

EXT. SMALL TOWN DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

A MAN, dressed in office wear, JOHN, walks on the sidewalk at night in a semi-sleepy downtown. He appears dazed and confused, but is clearly not drunk. It is not winter but not quite fall. JOHN walks faster and faster, unsure of where he is going, what he is about to do, or why he is where he is. He has broken into a hurried pace when he finally catches a full glimpse of himself in a window. He stops, as if recognizing himself for the first time, partly disgusted but partly amazed, as any new creation would be with its discovery of its self.

INT. CAFÉ - MORNING

JOHN drinks a cup of coffee at a table near the window, half-heartedly reading a newspaper. SARAH, JOHN's coworker, orders a bagel at the counter behind him. It is handed to her and she turns around, noticing JOHN, who has abandoned his newspaper and is staring idly out of the window. She walks over to him, pulls out the chair at the table and sits down. JOHN is broken out of his trance and now stares dumbly at her as she pulls out her bagel and begins smearing it with cream cheese.

SARAH

I hate my life.

JOHN

I'm sorry... Who are you? Have we met?

SARAH

Haha, good morning to you too. Of course we have. Stop being ridiculous. (She laughs then aggressively takes a bite of her bagel). Y'know, I still can't believe it. I worked SO hard to be picked for the board position, and then Larry still gets it. Unbelievable.

JOHN

(realizing he does know SARAH, even if indirectly)
Right... I mean, Larry has been around for a while. Been waiting on the promotion even longer. Uhm... I'm sorry, what's your name? Are you new to the office?

SARAH

I'm Sarah? And no, I've been working there for a year now. Our paths cross pretty frequently.
(awkward pause)

JOHN

Oh... Well, I'm John.

SARAH

Yeah, I know. What have you been doing with your life. Other than coffee and crosswords. You seem like a 9-5 guy. No offense.

JOHN

(not entirely aware he's kind of being insulted)
Why do you ask that?

SARAH

I was just curious.

JOHN

My job works for me. I like it.

SARAH

No, you work for it. You probably want to quit right now and you're just lying to yourself. Even your tie is tied wrong.

JOHN looks down at his loosely-tied tie and quickly slips it off and into his pocket.

JOHN

Is it hard to believe that some people may actually enjoy their careers?

SARAH

I don't find it hard to believe. I'm sure some people like pushing paper in a suit in a boring office all day.

(pause)

Look around you, John. We're all drinking this coffee because we've become addicted to it. Your briefcase barely has anything in it. You just want to look like you're doing something.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

The concept of business attire is a way to make those who are insecure about themselves feel empowered and to give authority to the bureaucratic noise that are our lives. Do you see? It's not about you. It's about corporations, and greed, and we're all just trapped! I don't think anyone who really realizes what they're apart of likes it.

JOHN

(folding his newspaper in half)

Well, that's interesting insight but I happen to think market shares are incredibly important-

SARAH

Haha! I'm sure you do.

JOHN

But...

I also don't think it's fair for you to assume such things.

SARAH

I've experienced enough of this to know that it's applicable to most people.

SARAH crumples the bagel wrapper and gets up to leave.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I'll see you around.

JOHN watches SARAH as she leaves the cafe. He finishes the rest of his coffee and gets up.

EXT. CAFE EXTERIOR, MIDDAY. SUNNY.

JOHN pushes open the door to the outside world. The sun is too bright, now, and all of a sudden he has a pounding headache.

The world reverses and JOHN, unwillingly and unaware, walks backwards into the cafe to sit at the same table, with the same cup of coffee once more. JOHN finishes the coffee, leaving it on the table. The cup refills itself to the brim, and overflows.

INT. JOHN'S LONELY APARTMENT

JOHN wakes up, goes to work.

INT. TYPICAL OFFICE BUILDING.CUBICLE CITY.

Something is not 'right'. The office has changed from its ordinary gray decor. It is more colorful, and JOHN's coworkers are walking around the office without their left shoes. JOHN's expression doesn't change: he does not see what is happening around him. He sits at his desk, opens his computer, and begins typing, mechanically. A coworker approaches him to ask about a project he was supposed to finish. The coworker is wearing a ridiculous hat as if it is the most normal thing, but JOHN doesn't seem to see it.

The next cubicle over, a coworker is speaking complete gibberish on the phone. Two people are playing recorders. Others with empty glasses are toasting each other.

The coworker who asked JOHN about a project leaves. JOHN picks up a heavy file to take to SARAH on his right, he stands, leaves his cubicle. He thumbs through all the papers to make sure he isn't forgetting anything.

SARAH walks by him.

SARAH

Oh, is that for me?

She takes the file from his hands.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Thanks.

JOHN looks on at her retreating figure.

INT. JOHN'S LONELY APARTMENT

JOHN goes home, goes to bed.

JOHN wakes up, goes to work.

INT. TYPICAL OFFICE BUILDING.CUBICLE CITY.

Coworkers are walking around with bread stapled to their shoulders.

JOHN again shows no reaction. He sits down and begins typing on his computer.

A coworker, the same one from yesterday, with bread stapled to his shoulders, stops by to ask about the same project. JOHN picks up a heavy file to take to SARAH on his right, he stands, leaves his cubicle. He thumbs through all the papers to make sure he isn't forgetting anything.

SARAH walks by him, without bread on her.

SARAH
Oh, is that for me?

She takes the file from his hands and gives him a pat on his shoulders.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Thanks, John.

JOHN looks on at her retreating figure.

INT. JOHN'S LONELY APARTMENT

JOHN goes home, goes to bed.

JOHN wakes up, goes to work.

INT. TYPICAL OFFICE BUILDING.CUBICLE CITY.

Coworkers are walking around without their left shoes on, with their blazers inside out and backwards.

JOHN again shows no reaction. He sits down and begins typing on his computer. A coworker, the same one from yesterday, with an inside out blazer stops by to ask about the same project. The coworker leaves. JOHN picks up a heavy file to take to SARAH on his right. He stands, leaves his cubicle. He thumbs through all the papers to make sure he isn't forgetting anything.

SARAH walks by him.

SARAH
Oh, is that for me?

She takes the file from his hands and gives him a pat on his shoulders. But this time, she doesn't let go. JOHN is confused.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Thanks, John. Do me one more favor.
Wake up. WAKE UP!

INT. JOHN'S LONELY APARTMENT

JOHN wakes up.

He goes to work.

The same day repeats. JOHN wakes up, goes to work, goes home, goes to bed. This loop of activities begins getting faster and faster, Sarah's face, his coworker's face, floating in this mirage of activities until-

V. CAFÉ CHAT

INT. CAFÉ - NOONISH

Coffee is poured into a mug.

JOHN is seated at a table with a chair between him and a window. He is gazing down at the cup of black coffee which he is cradling in his hands.

There is a quiet murmur of people talking, dishes and pans clattering. The atmosphere is calm.

SARAH enters the cafe and notices him sitting by the window. She sits next to him and JOHN breaks out of his window trance.

The two study each other for a moment.

JOHN

I thought about what you said.

SARAH

That was a long time ago.

JOHN looks back down at his cup of coffee.

JOHN

It certainly feels that way. It took me too long. Way too long.

SARAH

You still have time.

JOHN takes a sip of his coffee and sighs deeply. SARAH continues to study him, and JOHN looks forward into space.

JOHN

You've changed me. In a previous life, my mind was so infected with monotony that I didn't even know I was living, am living. I hate that past life.

JOHN turns abruptly to SARAH.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Where are we? Where are we going?

SARAH and JOHN look at each other for some time.

SARAH

We're all in different places.

JOHN

Are we? Look around you. Look at me, sitting right here. Look at all these people. There's no escape. It's a loop, Sarah! No matter where I go I'll be sucked back right where I began.

SARAH

Beginnings aren't usually looked at as bad things.

JOHN

There are no beginnings here. Not like the ones in fairy tales. The beginning is the end because nothing happens.

JOHN turns back to his coffee and takes a large gulp. He looks into it, again, frowning. SARAH sighs.

SARAH

You know what you are?

JOHN

What?

SARAH

You're a crybaby.

JOHN

Excuse me?

SARAH

You heard me perfectly. You said you thought about our last conversation. You didn't think very hard. We all hate our lives, John. You could say that, in a way, we're born hating them. It's the actions we take that will make a change. That's what living is. That's what time is for.

JOHN looks down at his coffee. He stares at it for a while, then finishes it. He lifts his hand to wave down a waitress, turning his back on SARAH.

JOHN

Excuse me, hi. Could I get another coffee?

Sarah, do you want any-

JOHN turns to where SARAH has been sitting, but the chair is empty. JOHN freezes, stunned. He stands up to look around the café, but all he sees are people talking.

SARAH is gone. He shakes off his confusion and walks out of the cafe. The coffee cup refills to just below the brim.

INT. JOHN'S LONELY APARTMENT, NIGHT.

JOHN gets back to his apartment. He takes a good long look at everything inside of it. He can't allow himself to enter the apartment any farther. He looks at the keys in his hand and it is here when he realizes that he has autonomy. JOHN leaves the apartment.

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He stops, as if recognizing himself for the first time, partly disgusted, partly amazed, as any new creation would be with its discovery of its self. Perhaps wondering if he is real, if anything is.

He reaches out to touch his reflection and at this moment, SARAH's reflection appears alongside his in the window. He turns around to see her. But there is nothing there.

Just JOHN, reaching out a hand to grab air.