

Black Mirror

"Hacks"

written by

ML Kennedy

5842 S. Harper Ave, Chicago IL 60637
773.667.7981
Wbxylo@gmail.com

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

A chubby MAN with thinning hair in his late thirties is dining with an attractive, fashionable WOMAN in her early thirties. He adjust his glasses a few times and smiles at her, but she is paying all of her attention to her phone. The phone's screen is slightly cracked. He practices a few cheesy variations of his smile until she notices him.

WOMAN

Oh. I'm sorry, William.

WILLIAM

Don't worry about it, Bridget. I-

BRIDGET

No, it's rude. I'm going to be sociable. I'm putting it away. See?

She does that thing, first making a big magician style gesture of holding the phone in the air before putting the phone away in her purse. A WAITRESS comes by with a small black square about the size of an ashtray. William pulls his phone out of his pocket and taps it to the square; it makes a satisfying BLOOP.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

You know you don't have to pay.

WILLIAM

I know. I'm old fashioned, though.

BRIDGET

I was the one who asked you out. I feel a little guilty now like, "hey, go buy me dinner."

WILLIAM

Don't even worry about it.

BRIDGET

Well, I wasn't going to worry.

William looks at his phone and plays with the screen for a bit.

WILLIAM

See, now I feel like a hypocrite. You put your phone away, and here I am on mine.

BRIDGET
 (mimicking William)
 Don't even worry about it.

WILLIAM
 I just, well, I need to do Sumptin.

BRIDGET
 Oh, really? What do you need to do?

WILLIAM
 Sumptin.

A beat.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 Sumptin is the name of the app. I think it's supposed to be like "consumption". But they were cute, I guess and decided to get rid of the con and the o? So, Sumptin is the name of the app and what is the name of the guy on second base.

BRIDGET
 I don't know.

WILLIAM
 Third base!

A beat.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 (embarrassed)
 I just, I do this consumer app thing. It's like a nervous tick now.

BRIDGET
 How does it work?

WILLIAM
 So, you just scan everything you buy and you collect points.

BRIDGET
 What do you mean everything? Did you scan your tea?

WILLIAM
 Well, everything, but not you know, everything. A lot of places, it just automatically uploads after I tap my phone to pay.
 (MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

If this place were a Pizza Castle, I could just tap it and it would know large pineapple and Canadian bacon with a 2 liter. Here's not a big chain. So, I just tell it I spent \$80 on "general food". Like, if you're at a mom and pop shop they're probably not in the system. So, then you select the store or a store type from a menu of where you were shopping, scan the UPCs and then say how much you spent. This is boring to me, and I'm the one doing it.

BRIDGET

Well, what if you buy a piece of fruit?

WILLIAM

Some fruit has a code in the sticker. Other things you can open a menu and select the fruit you are buying from that. I usually guesstimate the pounds. Same thing if I use cash for something like for gas or for coffee. There is a little button where I can say that I bought 10 gallons of, you know, coffee.

William smiles and tilts his head. Bridget listens intently.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Sorry, lame joke.

BRIDGET

I just assumed you were buying those big boxes for the office. Like how you bought coffee and donuts last Friday.

WILLIAM

Yeah. Right.

BRIDGET

You sounded weird there. Why did you sound weird?

WILLIAM

Um, actually, that was Ben. The other IT guy. Ben is the guy that gets the coffee for the office. It happens all the time.

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

He's just a little balder, and a little fatter... and a little shorter... and a little older.

BRIDGET

Oh, so I got the good one.

WILLIAM

Ben's getting married, anyway.

A moment of shifting in chairs. William appears to be reflecting on the last thing he said.

BRIDGET

So, why do you do this something?

William resists the urge to correct her pronunciation.

WILLIAM

Well, you get points, and there's a leader board. You can store up the points and get stuff too.

BRIDGET

Good stuff?

WILLIAM

Well, it's basically the equivalent of Chuck E. Cheese prizes for adults. If you scrimp and save, you might someday be able to afford the model rocket or the Technodrome, but you're probably just gonna cash in when you have enough points for something that isn't completely useless.

BRIDGET

Like?

WILLIAM

Well, for me it's earbuds. I basically use my points to get a new pair of earbuds every three months, which is good because they only last about three months.

BRIDGET

Oh. It's a shame you don't use the earbuds for the app. Then there would be some sort of irony there like some sort of *Gift of the Magi* shit.

WILLIAM

Well, I assure you I'm not selling my hair for anybody; I don't think anybody's buying.

BRIDGET

That's funny.

William smiles half-heartedly.

The waitress comes by, and picks up the box.

WAITRESS

Thanks so much you guys! Have a great one.

She leaves.

WILLIAM

This has been nice.

BRIDGET

You want to go to a party?

INT. A CAR

Bridget is sitting in the traditional driver's seat, but there is no steering wheel visible. William is squirming in his seat next to her. We see him pull a tiny screwdriver out of his pocket. From their P.O.V. we see that the windshield is playing a commercial featuring a beautiful mountain view with the word Wyoming in a glossy, slightly beveled typeface.

VOICE FROM WINDSHIELD

Visit scenic Wyoming this summer and you'll be saying "Why-not-oming?"

WILLIAM

So, how do you know this, um, fella?

William takes off his glasses and tightens the screw.

BRIDGET

Steve? He's my boyfriend.

WILLIAM

Oh, um...

BRIDGET

That was my joke. See, I can joke. I'm funny.

WILLIAM

Right.

He puts the glasses back on.

BRIDGET

We just fuck.

WILLIAM

Oh?

BRIDGET

(laughing)

You're so easy!

WILLIAM

Like Sunday morning.

BRIDGET

Yeah, I guess. Why do you ask?

William stands up slightly to put the tiny screwdriver into his pants pocket.

WILLIAM

Uh, no, it's just, um-

BRIDGET

Hey, so, if I were to pay for this ride, would you still do the app?

WILLIAM

Oh, I'm paying.

BRIDGET

(annoyed)

Yeah, I know, but-

WILLIAM

Oh, I'm sorry. That was rude. If you were paying, it wouldn't count. I mean, unless you were part of my household. I would have to register you.

BRIDGET

How romantic.

WILLIAM

Isn't it? Since I'm paying for it, I do add you as a fellow shopper, non-household member. I did that for the restaurant, too.

BRIDGET
So, we've taken our workplace
relationship to the next level. The
co-shopper, non-household level.

WILLIAM
I think we should file that with
HR.

Bridget laughs politely.

They sit in silence.

BRIDGET
So.

Silence.

WILLIAM
So.

Silence.

BRIDGET
Tell me, what's your deepest,
darkest, dirtiest secret?

WILLIAM
Oh, um, I like rom-coms.

BRIDGET
That's your secret? I don't know if
that's very deep, dark or dirty.

WILLIAM
Oh yeah. Maybe it's more of a
guilty pleasure than a deep, dark
secret.

BRIDGET
Yeah.

WILLIAM
I guess I'm kinda a boring guy.

BRIDGET
Nothing wrong with that.

WILLIAM
Hnh.

BRIDGET
So, rom-coms. Wouldn't have guessed
that.

WILLIAM

Oh, well they're terrible and the people in them are terrible to each other and I love them. It's all scheming and lying and nonsense to trick people into falling in love with you. And in the end, it almost always works! What about you?

BRIDGET

I don't really watch many movies.

WILLIAM

No, I mean your dirty, deep, dark secret.

BRIDGET

Oh, I don't give away secrets on a first date. I'm mysterious.

EXT. HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

William and Bridget stand by a front door. STEVE opens the door. Steve has a large beard is tall and muscular. He wears a fitted shirt through which you can see the outline of his abdominal muscles.

BRIDGET

Steve!

STEVE

Come on in. And you are?

WILLIAM

William.

STEVE

Are you a Will or a Bill?

BRIDGET

He's a William.

STEVE

(derisively)
William?

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE

It's a party, sort of. There is only one other guest: GRACE, a 25-year-old woman with dark, mussed hair who is dressed in pajama bottoms and a tank top. Grace is playing with her phone.

She is sprawled across all three cushions of a large couch. William and Bridget sit quietly on a love seat. In the background, we see Steve in a nearby kitchen pulling appetizers out of the oven.

WILLIAM
Steve seems nice.

BRIDGET
Really?

GRACE
(to her phone)
Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit! Go!
GO! Ha-HA!

WILLIAM
(whispers to Bridget)
Do, uh, you know her?

GRACE
Fucker!

BRIDGET
That's Grace.

GRACE
(to phone)
Aw, you bitch! You fucking bitch!

BRIDGET
I think she's so pretty, don't you?

Steve enters with a tray full of meatballs and sets it on a coffee table. The tray has a red logo and the word WARATAHS written across it. The coffee table looks to have been clawed up by a large animal of some sort.

WILLIAM
Sorry, if we are early.

STEVE
You are perfectly on time. Those dipshits are always 20 minutes late. So, that means that you all get first crack at the food. Don't be shy.

Grace grabs a meatball without losing focus on her phone.

BRIDGET
We just ate.

WILLIAM
 (with a mouthful of food)
 Just ate.

STEVE
 (To Bridget)
 See? Big Willie's not shy.
 (To William)
 Now that has no bread crumbs, no
 filler, no garbage in there,
 whatsoever.

WILLIAM
 These are good. I'm glad there's
 no, um, garbage.

BRIDGET
 Do you have to scan that?

WILLIAM
 Hopefully, Steve isn't charging.

STEVE
 What're you guys talking about?

WILLIAM
 Sumptin.

STEVE
 You trying to be funny?

WILLIAM
 Oh, no. Sumptin, it's just this
 consumer panel app thing that I
 use. I scan everything I buy and
 they put it in a database that's
 like the Nielsen ratings but for,
 you know, groceries and underpants,
 or whatever.

STEVE
 So, you are surveilling yourself.

WILLIAM
 I-

STEVE
 For them.

BRIDGET
 Oh, leave him alone.

WILLIAM
 I guess. In a manner of-

STEVE

No manner about it, Bill. You've wiretapped yourself. So not only are you carrying around a GPS tracker everywhere you go, you're reporting in on everything you've bought.

BRIDGET

Stop.

STEVE

No, that's some bullshit. What was the last thing you logged in?

WILLIAM

I paid at the restaurant. Oh, and the ride here. I always fill in the stuff right away. You get more points if you do it right away. I'm pretty high on the leaderboard. You know, for my spending bracket.

STEVE

Big brother doesn't even have to watch you man. You're watching yourself. And they've got your head so fucked up that you're happy about it.

GRACE

(to phone)

FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU IN THE FACE AND NECK!

WILLIAM

I'm not terribly important. Big brother can watch me, Kid Sister, My Buddy, Creepy Uncle, the whole crew.

STEVE

This is funny to you?

WILLIAM

It's just that I'm not really worried about things like that. I mean, am I supposed to be worried about the government or some big evil corporations-

STEVE

One in the goddamned same.

BRIDGET
I'm sorry I brought this up. Can we talk about, literally, anything else?

WILLIAM
I would be-

STEVE
(to Bridget)
Agnes, I thought you said you were bringing a man over here. I don't see a man sitting here.

WILLIAM
In the office, she goes by Bridget.

GRACE
(to phone)
God-fucking-damnit! Steve, how do I kill the purple wyverns?

BRIDGET
My name *is* Bridget. Agnes is just something Steve calls me when he wants to be annoying. Isn't that right?

Steve smiles.

STEVE
Smoke grenade the room, then crowbar.

Bridget thinks Steve is saying this to her before realizing that he is instructing Grace's game.

WILLIAM
Agnes?

GRACE
Why can't I just shoot them?

BRIDGET
It's a whole story.

STEVE
Cuz bullets don't work on them.

WILLIAM
I like stories.

GRACE
Stupid. Uh, fucking finally.

STEVE

Not everything is for you, though,
is it Billiam?

WILLIAM

I guess not. I'm thinking, um,
should I go? Maybe I should go.
I've got-

GRACE

Fucking dumb!

STEVE

I got you pegged already, Billy.
You are a classic dopamine addict.

WILLIAM

I never-

STEVE

Not drugs. You're too much of a
pussy for that. You see, you get
your little rush of dopamine when
you use your tiny hand computer and
get your points. You get a little
rush of dopamine when you eat that
candy and soda pop and whatever
else keeps you so damned fat. You
probably watch the same garbage TV
that all those other little addicts
binge on, then you go and post
about it online. Then, you probably
get another little rush when some
other shithead gives you a virtual
thumbs up for your opinion about
garbage.

WILLIAM

Guilty.

William stands up and walks toward the door.

STEVE

I bet you jerk off every day. Well,
if you can get it up every day!

The door opens and five people enter. Most are wearing track
pants. William awkwardly shuffles between them, apologizing
as he leaves.

EXT. HOUSE -EVENING

William is walking toward the sidewalk, visibly upset, when Bridget catches up to him.

WILLIAM
I'm sorry. You don't have to go-

He takes off his glasses.

BRIDGET
No. Fuck that guy.

WILLIAM
(holding up his glasses)
These are shit.

William once again tightens the screw of his glasses with his tiny screwdriver.

BRIDGET
I was invited a while ago and only went because I thought you and he would get along.

WILLIAM
Really?

BRIDGET
Well, both of you really like rugby, and I thought-

WILLIAM
Well-

BRIDGET
Well what?

William chuckles.

WILLIAM
That's Ben. Ben is the rugby guy. He's just a little sportier than me, too.

BRIDGET
(Laughing)
I'm sorry.

William walks to the side of the road. Aside from the street names, there are no signs on any of the visible roads.

Bridget follows and stands next to William, unsure what to do. Bridget looks into her purse.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
You want an energy drink? I stole
some cans from Steve.

WILLIAM
Naw. Thanks.

BRIDGET
Yeah. It's pretty nasty, but I
wanted to get something out of that
party. You know?

Bridget opens a can and drinks.

WILLIAM
I ordered an IP. It's already in
club mode, so I can add you in.

BRIDGET
Thanks!

WILLIAM
I just need your fingerprint here.

She puts her right index finger on his phone screen.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Now, say your full name.

BRIDGET
Bridget Jessica Smith.

WILLIAM
You're official!

BRIDGET
Thanks! I don't know IP. Is that a
new one?

WILLIAM
Relatively. I think it stands for
Instant Passenger.

BRIDGET
That's a terrible name.

WILLIAM
(smiles)
It is. It's no Bridget Jessica
Smith.

BRIDGET
Come up with a better name with me.

WILLIAM

Okay. Wait, a better name for you
or the app?

She hits him playfully.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

App it is.

BRIDGET

Pick-you-ups.

WILLIAM

That's terrible. Carmooch?

BRIDGET

Sounds dirty. Ghost ride?

WILLIAM

Too scary. Two Live Cruise Control?

BRIDGET

I know that's a reference to
something, but I have literally no
idea what.

We see a large van pull up next to William and Bridget. There is an outline of a driver's side door, but it looks to be welded shut. The car is smooth, purple and plastic even where the windshield and windows ought to be. Double doors open on the curbside, creating a large opening like an airport shuttle. Inside the van, we see a YOUNG BLONDE WOMAN in a comic book t-shirt with her back to where the driver would be and THREE WOMEN FROM A PARTY sitting next to each other on the side opposite the doors. Each of the women is dressed somewhere between business casual and cocktail casual, and each one is carrying a tiny blue paper bag with ribbon around it. Flat screen monitors are located where the windows ought to be.

INT. VAN- NIGHT

MALE VOICE #1 FROM SCREEN

Was I wearing pants when I walked
out here?

FEMALE VOICE #1 FROM SCREEN

Oh, honey.

MALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN

Kale-O cereal is part of your
complete balanced breakfast.

BRIDGET

Hey, listen. I'm sorry, you've had kind of a shitty night.

WILLIAM

Don't worry about it.

BRIDGET

Steve's a jerk. He's pretty much always been a jerk.

WILLIAM

Yeah.

BRIDGET

You okay?

WILLIAM

When I was in junior high, maybe even high school, I remember thinking 'man, why do all the women go for jerks?' I didn't buy a trilby or post men's rights Tumblr videos or anything. But I remember talking to an adult; I don't remember why even. You know, I don't remember if she was a counselor or the art teacher. She asked the question, "what makes them jerks?"

BRIDGET

What did you say?

WILLIAM

I think I just stammered.

FEMALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN

We have arrived at Shay-ron stop.

The van came to a stop. The doors opened and the three women stood up.

PARTY WOMAN #1

Have fun, you two!

PARTY WOMAN #2

Shh!

They exited and the doors closed. The van is moving again. Our couple sits in silence for a moment. Then, William notices something.

WILLIAM
They left a canvas bag.

BRIDGET
I'm going to check it out.

WILLIAM
Just leave it.

BRIDGET
What if there is cool stuff in there?

WILLIAM
Then they'll want it back.

BRIDGET
If they wanted it back, they wouldn't have left it.

BLONDE WOMAN
(She has a British accent)
She's right. If it's good, split half with me.

Bridget checks the bag and stares at it.

BLONDE WOMAN (CONT'D)
Anything good?

We see these things as Bridget describes them.

BRIDGET
A ball of string, clothespins, and a ziplock bag full of rice.

BLONDE WOMAN
Don't need clothespins. String or rice, string or rice?

BRIDGET
Have both.

Bridget tosses the bag of rice and the ball of string to the woman. She places both in her deceptively large bag.

WILLIAM
(checking phone)
It looks like you're next.

FEMALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN
Our next stop will be, Brid-jet.

BRIDGET
Cool. So, did you ever figure out
what made those guys jerks?

WILLIAM
Probably ten years later.

Bridget laughs.

BRIDGET
Sorry.

WILLIAM
They were jerks because they were
forward and direct. They wanted to
get girls, and I wanted to get
girls. They went up and talked to
girls and told them they wanted to
go out. I stayed in my room,
couldn't talk to anybody, made
pedestals for fictional versions of
the girls and then, at most, if I
could get up the nerve, I would try
to be their best friend.

BRIDGET
So, they were jerks because they
had girlfriends and you had girls
who were friends.

WILLIAM
Pretty much.

BRIDGET
And they were honest about wanting
sex.

WILLIAM
And I took the garden path for a
fantasy.

BRIDGET
Well, what would one of your rom-
com heroes do?

The van stops with a slight jerk.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
Are we at my place already?

The lights inside the van turn off, and we see our couple and
blonde woman by the light of the error screen and the small,
glowing lights on the floor.

FEMALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN
Error. We apologize for any
inconvenience. We apologize for
this error. We shall be back online
shortly.

MALE VOICE #3 FROM SCREEN
Attention passengers: for your
safety and convenience, we ask that
you remain seated until the ride
resumes. Stay clear of the vehicle
door. Do not lean on the vehicle
door. Do not attempt to open the
vehicle door. Passengers who are
found in violation of these rules
will forfeit their fare, and may be
barred from future rides.

BLONDE WOMAN
(mocking)
Sounds serious.

WILLIAM
This has happened to me before.
It's usually only like two minutes.

MALE VOICE #3 FROM SCREEN
We know you have many choices in
transportation, and we appreciate
your patronage. Our staff is hard
at work ensuring-

BRIDGET
So, tell me. Is this the best date
you've ever had? Or the bestest?

WILLIAM
I've had worse.

BRIDGET
Me too.

WILLIAM
My prom date threw up on my tux.

BRIDGET
She did not.

WILLIAM
She did. When I went to get my
house keys, when I went home, there
were still some chunks in my
suitcoat pocket.

BRIDGET

She at least go home with you, and pop your cherry in that proud high school tradition?

WILLIAM

She left the prom with somebody else. The rental company charged me \$200 to clean the tux.

BRIDGET

Well, my prom date pushed me out of a moving car when I refused to give him road head.

WILLIAM

Jesus!

BRIDGET

That's not true. Well, actually, it is true, but that happened to my cousin. I shouldn't even joke about that. That was really gross.

The lights turn back on, and the vehicle starts moving again.

MALE VOICE #4 FROM SCREEN

I used to think that Wyoming was the middle of nowhere, but after-

BLONDE WOMAN

Fucking finally.

WILLIAM

See. That was like exactly two minutes.

BRIDGET

If that.

They sit quietly.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Feels kind of tense in here, huh?

FEMALE VOICE #3 FROM SCREEN

My name is Yolanda Evans with your Instant Passenger 30 second news update. This thirty second news update is brought to you by Pizza Castle, where you can find the new Buffa-loaded Pizza, the only Pizza with all white meat Buffalo chicken strips baked right in the crust.

(MORE)

FEMALE VOICE #3 FROM SCREEN (CONT'D)

Get your Buffa-loaded Pizza now,
only at the Pizza Castle! Still no
motive given for the attack that
left ten dead and forty-five
wounded last week in Wyoming. With
your Instant Passenger 30 second
news update, I'm Yolanda Evans.

Bridget pulls out her phone and opens a GPS application. A map appears on the cracked screen. A large circle appears over the map, with the message LOCATION NOT AVAILABLE.

WILLIAM

So, uh, you got a favorite color?

BRIDGET

What?

WILLIAM

Nothing.

The van jerks to a stop. The lights go out again, and the error screen reappears.

FEMALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN

Error. We apologize for any
inconvenience. We apologize for
this error. We shall be back online
shortly.

MALE VOICE #3 FROM SCREEN

Attention passengers: for your
safety and convenience, we ask that
you remain seated until the ride
resumes. Stay clear of the vehicle
door. Do not lean on the vehicle
door. Do not attempt to open the
vehicle door. Passengers who are
found in violation of these rules-

The screens cut out once again. Only the tiny floor lights remain on.

BLONDE WOMAN

Ugh, for fuck's sake! Why did I
take the club? I swear I hit the
regular button. It was only three
dollars difference.

WILLIAM

This has happened to me a couple of
times before. We are usually only
stopped for. . . ninety seconds.

BRIDGET

Hnnnh.

WILLIAM

Tops.

The screens turn back on and Bridget looks at William with a crooked eyebrow.

FEMALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN

(The voice is doubled with
a slight delay)

Error. We apologize for any
inconvenience. We apologize for
this error. We shall be back online
shortly.

FEMALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN (CONT'D)

(said at same time as last
dialog)

Error. We apologize for all
inconvenience. We apologize for
these errors. We are working to fix
this problem shortly.

WILLIAM

That's unsettling.

BLONDE WOMAN

Oh, good. You heard it like that
too.

The screen crackles.

FEMALE VOICE #3 FROM SCREEN

My name is Yolanda Evans with your
Instant Passenger 30 second news
update. This thirty second news
update is brought to you by Spurt,
the new zero protein energy drink
from the makers of Kale-Os. When
that project is due in 30 minutes,
don't hurt yourself, Spurt
yourself! Now without any of that
protein to drag you down. Sad news
out of Chicago today as the Shedd
Aquarium bids a fond farewell to
Aldo, the famous Portuguese man
o'war. As many know, Aldo was not a
single creature, but rather a
colonial organism made up of
several different animals working
together harmoniously. Foul play
has not been ruled out.

(MORE)

FEMALE VOICE #3 FROM SCREEN (CONT'D)
With your Instant Passenger 30
second news update, I'm Yolanda
Evans.

Bridget involuntarily leans to the right in her seat.

BRIDGET
Wait. Are we even stopped? It
doesn't feel like we've stopped.

BLONDE WOMAN
Fuck it. I'm calling.

WILLIAM
You could probably just-

She waves her left arm at him like a cat batting at a feather
on a string. With her right, she holds her telephone.

BRIDGET
Are we going faster? It feels like
we are going faster.

They all shift in their seats as though the van took a sudden
left turn.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
Oh, I hate this.

A bump lifts all three passengers slightly off their seats.
William looks for a seatbelt that isn't there.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
This doesn't feel at all right.

BLONDE WOMAN
(To Bridget)
They say that we are still at that
last stop.
(To phone)
Your fucking sensors are wrong
then!

WILLIAM
(Checking his phone)
The app says we are still at that
last stop too.

BRIDGET
The last blackout or the baby
shower women?

WILLIAM

The women stop. How did you know they were going to a baby shower?

BRIDGET

They had shower favors, and the string and such are for those stupid shower games. You know, where they humiliate the woman by trying to guess how fat has gotten?

WILLIAM

Oh.

BRIDGET

Bigger things to worry about now, William.

The blonde woman covers part of the phone with her hand.

BLONDE WOMAN

(to William)

Hey, you, can you see if you can turn the monitors to camera screen mode?

(to Bridget)

See if you can get that one to satellite view.

William pushes a button by the monitor behind the blond woman, and Bridget adjust the monitor closest to herself. From William's monitor, we see that A LARGE TRUCK is heading right for them, barely avoiding a crash at the last moment.

WILLIAM

Jesus!

CUT TO:

Bridget's monitor.

FADE TO:

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

We see the van driving much faster than the other vehicles on the road.

The van has veered across double yellow lines into oncoming traffic.

The other cars move away in automated harmony, deftly avoiding dozens of collisions and returning to their appropriate places on the road without missing a beat.

The van jumps over a median. It rocks back and forth, and comes to a screeching halt turning 270 degrees. It ends up sideways in the middle of the road. Cars pass it on both sides, efficiently zippering from four lanes into two.

INT. VAN- NIGHT

William is checking on Bridget and Bridget is checking on William. They are slightly disheveled. The Blonde woman is still on her phone.

BLONDE WOMAN

(Putting her phone away)

They said to stay in the car.

BRIDGET

Well, I'm in no hurry to jump out into traffic.

WILLIAM

Well, I mean, the sensors in all the other cars should make it so that you won't get hit. I mean-

BRIDGET

Yeah. These machines are 100 percent reliable.

WILLIAM

Well, yeah, I see what you mean there.

BLONDE WOMAN

Anyway, they say to stay in the car and they are going to reboot it from there. I, for one, am going to listen to them, because I think that will make it easier to sue them.

WILLIAM

Stay in the car.

BLONDE WOMAN

And don't lean on the door, and stand clear of the vehicle door, and all that other bullshit.

Bridget has moved to the furthest back seat in the van and his holding her head.

WILLIAM

You okay.

BRIDGET

This is my fault.

WILLIAM

No, don't be silly. I booked this. If this is anybody's fault, it's mine. I mean, this is way more my fault than yours.

BLONDE WOMAN

Hell no.

(to the ceiling)

This is not at all my fault! For whosoever is watching and or listening to the surveillance in this van, I, Charlie Starling admit to no wrong doing, and fully implicate the Instant Passenger corporation in this colossal goatfuck.

(to Bridget)

I'm Charlie, bee tea dubs.

BRIDGET

Bridget.

WILLIAM

William. So how long did they say it would be?

CHARLIE

They said five to ten minutes. So, probably twenty minutes.

BRIDGET

You're giving these guys a 1 star review, right?

CHARLIE

Fuck yeah.

WILLIAM

Probably.

CARTOON BEETLE FROM SCREEN

Hey kids!

KID VOICE #1 FROM SCREEN
It's Becky the beetle!

CARTOON BEETLE FROM SCREEN
You're damn right! I'm here to tell
you about my new friends from
Entomo!

KID VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN
You've got friends?

CARTOON BEETLE FROM SCREEN
Why everybody should have friends!
Meet Corky the Roach, he can fly!
There's sexy Robert, the ladybug!
And my newest friend is Maggie!
She's a fly larva!

The monitors all go out and our three characters sit in the relative darkness for a moment. Various loading screens appear on all the monitors and the lights flicker back on.

BRIDGET
Faster than expected.

The monitors flash the company logo and make a satisfying bloop noise.

FEMALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN
Welcome to Instant Passenger. Enjoy
the ride!

OLDER MALE VOICE FROM SCREEN
I don't have to go to the drug
store to get my catheters now. I-

Charlie's phone rings. She answers it.

CHARLIE
Uh-huh. Okay. That's a great start.
(Whispering)
Free ride.

WILLIAM
Great?

Charlie pulls a tiny pen and a tiny notebook out of her purse, and flips through a few pages.

CHARLIE
(To phone)
Yes, can I have your name? Cool.
Is there a case number or anything
like that? Halo, alpha-

WILLIAM
 (To Bridget)
 Why did you say this was all your
 fault? Guilty conscience?

Charlie nearly falls out of her chair. Bridget and William
 smash into each other.

CHARLIE
 Fucking hell!

BRIDGET
 Can you turn the monitor back to
 camera screen? I'd like to see my
 death coming?

WILLIAM
 Dear god, why?

William complies with her request. Instead of the road camera
 view, we see a MAN IN A GORILLA MASK sitting in a desk chair.
 He's wearing a pink shirt turned inside out; we can faintly
 see the outline of a logo.

GORILLA MASK
 Uh, hey guys.

BRIDGET
 Is this really happening?

CHARLIE
 The fuck?

GORILLA MASK
 Listen, my son kinda-sorta hacked
 your van. He's a good kid-

CHARLIE
 Of course he is.

GORILLA MASK
 But he overheard me talk about how
 my dad taught me how to drive and
 how driving was really important to
 grandpa.

His mask has slumped, and he adjust the eyeholes with his
 right hand. We see that he is wearing a thick silver ring
 with an orange stone.

GORILLA MASK (CONT'D)
 He fucked up. He'll admit it, I'll
 admit it. He just wanted to really
 drive a real car.

CHARLIE

Fuck off.

GORILLA MASK

Listen, I love my son. So, I've got to destroy this evidence. And by evidence, I mean this van.

CHARLIE

The fuck you are.

WILLIAM

Relax. Relax.

GORILLA MASK

I'm going to let you guys go. I'm going to pull over, open the door, then drive this thing off a bridge and sploosh, right into the drink.

BRIDGET

The drink?

GORILLA MASK

They don't reinforce the guardrails like they used to, because, you know, nobody ever hits them.

CHARLIE

Yeah, fucking fascinating.

BRIDGET

(to Charlie)

Shut. Up.

(to Gorilla Mask)

Thank you. We won't tell anybody.

GORILLA MASK

Oh, yeah. That was the condition I was going to give. You guys, just, you know, chill. If anybody asks, just say the van pulled over, and the door opened, and you stepped out. All that will be true, so it won't even be a lie. So, can you all just promise me that this is the story? No gorillas need be harmed in the making of tonight?

WILLIAM

Yes. We all promise.

GORILLA MASK

What about you, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Fine. I fucking promise.

GORILLA MASK

Well, great. There's no place to drop you off here. But it'll just be a few more minutes.

The screen goes dark for a moment, then cuts to a glowing ad for Wyoming.

WILLIAM

I mean, I am in no hurry to tell people I was kidnapped by a monkey.

BRIDGET

What could we even tell the cops?

CHARLIE

Fuck this guy! We can tell a lot. They got to be local, because they had to have tampered with the van itself. The monkey was wearing a class ring just like my mailman. He went to St. Vincent high school, which closed like twenty years ago.

WILLIAM

How much time do you spend talking with the mailman?

CHARLIE

And his shirt was inside out, but I could tell it was from the Hell Skate roller derby team.

BRIDGET

Hold on. How did he know your name was Charlie?

WILLIAM

Oh, shit. He's been listeni-

Gorilla Mask reappears onscreen.

CHARLIE

Aw hell.

GORILLA MASK

What the fuck is wrong with you people?

(MORE)

GORILLA MASK (CONT'D)

I'm trying to help you and keep my son out of prison, and you idiots can't even pretend to keep a promise long enough to save your own lives? Listen, I'm sorry I have to do this, guys.

BRIDGET

You don't have to do anything!

WILLIAM

She's right! The power is in your hands!

CHARLIE

Listen, since you're going to fucking kill us anyway, you can probably take off the stupid fucking monkey mask.

GORILLA MASK

Gorillas are apes.

The screen goes dark.

BRIDGET

(Yelling at Charlie)

You stupid fucking bitch!

(To the van's ceiling)

Mr. Ape! You can let me go! I'm not telling anybody! I don't know anything about roller derby!

CHARLIE

Fuck that guy! I'm calling the police!

BRIDGET

That guy holds our lives in his hands.

WILLIAM

I don't have a signal.

CHARLIE

I did a minute ago.

Charlie scrambles around the van, holding her phone in various positions.

BRIDGET

A man dressed like a gorilla holds our lives in his hands. Paws?

(MORE)

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Hands? They have hands for feet,
too, right?

CHARLIE

Fuck him. We'll figure something
out.

BRIDGET

Such as?

The van rocks, presumably from a fast turn.

WILLIAM

This spy show I used to watch as a
kid said a car has three vulnerable
spots. The driver, the engine and
the tires.

CHARLIE

Hour long action shows of the '00s,
that's what we're going with now?
I'm sure it's a wealth of factually
accurate information.

BRIDGET

There's no driver. Can we get to
the engine?

WILLIAM

Not quickly enough, I don't think.

CHARLIE

Tires are out. Even if we could
find a gun, grab a gun, open the
door and shoot them out, then we'd
just crash.

BRIDGET

But at least not into the, uh,
drink.

CHARLIE

The drink. That's another thing we
know about monkey-man. He's a
fucking idiot.

WILLIAM

What about the driver?

CHARLIE

Are you dumb, too?

WILLIAM

The problem isn't that there is no driver-

BRIDGET

It's that there *is* a driver when there shouldn't be.

CHARLIE

I listened to a podcast about how the companies can access these vans through something like a sim card on the old mobile phones.

BRIDGET

Okay.

WILLIAM

So, we just remove the sim card, and the van goes back on autopilot.

CHARLIE

Exactly.

A beat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Probably.

BRIDGET

Won't the van crash without instructions?

WILLIAM

No. The van can drive itself. It just gets directions from the company via satellite, and the card just tells the company which van is which.

CHARLIE

We pull the card out and it should just drive to the closest recharging station for repair.

WILLIAM

Ideally.

BRIDGET

Ideally?

WILLIAM

This isn't my field.

CHARLIE

I vote team: not dying. Go nuts!

BRIDGET

Well, where is the card?

All three look at each other and pause. They search behind the monitors, under the chairs, under the seat cushions. William examines the roof for an access panel, Bridget does the same for the wall, and Charlie does the same for the floor.

They search and search getting progressively more desperate.

Bridget shakes her head at William.

William looks at Charlie.

CHARLIE

How good can you swim?

BRIDGET

That's not funny.

WILLIAM

Lets just keep looking.

They do that thing. After a while, Charlie seems to have found something behind the driver wall monitor.

CHARLIE

I think I've got something!

BRIDGET

I already checked there!

CHARLIE

There a hidden panel here. Help me slide it!

William helps her do that thing. A section of the wall about the size of a piece of printer paper has shifted somewhat. William looks around the edges and discovers-

WILLIAM

There are screws.

BRIDGET

Screwdriver in your pocket!
Screwdriver in your pocket!

WILLIAM

(to Charlie)
I have a screwdriver in my pocket.

William removes the tiny screwdriver from his pocket. It's tiny end just fits in one section of the Philips head holes. The first screw is removed and falls to the floor.

One more to go.

He places the driver to the screw and turns. The small plastic handle of the screwdriver splits in two and falls to the floor.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

This is not my day.

BRIDGET

Can you still turn it?

CHARLIE

I would like to know that as well.

William tries, with his sweaty hands unable to grasp the smooth metal handle tightly enough.

WILLIAM

I can't get a good enough grip. Are there any pliers or anything else I could use to grab this?

William tries to grip the screwdriver between his teeth and move his head. It is not a particularly good plan.

The van is now jostling even more.

BRIDGET

Charlie. Give me that rice I gave you.

Charlie tosses the bag to Bridget. Bridget pours the bag over the seat.

CHARLIE

I was going to eat that. I mean, if we live.

Bridget spreads the rice over the seat with her hands. She finds something and shuffles over to William.

BRIDGET

Here, use this.

She hands him a bobby pin.

WILLIAM

I'll try it.

William attempts to grip the tiny screwdriver with the bobby pin as though it were a tiny pair of pliers. It is not very effective.

CHARLIE

Oh this is fucking painful. Don't use it on the screwdriver. Use it as the screwdriver.

William considers this thing. He bends the bobby pin at a ninety degree angle.

There is a small rubber tip at the tip of each end.

He sticks the bobby pin between his incisors and strips the tip off.

The stripped end fits into the screw hole, and William turns the bent end until the screw comes off.

He rattles the panel back and forth a bit until he is able to pull it loose.

The cockpit of a plane couldn't be as complicated as this thing looks. It is a mess of lights and slots and wires.

WILLIAM

I don't know if this is the right panel.

CHARLIE

Cut some wires or something!

WILLIAM

What?

CHARLIE

Cut the red wire!

William looks. There is no red wire.

WILLIAM

There is no red wire!

CHARLIE

Do something.

WILLIAM

Bridget, what's your favorite color?

BRIDGET

What?

WILLIAM
White it is!

He cuts the white wire.

A moment.

Gorilla Mask reappears on screen.

GORILLA MASK
You've failed. You are all dead.

BRIDGET
Fuck you!

Bridget removes a can of Spurt from her purse. She forces herself past Charlie and William and starts attacking the panel using the can like a caveman smashing in an enemy's skull with a rock.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
Fuck you! Fuck you!

She continues smashing the panel until, true to its name, the can spurts. Carbonated energy drink shoots into the electrical panel, causing sparks and smoke.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
And fuck you!

The van goes dark. Our three passengers are silent for some time.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

CHARLIE
Sorry? That was awesome!

BRIDGET
I'm sorry I asked you out, William.
This is my fault.

WILLIAM
Listen, a girl asking me out is great, let alone one as kind and pret-

BRIDGET
I'm not kind.

WILLIAM
It's worth a little life and death struggle to-

BRIDGET
I wasn't honest.

WILLIAM
What do you mean? Is your name really Agnes? Are you and Steve part of some ageless vampire coven.

CHARLIE
Covens are for witches.

WILLIAM
They can be-

BRIDGET
I asked you out because I needed money.

WILLIAM
What?

BRIDGET
My building has to bring the roof up to code. They're adding a special assessment, and I am already stretched to my limit.

WILLIAM
What?

BRIDGET
I'm embarrassed. It's just, I was desperate, and I heard you liked me. And I heard about how when you were into Sophie you gave her money to redo her bathroom, and she didn't even-

William laughs a sad laugh. It grows uncontrollably.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
Please don't laugh at me. I know it was a shady thing to do, and now we've been through all this stuff together-

WILLIAM
I'm not laughing at you.

BRIDGET
What?

WILLIAM
That was Ben.

BRIDGET
What?

CHARLIE
Ben.

WILLIAM
That was Ben that bought Sophie a
new bathroom when he liked her.
He's just a little bit more
pathetic than me.

The lights in the van turn back on.

CHARLIE
Oh. Cool.

William and Bridget turn away from each other.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

We see the van turn down a tree lined road and stop at a six
flat.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Bridget stands up.

FEMALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN
We have arrived at Brid-jet stop.

William stands up.

WILLIAM
I'll walk you to your door.

FEMALE VOICE #2 FROM SCREEN
Idling for 60 seconds.

EXT. BRIDGET'S PLACE- NIGHT

William walks Bridget to her door.

BRIDGET
I kinda thought you'd be screaming
at me. Or crying. I mean, I just
can't believe you are standing
here, walking me to my door like
I'm a decent person. Or like
tonight was a normal night.

WILLIAM

Listen. I've been in a rut, and I didn't think I'd ever get out of it. That I'd be living the same day for another 50 years then dying. Today was a different day.

BRIDGET

I can't argue with that.

WILLIAM

Plus, dating me because you thought I'd pay for your roof is the sort of Machiavellian scheming worthy of a rom-com.

CHARLIE

(From Van, with her foot
in the door.)

Bus is leaving!

WILLIAM

This has been fun. You know, when we didn't think we were dying. And parts when we did think we were dying.

BRIDGET

I guess

WILLIAM

Talk to me at lunch tomorrow, and I'll let you know if I can *loan* you money towards your roof. It's the least I can do for you saving my life.

BRIDGET

Thanks.

WILLIAM

But no more dates.

BRIDGET

Agreed.

She enters her building.

INT. VAN- NIGHT

Charlie and William sit quietly.

VOICE FROM WINDSHIELD

Raft the white waters and live life with the volume turned all the way up, or turn that noise down a bit by hiking our trails to take in the spectacular vistas. When you visit scenic Wyoming this summer, you'll be saying "Why-not-oming?"

WILLIAM

What a night, huh?

CHARLIE

Hn.

WILLIAM

Oh, I forgot to ask, do you guys do Sumptin?

CHARLIE

Baby, I do a little of everything.

WILLIAM

No, I mean the-

CHARLIE

(her accent is gone)

I know what you mean! Jesus.

Charlie digs in her bag and retrieves a small black square about the size of an ashtray.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Of course we do.

She checks the box.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Oh, but since you paid for this trip by redeeming points, they give you a smaller percentage.

WILLIAM

Well, that's fair.

CHARLIE

I just have to adjust a couple of things.

WILLIAM

Okay.

CHARLIE

Let me ask you something. Did she think this was all real.

WILLIAM

Bridget gets very into these things. You should see her at a haunted house.

CHARLIE

Man, I don't care. I got her thumbprint, she signed the waiver, I was just curious.

WILLIAM

She's, you know, uh. . .

CHARLIE

You think you're the first guy who fantasized about "saving" a girl?

A beat.

WILLIAM

So, you're not British?

CHARLIE

All right. Keep your nice guy act.

WILLIAM

I hear that we become what we pretend to be.

CHARLIE

Well, I'm still from Buffalo.

Charlie holds the black box out to William, and he taps his phone on top.

Bloop!

Credits roll.

We see the following bits interspersed with credits over black.

We see the bridal shower people leave the van. The van pulls into a building labeled UNLIMITED ESCAPE ADVENTURES.

The van pulls onto a platform like a car wash track.

Clamps tighten around the wheels.

The track raises slightly.

We see the van rock back and forth, up and down.

We see a suburban looking family of five in a room with a Frankenstein monster chained to the wall.

We see another family in an elevator scenario. The father pushes his toddler through the opening on top of the elevator.