

The first day of the rest of my life

by

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FADE IN:

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LIVING-ROOM - DAWN

An old apartment with a torn and faded flowered wallpaper. The place appears to be as if time has stopped here a long time ago. A TV set from the 70's, LP's, a lot of books, and not one feminine touch.

Traffic can be heard from down the street.

On a cupboard, among a numerous framed pictures of the same woman, an old and faded wedding photograph of a young couple.

On a wall, by a pinned poster of Hawaii, a clock untiringly ticks.

BEDROOM

An alarm clock ticks on a bedside table.

As soon as the hand reaches the 12, the deafening ringing tears the silence.

An old man's hand stops the ringing.

A long sigh O.S.

On the small carpet on the floor, two feet wear slippers.

JOHN SMITH (60) gets up of his bed. He wears a strayed pyjamas and walks like a zombie.

As he puts his thick glasses on, his face appears to be tired. Hirsute, he passes his hand in his gray hair and pushes them back. He yawns.

John passes by the large mirror of a wardrobe and faces himself. As soon as he catches his reflection, he draws a large smile.

JOHN

Hi John. Today's your big day.

He pinches his flabby cheeks and tries different smiles. He raises his hand to his heart.

JOHN

My dear colleagues. Today is the first day of the rest of my life. After forty two years spent with you --

He stops and shakes his head. He leans over a dresser where he picks up a piece of paper. He faces the mirror again and reads, putting back his hand to his heart.

JOHN

(reading)

After forty two happy years spent
with you all, I will allow myself
today to call you my friends --

He grimaces. He takes a pen, scratches and scribbles something on the paper, raises his hand to his heart, and reads again.

JOHN

(reading)

I will allow myself today to call
you my family --
(to himself)
That's better.

BATHROOM

John shaves in front of a spotted mirror. His hair is greasy and pulled back. When he's finished, he sweeps the rest of the foam on his face and smiles again.

His smile turns to a frowning.

He approaches his face to the mirror and takes a tweezers on the washbowl. He plucks three hairs, checks the rest of his face, and smiles again, satisfied.

He spills some after-shave lotion in his hand, rubs them, and splashes his face.

John looks up to the mirror. He looks like a brand new man.

Once again, he solemnly puts his hand to his heart.

JOHN

(reciting)

My dear colleagues -- No. My dear
friends. After forty two happy
years spent with you, today is
the first day of the rest of my
life.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Wearing an used suit, shirt and tie, John sips his tea, sits at a tiny table.

On his back, in a pan, two slices of bacon are frying.

John keeps sipping his tea, when he frowns.

Something smells bad.

He turns back to see his bacon burning.

He gets up, grabs the pan handle, and takes the pan out of the fire. In his move, one the slice of beacon explodes and some grease is projected on his shirt.

JOHN

Shit!!

LATER

John reappears with another used shirt.

On the table, the two slices of bacon are definitely burned in the pan.

John sighs.

LIVING-ROOM

John takes an old leather briefcase on a chair and checks out his tie in front of a small mirror by the cupboard, smiling.

The clock keeps ticking.

JOHN

(reciting)

I will allow myself today to call
you the family I never had after
life took mine --

He checks out his paper and slips it into his jacket inner pocket.

JOHN

(to himself)

Very good.

John turns to the faded picture on the cupboard.

JOHN

Miranda. You would be very proud
of me.

He kisses his fingertips, and touches the lips of the bride on the picture.

JOHN

I love you. Always did.

(a beat)

See you tonight.

John smiles a last time at the portrait, takes his keys, an old leather satchel, and steps out of the apartment.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

John steps down quietly the old wooden staircase. His hand slides tightly on the bannister.

A door opens. A middle-aged woman (MRS. SANDRIDGE) appears on her threshold, a broom in hand. She smiles at John.

MRS. SANDRIDGE
Good morning, Mr. Smith. So, this
is it? Today is --

JOHN
Exactly, Mrs. Sandridge.

MRS. SANDRIDGE
Is your speech ready?

JOHN
Still rehearsing.

MRS. SANDRIDGE
(winking)
You'll do fine.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Everyday life carries on in the streets. Traffic jam, hurried passersby, kids on skate, etc...

John walks quietly, staring at the chaos around him with an amused stare.

A bell rings from a nearby church tower.

INT. BUS - DAY

Sit at the back of a crowded bus, his satchel on his laps, John scans around with a naive smile.

A YOUNG MAN, earbuds thudding loud, stares at him with provoking eyes. As John smiles gently at him, the young man gives him a finger and shrugs as he turns his back.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A small clock indicates 9 AM.

John's office is small with four desks. While John types frantically on a calculator, lining up amounts, he is surrounded by three woman in the mid-fifties.

BESSIE, wearing round glasses, types with two fingers on an old electric typing-machine.

CALLIE, a chubby and over wearing make up blonde woman, writes amounts in a large notebook, while eating Custard Creams.

NORALEE, a pretty black woman, speaks softly on the phone.

Bessie exchanges a glance with Callie and they both giggle like little girls.

John raises his eyes from his calculator and stares at them with a smile.

JOHN

Are you up to something?

The women keep giggling.

BESSIE

Why would we? Is this a special event today?

CALLIE

(in her breath)

Or it won't be a surprise anymore.

She picks a Custard Creams and crunches it.

JOHN

A surprise?

CALLIE

(mouth full)

Did I say surprise? No--

(to Bessie)

Why would I say surprise?

They giggle again. Noralee turns to them, her hand covering the telephone speaker.

NORALEE

Stop it! Some people want to work.

Callie and Bessie giggle.

LATER

The clock indicates 12 PM.

The office is empty.

John is still sat at his desk. He pushes aside his calculator and papers, and takes a paper bag out his satchel.

He takes a wrapped sandwich out the bag, a napkin, a can of strawberry juice, and a tiny pill box.

In the silence of the office, the clock can be heard ticking.

John unwraps the sandwich, takes a bite, and chews quietly. He wipes his mouth with style and takes a sip from the can.

He takes his notes out of his jacket inner pocket and unfolds the paper on the table.

Reading it, he starts mouthing the text, nodding, smiling, one hand on the heart, and moving his other hand in an exaggerating and comical way, just like he was facing real people.

John scribbles again with a red pen, reverses sentences and reads.

He draws a satisfied smile.

LATER

The clock indicates 16:30.

The office is entirely redecorated. Balloons have been stuck on the wall, and a large paper colorful banner announces:

HAPPY RETIREMENT JOHN

The company staff is gathered in the room, facing John by Callie, Noralee, and Bessie. They stand in front of a long table covered with a paper napkin where plastic glasses, plates, snacks, and beverages wait for the party.

John is frozen in front of this people whispering to each other and, sometimes, looking at him. Uncomfortable, a bead of sweat starts to run on his temple.

Callie, Noralee, and Bessie look overexcited. Callie holds an envelope, as Noralee has her hands in her back.

CALLIE

Ladies and Gentlemen. Today is special. For two reasons. First of all, it's payday.

The staff laughs.

CALLIE
 And secondly, we're gonna miss a
 man.
 (she pretends to looking
 for someone)
 Where is he?

She scans the staff and her eyes finally meet John.

CALLIE
 John. After many years of hard
 work, your day has finally come.

Bessie shades a tear.

CALLIE
 (turning to Bessie and
 Noralee)
 The girls, and I, do hope, we'll
 have some young and athletic guy
 to replace you.

Bessie and Noralee giggle.

BESSIE
 At last, OUR day will come.

John grins a smile, more and more uncomfortable. He takes a
 glimpse at his watch.

CALLIE
 (to John)
 But, like I said before, today is
 your day.

Noralee steps to John and hands him a wrapped present.

Moved, John tears the paper to find: a colorful Hawaiian
 shirt.

The company staff applauds.

Noralee unfolds the shirt and holds it in front of John's
 chest.

BESSIE
 (to Callie)
 Don't you think something's
 missing?

CALLIE
 Something? Oh, silly me.

She hands the envelope to John. He opens it and takes a
 plane ticket out.

CALLIE
One whole week in Hawaii!!

The whole staff cheers and applauds.

As Noralee, Bessie, and Callie hug John, a SQUEAKING VOICE rises in the room.

SQUEAKING VOICE
Speech!!

ALL TOGETHER
Speech!!!

John puts his hand into his jacket inner pocket and takes his paper out.

He looks more and more uncomfortable. His shaking hands unfolds the paper.

As his forefront is increasingly sweaty, John readjusts his thick glasses.

He pulls on his collar and clears his voice.

People hush.

JOHN
(reading slowly)
My dear friends. I will allow myself today to call you the family I had after life took mine--

He stops and grimaces.

Bessie sobs on Noralee's shoulder.

BESSIE
He's so cute.

JOHN
After forty two years--

His breath becomes heavier. He looks like a fish out of his bowl.

Callie hands him a glass of water.

CALLIE
It's okay John. Take your time.

John grabs the glass-- and lets it drop as his hand falls along his leg, dizzy, losing balance.

Callie holds him as he slips between her arms.

BESSIE

John!

John's body falls heavily on the table, scattering the drinks and the snacks, and he collapses on the floor.

He's dead.

As some people around his body start to scream and panic, Callie kneels by him and looks at his face.

His thick glasses askew on his nose, John shows a strange smile.

Bessie and Noralee sob on each other's shoulder.

INSERT

Under his inert hand, through two fingers, his crumpled paper reads:

Today is the first day of the rest of my life.

FADE OUT:

THE END