

FADE IN:

1 INT. ROOM 1

A heavy metal door slowly opens, BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT pours in from beyond the doorway.

JOHN(V.O.)

Ever have one of those days, when you wake up in the morning and just know something's going to happen. That something will take place that will change things forever, and you'll never look at your life the same way again.

2 INT. BEDROOM - DAY 2

Laying in bed, JOHN SMITH, 20s, is staring up at the ceiling.

JOHN(V.O.)

Well, I didn't. I had no clue. When I got up that morning, all I could think about was going to the bathroom.

He sits up and looks into the closet. In the corner, past the clothes, are rolled up sheets of paper and art supplies, along with one unfinished drawing of a woman's face.

His wife, SUSAN, 20s, lies in the bed beside him. She turns to look at her husband, tired.

SUSAN

It's still early, sweetheart.

JOHN

I've got to go to work.

SUSAN

But it's Saturday.

JOHN

I know. But I have to get the drawings finished for the campaign or Bob will have my head.

He slides his feet into his slippers - which are placed perfectly side by side and pointing outwards - stands and exits. Susan watches him, sadly. Her eyes move to the closet, where John's former self sits collecting dust.

3 INT. BATHROOM

3

John splashes water on his face and without looking grabs the wash cloth from the rack and dries his face.

A sharp pain hits his head, and John shuts his eyes. He opens the mirror and removes a bottle of prescription medicine. One of several bottles. He finds one pill left. He pops it into his mouth and downs it with a gulp of water. With eyes shut, he rides out the pain.

4 INT. DINING ROOM

4

Susan, in a cheap, linen robe with her hair in a pony tail, places a bowl of cereal before John, now dressed and seated at the dining room table. His briefcase is beside him.

JOHN
I'm out of pills.

SUSAN
(moves her fingers through
his hair)
I'll get more this afternoon. How
bad was it?

JOHN
Usual.

Susan looks down at him for a moment. He moves his head away from her hand as he begins eating his cereal. She understands his pain, feels it in a way, and wants to help.

SUSAN
Maybe you should take the day off.
Get some rest.

JOHN
(continues eating)
Can't. Deadline's Monday.

SUSAN
John...

JOHN
Please, don't.

He stops eating, but doesn't look at her. She moves away, stops looking at him.

SUSAN
You know I love you, John.

JOHN

I know.

SUSAN

I just... watching you shut down
like this.

JOHN

(stands)

I've have to get to work.

He drops the spoon in the bowl and picks it up.

SUSAN

Just leave it.

John puts it down carefully. He stands still for a moment,
then picks up his briefcase and exits.

Susan begins to cry.

5

EXT. STREET

5

John walks down the street. He begins to cross it when:

VOICE(O.S.)

Mr. Smith.

He stops and turns to see a dark-skinned MAN, 30s, dressed in
a black suit seated on a set of steps leading up to one of
the houses. His head is cleanly shaven.

JOHN

Who's asking?

MOSES

My name is Moses. We need to talk.

JOHN

Maybe some other time.

MOSES

This is important, Mr. Smith.

SMITH

(surprised)

How did you know my name?

MOSES

I know all there is to know about
you.

Moses produces a manila folder. He opens it and flips through
the pages.

MOSES

I know where you live, where you work, that your first girlfriend was named Laurie and you once had a dog named, Roger.

JOHN

Is this some kind of joke?

Moses approaches John. The manila folder is gone.

MOSES

I'm afraid there has been a terrible mistake, Mr. Smith. It's kind of embarrassing, really. A simple clerical error, you understand, but a regrettable one. When they designed this system it was supposed to make things easier, but I guess in your case, it has made things rather difficult.

JOHN

What... What are you talking about?

MOSES

This will all be a lot easier to understand if you would just come with me.

Moses reaches out to grab him, but John moves away.

JOHN

Get the hell away from me.

He continues to back off, moving quickly. John then turns to see where he is going, and is startled to find Moses standing before him.

Moses grabs hold of his arm.

The two are enveloped in BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT.

6

INT. OFFICE

6

Fingers TAP a computer keyboard. Low VOICES mumble. Plain, dull elevator MUSIC plays.

The LIGHT fades away.

John, disoriented, blinks and squints as his eyes adjust to the light of the room around him.

The TYPING stops.

John looks to his right and sees a female RECEPTIONIST, 20s, seated at a desk, a computer before her. She is looking up at him with a smile.

RECEPTIONIST
Hello, Mr. Smith.

John looks around.

The room is crowded with PEOPLE, children and adults. Some are quietly talking to one other, others are alone. Many look scared, confused. A few appear peaceful.

A large WOMAN, 40s, is seated in a chair by the far wall, flipping through a magazine. She looks over at John, smiles.

Across from her is a black couch.

The walls are white, with a grey tiled floor. Hazy WHITE LIGHT shines in through the windows, hiding what lies beyond them.

Moses appears beside him. In his hand is the manila folder. He gives it to the Receptionist.

JOHN
Where--?

MOSES
This is the processing center.

JOHN
The what?

MOSES
Please, Mr. Smith, sit down. I'll explain everything in a moment.

Moses motions towards the black couch.

John, still disoriented, walks over and sits down. He looks over at Moses, who is now talking on a telephone.

Moses turns to look at John, as does the Receptionist. Then he turns his back to John again, and the woman smiles. She walks around the table and approaches him.

RECEPTIONIST
Would you like something to drink?

JOHN
Where am I?

RECEPTIONIST

Moses will explain it all to you.
You sure you don't want anything?

JOHN

Just answers.

The Receptionist smiles and walks back to the table. Moses hangs up the phone.

RECEPTIONIST

Poor thing.

MOSES

Who?

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Smith.

Moses looks at him. He is eyeing all the other people nervously.

MOSES

He's been trapped in limbo for four years. I imagine that would damage his perspective.

RECEPTIONIST

Don't you remember what it was like?

MOSES

What?

RECEPTIONIST

To be alive?

Moses looks at her for a moment, then back at John.

Seated like a lost child, John looks to his left to see a heavy metal door. Two men stand before it. A YOUNG MAN, 20s, is dressed in a black suit. He is smiling and talking quietly with an OLDER MAN, 60s. The older man is smiling.

A moment later, the door opens. BRIGHT LIGHT pours in. The old man is nervous. The younger one reassures him. The two shake hands, then the old man turns to the doorway and passes through.

The door SLAMS shut and the young man walks passed John.

John notices that the woman seated across from him is staring at him. He pretends not to notice.

WOMAN

Hello.

JOHN

Hi.

WOMAN

What happened to you?

JOHN

What do you mean?

WOMAN

I got hit by a bus. Wasn't looking
where I was going.

John simply stares at the woman. She smiles widely at him. Suddenly, John is startled by the sound of a GUNSHOT. He looks around, but no one else appears to have heard it. He presses his fingers gently to the side of his head, as a dull ache passes through.

Moses crosses in front of John and sits down beside him.

MOSES

Okay, everything will be ready in a
few of minutes.

JOHN

Who are you? Who, who are all these
people?

MOSES

The receptionist's name is Mary,
I'm a case worker, and these people
are just like you.

JOHN

And what's that?

MOSES

Well... dead.

John chuckles with shock and disbelief.

JOHN

I must be having a nervous
breakdown.

MOSES

John, four years ago, you took your
own life.

JOHN

Bullshit.

MOSES

I'm afraid it's the truth. Please excuse my bluntness, Mr. Smith, but it appears to be necessary. As your case worker, it is my responsibility to acclimate you to what has happened.

JOHN

Case worker?

MOSES

There are about ten of us at this center. We help facilitate the transfer of what you know as souls from one existence to another.

JOHN

Another existence? You mean, heaven?

MOSES

Not exactly. When a person reaches the end of one existence, or life, their soul is transferred to another.

JOHN

Like reincarnation?

MOSES

That would be a more accurate term. You'd be surprised at how many different forms of existence there are in the universe.

JOHN

Then, all that stuff about being good so you can get into heaven, that was all just a crock.

MOSES

No. The quality of your new existence is determined by your deeds in the previous life. If you were a rotten individual, the existence you move on to will reflect that.

7 INSERT

7

Mary, the receptionist, hands a manila folder to a woman dressed in black. They smile and talk with each other.

JOHN (O.S.)

So why all this bureaucracy? Why doesn't God just take care of it all.

8 BACK TO SCENE

8

MOSES

The concept of death is vastly misunderstood in the human mythos. God got the ball rolling, but existence is a rather chaotic animal. Life and death are simply a series of events unfolding at random. In the beginning, when life forms died it was easy moving souls around, but as species grew and expanded, souls began arriving at an alarming rate. There was heavy congestion, some went to the wrong place. He had difficulty handling things alone. So, a system was developed.

JOHN

But, He's God, right? I mean, he can do anything.

MOSES

Another misconception.

JOHN

If this system was designed to prevent mistakes, what happened with me?

MOSES

Well, no system is perfect. We've misplaced a file or two in the past during busy times such as natural disasters, plagues, wars, that sort of thing. But they never stayed misfiled for long. Somehow, your file was lost and remained lost for several years. Sadly, you continued your existence in the white zone.

JOHN

"White zone"?

MOSES

That's just what we call it around here. It's a false reality. You see, most people have an easier time accepting "death" if they are eased into it. Because of chaotic random events, death can arrive suddenly, which can be a traumatic experience. Some people suffer memory loss, become confused and frightened. So, the white zone was developed, a place familiar and calming created from the person's memory where case workers can approach individuals and work with them to accept what has happened.

JOHN

But none of it is real.

MOSES

Correct.

JOHN

And my wife?

MOSES

A manifestation of your subconscious. In fact, everything you've known since your death has been a... figment of your imagination, as it were.

JOHN

This is all too much.
(beat)
What happens next?

MOSES

Well, once Mary has entered your file into the system, you go through that door.

INSERT

The think metal door is closed.

JOHN (O.S.)

What's on the other side?

MOSES (O.S.)

It's different for everyone, constantly changing.

9

BACK TO SCENE

9

MOSES

What one person may experience
could be totally different from
what happens to you.

JOHN

Is it dangerous?

MOSES

It can be. It may also be better
than anything you've ever known.
You'll have to walk through it to
find out.

VOICE(O.S.)

Mr. Smith?

John and Moses look up to see a heavy-set MAN, late-20s,
approach. Dressed in a white suit, he holds his hand out for
John.

MUHAMMAD

My name's Muhammad, I'm the office
manager here. On behalf of God and
the entire staff, I would like to
apologize for the mistake with your
file. I know there is little that
can be said to make up for the
problems and pain this has caused
you, but we assure you that
measures have been taken to prevent
such an occurrence from happening
again.

JOHN

Okay.

MUHAMMAD

As such, we've been authorized by
the Almighty to offer you a choice.
You can either pass onto the next
plane as you were meant to. Or, you
can be placed back into the white
zone to resume the life you had
there.

JOHN

You mean, I can go back?

MOSES

This isn't a good idea.

MUHAMMAD

Yes. You will be allowed to live out the remainder of your life without further interruption. Your memory of this event will be erased. After a few decades, we will come and collect you. Consider it a token of regret for our terrible error.

MOSES

Boss, I was--

MUHAMMAD

This has come down from the top dog, Moses, that should be enough for you.

Moses, unhappy, turns to John. John looks at the door. He then looks at Muhammad.

JOHN

I'd like to go back.

MUHAMMAD

Very well. Moses here will take you back and settle whatever details remain.

Disappointed, Moses reaches out to take hold of John's arm. The two are immersed in BRIGHT LIGHT.

10

INT. LIVING ROOM

10

The light fades to reveal John's living room.

John blinks his eyes to adjust to the light, excited to be home. When he sees what is around him. Things feel different to him. His smile fades.

MOSES

John, I wish you would reconsider this action.

JOHN

(pretends he doesn't notice the difference)
I just want to go home, be with my wife.

MOSES

But she's not real. None of it is.

JOHN

I don't care. Besides, your boss said I wouldn't know the difference.

MOSES

You won't remember this encounter or that you're dead, but--

JOHN

That's good enough, then. Just send me back and leave me alone.

Moses looks at John. Sees the desperation in John.

MOSES

How's your head, John?

JOHN

What?

MOSES

Does it still ache?

John thinks about it for a moment.

JOHN

No.

MOSES

Sometimes, when the recently deceased suppress things, they suffer side effects in the white zone. Headaches. Their subconscious struggles to remember, but their conscious minds keep pushing the memory away.

JOHN

What do you mean?

Suddenly, John is hit with a stabbing pain in his temples. He shuts his eyes, fingers pressed against the sides of his head. When he opens his eyes, he sees that Moses is no longer beside him. He looks around, and is shocked by what he sees.

JOHN

What is this?

MOSES (O.S.)

The truth, Mr. Smith.

Before him, on the couch, is himself. In one hand is a pistol. The other, a magazine clip.

He loads the clip into the gun. He's been crying. The apartment is dark, the blinds are closed.

On the table before him is a note, an empty bottle of alcohol, and a picture of Susan. The two of them together, happy, in love.

John watches with recognition of the events. He's seen this before. No... not seen. Lived.

JOHN
She was killed.

MOSES (O.S.)
Yes.

JOHN
Stabbed by some crack addict.

MOSES (O.S.)
You had trouble adjusting. Alone.
No friends, no family.

JOHN
She was my life.

The John on the couch puts the gun into his mouth, eyes red with tears.

JOHN
NO!

A GUNSHOT rings out.

The image of John on the couch is gone.

JOHN
I was an artist. Why did I do that?

MOSES
Pain can blind your judgement. You wanted to be dead so you could be with her. And, in a way, you were.

With a flash of WHITE LIGHT, John is back in the white zone. He looks around, at himself. It looks and feels different, not the place he remembered.

In the kitchen, Susan is crying.

JOHN
Susan?

Susan turns to look at him. She is confused for a moment, but smiles and runs to him. She wraps her arms around him, happy and relieved.

SUSAN

I'm so sorry, John. It's just... I can't keep doing this. I can't keep watching you waste away like this. You... You can be so much more.

John holds her tight, hearing her words. He remembers the

11 INSERT

11

Drawings and paintings sit in the corner of the closet. His old self sitting in the corner and collecting dust.

12 BACK TO SCENE

12

John hugs her tightly, and smiles for the first time. They are silent for a moment.

JOHN

I have to go, sweetheart.

SUSAN

Please, stay home today.

JOHN

I can't. Not today.
(looks down at her, into
her eyes)
But, I promise, things will be
different.

Susan smiles up at him, her cheeks wet with tears.

SUSAN

Really?

JOHN

(he wipes one cheek dry)
I swear. I'll make you proud.

Susan smiles wider. The two embrace again. They kiss passionately.

JOHN

Time to go.

SUSAN

I love you.

JOHN
I love you, too.

WHITE LIGHT envelopes them.

13

INT. PROCESSING CENTER

13

John's eyes are open as he finds himself standing before the thick metal door. It is closed.

JOHN
Thanks.

MOSES
For what?

JOHN
For helping me see the truth.

MOSES
I was just doing my job.

John turns to face him.

MOSES
Besides, you helped me remember something.

JOHN
What?

MOSES
What it meant to be alive.

John and Moses shake hands.

The door opens, pouring FLICKERING WHITE LIGHT into the room. John turns to face it, with Moses behind him.

JOHN(V.O.)
As I stood there, about to step into fate, I felt that familiar tightening in my stomach. The growing fear which had stopped me so many times before. But then, it just melted away, like ice in a glass of hot water.

JOHN
So you think it's possible that... That I'll see her on the other side?

MOSES
Anything's possible.

JOHN
(smile)
Good.

John takes a deep breath and walks into the light.

JOHN(V.O.)
It's kind of funny, really, when
you think about it. I had to die to
understand what it means to live.

The door slams SHUT.

FADE OUT.