

SCREEN TIME

Written by

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FADE IN:

**INT. DORM ROOM - DAY**

A BRAND NEW SMARTPHONE, still boxed. Reverent hands slide the box open to reveal the sleek, untouched screen.

FROM THE PHONE'S POV -- DANIEL DAWES (22), kind-faced but perpetually downcast and serious, stares into our "eyes" with a rare childish joy.

DANIEL

Wow.

He lifts us into his hand. Taps the screen, then again.

CLICK! A STILL IMAGE of Daniel, mouth open, poorly framed. His first selfie.

**BEGIN MONTAGE (PHONE'S POV):**

- Daniel stares down at us, face wrinkled in concentration as buildings and traffic lights whip by in the bus window
- Daniel pretends not to look at us, surreptitiously scrolling as a PROFESSOR drones in the background
- Daniel slumps against the wall in his dorm room, lights off, illuminated only by phone light. A smile spreads on his face as he texts
- Daniel clutches us drunkenly as he and his FRIENDS belt out a drinking song
- Daniel texts in the park, one of the friends and his GIRLFRIEND making out in the background
- Daniel frames up a picture of him and his DAD visiting a local landmark
- Daniel texts late at night, nodding off. Our view slowly slips down to his chest as he falls asleep, cradling us.

**END MONTAGE**

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

We look up at Daniel, scrolling away while the Professor talks.

PROFESSOR

Daniel! Am I that uninteresting?

A few students titter as the Professor approaches. Daniel hunches as the Professor sweeps us into his hand and walks back to his lectern.

As we're carried down the aisle and away from Daniel:

PROFESSOR

I know everybody loves these things  
these days, but here's a bit of bad  
news: they don't love you back.

We catch a last glimpse of Daniel, eyes locked on us, before the Professor puts us face down on his desk, and everything is black.

**EXT. UNIVERSITY QUAD - DAY**

We rest in Daniel's hand, staring up at his face and at the trees and sky beyond as he types out a text.

MAYA (18), in transition from stoner to army jacket-clad philosophy major, leans her head in, looking down at us. Daniel pretends not to notice her head brushing his shoulder.

MAYA

(teasing)

Gettin' them nudes, Danny boy? I  
didn't know she was that kinda  
girl!

Daniel tilts the phone away from her, pushing her out of our vision.

DANIEL

Dude.

MAYA (O.S.)

What?

DANIEL

I know you think you're cute.  
You're not cute, Maya.

Maya leans in, head right on his shoulder now.

MAYA

Let's still be friends next year,  
okay?

Before Daniel can answer:

MAYA

And I'm cute, man, look.

She reaches out and grabs us -- CLICK CLICK!

A STILL IMAGE, then another: Maya and Daniel, frozen in time.

**BEGIN MONTAGE (PHONE'S POV):**

- Daniel texts as SPORT FANS in the bleachers around him surge to their feet
- Daniel up late texting -- he smiles at a cute text
- Daniel's head dips as he falls asleep in class
- Daniel frames himself and Maya in a vacation selfie on the beach
- Daniel up late texting, but he looks serious, worried
- Daniel, Maya, and friends pose for a picture in the corner of a party -- Daniel and Maya are separated by the others

**END MONTAGE**

**INT. LATE NIGHT DINER - NIGHT**

We stare up at Daniel, the fluorescent lights of the diner an industrial halo above. He's focused on his phone as Maya rambles, obviously with a mouth full of food.

MAYA (O.S.)

...which is pretty much the culmination of like, acting as though all morality can be derived from first principles. Like it's always one of these sad white dudes living in a hut out of some bizarre sense of like, self-imposed rigor -- man! Seriously, this chocolate is good as hell, man. Taste it.

Daniel's engrossed, still texting.

A chocolate bar slowly slides into our view. It continues on its path until it softly presses into Daniel's nose. Maya pulls it back, then pushes it against his cheek.

But Daniel's face is serious. Maya leans in to look --

MAYA

What?

-- but Daniel moves us away so she can't see.

MAYA (O.S.)  
What's up?

DANIEL  
She uh... she wants to know if I'm  
still single. Like, to meet up.

MAYA (O.S.)  
Katherine?

DANIEL  
Yeah.

He's avoiding Maya's eyes. A long pause.

MAYA  
Well that's awesome! She's a super  
cool chick. And... you're single!  
So...

DANIEL  
Yeah! I mean... yeah.

**BEGIN MONTAGE (PHONE'S POV):**

- We watch Daniel in class when a text comes in. He can't hide his excitement
- We're held aloft following Daniel through a club, talking animatedly to someone on a video chat
- Daniel poses for us with his family at graduation
- Daniel blows a kiss at us from his bed, wishing someone on video chat a good night
- Daniel fidgets nervously as he texts from the hall of a large modern office -- behind him, JOB APPLICANTS are lined up as the SECRETARY calls one over
- Daniel tries to get our angle right as he films himself in the passenger seat of an old convertible on the highway, a BUNCH OF RED ROSES in his right hand. He talks lovingly at us until a WIND GUST RIPS THE ROSES OUT OF HIS HAND -- he pauses, shocked, then bursts out laughing

**END MONTAGE**

**INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - DAY**

We're on the counter looking up at the ceiling, but we can see it's a nice place. Daniel's moving up.

And here he is, stepping up to the mirror to check his hair. He's in a nice collared shirt. He looks happy, more adult.

He walks out of the bathroom, leaving us.

DANIEL (O.S.)  
Okay. I **will not** be later than six today. Dinner at eight like you said, no matter what.

KATHERINE (O.S.)  
Right.

The sound of a KISS, then Daniel's FOOTSTEPS recede.

DANIEL (O.S.)  
(further away)  
Oh. Babe, could you grab my phone?  
Bathroom counter.

FOOTSTEPS come closer, softer, barefoot. Then KATHERINE (23), sleepy-eyed but with an unmistakable charisma, PICKS US UP, pulling absently at her tangled hair.

KATHERINE  
Coming!

A sly smile spreads across her face. She extends her arm, stares seductively at us, and lifts her t-shirt to show off her RED PANTIES. CLICK!

A STILL IMAGE, playful, generous lust, captured forever.

#### **INT. CAB - DAY**

Daniel stares down at us. His brow furrows at a text.

CABBIE (O.S.)  
We're here, man. 22.90.

Daniel's still focused on us.

CABBIE (O.S.)  
22.90?

DANIEL  
-- yeah! Just a... text from an old friend. Here you go.

#### **EXT. CITY STREET - DAY**

Daniel clutches us as he checks his messages. He stumbles --

-- we TUMBLE THROUGH THE AIR and smash into the sidewalk.  
When he picks us up, THERE IS A CRACK ACROSS OUR VISION.  
Daniel traces a worried thumb across the cracked glass.

**INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT**

THE CRACK IN OUR VISION cuts across Daniel's face as he lies in bed staring at us. Katherine flops down on his chest.

KATHERINE  
It's cracked, babe. Get a new one.

DANIEL  
You're cracked.

KATHERINE  
Cracking comeback.

DANIEL  
Ha.

KATHERINE  
Seriously. Daniel. It's time to  
release the **Kraken**.

DANIEL  
Wow. WOW. Bad.

KATHERINE  
I think you like it. I think  
you're trying not to laugh.

DANIEL  
I'm not gonna laugh.

KATHERINE  
Really? I think you're just about  
to **crack!**

She grabs him under the covers. We tumble away onto the bed as they WRESTLE O.S. Katherine giggles as Daniel pushes her up, back into our vision.

DANIEL (O.S.)  
I will never be able to keep up  
with your bad puns.

But Katherine's gaze has fallen on us. Suddenly serious.

KATHERINE  
You're still in touch with Maya?

**EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY**

A park stretches in the background behind Daniel's tired face. Kids run, parents chat, lovers walk.

Daniel starts to text, pauses, then deletes everything.

**INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Daniel types out a text. Behind him, Katherine appears, a small box clutched to her chest like a security blanket. For a long moment, the CRACK obscures her face.

Then she comes closer.

KATHERINE

You're talking to her still, huh?

DANIEL

You know she's in Seattle.

KATHERINE

Yeah. It's really just you in an empty apartment alone with that broken old phone.

(with an attempted smile)

Cracked old phone.

Daniel's just waiting for her to leave.

KATHERINE

Fly out and see her some time. The phone doesn't love you, Daniel.

She gives him a quick peck on the forehead, and leaves. The room sinks into a heavy silence.

Daniel types out a message, but he doesn't send it.

Suddenly, HE HURLS US AWAY.

We land on the couch on the opposite side of the room, propped up facing him, seeing now how totally empty the apartment is around him.

A BUZZ from the phone.

Daniel strides over to us, picks us up, crosses to the window, and LAUNCHES US OFF THE TWELFTH STORY.

WE FALL...

**EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT**

THE SMASHED OLD SMARTPHONE lies on the pavement.

It's mangled. The screen is discoloured and most of it isn't on. So much so that it's impossible to tell whose message it is that we're barely able to read:

"I really do love you."

**INT. TECH STORE - DAY**

A BRAND-NEW SMARTPHONE, still boxed, sits on the counter. A much sleeker model all these years later.

POV: Daniel stares into our eyes.

DANIEL

Wow.

DANIEL'S POV: ANNE (25), the kind-faced tech vendor, stares back. Her expression almost matches Daniel.

ANNE

Yes?

ANNE'S POV: Daniel smiles, suddenly a little vulnerable.

DANIEL

I really... uh, I would really like  
to take you out soon. If you're  
free.

And now, we see the two of them fully, in profile, Anne barely hiding her smile, the phone forgotten on the counter between them.

ANNE

I'm free. Sure. Are you free?

DANIEL

Yeah. I'm free.

FADE OUT.