

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

Stop. Rethink.

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"Stop. Rethink."

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

JOHN (33) is sitting on his desk chair, desperately trying to begin writing his new novel "Stop. Rethink." but is unsuccessful.

JOHN (V.O.)
Loud. The sound of the water slowly dripping in the sink.

Loud muffled music is heard coming from the apartment across from his.

JOHN (V.O.) (cont'd)
Distracting. The neighbor's music is scratching its way into my ears and brain, and I let it take me somewhere else. Some place where I don't have these voices screaming at me.

John keeps looking back and forth from his computer to the door, wondering; should he go say something?

JOHN (V.O.) (cont'd)
(whispering)
You are not a real artist.

The time on screen reads FOUR AM.

JOHN (V.O.) (cont'd)
Fifteen books later...I got published. People loved it.

John looks around his empty apartment.

JOHN (V.O.) (cont'd)
They want more.

He buries his head in his palms, slowly rubbing his face. John is struggling to breathe.

JOHN (V.O.) (cont'd)
Music.

He looks at the empty page, the cursor appearing and disappearing. The music is getting louder. The world seems to be spinning.

JOHN (V.O.) (cont'd)
Voices.

John is frustrated. He types two words; "CHAPTER ONE".
Shortly after, he erases them.

JOHN (V.O.) (cont'd)
(whispering)
Sell-out.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALL - NIGHT

John is knocking furiously on his neighbor's door.

The door opens...

FRANCESCA
(upset)
Yes?

JOHN
Uh, hi.

FRANCESCA
(still upset)
...Hi.

John is taken aback by her attitude.

JOHN
It's four in the morning.

FRANCESCA
I'm aware.

FRANCESCA (30) stays silent, looking irritated.

JOHN
Your music is loud. You're disturbing
the whole building, myself included.

FRANCESCA
The building? Do you mean the college
student who rarely comes here or the
eighty-year-old deaf woman?

Slight pause.

JOHN
Well... fine, they might not care
much but I do.

They look at each other. Francesca stays still, much to
John's dismay.

JOHN (cont'd)
Can you please turn it off? Or at
least lower the volume.

Francesca rolls her eyes, walks further into her apartment and stops the music from playing. She then walks back to the door to a confused-looking John.

FRANCESCA
Anything else?

JOHN
N-

Francesca shuts the door.

John is super confused. He takes a big breath and walks back to his apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

John has his head right in front of the computer's screen. He looks at his empty notebook. He looks at the clock; FOUR TWENTY-FIVE. He looks outside the window.

He rolls away with his chair, his eye catching a certain book by the bookcase and he grabs onto the shelves to stop.

John grabs the book; his name is written on the top. His fingers brush upon it. John smiles, closing his eyes.

After a few beats,

JOHN (V.O.)
(whispering)
Sell-out.

John's eyes shoot open. He is no longer smiling. He drops the book where he found it and rolls back to his desk, huffing.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALL - MORNING

John gets out of his apartment holding a random pile of papers in his hands. He locks the door and kicks some letters that are thrown on his doorstep with his foot.

That same time, Francesca comes out of her apartment. She looks hesitant, but says:

FRANCESCA
Good morning.

JOHN
(while bending down
to get the letters.)
Morning.

Francesca observes her neighbor for a little while. She plays with her fingers. She is nervous.

JOHN doesn't notice. He starts walking intending to leave.

FRANCESCA
(stepping towards
John)
Look-

John stops, startled by the sudden invasion of his private space. He had forgotten all about Francesca even standing in the hall.

FRANCESCA (cont'd)
I'm really sorry about last night, I was way out of line. I sort of had some things of my own to deal with and didn't have the mind to think about others.

John stares at her with a questioning look.

FRANCESCA (cont'd)
Anyways, just wanted to apologize.

JOHN
It's no big deal.
(he looks at the time
on his phone)
Didn't end up doing much work anyway.

FRANCESCA
Oh, are you working on-

JOHN
Sorry, I really have to go. See you.

John runs off out of frame. Francesca stays there disappointed and slightly ashamed.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MORNING

John and ANDREW (46) are walking on a fast pace through a crowd of people.

John is holding some papers while Andrew is looking fairly upset.

JOHN

Look, I can definitely have the ten chapters ready. I just need one more week. One week. Come on, you can give me one wee-

ANDREW

I can't, John. January 15th is your due date and that's final.

JOHN

But I have the pages, I do. I just- I just need some more time to go over them, that's all.

ANDREW

Impossible. You have ten days and that's it.

JOHN

Andrew, come on man. I can give you two more chapters.

Andrew stays silent as they both keep pacing quickly through the crowd.

JOHN (cont'd)

Five more.

ANDREW

John-

JOHN

Ten more. I swear, just give me-

Andrew suddenly stops walking and so does John.

ANDREW

John, I can't help you. You said you'd have the manuscript ready by the 15th and we took your word for it.

John sighs. He looks around. The world seems to be spinning once again.

ANDREW (cont'd)

Now come on. Go home, get some rest and just write. Just like you did with *At first sight*. Have the good stuff ready in ten days and you'll be fine.

Andrew gives John a sympathetic smile but he [JOHN] is not looking at him. He is breathing heavily. So stressed.

Andrew withdraws his hand from John's shoulder and turns to leave.

JOHN

And what if I don't?

Andrew turns to face him.

JOHN (cont'd)

What if it's not finished by the 15th?

ANDREW

...You know the answer to that, John.

CUT TO:

EXT. COFFEE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

John is sitting at a booth talking with his friends. He is frustrated, he is worried and stressed.

JOHN

I just don't know why it doesn't... come to me. I have written over fifteen books in my life-time and now I feel like all the inspiration is... emptied out.

FRANKIE

It's normal. You're under a lot of stress and your mind is just blocked. Everything will come to you if you just give it time.

JOHN

Yeah, the thing is; I don't have any time.

FRANKIE (33) and SOPHIA (32) look at John sympathetically.

John realizes, and with a groan, he lets his head drop to the table where he has his hands crossed.

JOHN (cont'd)
And now you're feeling sorry for me.
Everything's just
(screaming)
GREAT!

A lot of heads turn to look at the group.

SOPHIA
We don't feel sorry for you, John.
We're only sad that you have to go
through this.

John lifts his head and locks eyes with Sophia. He seems to believe her.

The pair maintain the eye contact, smiling. *Love-struck.*

FRANKIE
*God, why don't I have someone to look
at each other like that?*

John chuckles and Sophia is startled.

SOPHIA
Wha- What do you mean?

Frankie starts laughing with John who is getting up from his seat. Sophia is awkwardly rambling on about how she and John didn't look at each other a certain way.

John kisses the top of her head and then sends a kiss with his hand to Frankie.

JOHN
(while walking away)
See you when I finish the chapters!

FRANKIE
(teasing)
Oh, you mean never?

John pretends to have been shot in the heart before pretending to limp out of the coffee house.

SOPHIA
(whispering)
I can't believe you would say that we
were looking at each other in some
way.

FRANKIE
Why are you whispering? He literally
just left.

SOPHIA

Oh, God.

FRANKIE

What? Were you so love-struck you didn't even see him go, or?

Sophia laughs and raises her hand, asking for a check.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

John is pacing around the floor anxiously. His computer, placed on his desk, sits open with the empty document shown on the screen.

JOHN

(to himself)

A girl. No, no. A boy. No, I'm repeating myself. A woman, her name is...her name is Shelby. Celia. Sally. Fuck, that's boring.

John continues to pace around his living room. Only quicker, with his hands glued on his face, his breath coming in and out as fast as his walk is.

The phone rings. He answers it.

JOHN (cont'd)

(out of breath, to the phone)

Yeah.

The voice on the other side is inaudible. JOHN slams his hand on his face, folds his back and finally sits like a ball in the floor.

JOHN (cont'd)

Sorry, yeah...No mom, I didn't forget your-...I've been busy. I have been,, writing.

(mumbling)

Or at least been trying to.

(normally)

What?... No, I know, I'm sorry...

Okay, yes, I'll be there I promise...

See you Sunday.

He gets off the call and stumbles his way to his desk. Looking at the wordless manuscript, he takes a big breath and sits down.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

John is walking his way into a small bookstore. He is wearing a pair of black sunglasses, a black coat and a green beanie.

John pretends to be observing at some books displayed near the entrance, when he comes across his own. He grabs it to inspect it. He walks away to the register with it on his hand.

With his head low, he slides the book to the cashier, who *happens* to be Sophia.

SOPHIA
(bored)
Will that be cash or card?

JOHN
Cash, please.

SOPHIA
Do you have a discount card?

JOHN
Uh, no.

SOPHIA
Are you using any coupons?

JOHN
No, no.

Sophia sees the book and smiles. She puts it in a plastic bag and waits for the receipt. When the transaction is complete Sophia slides the bag towards John. He grabs her hand and lifts his head.

SOPHIA
Wh- John? What the hell are you doing here? I though you were writing.

JOHN
(whispering)
Yeah well, that didn't go as planned. Listen, is Frankie here?

SOPHIA
He's in the back, why?

JOHN
(still whispering)
Come with me.

SOPHIA
What?

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

It's a silent night. John and Sophia are sitting next to each other in an alley behind the bookstore.

SOPHIA
So why'd you drag me out of work? I
though everything was fine.

John doesn't speak. He is just smiling; a sad smile.

SOPHIA (cont'd)
You know you can talk to me right?

JOHN
(whispering)
Yeah, I know.

SOPHIA
Then why aren't you?

JOHN
(interrupting her)
I can't write.

SOPHIA
Of course you can.

JOHN
No, it's, it's...it's hard. It's
consuming, it's *so fucking scary*.

Sophia looks at John. She places her hand on top of his.

JOHN (cont'd)
I was just used to being good at it.

SOPHIA
You ARE good at it.

John stands up frustrated.

JOHN
No, no you don't get it.
(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)

(a beat)

I *can't* write. My brain is not functioning as it usually does, or did apparently, and now I have nine days to hand in the first *ten chapters* of my brand new *bestseller* and I have NOTHING. My book is a big ball of nothing.

John slides down and hides his face in between his knees. Sophia lets out a big breath.

SOPHIA (O.S.)

You're right.

John raises his head. He sees Sophia walking up to him. He, just now, notices how beautiful she is.

SOPHIA

It's impossible.

Sophia's walk and stare is -purposefully- distracting John.

JOHN

(distracted)

Yeah.

Sophia stops right in front of him.

SOPHIA

So...give up. That's the easy way out right?

JOHN

M hm.

SOPHIA

But you hate the easy way out. Or else you wouldn't be a writer right now.

Sophia crouches down at John's level.

SOPHIA (cont'd)

So either go home and do what you know best, which is writing, by the way,

John halfheartedly laughs.

SOPHIA (cont'd)

Or stay here and complain.

(MORE)

SOPHIA (cont'd)

(pause)

To yourself though. Because *I* am going inside. You know, to work.

(while walking away)

Like normal people do.

John laughs and leans his head back, smiling.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

John is sitting on his couch, notebook in hand, scribbling down ideas. Someone knocks on his door and he goes to open, with his notebook still in hand.

FRANCESCA

Hi!

John is surprised to see his neighbor standing outside his apartment.

JOHN

..Hi.

FRANCESCA

Am I bothering?

JOHN

Oh, uh... I was kind of in the middle of somethin-

FRANCESCA

Oh don't worry, I won't be long. Just wanted to invite you to this small gathering at my house this Sunday.

John seems perplexed.

FRANCESCA (cont'd)

It's for my birthday.

JOHN

Oh, uh, sure yeah. I'll see what I can do.

FRANCESCA

Cool! You can bring any friends too, I don't mind.

(pause)

..It starts at eleven.

JOHN
(awkwardly)
Great!

FRANCESCA
(laughing)
Yeah, and you know where I live.

John gives her some fake laughs and closes the door after seeing her leave.

JOHN
(to himself)
Sunday...

He starts pacing around the living room.

JOHN (cont'd)
Sunday... Sunday, Sunday, Sunday...
(mumbling)
What do I have on Sunday?

The phone rings, John leaps to answer it.

JOHN (cont'd)
Yeah.

CELIA (V.O.)
Hello, my beautiful best-selling author!

JOHN
(whispering)
Oh, shit.
(to Celia)
Celia, hey, hi -cough- What's up?

CELIA (V.O.)
Everything's been fine dear, now listen up.

John's eyes are wide and his mouth is partially open, waiting for CELIA (49) to speak.

CELIA (V.O.) (cont'd)
You have the chapters ready for me, right hon?

JOHN
I, uh, -awkward laugh- yeah, uh, yes. Definitely got them.

CELIA (V.O.)
*A-mazing, 'cause I have a few
interviews lined up for you so you
can talk about that new book. It's a
good chance to get back on the radar
plus...*

Celia's voice is almost muted as John takes in what he has just been told.

Everything goes quiet except from a buzzing noise and the thuds of his beating heart.

He takes a couple of shaky breaths.

CELIA
*...you're going to be great, okay?
I'll see you Sunday morning.*

JOHN
Wait, wait. Celia,

Celia has already ended the call.

JOHN (cont'd)
(screaming)
FUCK!

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE - MIDDAY

Sophia and Frankie are working at the register. Once Sophia is done with a customer, she stops smiling and turns to speak to Frank.

SOPHIA
Have you talked to John at all today?

FRANKIE
No, why?

SOPHIA
Yeah, me neither.

Frankie frowns his eyebrows and continues working. Sophia is anxiously biting her nails.

Frank looks back at her.

FRANKIE
What got you biting your nails?

SOPHIA
(mumbling)
Nothing.

FRANKIE
Don't worry, prince charming will
turn up.

Sophia rolls her eyes and walks up next to him to service a customer.

FRANKIE (cont'd)
He probably stayed up late writing,
Soph. Stop worrying that much.

SOPHIA
HA, as if you weren't glued to your
phone that one time Jax wasn't
answering to your texts for thirty
minutes.

FRANKIE
First of all it was an hour.
(pause)
And second of all, that's different.

SOPHIA
Oh really, how so?

FRANKIE
I am *dating* Jax. You can't even admit
you're attracted to John.

SOPHIA
Yeah, 'cause I'm not.

FRANKIE
Then stop worrying. Or just say out-
loud, "I am attracted to John
Anders".

JOHN
(teasingly)
Oh, you are?

Frankie and Sophia turn their heads to look at John, *shocked* and partially scared that he heard their whole conversation.

John is smiling. Big smile.

FRANKIE
Sure. Always have been, always will
be.

John laughs and locks eyes with Sophia. Frankie starts working again but John doesn't move from his spot.

SOPHIA
You're holding up the line.

JOHN
It's worth it.

Sophia tries to hold back a smile before walking around the register and grabbing a hold of John's hand.

JOHN (cont'd)
Oh, I like where this is going.

Sophia chuckles and drags him behind the register where she and Frank work, letting him stand on the very back.

Before turning her body away from him to continue working, Sophia says;

SOPHIA
Get your head out of the gutter.

John laughs.

A few moments of silence pass before John speaks up again.

JOHN
I finished the chapters.

Frankie and Sophia turn around in an instant. Sophia's mouth hangs open while Frankie is utterly shocked.

FRANKIE
You did?

JOHN
Well, only the outlining and I wrote some heavy details about it. But that's the difficult part. The writing's just writing. Nine days are more than enough to finish them completely.

FRANKIE
Holy shit, John. That's amazing.

John looks at Sophia.

JOHN
It's what I do best.

CUT TO:

