

Psychosis

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SUNDAY

BLACK SCREEN.

Noise of a pencil writing on paper is hearable.

JOHN
(narrating)

I'm not sure why I'm writing this down on paper and not on my computer. I guess I've just noticed some odd things. It's not that I don't trust the computer ... I just... need to organize my thoughts.

FADE IN:

INT. JOHNS HOUSE NIGHT

John is writing.

JOHN
(narrating)

I need to get down all the details somewhere objective, somewhere I know that what I write can't be deleted or... changed... not that that's happened. It's just... everything blurs together here, and the fog of memory lends a strange cast to things...

INT. JOHNS HOUSE NIGHT

Flashback. John is sitting in front of his computer drinking coffee. Code is visible on the screen.

JOHN
(narrating)

I haven't been out in a few days because I've been working on this programming project so intensively. I suppose I just wanted to get it done. Hours of sitting and staring at a monitor can make anyone feel strange, I know, but I don't think that's it. I'm not sure when I first started to feel like something was odd. I can't even define what it is. Maybe I just haven't talked to anyone in awhile. Yeah, that's it. I just need to call someone.

He looks at his cellphone. No reception. He stands up and watches himself in the mirror. He looks down for a moment.

JOHN
 (narrating)
 It was lunchtime, maybe I'd run
 into one person I knew.

He changes his shirt. He slowly opens the door.

JOHN
 (narrating)
 A small feeling of apprehension
 had somehow already lodged
 itself in me, for some
 indefinable reason. I chalked
 it up to having not spoken to
 anyone but myself for a day or
 two.

he looks down the hallway, to the stairs and outside the
 glass-window of the door.

JOHN
 (narrating)
 It was definitely not lunchtime.
 City-gloom hung over the dark
 street

EXT. OUTSIDE JOHNS HOUSE NIGHT

JOHN
 (narrating)
 I remember shivering, though I
 wasn't cold. Maybe it was the
 wind outside. I knew it was
 that unique kind of late-night
 wind, the kind that was
 constant, cold, and quiet, save
 for the rhythmic music it made
 as it passed through countless
 unseen tree leaves.

Sound of wind and trees.

JOHN
 (narrating)
 I decided not to go outside

EXT./INT. JOHNS HOUSE-DOOR NIGHT

John holds the cellphone up at the door and gets reception.
 He smiles

JOHN
 (slightly
 laughing and
 shaking his head)
 Time to hear someone else's
 voice I hit speed-dial for my
 best friend Amy's number

He dials Amys number (adress-folder). The phone rings one time, than stops - silencetone. Pause. John cancels and seems confused. He checks the reception, which is still very good. The phone rings.

JOHN

Hello?

Short silence.

UNKNOWN CALLER

Hey. Who is this?

JOHN

(confused)

John!

UNKNOWN CALLER

Oh, sorry, wrong number

He hangs up. John looks at the number, unknown. He seems really irritated. The phone rings again, another unknown number. John holds the phone to his ear but doesnt speak.

AMY

John?

JOHN

(breathes out
releaved)

Hey, it's you!

AMY

Who else would it be? Oh, the number. I'm at a party on Seventh Street, and my phone died just as you called me. This is someone else's phone, obviously.

JOHN

Oh, ok.

AMY

Where are you?

JOHN

(looking around)

At my building

(sigh)

Just feeling cooped up. I didn't realize it was so late.

AMY

(laughing)

You should come here

JOHN
(Looking at the
street)

Nah, I don't feel like looking
for some strange place by myself
in the middle of the night. I
think I'm just going to keep
working or go to bed.

AMY
Nonsense! I can come get you!
Your building is close to
Seventh Street, right?

JOHN
(joking)
How drunk are you? You know
where I live.

AMY
Oh, of course, I guess I can't
get there by walking, huh?

JOHN
You could if you wanted to waste
half an hour.

AMY
Right. Ok, have to go, good
luck with your work!

he lowers the phone. Silence. He looks outside. He seems
unwell. He grabs the door and opens it. He seems even more
unpleasant.

JOHN
(narrating)
The two strange calls and the
eerie street outside just drove
home my aloneness in this empty
stairwell. Perhaps from having
seen too many scary movies, I
had the sudden inexplicable idea
that something could look in the
door's window and see me, some
sort of horrible entity that
hovered at the edge of
aloneness, just waiting to creep
up on unsuspecting people that
strayed too far from other human
beings. I knew the fear was
irrational, but nobody else was
around, so

He runs back to his apartment. One sees him searching for
paper and a pencil.

JOHN
(narrating)

Like I said, I feel a little ridiculous for being scared of nothing, and the fear has already faded. Writing this down helps a lot it makes me realize that nothing is wrong. It filters out half-formed thoughts and fears and leaves only cold, hard facts. It's late, I got a call from a wrong number, and Amy's phone died, so she called me back from another number. Nothing strange is happening.

Pause. The flashback ends. One can see, that the the first scene follows.

JOHN
(narrating)

Still, there was something a little off about that conversation. I know it could have just been the alcohol she had... or was it even her that seemed off to me? Or was it... yes, that was it! I didnt realize it until this moment, writing these things down. I knew writing things down would help. She said she was at a party, but I only heard silence in the background! Of course, that doesnt mean anything in particular, as she could have just gone outside to make the call. No... that couldnt be it either. I didnt hear the wind! I need to see if the wind is still blowing!

He stands up.

MONDAY.

INT. JOHNS HOUSE DAY - RAINING

Black Screen.

JOHN

(narrating)

I forgot to finish writing last night. I'm not sure what I expected to see. I'm feeling ridiculous. Last night's fear seems hazy and unreasonable to me now. I can't wait to go out into the sunlight. I'm going to check my email, shave, shower, and finally get out of here! Wait... I think I heard something.

FADE IN:

Rolling thunder. John gets up.

HALLWAY.

He looks outside the window.

JOHN

(sighs)

Well, the whole sunlight and fresh air thing will not happen.

Its raining strongly. One only can see rough shapes. John looks outside stressed. He turns around and goes back while stopping and listening for people inside the other appartments on the way.

JOHN

(narrating)

It was the middle of the day, so I wasn't surprised that I heard nothing but the rain outside.

He stands, leans against a wall and listens to the rain. he goes to a window/door to the street and wants to open it, he hesitates.

JOHN
(narrating)

I had the strangest feeling that if I opened that window, I would see something absolutely horrifying on the other side. Everything's been so odd lately... so I came up with a plan. I don't seriously think anything will come of it, but I'm bored, it's raining, and I'm going stir crazy.

He installs a webcam in the hallway in front of his apartment, fixes the wire.

JOHN
(narrating)

I know this is silly, but I don't have anything better to do...

John sits in front of his computer and watches the picture of the webcam. He sighs. Suddenly a contact (Matt) is coming online. John clicks to start a conversation.

FADE OUT:

No sound. One sees short scenes from the webcam-conversation.

JOHN
(narrating)

I cant really explain why I wanted to video chat, but it felt good to see another person's face. He couldn't talk very long, and we didn't talk about anything meaningful, but I feel much better. My strange fear has almost passed. I would feel completely better, but there was something... odd... about our conversation. I know that I've said that everything has seemed odd, but... still, he was very vague in his responses. I can't recall one specific thing that he said... no particular name, or place, or event... but he did ask for my email address to keep in touch.

E-mail-sound.

FADE OUT:

INT. JOHNS HOUSE DAY

John is getting ready to leave the house. He writes down.

JOHN

(narrating)

I just got an email from Amy that asked me to meet her for dinner at 'the place we usually go to. Again, I feel ridiculous about the odd couple of days I've been having. I should destroy this journal when I get back.

John is on his way to the door. E-mail-sound.

JOHN

(narrating)

Oh my god. I almost opened the door. I almost opened the door, but I read the email first!

The mail is visible. No subject. Many more recipients.

SEEN WITH YOUR OWN EYES DON'T TRUST THEM THEY.

John walks up and down the room. He seems nervous and disturbed. He is looks to the still open mail over and over again.

JOHN

(narrating)

What the hell is that supposed to mean? Is it a desperate email sent just as... something happened? The words are obviously cut off without finishing! On any other day I would have dismissed this as spam from a computer virus or something, but the words... seen with your own eyes! I can't help but think back on the last few days and realize that I have not seen another person with my own eyes or talked to another person face to face. The webcam conversation with my friend was so strange, so vague, so... eerie, now that I think about it. Is the fear clouding my memory? My mind toys with the progression of events I've written here, pointing out that I have not been presented with one single fact that I did not specifically give out unsuspectingly.

Short flashbacks of the last scenes. Unknown caller, Amy, Matt.

JOHN

(narrating)

The random 'wrong number' that got my name and the subsequent strange return call from Amy, Matt who asked for my email address... I messaged him first when I saw him online!

John stands up, seeming agitated. Goes on walking in the room and goes on thinking and writing.

JOHN

(narrating)

And then I got my first email a few minutes after that conversation! Oh my god! That phone call with Amy! I said over the phone I said that I was within half an hour's walk of Seventh Street! They know I'm near there! What if they're trying to find me?! Where is everyone else? Why haven't I seen or heard anyone else in days?

He stops.

JOHN

(narrating)

No, no, this is crazy. This is absolutely crazy. I need to calm down. This madness needs to end.

FADE OUT:

One sees John walking in his apartment, the phone in his hand. He looks for reception. He finds it near a window in the bathroom. He writes a message to all on his contactc-list.

JOHN

(text)

ou seen anyone face to face lately? I just wanted any reply back. I didn't care what the reply was, or if I embarrassed myself.

He stares at the screen and doesn't get any answers. He rushes to the computer. One can see the opened instant messenger. John is typing.

JOHN
(narrating)

Nobody responded. My messages grew more frantic, and I started telling people where I was and to stop by in person for a host of barely passable reasons. I didn't care about anything by that point. I just needed to see another person!

INT. JOHNS APPARTMENT DAY

One sees John, writing at the table. The appartment is looking messier than before.

JOHN
(narrating)

I also tore apart my apartment looking for something that I might have missed; some way to contact another human being without opening the door. I know it's crazy, I know it's unfounded, but what if? WHAT IF? I just need to be sure!

One sees the phone, being taped to the window/near the window.

TUESDAY.

INT. JOHNS APARTMENT DAY

Messy.

John looks unwell. Sunken eyes, three-day-beard.

He sleeps with the head on the table, over his writing. The phone rings. John wakes up and runs to the bathroom. He answers the fixed phone. One sees him talking.

JOHN

(narrating)

It was Amy, and I feel so much better. She was really worried about me, and apparently had been trying to contact me since the last time I talked to her. She's coming over now, and, yes, she knows where I am without me telling her. I feel so embarrassed.

One sees him writing again.

JOHN

(narrating)

I am definitely throwing this journal away before anyone sees it. I don't even know why I'm writing in it now. Maybe it's just because it's the only communication I've had at all since god knows when. I look like hell, too.

INT. JOHNS APARTMENT DAY

Even more messy.

JOHN

(narrating)

My apartment is trashed, but I'm not going to clean it up. I think I need someone else to see what I've been through. These past few days have NOT been normal. I know I have been the victim of extreme probability.

He writes.

JOHN
(narrating)

I probably missed seeing another person a dozen times. I just happened to go out when it was late at night, or the middle of the day when everyone was gone. Everything's perfectly fine, I know this now. I'm glad Amy's the only one that responded to me after last night's frantic pestering of everyone I could contact. She's been my best friend for years. She doesn't know it, but I count the day that I met her among one of the few moments of true happiness in my life.

EXT. PLAYGROUND DAY - SUNNY

Flashback. John and Amy hanging out.

JOHN
(narrating)

I remember that warm summer day fondly. It seems a different reality from this dark, rainy, lonely place. I feel like I spent days sitting in that playground, much too old to play, just talking with her and hanging around doing nothing at all. I still feel like I can go back to that moment sometimes,

INT. JOHNS APARTMENT - FROM BEFORE DAY

Flashback ends. John is writing.

JOHN
(narrating)

and it reminds me that this damn place is not all that there is...

(knocking)

finally.

He gets up, but hesitates. He looks at his computer-screen.

JOHN
(narrating)

I thought it was odd that I couldn't see her through the camera. I figured that it was bad positioning. I should have known. I should have known!

John stands at the door, listening with the head leaning against it.

JOHN
(shouting)
Hey, did you see my camera over
to your right?

He looks to his screen. Amy comes in the picture.

AMY
(with a wry look)
Hey

JOHN
([)
It's weird, I know. I've had a
weird few days.

AMY
Must have. Open the door, John.

John hesitates, looks to the door and back to the screen.

JOHN
Hey, humor me a second here.
Tell me one thing about us.
Just prove to me you're you.

Amy looks to the camera irritated.

AMY
(
)
Um, alright.
(thinking)
We met randomly at a playground
when we were both way too old to
be there?

John sighs relieved.

JOHN
(narrating)
God, I'd been so ridiculous. Of
course it was Amy! That day
wasn't anywhere in the world
except in my memory. If there
was some unknown force at work
trying to trick me, as I feared,
there was no way they could know
about that day.

JOHN
Haha, alright, I'll explain
everything. Be right there.

John gets up quickly, looks to the mirror and arranges his hair.

JOHN
(narrating)
I looked like hell, but she
would understand.

John lays his hand on the doorknob.

JOHN
Ridiculous

and looks around in the room, bin, table. At the end the
webcam that lies on the side, seeing the notebook. John gets
horrified.

JOHN
(narrating)
I just wrote about that day. I
asked her for any one thing
about us, and she chose the only
thing in the world that I
thought they or it did not
know... but IT DID! IT DID
KNOW! IT COULD HAVE BEEN
WATCHING ME THE WHOLE TIME!

John panics, runs to the webcam and throws it at the wall/in
the corner. He screams. One hears somebody shaking the
door. The sound comes down.

FADE OUT:

JOHN
(narrating)
I didn't hear Amy's voice
through the door. What could
have been trying to get in, if
not her? What the hell is out
there?! I saw her on my
computer through the camera
outside, I heard her on the
speakers through the camera
outside, but was it real?! How
can I know?! She's gone now I
screamed, and shouted for help!
I piled up everything in my
apartment against the front
door.

FRIDAY.

INT. JOHNS APPARTMENT DAY

Messier. The entry is blocked. John sits in a corner and writes. Old notes lying next to him.

JOHN

(narrating)

At least I think that it's Friday. I broke everything electronic. I smashed my computer to pieces. Every single thing on there could have been accessed by network access, or worse, altered. I'm a programmer, I know. Every little piece of information I gave out since this started my name, my email, my location none of it came back from outside until I gave it out. I've been going over and over what I wrote and I keep running through it in my head. One point of view says I've acted like a madman, and all of this is the extreme convergence of probability never going outside at the right times by pure luck, never seeing another person by pure chance, getting a random nonsense email from some computer virus at just the right time. The other point of view says that extreme convergence of probability is the reason that whatever's out there hasn't gotten me already. I haven't opened my own solid door since I flung open the front door of the building. Whatever's out there if anything's out there never made an 'appearance' in the building before I opened the front door.

Many copies of the e-mail are lying around.

JOHN
(narrating)

That email short, cut off was it from someone trying to get word out? Some friendly voice desperately trying to warn me before it came? Seen with my own eyes, don't trust them exactly what I've been so suspicious of. It could have masterful control of all things electronic, practicing its insidious deception to trick me into coming outside. Why can't it get in? It knocked on the door it must have some solid presence... the door...

One sees the blocked door.

JOHN
(narrating)

Doors have always been such intense foci of human imagination, always seen as wards or portals of special importance. Why does it even want me? If it just wanted to kill me, it could do it any number of ways, including just waiting until I starve to death. What if it doesn't want to kill me? What if it has some far more horrific fate in store for me? God, what can I do to escape this nightmare?!

Knocking.

LAST PART. TO BE FINISHED

I told the people on the other side of the door I need a minute to think and I'll come out. I'm really just writing this down so I can figure out what to do. At least this time I heard their voices. My paranoia and yes, I recognize I'm being paranoid has me thinking of all sorts of ways that their voices could be faked electronically. There could be nothing but speakers outside, simulating human voices. Did it really take them three days to come talk to me? Amy is supposedly out there, along with two policemen and a psychiatrist. Maybe it took them three days to think of what to say to me the psychiatrist's claim could be pretty convincing, if I decided to think this has all been a crazy misunderstanding, and not some entity trying to trick me into opening the door. The psychiatrist had an older voice, authoritarian but still caring. I liked it. I'm desperate just to see someone with my own eyes! He said I have something called cyber-psychosis, and I'm just one of a nationwide epidemic of thousands of people having breakdowns

triggered by a suggestive email that 'got through somehow.' I swear he said 'got through somehow.' I think he means spread throughout the country inexplicably, but I'm incredibly suspicious that the entity slipped up and revealed something. He said I am part of a wave of 'emergent behavior', that a lot of other people are having the same problem with the same fears, even though we've never communicated. That neatly explains the strange email about eyes that I got. I didn't get the original triggering email. I got a descendant of it - my friend could have broken down too, and tried to warn everyone he knew against his paranoid fears. That's how the problem spreads, the psychiatrist claims. I could have spread it, too, with my texts and instant messages online to everybody I know. One of those people might be melting down right now, after being triggered by something I sent them, something they might interpret any way that they want, something like a text saying seen anyone face to face lately? The psychiatrist told me that he didn't want to 'lose another one', that people like me are intelligent, and that's our downfall. We draw connections so well that we draw them even when they shouldn't be there. He said it's easy to get caught up in paranoia in our fast paced world, a constantly changing place where more and more of our interaction is simulated... I have to give him one thing. It's a great explanation. It neatly explains everything. It perfectly explains everything, in fact. I have every reason to shake off this nightmarish fear that some thing or consciousness or being out there wants me to open the door so it can capture me for some horrible fate worse than death. It would be foolish, after hearing that explanation, to stay in here until I starve to death just to spite the entity that might have got everyone else. It would be foolish to think that, after hearing that explanation, I might be one of the last people left alive on an empty world, hiding in my secure basement room, spiting some unthinkable deceptive entity just by refusing to be captured. It's a perfect explanation for every single strange thing I've seen or heard, and I have every reason in the world to let all of my fears go, and open the door. That's exactly why I'm not going to. How can I be sure?! How can I know what's real and what's deception? All of these damn things with their wires and their signals that originate from some unseen origin! They're not real, I can't be sure! Signals through a camera, faked video, deceptive phone calls, emails! Even the television, lying broken on the floor how can I possibly know it's real? It's just signals, waves, light... the door! It's bashing on the door! It's trying to get in! What insane mechanical contrivance could it be using to simulate the sound of men attacking the heavy wood so well?! At least I'll finally see it with my own eyes... there's nothing left in here for it to deceive me with, I've ripped apart everything else! It can't deceive my eyes, can it? Seen with your own eyes don't trust them they... wait... was that desperate message telling me to trust my eyes, or warning me about my eyes too?! Oh my god, what's the difference between a camera and my eyes? They both turn light into electrical signals they're the same! I can't be deceived! I have to be sure! I have to be sure! Date Unknown I calmly asked for paper and a pen, day in and day out, until it finally gave them to me.

Not that it matters. What am I going to do? Poke my eyes out? The bandages feel like part of me now. The pain is gone. I figure this will be one of my last chances to write legibly, as, without my sight to correct mistakes, my hands will slowly forget the motions involved. This is a sort of self-indulgence, this writing... it's a relic of another time, because I'm certain everyone left in the world is dead... or something far worse. I sit against the padded wall day in and day out. The entity brings me food and water. It masks itself as a kind nurse, as an unsympathetic doctor. I think it knows that my hearing has sharpened considerably now that I live in darkness. It fakes conversations in the hallways, on the off chance that I might overhear. One of the nurses talks about having a baby soon. One of the doctors lost his wife in a car accident. None of it matters, none of it is real. None of it gets to me, not like she does. That's the worst part, the part I almost can't handle. The thing comes to me, masquerading as Amy. Its recreation is perfect. It sounds exactly like Amy, feels exactly like her. It even produces a reasonable facsimile of tears that it makes me feel on its lifelike cheeks. When it first dragged me here, it told me all the things I wanted to hear. It told me that she loved me, that she had always loved me, that it didn't understand why I did this, that we could still have a life together, if only I would stop insisting that I was being deceived. It wanted me to believe... no, it needed me to believe that she was real. I almost fell for it. I really did. I doubted myself for the longest time. In the end, though, it was all too perfect, too flawless, and too real. The false Amy used to come every day, and then every week, and finally stopped coming altogether... but I don't think the entity will give up. I think the waiting game is just another one of its gambits. I will resist it for the rest of my life, if I have to. I don't know what happened to the rest of the world, but I do know that this thing needs me to fall for its deceptions. If it needs that, then maybe, just maybe, I am a thorn in its agenda. Maybe Amy is still alive out there somewhere, kept alive only by my will to resist the deceiver. I hold on to that hope, rocking back and forth in my cell to pass the time. I will never give in. I will never break. I am... a hero!

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The doctor read the paper the patient had scribbled on. It was barely readable, written in the shaky script of one who could not see. He wanted to smile at the man's steadfast resolve, a reminder of the human will to survive, but he knew that the patient was completely delusional. After all, a sane man would have fallen for the deception long ago. The doctor wanted to smile. He wanted to whisper words of encouragement to the delusional man. He wanted to scream, but the nerve filaments wrapped around his head and into his eyes made him do otherwise. His body walked into the cell like a puppet, and told the patient, once more, that he was wrong, and that there was nobody trying to deceive him.