

STEPS

Written by

Daniel Kowalski

DanKowalski@gmail.com
631-343-4320

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - EVENING

JOHN MANUCCI (late 20s, fit, good looking but a little awkward, business casual dressed with a backpack) steps out of the elevator holding a pizza box and a plastic bag with a six pack.

His CELL PHONE RINGS. He juggles the items in his hands to answer the call.

JOHN

Hello?

INT. OFFICE LOBBY DESK - EVENING

REBECCA (Receptionist, 20s, female, blue tooth in ear) sits behind the desk.

The scene cuts back and forth between the two of them.

REBECCA

John, this is Rebecca from Kensington, Rice, and MacLeod. How are you today?

JOHN

Good--

REBECCA

Listen, I have your resume in my hand and my boss, John MacLeod, thinks you might be a great fit at our company for the junior copywriter position.

JOHN

That's great to hear.

REBECCA

Are you available to come in for an interview next week?

JOHN

I'm free Monday.

REBECCA

Monday is a holiday and we won't be open. The only day available for Mr. MacLeod is Thursday at 10am.

JOHN

I'll be there.

REBECCA
Have a great weekend.

She disconnects the call.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - EVENING

John gets to his door and unlocks it.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

It's a very basic one bedroom apartment with no frills when it comes to decorations, just basic and cheap. The only indulgence is a giant framed poster of Jim Kelly from the 1990s era of the Buffalo Bills on the wall.

John puts the pizza and beer down on the counter, removes his backpack, and goes to the bedroom.

He comes out in shorts and a t-shirt. He picks up his phone and checks his Steps App: 25,641. He nods in approval.

John opens a beer, grabs a slice, and turns on the TV.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Three slices are gone from the pie and three beers are empty. John puts his plate down, grabs beer number four, and turns on his Play Station 4.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Six beers are now empty. John turns off the Play Station and goes into his bedroom.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

John's ALARM CLOCK BEEPS. It's 8am. He gets out of bed.

EXT. JOHN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

It's a large 200 unit complex with a doorman. John walks out of the automatic door, pops in ear buds, and starts running.

EXT. HOBOKEN - VARIOUS SHOTS

John runs through the streets of Hoboken on his morning jog. Through the trendy Washington Street and the luxurious waterfront. He passes brown stones and public housing projects. He winds through abandoned industrial sites and finally returns to...

EXT. JOHN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

John gets to the front door and stops to catch his breath. He takes out his phone and opens the Steps App. Four miles so far this morning: 12,431 steps.

He goes inside.

EXT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

John steps out of the elevator. The hallway is full of boxes with TWO BIG MEN moving them into the apartment that's across from his. He unlocks his door and steps in.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

John comes out of his bathroom in his shorts and t-shirt with wet hair. He turns on his stove and throws eggs and bacon into a frying pan as coffee brews.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

John sits at a small folding table in a folding chair eating his breakfast.

He scrolls through his phone and opens the Steps App again. This time it says 22,572 steps.

John frowns. That can't be right. He clicks on the screen to get a detailed break down.

DING DONG

John puts his phone down. He walks to his door and looks through the peep hole. He opens the door.

BROOKE (26, blonde, attractive, fit) stands there.

BROOKE

Hi, I'm sorry to bother you. I'm Brooke.

She extends her hand.

JOHN

John.

John shakes it.

BROOKE

I moved into the apartment across from yours today and I just realized that the way my couch is positioned it gets this really bad direct sun glare during the day. Could you help me move it? It would just take two minutes.

JOHN

Sure.

INT. BROOKE'S APARTMENT - DAY

It has the exact same layout as John's except it's full of boxes. Brooke leads John inside.

BROOKE

Was I disturbing your breakfast?

JOHN

No, it's okay. Welcome to the building.

BROOKE

Thanks.

They arrive at the couch.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

I think if we move it here we should be okay.

JOHN

Let's do it.

They lift the couch and move it.

BROOKE

Thanks.

JOHN

No problem.

BROOKE

How do you like living here?

JOHN

It's a great building. The train tracks next door can be loud at first but you get used to them.

BROOKE

I guess that's the cost you pay for living in a building with these amenities.

JOHN

It definitely makes this place cheaper than other buildings in the area. There's some good restaurants here and there is some really good take out too. One place has the best chicken wings I've had since Buffalo.

BROOKE

Are you from Buffalo?

JOHN

Close. Outside of Rochester.

BROOKE

Me too! Where?

JOHN

Victor.

BROOKE

I'm from Honeyoye.

JOHN

That's pretty close. I know a few people from there. When did you graduate high school?

BROOKE

Two thousand ten, you?

JOHN

Two thousand and eight.

BROOKE

Damn, you're old.

JOHN

Yeah. I'm almost thirty.

BROOKE

That's like being a real adult.

JOHN
I guess so.

John's running out of stuff to say.

BROOKE
Well I have finish unpacking and I
don't want your breakfast to get
cold.

JOHN
Yeah.

She leads John to the door.

BROOKE
But you need to take me to that
wings place sometime soon so I can
judge for myself if they're better
than Buffalo.

JOHN
You got it.

John leaves.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

John enters and walks back to his table.

JOHN
"I guess so" Why was that the best
I could come up with?

He sits down and unlocks his phone. The Steps App is open.

JOHN (CONT'D)
And this thing.

He looks at the breakdown. The steps are logged until 11pm.
He checks his clock and sees that it's not even 11am.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Stupid junk.

He presses clear data. An hour glass icon appears for a few
seconds and disappears.

The data is still there.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Come on.

He clicks clear data again. The hour glass comes and goes but the data is still there.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Damn it.

He opens the app store, searches step counter, finds a free app and downloads it.

As he waits he quickly finishes the remainder of breakfast.

He opens the New App and there isn't anything to set up. All his data is there.

He clicks on steps and it says: 22,572.

He shakes his head in frustration.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LATER

John opens the door and enters. He is carrying a plastic bag. He sits at his desk and pulls a Fit Bit out of the bag.

He plugs it into a USB and attaches it to his computer. A Set Up Prompt begins.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

John's alarm clock goes off at 8am.

He shuts it off and looks at his phone. He opens the Steps App: 18,432. He gets out of bed and we notice that the Fit Bit is on his wrist.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT/EXT - HOBOKEN AND JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY/NIGHT

John does his jog, he goes home, he goes grocery shopping. He cooks, watches TV, plays video games. It's a busy day.

END MONTAGE.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

John lays down in bed and turns off the light. He checks the Fit Bit: 18,432 steps.

He closes his eyes. But something is unsettling him. He grabs his phone and checks the Steps App: 18,432.

He opens the New App: 18,432.

John lays there, all of a sudden he is awake now.

EXT. JOHN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

John returns from his run. He opens the Steps App and compares the hour by hour data to his Fitbit. So far at the beginning of the day they're identical.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

John, now wearing shorts, t-shirt, and wet hair, sits down at his desk.

He Googles: Steps App data filled in in-advance. There are no useful results.

He goes to the Steps App company's website searching for clues. Nothing in the faqs section.

He finds a Contact Us link with a phone number.

He calls it.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
North Valley Call Center.

JOHN
Yes. Hi. Good Afternoon. I need to speak with someone in Tech Support.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
What product?

JOHN
Steps App.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
You can leave your name and phone number.

JOHN
Can I talk to someone?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
They're all off for the holiday.

DING DONG.

JOHN
I'll call back later.

He hangs up the phone, walks to his door, and looks through the peephole.

He opens the door. Brooke is standing there.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hi.

BROOKE

Is this a bad time?

JOHN

For?

BROOKE

Wings.

EXT. JOHN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

John and Brooke walk to their building. John is holding a large bag of take out food.

JOHN

I just think you might have underestimated how hot the fire sauce is.

BROOKE

If it's that hot then I'll eat some of your mild ones.

JOHN

You should. They're delicious. And you need to try the fried shrimp too.

BROOKE

Yeah, no thanks.

JOHN

You don't like shrimp.

She shakes her head.

JOHN (CONT'D)

More for me then.

He checks his step counter on his Fit Bit. Then he pulls out his phone and checks that.

BROOKE D

Are you a step freak or something?

John puts away his phone.

JOHN

Me? No.

BROOKE

You checked your phone three times since we left your apartment.

JOHN

It's just that--. No, never mind. It's weird.

BROOKE

Tell me.

JOHN

My Steps App has everything filled out in advance and I don't know why.

He shows her today and tomorrow's steps.

BROOKE

Delete and download it again.

JOHN

I did. Still there. But the weird thing is that the data is right.

BROOKE

How?

JOHN

I don't know, but last night the Fit Bit logged the same amount of steps that the App had originally displayed in the morning. And today looks like they'll be the same too.

They enter the front door.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

John puts the bag on the counter and gets plates.

BROOKE

Can I take a look at your app?

John unlocks his phone and hands it to her. He gets the food ready while she scrolls through the App.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Looks like the glitch will fix
itself on its own.

John brings the food and two beers to his folding table.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
On Thursday it stops recording
data.

She hands the phone back to him. He scrolls through it.

JOHN
It stops recording after 11am.

John thinks about this new information.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I have a job interview that day at
10. What if something happens to me
after I'm leaving it and I'm dead?

BROOKE
That won't happen.

JOHN
But all of the data has been
correct so far. Why else would it
stop recording steps unless it's
because I'm not here?

BROOKE
You can prove this thing wrong.

She takes the phone and scrolls to Tuesday.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
1,821 steps. That's low for you,
right?

John nods.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Walk a lot tomorrow.

She scrolls to Wednesday.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
11,398. Take a sick day and stay
in. You don't need a stupid app to
dictate your life.

She hands the phone back to him.

JOHN

All right. I can try that.

He offers her a shrimp. She declines. He eats one.

She picks up a wing and bites into it.

BROOKE

This isn't very spicy.

John grabs a wing and takes a bite. He instantly regrets it.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

You gave me the mild?

John nods. He cracks open his beer and chugs it. Brooke switches the plates.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The time is 3:28. John is asleep. His eyes suddenly open wide and he runs into his bathroom.

The light turns on and we hear him VOMITING.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

John lays on the couch watching TV. He's pale and under a blanket.

DING DONG

John gets up and hobbles to his door. He looks through the peep hole.

He opens the door and finds Brooke.

BROOKE

How did today go?

JOHN

I got food poisoning and couldn't walk anywhere.

BROOKE

The fit bit?

JOHN

It's the same as the app.

BROOKE

I think the shrimp made you sick.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

John's alarm clock goes off at 6:30. He takes his phone and makes a call.

JOHN

Hi, this is John Manucci. I'm still not feeling one hundred percent and need to take another sick day today to recover. Thanks.

He hangs up. What to do now? He looks at his running gear with temptation.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

John turns on his play station and starts playing his game.

His CELL PHONE RINGS. The caller ID says: Kensington, Rice, and MacLeod.

John pauses the game and answers.

JOHN

John Manucci.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY DESK - MORNING

Rebecca sits at her desk.

REBECCA

Mr. Manucci. Good Morning how are we today?

The scene cuts between them.

John opens his mouth to answer.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Listen, Mr. MacLeod has a scheduling issue and the only time he can see you is today at 10 instead of tomorrow.

JOHN

That's kind of difficult for me right now. Are there any other slots?

REBECCA

It's the only time he has before the deadline to fill the position.

Shit.

JOHN
I understand.

REBECCA
And?

JOHN
I'll be there.

He hangs up.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - EVENING

Brooke is unlocking her door. John steps off the elevator. He looks tired. She turns and sees him.

BROOKE
I thought you were taking another
sick day?

JOHN
I was. But the interview I was
supposed to have tomorrow got
rescheduled for today.

BROOKE
And the steps?

John shakes his head.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
How?

JOHN
Subway delays. Giant shit show that
required a lot of walking to get
home.

BROOKE
Can I see your phone?

He unlocks and hands it to her. She scrolls to tomorrow.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
You need to do your routine
tomorrow. Go for your jog.

JOHN
I'm not leaving my place tomorrow.

BROOKE
But your steps. They're too low.

JOHN
Maybe I step out, run, and get hit
by a bus.

BROOKE
Maybe you stay home and there's a
gas explosion?

John shrugs.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
You do the jog before 8 and you
beat it. The steps don't stop until
11.

JOHN
I'm not taking any chances.

She's a little disappointed in him for giving up.

BROOKE
Okay. Good night then.

JOHN
Good night.

They both go into their apartments.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

The alarm clock doesn't go off. He wakes up naturally at 9:15.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

He walks to the stove and almost turns it on. But remembers
Brooke's words: gas explosion.

He goes to the fridge and takes out an old slice of pizza.

He starts closing it but sees left over fried shrimp.

He throws the shrimp away.

John turns on the TV and eats his cold pizza.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's 10:43. John is watching an old black and white movie. He's tense. Eyes fixated on the clock.

He checks his phone again. No step after 11.

His phone rings. It's Brooke. He picks up.

JOHN

Hey.

INT. OFFICE DESK - DAY

Brooke is at her desk.

The scene cuts between them.

BROOKE

Still alive?

JOHN

Hopefully for the next 17 minutes.

BROOKE

What are you doing?

JOHN

Sitting on my couch.

BROOKE

Whats your step count?

JOHN

855. The app stopped at 989 before 11.

BROOKE

Don't go anywhere before then. Not even the bathroom.

John smiles slightly. She's on his side.

JOHN

You got it.

BROOKE

Call me after 11.

JOHN

Okay.

They hang up.

John looks at the clock then back at the TV.

BUZZ BUZZ BUZZ. THIS IS NOT A DRILL. BUZZ BUZZ BUZZ.

What the hell? The alarm is coming from a red panel on his living room wall.

The panel cackles with a radio voice.

SUPER (O.S.)
Attention. This is the Super. This
is not a drill. All residents must
evacuate immediately.

John jumps off his couch, grabs his keys, and runs out.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

John runs down the stairs with his keys and phone in hand.

He misses a step and trips...

The phone flies out off his hand...

John falls...

John hits the pavement. Ow.

He gets to his feet and sees his phone. He grabs it.

The screen is cracked.

He tries to use it but it's dead.

He hits it and tries it again. Dead.

John check his Fit Bit. **989 steps.**

John laughs. Full of joy.

EXT. JOHN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

John stands by himself. We can see the red flashes of emergency lights.

Brooke runs up to him.

BROOKE
What the hell?

She pushes him.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
I told you to call me. I was
worried.

John shows her the broken phone.

JOHN
I fell down the stairs and it
broke. At 989 steps.

She examines the phone.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Sorry. I wanted to call.

She hugs him.

BROOKE
You're not dead.

She leans in for a kiss. John's thrown off and there's a split second of awkwardness but he overcomes it and it ends up being a little romantic.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LATER

A new cell phone box rests on John's desk. A new phone is attached to his computer via cord. It finishes it's set up.

John and Brooke are together. The phone is ready. They look at each other.

BROOKE
Open it.

John opens the Step App. He scrolls through it and they watch the screen. Everyday has data.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Looks like you're not going to
immediately die.

JOHN
I guess not.

BROOKE
And you'll have this phone for a
while.

John exits the App and deletes it.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

I guess that's for the better.
Whats the joy of living if you
don't know the end?

JOHN

I can alway download it again if I
have any regrets.

FADE OUT.