading dock, only barely noticing John. John stands there staring in disbelief.

JACQUES
I say, these earthquakes are getting worse and worse. I can't even sleep anymore.

JOHN
You...you must be Jacques.

Jacques turns and acknowledges John for the first time.

JACQUES
Oh, hello Jonathan.

JOHN
H-how did you know my name?

JACQUES
The garbage speaks volumes to me.

JOHN
Oh.

JACQUES
I hear you speaking of Ms. Avil.
You want to harm her?

There is a long silence between them.

JOHN
She's horrible! She's so horrible!
Ever since I accidentally talked back to her she's been trying to get me fired.

(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)

Like, just the other day, I was stocking the bug spray, just minding my own business, when she came along and started screaming in my ear about the price of Raid. I ran to the bathroom to get away from her and I accidentally ran into the ladies room! She screamed and called me a rapist for the rest of the day! I hate her!

JACQUES

Ah, the hero and his great enemy. 'Tis the classic tale between good and evil.

JOHN

Someone should stand up to her or something.

Jacques reaches into his jacket and pulls out an old dog-eared paperback. On the cover we can see the title "Valley of Passion," and below the title, a voluptuous woman and muscular man embrace.

JACQUES

The struggles of our everyday life are reflected in our great literature. We can derive much knowledge from it.

Jacques flips to the middle of the book, clears his throat, and begins reading.

JACQUES

(reading)

"...Bo and Jack faced each other like pit bulls, ready to strike. Sweat poured down their bulging biceps, down their great bodies to their plump manhoods. Suddenly, Fay barged into the room, her negligee was torn and it revealed her shapely curves. She placed her soft body between the two men. "Don't! Don't do this. Don't fight on my account. I love you both. Please don't fight over me, my loves. I couldn't live with myself if something happened." Fay's passionate breath flowed between her pouting crimson lips."

JACQUES

(to John)

Fay is a woman of peace, happiness.
Bo wants only violence, death. Be
Fay, not Bo, Jonathan. Fighting
Avil will only defeat the goodness
within you. Be strong and resist
her dark temptations. Be Fay, not
Bo.

Without another word, Jacques stands and crawls back into the dumpster, disappearing amongst the garbage. John sits there, staring at the dumpster in utter disbelief.

INT. KINGDOM MARKET - LATER

John walks through the double doors back into the store.

INTERCOM VOICE

John up front to bag.

INT. REGISTERS

John walks up to the busy area. The lines are long, filled with screaming children, annoyed parents and elderly. John walks up to the register and begins bagging. He looks around and freezes. Ms. Avil is standing in another line with a full cart and is about to leave. She sees him and an evil smile spreads across her face.

Avil begins walking out with her groceries. She walks by John, stealing an evil glance in his direction. John glances in her direction and quickly averts his gaze, trying to concentrate on his bagging. Avil bumps her cart into John.

AVIL

Get out of my way!

No response from John, he continues working.

AVIL

I said get out of my way! Now, you
little ant!

John, face red, takes a half step out of her way. His foot moves slightly, but is still in the way. Avil's foot is about to collide with his.

Her eyes open wide and she pitches forward in SLOW MOTION.

Everyone turns and looks as Ms. Avil falls. Several people reach out feebly to grab her, but no one seems to really want to touch the woman.

John stares down at the falling Avil in disbelief, and she grabs John's smock and pulls. Eyes wide, John disappears from view as he falls as well. The two hit the floor. Avil screams and wraps her hands around John's neck and begins strangling him. John feebly fends her off.

JACQUES (V.O.)
Remember, Jonathan. Be Fay, Not
Bo...Not Bo...Not Bo...

As he fends her off, John shakes his head and screams. He begins strangling her as well. Taking a quick glance, he notices a nearby price gun. John grabs it and opens fire on Avil.

Dozens of bright red 99 cent stickers fill the old woman's mouth. She spits a glob of stickers out of her mouth and they SMACK onto John's forehead.

John screams in rage and pulls at her blue hair, pulling her wig off in the process. With that, Avil sends her shoe into John's crotch. John lets out a high-pitched battle cry and continues strangling her.

Avil suddenly clamps down onto John's nose with her mouth. The two roll over; Avil is now on top of John and she beats her fists against his body while continuing to clamp down on his nose.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

Ambulances and police cars are scattered around. Flashing lights illuminate the storefront in reds and blues. Dozens of people watch as PARAMEDICS wheel two stretchers out of the store.

ANGLE ON AVIL

She is lying in the stretcher, her head rolling from left to right. Several price stickers are still stuck around her mouth.

AVIL
I see Him! I see the Savior. I'm
coming Lord! I'm coming!

He is in his own stretcher. His nose is purple and swollen and the glob of stickers is still on his forehead. William walks quickly along side.

WILLIAM
You are so fired. You are
just...Fired. If I could say it in
another language, I would.
(MORE)

WILLIAM (cont'd)
Vous are le fired! I don't know,
you're just fired!

John takes William's hand in his and looks at him.

JOHN
Yes, but victory is mine.