

FACING JOHN DONOVAN

by

George Galanakis

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE - DAWN

The magnificent skyline of New York City is glimmering as the spring sun breaks over it.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR - DAWN

The fountain shoots arching plumes of water over the reservoir. Five little ducklings follow their mother across the shimmering waters. The trees of the park explode with spring color.

An indistinct shape of a MAN in a designer suit, sleeping on a park bench with the background vista of skyscrapers. An empty bottle of champagne in his lap. The man steers, troubled by uneasy dreams.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - DAWN

The streets are relatively empty. The city that never sleeps is resting. An ACROBAT performs on a corner. A HOMELESS MAN searches a trash dumpster.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

An alarm clock rings on a bedside table. It's 7:00 a.m. A hand reaches over and slaps the button, killing the alarm.

JOHN DONOVAN (33, handsome, athletic, cocky) sits upright on the bed. His facial features can barely be settled at the time being, because of the sleeping mask, hair net and green facial masque all over his face.

John takes off his ear plugs and leaves them on the bedside table. The sleeping mask and hair net are next.

His feet land on the carpet floor. He puts on his slippers and stands up. He walks out of the room towards the attached bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The feet move to the toilet. John's hand lifts up the lid. A second later, a stream of urine squirts down to the bowl, spilling on the toilet seat.

JOHN (O.S.)

Shit!

John flushes, lowers the lid and turns around. Now he is in front of the sink.

He washes his hands and begins slowly peeling the masque off his face. Pieces fall in the sink. He finishes and washes his face.

John looks at his reflection in the mirror. His face is now clearly visible. A smile forms on his lips.

SERIES OF SHOTS - JOHN GETTING READY

John brushing his teeth... shaving... putting on after shave and wincing in pain... applying another lotion on his face... admiring his body in front of the full-length floor mirror in his bedroom... trying out a suit... another suit... finally standing ready in a completely different combination of clothes.

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

A doorman, TONY, (52, bovine, white hair, short) waits behind the desk near the exit of the building. John gets out of the elevator and makes his way to the door.

TONY

Good morning, Mr. Donovan!

JOHN

There are no good mornings, Tony.

He steps out of the lobby. Tony's face darkens.

EXT. JOHN'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

John comes out. Outside the fifteen-story building is parked a brand new Ferrari 360 Spider F1.

John's face lights up. He approaches the flashy car, pulls out a set of car keys from his pocket and disarms the alarm. He walks around to the driver's side.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - CONTINUOUS

John gets in. He jams the key into the ignition and turns over the engine. He checks the rear-view mirror, fixes his hair and awards himself with a wink. He jerks the wheel and hits the gas.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The Ferrari screeches out onto the street and speeds away. An oncoming car breaks just in time. The DRIVER sticks his head out the window and shouts:

DRIVER

Hey, watch where you're going!

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

John watches the driver from the side mirror.

JOHN
You jackass!

EXT. SIDEWALK NEWSSTAND - DAY

John pulls over at a sidewalk newsstand. His hand reaches out of the car and gives a twenty dollar bill to the NEWSSTAND OPERATOR. He gives John a pile of magazines and his change. The Ferrari roars away.

EXT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - DAY

John's Ferrari pulls up outside the building. John gets out of the car, magazines in hand, and strides towards the building.

A GIRL (6, sweet, glasses, pig-tails), holding a teddy bear, stands in his way. She accidently drops her teddy bear on the sidewalk.

John looks at her and flickers a smile. The girl smiles back. John, suddenly serious, steps on the teddy bear and heads to the entrance. The girl starts to cry and runs away.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

John walks into the lobby and motions to the elevator.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The elevator is packed with PASSENGERS. One of them, pushes the "Close" button frantically. The doors begin to close. John picks up a quicker pace. The passengers are getting tense, anxious.

PASSENGER
Come on! Come on!

The doors are almost shut, when John's arm knifes between them. The doors part and John boards the elevator. The passengers sigh as the doors slide closed.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

The passengers have grave looks on their faces. John, on the other hand, is cheerful and happy. He cups his hand over his mouth and tests his breath. He is satisfied.

John sniffs something in the air. He follows the smell to the passenger next to him. He smells a little closer. He is repulsed and pulls back.

JOHN

Wow, buddy, you stink! You didn't take a shower this morning?

The elevator doors open. The people rush out of the elevator. John stays alone. He is happy as a lark.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

A long row of partitioned cubicles. The STAFF of Starz magazine, at their desks, work phones and computers. John comes in through the doors and bumps into DENISE (22, freckles, annoyingly fit).

DENISE

Hey, Mr. Donovan! What happened last night? I thought you were gonna call me.

JOHN

(tries to remember)
Uh...

DENISE

Denise.

JOHN

Yes, of course! Denise! Well, Denise, something came up. I'll make it up to you. How about I take you out to dinner next time I'm free, huh?

DENISE

That'd be great! I hope you mean it this time.

JOHN

Denise! Would I say something I didn't mean just to get you off my back?

He fakes a smile and moves away. Denise glows with happiness.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Saddo!

He paces along the cubicles. ALBERT (40, overweight, horn-rimmed glasses) springs up from his desk. He stands rigid, his tie a bit askew.

ALBERT
Mr. Donovan.

JOHN
Fix that tie of yours, Albert.
You look like you just had a lap
dance!

Albert straightens his tie at once. John walks a little further down the offices. SUSAN (30, unattractive, excessive make-up) types at her computer. He moves past her desk, halts and backs up.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Susan, what do you say you tone
down the make-up a little bit,
huh? This is a magazine, not a
circus!

Susan is trying to resist bursting into tears. John continues down the offices. A door up ahead of him, a desk near the door. MELANIE (43, slightly plump, sardonic), his assistant, is at her desk.

MELANIE
Good morning, John.

JOHN
Melanie.

He opens the door.

MELANIE
It wouldn't kill you to say a
nice word to the people that work
for you, John.

JOHN
I'm not here to make your day,
Mel. I'm here to run a magazine.
Now, bring me my messages, tell
the Picture Editor I wanna see
him in my office ASAP and I also
want coffee. Make it lots of
creme, lots of sugar. I'm
feeling crazy today!

He enters and shuts the door behind him.

MELANIE
 (cynically)
 You don't say.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

An ornately furnished office that shows John is at the upper level of the company. John leaves the magazines on his desk and takes a seat. He turns on his computer and looks around at his desk.

There is a name plate that reads "John Donovan, Editor-in-Chief." A picture of John posing with Jack Nicholson on his side. Another picture. John talks with Meryl Strip.

John catches his distorted reflection on a silver lamp, sitting on the desk.

The door opens and Melanie comes into the office. She holds a cup of coffee in one hand and a notebook in the other.

JOHN
 Come on, come on! Let's go,
 let's go!

Melanie leaves the coffee on the table and flips through the notebook.

MELANIE
 Let's see. Mr. Gibbons called.

JOHN
 Shit! That goddamn geezer! Did
 he say what he wanted?

Melanie shakes her head.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 What else?

MELANIE
 Your friend Max called. Also, a
 bunch of girls said they couldn't
 reach you at home. Daphne,
 Cecilia, Marie... Shall I keep
 going?

John has a sip of his coffee and signals "no."

MELANIE (CONT'D)
 And Mr. Woodward is waiting right
 outside.

John gives her a look.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Timothy.

JOHN

Mel, you are the best! Have I ever told you that?

MELANIE

None that you have meant.

A sarcastic smirk from John. Melanie leaves the office. TIMOTHY WOODWARD (37, tall, glasses) is waiting in the doorway.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

Good luck.

Timothy enters.

JOHN

Timothy, get in here. Take a seat.

Timothy hesitantly steps in and sits at John's desk.

JOHN (CONT'D)

How are you, Tim?

TIMOTHY

Well, Mr. Donovan, me and my wife are --

Before he gets a chance to finish the sentence:

JOHN

Okay, Tim! I'll get right to the point. What I have here is the latest issue of Starz magazine.

There's a copy of Starz magazine on his desk. John picks it up, flips through the pages and leaves it on the desk in front of Timothy.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I want you to take a good look at the cover and tell me what you see.

On the cover there's a photograph of Jennifer Aniston eating a cheeseburger with a headline: "JEN IN TROUBLE... AGAIN!"

TIMOTHY

A picture of Jennifer Aniston eating a cheeseburger, Mr. Donovan.

John paces about the room like a caged animal.

JOHN

That is correct, Timothy. That is a picture of Jennifer Aniston eating a cheeseburger. Now, I want you to look at these covers.

He spreads the pile of magazines on the desk. Every magazine cover has a photograph of Britney Spears holding a newborn baby with a headline: "BRITNEY'S NEW BABY."

JOHN (CONT'D)

Since you're the Picture Editor of Starz magazine, can you tell me how is it that every goddamn tabloid magazine in the country has a picture of Britney's newborn baby and Starz magazine doesn't?

Timothy is speechless. John picks up the copy of Starz magazine.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What's this? "Jen in trouble?" This is a bunch of crap!

He slams the magazine on his desk. Timothy nervously clears his throat.

TIMOTHY

Sir, that was the best picture we could -- We couldn't find anything better --

(pause)

Oh, man, I can't believe I screwed up! I'm so sorry!

John approaches Timothy and stands behind him.

JOHN

Tim, Tim, Tim, Tim! Calm down, okay? There's no need to get nervy. Look, consider this a warning.

Timothy nods in understanding and tries to calm himself.

JOHN (CONT'D)

We're a serious publication, Tim. We cannot let stuff like that happen, now can we?

TIMOTHY

No, sir, we cannot. Mr. Donovan,
you have my word. It will never
happen again.

JOHN

That's what I needed to hear.

TIMOTHY

Thank you, sir. Mr. Donovan.

He stands up and goes to the door.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Timothy comes out and closes the door. He turns to
Melanie.

TIMOTHY

Phew!

He makes his way to his desk.

A moment later, the door opens and John peeks his head out.

JOHN

Melanie?

Melanie turns to him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Call Accounting. Tell them that
Timothy - what's his name - from
Picture Department has been let
go.

MELANIE

He just found out, he and his
wife are having... a baby. He
was gonna take out for drinks
after work.

John sighs and thinks.

JOHN

You're right. You're right.

(pauses)

Throw in a card too. Hold it out
of his paycheck.

MELANIE

You're a horrible man, John.

JOHN

It's my job.

He closes the door.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - JOHN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

John moves to his desk, picks up the phone and dials a number. A few seconds later:

JOHN
Hey, big Bob!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - BOB'S OFFICE - DAY

BOB GIBBONS (65, Southern, moustache, gruff) sits at his desk. His office is well-furnished and highly decorated with pictures, awards. He has been in this business for quite some time.

Bob talks on the speaker phone.

BOB
John! How's it going?

JOHN
You know me, Bob. I'm still trying to pick up the pieces from the night before!

Bob laughs.

BOB
Don't waste your youth growing up, huh?

JOHN
That's the idea. Anyway, you wanted to talk to me?

BOB
Yeah, could you come up? There's something I wanna tell you.

Melanie comes in. John signals her to leave. She does.

JOHN
Sure. What is it?

BOB
Come on up and I'll tell you.

JOHN
All right. I'll be there in five.

JOHN

Nice treat you got yourself
there, Bob. Is she any good?

BOB

They're all the same, John.

John smiles. Bob turns the box of cigars toward his side.

BOB (CONT'D)

Cuban?

JOHN

No, Bob. Smoking accelerates the
aging of the skin. Who would
wanna look like you when they're
50, huh?

BOB

(laughs)
Right.

JOHN

Why did you wanna see me, Bob?
What's up?

BOB

Well, John, I'll be honest with
you. That's the problem.

He puts a cigar between his lips, lights it. John listens
in agony.

BOB (CONT'D)

Nothing. The sales are down and
I mean bad. We just got the
latest ABC figures and the
average net circulation dropped
almost 5%.

JOHN

Are you serious?

BOB

Yeah. We rank No. 3, John. No.
3! The National sells about one
million copies more. And the
Globe close to half a mil more.
There was a time when Starz
magazine was No. 1!

JOHN

Come on, Bob! You've been in
this business for how long? 30
years? You know that's the way
the cookie crumbles. There are
always gonna be ups and downs.

BOB

I know, but the council's up my ass, John. They're worried. They say that month on month we're losing readers. Sales are slipping.

JOHN

It's the people, Bob. You know? One day they want this, the next day they want something else. It's... people!

Bob nods understandingly.

BOB

Listen, we've got a meeting on Monday. All I'm asking you is find a way to get past this little hitch and speak before the council. They expect to hear something. You've got a few days. I'm sure you'll figure out something.

John considers for a moment.

JOHN

Yeah, definitely, Bob. I'm on it.

John rises and shakes hands with Bob.

BOB

We're still on for golf Sunday?

JOHN

Yeah.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - BOB'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

John comes out of the office and closes the door. He is angry. Jody dreamily looks at him.

JODY

Bye, John.

John doesn't respond, exits the waiting room.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

John walks in and halts before the doors. Everyone stares at him. There's silence.

JOHN

All right! Let's get to work!

The staff goes about their business. The offices come alive again. John paces along the cubicles. He stops before one.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You!

DOROTHY (23, puffy, affable) raises her eyebrows, surprised.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Get me the article on "The best and worst beach bodies".

DOROTHY

Yes, sir.

John moves further down the offices.

JOHN

Who's on the "Starz Diets" article?

Albert raises his hand.

ALBERT

I am.

JOHN

(under his breath)

I wonder why?

(to Albert)

Meeting room. Two minutes. Get me pictures! I wanna see pictures!

A paparazzi named MARIO (30, Mexican, stocky, tattooed) cuts in front of him.

MARIO

Mr. Donovan, I've got some really good beach shots of J-Lo. You wanna see them?

He gives him a bunch of photos. John goes through them.

JOHN

Good, good, good! That's what I'm talking about, people! Pictures! Oops, upskirts, nipple slips, asses, tits! If there's one thing people love more than stars... is falling stars!

He throws the pictures on Susan's desk.

SUSAN
What do you want me to write?

JOHN
I don't care. Just make it
tasty.

He keeps moving towards his office.

SUSAN
You still want to run the Paris'
trip to Mexico?

JOHN
No. Paris Hilton's old news.
Find something else.

He moves past Timothy's cubical. Timothy clears his desk, putting his stuff in a box. He shoots him a piercing glare. John ignores him. Timothy shouts:

TIMOTHY
Mr. Donovan!

John stops, turns around slowly.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
You are a rotten bastard! People
like you make me sick!

JOHN
Well, Tim, people like me still
have a job.
(pause)
Oh, and... congratulations on the
baby! All the best!

John heads to his office. Timothy throws a frame inside the box aggressively. John stops at the door.

JOHN (CONT'D)
All right, people! Bring
everything we've got in the
meeting room! Now!
(to Melanie)
Council meeting. Monday morning.

Melanie marks it down on the notebook. John opens the door.

JOHN (CONT'D)
And Tim's card... cancel it.

He enters and shuts the door.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - MEETING ROOM - DAY

Dozens photographs of celebrities are scattered on the long conference table that spans the length of the room. Ten staffers surround John which is seated at the head of the table and goes through some picture. He is disappointed.

JOHN
Bullshit. Bullshit. Bullshit.

He tosses the pictures on the table.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Bullshit. For the love of God,
what is this?

DOROTHY
It's for the "Starz Fashion"
column.

JOHN
Come on, people! Where's the
juice?

SUSAN
How about the "Starz Jewels?"
Shall I...?

John snatches the pictures from Susan's hands. He glances at them and thinks for a moment. Then:

JOHN
Run it! Go!

He gives the pictures back. Susan grabs them and hurries out of the office. John's cell phone rings. He answers.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Max! How's it going, buddy?
(pause)
Sure, yeah! I'll bring my tennis
shoes. Around five?
(pause)
All right. See you then.

He hangs up.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - HALLWAY - DAY

Staffers hustle across the hallway. John comes out of the meeting room. He sees Bob waiting for the elevator. He hurries to him.

JOHN
Bob!

BOB
What is it, John?

John catches up to him. Bob boards the elevator. John stays in the hallway.

JOHN
Look, about this whole thing, I don't want you to worry, okay? I assure you, we're gonna turn this thing around.

BOB
I'm not worried, John. It's your ass.

The doors close. John is left alone in the hallway.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - AFTERNOON

The game is in progress. John against his friend MAX (32, moderately attractive, dapper), both dressed in tennis whites. John serves the ball.

JOHN
That piece of shit! I hate this fucking prick!

Max returns the ball.

MAX
You hate everybody, John.

John smacks the ball back to Max. Max dives for the ball and hits his return just over the net. John is waiting and bangs a kill shot.

JOHN
That's game! You up for another?

MAX
Nah...

They move towards the net and meet.

JOHN
I can't wait for the moment this son-of-a-bitch dies, you know? Then people will say hello to the new publisher of Starz magazine. A lot of things will change when that day comes, I'm telling you.

MAX
You know it's gonna happen, man. Eventually.

JOHN

When?!

(sighs)

I'm the one who's busting his ass day in and day out! And it's gonna be my ass? Son-of-a-bitch!

MAX

Look, why don't we go out tonight, have a couple of drinks and get your mind off all this crap. What do you say, huh?

John thinks. He stares at Max. Their eyes are locked. A smile creeps across John's face.

MAX (CONT'D)

All right! I'll call Ben and Charlie.

JOHN

(sarcastically)

Oh, good! The shirtlifters are gonna be there! We'll have a great time!

SERIES OF SHOTS - JOHN GETTING READY AGAIN

John taking a shower... drying his naked body with a body drier mounted in the bathroom ceiling... applying a leave-in conditioner on his hair... smearing a lotion on his face with a towel over his head... standing in front of his full-length mirror in a banana hammock... picking out a designer suit from his closet... walking down the stairs of his building in little hops... stomping his foot on the accelerator, making his Ferrari blasting out to the street.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - NIGHT

The Ferrari cruises down the street. John adjusts the rear-view mirror and checks his reflection. Perfect. He blows himself a kiss.

EXT. RAIN NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

John's Ferrari parks outside the splendid nightclub. A long line of NIGHTCLUBBERS are waiting for their turn to get in.

John steps out of the Ferrari. A VALET PARKER (23, Latino) waits near the car. John tosses him the keys. The valet catches them mid-air.

JOHN
 You scratch, I kill!
 (Mexican accent)
 Comprente?

The valet nods, terrified. John moves to the front of the line. The nightclub doorman named IZZY (36, tall, hulking), seeing John approaching, unhooks the velvet rope and greets him.

IZZY
 Welcome back, Mr. Donovan!

JOHN
 Hey, Izzy. How's life treating you?

IZZY
 I've got no complains, Mr. Donovan.

JOHN
 Who does, huh?

He pats Izzy on the shoulder.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Come join us for a drink later.

IZZY
 Will do, sir.

John enters the club. A NIGHTCLUBBER tries to pass. Izzy hooks the rope and shakes his head.

INT. RAIN NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Loud music is playing. The club is massed with people. John moves to the side along the huge dance floor, heading to the VIP area.

INT. RAIN NIGHTCLUB - VIP ROOM - NIGHT

Max, BEN (32, African/American, homosexual) and CHARLIE (27, English, homosexual) sit around a table with THREE WOMEN (20s, very beautiful, sexy) surrounding them. Ben and Charlie are in the middle of a story...

BEN
 ... and John is staring, literary
 staring, at the woman at the next
 table --

CHARLIE

She was wearing a hideous, god-awful dress, by the way! It was soft yellow V-neck with rose and sash belt. Gross!

BEN

Anyway, the guy she's with realizes something's going on and turns around and - you're not gonna believe this - it's George Clooney! So John --

John approaches the table.

JOHN

What are you guys saying about me?

BEN

Remember the time when George Clooney punched you in the face?

JOHN

(sarcastically)
Vividly...

CHARLIE

(to the women)
Did you read the articles on how Clooney's new girlfriend was a transvestite?

WOMEN

Yeah. Uh-huh.

CHARLIE

It was the day after that.

MAX

Never piss off an Editor-in-Chief of a tabloid magazine!

She gives a look at John, lust in her eyes.

JOHN

Hi. I guess I don't need an introduction, huh?

WOMAN #1

I guess you don't. We heard so much about you.

JOHN

Nothing good, I hope!

He smiles broadly at the women, a smile of charm and personality, and takes a seat next to them. Max fills a glass of champagne for John. He picks up the glass, raises it in the air. Everybody else does the same.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Someone once told me: Four
 blessings upon us. Older
 whiskey, younger women...

He trades a look with the women.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 ... faster horses, and more
 money!
 (pause)
 I don't gamble and I only drink
 champagne! Cheers!

EVERYBODY
 Cheers!

INT. RAIN NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Hundreds of nightclubbers throbbing to LOUD MUSIC on the dance floor. Among them, Ben and Charlie are dancing with each other. So is Max with Woman #3.

INT. RAIN NIGHTCLUB - VIP ROOM - NIGHT

John sits in between Woman #1 and Woman #2. The FEMALE BARTENDER (28, natural beauty, sexy) steals looks at him.

JOHN
 So what time do you have to be at
 work tomorrow?

WOMEN
 Around nine.

JOHN
 I'll set up the alarm at eight.
 Is that okay?

The women laugh. He starts to make out with both of them. John stops and has a sip of champagne.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 I'll go get myself a Perrier.
 You girls want anything from the
 bar?

WOMAN #1
 A Manhattan.

WOMAN #2

Same for me.

John goes to the bar. The bartender is behind the counter serving drinks. John stands at the bar and looks at her intently. After a while, she realizes he's staring.

FEMALE BARTENDER

How can I help you?

JOHN

Actually, I'm trying to figure out something. Have I seen you in the cover of Vogue... or was it Cosmo?

The bartender's face lights up with a smile.

FEMALE BARTENDER

Neither. I do appreciate the effort though. And I do have a boyfriend.

JOHN

No, I'm serious! You're ravishing! Really!

FEMALE BARTENDER

Really?

JOHN

No. Get me a Perrier, two Manhattans, and send them over to that table.

He points to his table and strides away. The bartender watches him leave, anger filling every cell of her body.

John arrives at the table. The women are looking at him with a longing that goes well beyond lust. He takes a seat in between them.

JOHN (CONT'D)

The waitress will bring them right over.

They start to make out again.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Woman #1)

Wow! You're extremely talented.

WOMAN #1

You haven't seen anything yet.

John and the woman hold a look.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John and the women burst through the door, kissing passionately. They begin to unbutton his shirt and pull it free of his pants.

JOHN
Watch the shirt! Watch the --!

They push him down on the bed and get on top of him.

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The door to John's apartment opens. The women are pushed outside.

WOMAN #1
What are you doing?

JOHN
You have to go.

WOMAN #1
Why?

JOHN
I can't sleep when there's
someone else in the room.

WOMAN #1
What? Are you kidding?

WOMAN #2
Are you gonna call us?

JOHN
Of course.

WOMAN #2
You don't have our number.

JOHN
All right, then!

He slams the door shut. The women are disappointed.

WOMAN #1
Jerk!

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

John stands facing the mirror, applying facial creme on his face.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John climbs into his bed, creme on his face, the hair net on his head, and gets under the covers. He reaches out, takes the ear plugs from the bedside table and puts them on. Then the sleeping mask. He falls on his bed and turns off the light.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAWN

The sun is just starting to come up, bathing the great city in a bright, golden light.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm clock goes off on the bedside table. It's 7:00 a.m. A hand reaches over and silences the alarm.

The sleeping mask, the hair net and the ear plugs are left on the bedside table.

A pair of man's feet land on the carpet floor. He puts on his slippers and stands up. He walks out of the room towards the attached bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The feet move to the toilet. A hand lifts up the lid. A second later, a stream of urine squirts down to the bowl, spilling on the toilet seat.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Come on!

The man flushes, lowers the lid and turns around. He's now in front of the sink, once again, his facial features cannot be settled. He washes his hands and begins slowly peeling the masque off his face. Pieces fall in the sink.

The man finishes and washes his face. He looks at his reflection in the mirror.

JOHN #2 (33, arched nose, tall, slim) stands before the sink. John's face is changed giving its place to a new one. Startled by the image of his own face, he raises a scream and falls backwards.

John lifts his head to the mirror slowly. His reflection hasn't changed. He moves a little closer and starts touching his face to make sure this isn't a bad dream. His cheeks, his lips, his forehead. John's mouth hanging wide open in disbelief.

JOHN #2
 What--? What the hell? What --?

He takes a step backwards, shocked. His face a mask of anguish. His eyes glazed and unblinking. He rockets out of the room.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

John stumbles in and darts to the mirror. He comes before the full-length mirror. The reflection is the same.

JOHN #2
 NOOOOO!
 (pauses; thinks)
 What the hell is happening to me?
 No. This isn't happening...

He turns to the side and feels his belly to notice the leaf fat on his body.

JOHN #2 (CONT'D)
 (disgusted)
 Oh!

He moves a little closer to the mirror.

JOHN #2 (CONT'D)
 Am I dreaming? Is this a fucking dream? What the --?

He starts to slap his face repeatedly. First softly, then harder and harder.

JOHN #2 (CONT'D)
 Wake up. Wake up. Wake up!
 Wake up! WAKE UP! WAKE UP!

He stops and shuts his eyes tight. After a moment, he opens them. The image hasn't changed. John holds back tears. He falls on the floor, stares at his face intently. Something catches his eye in the reflection.

John turns around, his gaze comes to rest on the alarm clock. The time it reads is 8:18 a.m.

JOHN #2 (CONT'D)
 Shit!

He bolts up.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

John paces about the room with a phone to his ear.

JOHN #2
Melanie?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

Melanie is at her desk, talking on the phone.

MELANIE
Good morning, John.

JOHN #2
Listen, Mel. I'm a little sick
and, uh, I won't be able to make
it at work today.

MELANIE
What's wrong?

JOHN #2
It's nothing. I got a little
cold, that's all.

He coughs.

Melanie holds the receiver away from her ear.

MELANIE
Okay, John.

JOHN #2
See you Monday.

He hangs up and breathes a sigh of relief.

Melanie hangs up, too. She stands up and shouts:

MELANIE
People! People!

She has everyone's attention.

MELANIE (CONT'D)
He called in sick. He's not
coming in today!

There is silence. Then everyone starts screaming in
excitement.

STAFF
Yeah! Yes! All right! Thank
God!

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - DAY

John goes through the cabinets. He takes the facial masque jar and reads the label.

JOHN #2

Infrequently reported adverse effects included irritant dermatitis, temporary redness, scaling and burning, hives, facial swelling, abscess formation -- What the hell?

He puts the jar back. He stares at himself in the mirror, turns to the side and starts to study his face. He notices his ugly snoot.

JOHN

Oh, Lord!

He hurries out of the bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

The door to John's apartment opens. John peeks his head outside. He's wearing a hat, sunglasses, and is bundled in an overcoat.

John scans the hallway to see no one coming. John sneaks out of his apartment and closes the door. He motions to the elevator, pushes the button.

A neighbor, MR. HOWARD, (45, short, bald, prudent) comes out of his apartment. John sees him and jabs the button again. And again. The elevator is two floors down, coming up.

JOHN #2

(under his breath)

Come on...

Mr. Howard moves to John. He stands next to him. They share a glance.

MR. HOWARD

Morning.

John mumbles something unintelligible. The elevator arrives and the doors open. John rushes inside. Mr. Howard gets in, too.

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

John hits the button for the ground floor. A moment later, the doors close. John is becoming increasingly agitated. Mr. Howard shoots him a curious look.

MR. HOWARD
Did you catch the Knicks game
last night?

John doesn't respond.

MR. HOWARD (CONT'D)
Five seconds to go and it's tie
score. 96 - 96. Curry's up for
a three pointer...

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

John charges out of the elevator.

MR. HOWARD
It was the game of the year!
Hands down!

John is already far away.

MR. HOWARD (CONT'D)
Nice talking to you!

John puts his hand over his face to hide from the suspicious look of Tony who is standing behind the counter. John is close to the door, when --

TONY
Mr. Donovan!

John halts. He turns around slowly, eyes bugged out in surprise.

TONY (CONT'D)
The building manager told me to
inform you that all tenants will
be meeting Saturday morning at
12:00.

Mr. Howard crosses the lobby.

TONY (CONT'D)
Did you hear that Mr. Howard?

MR. HOWARD
Saturday at 12! Thanks!

He exits. John stands frozen.

TONY
Mr. Donovan?

John looks at him oddly and goes to his side.

JOHN #2
You... recognize me?

TONY
Yes.

JOHN #2
You recognize me --? You know me?

TONY
Are you feeling all right, sir?

JOHN #2
Yep! Great! Uh-huh!
(pause)
So let me get this straight. You know who I am?

TONY
Of course I do. Are you sure you're okay?

John nods in agreement.

JOHN #2
I'm fine. I'll talk to you later!

TONY
Don't forget --

JOHN #2
Saturday, 12 o'clock!

He storms out of the building. Tony watches him curiously.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - DAY

John gets in. He falls back on the seat and closes his eyes. He opens them and glares at his reflection in the rear-view mirror. Same. He jams the key into the ignition and turns over the engine. He accelerates and the car speeds away.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - MOVING - DAY

John drives fast, weaving through traffic. He has a cell phone to his ear.

JOHN #2

Max! Listen, I have to see you!
It's important!

(pause)

I don't care if you're in
conference! Get out of it! I
need to talk to you! I think
something's going on. Something
big.

(pause)

Okay. I'm coming over right now!

He hangs up.

EXT. MAX'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The Ferrari parks on the sidewalk across the building.
John steps out. He crosses the street. Tires screech. A
car skids to a halt inches from him.

JOHN #2

Watch it, dickbrain!

He gives the finger to the driver and heads to the
building.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

John comes in and stops near the entrance. He scans the
lobby.

MAX (O.S.)

John!

John spins. Max strides towards him. John gazes at him in
shock.

MAX (CONT'D)

Come on, let's go. Cafeteria's
that way.

John breaks out of his shock and follows Max.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE BUILDING - CAFETERIA - DAY

John and Max sit opposite from each other, sipping coffee.

MAX

So what's the problem?

John takes his time before he responds.

JOHN #2

Max, do I look different?

MAX

How do you mean?

JOHN #2

I mean... my face, my body.

MAX

I don't understand. What --?

JOHN #2

Do I look different?

MAX

Man, you're freaking me out.
What are you talking about?

JOHN #2

(smiles)

I know, it's crazy...

(pauses)

Look, I want you to slam me as
hard as you can. No, no, no, no!
Not as hard as you can, just a
little, you know... Right here.

(off Max's look)

I'm serious. I want you slap me
right in the --

Max slaps him hard across the face. People in the
cafeteria look at them strangely.

MAX

Better?

John nods in response.

MAX (CONT'D)

Anytime.

(off John's look)

Go home, John, and get some rest.
You look like you need it.

John nods in acknowledgment and stands up.

MAX (CONT'D)

We're going out tomorrow, right?

He nods in agreement and walks away.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

John comes in. He closes the door and double locks it. He
leaves his overcoat on the coat rack and makes his way
further inside the living room. He hits the play button on
his answering machine.

JOHN'S ANSWERING MACHINE
You have four new messages.

The machine beeps.

WOMAN #4'S VOICE
John, it's Samantha. Listen, I'm
in town for a couple of days and
I was wondering if you wanted to
see me --

John pushes the button.

WOMAN #5'S VOICE
Hey, John. I was thinking if
you're free tomorrow, maybe we
could --

John pushes the button again.

WOMAN #6'S VOICE
Hi! I don't know if you remember
me --

And again.

JOHN'S MOTHER'S VOICE
John, it's... your mother. We
haven't heard from you in a while
and we're starting to worry.

John heads to his bedroom.

JOHN'S MOTHER'S VOICE (CONT'D)
I understand how difficult it
must be for you to forgive me,
but that's okay. I hope someday
you will.

John doesn't react.

JOHN'S MOTHER'S VOICE (CONT'D)
I want you to know that I love
you... and I'm sorry. Please,
give us a call. We just want to
make sure you're okay.

John closes the door. The machine beeps.

JOHN'S ANSWERING MACHINE
You have no messages.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

John begins to undress. He places his clothes neatly in
the closet.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

John regards his face in the mirror. He takes the facial masque jar and applies the creme on his face.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John climbs on his bed and gets under the covers. He reaches out to the bedside table, takes the ear plugs and puts them on. The sleeping mask and hair net are next. He turns the lamp off. He sighs deeply.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm sounds. John wakes up with a jolt. He takes off the sleeping mask, ear plugs and hair net, and leaves them on the bedside table. He gets out of bed and sprints to the bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

John stumbles into the bathroom. He comes before the sink and starts peeling off the facial masque. Pieces drop in the sink.

Moments later, John looks up. JOHN #3 (33, slightly overweight, goatee) appears in the mirror. John lets out a scream and falls backwards. Again.

John springs up and sticks his face close to the mirror. He starts to laugh hysterically.

JOHN #3
Is this a joke? What the fuck is
this?

He studies his new face.

JOHN #3 (CONT'D)
You've gotta be fucking kidding
me!

He darts outside.

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - LOBBY - MORNING

The elevator doors open and John races out. He moves to the front desk where Tony is sitting.

JOHN #3
Tony!

Tony stands up.

TONY
Mr. Donovan. What can I do for
you, sir?

John stares at him for several breaths, totally immobile.

TONY (CONT'D)
Sir?

John hurries back to the elevator. Tony shrugs and sits
back down.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

John is before the full-length mirror. He checks his body
type.

JOHN #3
That's not funny. That's not
funny. Not even close.

He touches his goatee.

JOHN #3 (CONT'D)
Oh, dear God!

He dashes out of the room.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - LATER

John is shaving. After a while, he finishes, splashes
water on his face and looks up. The goatee is history.
John grins.

JOHN #3
Much better.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - DAY

John opens the refrigerator and takes out a carton of milk.
He pours some in a glass, sitting on the table. He knocks
it back and wears a thoughtful face.

JOHN #3
(to himself)
Okay, okay, okay. Think. Why is
this happening to you, huh? Why?

He paces about the room like a caged animal. He tries to
think.

JOHN #3 (CONT'D)

This is crazy! It doesn't make any sense! Okay. Two days ago, everything was fine. I wake up yesterday, I look like someone else. I wake up today, I look like someone else. It's insane!

He pours another glass of milk. The carton is empty. He throws the carton on the wastebasket. It bounces onto the side and falls on the floor.

John rolls his eyes and goes to the carton, kneels down and picks it up. His eyes go wide when a thought strikes him. He bolts up, drops the carton on the floor and runs out of the kitchen.

There's picture of a missing child on the side of the carton.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

John moves to the furniture with a few pictures on it. He picks up a frame and looks at it. He goes bug-eyed. The picture shows John #3 on a stand, giving a speech.

John puts the picture down, picks up another one. John #3 with Pamela Anderson. Another photo. John #3 and Hugh Hefner are laughing, surrounded by Playboy bunnies.

JOHN #3

No way. No way!

John puts the picture down and storms out of the living room.

INT. JOHN'S STORAGE ROOM - DAY

The door flies open. John flicks on the light. He starts searching through the storage room. He comes up with a cardboard box. He opens it and pulls out a photo album.

John flips through, surprised. YOUNG JOHN #3 in posed portraits, high school yearbook photos and vacation photos. John almost bursts into tears. He attempts to regain his composure.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - MOVING - DAY

John drives with his cell phone to his ear.

JOHN #3

Come on! Pick up!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

A secretary, VIOLA, (25, blonde, sexy) goes to her desk, sits on the side and answers the phone.

VIOLA
Mr. Lehmann's office.

JOHN #3
Yeah, it's Donovan! I need to speak with him. Put him on.

VIOLA
(sarcastically)
I know who you are, Mr. Donovan! The doctor can't come to the phone right now. He's in a session.

JOHN #3
I don't care! I have to talk to him! Put him on the phone!

VIOLA
Mr. Lehmann has specifically told me to hold his calls when he's in a se --

The door opens and a PATIENT comes out. PETER LEHMANN (38, glasses, grey hair) follows.

PETER
(to the patient)
I'll see you next week.

The patient exits.

PETER (CONT'D)
What's the matter, Viola?

She holds up the receiver.

VIOLA
It's him. He says wants to speak with you. It's urgent.

Peter takes the phone.

PETER
John? How you've been?

JOHN #3
 (sarcastically)
 Well, not great, Peter! I have
 to see you! ASAP!

PETER
 I've got another appointment in
 30 minutes, John. Can't it wait
 until our scheduled meeting?

JOHN #3
 No, Peter! I have to see you
 right now!

PETER
 John...

JOHN #3
 I'm three blocks away!

He hangs up.

PETER
 John? John? Goddamn it, John.
 (to Viola)
 Cancel Mr. Jenkins' appointment.
 Tell him something came up and we
 have to reschedule.

He enters his office.

EXT. PETER'S BUILDING - DAY

John pulls over at the curb before the building. He gets
 out, locks the car and rockets to Peter's building.

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

John barges into the waiting room. Viola, at her desk,
 scares.

JOHN #3
 Where is he?

Viola stares daggers at him.

VIOLA
 So you never thought of calling
 me back, huh? Let me guess. You
 were too... busy?

JOHN #3
 Look, this is not a good time.

He goes to the office.

VIOLA
 (sarcastically)
 When is a good time, Mr. Donovan?
 Huh? Could you check your
 schedule and let me know --?

The door opens. Peter stands in the doorway.

PETER
 John. Come on in.

John does.

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - DAY

John goes to the armchair in the middle of the room and
 sits down.

JOHN #3
 Peter, I appreciate your seeing
 me.

PETER
 Did I have a choice?

Peter grins, closes the door and motions to a chair next to
 John. He takes a seat.

PETER (CONT'D)
 What's the matter, John?

JOHN #3
 I think I'm loosing it, Peter! I
 think I'm going out of my mind!
 I don't know how to explain it!

PETER
 Wow, wow, slow down! Slow down,
 John.

Peter looks at him curiously. John gazes straight into his
 eyes.

JOHN #3
 Pete, we've known each other for
 many years, huh?

PETER
 That's right.

JOHN #3
 Did I always...
 (hesitates)
 ... look like this?

PETER

I don't understand the question.
What do you mean?

JOHN #3

I mean... this! Did I always
have this face? This nose and
ears? And my body! Look at my
arms!

He touches his arms and sighs in disbelief.

JOHN #3 (CONT'D)

Was I always like this?

Peter takes his time before he gives an answer.

PETER

Of course.

John leans back to the chair and drowns himself in his
thoughts.

JOHN #3

(to himself)

How is this even possible?

PETER

Why don't you tell me what's
really bothering you, John?

JOHN #3

I don't know who I am anymore!

(pauses; calms down)

All right. Are you sure you
wanna know?

PETER

Yes, John. Tell me.

JOHN #3

Three days ago, everything was
great. Great! I woke up, went
to work, played tennis with my
best friend, went out, had fun.
Great! The next day, I got up
and...

(laughs sarcastically)

... I'm someone else! My face is
changed! My body is changed! I
am... different! And the weird
thing is that everyone recognizes
me, everyone but me! And the
pictures! How can the pictu --?!

PETER

John! Please, calm down!

(pause)

Are you still on the medication I prescribed you?

JOHN #3

Yes, Pete. I am, okay? I am.

(pauses; thinks)

The question is, what do you do when you don't see yourself in the mirror anymore?

Peter rises from his chair.

PETER

Come with me.

John stands, too. Peter moves towards a door and opens it.

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Peter walks in, turns on the light. John follows. They're both in front of the bathroom mirror.

PETER

Look at yourself and repeat after me: "I am John Donovan."

John is silent.

PETER (CONT'D)

"I - am - John - Donovan." Let me hear you say it, John. Say it.

JOHN #3

I am... John... Donovan.

PETER

"I am the Editor-in-Chief of Starz magazine."

JOHN #3

I am the Editor-in-Chief of Starz magazine.

He pats John on the shoulder.

PETER

Good. Now, take a deep breath.

John breathes in and out.

PETER (CONT'D)

Do you feel better?

John nods slowly. Peter steps out of the bathroom. John takes a last look at his reflection and comes out, too.

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They walk out.

PETER

Look, I understand you have a lot going on in your life right now, and trust me, it is completely normal to drop the ball once in a while. That's okay. It happens.

JOHN #3

Not to me.

PETER

It happens to all of us, John. What I want from you is get some rest this weekend. Forget about work, forget about your problems and try to find Jonathan again. Okay?

John nods. They walk to the door. Peter opens it.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'll see you in your regular appointment next week.

John nods in response. He steps out and looks at Viola. She stares at him with lustful eyes.

VIOLA

(mouths)

Call me.

John reacts and exits the office.

EXT. PETER'S BUILDING - DAY

John comes out of the building. A municipal tow truck has hoisted up his Ferrari and drives away. John runs towards the truck, shouting:

JOHN #3

Hey! Hey, that's my car! What are you doing? That's my --!

The tow truck rounds the corner.

JOHN #3 (CONT'D)

Ahh! Fucker!

INT. TAXI - DAY

John is in the back of the taxi. His face a mask of anger and distress. The TAXI DRIVER (40, Chinese) lights a smoke.

JOHN #3

No smoking.

TAXI DRIVER

I smoke, my friend! My taxi, my rule! You not like, you get out!

John rolls down the window and gazes at the city gliding past. The people, the cars, the buildings. He sighs sadly.

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

John puts the key in the lock to open his front door. Mr. Howard gets out of his apartment.

MR. HOWARD

Mr. Donovan!

John struggles to unlock the door. It's stuck!

MR. HOWARD (CONT'D)

The meeting's in five minutes.

JOHN #3

Yeah, I'm not gonna be able to make it.

MR. HOWARD

But Mr. Donovan...

JOHN #3

Listen, dickface! I don't give a shit about your fucking meeting. Do you understand? I'm having a really, really bad day. How bad you might ask? Well, bad enough for me to actually kill someone! Kill someone!

Mr. Howard is frozen in a state of shock.

JOHN #3 (CONT'D)

Now, leave me the fuck alone before I shove my leg so far up your ass that your morning breath smells like my foot powder!

Her enters his apartment and slams the door behind him. Mr. Howard, shocked beyond belief, drops his jaw.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Frank Sinatra is playing on a stereo. John is in the bathtub, a washcloth draped over his head, a sleeping mask on his face. He seems peaceful, relaxed.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John is laid on the couch in his bathrobe and watches TV. The phone rings and the answering machine picks up.

JOHN'S ANSWERING MACHINE

You've reached John. I am home right now and in a moment I'll be making a decision. Leave your name and number and I'll think about it...

The machine beeps.

MAX'S VOICE

Hey, man, where have you been? I thought we were gonna get together tonight. Anyway, I'm going out with the guys. In case you wanna drop by, we'll be at the Beaumont around nine o'clock. See you.

John doesn't react.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

John is staring blankly at the TV. His face betrays a growing unease.

JOHN #3

Forget about it!

He turns off the TV, bolts up and dashes out of the room.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John drags the full-length mirror close to the bed. He sits on the side, staring at his reflection and waits.

JOHN #3

Okay. Now show me how you're doing this. Come on.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - LATER

John checks his watch impatiently.

JOHN #3
Come on! Do your thing! What
are you waiting for?

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - LATER

John has fallen asleep on the bed. He wakes up with a jolt, looks at the mirror. His face is still the same. He explodes to his feet.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The table is filled with empty espresso cups. John has the last sip of an espresso and leaves the cup on the table.

JOHN #3
Let's try this one more time,
huh?

He grabs a duct tape from the table and exits.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John waits again on the side of the bed, staring at his reflection. His eyelids are duct taped to his forehead. His eyes are now wide open. Literally.

John starts falling asleep, wakes up. Again. His eyes close for a second and flash open!

JOHN #4 (33, afro, mustache) has taken the place of the old John. He winces and kicks the mirror.

The mirror topples backwards, drops to the floor and breaks into a thousand pieces.

JOHN #4
Shit...

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - LATER

John picks up the broken pieces and puts them in a garbage bag. He holds up the last one and looks at himself.

JOHN #4
Jesus. I look like Cher... with
a mustache.

He drops the bag and falls onto his bed, drained.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sunlight bathes the room. John is on his bed, just as he was yesterday, eyes wide open. He clearly didn't sleep the whole night. He rolls out of bed.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - DAY

John is in front of the sink. He frantically opens the cabinet and looks through his beauty products. He pulls out a hair gel, unscrews the cap and squashes some on his hand.

John applies the gel on his unmanageable hair. No difference. His afro hairdo stays exactly the same.

JOHN #4

What the...?

He puts even more gel on his hand and then on his hair. Again, no difference.

JOHN #4 (CONT'D)

Why won't it smooth down? Shit!

He puts the rest of the gel on his hand and fixes his hair. The hair smooth down a bit. He breaths a heavy sigh of relief.

JOHN #4 (CONT'D)

Thank God! Today's Sunday!

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - LATER

John shaves his mustache. He splashes water on his face and looks up.

JOHN #4

Oh. I look human again.

His cell phone starts to ring in the distance. He grabs a towel and dries his face. He hurries out of the bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

John goes to the couch and picks up the cell phone.

JOHN #4

Yeah?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BOB'S LIMOUSINE - DAY

Bob, in a vibrant golfer uniform, is on his cell phone.

BOB
John! Listen, we're still on for today, huh?

JOHN #4
Well, Bob --

BOB
Great! I booked us a course for one o'clock. Be there 30 minutes earlier.

JOHN #4
Bob... I, uh, don't...

BOB
Settled then! See you later!

He hangs up the phone. So does John.

JOHN #4
Oh, boy...

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - PARKING LOT - DAY

A taxi pulls over at the parking lot and close to the entrance of the club. John gets out of the taxi with an athletic bag in hand.

Bob's limousine is park further away. Bob stands next to the limo, prepares his stuff. He sees John.

BOB
John!

John goes to him.

BOB (CONT'D)
Say, where's your car?

JOHN #4
It was towed yesterday. I didn't have the time to pick it up.

BOB
You shaved your mustache. It looks good.

John is taken aback.

JOHN #4
 Yeah... I'm -- I'm -- I'm trying
 something...

They motion to the entrance.

BOB
 So are you ready to get your ass
 kicked?

JOHN #4
 It depends. Who have you got as
 my partner in crime this time?
 Woody Allen?

Bob laughs hard.

BOB
 Kevin Williams from the council.

John, clearly disappointed, shakes his head. Bob grins
 impishly.

BOB (CONT'D)
 And I like what you've done with
 your hair, too.

JOHN #4
 Thanks.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

A golf ball on a tee plugged into the ground. John
 waggles his club, ready to swing. His hair, from all the
 sweat and wind, have returned to afro. Partially. He
 swings. The ball rockets off the tee and fades into the
 distance.

BOB
 Nice shot! Hey, who knows maybe
 this time you won't get to be
 humiliated. At least, not too
 much!

He laughs. BILLY CANE (31, ridiculous hair transplants,
 juvenile) joins him. John and KEVIN WILLIAMS (40,
 attractive, supremely poised) exchange a look.

KEVIN
 Don't let him get to you.

John acknowledges with a smile.

INT. GOLF CART - DAY

They all get into the cart. Bob drives, Kevin sits in the passenger seat, John in the back, the golf bag next to him. There is no room for Billy.

BILLY

There's no room in the back.

BOB

Then walk damn it! It only a few hundred yards!

He accelerates away.

INT. GOLF CART - MOVING - DAY

Bob looks at John.

BOB

Are you ready for tomorrow?

JOHN #4

Tomorrow?

BOB

The council meeting.

John looks at him, surprised. After a short pause, John shakes off the surprise, acts cool.

JOHN #4

Oh, that! Yeah! Definitely!
I've got some great ideas! Yeah!

BOB

That's my boy! You know, old Bob ain't gonna be around for much longer. I love this job, John, but I'm tired. When I'm gone a lot of people will fight over this position.

John nods.

BOB (CONT'D)

You do a good job, pull the magazine out of the gutter, and I guarantee you, that position is gonna be yours.

John beams and winks. The golf cart skids to a halt. They all get off. Billy is far behind and struggles towards them.

BOB (CONT'D)
Come on, Billy! Jesus, what a buffun?!

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - RECEPTION HALL - DAY

All four men step into the hall, weariness suffusing their faces. John's hair is back to full afro.

BOB
Good game. I don't know what happened back there.

KEVIN
Well, you lost, Bob. That's okay. Every horse has a bad day.

Him and John share a look and a smile.

BOB
I've got to take a leak.

KEVIN
Me, too. Let's go.

JOHN #4
I gotta change. I'll catch up with you later.

The three go to the restrooms, John goes to the locker room.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

John is getting dressed. He hears a conversation in distinct. He looks up at the vent.

THROUGH THE VENT

the conversation can be heard more clearly. It's the voices of Bob and Kevin.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - MEN'S RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bob and Kevin stand at the urinals. Bob whistles while he pees. Billy washes his face at the sink.

KEVIN
What are you gonna do when you retire, Bob? The magazine's your life.

BOB

Everybody's gotta retire
sometime, you know? One thing's
for certain. When that happens,
the last person who'll get my job
is that douche bag!

KEVIN

That's not up to you, that's up
to the council.

BOB

I got the council in my pocket,
Kevin. No offence.

KEVIN

John is a good executive --

BOB

Uh, forget that piece of shit!
As long as I'm around, he ain't
never gonna take this job!

Kevin finishes and zips.

KEVIN

You're a mean, old man, Bob.

BOB

I ain't that old.

He lets one rip. Billy laughs.

BACK THROUGH THE VENT

the laughs can be heard.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

John stands frozen, completely immobile. He is shocked.
He can't believe what he just heard.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - RECEPTION HALL - DAY

They all meet. Bob puts his arm around John's neck.

BOB

So you want us to give you a
lift?

John suppresses his anger.

JOHN #4

That's okay, big Bob. I'll take
a cab home.

BOB
You sure?

John nods.

BOB (CONT'D)
Suit yourself. We'll see you
tomorrow. I'm expecting great
things from you.

John manages a smile. He shakes hands with Kevin and
Billy.

KEVIN
Nice seeing you again, John.

JOHN #4
Same here.
(pause)
Billy.

Billy winks. They go away. John turns to the RECEPTION
CLERK.

JOHN #4 (CONT'D)
Call me a cab.

EXT. JOHN'S BUILDING - AFTERNOON

John gets out of taxi. The taxi drives off. He stays on
the sidewalk before the building for a moment and thinks.
Then he races away.

EXT. SAINT JOHN'S CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

John climbs up the stairs of the beautiful cathedral. He
moves through the doors and into the building.

INT. SAINT JOHN'S CATHEDRAL - CONTINUOUS

John comes inside. A funeral is in progress. A few
MOURNERS, seated here and there in the sea of pews, turn
around and look at him. All eyes on him. Eyes filled with
tears and sadness.

John bows his head and moves down the center aisle toward
the casket.

NATALIE FREEMAN (28, pretty, prudish) is in the front row.
She gazes at John curiously.

He stops right before the casket. NATALIE'S FATHER lays
inside. John looks up.

JOHN #4

(softly)

I know I haven't been here in a long time. I know I'm not praying as much, or asking for forgiveness. Maybe that's because the past few years you've been an unbelievable dick!

He looks around. Nobody heard. He's relieved.

JOHN #4 (CONT'D)

Right now, I need you. You have to help me through this.

(pause)

I've learned my lesson, okay? I promise I'll change. Just make things the way they used to be. I'll do anything. I swear --

He touches the side of the casket. The casket door swings downwards and slams on John's hand's. He screams in pain.

JOHN #4 (CONT'D)

AHHHH! FUCK! FUCKING SH --!
WHY?! WHY?!

He turns to the side of the mourners. They all stare at him with judgemental eyes. He holds his pain.

JOHN #4 (CONT'D)

(acts emotional)

Why do all the good ones leave too early?

He motions down the aisle towards the exit.

JOHN #4 (CONT'D)

(to the mourners)

He was a good man. A good man.
My condolences to you all.

Natalie gives him another curious look.

EXT. SAINT JOHN'S CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

John climbs down the stairs. The doors to the cathedral open and Natalie comes out.

NATALIE

Wait! Wait!

John halts. Natalie approaches him.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

How did you know my father?

John is taken by surprise. He is a little flustered.

JOHN #4

Your father? We, uh, we were...
we worked together. Yeah, we
were partners.

NATALIE

You're in the cheese business?

JOHN #4

Me? You bet! I love cheese! Uh-
huh!

NATALIE

He never mentioned you, Mr...?

JOHN #4

Donovan. John Donovan.

NATALIE

Donovan...

JOHN #4

Anyway, I have to get going. My
condolences... again.

He flies down the stairs. Natalie is puzzled and charmed
at the same time.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John passes past the answering machine and presses the play
button.

JOHN'S ANSWERING MACHINE

You have three new messages.

The machine beeps. John falls back on the couch.

WOMAN #7'S VOICE

Hi, John! It's Gina! I'm
calling to make sure you have my
number right, because it's been a
week and I still haven't heard
from you. Anyway, it's 555-2394.
Call me.

The machine beeps.

BEN AND CHARLIE'S VOICES

Hey! It's Ben... and... Charlie!
How are you, John? Listen, the
grand opening is in a couple of
days. We hope you could make it.

(MORE)

BEN AND CHARLIE'S VOICES (CONT'D)
 Max will give you the details.
 Bye!

The machine beeps.

JOHN'S FATHER'S VOICE
 John... it's dad. Your mother
 and I are going crazy. Why don't
 you give us a call, son? Please,
 John. Just let us know you're
 okay. Take care of yourself.

The machine beeps.

JOHN'S ANSWERING MACHINE
 You have no messages.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

The alarm clock blares on the bedside table. John's hand reaches over and shuts off the alarm.

JOHN #5 (33, strikingly handsome, muscled body) rolls out of bed and sits on the side. Only the right side of his face is visible. He yawns and rises. He puts on his sleepers and goes to the bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

John comes in. He walks past the mirror, halts and backs up. He looks at his reflection. He is happy with what he sees. The side of it, at least.

JOHN #5
 Not bad! Not bad at all!

He turns around. A gigantic mole on his right cheek. John lets out a shrill. He examines the mole a little closer.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)
 I knew it! I knew --!
 (to the sky;
 sarcastically)
 Thank you!

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

John comes through the doors in a hurry, head down, big sunglasses covering his face. He paces towards his office. Staffers shape themselves up. A few people on his way part like the red sea as he comes forth. Albert finds the courage to say:

ALBERT
 Good morning, sir.

John doesn't even look up.

JOHN #5
(under his breath)
Morning.

Albert is surprised. John keeps heading to his office.

ALBERT
He said... good morning. Did
anybody else hear that? He said
good morning!

He lifts his hands in the air and cheers.

John arrives at Melanie's desk.

MELANIE
Hello, John. How are you?

John holds up his hand, telling her to stop talking.

MELANIE (CONT'D)
One of those days, huh?

JOHN #5
You have no idea!

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - JOHN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

John comes in, goes to his desk and takes a seat. He
chills back, glasses still on and takes deeps breaths.
Melanie steps into the office.

MELANIE
Would you like some coffee?

JOHN #5
I'll take a loaded gun if you
have one.

MELANIE
I have a cousin who knows people.
I suppose I could give him a
call...

John smirks to her sarcastically. He takes off his
glasses, opens the top drawer in his desk and pulls out a
handy pocket mirror. He glares at his mole.

JOHN #5
Oh, my God! Would you look at
that?

MELANIE
What? Your mole?

JOHN #5

Yeah!

MELANIE

What's wrong with your mole?

JOHN #5

What do you mean "what's wrong?"
Look at it! It's disgusting!

MELANIE

What are you talking about?
That's your tickle button. Girls
love it.

JOHN #5

You can't be serious.

MELANIE

What's with you today? You're
weird.

JOHN #5

It's nothing. Just get me a cup
of coffee, will you? Lots of
creme, lots of sugar!

MELANIE

Gotcha!

Melanie goes to the door, halts in the doorway.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

You have to interview a bunch of
people for the Picture Editor
position. And don't forget the
council meet --

JOHN #5

I know! I know!

MELANIE

Just wanna make sure.

She exits. John falls back to his seat and lets out a deep
sigh.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - MEETING ROOM - DAY

John is seated at the head of the table. Alone. He gazes
blankly at nothing, an expressionless look frozen forever
on his face. Abruptly, the doors swing open as the Starz
magazine COUNCILORS bursts inside.

They glare at John and whisper in uneasiness. John stares at them. Each and every one of them. Kevin, Billy. They all take their seats at the table.

John breaks out of his trance, starts to come around. Bob comes in last and sits at the head of the table across John.

BOB
Morning, John.

John greets him with an imperceptible inclination of the head, hatred in his eyes.

BOB (CONT'D)
Is everyone here?

The councilors look at one another. They're all present.

BOB (CONT'D)
All right, let's begin!

He has everyone's full attention.

BOB (CONT'D)
Last week I asked from our Executive Editor to come up with an idea that will help us overcome the obstacles in our way. John?

John stares at Bob with wide, unblinking eyes. Frozen.

BOB (CONT'D)
John!

John shakes off his freeze and rises.

JOHN #5
Yes...
(clears throat)
As you all know, the past few weeks we have found ourselves in a bit of a sales crises. Uh...

He pauses. Awkward silence. Bob snickers. John clears his throat and stands up straight.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)
What we have to understand is that we're in a middle of a price war. A war between strong combatants. What do I suggest? Drop the price.

The council sighs.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)

I know what you must be thinking, but, trust me, the last thing we want is to shoot ourselves in the foot. You have to comprehend that the point of the price war is to increase sales at the expense of the competitor, to get the paper into more hands, so that more people sample it, like it and continue to buy it. So if we launch the best issue we have in years and drop the price by... 25 cents... Anybody got a cell phone?

The councilor gives him his cell. The council laughs. John makes the calculations.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)

We'll lose about 600.000 dollars...

The council sighs again.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)

... but end up increasing sales by 12% and winning...

He works the calculator once more.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)

... 1.300.000 million as of the third week of circulation. It's a risky move, but it's been done before.

(pauses)

What do you think?

The councilors are silent.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - HALLWAY - DAY

Councilors walk down the hallway, wide smiles on their faces. Bob and John head for the elevator.

BOB

Well, John, I have to admit. You really impressed me today.

JOHN #5

Of course I did, Bob. I'm great at what I do and you know it.

The elevator beeps and the doors open.

BOB

You're right, John. You are the best and you prove yourself every single day. What can I say? The Publisher position is yours. You deserve it.

He pats John on the shoulder and boards the elevator. John stays in the hallway and shoots him a look.

JOHN #5

You think so, Bob?

BOB

I know so.

John fakes a smile.

JOHN #5

I'm gonna hold you to that!

Bob gives him a wink as the doors slide shut. John's smile fades away. He walks away.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

John stops at Melanie's desk.

MELANIE

Great job! I heard you kicked butt!

John nods and a grin breaks into his lips.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

There's a woman waiting in your office for the interview.

JOHN #5

Thank you, Mel.

He goes to his office. Melanie is surprised. A "thank you" from John Donovan?

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - JOHN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

John steps in. A woman in a black dress is waiting at his desk with her back to John. She stands up and turns around. It's Natalie! John drops his jaw.

JOHN #5

It's you!

Natalie's face darkens.

NATALIE
And it's you.

John smirks.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
What are you doing here?

JOHN #5
Uh, yeah! Uh, what am I, uh,
doing? Here?

NATALIE
Do you work here? You are the
Editor-in-Chief? Mr. Donovan?

She puts it together. John doesn't respond.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
You said you worked with my
father. You said you knew him,
you were his friend...

John stays silent.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Oh, my God! I can't believe
this! My father was dead and you
--! You lying bastard! Shame on
you!

She sprints to the door.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
I could never work for someone
like you!

She storms out.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Natalie bolts out of the office.

NATALIE
(to Melanie)
Thank you very much!

Melanie checks the clock on her desk.

MELANIE
(to herself)
One minute and forty eight
seconds. That just might be a
new record!

John comes out, too and shouts:

JOHN #5
All right, I'm sorry!

The staff gasps. Natalie halts. Everyone stares at John, eyes bugged out in surprise. He sees them staring.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)
Get back to your work!

They all do immediately. Natalie turns around slowly. John goes to her.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)
You're right. I didn't know your father. And I'm not in the cheese business. Apparently.

Albert watches them, almost as if he's at the movies.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)
Are we amusing you, Albert?

Albert drifts his eyes at the computer screen and starts typing something.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)
Look, can we talk in my office?

Natalie glares at him.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John holds the door open for Natalie. She comes in. John closes the door.

JOHN #5
Please, have a seat.

Natalie does.

NATALIE
You better tell me the truth this time.

John nods and sits down at his desk.

JOHN #5
Last night, I wasn't there to pray for your father. I was there... because I needed help.

NATALIE
That I can believe!

John grins.

JOHN #5

I know I've upset you, but you have to understand I didn't mean to disrespect you or your family. I hope we can forget the whole thing.

Natalie nods.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)

So... are you still interested in that job?

Natalie doesn't respond. John reads her resume.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)

I have your resume here and I've got to tell you. We would be very proud to have you on our team.

NATALIE

When can I start?

JOHN #5

I understand the whole thing with your father --

NATALIE

I want to start right away. Tomorrow.

JOHN #5

Tomorrow it is. Be here at nine and... well, that's it.

Natalie nods and stands up. John stands up, too.

NATALIE

Mr. Donovan, thank you very much.

They shake hands. Natalie goes to the door. John checks his reflection on the lamp, his hair, his teeth. He sees his mole and makes a face. He moves to the door.

JOHN #5

Listen, Natalie. I was wandering if you'd let me take you out to dinner sometime, you know, as an apology for everything --

NATALIE

I appreciate the offer, but I don't think so, Mr. Donovan.

JOHN #5

I understand.

He opens the door for her. She exits.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Natalie comes out. John stays in the doorway.

NATALIE
I'll see you tomorrow.

JOHN #5
Thank you for coming in.

The staff gasps again. John stares at them for a few breaths, then shuts the door.

MELANIE
(to Natalie)
I don't know who you are, but
it's a real pleasure meeting you!

Natalie beams.

EXT. POLICE IMPOUND YARD - DAY

Hundreds of impounded cars are in the yard. John's Ferrari is near the entrance. The impound yard CASHIER returns John the credit card he just used to pay the impound fees. He gives him a receipt, too.

CASHIER
Now, sign here.

John signs the receipt.

CASHIER (CONT'D)
Keys are inside the car.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - DAY

John's Ferrari lurches out of the impound yard and into the street.

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE - AFTERNOON

The Ferrari cruises down the bridge, heading towards Jersey.

EXT. DONOVAN RESIDENCE - AFTERNOON

A detached house with a big yard out in front in Bergen. John's Ferrari pulls over at the curb before the house.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - CONTINUOUS

John turns off the engine and headlights of the car. He gazes at the house. No lights on. John thinks for a moment, takes a deep breath and gets out. He heads to the house.

EXT. DONOVAN RESIDENCE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

John walks up to the porch, kneels down and removes a flowerpot next to the front door. There's a key under it. He picks up the key and unlocks the door.

INT. DONOVAN RESIDENCE - ENTRANCE HALL - AFTERNOON

The door creaks open and John walks inside. He scans the dark house. The hall, the kitchen, the living room. No one. He picks his way to the living room.

INT. DONOVAN RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

John steps in and turns on the light. Some pictures on the wall get his attention.

Photographs of JOHN'S FATHER (54, still handsome, hearty, prudent) and JOHN'S MOTHER (48, cold, hard face, brunet) posing in front of a Christmas tree, their house, a new car.

John bitterly smiles, when a scream intimidates him. He whips around. A baseball bat is coming down straight at his head. John, at lightning speed, dodges the bat, which smashes a lamp.

JOHN'S FATHER

John?

John's father is standing behind him with the baseball bat in hand. He looks a little pale and cold.

JOHN #5

Dad! What the hell?!

His father's face glows with joy when he sees his son.

JOHN'S FATHER

John! I'm sorry! I didn't know
it was you! I thought...
(smiles in disbelief)
Oh, my God! Come here!

He drops the bat and hugs his son tightly. John is uncomfortable.

He doesn't put his arms around his father, but his face gives out a warmth. He gives him an awkward pat on the back.

JOHN #5
How are you, dad?

His father fights back the urge to break into tears.

JOHN'S FATHER
A little cold.

He manages a smile. John smiles back. Father and son share a glance, their eyes very involved.

JOHN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
It's good to see you again, son.

John nods, moved. A short pause.

JOHN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
Would you like a cup of tea?

JOHN #5
Why not?

INT. DONOVAN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

There are two mugs with tea bags dropped inside sitting on the kitchen table. John's father pours steaming hot water from a tea-kettle. John glances at the pictures on fridge held by magnets.

JOHN'S FATHER
How you've been?

JOHN #5
Uh, good, good. There are some things I need to figure out... with my life... but other than that, good.

JOHN'S FATHER
I'm glad to hear that. Grab a chair.

They both sit at the table.

JOHN #5
And you?

JOHN'S FATHER
Ahh, we're doing all right.

John acknowledges with a smile. He has a sip of his tea.

JOHN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
How's the tea?

JOHN #5
It's fine.
(pause)
How come you're not at the store?

JOHN'S FATHER
Your mother sent me home on a
sick leave.

They exchange a smile. A short pause.

JOHN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
We miss you, John.

He reaches out and touches his son's hand. John doesn't react.

JOHN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
What do you say we drop by the
store and say hello to your
mother, huh? Would you like
that?

John pulls his hand and bolts up.

JOHN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
It's time to let that stuff go,
John.

John shakes his head.

JOHN #5
She cheated on you, dad! She
cheated you in our own house!
Our home.
(pause)
How could you ever take her back?

JOHN'S FATHER
She was my wife. I had to
forgive her. I think you should
do the same.

JOHN #5
I've tried, dad. I've tried, but
I can't.

His father nods in understanding. A short pause.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)
What did you do with my room?

He heads upstairs.

INT. DONOVAN RESIDENCE - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John paces about the room and looks around. So many memories. He is struggling inwardly with his emotions.

JOHN #5

It's exactly how I remembered it.

JOHN'S FATHER

We didn't move a thing when you went away.

John finds an old science project on his desk.

JOHN #5

Remember this? Second place. I didn't speak to anyone for a week!

He grins. John turns around and looks at his father straight in the eyes.

JOHN #5 (CONT'D)

Dad, look at my eyes. Now, tell me. Do you know me? Do you know who I am?

JOHN'S FATHER

You're my son... but I don't know you. Not anymore. Not since you left.

Their eyes are locked.

JOHN'S FATHER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for everything.

EXT. DONOVAN RESIDENCE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

John and his father come out of the house. They stop at the steps.

JOHN'S FATHER

Don't be a stranger, okay?

JOHN #5

I don't know, dad...

John's father nods in acknowledgment.

JOHN'S FATHER

Thanks for dropping by, huh?

JOHN #5

It was nice seeing you, dad.

They hug.

JOHN'S FATHER
Take care of yourself.

JOHN #5
You, too.

John strides away. His father watches him leave.

EXT. DONOVAN BOOKS - NIGHT

A bookstore with a sign above the entrance: "DONOVAN BOOKS." The Ferrari pulls over on the opposite side of the street. John tries to look thought the storefront.

John's mother serves a CUSTOMER. John looks at her for a few breaths and accelerates away.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - MORNING

A new day. JOHN #6 (33, united eyebrows, hairy, sinewy) is staring at himself in the mirror, clearly disappointed.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John moves to the window, overlooking the Central Park. He stands there, gazing at the view. A knock at the door.

JOHN #6
Come in!

Melanie comes in with a bunch of pictures in her hands.

MELANIE
I've got those pictures you asked
for.

John doesn't turn around.

JOHN #6
Leave them on the desk.

Melanie leaves the pictures and goes to the door. She stops in the doorway and glances at John. She wants to say something, but doesn't. She gets out and closes the door.

INT. RACQUETBALL COURT - AFTERNOON

A black racquetball slams against the wall. A hard, fast game is in progress between John and Max.

MAX

I left a message on your machine
Saturday night. You didn't call
me back.

JOHN #6

I'm dealing with some stuff right
now and --

MAX

Who is she?

JOHN #6

Just a girl from work.

MAX

"Just a girl from work."
Something's up. Details.

JOHN #6

What do you want me to say?

MAX

Did you bang her yet?

JOHN #6

No, this is different.

MAX

What?

JOHN #6

Yeah. I -- I -- I think I like
her.

Max grabs the ball.

MAX

Okay, who are you and what did
you do with my friend? What are
you talking about?

John nods.

MAX (CONT'D)

Seriously?

John nods again. A short pause.

MAX (CONT'D)

Man, that's wonderful! Good for
you!

JOHN #6

She turned me down.

MAX

What? You have to be kidding me.

John shakes his head.

MAX (CONT'D)

A girl turned you down?

John nods.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hey, don't worry about it. We'll hook you up with another girl in the opening tonight.

JOHN #6

What opening?

MAX

Ben and Charlie are exhibiting tonight. Tell me you're coming!

John considers for a moment.

JOHN #6

Just serve the ball, okay?

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

John is in the shower, a reflective look on his face.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - LATER

John stands before of the fogged-up mirror, towel tucked around his waist. He swipes his palm across the mirror and wipes the steam away. He stares at his reflection for a long moment and smiles bitterly.

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

A sophisticated crowd has massed the gallery. Photographs of everyday New York people adorn the walls. Ben, Charlie and Max are discussing a photograph.

CHARLIE

This is one of my favorites.
Kind of free-form, free-flowing
asymmetrical.

BEN

It was taken on Thanksgiving day.
This photo is a simple reminder
that more often, less defines
happiness.

MAX

Very touching, very human.

A few FRIENDS of Ben and Charlie congratulate them.

FRIENDS

Ben! Charlie! Congratulations!
Incredible captures! You have a
talent for finding interesting
faces!

Max spots John wandering among the crowd. He signals to
him. John sees him and goes to him.

JOHN #6

How you guys doing?

CHARLIE

Peachy!

BEN

Glad you could make it.

They shake hands. Max picks up a glass of champagne from a
passing WAITER and offers it to John.

MAX

Are you feeling any better?

JOHN #6

Yeah.

(to Ben and Charlie)

Great show, huh? Beautiful place
you got here.

MAX

The guys have bigger news! They
decided to... get married!

JOHN

Oh...

(pauses)

Isn't that... something?

MAX

Have you set on a date yet?

BEN

June 5th.

CHARLIE

Yeah, we wanted to be quite warm,
but not really. You know what I
mean?

John nods vigorously.

JOHN #6
Well, good for you... I guess.

MAX
Here's to you guys!

He raises his glass in the air.

CHARLIE
To happiness!

BEN
To finding the right person!
Cheers!

They all clink their glasses. John's smile fades into thoughtfulness as he has a sip of champagne.

INT. ART GALLERY - LATER

John is surveying the gallery. A smile spreads across his face.

Cool and confident, he approaches ANITA (29, stunning, aloof). He stands next to her and without looking at her says:

JOHN #6
So tell me. What does it feel
like to be the most beautiful
woman in the room?

ANITA
(cynically)
Wow! Girls actually fall for
that?

John raises his eyebrows and gives her a look.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John and Anita are making out on John's bed. Their clothes are on the floor. Anita starts licking his chest. John gets lost in his thoughts and closes his eyes. A moment later:

JOHN #6
Stop, stop, stop.

Anita pulls away.

ANITA
What's the matter?

JOHN #6
I can't do this.

ANITA
Why?

JOHN #6
There's someone else.

ANITA
Don't worry. I'll make you
forget all about her.

She starts licking him again. John rolls his eyes.

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Anita is thrown out of John's apartment.

JOHN #6 (O.S.)
Thank you for the wonderful
evening.

The door slams shut. Anita stands alone in the hallway,
blinking in surprise.

ANITA
You suck!

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm goes off. JOHN #7 (33, bald, funny teeth) pushes
the button to stop it. He puts his hands over his face.
He reaches for his hair and feels his scalp. No sign of
hair. He jolts out of bed.

JOHN #7
Oh, no, no, no, no, no!

He shoots to his bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

ROSETTA (45, Columbian, chubby) cleans the bathtub. John
scares, slips and falls down. He springs up.

JOHN #7
Rosetta! What are you doing
here?

ROSETTA
It's Wednesday. I clean your
apartment every Wednesday,
remember?

John regards his face in the mirror.

JOHN #7
My hair...

ROSETTA
What about your hair?

JOHN #7
I don't have any!

ROSETTA
I know.

JOHN #7
And my teeth...

He touches his teeth and moves them right and left.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
What are they? A denture --?

His denture falls out.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
Oh, my God!

ROSETTA
What? What happened?

John grabs the denture, puts his hand over his mouth and mumbles:

JOHN #7
Listen, I have to go. Let
yourself out, okay?

He rockets out of the bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He picks up his suit and shoes from the floor and races out of the bedroom.

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - ELEVATOR - DAY

A TENANT is uncomfortable and looks out of the corner of his eye at John putting on his shoes.

JOHN #7
(mumbles)
How's it going?

The tenant looks away.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

John stands before the counter and, with his denture hanging on a thread, mumbles:

JOHN #7
I would like something for my
denture.

A PHARMACIST behind the counter stares at him wide-eyed.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - MOVING - DAY

John stops at a red light. He pulls out an adhesive from the paper bag and reads the instructions on the back.

John opens the box, takes out the tube. Then he removes the denture from his mouth. He unscrews the cap and tries to apply the cream on the denture, when --

A loud horn is heard, scaring him. He sprays the cream all over himself, the steering wheel, the seats. Basically everywhere but the denture. He looks at the rear-view mirror. TAXI DRIVER #2 is shouting at him:

TAXI DRIVER #2
That's as green as it's gonna
get, asshole! Move it!

He sighs in exasperation and throws the tube and denture on the passenger seat. He grabs the wheel, aggressively, hits the gas and drives off.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

John hurries to his office, avoiding eye contact with anyone. He arrives at Melanie's desk.

MELANIE
Hello, John!

John mumbles something and enters his office. Melanie is concerned.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - JOHN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

John sits down on his chair. He pulls out the tube from the bag and then takes out his plate. He applies the adhesive in a continuous line around the perimeter of the denture. He puts the denture on.

MELANIE (O.S.)
John? Everything all right?

JOHN #7

(mumbles)

Yeah! Everything's fine! Don't come in here! Uh, have everyone in the meeting room in fifteen minutes, okay?

MELANIE (O.S.)

All right.

(pause)

Are you sure you're okay?

JOHN #7

I'm fine! Thank you!

He sighs in relief. He checks his teeth. They're glued on.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - MEETING ROOM - DAY

Staffers take their seats around the table. John is standing at the head of the table. Natalie walks past him.

JOHN #7

How are you, Natalie?

NATALIE

Good, Mr. Donovan.

She goes to her seat. Everything's ready.

JOHN #7

People, before we begin I would like to introduce a new member of Starz magazine and our new Picture Editor, Ms. Natalie Freeman!

Staffers exchange puzzled glances and clap awkwardly.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)

Come on, people! That's not a warm welcome!

ALBERT

It's just, sir, we never actually welcomed anyone before.

JOHN #7

That's about to change as of this moment. Come on!

He claps loudly. The staff follows his lead. A rousing cheer and applause goes up. Staffers shake Natalie's hand.

STAFFER #1
Good to have you on board,
Natalie.

STAFFER #2
Welcome to Starz magazine.

Albert whistles. Everyone looks at him.

ALBERT
Sorry, I got overexcited.

The cheering continues. John takes a deep breath to calm himself and shouts:

JOHN #7
Okay, that's enough!

The cheering and applause stops at once.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
Now, let's see what we have here
today.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - MEETING ROOM - LATER

The meeting is over. Staffers exit the room. Natalie walks to the door. John gathers his paperwork.

JOHN #7
You did good today, Natalie.

NATALIE
Thanks.

JOHN #7
Listen, can we talk... just you
and me?

NATALIE
Sure. You wanna go to your
office or...?

John raises his eyebrows.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

PEOPLE are sitting on benches, others strolling, some walking dogs. A BOY and his MOTHER feed cooing pigeons. John and Natalie stroll down a walkway.

JOHN #7
What do you think of the
magazine?

NATALIE
It's all right.

JOHN #7
Do you like your job?

NATALIE
It's just a job.

JOHN #7
Would you prefer doing something
else?

NATALIE
I always dreamed of working for a
more anthropocentric magazine.
Kind of like -- Excuse me, what
are we doing here, Mr. Donovan?

JOHN #7
Call me John.

NATALIE
John, what are we doing here?

John stops. So is Natalie.

JOHN #7
Natalie, look about the other
day, I, uh...

NATALIE
I know. You didn't mean any of
that to happen. It's okay.

JOHN #7
So we're...?

Natalie nods. They share a smile. Natalie starts to walk
again.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
Go out with me.

Natalie halts, turns around.

NATALIE
What did you say?

JOHN #7
I like you, Natalie. Let me take
you out.

NATALIE
We work together, John. This
could never work.
(pause)
(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)

And, don't take this the wrong way, but you look like the guy that's been around many, many, many girls and --

JOHN #7

I know how I come off. I know, the whole... you know... but I can change.

NATALIE

I'm not the one for you, John. I'm sorry.

JOHN #7

Is it because of the way I look?

NATALIE

No.

JOHN #7

I knew I should've asked you another day.

NATALIE

What would've been different?

JOHN #7

More than you might think.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - MOVING - AFTERNOON

The Ferrari races through the downtown streets. John is expressionless and distracted. Suddenly, he starts hitting the steering wheel viciously with both hands.

JOHN #7

Stupid, stupid, stupid!

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

John steps in and shuts the door. The phone is ringing. He is oblivious. He takes off his jacket and throws it on the couch. He moves further into the apartment. The machine picks up.

JOHN'S ANSWERING MACHINE

You've reached John. I am home right now and in a moment I'll be making a decision. Leave your name and number and I'll think about it...

The machine beeps.

JOHN'S MOTHER'S VOICE
Hello, John? How are you?

John stands above the machine, listens intently.

JOHN'S MOTHER'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Your father told me you were here
a couple of nights ago. I
understand if you still don't
want to see me, but I want to see
you, John. I am your mother.
Please, come home. We love --

John grabs the machine, rips up the wires. He moves to the kitchen.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

John goes to the wastebasket, opens it and throws the answering machine inside.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BAR - NIGHT

John's Ferrari pulls up at the curb. John gets out of his car and motions to the entrance.

INT. DOWNTOWN BAR - CONTINUOUS

John walks in. The dark and smoky bar is relatively empty. A few PATRONS sit around the bar drinking, talking, and smoking. The BARTENDER wipes down the bartop with a rag. John takes a seat on a stool and calls out to the bartender:

JOHN #7
Get me a whiskey!

The bartender nods and starts making his drink. John turns next to him. A DRUNKEN MAN has the first sip of his drink.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
How you doing?

The bartender brings John's drink.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
(to the drunken man)
Cheers!

He has a sip and chokes. He spits the whiskey back in the glass.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
This... is... horrible!

He eyes at the drunken man downing the whole glass of whiskey. John takes a couple of deep breaths and knocks back his drink. He is burning inside, feels like throwing up. He takes a couple more breaths and starts to come around. Then:

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
Bartender, get me another!

INT. DOWNTOWN BAR - LATER

John sits at the same spot. He is halfway drunk. The drunken man is completely wasted, barely hanging on his seat. John is in a middle of a monologue.

JOHN #7
... I really don't wanna wake up
in the morning, you know?

DRUNKEN MAN
Uh-huh...

John takes the drunken man's pack of cigarettes left on the bar. He pulls one out and lights it. He chokes on the smoke, eyes widen. He has another drag.

JOHN #7
I'm serious. I don't know how
much more I can take of this.

He signals to the bartender. He talks with a YOUNG WOMAN at the bar.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
Two more!

BARTENDER
Give me a sec!

John keeps going.

JOHN #7
And it's this girl! This amazing
girl that I cannot have! All my
life, I never had girl problems.
Not once! And now it's just...
You know what I mean?

He turns to the drunken man. He is no longer sitting next to him, but has fallen face down to the floor. John bolts up and kneels beside him.

JOHN #7 (CONT'D)
MAN DOWN! CALL 911!

The bartender arrives with the drinks. The drunken man opens his eyes slowly. He stands up and leans against the bar. He grabs the first glass, knocks it back. He grabs the second, knocks that one, too.

The drunken man staggers out of the bar.

DRUNKEN MAN

Good night...

John watches him leave with startled eyes.

BARTENDER

Don't worry. He does this every night.

WOMAN #8 (30, impeccably dressed, poised) comes to the bar.

WOMAN #8

Can I get a beer?

BARTENDER

Sure, hon!

John stares at her, possessed with an obviously feverish desire.

JOHN #7

Excuse me? Is this seat taken?

He grabs her bottom. The woman stares at him for a moment, and, suddenly, delivers a kick to his crotch. John grimaces in pain. The bartender brings the beer. The woman pays him, takes the beer and moves away.

BARTENDER

Hey, man, you okay?

John lets out a painful gasp.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Come on, don't beat yourself up.
Tomorrow's gonna be a new day.
Perhaps it'll be a better one.

JOHN #7

(in pain)
I doubt it...

BARTENDER

Trust me.

MONTAGE:

1. JOHN #8 (33, short, descending hair) stands before his bathroom mirror and sighs.

2. John is at the head of the conference table, smoke in hand, with staffers surrounding him. He talks to them about their articles.

3. JOHN #9 (33, handsome, silver-haired) strolls down the street and checks his reflection on a storefront. He is satisfied with what he sees.

4. Natalie stands in Susan's desk. John moves along the cubicles and greets her. She responds in a cold, politely formal manner. John is disappointed. She watches him walk away with sad eyes.

5. In a sidewalk newsstand, stacks of Starz magazine. READERS pick up a copy one after the other.

6. John and Bob shake hands in cheering from the council. Wide smiles on everyone's face.

7. JOHN #10 (33, African/American, great body) is in his bathroom with a towel tucked around his waist. He removes the towel and looks down. A grin breaks into his lips.

8. John is at Melanie's desk. Natalie passes past him, ignoring him. Melanie shoots a sympathy look his way. They share a bitter smile.

9. Ben and Charlie are dancing in the floor of Reef Club. All of a sudden, John joins them with wild abandon and they all dance together.

10. A new teddy bear falls from the girl's backpack. JOHN #11 (33, slim, office-pale) picks up the teddy bear and catches up to the little girl. He gives her back her stuffed animal and smiles. The girl, overwrought with anger, punches him in the crotch. John winces in pain.

END MONTAGE

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm clock goes off. JOHN #12 (33, ugly, short) reaches out, silences the alarm. He gets out of bed, puts on his slippers and moves to the bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

John comes in, yawning, and stands before the toilet. He lifts up the lid and starts to pee. He turns around, looks at his reflection. He shrugs, his manner blase.

JOHN #12

Huh...

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Tony is near the door to the exit. John steps out of the elevator.

JOHN #12
Morning, Tony!

TONY
Good morning, Mr. Donovan!

JOHN #12
You're looking great! You lost some weight?

TONY
I've gained five pounds.

JOHN #12
No matter, Tony. You're a beautiful man.

Tony beams.

TONY
Thank you, Mr. Donovan. Have a great day!

JOHN #12
I sure will!

He exits the building.

EXT. SIDEWALK NEWSSTAND - DAY

John pulls over at a sidewalk newsstand. His hand reaches out of the car and gives a twenty dollar bill to the newsstand operator. He gives John a pile of magazines. The Ferrari accelerates away.

NEWSSTAND OPERATOR
Hey, your change!

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - ELEVATOR - DAY

Passengers stand around John at a safe distance. He is motionless. Expressionless. Suddenly, he raises a scream. Passengers panic and start screaming in terror.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

The doors open and passengers rush out of the elevator, scared shitless. A PASSENGER is curled up in a corner, trembling and hyperventilating. John sees him.

JOHN #12

GO!

The passenger charges out of the elevator. John is left alone. An devilish smile creeps across his face as the doors slide closed.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

John comes through the doors and paces along the cubicles. Albert bolts up from his desk. He stands rigid, his tie a bit askew.

ALBERT

Mr. Donovan.

A short pause.

JOHN #12

That's a nice tie, Albert.
You've got to tell me where you
got it from.

ALBERT

(stunned)

Yes... Yes, sir...

John continues down the offices. Susan types at her computer. He walks past her, halts and backs up.

JOHN #12

New eyelash, Susan?

Susan nods nervously.

JOHN #12 (CONT'D)

It really brings out your eyes.

Susan grins weakly. John continues towards his office, arrives at Melanie's desk.

MELANIE

Are you dying? Seriously, are
you feeling okay?

JOHN

(smiles)

Oh, Melanie!

He enters his office and closes the door behind him. The staffers exchange glances. Natalie, in a corner, can't help but be impressed by John's transformed behavior.

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John is working on his computer. A knock at the door.

JOHN #12

Come in!

Melanie steps into the office.

MELANIE

Mr. Gibbons' secretary faxed me these ABC numbers. I think you might wanna take a look.

He takes the papers.

JOHN #12

Thanks. I already know. Bob called me half an hour ago.

MELANIE

So I guess your little plan worked after all, huh?

JOHN #12

It seems so.

A short pause.

MELANIE

Tonight's the big night! They're making you a publisher! Are you excited?

JOHN #12

You bet. I've worked for this for God knows how long!

MELANIE

I guess this is it, huh?

John is digging into Melanie's eyes. There's sadness.

JOHN #12

I'm just moving up a floor. We'll see each other again. Don't worry.

MELANIE

I'll live.

JOHN #12
You know you're gonna miss me.

Melanie reacts.

MELANIE
Ahh, what the heck! Maybe a
little.

They stare at each other for a long moment and share a smile. John nods and with warm sincerity says:

JOHN #12
I'm sorry, Mel.

Melanie nods in understanding.

EXT. PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

Limousines and cars are parked in front of the Plaza. GUESTS, in suits and sleek dresses, get out and head towards the splendorous hotel.

John steps out of his Ferrari, looking very sharp in his designer suit. Two cars behind, Bob gets out of his limo. They meet and shake hands.

JOHN #12
Big night, huh, Bob?

BOB
Yeah.

JOHN #12
For both of us!

Bob smiles. They make their way to the entrance.

INT. PLAZA HOTEL - GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

The spectacular event of Starz magazine is in progress. FOUR HUNDRED GUESTS have attended. CELEBRITIES, HIGH SOCIETY, the council and the staff of the magazine. Everybody's here.

A BAND plays cheerful jazz. A delicious gourmet buffet attracts hungry guests. People are standing in the middle of the ballroom talking, others are eating, drinking or dancing.

John and Bob walk in and accept a warm welcome. John moves further into the ballroom, shaking hands with almost everyone. Albert, Susan, Melanie. He meets Natalie.

NATALIE
Congratulations.

JOHN #12
Thank you.

INT. PLAZA HOTEL - GRAND BALLROOM - LATER

A COUNCILOR climbs up to the stand. He checks the microphone.

COUNCILOR
Welcome, everybody! Welcome!

The band stops playing and the guests grow silent.

COUNCILOR (CONT'D)
We are here tonight to honor a great man, a worthy man, a man who's been in the Starz magazine family for more than 15 years! Ladies and gentleman, I give you Robert Gibbons!

A cheer goes up from the guests. Bob beams and walks up to the stand. He shakes hands with the councilor, which doesn't leave his side.

BOB
Thank you! Thank you very much!
You're great!

The guests grow silent once more.

BOB (CONT'D)
Thank you. This is probably one of the most difficult moments of my life. Not only because I leave behind a job which I loved, but because I leave behind a family. Thank you for taking me in and giving me a home. Thank you all!
(pauses)
I can assure you. I leave you in the very capable hands of the new publisher. I will miss you all. Thank you so much!

COUNCILOR
We thank you, Bob.

They shake hands again. He takes the microphone again.

COUNCILOR (CONT'D)
Where's Donovan? John, get up
here!

John charges with joy and moves up to the stand among much whistling and clapping. He shakes hands with Bob on his way down. John reaches before the councilor. He whispers into John's ear:

COUNCILOR (CONT'D)
Introduce the new publisher.

He gives him a piece of paper. All traces of a smile fade from John's face. He is startled. He holds the paper with trembling hands. He drifts his eyes to Bob greeting friends, then to Billy laughing and then back to the councilor.

COUNCILOR (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Read it.

John with low and cracking voice starts to read the piece of paper.

JOHN #12
Thank you...
(clears throat)
... thank you all for coming to
this very...
(clears throat)
... very special night. Tonight
we may say goodbye to one
publisher, but welcome another.
So without any further adieu, I
present you the new publisher of
Starz magazine... Bill Cane...

Billy steps up to the stand. He comes in front of John, winks at him.

John punches him hard in the face. Billy is knocked down on the floor. He lifts his head. Blood trickles from his nose.

BILLY
You're gonna pay for this!
(pause)
Don't even bother coming in
tomorrow. You're fired! Do you
hear me? Fired!

John flies down from the stand.

JOHN #12
(under his breath)
Worth it.

He meets Bob. They share a look. He makes a move to hit Bob, but his hand stops mid-air. Bob is scared. John shakes his head, disgusted.

He makes his way to the exit. The people part like the red sea. Natalie is on his way. She touches his arm, trying to soothe him.

NATALIE

John...

He walks past her almost as if she wasn't there. On his way out, John takes a bottle of champagne from a table.

EXT. PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

John storms out of the hotel, bottle of champagne in hand, and pops the cork. Natalie comes out of the hotel.

NATALIE

John, wait!

John halts.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's go back inside and talk.

John laughs hysterically.

JOHN #12

Yesterday you didn't wanna have anything to do with me and now you wanna talk to me? I have an idea. Why don't you just leave me the hell alone, huh?

NATALIE

I understand how tough this must be for you. I'm just trying to help you.

JOHN #12

I don't need your help. I don't need anyone's help! I am John Donovan!

He laughs hysterically again and darts across the street, making oncoming cars to skid in every direction. Natalie is concerned.

NATALIE

Oh, John...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR - NIGHT

John staggers along the running path with the help of the fence. The bottle of champagne is all most empty.

Abruptly, John halts. He gazes at the illuminated fountain spraying arching plumes of water over the reservoir. He moves to a nearby bench and takes a seat. He downs the rest of the bubble.

FADE TO BLACK.

We hear DUCKLINGS QUACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR - DAWN

John's face. The John we've come to know in the very beginning. The original John. The indistinct shape of a MAN in a designer suit was actually him.

John sleeps on the uncomfortable bench. The empty bottle of champagne in his lap. He steers, troubled by uneasy dreams. The five ducklings follow their mother crossing before the bench.

John opens his eyes, yawns and sits upright slowly. He looks around. His gaze come to rest on a pothole between his legs. A smile spreads across his face.

John drops to his knees and looks closely at the wet asphalt. The water in the pothole calms down. His reflection is clearly visible. He looks up, his face luminous with joy.

JOHN

It's unbelievable... It's... me
again...

He almost breaks into tears. He starts laughing hysterically and bolts up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Yeah! It's me again! I'm back!
I'm --

He rockets away.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR - DAWN

John runs along the path, yelling:

JOHN
I'M BACK! I'M BACK! I'M BACK!

A JOGGER runs the other direction and tells him:

JOGGER
(sarcastically)
Good for you, buddy!

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAWN

John crosses paths with an OLD LADY (65, with a cane). He grabs her arms.

JOHN
I'm back, grandma! I'm back!

The old lady brings her cane hard on his crotch. John goes bug-eyed in pain.

OLD LADY
Perv!

She strides away. John topples forward and falls to the ground.

JOHN
(in pain)
What's... wrong with you
people...?

EXT. JOHN'S BUILDING - MORNING

John staggers towards his building. Tony stands next to the entrance and rockets to him.

TONY
Mr. Donovan! Are you all right?

JOHN
(in pain)
Never better...

Tony helps him inside.

INT. JOHN'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

They come inside, heading to the elevator.

JOHN
I'm back, Tony.

TONY
Long night?

JOHN
(laughs hysterically)
Yeah. Yeah!

He steps into the elevator.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Thank you, Tony! Thank you!

TONY
Don't mention it.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - DAY

John regards his face in the mirror and smiles in disbelief.

JOHN
I can't believe it!
(pauses)
John...

He smiles again and feels terrible pain in his crotch.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

John lays down on the couch, drained. He puts a plastic bag filled with ice cubes on his balls. He sighs in relief.

Just then, the doorbell rings. John stands up slowly, goes to the door and opens it. Kevin stands in the doorway. John is surprised to see him.

JOHN
Kevin? What are you doing here?

KEVIN
Can I come in?

JOHN
Yeah, sure.

Kevin comes in. They move to the middle of the living room.

KEVIN
I'm sorry about your job. There was nothing we could do. Billy is a sleazy guy. He didn't deserve that position, but you put him in the right place, huh? Bang! You got a good left.

JOHN

Thanks. You came here to tell me that?

KEVIN

No, John. I'm here to offer you a job.

John reacts.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Me and four other guys from the council are starting something of our own and... well, we're looking for a publisher. We don't think there's anyone out there half as good as you. You fight for what you want. And that's the kind of person we need for a publisher.

John removes the plastic bag from his crotch.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You think there's a chance you might be interested?

John is frozen, staring at Kevin.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Although I should probably tell you it's not gonna be a tabloid. It's a magazine with a rather different news agenda, slightly more serious, more anthropocentric. Kind of like --

John falls into Kevin's embrace, hugs him tightly.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Okay! I'm not a big hugger. More of a handshake kind of guy --

John squeezes even tighter.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Okay! Okay, that's the reaction I was hoping for... sort of...

John lets go.

JOHN

Thank you so much.

He gives the bag to Kevin and dashes out of the apartment.

KEVIN
Where are you going?

JOHN
Fight.

Kevin is left alone with the plastic bag in his hands.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - DAY

John weaves through traffic with his cell phone cradled between ear and shoulder.

JOHN
Come on, pick up!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STARZ MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

Melanie answers the phone on her desk.

MELANIE
Mr. Sander's office. How can I help you?

JOHN
Mel, I'm so glad I caught you!

MELANIE
Oh, John. I'm so sorry about your job --

JOHN
That's okay, don't worry about it. I need to speak to Natalie. Is she there?

MELANIE
She didn't come in today.

John sees a bumper-to-bumper traffic ahead of him.

JOHN
Hold on.

He turns the wheel, cutting in front of another car and turns left at a crossroad.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Phew! Listen, Mel, I need your help. I want you to get me Natalie's address. Can you do that?

MELANIE
Anything for you, John.

She looks at her computer.

JOHN
Sanders? That's who they gave my
place --? You know what? It
doesn't even matter!

MELANIE
Anyway, how you've been?

JOHN
This may sound a little weird,
but I feel like a different
person.

MELANIE
I'm glad to hear that, John.
(pause)
Got it! Do you have a pen?

JOHN
Yeah, just a sec.

He opens the glove compartment and goes through it. He
finds a pen, looks up.

A car comes directly at him from the opposite direction.
He realizes his Ferrari has crossed to the ongoing lane of
the road.

John steers the wheel, jerks back into his lane as the car
whizzes past.

MELANIE
John?

JOHN
Still here. What's the address?

MELANIE
209 W. 54th Street, New York.

John writes it on his arm.

JOHN
Thank you, Mel. You're a
sweetheart. Listen, I got a job
for another magazine and I'm
looking for an assistant --

MELANIE
Say no more. You know I'm your
girl. Besides I hate my new
boss.

John laughs.

JOHN
I'll call you.

They both hang up.

MR. SANDERS (40, hard and heavy, formal) walks past
Melanie's desk and opens his door.

MR. SANDERS
Melanie, I want to see you in my
office.

She fakes a smile.

MELANIE
Of course, Mr. Sanders.

Mr. Sanders enters and closes the door. Melanie still has
the same smile.

MELANIE (CONT'D)
I hate your guts!

EXT. MIDTOWN STREETS - DAY

John's Ferrari moves slowly along a quiet neighborhood in
midtown.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - CONTINUOUS

John is breathless as he reads the numbers of the buildings
gliding past... 203... 205... 207...

John parks the car before a building with the number "209"
on it. He takes a deep breath, opens the door and gets
out.

EXT. NATALIE'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

John moves up the stairs of the building and halts before
the closed door. He checks the doorbells, notices one that
reads: "Natalie Freeman" and pushes the button. Again and
again. Nothing.

John pushes the button a few more times. Nothing happens.
He walks down the stairs, disappointed. Then:

NATALIE (O.S.)
John?

The voice guides John's eyes to a first floor window.
Natalie is standing there.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

What are you doing here, John?

John goes under her window.

JOHN

I have to talk to you.

NATALIE

About what?

John looks around uncomfortably.

JOHN

Can you let me in?

NATALIE

I have to come down. The thing is broken.

JOHN

Okay.

NATALIE

What do you want, John?

John hesitates. A GYPSY, further away, stops pushing his cart and watches with great interest.

JOHN

(to himself)

If it has to be like this, so be it. Here we go.

(pauses)

I think I'm in love with you!

NATALIE

What?

JOHN

I think I'm in love with you!
Yeah!

NATALIE

What are you talking about? You don't even know me!

JOHN

I wanna know you, Natalie! You never give me the chance!

NATALIE

It won't work out.

JOHN

How do you know that? Why don't you let me take you out... just once?

NATALIE

I don't know, John...

JOHN

I do! You're so afraid to let anyone in, thinking they gonna hurt you! Sometimes it's worth taking that risk, you know? No one wants to be alone and I know you don't wanna be alone either!

(pause)

You see, I do know you! Why don't you give me a chance to try and make you happy?

GYPSY

(emotional)

Yeah, why don't you give him a chance?!

John shoots him a look.

NATALIE

I've been hurt before, John... from guys just like you! I have a hard time trusting people!

JOHN

Me, too... but I trust my heart! I trust the fact that every time I see you, I get weak knees! I trust the fact that when I don't, I feel hollow, like I have no reason to live!

(pause)

I want to feel love like they show at the movies, or sing in the love songs! And I want that to be with you! I won't hurt you, Natalie. Give me a chance...

Natalie becomes very emotional, holds back her tears. She moves away from the window.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Natalie? Natalie!

The gypsy fights with his emotions.

GYPSY

That was beautiful!

JOHN
Thanks...?

He runs to the entrance of the building. The door opens. Natalie comes out. John stays on the sidewalk. A flight of stairs in between them.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Hey...

NATALIE
You won't hurt me?

John shakes his head.

JOHN
I just wanna make you happy.

Natalie walks down to John. They stare at each other, their eyes very involved, and then kiss. The gypsy whistles and yells:

GYPSY
Woo-hoo! Yeah!

John and Natalie pull away.

NATALIE
Ask me again.

John giggles.

JOHN
Would you go out with me?

NATALIE
Pick me up at eight.

John smiles broadly. Natalie brushes her hand along his face and gives him a kiss on the cheek. She walks up and enters her building.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Bye...

She closes the door. John grins and strides away.

GYPSY
Yeah! Way to go, buddy!

JOHN
(to himself)
There's just one more thing.

He pats the gypsy on the shoulder and sprints to his car.

INT. JOHN'S FERRARI - DAY

The car moves under a highway sign: "JERSEY."

John is a little flustered. His eyes betray a growing unease.

INT. DONOVAN BOOKS - DAY

John's mother is behind the counter, punching keys on the cash machine. A CUSTOMER is waiting.

JOHN'S MOTHER

It's \$15.99.

The customer pays her. She gives him back his change from a twenty, puts the book in a bag and hands it to him.

JOHN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Thank you! Have a good night!

The customer exits and bumps into John on his way in. His father, in the back, sees him.

JOHN'S FATHER

John!

His mother turns her gaze to John. The father runs to his son.

JOHN

Hey, dad.

He steals a look at his mother.

JOHN'S MOTHER

Hello, John.

JOHN

Mom.

JOHN'S FATHER

Oh, my God! What a surprise!

He takes him into his embrace and holds him tight. He whispers into his ear:

JOHN'S FATHER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

He breaks the hug, clearly emotional.

JOHN'S FATHER (CONT'D)

I have to check something in the back.

He leaves. John and his mother stand almost face to face. There's ice in the air.

JOHN'S MOTHER
How you've been?

JOHN
Good. Really good.

JOHN'S MOTHER
I'm happy for you.

John nods.

JOHN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
So...

JOHN
So...
(pauses)
How could you do this to us?
Huh?

JOHN'S MOTHER
I know how you must be feeling.

JOHN
No, mom. You don't have the slightest idea! You don't know what it's like for a 16 year old boy to see his mother with someone else! You can't even conceive of it!
(pause)
How could you do this to dad?

JOHN'S MOTHER
It was so long ago. I was stupid and I'm sorry. I don't know what else to say.

JOHN
You're sorry? You're sorry?

JOHN'S MOTHER
I hope someday you find it in your heart and forgive me.

JOHN
I don't know if I could do that, mom.

His mother nods understandingly.

JOHN'S MOTHER
I truly am sorry, John.

John nods in acknowledged. Their eyes lock.

JOHN

I've gotta go. Say goodbye to
dad for me.

He makes a move to leave, when:

JOHN'S MOTHER

John! The 4th of July is coming
up. It would really mean a lot
to us... to me... if you'd be
there. I mean if you can make
it.

John stares at his mother and nods slowly. Then he exits
the store. A smile moves his mother's lips.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

An alarm clock rings on a bedside table. It's 7:00 a.m. A
hand reaches over and slaps the button, killing the alarm.

A pair of man's feet land on the carpet floor. He puts on
his slippers and stands up. He walks out of the room
towards the attached bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The feet move to the toilet. A hand lifts up the lid. A
second later, a stream of urine squirts down to the bowl,
spilling on the seat.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Damn it!

The man flushes, lowers the lid and turns around. He's now
in front of the sink, his facial features cannot be
settled. He washes his hands and splashes a little water
on his face. He looks at his reflection in the mirror.

JOHN #13 (33, funny looking, red hair) glares at himself in
the mirror. He touches his face and raises a scream --

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

John wakes up in a cold sweat, gasps for air. He looks
around, disoriented. The alarm clock reads 06:59 a.m. He
is thoughtful. Was this whole thing a dream?

A female hand slips on his shoulder.

NATALIE (O.S.)

What's the matter?

John turns and sees Natalie on the other side of the bed.

JOHN
Just a bad dream.

He beams and falls back into bed. His face is close to Natalie's. They kiss.

NATALIE
I love waking up next to you.

JOHN
Me, too.

They kiss again.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I love you.

NATALIE
I love you.

The kiss again. The time changes to 07:00 a.m. The alarm doesn't ring.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE - DAWN

The impressive skyline glistens as dawn breaks the horizon. Giant rays of sunlight start to warm the great city.

FADE OUT.

THE END