

TASTE THE ROAD, JACK

V 3.0

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EXT. VAN - DAWN

A warm, golden, sun rises over a misty field.

A perfect shot that could only be achieved through filters and grading in post.

Perfect, but also, somehow, not entirely real; too carefully curated, too artificial.

JACK (V.O.)

I love this time of day.

We close in on an aging camper van that's seen better days, and appears held together with duct tape and bubble gum.

JACK RAINEY (30s, appears to dress for a life of on-the-road living rather than fashion, but it takes hours to look this disheveled) leans against the hood, drinking from a steaming mug.

He's trying to look casual and care-free, but there's something affected about his manner.

He's apparently talking to himself.

JACK

Just me and the world. No judgments, no pressure. It's so peaceful.

Jack runs his hands through his hair and looks off into the middle distance; a deliberate pose designed to make him look as photogenic as possible.

We realize that Jack is VLOGGING, addressing a phone camera, set up on a small tripod.

JACK (CONT'D)

It's what this lifestyle affords us. Freedom. A new view every morning. Just us and the world.

He smiles warmly and sincerely, directly into the camera.

JACK (CONT'D)

Emma's back there. I think she's still sleeping, and I didn't want to wake her. Plus sometimes it's just nice to have these moments to yourself. To be alone with your thoughts. So peaceful.

He stops talking, and listens to the sounds of nature.

He switches off the phone, drops his vlogger persona, becoming all business.

He immediately scrolls to his social feed. He grins; the first batch of comments are all positive.

- **Yay! Morning routine!**
- **I love you guys**
- **YOU'RE THE BEST**
- **GO, RAINEYARMY!**
- **Van life 4 eva**

Loveheart emojis, smilies...

And then his face drops - a batch of negative comments, puke emojis, angry faces, thumbs downs...

- **You're dumb**
- **So entitled and smug**
- **Anyl notice they've both been putting on weight???**
- **So fake**
- **What time does the e-begging begin?**
- **Come over to my channel and watch me expose them @CodeNameTerminator**

He deletes them, bitterly, and blocks the accounts.

INT. VAN - BATHROOM - DAY

A positive pregnancy test sits on the vanity.

EMMA RAINEY (20's, shabby chic in a manner that can only come from living in a van) stands over it.

She looks up at herself in the mirror - the fear and hope in conflict on her face - as she runs a hand over her belly.

She lifts the bottom of her pajama top, and inspects her bare stomach for signs that she's showing. Still perfectly flat.

It's early days.

INT. VAN - LIVING/KITCHEN AREA - DAY

Jack enters, plugging his phone into a laptop with an editing suite open. He pours out the dregs of his beverage and flips over two slices of cinnamon toast cooking in a skillet as Emma enters from the bathroom.

JACK
Rise and shine. I made toast and coffee.

EMMA
And you're not vlogging it?

Jack lets out a forced chuckle and then looks away. Emma notices this and sits down as he plates the toast.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

JACK
Yeah. It's nothing. Just -- y'know.

She realizes.

EMMA
What's rule one? Never read the comments.

JACK
Don't feed the trolls, I know. We just seem to be getting a lot lately.

Emma squeezes his hand, supportive.

EMMA
Comes with the territory.

She looks impressed at the cinnamon toast.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What did I do to deserve this?

JACK
Being the best wife and collaborator a guy could have. And for reminding me what matters.

He kisses her cheek, sits down with his own toast and coffee.

JACK (CONT'D)
So I guess we should probably have a chat.

Emma tenses, worried he knows about her pregnancy.

EMMA

About?

JACK

The meeting. The van people. We ought to go there with a number in mind. I think we could try and get a free van out of it. Not that I don't love this one, but if they're going to be sponsoring us --

EMMA

(relieved)

Okay. Whatever you think.

Jack notices Emma's disengaged as he transfers footage from the phone.

JACK

What's wrong? I thought you wanted this.

EMMA

I do. Just feel a little...off today.

JACK

Emma, this could really help grow the brand and put money in our pockets. God knows we've been hemorrhaging it with repairs.

EMMA

Yeah, but...look, maybe we can reschedule? Or you could go without me?

She trails off as Jack checks their channel stats, ignoring her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Are you even listening?

JACK

... Yes, sorry. We put on another fifty subs overnight from that Doctor Vanlife shout-out.

EMMA

So you're not listening.

He closes the laptop, smiling tightly.

JACK

I could make you a juice? Might perk you up. We've got beets and carrots --

He heads to the fridge. Emma's exasperated.

EMMA

I don't want a juice. I want you to be present. You can go to the meeting alone.

JACK

We're the brand, Emma. The two of us together. The Rainey Rangers.

EMMA

Sure, but I don't feel up to it today. You want this more than me anyway.

Jack sighs, struggling to hide his frustration.

JACK

I'm doing this for both of us. For the brand.

Irritated by her lack of support, he heads to the bedroom, closing the door firmly behind him. Emma watches him go, groaning in frustration.

EXT. JAYCO OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The headquarters of JAYCO, a hip van company.

The van is parked up outside. Emma sits in the passenger seat, deep in thought. She looks up at the building, and waits.

She has her phone in her hand, but the screen is off.

She looks down at her reflection in the black glass.

Suddenly, her phone buzzes. The screen lights up with "MILES CALLING". Emma hesitates, then answers.

EMMA

Hey, Miles.

MILES (V.O.)

Hey, sis. How's it going?

A pause.

EMMA

Good. How are you?

MILES (V.O.)

I am good. Just wanted to check up on you. It's been month since we saw you, sis.

Emma sighs.

EMMA

Yup... It has been some time.

A pause.

MILES (V.O.)

Emma, Is everything okay?

EMMA

Yeah, everything's fine. Why do you ask?

MILES (V.O.)

I don't know. You sound... off. Is something wrong?

Emma glances nervously at the Jayco building, then back at her reflection.

EMMA

No, really. I'm just... tired. We've been busy with the channel and... stuff.

MILES (V.O.)

Are you sure? You know you can talk to me about anything, right?

EMMA

(abruptly)

Look, Miles, I appreciate the concern, but I really have to go. Jack's in a meeting and I'm waiting for him.

MILES (V.O.)

Emma, wait--

EMMA

-- I'll call you later, okay? Bye.

Emma hangs up quickly, her forced smile fading. She stares at her reflection in the phone's black screen, again.

INT. JAYCO OFFICE BUILDING - RECEPTION - DAY

Jack sits on a sofa in a shirt and tie, nervously jiggling his leg.

He looks around, out of place in this corporate environment, with its air of artificial casualness.

Photos of vans cover the walls; couples, families - traveling, with the van at the heart of their lives.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr Rainey? He's ready.

INT. JAYCO OFFICE BUILDING - ARTHUR'S OFFICE - DAY

ARTHUR (40's, hip marketing exec) sits behind his desk. The walls are covered in more glossy images of the company's products.

He studies a document on his computer.

Jack sits opposite, out of his depth here, not used to wearing a shirt and tie, not used to business meetings - too much of a self-styled free spirit.

ARTHUR

I really appreciate you coming in.
We're all big fans of what you and
Emma are doing. Water?

He offers Jack a bottle of designer water from a mini-fridge.

JACK

Thanks. Is this locally sourced?
Our brand is built on
sustainability.

Arthur shrugs. Jack hands the bottle back. Arthur is clearly irritated as he takes it back.

ARTHUR

You know, if Emma's sick, we could
have rescheduled. I was looking
forward to meeting her.

JACK

She's just resting.

ARTHUR

But she is on board, right? We need
her.

Jack shifts in his chair, uncomfortable.

JACK

She gave me her blessing to go it alone for once.

ARTHUR

Ah. Well, I've had that sort of blessing too, Jack. More than once.

He holds up his ring finger; he's married. Jack smiles politely.

Jack forces a chuckle.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

So, anyhow. Like I say, you two are testing through the roof with our consumer base, and we want to tap into that.

Arthur spins his computer screen round, so that Jack can see the statistics he's called up.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Your fans skew between 25 to 35. Disposable income. Strong sense of adventure. Everything we want.

JACK

That's our fans. I like to think we're offering a window into an alternative lifestyle.

ARTHUR

Absolutely. Yes! That's it. That's us too. So, here's what we'd can do for you.

Jack sits up. This is his big moment.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

We're looking for one post a week that drives engagement. Basic brand-extension stuff. Nothing too overt or in-your-face.

JACK

Our content remains independent though, right?

ARTHUR

Totally. We're not asking you to sell out.

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

No need to wear a collard shirt with our logo. Nothing that conflicts with your...

Arthur makes air quotes.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

...“scruples”.

Arthur laughs. Jack frowns, ever so slightly.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Now the juicy stuff. We can indeed sort you out with a van.

JACK

You can? Wow.

ARTHUR

I mean the brand doesn't suit... What's the one you drive? The old Jayco? Yeah, you need an upgrade. It's too old. It's ours and we can't afford to show it in that run down condition.

JACK

I didn't like to ask.

ARTHUR

Well, you mentioned it in your email, so --

JACK

Right. Yeah, of course.

ARTHUR

Obviously, at your level we can't just hand you the keys to a brand new van. But what we can do is give you a reconditioned vehicle, at cost.

Arthur sits back, like he's just done Jack a big favor, but Jack's heart sinks.

JACK

So we'd have to pay for it?

ARTHUR

Payment plan. Very low. It can be deducted from the sponsored posts fee. And again; it's at cost. Everyone works like that.

Jack pauses at the mention.

JACK

How long to pay it back with one post a week?

ARTHUR

If you keep it up, we're looking at around six years. But there's no obligation to keep the relationship going, but then you will have to cover any remaining cost yourselves.

JACK

I see. Right.

He goes into his drawer, reaches for a brochure.

ARTHUR

We've got some vehicles that I think you and Emma will really love. And then maybe you can go away and have a think.

Jack smiles, hides his disappointment.

INT. VAN - LIVING/KITCHEN AREA - DAY

At the table, Jack studies flyers and brochures for various used vans.

Emma is sitting next to him. Her phone RINGS. It flashes 'MILES CALLING'. Emma rejects the call and puts her arm around Jack.

EMMA

Sorry, babe.

JACK

I mean, they're interested. But... fifty bucks a post? I mean, that's hardly gonna cover gas the way this thing guzzles it. I guess we're not as big as we thought.

EMMA

Building a brand is a marathon, not a sprint.

JACK

When's the marathon gonna end though?

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

I thought we'd be up there by now with the big creators. Remember Vidcon last year? Shoved onto that tiny panel with all those no-hopers?

Emma looks at the brochures, thinks. Wants to be supportive.

EMMA

What if we reached out to some bigger creators?

JACK

Like for a collab?

EMMA

Maybe. I'm just spitballing. What do people do?

Jack sits back, sighs. Then:

JACK

Look, it's our first sponsor. Either way, we should probably be celebrating.

Emma squirms; this is her moment.

EMMA

Actually, it's not the only thing we have to celebrate.

He looks at her; what?

EMMA (CONT'D)

I think - I know - I am...

Jack waits for it; well?

EMMA (CONT'D)

Jack, I'm pregnant.

Jack freezes. Then:

JACK

Pregnant? With a baby?

EMMA

No, with a new van. Yes, with a baby. I took a test this morning.

On Jack, taking this in; what does this mean for their lives?

JACK
Holy crap.

INT. VAN - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma and Jack stare at the ceiling.

EMMA
Are you scared?

JACK
No. You?

EMMA
Terrified.

JACK
Same.

EMMA
I didn't know how you'd react.

Jack pulls Emma in for a hug.

JACK
You're gonna make a great mother.

EMMA
That's sweet of you.

JACK
It's the truth.

They continue stare at the ceiling; their POV looking at the stars through the skylight. Then:

JACK (CONT'D)
So...?

EMMA
What?

JACK
You're supposed to tell me what a great dad I'll be.

EMMA
Oh. Was I?

Awkward silence.

JACK
You're still not saying it.

Emma bursts out laughing.

EMMA
I'm teasing.

Jack hits her with a pillow.

JACK
You're the worst.

EMMA
You're gonna make an amazing dad.
But you already know that.

JACK
Kick-ass. Both of us.

EMMA
And we're not going to be those
parents that hide vegetables in our
kids food. We're going to teach
them to appreciate things that are
good for them.

JACK
One hundred percent.

EMMA
I'm super extra anyways.

JACK
You'll be a proper Momzilla.

Then:

JACK (CONT'D)
It's the best news ever, Emma.

EMMA
You're not disappointed?

JACK
Why would I be disappointed? I'm
gonna be a babydaddy. And besides,
family vloggers are crushing it
right now with sponsors. This could
be huge for us.

EMMA
I am sorry?

Emma pulls away from him, stung. She stares at him for a moment, waiting to see if he's joking.

EMMA (CONT'D)

So that's all this is? Content for
your channel?

Jack reaches for her, realizing his mistake.

JACK

No, baby, that's not what I meant.
I'm excited to be a dad, I swear.

But the damage is done. Emma turns away, blinking back tears.
Jack stares at the ceiling, still pondering something.

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

A shadowy figure sits in front of a computer screen, as it
plays an older video of Jack and Emma - carefully edited,
perfectly shot - driving along the open road.

The figure's hand reaches for the mouse.

On screen, the cursor hovers over the DISLIKE button.

And clicks it.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The battered van drives.

INT. VAN - DRIVING COMPARTMENT - DAY

Jack drives while Emma sits in the passenger seat, feet on
the dash. The mood is tense, despite their attempts at
optimism.

JACK

What about Bodie for a name?

EMMA

(dismissive)

Sounds like a bear hunter. Anyway,
what if it's a girl?

JACK

Bodeena.

Emma shoots him a look.

EMMA

I'm serious. The wrong name can
really impact a kid.

JACK
No gemstones either then.

EMMA
God, no. No Ruby or Emerald.

JACK
She can change it to Emerald when
she gets a job as a stripper.

Emma doesn't laugh, opening the glovebox instead. The door
comes off in her hand.

EMMA
We can't raise a kid in this thing.

JACK
I know. I'm working on it.

EMMA
Plus YouTube, social media - it's
not exactly stable income. Maybe
this is the push we need to grow up
a bit. Get proper jobs.

JACK
Doing what? You sound like my mom.
This is our job. 24/7.

EMMA
Exactly my point. The baby needs to be
the focus now, not the brand.

Jack pauses. As his expression sours.

JACK
Or maybe... we need to see the baby
as an opportunity for the brand.

Emma stares at him, aghast. She suddenly looks nauseous.

EMMA
Can you pull over?

Jack shoots her a worried glance as the van comes to a halt.

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAY

The van is parked by the side of a wooded area. Emma crouches
beside it, recovering from a bout of nausea. Jack hovers
nearby.

JACK
Better?

EMMA
A bit. It just comes in waves.

JACK
You'll be getting cravings next.

He rubs her back as she catches her breath.

JACK (CONT'D)
Listen, I had an idea...

Emma braces herself.

JACK (CONT'D)
We announce we've got a big
adventure coming up and need help
funding it.

EMMA
And by "adventure," you mean...?

JACK
Parenthood! Alright, they don't
know that yet, but--

-- She moves to go back into the van, but Jack gently stops
her.

JACK (CONT'D)
We're already living off donations
and subs. How is this different?

EMMA
Our child isn't a commodity, Jack.

JACK
The fans are on this journey with
us. It'll make them feel like
family.

EMMA
And then what? We just keep
exploiting our kid's life online?

JACK
There are tons of influencer
families. We'd probably get free
baby stuff too!

Emma sighs.

EMMA

I need to think about this.

She heads back into the van, leaving Jack outside. He can't help but glance at his phone

EXT. VAN - NATIONAL PARK - DAY

The van is parked at a scenic rest stop.

EMMA (V.O.)

As always, we appreciate your support.

JACK (V.O.)

And for any newbies, thanks for joining us!

INT. VAN - LIVING AREA - DAY

INSTAGRAM LIVE VIDEO - Likes and emojis pop up as Emma and Jack smile into the camera. Emma effortlessly outshines Jack's showmanship.

EMMA

You guys have helped our channel grow so much these past two years.

JACK

From nowhere to like, the number four Van Life channel.

EMMA

We have nearly ten thousand in the Rainey Family! We're so grateful to all of you.

A MONTAGE of their adventures plays:

Emma and Jack laughing at the Grand Canyon

Emma frolicking in beach waves

Jack zip-lining with a carefree grin

The couple hiking through redwoods

Silhouetted against a golden sunset

JACK

You've been with us through flat tires in Oregon...

EMMA
That blown gasket outside
Shreveport!

JACK
It's been wild, and we have bigger
adventures ahead...

EMMA
So thank you--

JACK
-- Speaking of, we'd love to bring
you all along on our biggest one
yet.

She shoots Jack a look.

JACK (CONT'D)
So keep donating, liking, sharing,
commenting - all the links are in
our bio. And come back at midnight
for our big news!

Emma's surprise is evident before she plasters on a smile.

EMMA
We love you!

She abruptly ends the stream and turns on Jack.

JACK
Are you okay?

EMMA
I don't like this, Jack.

JACK
We have to build hype.

Emma's expression falls.

EMMA
This feels...wrong. Icky.

JACK
What choice do we have?

Emma is silent.

JACK (CONT'D)
I even thought we could do a poll
to choose the name.

Emma stares at him, aghast.

EMMA

We're not letting strangers name
our child. It'll end up as Baby
McBabyface!

JACK

What's wrong with that?

Emma's look speaks volumes. Jack throws up his hands.

JACK (CONT'D)

Kidding! Look, if you have a better
idea, I'm listening.

Emma rubs her temples, stressed, and goes to search the
cupboards.

EMMA

I have a headache.

JACK

We're out of painkillers. I'll grab
some from the store.

Emma retreats to the bedroom.

JACK (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Thank you, Jack...

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

A rural, out-of-town, gas station.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

Jack stares at all the different pills and medicines.

He grabs a small box of pills. Makes his way to the register.

Jack takes his place in line.

He takes out his phone and scrolls through his social media,
checks the likes on the recent live stream.

He grins. Most of the comments are positive. This becomes a
frown upon spotting there are numerous bad ones among them.

He looks around the store at the other customers; any one of them could be one of these commenters. Back down at the phone.

Suddenly his face drops. Something sours his mood.

There's a comment from someone called MECHANICDUSK, that jumps out at him.

It reads:

"When selling your life online, be careful of the buyer"

JACK

Asshole.

The GUY in front turns around.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sorry. Not you.

The Guy rolls his eyes. Turns back around.

Jack blocks the account. Puts his phone away.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Various shots of Jack walking through the woodland trails on his way back from the garage, carrying snacks, drinks, and painkillers.

We get the sense it was a walk of a couple of miles or so.

He stops occasionally to get some b-roll footage with his phone of a spectacular view, or of wildlife, or setting up the camera to film himself walk.

As beautiful as the scenery it is, none of it is real to Jack.

It's just background for his videos.

EXT. VAN - NATIONAL PARK - DAY

Jack arrives back at the van. There's a heaviness to him.

He sighs as he makes his way to the door.

INT. VAN - LIVING AREA - DAY

Jack enters, puts the snacks and drinks down.

He looks around.

Emma is nowhere to be seen.

JACK

Emma?

No answer.

He knocks on the bathroom door.

No response.

JACK (CONT'D)

Emma, you in there?

Still no response.

He sighs.

He sets the painkillers on the counter.

JACK (CONT'D)

Emma!

No answer.

He races out the door.

EXT. VAN - NATIONAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

He looks around.

No sign of her.

He takes out his phone and tries to call her. There's no response.

JACK

(under his breath)

What the...

EXT. WOODED AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Jack marches through the woods. He scans the area as he goes.

JACK

Emma, where are you?! This isn't funny.

TWO HIKERS make their way towards him.

MALE HIKER
Hey, man. You okay?

JACK
Have you seen anyone come through
here? I'm looking for my wife.

He pulls out his phone. Scrolls to a picture of him and Emma.
Shows them the screen shot. The Hikers shrug, apologetically.

MALE HIKER
Sorry, man.

FEMALE HIKER
You're the first person we've seen
all day.

JACK
Okay. Thanks. If you happen to see
her, can you let her know her
husband is looking for her?

MALE HIKER
Sure thing.

Jack turns and heads back the way he came. The Hiker calls
after him.

MALE HIKER (CONT'D)
Actually... Hey, uh - have we met?

Jack turns back.

JACK
What?

MALE HIKER
Dunno. Uh, do you and your wife
drive a van by any chance?

Jack is momentarily taken aback at being recognized, but he
doesn't have time for this.

He rushes off. The Hikers watch him go.

INT. VAN - LATER

Jack sits on the edge of the bed. He scrolls through his
social media.

Something on-screen catches his eye.

Then he receives a text message from MECHANICDUSK2.

JACK
What the hell?

He clicks on it. It reads:

"Unblock MechanicDusk NOW. There's something you should see"

Jack takes a deep breath. He goes back to the socials, unblocks MechanicDusk.

The moment the account is unblocked, he gets an alert for a private message from MechanicDusk.

He stares at it. Unsure if he should click on it.

It's a video message. He plays the video.

He watches in horror, as the following appears on his screen:

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

It's a dark basemen, bare concrete walls, floor and ceiling.

Empty of anything identifiable - just a single ceiling bulb offering a stark illumination, and stairs leading upwards.

Emma is seated and handcuffed to a metal chair. She is dressed just as she was when he left.

She has a blindfold over her eyes. She's handcuffed to a metal RADIATOR.

On her lap is a dry erase board that reads:

"NO POLICE"

The silhouette of a MAN stands silently in the background, at the bottom of some stairs that lead up. We can hear Emma whimpering and sniffing.

EMMA
Jack, please -- please help --

The message cuts off. Jack jumps to his feet. Rushes out of the van.

EXT. VAN - NATIONAL PARK - DAY

Jack scans the area.

Behind the van, he sees tire tracks. He kneels down. Examines them. He follows them...

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAY

A couple hundred meters away, he sees that the tracks lead out onto the two lane road.

He stands in the middle of the road, and looks in the direction the vehicle must've gone.

He spots the two Hikers emerge from the trees up ahead.

JACK

HEY!

He rushes up to them, and grabs the Male Hiker, pushing him hard up against a tree.

JACK (CONT'D)

Where the hell is she?!

FEMALE HIKER

Get off him.

JACK

Where's my wife?! What have you done with her?

MALE HIKER

We've not seen your wife, dude.

FEMALE HIKER

Let go of him!

JACK

You knew about the van. You said I looked familiar.

FEMALE HIKER

We've watched your videos, you psycho.

MALE HIKER

Didn't recognize you at first.

Jack starts to realize he's made a mistake.

MALE HIKER (CONT'D)

You seemed a lot nicer in those. Less kind of attack-y.

JACK

Okay. Okay. Yeah. Uh --

Jack lets the guy go.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sorry.

MALE HIKER

Seriously, man - you gotta work on your IRL skills.

The shaken Hikers give Jack a bitter look, and head on their way.

MALE HIKER (CONT'D)

Good luck finding your wife.

FEMALE HIKER

(aside)

She probably left him. I know I would.

Jack looks around - feels like the trees are closing in on him. He's breathless, adrenaline racing.

He gets another notification on his phone. He opens it up. Another message from MechanicDusk. He opens it.

This time it's an audio recording; a dark, gravelly, obviously distorted, voice.

MECHANICDUSK (V.O.)

(recording)

If you want your wife returned to you, put on the smartwatch I left in the van, and begin a livestream. Off you go now. Quick as you like.

The audio recording ends.

JACK

God --

Jack curses beneath his breath, races back to the van.

INT. VAN - DAY

Jack is frantic as he searches the van.

Finally he finds Emma's smartwatch, on a shelf.

He studies it.

On the face of the smartwatch is a timer that's counting down until midnight.

There's also a four digit number on it. Jack takes a minute to study the number. Then it dawns on him; it's their follower count.

He paces the room. He picks up the phone. He dials 9.

Waits...

Then dials 1.

Before he can dial again, he receives another voice message. He plays it.

MECHANICDUSK (V.O.)

I already told you. Do not contact the authorities, Jack. Do not ignore my demands. If you do not comply, you will regret your actions.

Jack is hyperventilating, trying to maintain control.

MECHANICDUSK (V.O.)

I need you to reach one hundred thousand followers by midnight. If you fail, I will kill your wife.

Jack's face drops.

JACK

Hundred thousand? We are barely at ten thousand--

-- Message ends. Jack stares at the screen for a long beat.

JACK (CONT'D)

What the fuck just happened.

He paces the room, thinks.

JACK (CONT'D)

Shit...

He grabs what he needs to start a livestream.

Sets the phone inside a tripod.

Deep breath.

He turns it on.

INSTAGRAM LIVE VIDEO - DAY

Jack speaks directly into the camera, trembling, terrified, panicked.

He holds up his wrist so the smartwatch can be seen clearly by the kidnapper.

He starts to talk, but he's trembling - can barely get the words out.

JACK

Okay guys. There's been a... Emma is in -- I don't know how, but -- I don't --

He pauses, and looks directly into the camera, tears rolling down his cheeks.

JACK (CONT'D)

If you're watching this, you bastard, and I know you are, I am coming for you, and I am getting my wife back.

He reads more comments as they flood in;

- **Who's he talking to?!**
- **OMG is Emma having an affair?!**
- **Live breakdown! Juicy!**
- **This is so fake.**
- **Is this the big announcement?!**
- **Total cry for attention.**
- **Watch me expose them @CodeNameTerminator**

JACK (CONT'D)

She's pregnant -- she --

He breaks down.

JACK (CONT'D)

She's pregnant. Emma's pregnant.

Loads of heart emojis pop up; the sense is none of the viewers are fully understanding what's going on.

JACK (CONT'D)

That was our big announcement. I
love her. I can't lose her.

The screen floods with hearts and comments.

- **OMG is Emma okay?!**

- **Did they break up?!**

- **Is the baby even his?!**

He notices something on the watch. Studies it.

The number on the watch goes up. By a lot.

He's gaining followers by the second.

This livestream is going viral.

This isn't what he needs right now. He shuts off the phone
and takes it off the tripod. Knocks the tripod aside,
frustrated.

Dejected, he sits back, lost for direction.

The number on his watch continues to go up.

When the number on the watch hits 10,000 he gets a
notification.

He looks at it: another message from MechanicDusk.

Jack takes a deep breath, opens it.

There's a video. He clicks on it.

The video plays:

INT. PUPPET SHOW - DAY

It's a puppet show. A GREEN SOCK PUPPET AND YELLOW SOCK
PUPPET. Both puppets are behind a box.

The background is a large drawing of a van.

Jack is confused.

Green Sock Puppet turns to Yellow Sock Puppet, as a distorted
tune plays from an old musical box.

Mechanicdusk's distorted VOICE plays both parts. For the
Yellow Puppet he feigns a female voice.

GREEN PUPPET
Will you marry me?

YELLOW PUPPET
Of course! I love you. But how will
we pay for the wedding?

GREEN PUPPET
Let's start a video channel!

This seems oddly familiar to Jack.

GREEN PUPPET (CONT'D)
We can broadcast our entire life,
and beg people for money.

YELLOW PUPPET
Why would anyone give us money?

GREEN PUPPET
Because they're gullible idiots.

YELLOW PUPPET
I don't know. I think I want some
privacy.

GREEN PUPPET
Privacy? What's that? This is the
digital age. Don't you want to
share our love with the world?

YELLOW PUPPET
I guess so!

GREEN PUPPET
Great! Well then, let's sell our
entire life online and hope
everyone buys into our facade!

The two puppets start kissing, as the video ends.

YELLOW PUPPET
Oh, Jack...! I love you.

GREEN PUPPET
I love me too.

INT. VAN - LIVING AREA - DAY

Jack is furious. He punches the chair he's now sitting on.

He gets another alert.

Another message from MechanicDusk.

He opens it.

The message reads:

"I repeat: Get 100K followers by midnight or I kill her. Be good, behave, be safe. Quick as you like."

Jack shuts off the phone.

He buries his head in hands.

His phone rings. He sees who it is, answers it. He stands as he puts the phone to his ear.

JACK
(into phone)
Oh my god. Miles.

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The place is homey and lived-in. EMMA'S PARENTS, along with MILES (30s, likable), are gathered around a phone on speaker.

MILES
Jack? We just saw your stream.

INTERCUT between the family house and the distraught Jack, pacing the van.

JACK
Oh god. Miles. Listen --

EMMA'S MOTHER
-- Is Emma pregnant? Why didn't she tell us?

EMMA'S FATHER
(furious)
What kind of irresponsible behavior is this, Jack?

JACK
I... I can explain...

EMMA'S MOTHER
Explain? You announced it to the whole world before telling us!

EMMA'S FATHER

Are you even ready to start a family? You know how much raising a child costs?

EMMA'S MOTHER

Did Emma even want this? Are you sure you aren't forcing this baby on her--

-- Miles raises his hand.

MILES

Okay... Mom, Dad, let me handle this.

Miles takes the phone off speaker and steps away from his parents.

MILES (CONT'D)

Jack, what's going on? Why did you announce it like that?

JACK

Miles, Emma's been taken.

MILES

What? What do you mean taken?

JACK

Abducted. Kidnapped. I came back to the van, and she was gone. Someone sent me a video of her.

MILES

(lowering his voice)

Are you serious? This isn't some stunt, right?

JACK

How could you think that? I'm terrified, Miles.

MILES

Okay, okay. We need to call the police.

JACK

NO! We can't. They said they'd hurt her if I involved the authorities.

MILES

(sighs)

Alright. What do they want?

JACK

They want me to hit a hundred thousand followers before midnight.

MILES

What? That doesn't make sense.

JACK

I know. It's messed up. I think they're trying to ruin me.

MILES

(after a pause)

Okay, listen. Do what you can for now. Play along. I'll see what I can find online. Send me that video, there might be some clues.

JACK

Thanks, Miles. I really appreciate it.

MILES

I'm doing this for Emma. Just... be careful, okay? And Jack, we'll need to tell my parents eventually.

Miles hangs up and rejoins his parents, who are still visibly upset.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The van drives.

INT. VAN - DRIVING COMPARTMENT - DAY

Jack is behind the wheel. His phone is set up on the dash, live-streaming.

INSTAGRAM LIVE FEED:

Jack looks directly into the camera, composes himself as best he can.

JACK

Okay. Normal service is resumed, and here's the situation. We're going to play a game. Just us. Something a little different to our usual content. Emma has bet me that I can't get to 100,000 followers by midnight.

- **WTF is going on?!**
- **Has he lost his mind?**
- **This is so weird.**
- **Is she pregnant or isn't she?**

JACK (CONT'D)

So I need you to spread the word. Tell everyone you know to follow us. Next, I need ideas. Nothing illegal. Stunts I can do to go viral. I'll live stream the best suggestions.

Suggestions start to flood in.

- **Scare prank video!**
- **Rob a store!**

He winces as he glances at them scrolling up his screen.

JACK (CONT'D)

Yeah, nice one, guys. I don't want to go to jail.

He reads some more suggestions.

- **Kiss a stranger!**
- **Have sex with a hobo!**
- **Have sex with a dog!**

JACK (CONT'D)

And I don't want to make my mom blush. She's ashamed enough of me as it is.

He reads some more ideas.

JACK (CONT'D)

Give money to a homeless guy. Okay. That's doable. That's in the maybe pile. But let's see if we can think bigger.

A comment scrolls up.

- **Destroy the moon.**

JACK (CONT'D)
Not that big.

Jack laughs.

He's having a little too much fun with this. He seems to genuinely love the attention, and the connection, despite the circumstances.

He's so distracted by it that he doesn't notice:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The van drifts over the median strip
- into the path of an ONCOMING TRUCK. It blares its horn
- Jack swerves back into his lane, just in time.

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

The blinds are closed, the only light coming from a computer screen playing out Jack's reaction as the above plays out via an Instagram live stream.

INT. VAN - DRIVING COMPARTMENT - DAY

Jack breathes a sigh of relief.

JACK
There's a reason they say don't
stream and drive. Guys, we're
coming up on the town. Catch up
with you once I'm parked. Until
then - be good, behave, be safe.

He switches off the stream. A hint of a smile appears on his face.

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

The figure sits back, and watches the Rainey Rangers follower count ticking up.

He leans forward, and gives the video a like.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The van is parked at the side of the street.

Jack exits, wearing a phone chest harness. He checks his watch. It's five minutes after 8AM.

JACK

Shit.

He fixes his phone into the harness, and sets it to stream, talking down into it.

JACK (CONT'D)

Okay. I'm back. Sorry if you can see right up my nose, but I'm going hands-free.

He looks up and down the street for potential viral content.

JACK (CONT'D)

Here we go, guys. It's time to do this, and you're coming with me.

He sees an OLDER MARRIED COUPLE walking along with shopping bags.

JACK (CONT'D)

This suggestion comes from Tylerorlando1992. Tyler - this one is for you.

He runs up to the married couple.

JACK (CONT'D)

Quick question.

The WIFE notices the phone in the harness.

WIFE

What is that? He's filming us. Are you filming us?

JACK

Yes. Kind of. Is that okay?

HUSBAND

I'm not comfortable with that.

WIFE

You can't just film people without permission.

JACK

I'll give you five dollars to slap me.

HUSBAND

What?

JACK

Five dollars. No catch.

Jack pulls out five dollars, offers it.

JACK (CONT'D)

All you have to do is slap me
around the face. That's it.

WIFE

That's it?

HUSBAND

Are you out of your mind, son?

JACK

Ten dollars.

WIFE

Why do you want us to slap you?

HUSBAND

Son, do you need a hospital?

JACK

It's a stunt. Kind of a social
experiment. You've heard of
YouTube, Instagram?

They look at him; he seems insane from their POV.

JACK (CONT'D)

Okay, how about... I'll give you
five dollars to watch me slap
myself? Forget it - I'll just do it

--

Jack slaps himself, hard.

The husband pulls out a gun at Jack.

HUSBAND

Get away from us, you freak.

JACK

Hey hey hey... It was just a video.

HUSBAND

Get the fuck away if you don't want
a hole in your face.

WIFE

Nuisance.

The screen fills with laughing emojis.

JACK

I didn't... I am...

The Husband and Wife walk off, weirded out.

Jack calls after them.

JACK (CONT'D)

I am sorry!

Jack watches them go, disappointed. Checks his watch.

That gained him 3 followers. He's disheartened.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hello to the three new followers.
Thanks for joining us.

However, there are a number of laughing emojis popping up on screen, which gives Jack hope. He chuckles to himself.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - DAY

A GROUP OF THREE HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS walk down the street, talking and laughing.

Jack suddenly lunges out at them from behind a BUS SHELTER

JACK

Hakuna Matata!

The girls scream, flinch

- Triggering a wave of LAUGHING EMOJIS.

PURPLE HAIR

Oh my god. What are you doing?

JACK

Surprise!

BLACK HAIR

Are you a psychopath?

JACK

Relax, guys. It's just a prank.

BLONDE
It's not funny. You scared us.

BLACK HAIR
I almost peed myself.

They look at him; who the hell is he? Purple Hair notices the phone.

PURPLE HAIR
Oh my god. Are we live right now?

BLACK HAIR
Are you streaming?

BLONDE
Are you a pervert?

JACK
What? No. I'm not a pervert. You're internet famous. You ever hear of the Rainey Rangers?

BLONDE
No. Is that a thing for perverts?

PURPLE HAIR
(singing)
It's raining perverts - Hallelujah,
it's raining perverts.

The girls laugh. They lean into Jack's camera, start pulling faces, posing, Jack losing control of the situation.

BLACK HAIR
TristaJaneX. Check me out on Insta.

PURPLE HAIR
She means OnlyFans.

BLACK HAIR
Shut-up! I ain't on OnlyFans.
You're on OnlyFans.

BLONDE
Yeah, she totally does, like, foot
fetish videos. Old men, go crazy...

BLACK HAIR
Yeah, if you're hot for bunions and
corns check her out.

The girls fall about laughing, and walk off, laughing, singing about being "Hot for bunions".

Comments pour in:

- **I would pay to watch you on onlyfans!**
- **Give a shoutout to yourself, would you?**

The girls looks at the comments and make disgusted faces.

BLONDE

Geez! Calm down it was a joke.

BLACK HAIR

(to Jack)

Is all of your audience a pervert?

JACK

Hey!

PURPLE HAIR

Lets just leave this loser alone.

They walk away as Jack's face loses all the color. The interaction was way outside Jack's comfort zone.

JACK

Well, that was interesting. Thanks to BullhoundMagnificent for the suggestion.

He checks the watch.

He gained another 15 followers. He sighs. This isn't going to get it done.

JACK (CONT'D)

Guys, I'm not sure any of these ideas are really doing it. One more, and we're trying something else.

EXT. QUIET STREET - DAY

A HOMELESS GUY sits in a doorway, with his MANGY DOG

Jack appears above him. The Homeless Guy looks up. Jack hands him ten dollars, nervously.

HOMELESS GUY

Thank you, sir. Much appreciated.
Have a nice day.

He realizes that Jack hasn't left.

JACK
Um. For your clothes?

HOMELESS GUY
Unh?

JACK
I, uh, I want to buy your clothes.

HOMELESS GUY
You want my clothes?

JACK
You can have mine. You can have my clothes in return. We'll swap.

HOMELESS GUY
Why?

JACK
It'll be funny.

HOMELESS GUY
So, let me get this straight. You want me to get naked in the street with you, man?

JACK
Please -- twenty dollars, and I film it.

The Homeless Man is disgusted. Jack pulls out another bill.

HOMELESS GUY
You want to film me getting naked?

JACK
No -- not naked. Swapping clothes. With me. Okay, not the underwear.

HOMELESS GUY
I dunno, man. It seems a kinda weird thing to do.

Jack is getting desperate, exasperated.

JACK
Why does everyone think I'm a pervert?

HOMELESS GUY
Maybe you should ask yourself that question, man.

JACK
I gave you money!

HOMELESS GUY
Yuh, to get naked.

JACK
To swap clothes!

HOMELESS GUY
I still got my dignity.

JACK
You know what?! Forget it.

Jack starts to leave. The homeless guy gets to his feet. So does his dog. He gathers up his bedroll.

HOMELESS GUY
Hey, what about the rest of my money?

JACK
I was paying you to swap clothes. You didn't want to do that, so no deal.

HOMELESS GUY
I'm homeless, man. Have some damned compassion. I don't exist for your twisted entertainment.

JACK
I'll give you fifty dollars if you give me your clothes.

HOMELESS GUY
Gimme my money!

The homeless guy lunges at Jack. Jack shoves him away.

HOMELESS GUY (CONT'D)
I need money, man.

JACK
No! Get away from me.

HOMELESS GUY
I'm hungry --

The homeless guy shoves Jack hard, and he falls down in a heap of trash.

Countless LAUGHING and SHOCKED FACE EMOJIS pop up on screen, as Jack struggles to get to his feet.

He slips. More hilarity from those watching.

HOMELESS GUY (CONT'D)
C'mon, Beaner. Let's leave this
loser to it. You need to reconsider
your choices, my man.

The Homeless Guy picks up his dog's leash, and heads off with him

- leaving Jack behind, covered in trash.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Jack - filthy from his fall in the trash - returns to the van, frustrated. He punches the side of the van. The wing mirror falls off.

He checks his watch, as he picks up the mirror; the altercation with then Homeless Guy gained him TWO THOUSAND followers.

JACK
Holy crap.

Buoyed, hopeful, taken aback, Jack enters the van.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

As Jack steps inside, his phone alerts him to an incoming VIDEO CALL:

He cues it up, full of dread, and watches.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Emma remains bound to the radiator, still blindfolded.

Her face is covered in tear streaks, make-up running beneath her blindfold.

MECHANICDUSK
Congratulations, Jack.

The distorted voice gives Emma a start; he's in the room with her.

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

That was a good start. But you still have a lot of work to do.

JACK

Give me my wife back, you bastard.

EMMA

Jack!? Jack!

JACK

Emma, I love you! I'm going to get you home.

EMMA

Please help me -- I don't know where --

Mechanicdusk reaches a gloved hand into shot, and grips Emma's face. She whimpers.

MECHANICDUSK

Uh-uh. No talking until I say so.

Emma stays quiet, trembling.

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

That's better.

JACK

Let go of her.

Mechanicdusk waggles a finger at Jack, silencing him.

Jack watches the video, jaw clenched, full of barely controlled rage.

MECHANICDUSK

Now, Jack. Old buddy. Old online pal. Fighting with homeless people is all well and good, but if you're going to get to a hundred thousand followers, I think you're going to have to get... a little more outrageous.

JACK

This doesn't come naturally to me. I'm doing my best.

MECHANICDUSK

Your best might not be enough. You don't want to kill your brand entirely do you?

(MORE)

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

You need to create some buzz.
Generate some heat, if you want to
get those sweet clicks. Isn't that
right, Emma?

Emma just whimpers, crying now.

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

I mean, how badly do you care,
Jack? Just how important is this to
you? What are you prepared to do to
reach the magic one hundred thou'?

JACK

Why are you doing this to us?

MECHANICDUSK

I'm just one of your adoring fans.
Part of The Rainey Family. You want
to keep your family entertained,
don't you? Quick as you like now.

JACK

Please stop.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

The video cuts off.

JACK

Shit!

Jack paces. Worried and scared. He runs his hands through his
hair; it's not affected this time.

He cues up Miles' number on his phone, and dials.

MILES (V.O.)

Jack.

JACK

Have you been watching?

MILES (V.O.)

No, I've been busy searching for
Emma.

JACK

Anything?

Intercut with:

INT. MILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Miles is sat at his computer.

MILES

I've been looking online at your videos over the past year. Definite uptick on the number of negative comments.

JACK

It happens. We grown a lot in the past twelve months.

MILES

Regardless, it could all be one person under multiple different screen names, or several people working together.

JACK

How does any of that help?

MILES

I've got a friend who works in IT. He's going to see if he can get their IP addresses. I'll let you know if he turns up anything.

JACK

Thanks, Miles.

MILES

Don't worry about it. How are you holding up?

JACK

I am okay. Just... Worried about her.

MILES

One way or another we'll get her back. I promise, Jack.

Jack nods, grateful for the support.

MILES (CONT'D)

Just do what you do, and I'll do what I do.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Emma sits as she was before

- but this time, VIDEOS of Rainey Rangers are projected onto the walls around her

- clips of Emma's adventures with Jack.

Across from her is MECHANICDUSK. He wears a mask, all in black with a hood and gloves, and wearing something that distorts his voice.

He simply watches her.

Eventually:

EMMA

I know you're there. I can hear your breathing.

Mechanicdusk stands perfectly still, says nothing.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Jack's going to find me, you monster.

MECHANICDUSK

Don't get agitated, Emma. Think of the baby.

EMMA

Where do you get off, playing games with people's lives?

MECHANICDUSK

I'm not the one selling my soul online.

Emma shifts; this touches a nerve.

EMMA

What do you care what we do?

Mechanicdusk sighs.

MECHANICDUSK

Do you know what a parasocial relationship is, Emma?

EMMA

Of course.

MECHANICDUSK

You let your followers think they know the real you.

(MORE)

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

You show them an impossibly perfect life that they can never hope to attain. Don't you feel that's rather exploitative?

EMMA

It is what it is.

MECHANICDUSK

And yet you continue. Why is that?

EMMA

It's our job.

MECHANICDUSK

Isn't it rather like prostitution to film your entire life?

EMMA

We don't film everything.

MECHANICDUSK

That isn't entirely true is it? You live your life through a lens. You feel you don't exist unless you're being filmed. It really isn't healthy.

EMMA

Who are you to judge me?

MECHANICDUSK

I am a simple fan, Emma. Who better to judge you?

Emma says nothing more.

Reveal that Mechanicdusk has a number of cameras set up on tripods

- recording everything, as the clips from Emma and Jack's channel play out on the walls in eerie silence.

He places a gag in Emma's mouth, and walks up the stairs, leaving her alone.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Jack sits on a bench, watching a YouTube video of a man ROBBING A CONVENIENCE STORE at gunpoint, and being taken out by the owner, wielding a baseball bat.

The title: 'EPIC FAIL: THIEF LIVE STREAMS ROBBERY (RE-UPLOAD)'.

It has 15.3 million views.

Jack looks up at a franchise coffee outlet across the street.

He makes his decision, picks up a bag labelled as coming from a TOY STORE, and heads over.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Clutching the bag, Jack enters the busy shop. He waits nervously in line, as it moves closer to the counter. He looks around at customers; some on laptops, some on phones

- all of them living their lives online, to one degree or another.

He finally makes his way to the young BARISTA behind the counter.

BARISTA
What can I get you?

JACK
I need a favor.

BARISTA
Okay.

JACK
Can I stream here?

He indicates the phone strapped to his chest.

BARISTA
I dunno -- um... what, like a live stream.

JACK
Kind of. I want to make a video.
I'm a content creator. A filmmaker,
I guess.

BARISTA
What kind of video?

JACK
I want to...

Jack looks around, lowers his voice.

JACK (CONT'D)

I want to pretend I'm robbing the store, and I want you to stop me.

The Barista reacts, visibly shocked.

JACK (CONT'D)

It has to look real. I want it to go viral. Like I've lost my mind or something. And then you, I dunno, you pretend to knock me down, and I run out of the store. Okay? That's it.

The Barista looks at him, nervous, weirded out.

BARISTA

Let me get my duty manager --

JACK

I mean, we can just do it now, or -- sure, no problem. Go get your manager.

The Barista, not taking her eyes from Jack, heads over to her MANAGER. Jack watches as they talk. The Manager is confused, concerned, as they speak in urgent whispers.

He comes over to Jack, who tries to appear as casual as possible.

MANAGER

Can I help you?

JACK

Hi. My name's Jack Rainey. I'm from Rainey Rangers.

Jack pauses to see if the manager has heard of him. He hasn't.

JACK (CONT'D)

We're a lifestyle brand. Social media influencers. You can look us up.

MANAGER

I don't have time for that.

JACK

I was asking your employee whether it'd be possible to stream in here? You can all be in it.

MANAGER

Why would I want to be in it?

JACK

It's gonna go viral. Could get you some more customers.

MANAGER

I'm not sure what you're asking exactly.

JACK

I'll give you a proper shout-out in the video. Please. I need to do this.

MANAGER

It's something we'd have to clear with corporate.

JACK

Well, how long's that going to take?

MANAGER

(shrugs)

How long's a piece of string.

JACK

It's just a quick thing. I need to do this today.

MANAGER

Plus, aren't there things like filming permits, and release forms, you'd need? What if people don't want to be in your video?

JACK

Why wouldn't they want to? It's just for online. Let me just --

Jack starts streaming.

MANAGER

Are we live now? Is that thing on? I never said you could do that.

Jack reaches into his bag, and pulls out a REPLICAS GUN

- then shouts, as if he's robbing the coffee shop, pointing it at the Manager.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Holy shit!

JACK

Gimme all your money!

The Manager flinches away, the Barista SCREAMS.

BARISTA

He's got a gun!

MANAGER

-- the fuck?!

All hell breaks loose. One customer runs out, others cower beneath tables.

Somebody else points their phone at the scene and starts filming.

Jack realizes he has made a terrible error.

JACK

No! What? Everyone stay calm. It's a toy. It's a fake!

Jack spins around, waving the gun - people flinching as it aims at them.

JACK (CONT'D)

You don't need to be scared! Stop being scared. I'm not going to hurt anybody. Just calm down!

A burly-looking CUSTOMER steps up, approaches Jack, hands extended to calm the situation.

CUSTOMER

Okay, pal. Just put it down. Put the gun down.

JACK

It's not real -- it's just a replica. Nobody needs to be scared.

The Manager shouts across

MANAGER

Call 911.

JACK

What the hell? No! I've not done anything --

The Barista picks up a phone.

JACK (CONT'D)
Don't call anyone!

The Barista ignores him. Jack points the gun at her.

JACK (CONT'D)
I said put the phone down!

The Barista drops the phone. There's silence in the coffee shop now. Everyone's scared. Jack, for the moment, is in control, but doesn't seem to know what to do with it.

JACK (CONT'D)
Okay. Listen to me. Everyone, listen. This has all been a misunderstanding. You're all live right now. Say hi to your moms.

The Customer seizes an opportunity throws himself at Jack, knocking them both into a table.

The gun flies out of Jack's hand, as the Customer restrains him.

Jack struggles, but the guy is stronger than him, pins him down.

JACK (CONT'D)
You're making a mistake.

CUSTOMER
Just stay calm, buddy. Nobody needs to get hurt.

JACK
I'm not trying to hurt anyone!

The Manager picks up the gun.

MANAGER
This isn't real. It's a fake gun.

The Customer looks back over at the manager.

Jack brings his knee up between the customer's legs, winding him

- and giving Jack the opportunity to break free, and run from the shop.

EXT. STREET NEAR COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Jack runs down the street, breathless -

- as HEART and LAUGHING EMOJIS flood the screen, and the views and FOLLOWERS start climbing at speed

- along with the inevitable comments.

- **Is this real?**

- **Totally fake.**

- **Dumb stunt.**

- **Was the gun real?**

- **Is anything real?**

- **Has Jack gone mad? If so, I'm here for it.**

Jack finally stops when he is the clear. He waits for a second, looks around and then chuckles. Slowly the chuckles takes form of a full blown laughter.

He falls to the floor laughing. He catches his breath back, sitting up.

JACK

Oh, boy.

He shakes his head, smiling.

JACK (CONT'D)

What's happening, Jack.

He let's out another chuckle, lying back.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Emma is alone. Handcuffed, blindfolded, gagged. The cameras watch her, silently, apparently turned off.

She is struggling to free her hands from the handcuffs - even if she has to break every bone in her hand to do it, she's going to get free.

She pulls on her hand, tearing the skin against the metal cuffs. She bits down hard on her gag, to stop from screaming out with the pain.

It's impossible. She's never going to be able to do this with one hand, let alone two.

She bends forwards, and removes her blindfold.

She takes stock of the radiator pipe she's attached to; it looks flimsy enough that with enough force she might be able to break it.

She braces her feet against the pipe, and leans backwards

- straining and pushing against the pipe

- and then it comes free, with a CLANG. Emma winces; the sound too loud in this small, harsh, room.

She pauses, waits to see if she has been heard. And then she slides the handcuffs over the broken pipe.

Her hands are still attached together, still bleeding, but at least she is no longer cuffed to the radiator.

She runs to the stairs, throwing herself up them.

She reaches for the handle to the door at the top of the stairs

- and it opens for the other side, as Mechanicdusk looks at her. He watches impassively as the startled Emma loses her footing

- and falls back down the stairs, tumbling all the way to the bottom, hitting her head on the bare concrete floor.

Hard cut to black, as Emma is knocked unconscious.

INT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Jack lurks at the end of the alleyway, with a hood pulled down over his face.

He ducks back into the shadows as a POLICE CAR speeds past, lights flashing.

He checks his watch. The follower count is at over 75,000. Even he's taken aback by it.

Coast clear, he steps out into the street, head down, walks on. He's clearly hoping to be incognito.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack peruses the aisles, settling on a hot dog from the heated roller display. He methodically adds mustard, relish, and ketchup.

Across the store, TWO TEENAGE GIRLS in a denim jacket and skirt whisper and giggle, stealing glances at Jack.

He tries to ignore them, focusing on preparing his hot dog. But as he moves to the chip aisle, the GIRL IN DENIM JACKET approaches.

DENIM JACKET

Is it you?

Jack averts his face.

JACK

Is who me?

DENIM JACKET

It is, isn't it?

JACK

Sorry, just getting something to eat.

DENIM JACKET

It's totally you! It's him! I told you!

The GIRL IN SKIRT hurries over, giddy.

GIRL IN SKIRT

Oh my days, it is!

JACK

I don't know who you think I am, but--

GIRL IN SKIRT

We saw your video!

DENIM JACKET

From the coffee shop. With the gun!

GIRL IN SKIRT

That was some funny shit. You've gone viral, bro.

Jack can't help but be a little happy about the attention.

JACK

Uh...thanks?

DENIM JACKET

What were you even trying to do? So lame.

GIRL IN SKIRT

How are you gonna get to a hundred thousand followers?

Jack tenses, surprised they know his goal.

JACK

You know about that?

GIRL IN SKIRT

Duh, everyone does! It's all anyone's talking about. Only a few hours left.

DENIM JACKET

People are saying you got shot by the cops.

Jack tries to brush them off, grabbing a bag of chips.

JACK

I didn't get shot. It wasn't that big a deal.

He heads to the register, but the girls trail him persistently.

GIRL IN SKIRT

Can we get a selfie?

DENIM JACKET

Can we be in one of your streams?

Jack grows flustered under their probing.

JACK

Please, I just want to get back to the van--

DENIM JACKET

Can we come with you?

The CASHIER rings him up impassively as Jack pays. He snatches his items, desperate to escape their attention, and flees outside.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

The girls follow Jack down the street as he exits the convenience store.

He just wants to keep a low profile, but they're drawing too much attention.

GIRL IN SKIRT

Come on. Stream us, bro. We'll make you go viral.

JACK

If I put you on the stream, will you leave me alone?

GIRL IN SKIRT

Yeah, bro. We'll totally leave you be, bro. C'mon.

DENIM JACKET

We just want our fifteen minutes.

Jack takes out his phone. The girls giggle. He turns it on himself, and starts a stream.

JACK

Hey, guys. Sorry for the radio silence. The uh... as you saw, the last, um, social experiment didn't go entirely to plan, but onwards and upwards. Just a few hours to go, but we're on course. I'd like to introduce you to two friends of mine --

The Denim Jacket girl throws herself at Jack, and KISSES HIM FULLY ON THE MOUTH. Jack is so shocked, it takes him a moment to pull away

- which he eventually does.

DENIM JACKET

Did you see that? He tried to kiss me!

GIRL IN SKIRT

Dirty old bastard.

JACK

What the fuck?! You kissed me.

GIRL IN SKIRT

Eyewitness here. You sexually assaulted my friend, bro.

DENIM JACKET

You forced yourself on me.

Jack glances at the comments

- **OMG JACK!!**

- What a pig
- Emma's not gonna like this
- cancelled

Jack just looks at the girls, stunned

- he drops his food, and runs, as fast as he can, the girls' jeers and cackling abuse echoing after him
- negative comments swirling around his head.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

EMMA wakes on a grimy mattress, hands cuffed behind her back, blindfold back on. MECHANICDUSK sits watching her intently.

MECHANICDUSK

That wasn't very clever, Emma.

Emma tries sitting up but winces from a gash on her forehead.

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

You could have hurt yourself. Or the baby.

EMMA

Go to hell.

MECHANICDUSK

I don't wish you any harm.

EMMA

Weird, because the kidnapping and handcuffs suggest otherwise.

MECHANICDUSK

I want to set you and Jack free. You're trapped in a cage of your own making.

EMMA

What did we ever do to you?

MECHANICDUSK

To me? Nothing. It's what you've done to yourselves. Become slaves to content, deceiving people. I've watched your husband turn vile, selfish, a peddler of lies.

Emma falls silent, his words striking a nerve.

EMMA

Jack isn't selfish. He does everything for us.

MECHANICDUSK

Are you sure? Does he care about you? Or just what you bring to the brand?

EMMA

Jack loves me.

MECHANICDUSK

Interesting. Let's see what they're saying online.

He presses a remote, and projections of videos fill the room - the teenage girls from the store.

GIRL IN SKIRT (VIDEO)

Jack Rainey is a sexual predator!

DENIM JACKET (VIDEO)

He tried to kiss me and felt me up!

Emma's face falls as she watches in horror. Mechanicdusk changes to a news report.

NEWSREADER (VIDEO)

Police are investigating an incident where minor influencer Jack Rainey attempted to hold up a coffee shop with a toy gun.

Tears roll down Emma's cheeks as it cuts to the homeless man's interview.

HOMELESS GUY (VIDEO)

Dude offered me money to get naked! I might be desperate but I ain't that desperate.

NEWSREADER (VIDEO)

Police are asking for any information on Rainey's whereabouts.

Emma is utterly broken as the videos end. A heavy silence hangs until:

EMMA

You're right. You know exactly what I need.

She meets Mechanicdusk's gaze, the hint of a manipulative facade crossing her features as she decides to play along.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jack hurries toward the van when his phone rings - a video call from Mechanicdusk. He stops, answering hesitantly.

MECHANICDUSK

Congratulations, Jack. It's all going so well.

JACK

This is a fucked-up definition of "well." I'm literally wanted by the police now.

MECHANICDUSK

No one made you hold up that coffee shop, Jack. I simply told you to reach 100,000 followers.

Jack freezes, Mechanicdusk's implication hitting him like a sledgehammer.

JACK

What are you saying?

MECHANICDUSK

I never specified how to gain that popularity. So tell me...how does it feel to finally be internet famous?

JACK

You--

MECHANICDUSK

-- Just ask yourself, Jack. Why were you enjoying it so much? Was some darker part of you seeking this viral fame, no matter the cost?

JACK

I feel like killing you, you sick fuck!

MECHANICDUSK

Tsk tsk, no need for those kinds of threats. Then you really will be in trouble.

JACK
Says the bastard who abducted my
wife!

Mechanicdusk nods.

MECHANICDUSK
Now Jack, we're all one big happy
family here, aren't we? Your Rainey
Army is watching, waiting for your
midnight surprise.

He glances at his watch.

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)
Tick tock, better hurry. I'll be
waiting.

The call ends. Jack ponders.

Jack throws open the van door and climbs inside.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Jack slams the door behind him, locks it. He presses his back
against it, feeling the world closing in on him.

He checks his watch; he's up to 85,000 followers. He cues up
Miles' number, dials it

- but it rings out. He answers it.

JACK
Hello?!

Intercut Jack pacing, phone to his ear, with:

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Emma's Mother and Father are on the couch. The cell phone is
on speaker.

EMMA'S MOTHER
Jack! What's going on with you?
You're all over the internet making
a fool of yourself.

JACK
What do you mean?

EMMA'S MOTHER
Listen to this garbage.

Emma's Mother plays a video on her nearby laptop. It's an autotuned remix of the Homeless Guy's interview, set to a dance beat.

HOMELESS GUY (V.O.)

Dude comes up and starts offering me money to get naked. I might be desperate, but I ain't that d-d-d-d-desperate! Get naked! M-m-money to get naked!

Jack is silent, mortified.

EMMA'S FATHER

What the hell were you thinking, boy?

JACK

It's not what it looks like. It's been taken out of context!

EMMA'S MOTHER

Oh, please. You've always been irresponsible, but this takes the cake.

JACK

That's not fair--

EMMA'S FATHER

-- Fair? You know what's not fair? Dragging our daughter into your ridiculous schemes.

EMMA'S MOTHER

This whole "van life" nonsense was bad enough. And now you're bringing a child into it?

JACK

We made this decision together--

EMMA'S FATHER

-- Where is Emma anyway? Put her on the phone.

JACK

She's... she's not available right now.

EMMA'S MOTHER

Of course she isn't. You probably don't want her to talk to us.

JACK

Look, I really don't have time for this right now.

EMMA'S FATHER

You never have time for anything except your damned internet fame, do you, Jack?

Jack is distracted by flashing lights outside, and the burble of a police siren. He looks out the window; a police car has pulled up.

He throws himself aside, as two COPS emerge, hands on their gun holsters.

Jack hangs up the phone, doesn't know what to do. There's a hammering on the door.

COP (o.s.)

Jack Rainey?

Jack opens a window over the kitchen sink, opposite the door. He's about to try climbing out of it, when he has an idea.

He puts his phone in its chest harness, and live-streams - this is perfect content.

He calls out to the cops.

JACK

I'm innocent!

COP

Mr Rainey, we need you to step outside.

JACK

I've not done anything wrong.

Jack checks his watch; the follow count is climbing.

COP

We just want to ask you some questions. It'll be much easier if you open this door, and come out with your hands over your head.

Jack starts trying to climb out of the kitchen window.

JACK

I'll be out in a moment. I'm just, uh --

Jack hooks one leg over the window frame.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm getting changed. I'm half-naked.

More hammering on the door.

COP

Open the door, Mr Rainey, or I'm kicking it down.

Jack climbs out, but gets one of his legs hooked on the window - and he falls out head-first, his pants leg still attached to the window frame.

EXT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Jack's hanging upside down from the van window, stuck. He unbuckles his pants

- and slithers out of them onto the ground, landing in his underwear.

He looks up, and realizes the two Cops are standing over him, looking down at him almost with pity at how pathetic he looks.

COP

Hands behind your back. We're taking you in.

Jack goes to check his watch

- but one of the Cops grabs his arm, and twists them both behind Jack's back, snapping on a pair of handcuffs.

They pin Jack to the ground.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Emma sits calmly on the mattress, uncuffed now, sipping milk after finishing her soup. Mechanicdusk watches her intently.

EMMA

Thank you...for the food. And not keeping me restrained.

Mechanicdusk says nothing, so Emma presses on in a soft, disarming tone:

EMMA (CONT'D)

I've been thinking about what you said. About Jack. About us being trapped.

She sets down her glass, looking at him imploringly.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Maybe you're right. This life of ours, always performing, sharing everything online...it's not healthy. Especially now, with the baby coming.

Mechanicdusk seems surprised by her change in demeanor, but remains wary.

MECHANICDUSK

You're merely saying what you think I want to hear.

Emma shakes her head.

EMMA

No, really. I see it so clearly now. Jack's obsession, his desperation for views and likes...it's toxic. It's already putting our child at risk before they're even born.

Tears well up in her eyes, her performance utterly convincing.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I don't want to raise a baby in that environment. Please...you have to help me escape this, escape him. I'll do anything you ask.

She reaches out, placing her hand on Mechanicdusk's arm beseechingly. He tenses at her touch, clearly thrown by her words and demeanor.

MECHANICDUSK

I...want to believe you mean that. But you're an accomplished performer, Emma. How can I trust this isn't an act?

Emma lets her anguished tears flow freely. The masked figure seems to be contemplating Emma's words.

Slowly, Mechanicdust reaches up and removes his mask, revealing the face of JUSTIN, a man in his early 30s with intense eyes and a determined expression.

EMMA
(confused)
Who are you?

JUSTIN
You don't know me, but you might recognize my channel name - CodeNameTerminator.

Emma's eyes widen slightly in recognition.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
I've been commenting on your videos for months, trying to get people to see the truth about lifestyle influencers like you and Jack.

EMMA
You're the one who kept saying you'd expose us...

JUSTIN
That's right. My channel is dedicated to revealing the lies behind the perfect lives that influencers like you sell to your followers.

Emma nods.

EMMA
Thank you for... removing your mask. I feel like I am talking to a person now. Though I don't think I deserve your trust. After the way I've lived, being dishonest and fake for clicks? I don't deserve your trust.

She meets his gaze, her own eyes pleading.

EMMA (CONT'D)
But I'm begging you...help me be a better person. A real person, not a product. For my child's sake.

Justin studies her intently, seemingly profoundly impacted by her naked vulnerability and desperate plea. He doesn't respond immediately, his expression unreadable.

JUSTIN

Your words sound sincere, Emma. But
actions speak louder than words.

With that, he walks out.

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELLS - NIGHT

Jack is in the cell with a group of OTHER INMATES; drunks,
thugs, thieves.

The other inmates watch as he paces.

THUG

Sit down, dickface. You're making
the rest of us uncomfortable.

Jack glances at his wrist

- but his watch has been taken.

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELLS - NIGHT

Finally, THE GUARD arrives.

GUARD

Jack Rainey?

JACK

That's me. What time is it?

GUARD

Come on.

The Guard opens the cell and lets Jack out. Jack catches
sight of a clock on the wall; it's 10.45pm.

JACK

Shit.

INT. TELEPHONE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

The Guard and Jack arrive in the hall with the phones.

GUARD

You got one call.

The Guard points at a phone on the wall. Jack goes to it.
Dials a number. Waits.

JACK
(into phone)
Miles. Hey. It's me.

Intercut with:

INT. MILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Miles sits at his kitchen table, on the phone. Open on his laptop is the Rainey Rangers account. Miles watches the comments coming in, and the followers ticking up rapidly, approaching 100,000.

MILES
(into phone)
I'm guessing this call is coming
from the police station.

JACK
Still watching then?

Miles looks at his watch.

MILES
Yes, though I guess it's over now
for you. Just an hour till
midnight. I am sorry, Jack. He's
won. I don't support your methods,
but you came so close. Actually,
you're about to hit 100K followers.

JACK
What? How?

MILES
Your last video went viral. People
are rallying behind you.

JACK
Did you even find anything?

MILES
All the IP addresses are encrypted,
or going through proxy VPNs.
They're untraceable.

JACK
Shit. Everything we've built...
gone. Rainey Rangers is done. I
fucked it all up.

MILES

I am just worried about Emma. But I know you did everything you could to win this.

JACK

At what expense, Miles? Am I ever going to get Emma back?

MILES

I don't think he wants to hurt Emma. He got what he wanted. We only have one option now. You have to tell the police why you've done what you've done? They might be lenient with you.

Jack rests his head against the wall, thinks. Then:

JACK

No. I'm not telling them. It's not over yet. It isn't midnight.

MILES

What are you going to do from the inside of a jail cell? I'm guessing they took your phone.

JACK

And my watch.

MILES

How much is your bail?

JACK

Ten grand.

Miles sighs.

MILES

Look, I'll pay it. This is my entire savings, but you need it more than I do right now.

JACK

Miles, I... I don't know what to say. Thank you.

MILES

Don't thank me yet. We still need to get Emma back. I'll be there soon with the money.

GUARD (O.S.)
Time's up.

JACK
Thanks, Miles. I owe you.

Jack hangs up, looking relieved.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Emma sits against the wall, restless and uncomfortable near the empty bowl and glass. She eyes the glass - could it be a potential weapon?

The door opens, and Mechanicdusk descends the stairs. His mask is back on.

Emma smiles.

EMMA
So the mask is back?

MECHANICDUSK
I've been monitoring Jack's progress. I believe he may be getting closer to freeing you.

Emma visibly softens at this.

EMMA
Thank god.

Emma looks down, pondering.

MECHANICDUSK
Thinking of how you'll go to the police once this ends?

EMMA
No..

MECHANICDUSK
To authorities, the online world isn't real - they deal with murderers and rapists, not internet trolls.

Emma looks down, stressed.

EMMA
Can you open these cuffs? My hands are hurting.

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

(pauses)

Please...

Mechanicdusk studies her for a moment.

MECHANICDUSK

If I release your handcuffs, will you promise to behave yourself?

Emma regards him warily for a moment, then:

EMMA

...I promise.

Mechanicdusk approaches, his masked visage terrifyingly close as he unlocks the cuffs. Emma rubs her raw, cut wrists gingerly.

MECHANICDUSK

Is that better?

EMMA

Yes...thank you.

MECHANICDUSK

You must be exhausted. I can't imagine...

EMMA

It has been a long day, yeah.

MECHANICDUSK

I mean exhausted of this whole lifestyle. What if I told you that you could just...stop? Walk away from it all?

Emma's eyes widen with pretended amazement.

EMMA

That's what I've been telling Jack! That we need to quit this...performing for strangers online.

Mechanicdusk tilts his head, intrigued that she seems to be opening up.

MECHANICDUSK

Go on.

Emma looks away, faking hesitance.

EMMA

Why should I tell you anything?

MECHANICDUSK

Because Emma...I may be your captor, but I could be the only real relationship you have left.

His words hang heavy in the air. Emma meets his gaze, the glimmers of trust and connection evident on her face as she leans into her manipulation.

EMMA

You're right...Jack's obsession has driven a wedge between us. All he cares about is views and likes, not me. Not our baby.

She places a hand on her belly, the picture of a worried, sympathetic mother-to-be.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'm so afraid of the environment that obsession will create for my child. You...you get that, don't you?

Mechanicdusk is clearly impacted by her performance, slowly nodding along in apparent understanding.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Jack and Miles exit the police station together. Jack looks exhausted but relieved.

JACK

Thanks for bailing me out, Miles. I owe you big time.

MILES

Don't mention it. Family comes first.

Jack pulls out his phone, which Miles had brought for him. His eyes widen as he checks his account.

JACK

Holy shit. We crossed 100K followers!

MILES

Congratulations. You finally got what you wanted.

Suddenly, Jack's phone buzzes with a new notification. It's a video message from Mechanicdust. Jack hesitates, then plays it.

ON PHONE SCREEN: The masked figure appears.

MECHANICDUST

Congratulations, Jack. You've achieved your dream. 100,000 followers. But now, it's time for your final choice.

Jack and Miles exchange worried glances.

MECHANICDUST (CONT'D)

You can keep your newfound fame and live the influencer life you've always wanted. Or, you can delete your channel right now and save Emma. The choice is yours. You have one hour to decide.

The video ends. Jack stares at his phone, stunned and conflicted.

JACK

No... This can't be happening.

MILES

Jack, you have to delete the channel. We're talking about Emma's life here.

JACK

But everything we've worked for... It's all here. We finally made it. I can save both...

MILES

Jack, please. This is my sister we're talking about. Your wife. Is this really a choice?

Jack looks at his phone, then at Miles, clearly wrestling with the decision.

JACK

I... I need a minute to think.

Jack walks a few steps away, staring at his phone screen.

EXT. STREET NEAR POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Jack takes a seat on the curb. He scrolls through all his social media accounts.

It's a heavy moment for him, full of portent, and regret - committing social media suicide.

When he's done...

JACK

Thanks for everything, Rainey
Rangers. Be good, behave, be safe.

He tucks the phone back into his pocket, and puts his head in his hands.

His phone dings. He's got an alert.

He pulls the phone out of his pocket, sees the time: it's MIDNIGHT.

He opens the message...

It's from MechanicDusk. It's a video message.

He clicks on it.

MECHANICDUSK

(on video)

I see that you have made your
choice. A deal is a deal.

A weary realization hits Jack.

JACK

(quietly)

Where's my wife?

MECHANICDUSK

If you want to see your wife, you
can find her at 1667 Addison Road.

The video ends.

Jack perks up. Races down the street.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Emma is alone. She hides something under the mattress: pieces of broken glass. She has something behind her back.

Mechanicdusk descends the stairs. Emma looks almost pleased to see him.

EMMA

Where did you go?

MECHANICDUSK

I needed to send your husband a message. Now, where were we? Ah yes, talking of Jack, you were telling me how you're ready for change.

EMMA

It's just a lot, you know? Living from one video to another. Always traveling. I don't want to bring a child into that.

MECHANICDUSK

I can imagine. How do you think Jack would respond if you told him this?

EMMA

Jack lives for his audience.

MECHANICDUSK

Not for you?

EMMA

He loves me. Sure. But... he's can be such an attention whore.

Something about Mechanicdusk's manner suggests he likes this response; this is what he wanted to hear from Emma.

But she's playing him, disarming him.

EMMA (CONT'D)

When it comes to attention, I'm more like the Robin to his Batman.

MECHANICDUSK

Are you jealous?

EMMA

I'm jealous that sometimes the fans - god, I hate that word - *the community*... seem to be more important to him than I am. When we met, our entire lives didn't revolve around likes and comments.

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

One bad comment now and he can get depressed for days.

MECHANICDUSK

That doesn't sound as if he'd make good father material.

EMMA

He'll be a good father, but I worry that everything will be through the filter of Rainey Rangers.

MECHANICDUSK

I'm not sure you have to worry about that anymore.

EMMA

Why not?

MECHANICDUSK

For one thing, you're admitting that you're not happy, Emma. That's the first step in freeing yourself, and becoming your own person.

Emma nods at the wisdom in his words.

EMMA

When you put it like that --

Emma suddenly reaches behind her, grabbing the broken glass

- and lunges with it at Mechanicdusk.

He recoils, flinches away

- but trips, falls. Emma runs for the stairs

- but he grabs her ankle, pulling her down, HARD.

She kicks out at him

- he shields his face.

She reaches behind, and STABS HIM IN THE SHOULDER with the broken glass.

He cries out in pain.

She gets to her feet, runs once more for the stairs

- but Mechanicdusk is too fast. He leaps up, grabs her, pins her to the wall.

There's a manic quality to his voice now, his madness unrestrained in a way that terrifies Emma.

MECHANICDUSK
Stupid bitch!

INT. VAN - IN MOTION - NIGHT

Jack and Miles drive the van down the street. A mix of excitement and nerves cover Jack's face.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

The van screeches to a halt in this nondescript residential area.

It's gone midnight, so it's quiet.

Jack jumps out of the van, scans for the address. Miles follows him.

And then he spots it: 1667 Addison Road, an ordinary home, well-maintained.

Jack goes to approach, and then has second thoughts.

He returns to the van, and retrieves a TIRE IRON. He wields it as he walks slowly to the front door

- and is surprised to find it unlocked, and slightly open.

He steps inside, warily. Followed by Miles.

INT. HOUSE - ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Jack enters. The lights are on in this furnished, but barely lived-in, house.

Jack holds the tire iron out in front of him.

And then he spots it - further along the hall: spots of BLOOD on the floor.

MILES
Shit...

JACK
No.

MILES

I'll check upstairs. You check the ground floor.

JACK

Okay...

Jack turns pale, fears the worst, and follows the trail of blood.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jack follows the blood in here.

On the kitchen table, a first-aid kit is open. There is blood everywhere

- and bloody rags and bandages. Somebody has performed some sort of emergency first-aid here.

There are also two familiar puppets, one green, one yellow.

Jack hears a noise from an adjoining room; a labored breathing.

Holding the tire iron aloft, he pushes open the door - upon which is a bloody handprint - leading to:

INT. HOUSE - UTILITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside, slumped against a wall, is Mechanicdusk, in a pool of his own blood.

He has torn open his top in order to self-suture the wound that Emma inflicted upon him.

He is weak, has lost a lot of blood, much of it still coating his clothes and body.

He's still wearing the mask and the voice changer. Jack is trembling with rage, trying to keep it in check until Emma is safe with him.

MECHANICDUSK

Made rather a mess of the rental place didn't I, Jack?

JACK

Where is she?

MECHANICDUSK

Your wife is quite the firebrand.
If only she had displayed some of
that strength when it came to you.

JACK

Tell me where she is, or I will
hurt you.

MECHANICDUSK

All in good time.

JACK

Now.

Jack goes to hit Mechanicdusk with the tire iron.

MECHANICDUSK

Uh-uh. I don't think so.

Jack realizes that Mechanicdusk has a gun pointed at him.

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

And this one's real, just in case
you were wondering.

Jack freezes.

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

Drop the iron. Quick as you like.

Jack does as he's told.

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

You've become quite the celebrity
today. Tell me - was it as fun as
it looked?

JACK

What do you think?

MECHANICDUSK

I think you're an incorrigible
narcissist who needed to be taught
a lesson the hard way.

JACK

It's not for you to decide what
other people need.

MECHANICDUSK

And it isn't for people like you to
exploit the goodwill of others.

JACK

People gave to us because they wanted to. No-one ever forced anybody.

MECHANICDUSK

Tell me - how many arguments did you stream? How many bad days? How long did it take in the morning to get that just-out-of-bed hair so perfectly tousled?

This strikes a chord with Jack. He feels seen, and he is ashamed.

MECHANICDUSK (CONT'D)

You claim to share your life, and yet you show just what you want the world to see. You're a fake. A phony. It makes me sick the way you treat your audience.

JACK

Emma and I love our audience.

MECHANICDUSK

You don't even love Emma.

JACK

What do you know? Why do you even care anyway? You could've given back to the world, to society. Instead... you spend your time doing this? You make me sick.

Mechanicdusk slowly removes his mask, revealing his face.

A tense moment passes before Justin speaks again.

JUSTIN

You make me sick.

JACK

Who the hell are you?

JUSTIN

Someone who knows what you truly are.

JACK

And what is that?

JUSTIN

A selfish fuck.

JACK

What?

JUSTIN

She doesn't deserve to be treated like a side character in your life. She is better than that.

JACK

You're clearly insane.

JUSTIN

Time to get down that high horse of yours.

Jack's fury builds, despite his shock.

JACK

You wanted to save her? By kidnapping her? Putting her life in danger?

JUSTIN

Oh, like you even care about Emma. This whole time, you've been lapping up the attention, getting off on your newfound fame!

JACK

That's a lie!

JUSTIN

Is it? Those stunts of yours went viral, Rainey. The world was watching, and you were eating it up like the narcissistic pig you are.

Shaking with rage, Jack launches himself at Justin, taking him to the ground.

JACK

You're dead! You hear me? Dead!

Justin laughs.

JACK (CONT'D)

You took my wife! My child! I'll kill you!

Just then...

Miles enters, pulling Jack back.

Jack blinks with surprise, takes a step backwards. Miles smiles at Jack.

MILES

Relax.

Miles goes to Justin.

MILES (CONT'D)

You okay?

JUSTIN

Yeah, just a bruise.

JACK

You know him?

MILES

Of course, Jack. Don't you? He's pretty famous for exposing the fakes like you.

It dawns.

JACK

CodeNameTerminator? You're with him?

JUSTIN

(smirks)

So you read the comments.

Miles shrugs.

MILES

I know what's best for my sister.

JACK

Why?

MILES

Because...

Miles retrieves a phone from his pocket.

MILES (CONT'D)

Emma was my sister before she was your wife. You took her away, and you ruined her. And that's why I approached him.

He points towards Justin. Jack scoffs at him.

JACK
I make her happy.

MILES
Do you? I want to show you
something before we go and see
Emma.

Miles tosses the phone to Jack.

MILES (CONT'D)
Press play on that. Quick as you
like.

Jack hesitates. Miles waggles the gun, urging him on.

Jack does as instructed.

On the screen, Jack watches old videos from their account.

In all the clips, Jack holds the phone and takes videos of himself.

Emma is always in the background.

Oftentimes she looks despondent and sad, lost or overshadowed.

It finally dawns on Jack.

He's been neglecting his wife. Everything really is about him.

MILES (CONT'D)
Do you know how hard it has been to
watch my beautiful, brilliant,
sister be overshadowed by your ego?
I don't want the same for her
child.

JACK
(quietly)
Our child.

MILES
The child you were ready to sell
for fame.

JACK
Why the whole drama of making me
run around the town when you could
have just asked me delete the
channel?

MILES

Oh... Then what would you have learnt from that? I needed you to see just hollow your whole persona and life is without her. Before it was too late. Before she gave birth to my nephew.

Something changes in Jack. He looks up at Miles.

JACK

The nephew which you'll never get to meet, because you'll be locked up.

Jack removes his phone from his jacket pocket

- Justin and Miles' face drops when he realizes that Jack has been streaming this whole time. Jack checks his watch, nods, impressed.

JACK (CONT'D)

Two hundred and fifty thousand followers in just under an hour. Not bad for a new account.

JUSTIN

No!

Jack looks into the camera.

JACK

Hey guys. If somebody would like to call the 911 for me, tell the cops I'm at the address in the description.

JUSTIN

No. No you cannot!

JACK

Doesn't taste so good, does it?

JUSTIN

It was supposed to be peaceful.

He looks at Miles.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

You promise there'd be no police, motherfucker.

He lunges at Miles.

MILES
Calm the fuck down.

But Justin is unhinged. He finally lets Miles go and runs out.

JUSTIN
(to Jack)
I was never going to hurt Emma.

With that, he disappears. Jack ends the live-stream, turns to walk out.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Emma is handcuffed, sat on the mattress, blindfolded.

Jack sees her. Rushes to her aid. Kneels down and removes the blindfold.

The moment Emma sees that it's him, she starts to cry.

There's a key on the floor. Jack grabs it and undoes the handcuffs. They embrace, both crying openly.

EMMA
It's some boy who hates famous
people...

JACK
I know. And Miles.

Emma is taken aback.

EMMA
Miles?

JACK
Yup.

EMMA
I didn't know, I promise.

JACK
I know you didn't. Come on.

He helps her to her feet.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Miles is slumped at the table.

Jack emerges from the basement, helping Emma.
Neither look at him, as they head for the door.

MILES

So you're gonna go back to that
shitty life, Emma? With your shitty
husband. You said you hate it.

Jack turns to face Miles.

JACK

You are right, Miles. I was a
shitty husband. But not anymore.
(looks at Emma)
I won't fuck this up, I promise.

SIRENS WAIL in the background.

MILES

He is lying, you know that. He
would always be an attention whore.
He'll make you build another
channel. Ruin your life.

Emma stares at Jack, thinking.

JACK

No more. I promise.

Jack and Emma exit, leaving Miles there.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Months later.

Emma is in bed. She's covered in sweat and exhausted.

Jack sits next to her.

A baby cries.

A NURSE walks over with A NEWBORN. She hands the Newborn to
Emma.

JACK

Would you mind taking a pic for us?

NURSE

I can take a video if you've got a
phone?

Jack and Emma exchange a look. Then:

JACK
Photo is fine.

Jack hands her a disposable camera. She studies it.

Jack leans in so he, Emma, and the newborn are all in the picture together.

Emma and Jack smile.

The Nurse snaps the picture.

FADE OUT.