

It's Not The Same

By

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INT. BUS - DAY

KATHY, young but fatigued, sits in a bus by the window, slouched with her hands in her parka vest pocket. An overstuffed black backpack sits between her legs that she latches onto with her knees. She blankly looks out the window.

She snaps out of her thinking bubble and takes a deep breath. She shifts herself, trying to find a more comfortable position. She reaches for her hoody and pulls it over her head, disappearing into its shadow.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

MONTAGE:

Kathy walks around, grabbing and eating food samples around the store.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

NATHAN, mid to late 20s, scruffy with maybe a few days' worth of not shaving, is lying down on the couch with his laptop on his stomach. There's a word document open, but he's not typing. The idleness is accentuated by the deafening silence that surrounds him.

On the coffee table next to him, there are several soda cans, half full water bottles, open bags of chips, along with a few mugs with coffee stains extending onto the table.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Kathy walks on a sidewalk in a residential neighborhood, holding onto the straps of her backpack and looking down at her feet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nathan is still on the couch, lying on his back. He moves his eyes away from the screen and looks up at the ceiling. He peels his hands off from the side of his laptop, letting his notebook sit securely on his stomach. He lifts his arms as he interlaces his fingers, resting them on top of his head. He closes his eyes as he lets out a big sigh.

(CONTINUED)

After a brief moment of what looks like a quick slumber, he opens his eyes and quickly redirects himself to a seated position. He starts typing away in deep concentration. He wears a stern face. It's as if he's expressing his emotions through his finger tips instead.

His phone, lost among the mess on the coffee table, disrupts the echo of his typing with a VIBRATE. Nathan looks up, annoyed. He searches with his eyes, trying to follow the sound of the phone. He grabs the phone. It's a text.

FRANCES (TEXT)

'I'm leaving in ten minutes. I'm hungry so try to have some food ready by the time I get home. Thanks.'

He puts the phone down, closes his laptop, and starts moving in haste. He grabs an empty garbage bag that sits within his reach. He grabs all the empty wraps, cans, and bottles from the coffee table and chucks them in the black garbage bag. He takes a wet wipe sitting under the coffee table and wipes off the table. As he stands with his garbage bag, he scopes around the living room. It's clean. He's safe.

He picks up his laptop from the couch and sets it down on the desk as neatly as possible.

EXT. OUTSIDE NATHAN'S APARTMENT- DAY

He tosses the garbage bag into the outdoor trash can. He stands for a moment like he's waiting for something. Then he quickly runs back towards his apartment.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

He goes into the kitchen and starts on the pile of dirty dishes in the sink. He washes in haste with the water running at its highest strength, hastily but with ease that reveals his familiarity with this specific sink and this set of dishes.

He hears the phone VIBRATE.

NATHAN

Crap..

He turns off the water.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCES (TEXT)

'Did you start cooking yet bc I'm almost home'

Nathan thinks for a moment and writes back.

NATHAN (TEXT)

'Not yet.. I got your text late. Sorry..'

FRANCES (TEXT)

'Ugh... Fine. Just come out. Be outside in 5 minutes.'

Nathan reads in a bit of frustration and rolls his eyes in annoyance with a thin shake of his head.

Then he moves quickly, stopping abruptly in the middle of the living room, looking around to make sure he didn't miss anything. He grabs his keys and heads out in a hurry, slamming the door behind him.

EXT. OUTSIDE NATHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Kathy stands by the building as Nathan rushes out. Kathy quickly steps behind a wall, disappearing from his view. She watches him as he positions himself on the curb, waiting. After a quick moment of Kathy's contemplation over her phone that she holds in her hand, a car sweeps in, picking up and taking Nathan away.

Kathy watches as the car drives away.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

It's morning, but Nathan lies in bed asleep, peacefully.

Hairdryer TURNS ON, startling Nathan from his sleep. Groaning, Nathan takes his pillow from under his head to cover his ears.

Near the bed, FRANCES, whose long hair being blow-dried is the only thing visible, stands in front of the mirror, styling away.

Nathan turns his head towards her, giving her a look, which goes unnoticed.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Kathy is in the same clothes, looking tired and disheveled. She stands in an aisle, looking at some snack foods. She reaches in her pocket and takes out some dollar bills and coins. She puts them back in and heads to the bathroom.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE BATHROOM - DAY

Kathy places her bag on the ground and takes out a tooth brush and a travel size tooth paste. She brushes her teeth.

She takes out a small travel size shampoo and starts shampooing just the edges of her hairline.

She washes her face.

She puts on some lip balm.

She smells herself and heads out.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Kathy walks down the street, holding onto the straps of her backpack, trying to manage the weight of the bag.

EXT. FRONT DOOR OF NATHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Frances, in black skinny jeans and tight, black leather jacket, walks out of her apartment. Her black hair, matching her outfit like a shiny accessory, covers her face from most angles. She walks quickly but with ease like a seasoned model on a runway. Her black and polished heels HIT the ground with force. She extends her arm and pushes her car key remote like she's commanding it to unlock.

EXT. OUTSIDE NATHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Kathy wears a pair of blue jeans with white converse sneakers. With her hands in her pocket, she awkwardly hides behind the same wall from before. Standing in bad posture, Kathy watches Frances get in her car and drive away. Kathy's wispy hair pieces fall from her loose pony tail.

She takes out her phone from her parka vest pocket, contemplating a phone call.

Instead, she starts to sheepishly walk up the stairs that Frances used to get to her car moments before.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nathan sits at his couch with his laptop on his lap, TYPING. A mug sits on the coffee table. He hears a door KNOCK.

He walks over to the door.

NATHAN

Did you forget something?

As he opens the door and finds Kathy, Nathan is startled.

Kathy and Nathan just stare at each other for a moment.

Kathy gives him a melancholic smile, trying not to cry.

NATHAN

Kathy.... Hi..

KATHY

Hi...

NATHAN

Come in..

After a few moments of awkward silence, Nathan moves in for a hug. Kathy hugs him back.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Nathan opens the microwave as it BEEPS. He pulls out a mug of hot water and gently drops a tea bag into it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kathy sits on the couch, fidgety and nervous. Her bag sits between her legs.

As he walks in from the kitchen, Kathy smiles at him.

NATHAN

Here you go. Ginger. Your favorite. And not too hot.

KATHY

You remember that..

NATHAN

Of course I do..

(CONTINUED)

As Nathan hands her the mug along with his warm smile, Kathy smiles back. A bit awkward, she looks down at her warm tea, which she holds with two hands. She takes a careful sip. Nathan was right. It's not too hot.

KATHY

It's perfect.. Thank you.

Nathan attempts to say something but nothing comes out. He sits by the chair across from Kathy and carefully looks at her, trying to read her face.

NATHAN

It's really good to see you.

Kathy smiles at him but doesn't respond.

NATHAN

How have you been?

KATHY

I've been... Okay I guess..

NATHAN

It's been a really long time.

KATHY

I know.. Nathan, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off like that. I just didn't know what else to do. It's just...

NATHAN

No no, it's okay. I'm sorry too.

KATHY

So.. How have you been?

NATHAN

You know... the same.

KATHY

How's Frances?

Nathan pauses for a moment, taking a sip from his mug.

NATHAN

You know how she is.

KATHY

Yeah. I actually saw her leave. She looks really good. But then I guess you don't really

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATHY (cont'd)
expect anything else from
her. She's always so perfect..

NATHAN
Have you guys talked lately?

KATHY
No... No, we're not really talking.
But I miss her.

NATHAN
Of course you do...

Nathan looks down in a bit of distress. Kathy catches his
face and stares at him for a moment.

KATHY
So, are you still writing?

NATHAN
Yeah.. I am.

KATHY
Good.. Because I love your
writing. You know I love it,
right? I do..

NATHAN
Yes... I know... And thank
you.. How about you..? Are you
still writing?

KATHY
Well, not so much anymore. Well,
not lately... I've been kind of...
preoccupied.

Nathan watches quietly as Kathy speaks.

KATHY
So Nathan, I know you're busy and I
don't want to waste your time.

NATHAN
No, no no. You're not wasting my
time. I don't have anywhere else
to go.

KATHY
I know, but I know you're
working... I'll just get to the
point..

Nathan takes a breath and braces himself.

KATHY

This is embarrassing..
Nathan... I am so sorry.. But I
didn't know where else to go...

NATHAN

It's okay. I'm glad you came here.
Whatever it is, you can tell
me. It's okay..

KATHY

I'm in some trouble and I need your
help.

NATHAN

What happened?

KATHY

I'd rather not say...

Nathan waits.

Kathy speaks hesitantly but quickly.

KATHY

Basically... I need some money..

NATHAN

Okay... That's not a problem.

Kathy continues without making eye contact.

KATHY

And... I need it in cash.

NATHAN

Okay. I could just take you to the
nearest ATM, and take some out for
you.

KATHY

Nathan...

Nathan waits patiently.

She finally looks up at him.

KATHY

Thank you..

They meet eyes. A moment passes before Kathy starts to get
fidgety again.

(CONTINUED)

NATHAN

Can you stay?

Kathy looks conflicted. Nathan anxiously waits for an answer, which takes a while.

KATHY

No, I should go.

NATHAN

Are you sure you can't stay..?

KATHY

Yeah, I'm sure... I gotta go...

NATHAN

Okay. Let me grab my coat, and we'll go.

Kathy looks up and follows Nathan with her eyes as he walks away to get ready.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Kathy stands outside the store, waiting for Nathan.

Nathan walks out of the store with an envelop in his hand.

He reaches over and gently grabs Kathy's hand, placing the envelop in it. There's hesitance yet familiarity in the way he touches her. As the envelop lands in one hand, Kathy grabs Nathan's hand with the other. For a moment, they just stand there, holding each other's hands.

Kathy lets go. She unzips her bag and slides the envelop into a deep place in one of the pockets. As she closes her bag and places it on her back, she takes a step away from Nathan.

KATHY

Thank you..

NATHAN

Kathy.. Where are you going now.. I am worried about you.

KATHY

I am not a little girl. I can take care of myself.

(CONTINUED)

NATHAN

Kathy...

KATHY

Nathan, thank you. Thank you so much. You are my best friend. You know that, right?

NATHAN

You are mine too.

KATHY

I gotta go. There's a bus stop right over there, and it'll take me where I need to go.

NATHAN

Kathy...

Kathy takes a step towards Nathan and reaches for his neck. As they hug, both of them close their eyes, absorbing all they can.

As they let go of each other, Kathy runs her right hand down Nathan's shoulder until she reaches his hand. She slides her fingers into his and grabs it. As she steps back and away from him, Nathan's arm extends a bit as Kathy pulls on his fingers. Their arms form a 'V' until the weight of their arms breaks the delicate bind.

KATHY

You know how I feel..

Nathan stands there as Kathy starts to walk away. She makes a quick turn and gives him a smile.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nathan is lying down on the couch in the same position from before, with his laptop on his stomach, reading.

As he removes his eyes from the screen, he positions the laptop safely on his stomach. He tilts his head back and covers his face with his hands, letting out a big sigh.

The front door opens and Frances walks in. She stands still by the door. Her silky hair falls down straight, covering the sides of her face as she looks down at Nathan.

FRANCES

Hey.

Nathan still has his hands on his face as he responds.

(CONTINUED)

NATHAN

Hey.

FRANCES

Um. What are you doing?

NATHAN

Thinking.

FRANCES

No, I mean, what are you doing lying there? Didn't you get my text?

NATHAN

I did.

Calmly, Nathan removes his hand from his face and looks up at Frances.

Frances tilts her head and tucks her hair behind her ear, revealing her face. It is a more polished version of Kathy's face.

Frances stares at Nathan with an expression that is stern yet delicate.

NATHAN

I'm sorry honey. I had a long day.
I'm just preoccupied.

FRANCES

Are you okay?

NATHAN

Yeah, I'm just tired.

FRANCES

Okay. Well, so I guess we're going out again.

NATHAN

Actually, let's stay in. There are some leftovers in the fridge I can heat up real quick.

FRANCES

Yeah? Are you sure?

NATHAN

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCES

Okay, I'm gonna change and wash up
a bit then. Be quick?

NATHAN

Yep. I'll be quick.

As Frances walks into the bedroom and closes the door,
Nathan gets up from the couch to head to the kitchen.

On his way, he stops and looks back at the couch, where
Kathy was sitting earlier.

He closes his eyes and thinks for a moment before he quickly
runs into the kitchen and starts heating up dinner.

THE END