

CHILD STAR

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Two friends, JAMES and LUCAS, both in their early 20's are sitting at a cosy corner table. James looks frustrated, stirring his coffee absentmindedly.

JAMES

(sighs)

I just can't catch a break. I've applied to so many jobs, but most don't even call me back.

LUCAS

(frowning)

That's rough, man.

JAMES

I'm educated. I don't have a police record. But it's like they're scared to hire me. The rejection phone calls. They don't make any sense.

LUCAS

Maybe you're interviewing weird?

JAMES

I don't even get to the interview stage. That's what I don't understand.

LUCAS

You introduce yourself and it doesn't go any further?

JAMES

Right.

LUCAS

Have you ever thought that maybe there's something about you online that's turning people off?

JAMES

No way.

LUCAS

Have you checked?

JAMES

What's the point?

LUCAS

Don't you want to find out? Maybe there's something about you out there?

JAMES

(confused)

What do you mean?

LUCAS

(leans in)

When was the last time you Googled yourself?

JAMES

(surprised)

I've never done that. Why would I?

LUCAS

It's fun.

JAMES

No.

LUCAS

Maybe do it for a laugh? See if you share your name with anyone famous, or crazy. Like a serial killer?

JAMES

That's stupid.

LUCAS

(smiling)

You'd be surprised what you might find. Sometimes old posts or photos can pop up and give the wrong impression.

JAMES

I don't know.

LUCAS

Just google yourself.

JAMES

No.

LUCAS

(annoyed)

Take out your phone and google yourself right now. Or I will.

JAMES

It sounds perverted. Googling yourself.

LUCAS

Just do it. Full name and date of birth too.

James pulls out his phone, hesitates for a moment, then starts typing out his name.

JAMES

(nervously)

I bet you I share a name and a likeness for a really gross porn star. Something stupid like that. And that's who they think is applying for these jobs.

LUCAS

A gross porn star is your guess?

James shrugs.

JAMES

Why not?

LUCAS

What even is a gross porn star?

JAMES

You know, the guys who do gross porn.

LUCAS

Gross porn?

JAMES

There's nice porn and there's gross porn. Don't act like you don't know the difference.

LUCAS

I'm not even going to ask any more questions. I'm too scared.

JAMES

(points at his phone)

Here we go.

They both lean over the phone, waiting for the search results to load.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(shocked)

No fucking way. What the fuck is this shit? Like, what the fuck am I looking at?

LUCAS

(curious)

I don't know. I mean, I think I do but I'm just not sure.

JAMES

(stunned)

That's me as a fucking baby. What the fuck? How have I not see any of this shit before. What the fuck is this?

James shows Lucas the screen, which is filled with YouTube thumbnails of videos featuring a much younger James. Titles like "James' First Steps" and "Baby James' First Words" are prominently displayed, each with millions of views.

LUCAS

(laughing)

That's you.

JAMES

Yeah.

LUCAS

That's a lot of videos.

JAMES

And they've all got fucking millions of views.

LUCAS

(amazed)

You were a child star. This is like, really early days of Youtube. It's impressive.

JAMES

Why the fuck do I not know about any of this?

Lucas shrugs.

LUCAS

So you think these videos have been stopping you from getting job interviews?

JAMES

No, fuck that. We're past that.

LUCAS

Maybe these job places think you're an internet star, looking to use them for content? I mean, I'm just guessing.

JAMES

Fucking forget all that Lucas. We've moved way beyond that.

LUCAS

You sound pissed off?

JAMES

(nodding)

I am fucking pissed. I had no idea this shit was out there. My parents have kept this from me all this time?

LUCAS

(grinning)

There's ad revenue attached to these videos too.

JAMES

(nods)

Fuck yeah there is. So where the fuck is my money?

Lucas leans back into his seat, picking up his coffee he takes a sip.

LUCAS

Guess you're going to have to ask the people who filmed the videos. Dear old Mom and Dad.

JAMES

I'm not asking shit, I just want my fucking money.

INT. JAMES' PARENTS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

James stands in front of his parents, MR. and MRS. WILSON, both in their lates (50's) his face a mix of anger and confusion.

At first they don't really notice him, too busy watching the TV with a tray of food on their laps.

JAMES
(angrily)
The fucking videos. When the fuck
were you going to tell me about
them?

This outburst certainly gets their attention.

MRS. WILSON
(shocked)
James!

MR. WILSON
Do you maybe not want to speak to
me and your Mom like that?

JAMES
You know what the fuck I'm talking
about right.

MR. WILSON
Don't swear.

JAMES
Answer me!

His parents share a look, then come back to James.

MR. WILSON
Yes.

MRS. WILSON
Do you really care that we didn't
tell you?

JAMES
Mom! That's me in those videos.
Don't I have a right to know?

MRS. WILSON
We stopped making them after a
couple of years. You're twenty one
now. Nineteen years have past since
then.

JAMES
Millions of views.

MRS. WILSON
Well yeah, they did well.

MR. WILSON
Once you turned around two and a
half years old, we just stopped.

JAMES
Millions of views Dad.

MR. WILSON
You've said.

JAMES
Ad revenue.

MR. WILSON
So that's what this is about?

MRS. WILSON
James, you've got this all twisted.
You need to calm down and we can
talk about it properly.

James shakes his head.

JAMES
(forceful)
No. I want my fucking money. That's
me in those videos. It's my money.

MRS. WILSON
There is no money.

JAMES
Bullshit!

MR. WILSON
(sighs)
James, we spent it.

JAMES
On what?

MR. WILSON
On family vacations, on your
upbringing. It's all gone.

JAMES
Bullshit. Millions of views.

MR. WILSON
It's gone.

JAMES
All those views?

MR. WILSON
Yeah, OK. But they're not been
watched anymore.

JAMES
(disbelieving)
Vacations? I don't believe you. How
could you spend all of it?

MRS. WILSON
(defensive)
Those videos, they were just cute
moments. We never thought they'd
blow up like they did. It was a
long time ago.

JAMES
My money, where is it?

MRS. WILSON
It's gone. James, please don't be
like this.

JAMES
You used me and you stole from me.
I don't believe anything that you
say.

MRS. WILSON
Then what's the point of talking to
you?

JAMES
Give me the account. The Youtube
account. Give it to me. If there's
no money coming in, you shouldn't
have a problem with that.

MR. WILSON
You need to go away and come back
when you can talk to us in the
right way.

JAMES
(fuming)
You fucking used me!

MR. WILSON
Watch your mouth, I'm warning you.
Enough.

JAMES
This is isn't right Dad. It's
like... it's like fucking child
abuse!

MRS. WILSON
How can you say that?

MR. WILSON
(shaking his head)
You're being ridiculous. We never meant any harm. You're our son, and we had every right to share those moments.

JAMES
No, you fucking didn't.

MR. WILSON
Your wrong.

JAMES
You don't get to share my fucking life without asking me.

MR. WILSON
Yes, we do.

JAMES
(bitterly)
What about my rights?

MR. WILSON
There's no talking to you when you're like this.

JAMES
Don't I get a say in any of this? You exploited me for views, for money and now there's nothing left?

MRS. WILSON
(softly)
James, we love you. We never meant to hurt you. You're blowing this out of proportion.

JAMES
(sarcastic)
Yeah OK. Great point Mom, thanks.

Mr. Wilson stands up.

MR. WILSON
You want to see where the money went? How much is coming in? Then lets go to the bank and I'll show you.

JAMES

I want you to give me the fucking account. Let me have it. Then I'll find out the fucking truth myself.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

James follows his dad, MR. WILSON, out to his car, still fuming. Mr. Wilson pulls out his car keys.

JAMES

(angrily)

You really can't see why I'm so angry about this can you?

MR. WILSON

(frustrated)

James, I think you're being a big baby.

JAMES

A big baby Dad? Quick, get out your camera and you can film me, make some money out of it.

MR. WILSON

Oh, just fucking drop it.

JAMES

So you get to swear but I don't?

Mr. Wilson reaches for the car door, but in his haste, he trips over a loose paving stone and falls heavily to the ground. He cries out in pain, clutching his leg.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(shocked)

Dad! Are you okay?

MR. WILSON

My leg.

JAMES

Is it alright?

MR. WILSON

(grimacing)

I think... I think it's broken.

James' anger quickly turns to concern. He kneels beside his father, unsure of what to do.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. Wilson once again sits in his chair, but now his leg is in a cast. He looks at James, who is standing nearby with his phone in hand. Filming him.

MR. WILSON
(to James)
Please, put the phone down.

James checks that he's recording.

JAMES
What's the matter Dad?

MR. WILSON
Your Mom isn't going to be back for a few more hours. I need your help. Why are you doing this to me?

JAMES
(still filming)
Come on Dad. You can do it. The doctor said you've still got to try and walk around as much as you can.

MR. WILSON
(struggling)
James, just help me to the bathroom. That's all I'm asking. Or are you just going to stand there and film me whilst I shit myself?

JAMES
(coldly)
I'm calling this video, Dad's first steps. Sound familiar?

Mr. Wilson looks helpless and confused, but James' expression is hard and unyielding.

MR. WILSON
(pleading)
James, please... I'm sorry.

JAMES
(bitterly)
Come on Dad. Stand up. I'm not stopping until I get my own viral fucking video. And I'm keeping the fucking money.

Mr. Wilson awkwardly tries to get out of his chair, wincing in pain.

He stumbles but manages to stay upright, slowly making his way towards the bathroom. James keeps recording, his face a mix of anger and satisfaction.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Karma, Dad. This is karma.

Mr. Wilson reaches the bathroom door, looking back at James with a mix of hurt and resignation. James lowers his phone, a flicker of doubt crossing his face.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(softly)
You took what should have been
precious memories and you turned
them into something to make money
from. For that, I'll never forgive
you.

Mr. Wilson disappears into the bathroom, leaving James alone with his thoughts, the weight of his actions beginning to sink in.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END