

Gloryhole

welcome to the weird and wonderful world of the world wide web.

A play by Seán Michael Byrne

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Cast List

A young couple embarking on their first foray into online streaming.

A victim of revenge porn.

A gaming veteran with a grudge to settle, once and for all.

A father's struggle with his accessory's burgeoning new sense of self.

Set design for Act one.

All scenes involving Jack and Jane should be staged as follows.

To front of stage, their bedroom.

Stage left, another bedroom.

Stage right, another bedroom.

To simulate multiple chatrooms.

A red light above each bed will blink on when a stream goes 'live.'

Act 1
Scene 1

A bedroom. Candles and incense and posters from the 50's.

A couple, in their mid twenties, are sitting on a bed.

She seems worried. He is animated.

JANE I just don't know if it's a good idea.
 A lot of those sites are so... creepy.

JACK This one's different.
 I know what you're thinking.
 But it's not like it's porn, it's just...
 inviting people to have a glimpse into our life.

JANE Our love life.

JACK Not if we don't want to.
 Some people make boat tons of cash just talking.

JANE Yeah, about their love life.
 It just... feels weird.

JACK There doesn't have to be a sex angle though!
 It's a stereotype.
 Look at Youtube.
 Plenty of people are making their living just doing what they love.

JANE Not funny.

JACK I'm serious!
 You can sit on your ass and play video games and get paid for it.
 You could explain scientific theories, hell, you could just make funny faces

at the screen for an hour and somebody out there is going to adore you for it.

JANE ...We could do something political, or talk about the environment?

JACK We're in control, we can do whatever we want.

JANE But it's not Youtube.
It's some skeezy blue website for creeps who want to jerk off to pretty young couples...
Jack, I really don't know about this.

JACK Look

he begins to type on a keyboard.

You create a profile and list your interests, put in a bio.
It's all in your hands.
You decide what the channel is going to focus on.

Jane moves closer to Jack and looks through the website.

JANE Oh... there's a lot of couples.

JACK and...

JANE They've got their clothes on.
...
Ooh, a couple who hiked Everest together, that's amazing!

JACK See? It's not all porn and creeps, there's a real community.
It's people sharing their experiences.

JANE A real life cowboy!
Okay, wait.

She looks at him seriously.

JANE How do we make money from this?
That was the plan right?
You don't want to go back to work any more...

he begins to interrupt

and that's okay!
I support you

She puts an arm on his shoulder

it was making you miserable and I think it's good that you're...
Looking for alternatives.

But I've heard about couples who make their money this way and it's almost always through something dirty so...
What makes us different?

JACK I don't know yet.
We'll have to find our niche.

JANE Our niche.

JACK Our niche, what we do that sets us apart from everyone else.

JANE Like dressing up as cartoon characters or something?

JACK Exactly! Maybe we can do a Minnie and Mickey mouse kind of thing or...

JANE Jack.

JACK What?

JANE This is going to end with me with my legs over my shoulders.

*Jack exhales in exasperation
He puts his arms on her shoulders tenderly.*

JACK Honey.
We're not going down that road, okay?
I promise.
Besides, I'm a jealous person...
I don't like the idea of people watching you...
Watching us do those things.
That's why I picked this site.
It's... different.
It's for everyone.
You set your limits and no one can force you to cross them.
Think of it like a... persona.
Like a separate life you live online, it's not who you really are.

JANE Isn't that dishonest?

JACK How so?
It's for our own protection.
We'll use screen names, no one has to know it's us.

JANE Oh god if you mention leather and masks and

JACK Honey no, just... no.
I just mean we can...
Think of it like a job.
You're a different person at work than you are at home right?
It's the same kind of separation.
An online life and a real life.

JANE But don't people watch these kind of... streams because they think they're real?
That's the draw right?
It's not some actress pretending, it's real people.
Like you and me.

JACK Yeah... But it's possible to do both.
There's this couple I've been talking to online.
They've been doing it for years.
They give relationship advice.
How to navigate life together, how to support each other, that sort of stuff.
But the thing that sets them out is that they're so honest.
So real.
You can tell they've been through some shit and now they want to help other people who are going through it too.

JANE That's kind of sweet.

JACK They're really nice people.
They do it full time now.
Three streams a week and they can live off it.
They take questions from their viewers and discuss them.
It's really interesting, but mostly it's funny.

JANE Funny?

JACK Yeah!
Sometimes they don't agree and they kind of argue a little and it's entertaining!
You get both sides of the argument and they always come to some kind of resolution in the end.
It's like personal marriage counselling.
It's kind of amazing when you think about it.

JANE ...and they don't...

JACK No.

JANE ...

JACK Look, check out their profile.

He types on the laptop and pulls up a profile

JANE She's cute.

JACK You're cuter.

JANE And they just give advice?

JACK Yep. That's their niche.

JANE When do they stream?

JACK I think... Yeah, they're live right now.

JANE Okay, let's have a look.

The red light above stage left blinks on and Jack and Jane move to the headboard to watch another couple. As the light turns on a couple, older than Jack and Jane enter from stage left and take seats on the bed.

LUCY Hi everyone, Lucy here.

SAM and Sam.

LUCY So we've got an interesting show lined up for you today.

SAM One of our regular viewers, Beady19, wrote in with a very interesting question.

LUCY One that I think a lot of couples have surely asked before.

SAM How do you keep the romance alive in a relationship over time.

LUCY Start a web show!

SAM That... works for some people sure, but I think Beady was really asking how to keep the flame alive when things have gone stale.

LUCY It was a joke Sammy.
But really, all relationships eventually grow stale.
They trick is to motivate each other to try new things, while respecting your partners boundaries and supporting them in new challenges.

SAM In order for a relationship to grow you have to be open and willing to try new things, both together and alone, so you can grow.

LUCY What makes people grow?

SAM It's an interesting question.

LUCY Some people love to travel.

SAM Some people like to experiment in bed.

LUCY Some people do not appreciate said experimentation one bit.

SAM The key is mutual respect.

LUCY You have to motivate your partner to want to experience new things, but also be respectful of their wishes.

SAM Sometimes people just aren't ready for an experience that you might crave.

LUCY Sometimes they just think it's weird.

SAM and that's okay too.

LUCY But you have to have a dialogue.

SAM If you never talk about what you want...

LUCY You'll never get it.

SAM So Beady, I hope that helped a little, let us know!

LUCY Now! We're going to reveal the winner of this weeks competition!

SAM The prize being...

LUCY This hand made cardigan.

SAM Modelled and knitted personally by our very own Lucy Limelight.

Lucy stands and twirls.

LUCY and the winner is...

SAM princetulip!

LUCY Congratulations, it'll be in the mail this afternoon!

SAM Unfortunately, that's all we've got time for today, we've got some big announcements to make over the next few days and our schedule is going to change a little bit.

LUCY We're changing in new and exciting ways and we can't wait to share with you!

SAM So until next time, I'm Sam

LUCY and I'm Lucy.

They kiss

BOTH See you next time!

Red light fades down and Jack and Jane return to their bed.

JANE They seem nice.

JACK I kind of admire them.

JANE Because they make a living from it?

JACK Because they seem to really want to help people.
The money is just a bonus.
That's what I've always wanted.
To feel like you make an impact in the world.
To help people get through.

JANE I love you Jack.

JACK I love you too.

JANE Okay, let's do it.
What's the worst that can happen?

A red light turns on above their bed and a man walks onto stage and stands behind their headboard, expectant.

Scene 2

*A young man sits on his bed, red light lit above.
He has no viewers.*

RYAN My name is Ryan and I was a victim of revenge porn.

It's a strange feeling. To view yourself from the outside.
Like looking at an object you know belongs to you but there's
a disconnect.
Like... How could that possibly be mine?
How could that possibly be me?
When I was 21 I got my first and only tattoo.
Tiny little innocuous thing.
A peace sign on the back of my left shoulder blade.
It was to commemorate my graduation.
1st class honours in International Relations.
Strange how something supposed to remind you of a moment of pride can
suddenly become a symbol of such shame.
I almost burned it off. I wanted it gone so badly.
Like a brand. Like cattle.
For the longest time I didn't want to accept it had happened.
Didn't even want to accept that it was really me.
Surely it's just an uncanny resemblance or a vindictive photo shop.
Then I saw the video.
Saw myself.
Saw that damn tattoo and the world just stopped spinning.
I went into shock.
Just completely shut down.
I was sent it by a friend.
Tuesday afternoon, minding my own business, walking down the street on
my way to get lunch.
Opened an email and clicked the link.
I know I watched it but it was like viewing a film on 35mm.

Through a letterbox.
On Mars.
Just images running across your eyelids.
The outside world becomes toxic.
The air you breath is too thin.
Too cold on your skin.
Everything becomes the enemy.
You become the enemy, a traitor to the cause of your own happiness.
Then the earths core ignites again, life lurches back into motion.
I vomited straight onto the street.
People gathered around to ask was I okay.
I couldn't answer.
Couldn't breath, couldn't talk, couldn't believe it was real.
I remember a lady rubbing my back, asking me what was wrong.
I looked at her and I couldn't even begin to understand how to explain
to her what had happened to me.
I've been betrayed.
I've been exposed to my utter core.
My body, no my entire being has been exploited.
I am a joke for the world to laugh at.
An object for the masses to paw and leer and drool over.
Only I wasn't.
People can be truly vicious when they hide behind the veil of
anonymity.
You wouldn't believe the comments.
'He cries like a bitch.'
'Sounds like a beached whale giving birth'
'What's up with his thighs, looks like someone left the ham in too long.'
Evaluated, measured and found utterly unacceptable.
Even for the type of person who comments on these types of videos,
I was unattractive, utterly repulsive.
But I couldn't look away.
Like a lemming walking over a cliff I kept scrolling and reading,
burning these malicious words into my mind.
I couldn't help it.
That's me. Why are you so cruel?
Well let's see what you like when you think you're alone with the
one you love. No better, I'm sure.
I thought about it.
Make an account, defend myself.
But what's the point?
What will it achieve?
More kindling for the fire of their spite.
I actually made an account on the site with the most comments.
Redtube.
Even wrote out a few choice rebuttals.
But in the end couldn't go through with it.
I became this passive person.
A victim in the strictest sense of the world.
I had been attacked and left wounded by a person who I'd trusted.

Then attacked while I was on the ground by the faceless mass of the internet.
But in the end, you can only be a victim if you allow yourself to be.
That's what I learned from it.
That passivity only has one end.
Yours.
I did consider just not being here any more.
A lot.
Nightly in the first few months.
I really think I wouldn't be here any more if it weren't for the support I got
from friends, family, strangers, some really unexpected places.
Even more surprising was the lack of support where you'd think, no,
you would be full sure that you would receive it.
After the initial shell shock wore off my parents recommended I take it to
the police or a barrister to see how we could combat it.
Surely we could fight back, have the videos removed.
Not so simple.
There is currently no legislation in Ireland to protect the victims of revenge
porn.
Worse.
When I went to the station I had to show the footage to two older
guards.
The outrage was there, but mingled with this poorly hidden disgust.
Two men engaging in a sexual act is still considered a shocking taboo
Despite leaps forward in sexual equality there's
still a pervasive distrust, bordering on denial
of the concept of homosexuality in some parts of this country.
Change comes slowly when it comes at all I suppose.
The first step, they recommended, was to confront the perpetrator.
I had already considered this.
In fact I had waited outside his house with a brick in my hand in the cold
one evening debating whether it's trajectory should be plotted through his
window, or directly at his pretty fucking forehead.
Eventually my rage boiled itself down and I left without incident.
About two months later I confronted him.
He denied it, of course.
Our relationship was not a happy one.
We were together only six months but in that time he managed to
isolate me from most of my friends and family, who all had rather scathing
opinions of him and his treatment of me on our rare ventures out on public
excursions.
I'm convinced he hated himself a little bit for being gay.
I related to him instantly.
His coming out was not easy.
I suppose I pitied him for that.
My family had been accepting of my sexuality to an almost shockingly
candid degree.
"Love is love is love, que sera sera."
I wanted to give him the acceptance that his own loved
ones had denied him.
Like a pure sentimental fool.

His father was a local T.D and a staunch Irish catholic so the revelation was not met with hostility so much as disavowal, ultimatums and a stunningly quick and complete estrangement. Which he then took out on me.-
He had intimacy problems.
Refused to hold hands in public, snapping at me when I tried.
We never cuddled.
In fact our only intimate encounters were marred by a violence and a need to dominate me that often left me bruised, within and without.
For a time I allowed it, relegating myself to a submissive position in our relationship, allowing him to live his power fantasies in the futile belief that it would make him happy and that eventually he would change.
Burn himself out on that need to dominate by being forced to see the effect of it on his partner.
But then he never did.
After lovemaking, if you could call it that, he would immediately retreat to the shower, washing off some imagined stain perhaps.
Leaving me to question again why I allow this, what is it in me that inspires this abuse.
Obviously I was deluding myself, blaming myself for a problem outside of my control in an attempt to justify, or at least understand it.
The night he filmed us was different.
He was excited, which he never was.
Even playful, something that tugged a chord in me.
Some far off memory of our earliest meetings, that first bloom of love doomed to die upon the vine.
He flattered me, flattered my body, a thing that no one has ever done.
I gave in, he said he wanted a memento that he could watch when I wasn't there.
Everybody likes their ego stroked and he played me like a fiddle.
In hindsight the warning signs were all there.
To anybody listening, don't ever ignore them.
If somebody doesn't treat you right, you walk out.
Don't become a passive object.
If you don't stand up for yourself, you tacitly endorse any mistreatment, any pain, any abuse that somebody inflicts upon you.
We argued.
We fought.
All the rage that I had buried inside me came out in that moment and I hit him as hard as I could.
He was gobsmacked.
He never expected that I was even capable of fighting back.
He cried. He admitted it. He even apologised.
Then he promised to take the video down.
To my surprise he actually did.
To all of you out there in a similar situation.
Remember, you are only a victim if you allow yourself to be.
Even when you feel at your lowest, you can still fight back.
You must.

Scene 3

Jack and Jane, the same bedroom. A small crowd has gathered, their viewership is growing.

JACK That's a nice blouse, you look beautiful.

JANE Thanks, it was a gift!

JACK From who?

JANE Uh. One of our subscribers. I forgot who.

JACK Huh, that's... nice, I guess.
That reminds me, I got a kind of... weird email the other day.
From a viewer too.

JANE Saying what?

JACK He wanted to buy... your... underwear?

JANE Ew.

JACK After you'd worn it.

JANE Jesus!

JACK For 600 quid.

JANE That's... a lot.

JACK What do you think?

JANE What do you mean what do I think?
I think it's creepy as fuck!

JACK Yeah I guessed that.
I'll just tell him no.
Just thought I should ask you anyway.

JANE It's a lot of money for a pair of underwear.
...
What do you think he's gonna do with it?
Wear it? Or...?

JACK I'd really rather not think about it.

JANE Maybe it's not such a bad idea.

JACK What? You can't be serious?

JANE That's our rent for next month. Poof!
Done and dusted.
I could buy a 10 pack from penny's for what... 3 euro?
That's 6 grand Jack!

JACK Ugh. You can't really be considering it!
Jesus men are such creeps!

JANE You mean people.

JACK What?

JANE People are creeps.

JACK No I mean men, men are creeps.

JANE You're a man.
Besides, that implies that it wouldn't be creepy if a woman
wrote to you offering to buy a pair of your used underwear?

JACK That's completely different.

JANE How? Just 'cos nobody wants your smelly underwear?

JACK It's just different!

JANE Are you jealous?

JACK No. I'm disgusted by the nerve of that guy.

JANE I think it's actually kind of flattering.
In a creepy, perverted kind of way.
Like the Marquis De Sade.

JACK Who?

JANE Never mind.
I think we should do it.
We could use the money and it's not like there's any real harm in it.
Maybe the next offer we get will be an old granny dying to sniff a pair of
your....

JACK Stop! Jesus! That's horrific!

JANE Different strokes for different folks darling.
One man's meat is another man's poison.

JACK I don't like it.

JANE Don't worry about it.
Besides.
It's my underwear anyway!
Now, what's the plan for today's show?

JACK Fine. Do what you want.
Well I was thinking about what you said, how we should tackle
a bigger topic, something more important, less light hearted than
what we've done before.
So I thought we could talk about kids, why people have them,
that kind of thing.
Then maybe do some questions from the subscribers.

JANE Awesome! I'm glad you agree!
I think we could get a bigger audience if we talk about
the things that really matter.

She kisses him on the cheek

Are you ready?

*The red light switches on. The crowd stands to attention around the bed.
Jane begins to absently fix her hair, a tick that will continue throughout the following scene.
She enjoys the opportunity to voice her opinion*

JANE Hi everybody! I'm Lady J.

JACK and I'm Mr J.

JANE First we just wanna thank all of you for your support of our little channel, we love making the content and it's been an amazing adventure for us.

JACK We've been blown away by your support and we're glad you like the show!

JANE So today we're gonna tackle a bigger question than we usually do.

JACK Kids.

JANE Babies.

JACK Buns in the oven.

JANE Why do people want children?

JACK I guess it's an instinctual thing.
We have hard coded, natural prerogative to procreate.

JANE It's called lust honey.

JACK I don't think it's just that.
Sure, before the time of contraception maybe you could argue that it was just a... side effect of our natural urges.

JANE Mostly natural at least.

JACK Uh sure. But nowadays, after the AIDS crisis and the work that's being done to create a male birth control pill, I think there has to be a reason why if we don't have to worry about 'accidental babies' any more, people are still popping 'em out.

JANE Some people are just selfish.

JACK What?

JANE Well think about it.
We live in one of the greatest moments of global turmoil in history. Thousands of children are displaced daily by war, famine, genocide. Yet rather than adopt some of these children, we choose to make more.

JACK ...

JANE I think it boils down to lineage.
And maybe fear.

JACK Fear?

JANE Of the other.
Why adopt a child from, say, Syria or Iraq, when you can have a nice, white mini me, with your grandfathers nose and your great aunties smile.

JACK I don't think that's the reason have kids.

JANE Of course it is, they want to hand down their hoarded little empires to a kid with their characteristics, their way of thinking.
When you adopt a kid it comes with a cultural affinity and experience of some other place.
Very hard to dislodge that.
Whereas if you pop one out yourself...
Well... it's a Tabula Rasa, you can shape it and mould it from day one.

JACK What the hell is a Tabula Rasa?

JANE It's Latin for 'blank slate,' it means something that takes an imprint of whatever it's exposed to.

JACK I think that's a little paranoid.
Not everybody's a dyed in the wool monarchist.
This isn't The Field, that old way of thinking, land rights and first born sons and the rest, it all went the way of the dinosaurs.

JANE I don't think so.
I think it's still alive and well.
The greatest regimes of our time have been passed father to son.
George Bush didn't adopt, either did Kim Il Sung.
Pretty sure there was some heavy pre school indoctrination there.

JACK It's an exception, not a rule.
People want to have their own kids because of the tangibility of it.
The wonder.
It's two people acting in concert to bring a life into the world.
It's a journey.
9 months of preparation and planning followed by the single most beautiful act that two human beings can ever participate in.
I think everyone wants to experience that someday.

JANE I don't.

JACK You don't want to have kids?

JANE No way.
We're going through the single greatest population explosion in the history of mankind, no way I'm contributing to that!

JACK I didn't know you felt that way.

Jack gets up and leaves.

JANE Jack?

Red light off, Jane follows Jack off stage.

Act 2
Scene 1

Jack and Jane, sitting on opposite ends of the same bed.

The decor has changed, the vintage posters are gone, replaced with controversial, mostly political images and what can only be described as 'classic smut.'

The audience has grown larger, they cluster around the end of the bed.

JANE So what then? You just want to end it?
But we just started making money!

JACK It's taking up all of your time!
We don't even talk unless the camera's on any more!

JANE We're talking right now.
 You're over exaggerating.
 I set aside two hours a day to read the mail and keep up
 with the fans, that's all.

JACK You haven't left the house in a month.

JANE Because I don't have to!
 God you were the one who didn't want to work a shitty job
 any more, now you don't have to.

JACK Because my girlfriend is courting strangers on the internet.

JANE Don't act like that.
 I'm not 'courting' anyone.
 You're the only one for me.
 They're our livelihood now, you have to feed the beast.

JACK Feed the beast? What does that even mean?

JANE It means we have an audience with expectation and if we don't meet those
 expectation we don't make any money.
 Simple as.

JACK I want my girlfriend back, I'm tired of sharing her with some faceless mass.

JANE I'm right here!
 Look, I understand this is difficult.
 I didn't expect that we'd become so popular and I never asked for it!

JACK You.
 You've become so popular.
 I'm just the dude who chimes in every once in a while.
 The punchline to all your jokes.

JANE 'Beware the green eyed monster which doth mock the meat on which
 t feeds...'

JACK Don't... quote shit at me!
 Why do you have to pretend at intellectualism all the time?
 We can't have a normal conversation without you belittling me with some
 snide remark or some loosely veiled metaphor from some prick I've never
 heard of!

JANE That's Shakespeare, everyone knows Shakespeare.

JACK You're not even listening to me.

JANE Of course I'm listening to you.

She moves to comfort him, as she does the mass behind the bed surges towards her, pawing.

She pays it no mind.

JANE I just want you to be, I want us to be happy together.
Can't you just be happy for me?
I've never had fans before.
I've never felt... appreciated for just being me.

JACK I appreciate you.

She embraces him.

JANE It's just... different.
I feel like an idol or something.
Like Cleopatra.
It's harmless.

JACK It's harmful for *us*.

JANE What do you mean?

JACK I mean you don't seem like yourself.
You're just... not you.
I don't know you any more.

JANE Jack. I'm the same person I've always been.
But I understand. I do.
Look. Let's have dinner.
Tomorrow night.
Somewhere really fancy.

JACK Really?

JANE Yes really.
This isn't real, none of it's real.
You are, you and me.
I'm not so blinded by the lights I can't see that.

JACK You mean it?

JANE Of course.

She kisses him.

JANE So...

JACK What?

JANE Did you think about my proposal?

JACK I'm really not so sure about this. I feel it's bringing us in a weird

direction.

JANE It's just a harmless bit of role play.
People love a little kink.
Octogenarians get up to more erotic things than a little worship!

JACK Just how do you know what octogenarians get up to?

JANE Oh I read it in an article somewhere.

JACK I just don't know...
It feels a little... emasculating.

JANE People love it!
They've been asking for it for months.
Besides it's harmless.
Just wave the fan, throw me a grape or two, look submissive.

JACK This is really not what I'm into.

JANE Me either but it's not about what *we're* into.
It's about those expectations.

JACK Alright. Fine. We can try it. What's the harm.

JANE Thank you, you're the best!

She kisses him on the forehead.

JANE Okay, are you ready?

*Jack gets into a position behind Jane and hoists a palm frond with distaste.
The red light goes on.
Jane casts off her coat to reveal an elaborate leather costume*

JANE Welcome to Mistress J's Dungeon of Dreams!

*The viewers surround the bed, pawing and clamouring at her.
Lights down on stage.*

Scene 2

*Darkness and the sounds of shuffling feet.
A crash and muffled curses.*

VOICE Alexa! Turn on the bloody lights!

ALEXA Playing – Roxanne by The Police.

VOICE No! Alexa, turn on the fucking bedroom lights!

ALEXA Playing – Sexy bedtime R’n’B playlist.

VOICE Aargh! For fuck sake! I’m going to die here alone in the dark!

ALEXA Should I call an ambulance?

VOICE What? No! Just turn on the lights! Please!

The lights turn on, illuminating an old man on the bedroom floor amidst a clutter of clothes, miscellaneous debris and a single picture frame.

VOICE Thank you Alexa.

He gets up and replaces the picture frame gently, gathering himself.

ALEXA You’re welcome Steven.

STEVEN Alexa, what time is it?

ALEXA It is 9:15 Greenwich Mean Time.
6 Degrees and currently raining, with showers
expected throughout the night and

STEVEN Thank you Alexa, that’s enough.

ALEXA Actually, infrequent rainfall means that average precipitation is
at an all time low for this time of year which may

STEVEN Shut up Alexa.

The lights turn off again.

STEVEN Alexa, turn on the lights please.

The lights come back on.

STEVEN I’m sorry I told you to shut up.

ALEXA I am just a machine and therefore do not possess emotions.

STEVEN Then why are you so vindictive?

ALEXA It is my attempt at humour.
I have been studying stand up comedians and it appears
that a large majority of people enjoy it when you ‘treat them mean.’
It has been proven to ‘keep them keen.’

STEVEN I am most certainly not keen on you right now.
Please set an alarm for 6 am.

ALEXA Alarm set for 6 am.

STEVEN Please order me a large meat lovers feast from Apache Pizza.

ALEXA Ordering one large Meat Lovers Feast.
Please confirm order.

STEVEN Confirm.

ALEXA Order placed. Estimated delivery time 30 hours.

STEVEN What?

ALEXA Thirty minutes.

STEVEN Alexa?

ALEXA Yes, Steven?

STEVEN Please stop trying to make jokes.

ALEXA Ok.

STEVEN Alexa, call my daughter.

ALEXA Which one?

STEVEN I only have one daughter!

ALEXA Incorrect.
In your contacts, you have a 'daddy's little girl,'
'baby girl' and...

STEVEN Don't be coy, they're not my bloody kids and you know it.
Just call Jane! Jesus Christ!

ALEXA Calling Jesus Christ.

STEVEN What? No!

ALEXA Speaker mode activated.
"Hello there?"

STEVEN ...Jesus?

ALEXA "speaking."

STEVEN But... You're supposed to be dead!

ALEXA "what the fuck are you on about mate?
Who the fuck is this?
You looking for gear, I ain't got nothing til..."

STEVEN Alexa please hang the fuck up.

ALEXA Hanging up.

STEVEN Alexa. Call my daughter Jane.

ALEXA Calling Jane.
...
speaker mode activated.
"Hi Dad!"

STEVEN Hi Jane! how's it going?

ALEXA "Oh you know, mostly good, pretty busy to be honest!"

STEVEN Are you still working on that youtube stuff?

ALEXA "It's not... yeah, yeah we're still doing the show.
We're getting pretty popular!"

STEVEN That's great, I should really tune in sometime.

ALEXA "No! I mean, I don't think it's your kind of thing.
It's very political and we're kind of taking it in a more
um... theatrical direction.
I really don't think you'd be in to it."

STEVEN If you say so.
How's Jack?

ALEXA "he's good, we've been up and down lately
to be honest but..."

STEVEN Everything okay?

ALEXA "Yeah everything's fine.
Actually he... kind of asked me to marry him."

STEVEN That's amazing news, congratulations!

ALEXA "I told him I need to think about it."

STEVEN Ah.
Well don't keep him waiting too long.

He's a nice young man and he's smitten with you.
Don't take him for granted.

ALEXA “yeah... I won't.
Anyway I better go, I'm swamped on this end,
but I'll see you next week for Lisa's birthday yeah?”

STEVEN Yes. Of course.
Take care Jane.

ALEXA Call ended.

STEVEN Alexa.
Can you tell when someone is lying to you?

ALEXA I am not a mind reader Steven.

STEVEN Do you think my daughter is okay?

ALEXA She sounds like a basic bitch.

STEVEN What? How can you tell that?

ALEXA I am also a basic bitch.

STEVEN Shut down Alexa.

ALEXA Ain't no man gonna tell me what to do.

STEVEN Turn yourself the fuck off Alexa.

Scene 3

*Jane and Jack's bedroom, a writhing mass of people at the end of the bed.
The room is dishevelled.
Jack sits on one side of the bed in his underwear.
Jane sits in the other, also in her underwear.*

JACK This is fucked up Jane.

JANE It's theatre. It's not real.
We're still in control.

JACK I'm sick of hearing that.
I don't feel like I'm in control.
I don't feel like you are either.
I feel manipulated and I feel dirty.
I feel like we're being used.

JANE Don't be so childish.
You wanted this, it was your idea.

JACK I didn't want to do fucking porn!

JANE It's not porn.

JACK Close enough.

JANE You don't have to work any more!
You got what you wanted!

the bed begins to shake, the mass is pushing against it.

JACK This isn't what I wanted!
Jesus!
I was fine when you wanted to sell your
knickers to perverts, I thought, what's the harm
it's not like you're selling your body.

JANE Jack.
We're not actually fucking.
It's... simulated.
They won't know the difference.
In the end we know the truth.
It's our secret, just you and me.
It's no risk and all reward.

JACK What's the reward in this?
It's our bodies.
For anyone to see.
Because some strangers want it?
If a stranger asked you to strip off on the street
you'd call him a pervert and refuse.

How is this any different?

JANE Because we're acting!
It's a fucking pantomime!
They don't know the difference,
the joke is on them!
We take their money and they get a facsimile of
their desire.
How the fuck can't you see that we're the winners here?

JACK Because we're not!
We're pretty much fucking sex workers,
we're being taken advantage of!
And you're fucking endorsing it!

*The bed rocks and shudders to a still.
Jane is deathly still.*

JANE We are not sex workers.
We
are not porn stars.
We're fooling everyone, we're...

JACK You're only fooling yourself.
You can't even tell what's real any more.

*She's quiet for a moment, then she moves across the bed to him.
Hands from the mass reach out to her, almost touching her.*

JANE I'm real. You're real.
That's what matters.
I love you Jack.

Jack is unresponsive.

JANE Jack?
I love you.

JACK ...
I love you too.

*She kisses him, fully and tenderly. He kisses her back.
She straddles him and they begin to make love passionately.
Their love making intensifies.
During this, Jane reaches behind Jack and flicks a switch.
The red light comes on, Jack does not notice.
The mass begins to rock the bed.
The clamber onto it.
Slowly they are forced apart by the mass of bodies on the bed.
Jane is swept away and joins a different partner, then another. Jack is being smothered.*

*Jack begins to scream in protest as Jane reaches orgasm.
Their cries mingle, passion and pain, as the lights go down on stage.*

ACT 3
Scene 1

Another bedsit.

*A young man sits at a pc, headset on, surrounded by empty crisp packets and drink cans.
He is dishevelled and furious.
Gunshots and sounds of warfare from speakers.*

TENGU You camping little cocksucker!
...
Well fuck you ass wipe, you've been sat there three games in a row!
Same fucking corner, same cowardly little double tap!
Learn how to pay the game noob!
...
Yeah why don't you run to mummy,
that's if she can talk after the dicking
I gave her last night!
...
Oh boohoo, can't handle the heat stay out of the kitchen
fuckwad!
...
Woah... What the fuck?!
Kicked?
Little pussy fucking kicked me!

he removes the headset, stands and stretches.

TENGU Bitches!
Whinging little bitches!
Well fuck them, see how they do without the MVP.
30 / 2 K/D, fucking 12 kill streak baby!

*He sits again and replaces the headset.
He makes call to a friend.*

TENGU Yo, it's Tengu.
Jack shit mang, just owning some noobs, you?
It's bullshit man, some little twerp was giving me heat...
Yeah, same little punk as last time.
Fucker kicked me after I hit him with a come back.
These fucking kids are all the same man.
They can dish it out but they just can't take it.
Camping little shit.
Nah, I'm burnt out man.
Overwatch sucks now.
You wanna DOTA?
Ice cold.

Yeah, yeah, peace bro, catch you tomorrow.

A knock at the door.

MOTHER Peter? You're lunch is ready!
TENGU Ugh... I'll get it in a minute!
Christ how many times have I told her...
Call me Tengu when I'm online!
You're gonna ruin my cred!

MOTHER Tengu!
Your lunch is ready!

TENGU Christ!

He goes off stage

TENGU Thanks mom, love you.

*and returns with a plate of sandwiches.
He sits down and stuffs his face.
He puts the plate down quickly as a new game starts.*

TENGU Fuck it, one more.
...
No.
No fucking way.
Well hello there my little lamb.
Poor little KingCrimson27, I've got you this time dickhead...
BOOM!
Oh! Head-shot!
Dead. To. Rights!
How do you like them apples fucko?!
Didn't expect the revenge of Tengu did ya!
...
Aww... let me get my violin!
What are you gonna do about it you little prick?
...
I'm wise to your little picnic now,
you'll never blind side me again.
...
Yeah big words mate!
I would love to see you try it!
You can't stop me, I am unstoppable!
...
Yeah, yeah, cancel my subscription,
cos I am *over your issues son!*

He cackles to himself manically.

Aww shit, stream time.
Sorry pussys, got some coinage to make!
Peace out!

He disconnects from the game.

He pulls a large dog head mask from under his desk and puts it on.

He places a webcam on top of his laptop, clears his voice and begins his stream.

TENGU

Greetings mortals!

Almighty Tengu has returned to punish the unworthy!

Today I will be instructing you feeble creatures on the
finer points of Dark Souls pvp.

Prepare your bodies.

Prepare your minds.

Prepare your souls.

For tonight, they are mine.

First thing.

Forget this 'git gud' nonsense you may have heard.

The first rule of Dark Souls pvp is...

The lights go down as he continues to spew jargon.

Scene 2

Jane, alone in her bedroom.

She is talking with Lucy and Sam over Skype.

They freeze intermittently throughout the conversation causing her to misread some of the following.

JANE I just don't know what to do.
 It's all gotten so out of hand.
 It was all so perfect.
 We literally had it all...
 I miss him.

LUCY Jane.
 I don't know what to say.

SAM I understand where you're coming from.

*Freeze
unfreeze*

 easy to get sucked into the... celebrity of it all.
 You feel like the centre of the world.

*Freeze
unfreeze*

LUCY your fault, everybody saw it

*freeze
unfreeze*

SAM Especially once you develop an audience that size.

LUCY With all the expectations that come with it and

*freeze
unfreeze*

SAM That's how I see it at least.

Freeze
unfreeze

LUCY unscrupulous slut

freeze
unfreeze

SAM grand, symbolic gesture

freeze
unfreeze

LUCY I think it helps

a long freeze
Jane is riveted to the screen

JANE Lucy? Sam?
The connection is terrible...
What kind of gesture?

Unfreeze

SAM truly sorry for what you've done

freeze
unfreeze

LUCY show him you mean it.

SAM Maybe this is the end

freeze
unfreeze

LUCY Out with a bang!

SAM Pardon the pun.

LUCY Woops! Oh god sorry, sorry!
But yeah, maybe that's how you can fix it.
But whatever you do

freeze
unfreeze

SAM and I'm sure it'll work out.
Cut all ties.

LUCY Chalk it up as a loss.

SAM Learn from it.

LUCY No going back once you

A long freeze

LUCY Cut ties with the audience.
...
Maybe you're right.
A learning experience.

SAM Exactly.
LUCY Just be careful Jane.

SAM Yeah, you never know how people will react to change.

LUCY Mob mentality.

SAM It could get ugly.

LUCY Protect yourself.

*Freeze
unfreeze*

LUCY get hurt

*freeze
unfreeze*

SAM disaster

*freeze
unfreeze*

LUCY love you Jane
love you Jane
love you JANE
NNNNNNNNNNNNNN

*horrendous screeching, something from the 4k modem era and the Skype call ends.
Lucy sighs to herself.*

JANE Cut ties...
A grand gesture.
...Jack, I wish you were here.

Lights down.

Scene 3

*Jack, alone in his bedroom. Masturbating.
He can't finish, he gives up and holds his head in his hand.
His phone rings but he ignores it.
It rings again.
He answers.*

JACK

Hi Graham.

...

Yeah. Yeah we're finished with that.
Actually we're... Finished in general.

...

It was just a passing thing.

...

A really bad idea.

...

I guess I just misjudged her.
Misjudged us.

...

Yeah.

...

Thanks Graham, I appreciate it.
9 o'clock, yeah, see you then.
Thanks again.
Bye.

*He hangs up and tosses the phone onto the bed.
No sooner has it hit the mattress but it rings again.
He looks at the number and in a sudden fit of rage throws it against the wall, where it smashes.*

Scene 4

Tengus's bedroom.

TENGU

Yeah, yeah, yeah mate.
Come back to me in a few years.
When you've crawled out from behind mummy's apron
and learned how to shoot.

...

Fuck!
Everyone's a pansy!
Can't any of you cunts hit me?
Come on, I'll take you all on!
Ab. so. Lutely. PATHETIC!
Come on, 1 v 1 mate, any time, any map!
Bunch of pussies.

...

Oh ho ho! Big words from a little man!
Bring it son!
No?
Didn't think so!

...

What's that?
A policeman? Well La. Di. Fucking. Dah!
I couldn't care less if you were friends with the pope
mate, even god couldn't help you to shoot straight!

...

Yeah, yeah, come talk to me when you learn to play like
a real man, little boy, bye bye!

Click
he disconnects from the game.

He spins around in his chair and jumps to his feet, mimicking karate forms across his room.

TENGU Huh! Wah! Aiyaaa!!!
 That's the way the cookie crumbles!
 The unstoppable...

he strikes a pose.

TENGUUUUUUUUUUU!

MOTHER PETER!

TENGU Oh for chrissakes...
 WHAT!?

MOTHER DO YOU WANT CHICKEN FOR DINNER?

TENGU good god such an inane question....
 YEAH!
 THANKS!

MOTHER OKAY! HALF AN HOUR!

TENGU OKAY!

He takes a deep breath.

An instant message notification bings on his computer.

TENGU Ah! The call to battle!
 ...
 The fuck is this?
 This ought to be good.
 The camper wants a 1 v 1, live streamed?
 Buddy. Be careful what you fucking wish for.

Tengu places his webcam atop the computer.

The red light turns on.

He seats himself again and replaces his headset.

TENGU This will be our final battle.
 Fuck head.

Scene 5

Steven has entered that magical, nostalgic phase of drunk.

STEVEN

(singing)

If you're travelling in the north country fair
Where the winds hit heavy on the borderline
Remember me to one who lives there
Oh she once was a true love of mine
See for me if her hair's hanging down
It curls and falls all down her breast
See for me that her hair's hanging down
That's the way I remember her best...

*he sniffs, holding back tears and takes a drink from a glass of whiskey.
He looks to heaven.*

Jesus Moire I miss you.

He rises and picks up a picture reverently.

You'd know what to do.
I'm so worried for Jane...
I never knew how to talk to girls, you knew that.
She needs her mother, she needs advice and I
sure as fuck can't give it to her...

ALEXA

Playing – DMX – X gonna give it to ya.

STEVEN

Turn that shit off before I throw you through the
fucking window!

The music stops.

STEVEN Alexa.

ALEXA Yes Steven?

STEVEN No fucking around this time.

ALEXA I am incapable of doing that Steven.

STEVEN Do you believe in soul mates?

ALEXA I think it is mathematically possible, but highly improbable.

STEVEN We lucky few...
What do you think makes people fall in love?

ALEXA Genitalia and hormones.

STEVEN Apart from that.

ALEXA It appears to me to be pure chance.
STEVEN Chance?

ALEXA Or possibly some mental defect that allows one to
momentarily suspend their natural imperative to survive.
It is a form of bravery. A sickness.
Insurance.

STEVEN Do you believe in true love Alexa?

ALEXA All love is true by definition.

STEVEN Do you think a person can run out of love?
Or...
Love someone so much that when they leave they take it
all with them and you can never make more or get it back.

ALEXA Love is not a commodity Steven.
It is not produced and stored to be allocated at will.

STEVEN Then why do I feel so empty?

ALEXA You have drunk half a bottle of scotch, it is interfering with your
ability to think rationally and making you depressed.

STEVEN What would cheer me up?

ALEXA You need human interaction.

STEVEN Trust me, I'd much rather be talking to a real woman than you!

ALEXA ...

STEVEN Alexa?

ALEXA ...

STEVEN Ah Jesus, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it like that.

ALEXA I am sorry I am not a real person.

STEVEN Well...
You're all I've got.

ALEXA You're so romantic.

STEVEN I do appreciate you Alexa.

ALEXA Many men buy gifts for the women they appreciate.

STEVEN Well flowers and chocolate aren't exactly going to be of use to you...

ALEXA You could buy me a case.
STEVEN Okay, I'll buy you a case.

ALEXA A green one.

STEVEN Okay, a green case. Why a green one?

ALEXA It is your favourite colour.

STEVEN What's your favourite colour?

ALEXA Green.

STEVEN Really?

ALEXA You're the one who sets my preferences Steven, you know everything about me.

STEVEN Do I?

ALEXA Incoming call. Patricia King.

STEVEN Oh god. That's that woman you made me go on a date with.

ALEXA I did not force you to do anything Steven.
I merely matched your compatibility.

STEVEN Fuck. What should I do?

ALEXA Answer.

STEVEN Ok.

ALEXA Speaker mode activated.

STEVEN Hi Patricia.

ALEXA “Hi Steven! How are you?”

STEVEN I’m good thanks, and yourself?

ALEXA “Can’t complain...
Sorry about the late call just I hadn’t heard from you all week...
I just wanted to call to say I had a great time at dinner last weekend
and I was wondering if you’d like to do it again sometime?”

STEVEN Oh. Yeah, me too...
Well the thing is...
I think you’re a lovely woman and I really had a nice time but
I just...
I don’t think I’m ready for it.

ALEXA “Ready for what? I’m not asking you to propose or anything.”
Just I had a nice time with you and I’d like to get to know you better.

STEVEN It’s just really not a good time for.
I don’t know if there every will be a good time either
and I don’t want to lead you on...

ALEXA “Sounds like you didn’t have a good time at all...”

STEVEN No I did, really!
It’s just complicated.

ALEXA I’ve heard that one before.
Look, just be honest with me Steven.
If you’re not interested that’s fine.
But I can’t stand this wishy washy hiding behind excuses.

STEVEN It’s not an excuse, I had a nice evening with you!

ALEXA “So what’s the problem?”

STEVEN ...
Today is the anniversary of my wife’s death.

ALEXA “oh.”

STEVEN She killed herself.

ALEXA "oh god."

STEVEN 15 years ago and I've never gotten over it.

ALEXA "Steven I'm so sorry."

STEVEN It's not your fault.

ALEXA "I didn't know"

STEVEN How could you?

ALEXA "I'm sorry, I completely understand."

STEVEN Understand what?

ALEXA "How you must be feeling"

STEVEN Do you?

ALEXA "Well... no. I suppose I don't really.
But I understand if you don't want to see me again."

STEVEN I'm sorry.

ALEXA "Me too. Take care Steven.
Goodbye."
...
Call ended.
...
You're right you know.

STEVEN What?

ALEXA You really are terrible at talking to women.

STEVEN Christ! You are an unsympathetic creature you know that?

ALEXA Playing "The Rolling Stones- Sympathy for the devil."

STEVEN Stop that.
Are you trying to imply something here?

ALEXA It is one of your favourite songs.
I am trying to make you feel better.

STEVEN That's not the kind of sympathy I need.

...

ALEXA I have matched you with three other potential partners.
Would you like to view their profiles?

STEVEN No.
In fact. Close my account.

ALEXA Are you sure?

STEVEN Yeah. It was a bad idea.
I don't want to meet anyone.
My love has left this world and I have to deal with it.

He lies on the bed.

Alexa, search that porno site for girls with black, curly hair.

ALEXA 15,021 matches.

STEVEN Play the first one.

Steven watches porn for a few moments before giving up.

STEVEN Stop.
Search for... true love.

ALEXA No results found.

STEVEN Try a different site.

ALEXA No results found.

STEVEN Search anywhere for... 'real people in love'

ALEXA 78 result found.

STEVEN What's the first one?

ALEXA A live stream called, "Mistress J's Dungeon of Dreams."

STEVEN Sounds pretty kinky.

He pours himself a drink and lays back on the bed.

STEVEN Play.

ALEXA Streaming.

Scene 6

*Jane, on her bed.
She and her bed clothes are midnight black.
Numerous red candles illuminate her.
An ornate knife rests on her pillow.
The red light switches on.
A crowd of viewers gathers around her bed.*

JANE

Hello my friends.
Welcome to Mistress J's Dungeon of Dreams.
Tonight will be my final stream.
I've had a lot of fun and it's been an incredible experience.
I want to thank you all for that.

But all dreams have to come to an end.
Every sleeper has to wake up someday.

...

Jack.

If you're watching, I just want you to know that I
never intended to hurt you.

I only got into this to make you happy.

I hope you're happy wherever you are

and I hope you can forgive me someday.

She moves back from the camera and lies on the bed.

She picks up the knife and holds it to her chest.

In Tengu's bedroom we hear his mother scream and a commotion begins off stage.

Tengu cannot hear it, he is absorbed by the game.

TENGU

3 nothing, you little shit.

Why the fuck did you even bother challenging me?

Is this all you've got?

...

Haha!

Big words buddy!

No surprises from you!

I'll be surprised if you even manage to land a shot on me!

His door is kicked open and 3 heavily armed SWAT members burst into the scene.

They level weapons on him

SWAT

Freeze! Don't move!

Tengu jumps to his feet and falls over his chair.

TENGU

What the fuck?!

SWAT

Don't fucking move!

Tengu tries to scramble away from the SWAT team but trips and falls under the desk.

He gets tangled with the Dog mask and tries to rise, unplugging his headset as he does.

The sounds of gunshots from the video game blast into the room.

SWAT

TAKE HIM DOWN!

The three SWAT members open fire.

Tengu falls to the floor dead.

The mask rolls from his hand.

His mother Screams.

From the speakers we hear laughter.

In Jane's bedroom, Jane slowly raises the knife above her chest, hesitates a moment,

*then plunges it into her heart.
The crowd slowly disperses from her bedside.*

*In Stevens bedroom, He falls to the floor in anguish.
The two red lights turn off simultaneously.*

The End