

Reality Check

written by

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1. INT. OFFICE - DAY

MICHAEL hears his phone ring, but he does not have the time to look away from his computer screen. He answers without looking down to see who is calling.

MICHAEL
Hello!

AVERI
(in phone)
Hey Michael, are you almost here?

MICHAEL
Here? What do you mea—Oh my goodness, Averi, I completely forgot!

Michael breaks contact from his computer; head and shoulder slugged over. AVERI (20s), a kind-hearted, patient, and virtuous woman, sighs on the other end of the phone.

AVERI
You forgot. We were meeting with my sister for lunch.

MICHAEL
Averi, I'm so sorry.

AVERI
Again.

MICHAEL
What?

AVERI
You're sorry, again.

MICHAEL
Averi, look, I know I messed up. I've just been so busy with work.

AVERI
That's what you said last time when you forgot about Nick's birthday dinner.

MICHAEL
(desperately)
You're right. I'll make it up to you though, I'll reserve dinner somewhere tonight. 6:30.

AVERI

Sure, we'll see.

MICHAEL

I promise it will-

AVERI

Please stop making promises.

Averi hangs up from the other side of the line and Michael sighs and puts his phone down. He lifts the lid off a paper coffee cup sitting next to his keyboard to see that it's empty.

Michael begins to slump in his chair when his boss, DANIELLA (30s) comes up behind him, holding a smartphone in one hand and a stack of papers in the other. She puts the papers on the end of Michael's desk, shoving Michael's coffee cup up to the keyboard.

DANIELLA

Hey, Mike. I need these done by tonight.

MICHAEL

(worried)

Tonight? This will have me here past five.

DANIELLA

You better get to work then, you don't want to have to come in tomorrow, do you? I need this for my meeting with HR on Monday morning.

Daniella walks out of the office, not batting an eye away from her phone. Michael looks at the stack of papers for a moment then puts his head in his hands. While his eyes are closed, the lights in the office briefly turn off then back on.

Michael turns his head to face a clock, hung high on a wall. The clock is ticking in slow motion, half normal speed, showing a time around 10:00.

The door suddenly slams and Michael jumps, knocking over the coffee cup. Brown coffee pours off the side of his desk.

MICHAEL

AH, what the?-

Michael lifts up the cup and stands it back on the desk, looking at it with a perplexed expression.

He spins his chair around towards a box of tissues, but when he turns back round, his desk is completely bare of any coffee spill. He tosses the handful of tissues to the corner of his cubicle.

Michael looks back at the spreadsheet he was working on, and the font is unreadable, looking like characters from Russian and Arabic were put in. He rubs his eyes and looks at the screen again, the text having completely changed. Staring at it, the typeface shifts in and out of itself.

2. INT. RESTROOM

Michael is suddenly in a restroom, looking straight at himself in a mirror. He turns on the faucet and stares as water streams from it. He puts his hands under the stream and it passes through his palms, as if he's not there.

3. INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Michael quickly walks out of the bathroom and shuffles across the large office, now empty and silent. He looks at the same clock from before and it's still pointing around 10:00. Michael turns to look out the window to the parking lot, and it is dark out.

MICHAEL
(whispering)
Shoot, Averi.

4. EXT. OFFICE BUIDING - NIGHT

Michael jogs outside into the empty parking lot and pulls a car fob from his pocket. He presses a button multiple times in desperation. He shouts out, resisting the urge to yell.

MICHAEL
Where... is my car?!

Michael jogs back to the door he came out of, and opens the door to an interior that looks completely different from the one he walked out of.

5. INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Michael walks through the door and walks down a long hallway.

MICHAEL
Hello?

Michael looks down to the end of the hall and sees a woman that looks like Averi at the end of the hall, facing away from him.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Averi? Averi!

She starts walking away from him, down the hallway and then she turns a corner. A large shadow grows from the end of the hall, looking like something large is around the corner. Averi's voice echoes through the hall, getting louder as the shadow grows.

AVERI
(echoey, whispering,
overlapping)
What are you doing? You're sorry
again. Stop making promises. You
forgot.

Michael takes a few steps back and his face changes from a look of confusion to a look of terror. Averi's voice thunders through the hallway and the lights start flickering harshly.

Michael turns around and starts frantically sprinting back to the door he came from, sprinting at an abnormally fast pace. He stumbles through the door and slams the door behind him.

Michael leans on a wall outside the building, looking down at the ground as he catches his breath.

NICK
Mike.

Michael jolts to see NICK (20s), cool and relaxed, standing in front of him.

MICHAEL
Nick?

NICK
Yep, you good bro? Missed you at my
birthday.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry, work has been keeping me
so busy.

NICK
Again.

MICHAEL
What?

NICK

You're sorry again.

MICHAEL

I don't know what to do...

Michael looks back at his hand, resting on the wall, and his fingers are shifting around.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Wait.

Michael faces the door and pumps himself up, closing his eyes. Then he confidently walks through the door.

6. EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The door closes behind Michael, and he's suddenly in the middle of a neighborhood street. The sky is blue and bright, it is the middle of the day.

MICHAEL

I did it, I'm dreaming. I can do this.

Michael pulls out his phone and it displays 5:00

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Sweet.

Michael starts running down the street, running extremely fast, gliding across the ground. Nick blocks Michael's path, so he slides to a stop, giggling.

NICK

Woah Mike, be careful.

Michael looks at Nick and chuckles.

MICHAEL

I'm just trying to have fun.

NICK

Oh yeah?

7. INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Nick and Michael are suddenly in the kitchen next to a dining room, where a handful of people including Averi are conversing.

NICK

You could've had fun at my
birthday.

Nick leaves Michael in the back of the room, and reenters, walking up to Averi.

NICK (CONT'D)

Is Michael on his way?

AVERI

He's busy with work or something...
He sends his wishes.

Michael watches as everyone converses around the table. He takes a step forward and he doesn't get any closer to the people. He takes a few more steps and still isn't actually moving.

MICHAEL

Hey! Guys!

Michael starts trying to run faster and he looks around. His phone starts buzzing and a text from his boss appears, asking to come back into work. He turns the phone off and back on to see that it is 7:00.

8. EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Michael is suddenly in front of a restaurant. He recuperates himself and calms down until he feels a tap on his shoulder. He turns to see Averi looking at him with disappointment, wearing a dress for the occasion.

AVERI

You're late, Mike.

MICHAEL

Sorry, I came straight from the
office. You look gorgeous.

AVERI

Thank you, what is this fancy place
you've been telling me about?

MICHAEL

You'll see.

Michael grabs her hand and leads her into the restaurant.

9. INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Michael and Averi sit at a booth, facing each other. They both pick up menus and start browsing the options.

MICHAEL
Order whatever you want, this place
has great reviews.

Averi chuckles.

AVERI
I think I'll get something small.

MICHAEL
Whatever you want.

Michael puts both his hands under the table and pulls out a small wrapped box from under the table.

AVERI
Oh, what's this?

MICHAEL
Open it, you'll see.

Averi pushes the gift back towards Michael.

AVERI
Stop it, I don't want any of this.

MICHAEL
Whaaat? I want you to have this, I
know I've been a bad boyfriend.

AVERI
(raised voice)
I don't want gifts from you,
Michael, I just want YOU.

MICHAEL
Averi, you have me.

AVERI
I can't do this anymore.

Averi takes a napkin off her lap and sets it on the table.
She gets up and walks away.

MICHAEL
Averi.

Michael tries to get up but the napkin on his lap is holding him in place. Nick and Daniella are suddenly standing in front of the table.

NICK
Come on, man.

DANIELLA
Where is my paperwork, Michael?

More people come up to the table and start saying more comments directed at Michael.

CROWD
Come on Michael! How did you mess up that bad? He was late again.
Didn't even change clothes.

NICK
Go after her.

Michael is unable to get up, being held down by the napkin.

MICHAEL
I'm trying!

NICK
Wake up.

Michael holds his hands on the sides of his head and closes his eyes. He inhales deeply and opens his eyes.

10. INT. OFFICE - DAY

Michael is back at his cubicle. He quickly sighs and turns to look at the clock on the wall, and it is pointed at 10:00, ticking at a normal speed. He holds one of his hands in front of his face and counts his fingers.

MICHAEL
(quietly)
This is real.

Michael gets up from his desk and leaves the room.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(frantically)
I have to leave early today!

DANIELLA
What? Hey!

11. INT. CAFE - DAY

Michael walks up to a table where Averi and Averi's sister are chatting. Averi turns to face him.

AVERI
Michael!

MICHAEL
I won't forget anymore. Let's chat
for a while.

AVERI
Thank you. I really appreciate it.

The three start conversing as the credits roll.