

ANIMATED

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. ANIMATOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The room is dark, with only the light of a DRAWING TABLET providing any sort of light into the space.

Holding the tablet is THE ANIMATOR, who himself is animated, and is a young, pudgy, thirty-something with short brown hair and some patchy facial hair. His shirt is covered with grease and sweat, and he looks as if he hasn't showered in at least two days. The tablet's light is so faint that the rest of the room is too dark to make out anything else.

We hear the light scratches and scribbles of a tablet pen rubbing against the tablet's glassy, clean surface, as the animator DRAWS a frame of HIS LATEST CREATION...

FADE TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom is packed full of children chattering and socializing, as high schoolers would. One of them, JACK, sits in the back corner of the room. He's been writing in a NOTEBOOK for the past few minutes.

The activity stops, however, when the teacher opens the door and enters the room. Suddenly the room goes completely silent, and the children LOOK UP at the teacher, anxious... and a bit scared. All but Jack, who continues to write, essentially ignoring that the teacher arrived.

With a loud THUD, the teacher drops a pile of papers on the desk. Some of the children cartoonishly sweat bullets. The teacher grabs the first paper, walks up to a nervous student in the front, and hands it to him. Upon reading the paper, the nervousness turns into blissful joy.

The teacher continues to pass out papers, and Jack continues to ignore everything the teacher is doing. He's frantically WRITING like a machine, as if his brain is somehow perfectly synchronized with the pencil in his hand.

He pauses, and then writes two last words: THE END. With that, he shuts the notebook and comfortably leans back in his chair, satisfied. A few seconds later, his eyes widen when he realizes that the teacher was STANDING right in front of him.

She PLOPS the paper on his desk: test results, and walks away.

Red pen markings drown the page, and at the top, a sinister-looking 42 with the words "TRY HARDER" written in all-caps right below.

Jack sighs and puts the test and notebook in his backpack, leaning nicely against his chair.

CUT TO:

INT. ANIMATOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

We return to the ANIMATOR, who is pacing back and forth in his small little apartment room. While blinds cover the windows, the light is so bright outside that it would be nearly impossible to seal it out completely without boarding up the place.

The apartment itself is pretty messy, with clothes sloppily thrown all over the floor, random office supplies covering his desk, which his TABLET also rests upon. Opposite the desk is an unmade bed.

A PRINTER sits on a table next to the desk, but the table clearly wasn't designed for the printer: half of it doesn't even rest on the table.

The only nicely kept part of the room is a neatly-kept CORK BOARD hung on a nearby wall. Tacks are stuck inside the board at random intervals, but only one tack actually holds anything up: a small, PIECE OF PAPER with some illegible writing on it.

Suddenly, the TABLET lights up with a notification. The animator picks up the tablet. He uses his finger to scroll down, and then physically LEAPS into the air with excitement.

With a few taps, the printer WHIRRS into action. A SERIES OF PAGES come out of the printer. The animator snags them and splits the pile in half. He grabs a stapler from his messy desk and neatly staples each set of papers together.

The first set gets attached to the wall with one of the unused tacks. The animator then flips to the last page of the other pile, grabs a pen from his desk, and signs it. He then grabs a manilla on his desk and places the signed packet inside.

With a renewed sense of confidence in himself, the animator then picks up his tablet once again, sits down in the chair in front of his desk, and starts DRAWING once again...

FADE TO:

## INT. CONCERT VENUE - EVENING

Loud noise drowns the place. We see a POSTER hangs on the wall, advertising an event currently taking place in the venue. A bunch of band names are listed, but about halfway down, in bold lettering, is the name JOHNNY ROCK.

The noise is coming from a crowd of people cheering on a rock band performing on stage. The performance is going extremely well, and the band members are dancing and leaping across the stage like total maniacs.

The only person not fully engaged in the concert is JOHNNY ROCK himself - young, thin, and clean shaven with long, dark hair - who is too focused on his upcoming performance to concentrate. He's backstage, with the performing band within his eyesight, strumming random chords on his guitar to calm himself down. He breathes heavily, and his HEARTBEAT is so loud that we can even faintly hear it.

Suddenly, Johnny is tapped on the shoulder by one of his own band members, who has his other hand on the neck of his bass. Behind him are the other two band members.

With the sound of applause in the background and the other band walking off stage, the bassist nods, and Johnny stands up and throws his guitar strap over his head.

Johnny walks out onto the stage first, and the crowd roars with excitement. The closer he gets to the microphone, the more the sound of applause is drowned out by the ever increasing sound of Johnny's HEARTBEAT, which, to him and us, is unignorablely loud. Johnny starts to sweat, and his vision distorts as the drummer starts to play the first few beats.

CUT TO:

## INT. ANIMATOR'S BEDROOM - DAY

Since we last saw the animator, his life seemingly has been on the up. He clearly lives in a different place, with blindless windows letting in as much light as possible. Despite being in a new place, the room layout is pretty similar, with the desk opposite the bed, the table with the printer, and the CORK BOARD on the wall.

But the cork board is very different from how it was before, as now it is covered in stapled packets of paper similar to the one he hung when we last saw him. The room itself is also much more well-kept than the apartment was.

The door to the bedroom opens and the animator WALKS IN. The animator, like the room he just entered, visibly looks more well-kept. He's clean-shaven, a bit thinner, and probably actually showered this morning.

The animator sits down on his bed and glances over the cork board. He looks over some of the contracts on the board when suddenly, his TABLET, sitting on his desk, lights up.

The animator sighs, gets up with a noticeable GROAN, and meanders over to his desk. He picks up the tablet and, without even looking at the contents, prints out two copies of the latest CONTRACT.

He opens the drawer underneath the desk, pulls out the stapler, and staples the two contracts individually. He then places the stapler back in the drawer and pulls out the manilla envelope, placing the contract inside.

The animator walks with the other contract to the CORK BOARD, but notices that there aren't any more unused tacks. He notices the PIECE OF PAPER that was originally tacked up to the board, pulls it down, and uses that tack to hang up the other contract.

Finally, the animator sits at his desk and decides to start DRAWING once again...

FADE TO:

EXT. STATE STREET - DAY

JONATHAN - a healthy-looking mid-twenties gentleman wearing a blue button-up and freshly ironed tan khaki pants - exits his car with FLOWERS in hand.

Before shutting his car door he pauses to look at the building in front of him: an apartment complex he is all-too familiar with. He glances down at his other hand, which has a CARD in it, whose front reads "I'm sorry" in a pretty pink cursive typeface.

Jonathan SIGHS deeply, turns around, and shuts his car door before walking towards the building.

He doesn't make it five steps, though, before he is stopped in his tracks. At his feet, the word "FEAR" is boldly written on the ground. It isn't written in chalk or paint. It just sits there, as an anomaly in Jonathan's reality.

Jonathan is confused, but decides to press on, WALKING AROUND the text and continuing to progress towards the building.

He pauses again, however, and LOOKS behind him, to see the word "UNCERTAINTY" printed.

He turns around to keep walking but can't, as "FEAR" appears before him once again.

To his left, he looks and sees the word "FAILURE". To his right, he sees the word "REJECTION". Suddenly, his entire view consists of nothing but printed negative words.

Jonathan panics, breathing heavily, and drops the flowers and card. He enters a state of shock.

The text moves closer.

Jonathan SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

INT. ANIMATOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The animator puts down his pen. He's unable to feel anything.

The room is dark, but light from outside the room, in addition to the light of the TABLET, manages to make the animator's surroundings lightly visible. It's clear that this is, once again, a different home. There is no bed anymore, this is a dedicated office space. In addition, the animator has since bought more CORK BOARDS. All of the walls are covered with these boards, and the boards themselves are covered with CONTRACTS.

The animator feels unable to hold himself upright. Suddenly, he collapses, falling forward until his head hits his desk.

CUT TO:

INT. THE REAL ANIMATOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

JON puts his pen down. This isn't an animation anymore. This is reality. The TABLET Jon was holding is blank.

Jon, the real animator, is just like his cartoon counterpart: a pudgy young thirty-something with a massive creative itch. His room looks exactly like the cartoon animator's original apartment, including that CORK BOARD adorning that single PIECE OF PAPER.

Jon slowly gets out of his desk and walks over to the cork board, pulling down the single piece of paper. At the top is the number 42 and "TRY HARDER" written right below, in all-caps.

He rips it up and is about to throw it into the nearby garbage can, but pauses, noticing a larger paper in the can. The paper is actually a POSTER. After unfolding it, he reads his nickname in the middle of the poster: "JOHNNY ROCK".

Jon starts to tear up. He grasps the POSTER and SCRAPS OF PAPER tightly in his hand before giving up, releasing his grip, resulting in everything falling to the floor, missing the garbage can entirely.

He sits on his bed and glances at his nightstand. There sat the card, with "I'M SORRY" written on the front. He picks it up and opens the card. Inside is a rather lengthy apology letter that was almost entirely scratched out in the same colored pen. The only legible word... is the word "AFRAID".

Jon places down the card, collapses on his bed, and cries.

FADE OUT.