

FADE IN:

INT. BANK - DAY

MR. PUPPY, a smiling, sweet-faced man in his 30's, strolls through the bank lobby, past several dead employees and customers. He holds a gun in one hand; in the other he cradles a CUTE LITTLE PUPPY. He steps over a DEAD SECURITY GUARD and makes his way to the exit.

TWO NSA AGENTS burst into the bank, guns blazing.

AGENT 1
Drop that puppy! Now!

AGENT 2
Put down the dog or I swear I'll
shoot it!

Mr. Puppy holds up the tiny dog. The Agents, suddenly mesmerized, lower their guns.

AGENT 1
Ooh, look at the little puppy.

AGENT 2
Sure is a cute little critter.

Grinning like fools, they approach Mr. Puppy and begin petting his dog. It licks their hands and faces.

AGENT 1
Ooh, look how fuzzy he is.

AGENT 2
Hi puppy, hi puppy puppy puppy.

EXT. BANK - DAY

The sound of two gunshots from inside the bank. Mr. Puppy walks out, carrying a bag of loot.

POLICE CARS screech to a stop. SEVERAL COPS get out and rush Mr. Puppy, but lower their guns when they catch sight of his dog. They rush over to pet its head and scratch its ears.

A CROWD gathers, gushing over the puppy, jockeying to get a better look. PEOPLE start shoving. Fights break out.

SOMEONE fires a gun, silencing the Crowd. Everyone looks around, confused. Mr. Puppy is gone.

As the crowd disperses, the shooter is revealed to be a woman, AGENT KATRINA ANDREWS, 45, dressed in a white suit, black shirt and white tie. She grabs a YOUNG COP and flashes her badge.

KATRINA
Katrina Andrews, NSA.

YOUNG COP
(dazed)
Yes, ma'am.

KATRINA
Did you see it officer?

YOUNG COP
Yes, ma'am, I, I sure did. Too bad you missed it.

KATRINA
Missed what?

YOUNG COP
Just the cutest puppy you ever saw.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - DAY

BIG REWARD, a scraggly mutt, sleeps in the doorway of a small kitchen, blocking GRAMSY, a seventy year old woman in a wheelchair.

GRAMSY
Move, Big. Come on, move. Big, move!

Gramsy wheels her chair closer to nudge the dog. Big Reward ignores her.

GRAMSY (CONT'D)
(shouts)
Jack! Can you please come over here and move this lazy mutt? Jack!

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jack, a gangly teenager, tries to balance on his bed as he tapes a James Bond movie poster to the wall.

GRAMSY (O.C.)
Jack!

Startled by Gramsy's voice, Jack rips the poster.

JACK

Crap!

GRAMSY (O.C.)

Jack!

JACK

On my way, Gramsy!

Jack quickly tapes the poster to the wall, fixes the tear, then hops off the bed to take a look. The entire wall is filled with movie hero posters, all ripped or stained.

GRAMSY (O.C.)

Jack!

Jack spins and knocks over a Batman action figure, cracking the cape. He puts Batman and his cape back on his night table, next to the rest of his collection of damaged superheroes, then rushes from the room.

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jack comes barreling from the hallway towards Big Reward and Gramsy. Unable to stop his momentum, he accidentally steps on the dog, which yelps but doesn't move.

JACK

Sorry, Big. Poor mutt.

GRAMSY

It's okay, Jack. Big's used to it.

Jack grabs the dog's legs and drags him out of the doorway so Gramsy can wheel herself into the living room.

GRAMSY (CONT'D)

Thank you, sweetheart. That dog's so stubborn, sometimes I think he's the reincarnation of your granddad.

JACK

Well, I'll try not to step on him so much, then. I gotta go, Gramsy.

GRAMSY

I think the lessons are helping, Jack. Don't you?

Jack picks up a birdcage. There's a dead parakeet inside.

JACK
Tweety Six might disagree, if it
was still alive, and could talk.

GRAMSY
Oh, Jack, I'm sorry. I thought this
one --

JACK
It's okay. I'm used to it.

GRAMSY
You don't have to bury everything,
Jack.

JACK
Yeah, I do. Everything should have
a place to go when it's dead.

Jack leaves with the birdcage, accidently banging it against
the furniture.

EXT. LULU'S YARD - NIGHT

Jack scrapes dirt over a freshly dug grave next to the empty
birdcage, pats it down and stabs the dirt with a popsicle
stick. He stands up, brushes the dirt off his hands and sadly
observes his latest addition to dozens of tiny popsicle-stick
headstones. Standing a few feet away is LULU, a teenage girl.

LULU
Mom says if you bury any more
animals we'll have to register as a
pet cemetery.

Lulu hands Jack a handful of weed flowers. Jack sprinkles
them over the fresh grave.

JACK
Maybe I should register as a menace
to all living creatures.

LULU
Clumsy's not a crime, Jack.

JACK
More like a punishment. I just wish
I wasn't so nervous around people.
And, when I'm by myself.

LULU

I think your grandmother's crazy;
she keeps buying you all these
small animals.

JACK

She thinks it will teach me to
control myself.

He holds up his hands.

JACK (CONT'D)

Keep my hands from twitching all
over the place.

Lulu takes Jack's hands.

LULU

They're not twitching now.

They look at other until the silence becomes embarrassing,
then let go of each other's hands.

LULU (CONT'D)

Are your lessons working?

JACK

I don't know, Lulu. I got class in
a few minutes.

LULU

Show me.

Jack steps away from the pet cemetery and does a few basic
karate moves.

LULU (CONT'D)

That's great, Jack.

JACK

Maybe I'm finally getting the hang
of it.

Encouraged, he steps forward and executes a high kick.

INT. KARATE STUDIO - NIGHT

From a sparring stance, Jack throws a wild kick that misses
his opponent, DEXTER, a truck-sized teenager, but strikes the
referee, an OLD SENSEI. Jack loses his balance and
accidentally elbows Dexter in the mouth. The three of them
tumble to the matt as a ROOM FULL OF STUDENTS look on.

JACK
Sorry, Dexter. Sorry Sensei.

DEXTER
(gets up, wiping a bloody
mouth)
Son-of-a-bitch, Jack, I'm gonna
kick your ass!

OLD SENSEI
(out of breath, massaging
his ribs)
No, Dexter, not our way. Must
respect the ancient traditions.
Jack, uh, maybe you go over there,
corner of matt, practice by
yourself for a while.

JACK
Sorry. Yes, Sensei.

OLD SENSEI
Concentrate.

JACK
I'll try.

The Other Students step away to give Jack plenty of space.
Sensei grabs Dexter and examines his cut lip.

OLD SENSEI
(whispers)
After class, kick his ass.

Dexter gives Jack a fierce, pitiless look.

INT. NSA HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

In a small conference room, the projected image of Mr. Puppy's kind, friendly face. Seated around the table, operating the projector, is Agent Katrina and two others: AGENT TOBY, a baby-faced 21 year old, and AGENT GREY, a hardened man in his 60's.

KATRINA
What you are looking at, gentlemen,
is the single most dangerous man in
the world.

AGENT TOBY
He looks like Mr. Rogers.

KATRINA

Don't let it fool you, Toby. Mr. Puppy's murdered civilians, cops, some of our best agents. Shot point blank, too enamoured by his dog to carry out their mission.

AGENT GREY

Hell, I'd shoot the bastard in a second. And his puppy. I don't even like dogs.

AGENT TOBY

You don't like dogs? How can you not like dogs?

AGENT GREY

Never liked dogs.

KATRINA

Neither did Lopez. Hated them, in fact. His father was a mailman, died of rabies when he was just a kid. But we wanted to be sure he was ruthless enough to do the job, the Agency took over a pound and ordered Lopez to kill every single dog with his bare hands, a job he did with a little too much pleasure. Frankly, I couldn't stand that sick son-of-a-bitch.

AGENT TOBY

What happened?

KATRINA

Mr. Puppy sent Lopez back with a bullet in his brain and traces of dog saliva all over his face.

Agent Katrina switches the screen to a picture of the Puppy.

AGENT TOBY

That's a cute dog, but not that cute.

AGENT GREY

Got to be some kind of chemical.

KATRINA

Deeper than that, Grey. Mr. Puppy was one of ours, just a schlep in Research, till he disappeared five years ago and started robbing banks and jewelry stores. Bought himself a lot of very bad, very smart people. Started his own criminal organization -- calls it The Puppy Mill. We think he's got big plans. Makes Osama Bin Laden look like an underachiever.

AGENT GREY

You're not telling us everything, are you?

KATRINA

I'm telling you enough.

AGENT TOBY

Have you ever actually, uh, seen the puppy?

KATRINA

Only on YouTube.

AGENT GREY

I thought it was a spoof.

KATRINA

We're counting on that. Our people are blogging twenty four seven to hide the truth. But he's getting a following.

AGENT GREY

Well, I'm looking at that dog, and all I know is I'd be happy to put a bullet right between those big, brown puppy eyes.

KATRINA

No, you wouldn't. Anyway, I didn't call you here to play field agents. You're our best recruiters, so do what you do best. Put the word out. Find someone who can stop Mr. Puppy and stop him now. Someone special. Someone so cool, so controlled, so unflappable...

EXT. KARATE STUDIO - NIGHT

Jack, still dressed in his karate uniform, runs for the bus but trips over his unravelling white belt. The bus takes off. He re-ties his belt and starts walking. When he gets to the corner, Dexter, in street clothes, steps out and blocks him.

DEXTER
Hello, Spaz.

JACK
Hello, Musclehead. Sorry about
smashing your lip into your teeth.

Dexter touches his swollen lip.

DEXTER
That's okay. Sorry I got to beat
you to a pulp.

Dexter raises his fists. Jack just stands there.

DEXTER (CONT'D)
Are you ready?

JACK
Well, I haven't shaved, and my
underwear isn't clean.

DEXTER
Seriously, Jack. I'm going to start
pummelling you, so get ready.

JACK
It was an accident, Dexter.
Accidents happen.

DEXTER
Sigmund Fraud said there's no such
thing as accidents.

JACK
Sigmund Fraud said all bullies are
repressed homosexuals.

DEXTER
I'll kick his ass, too.

Dexter steps forward and jabs a finger at Jack, who winces, covers his face with one hand and twitches out the other. It gets caught in Dexter's shirt.

DEXTER (CONT'D)

Let go of my new Tommy, you spaz!

JACK

Sorry, my hand's caught.

DEXTER

God, I just bought this yesterday.

Jack steps back, ripping Dexter's shirt. Dexter glares down at his bare chest.

JACK

Sorry, Dexter. Here, maybe you can sew it.

Jack flicks his wrist to return the torn section, accidentally snapping Dexter in the eye.

DEXTER

Ow, damn! You trying to poke my eye out. There is something seriously wrong with you, man.

JACK

I know, Dexter. Everyone knows there's something seriously wrong with me. They just don't know what it is. So go ahead and kick my ass. I know you can. But I guarantee you'll get injured while you're pummelling me. I'll accidentally break your knee, or rip off an ear, or poke out an eye. You know it's true. But go ahead and beat me up, if you're so pissed.

The two of them stare at each other for a few beats.

DEXTER

Sensei told me to kick your ass, Jack.

JACK

Well, I guess he doesn't like you very much, does he?

Jack turns and walks away. Unnoticed by him, Dexter is kidnapped by three men wearing Mr. Puppy t-shirts.

Jack continues walking, passing MISS PALTRY, an old crone of a woman standing in the doorway of a shop next to the Karate Studio.