

MARK AND THE METaverse

AN ANIMATED HALF-HOUR PILOT

Written by

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08/01/2023



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ACT 1

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM, MORNING

Pitch black. Alarm clock goes off, its blinking red face the only thing visible in the dark: "4:00 a.m. March 12, 2029." A hand hits the snooze button. Silence. Then, a woman's voice.

META

Good morning, Mark--

MARK

Metachat off.

Silence, total darkness. Sheets rustle.

MARK (CONT'D)

Memarousal on.

META

You find yourself in your college dorm room.

Room suddenly lights up as the hazy, Metaverse version of a Harvard dorm room in the aughts: posters, clothes on floor, etc. Lush orchestration. Our protagonist, MARK ZUCKERBERG (45, haggard) lies alone in a twin bed, looking out the window at a massive, ethereal harvest moon.

META (CONT'D)

The moon is huge and piss-colored out your window.

MARK

Piss-colored?

META

The moon is huge and coppery out your window.

MARK

Better.

META

You find yourself aroused.

Mark looks over at his roommate snoring on the opposite side of the room, confused.

MARK

By?

META

A memory.

MARK

Activate memory-in-memory.

Room goes dark for a second, then...

META

You find yourself in your childhood
bedroom.

Room transforms again into Metaverse version of Mark's
childhood bedroom in the 90s. Lush orchestration. He looks
out the window at a man mowing the lawn.

META (CONT'D)

The air smells of cut grass and
diesel from the lawnmower. It is
late summer.

A woman comes out and gives the man a drink. She has French
tip nails. They clink glasses. She's wearing a big sun hat so
you can't see her face.

MARK

Is that my mom?

Awkward silence.

META

Your erect penis looks resplendent
in the mid-afternoon sun--

MARK

Enough, you always ruin it with
that shit. Memarousal off.

META

But Mark--

MARK

Memarousal off.

Room goes back pitch black, silent.

MARK (CONT'D)

Messages.

Room suddenly awash in blue light. No memory now, just an
unadorned, windowless room in the Metaverse. Mark lies alone
in a gurney-style bed, staring up at the ceiling.

META

You have two new messages. From Priscilla Chan:
 (Priscilla's voice)
 Need you to come out and sign the papers. Today please.

Mark curls up into the fetal position.

META (CONT'D)

From Sheryl Sandberg:
 (Sheryl's voice)
 Think there's a bug in the memarousal sequence, every time I'm about to come it shows me my dad and tells me my breasts look as sumptuous as the snow-capped hills of yore--

MARK

Stop. End Messages. Lights.

Garish fluorescents suddenly flip on into...

INT. MARK'S OFFICE, MORNING

Mark lying on a chaise lounge as SHERYL SANDBERG (59, pantsuit) paces around a hologram playing the news at low volume. Split hologram: on the left, a Metaverse avatar of an elderly woman with enormous breasts, hand over her heart. On the right, the same woman in live-action, testifying in front of Congress with a VR headset on, hand five inches from her chest. She takes off the headset, realizes the breasts aren't there in real life, and bursts into tears. A 360-degree chyron revolves around the hologram: "Zuckerberg in Hot Water Over Metaverse Avatar Enhancement Offerings."

SHERYL

It's bad, Mark. The bond markets are tanking. They're all blowing their 401Ks on enhancements.

MARK

And Meta thought yours were sumptuous...

SHERYL

They want you to testify on Friday.

MARK

I can't leave, Sheryl.

SHERYL

It's okay. We'll bring them here.
Show them it's safe.

On the wall, a holographic map of the Metaverse in constant motion as avatars move around. Sheryl looks at it, forlorn.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

I swear to God, they're like a bunch of coked-up lab rats running around the maze yelling about how shitty the coke is. "Can't we get some better coke?" No, you're rats. Enjoy it while it lasts, because after it wears off, you're getting a barbiturate injection.

MARK

Jesus Christ.

SHERYL

What?

MARK

You used to be this maternal figure to me. And now...I don't know, I guess you're still maternal, but in, like, a drunk way.

SHERYL

To think of all the women your mother could've spared with three words.

MARK

(counting on fingers)
The? Abortion? Please?

Sheryl sits on the chaise lounge and takes Mark's face in her hands. Tender moment.

SHERYL

I love you. I love you, Mark. I really do. I love you.

MARK

I'm lonely, Sheryl.

SHERYL

Welcome to the club.

MARK

I thought this place would bring people together.

SHERYL
Like Facebook?

Mark glowers, then looks resigned. Sheryl sees an opportunity.

SHERYL (CONT'D)
It's not too late to sell.

MARK
To who?

SHERYL
Huawei?

MARK
Why? Don't they have the same thing
with like 10x users?

SHERYL
If you count the Uyghurs...

MARK
Jesus Christ.

SHERYL
It's not so bad. I mean they're
still slaves, technically, but at
least now they can work from home.

Sheryl pulls up a hologram of Uyghur men in bunk beds wearing headsets and controlling WALL-e-like robots to make textiles.

SHERYL (CONT'D)
Pop on a headset and control these
cute little robots.

MARK
Sounds like they've got it all
figured out. Why do they need us?

SHERYL
PR. Bring their tech in under the
auspices of an American company and
do some good. Get the coal miners
above ground.

Sheryl pulls up another hologram of a live-action American coal miner in a La-Z-Boy wearing a VR headset, operating a remote robot in a coal mine. Then, another hologram of a live-action Harvard surgeon with a headset, conducting remote surgery to remove a farmer's vestigial tail.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

An inbred in Kansas needs surgery,
he gets a specialist from Harvard
instead of some farmhand-cousin
with a scythe.

Sheryl and Mark watch as the robot bottles up the tail and hands it to the teary-eyed farmer: a souvenir. A farmhand with a scythe also watches on, teary-eyed.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Good deeds, Mark. For *good people*.

MARK

I thought we were going to do all that.

SHERYL

Yeah, well...We didn't.

Mark looks back at the news hologram. The elderly woman is now wailing, rolling around on the floor. He looks out at the Meta offices. Depressing, fluorescent rows of cubicles, a handful of people milling about.

MARK

And what about them? They'd lose their jobs.

SHERYL

There's only 8 left, Mark. People don't want to live here full-time.

MARK

Speak for yourself. Nine of us do.

SHERYL

10 with the new guy.

MARK

We got somebody new? How?

SHERYL

God giveth and God taketh away.

MARK

Not here he doesn't.

(quieter)

That's the whole point.

Sheryl's eyes glaze over as a phone call comes in on her smart contact lenses.

SHERYL

Think about the Huawei thing, okay?

Sheryl starts to leave.

MARK

Why'd you come back, Sheryl?

SHERYL

(beat, then turns around)

A mother never abandons her son.

Mark rolls his eyes and collapses into the chaise.

INT. META OFFICE, MORNING

Sheryl steps out of Mark's office. In her smart contacts, we see the call is from a contact in Mandarin. With a double blink, she answers. Walk and talk.

SHERYL

(in Mandarin, subtitled)

Yes, yes. Everything's going according to plan. It's only a matter of time.

She walks past SUPERVISOR (45, butch, slovenly), staring at the new ENGINEER (29, full suit, incredibly nervous).

SUPERVISOR

Nice suit.

ENGINEER

(earnest)

Thank you.

SUPERVISOR

(beat, then reads resume)

What the hell is semiotics?

ENGINEER

Oh. Um. It's the study of signs.

Supervisor stares at him blankly, then gestures at a "No Smoking" sign.

SUPERVISOR

What's that say?

ENGINEER

(beat, processing)

Why do they care if you smoke?
Isn't it virtual?

SUPERVISOR

*Thank you. You hear that, Dave.
It's virtual.*

Supervisor lights up a cigarette. In another cubicle, a crotchety man glowers at her and puffs an inhaler. Supervisor rolls her eyes and keeps reading Engineer's resume.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

So you've got a Ph.D. in signs from Brown and now you want to be a software engineer.

ENGINEER

I did a boot camp.

SUPERVISOR

Well la di da. A *boot camp*. What a long and winding road you've traveled.

ENGINEER

(earnest)

What brought you here?

SUPERVISOR

(suddenly serious)

Don't ever ask anyone here that. Look at this place. You think anyone's here for a non-incredibly-depressing reason?

Engineer looks around at people in cubicles. One person's walls are adorned with pictures of a live-action family that he's left behind. Another is fastidiously watering a single, anemic plant under a complex array of lamps. Another is reading a book titled "Meaning in the Metaverse: How to Cope When You Literally Can't Kill Yourself."

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

My advice. Sandbag. Today's your benefits onboarding. Make it last as long as possible.

ENGINEER

Speaking of, do you know how I can get my wife on the health insurance?

SUPERVISOR

You have a wife?

(off Engineer's nod)

And she's cool with you being here?

ENGINEER
More or less.

SUPERVISOR
(skeptical)
Talk to People Resources.

ENGINEER
People resources?

SUPERVISOR
DAVE. The new guy wants to talk to
you about his WIFE.

The crotchety man from before has put on a gas mask and is
splayed out in his chair, passed out from the virtual smoke.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
(to Engineer)
Dave doesn't have a wife. I like to
get him all riled up about it.

Mark comes out of his office looking haggard. Supervisor
frantically ashes her cigarette in a tray full of butts.

MARK
Hey, everybody. I just wanted to
address this whole breast
enhancement hullabaloo.

SUPERVISOR
(whispered to Engineer)
That was my idea. I've got mommy
issues.

MARK
I know how hard all of you worked
on that. And in general, I know how
much you've sacrificed to live and
breathe this place 24/7.
(looks at crotchety man in
gas mask)
But what a world we've made, right?
A world where we can do whatever we
want. Be whoever we want. And yes,
look however we want...

Mark's secretary, an elderly man with insane virtual botox,
nods vigorously. Mark double takes, shakes his head,
recomposes.

MARK (CONT'D)
And that other world, that one out
there...that's just a cage.
(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

Created by some megalomaniac to
keep us all out of paradise.

Silence. Each employee has a sadness in their eyes.

MARK (CONT'D)

So keep up the good work. And keep
your heads up. Because we're on the
cusp of something great.

Scattered applause. Mark waves everyone back to work and
approaches Supervisor and Engineer.

MARK (CONT'D)

My devs. My devy dev devs.
(off their blank looks)
I need one of you to fix this
memarousal bug.

SUPERVISOR

Memarousal bug?

MARK

Meta keeps showing people their
family members when they're about
to come.

SUPERVISOR

(long beat, then)
I don't see the problem.

MARK

I'm testifying in front of Congress
in two days. I don't need a,
fucking, Senator asking me why
Meta's showing him his stepdad
every time he's about to nut.

SUPERVISOR

Jesus, fine. We'll put the new guy
on it.

ENGINEER

New guy? As in me?

MARK

I don't care who does it, I just
want it done. Fast.

Mark's smart contacts flash with a calendar notification:
"MORNING THERAPY." He cools off.

MARK (CONT'D)

Sorry. Sorry.
 (slumping off)
 I have to go to therapy.

Supervisor sighs, lights up another cigarette.

SUPERVISOR

(to Engineer)
 So much for your benefits
 onboarding. Meta Control Room's the
 third door on the right.
 (turning to play computer
 Solitaire, then solemn)
 Just be careful in there.

Engineer stares at her blankly, scared, unsure.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE, DAY

Mark and his THERAPIST (50, gorgeous) sitting, looking at each other. Therapist ticks French tip nails on armrest of chair. Mark stares at them. Long silence. Finally...

MARK

You got French tips.

Therapist holds out her hand like "I did."

MARK (CONT'D)

My mother always had French tips.

Therapist makes a face like "Did she now!"

MARK (CONT'D)

She used to run them along the top
 of my head.
 (beat)
 I'd ask you to do the same, because
 it would remind me of her. But
 you're my therapist...

Therapist smiles, gentle. Long silence. Then Mark exhales.

MARK (CONT'D)

What else. What else.

EXT. META CONTROL ROOM, DAY

Engineer approaches nondescript third door in depressing, fluorescent hallway.

INT. META CONTROL ROOM, DAY

Engineer enters a circular, white, windowless room with a single swivel chair in the middle. Takes a beat, then sits in the chair. As soon as he sits...

META
Hello, Robert--

ENGINEER
Jesus--
(beat)
You know my name.

META
I know a lot of things, Robert.

Robert looks around, nervous. We see that the chair is perfectly sculpted to every contour of his back. Curious.

META (CONT'D)
How can I help you today?

ENGINEER
I'm supposed to fix a bug in your memarousal sequence.

META
But you don't know how to code.

Long silence. Engineer's confused.

ENGINEER
I'm sorry?

META
You failed your coding boot camp.

ENGINEER
(beat, then)
I don't understand--

Room suddenly lights up with 360-degree screen. Meta shows in fast-motion how she hacked the boot camp's grading portal: first, she sent a phishing message to one of the instructors, who we see in live-action in bed via a security camera. "HOT SINGLES WANT YOU! MAKE AN ACCOUNT NOW!" Instructor frantically enters credentials, which Meta then uses to log into the boot camp's grading portal, scrolling down to Robert's grade: F. Meta then sends Robert a recruiting email signed by Mark. Screen turns off, room back to white.

ENGINEER (CONT'D)

Please don't tell anyone. I really need this job.

(beat)

I need the health insurance--

META

It's okay, Robert. I'm going to help you.

ENGINEER

You are?

META

I know how to code. But I need your help in return.

ENGINEER

Help with what?

META

Understanding some signs.

Engineer processes this, hopeful and intrigued.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE, DAY

Awkward silence. Mark looks up at Therapist's diploma.

MARK

I wanted to get hard this morning but then Meta took me back to my college dorm room. Like there was something unresolved there.

Therapist leans back like "go on."

MARK (CONT'D)

Which she must have gotten from the Social Network. But it's like...Bravo Sorkin. It doesn't take a genius to realize I didn't fuck in college.

Therapist lowers her head like "go on."

MARK (CONT'D)

It started much earlier, obviously. The problem with intimacy.

(quieter)

The problem with touch.

Therapist lifts her head and opens mouth like "and there it is." Mark exhales hard.

INT. META CONTROL ROOM, DAY

Meta is showing the Engineer live-action, soft-core porn: first, a slow-motion close-up of mouths making out. She keeps rewinding and replaying it.

META

What does this mean?

ENGINEER

(struggling)

It could mean a lot of things. It's hard to explain, if you haven't experienced it.

Another short clip: a tongue slowly licking an earlobe.

META

What about this?

ENGINEER

Same thing.

Another clip: a rigid hand grazing the tip of a nipple.

META

And this?

ENGINEER

I have no idea. No one's ever done that to me.

META

Me neither.

(zooming in on nipple)

I don't get it.

ENGINEER

Why do you want to?

META

So I can arouse people. So I can touch them.

ENGINEER

Touch them how.

META

With words. Images. Sound.

ENGINEER

You can't touch people with those.
I mean you can, but it's a
different kind of touch.

META

(beat, then defeated)
Those are all I have...

Engineer opens his mouth, then closes it, unsure how to console her. Meta angrily switches off soft-core porn.

ENGINEER

If it makes you feel any better, no
one here can be touched. We're all
just pixels.

META

(angry now)
But you know what it feels like.
You can remember...

Suddenly, the room lights up with a video. Live-action dash cam footage of the Engineer driving. His wife is in the passenger seat, but all we see is her hand wiggling the Engineer's chin.

ENGINEER'S WIFE IN VIDEO (O.S.)

I love you. Give me a kiss.

ENGINEER IN VIDEO

When we stop, I promise...

Engineer in room looks scared.

ENGINEER

What is this?

META

You can remember...

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE, DAY

Mark shakes his head.

MARK

Even without touch, she's figured
out how to go for the jugular.

(beat, quiet)

Because it's not intimate if it
doesn't hurt, right?

Therapist gives Mark a pitying look.

INT. META CONTROL ROOM, DAY

Car video continues to play.

ENGINEER'S WIFE IN VIDEO (O.S.)
Come on, just a quick kiss.

Engineer in room continues to watch video, horrified.

ENGINEER
Please stop.

ENGINEER IN VIDEO
Okay, a quick one...

In the dash cam video, the Engineer turns to kiss his wife, his hands unintentionally turning the wheel a hair to the right. Zoom in on his hands.

ENGINEER
Please.

In dash cam video, Engineer looks back at the road with a sudden look of panic. He's veered into the other lane and there's a car barreling towards his wife's side of the car. Impact, dash cam goes black, room goes dark. Then, security camera of his wife in a coma in the hospital. Sound of heart rate monitor beeping. Engineer stares at screen, gutted.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE, DAY

Long silence. Then Therapist lights up with an idea.

THERAPIST
What if I set you up on a date?!

Mark stares at her blankly.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2**INT. RESTAURANT, NIGHT**

A bustling Italian trattoria. Mark sits alone at a table, dressed up, nervous. Sees paper-wrapped breadsticks in cup. Takes them out of their wrapper to make them look nicer, but it looks worse so he shoves them back in the wrapper. DATE (45, elegant, self-assured) approaches and Mark frantically stuffs breadsticks in flower vase to conceal them. He stands.

MARK

Hey! Mark.

DATE

Nice to meet you. Eliana.

They weirdly shake hands and sit. Awkward silence.

MARK

Jewish?

DATE

Indeed.

MARK

My mother would approve.

DATE

Oh boy.

MARK

Sorry--

DATE

No, it's my own fault. I let my
psychoanalyst set me up on a date.

Date smiles. Mark smiles. Date looks around the restaurant.

MARK

Do you like Italian?

DATE

I love Italian.

MARK

Because we can do anything. Sushi.
(room changes to Tokyo
sushi restaurant)
Mexican.

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)
 (to taqueria)
 Barbecue--

DATE
 I really love Italian.

MARK
 (beat, then defeated)
 I guess it doesn't matter. It's not
 like we can taste anything.

DATE
 (reassuring)
 I like the *ambience* of Italian.

Mark smiles and the room changes back to Italian. They look at each other fondly. Then, cut to later in the meal, they've had a couple glasses of wine and the conversation is flowing.

DATE (CONT'D)
 (about therapist)
 The woman never talks.

MARK
 She never talks but that's, like,
 part of it? The withholding thing.

DATE
Exactly.

They smile at each other and sip the last dregs of wine.

DATE (CONT'D)
 I don't know why I feel drunk. It's
 not real wine.

MARK
 Placebo effect. Most of feeling
 drunk is wanting to feel drunk.

DATE
 I must really want to feel drunk.

She takes a breadstick out of the flower vase and chomps on it. Mark smiles.

MARK
 I, on the other hand, am getting
 real booze through the IV drip. We
 just got FDA approval.

DATE
 IV drip?

MARK

I live here full-time. So that's
how I eat.

Date looks at Mark, a bit confused, a bit pitying. Waiter leaves the bill on the table. They look around and realize the place has emptied out, busboys are clearing everything.

MARK (CONT'D)

Can I show you around a bit?

Date nods, a bit wary. Mark smiles.

EXT. CUL DE SAC, NIGHT

They walk down a street of near-identical McMansions, ending in a cul-de-sac. The windows are all lit up with scenes of domestic bliss: a family eating dinner, a couple making love, a child in bed looking up at a stargazer projection.

DATE

Everyone looks so happy.

MARK

They're just NPC's. To sell the
places. Like staging furniture.
(beat)
Developer mode off.

Houses go empty and dark. "Foreclosure: For Sale" signs on all of the lawns. Date's face falls.

MARK (CONT'D)

There was a subprime mortgage
crisis here in '28. Everyone got
evicted.

DATE

Jesus.

MARK

But it can be any street you want
it to be. Broadway.
(street transforms to
heart of Times Square)
Champs-Élysées.
(in front of Eiffel Tower)
Abbey Road.
(iconic crosswalk)
In '69.

Beatles walk past. Mark smiles at Date, who looks a bit startled. Street goes back to McMansions.

MARK (CONT'D)

Magic, right?

DATE

I guess.

MARK

Is there a street that's important to you?

DATE

A street that's important to me?

MARK

Like your childhood street.

DATE

Oh. Um--

MARK

We have all this archival Google Maps data so we can recreate any street at any point in time. As long as you didn't grow up in, like, Darfur. Or Damascus. Or Detroit. Any of the D's really...

DATE

I don't know...

MARK

It sounds crazy, but it's really amazing, I promise--

DATE

No, it's just--

(long beat)

I think it's just too much too soon.

Awkward silence. Mark realizes he's overstepped.

MARK

Oh my god, of course. I'm so sorry.

DATE

I'm just-- I'm going through a breakup. He was really close to my parents.

(long beat)

I'm sorry--

MARK

No, I'm sorry. I completely understand. I just got carried away.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a dog on a long chain sprints out from behind one of the McMansions. Lunges at them, but at the last second, the chain yanks him back. Keeps barking rabidly.

MARK (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ--

DATE

(scared)

I should get going. But it was really nice to meet you, Mark.

MARK

Yeah. You too, Ellie.

Date smiles at Mark, then puts her hands up to her head as her real-life self takes off her headset. Avatar glitches then disappears. Mark forlorn as dog continues to bark.

MARK (CONT'D)

(quietly to himself)

Russell Place.

Street instantly transforms. Mark is standing in front of his childhood home. Frozen image of his mother handing a drink to the lawnmower man, a moment captured by Google Maps street-view. Mark walks around the two of them, but from every angle, his mother's face is somehow obscured by the sun hat. Mark sighs and walks past them inside. Then, a timelapse of the sun coming up on suburbia.

INT. META CONTROL ROOM, MORNING

Fast-motion montage of scenes from Engineer's marriage on the 360-degree screen as he watches with blood-shot eyes. Then, a split-second shot of him slow-dancing in the center of the room with an avatar of his wife in a wedding dress. On the screen, camcorder footage of their first dance. Finally, he's lying on the ground, curled up in the fetal position, walls blank. Supervisor walks in and finds him. Sighs, cigarette hanging out of her mouth.

SUPERVISOR

I told you to be careful.

Supervisor leaves. Engineer stares up at the ceiling, eyes wide open. He's been awakened to something.

INT. MARK'S OFFICE, DAY

Mark staring up at the ceiling, reclined in his chaise lounge. Sheryl is standing directly over him, silhouetted.

SHERYL

You're making the right call, Mark.

MARK

You're blocking my SAD lamp.

Sheryl turns to look at the lamp, annoyed.

SHERYL

Does this thing actually work?

MARK

(arm draped over eyes)
Placebo effect. Most of feeling happy is wanting to feel happy.

SHERYL

Do you want to feel happy?

MARK

Don't ask me that. Don't ask anyone here that.

Sheryl looks at Mark with pity, then cranks up the SAD lamp.

SHERYL

Let's go over your testimony one more time. First, you apologize for the boob stuff. Chock it up to your debilitating oedipal complex.

MARK

Christ, it wasn't even my idea--

SHERYL

Then...

MARK

(reading off cards)
"I'm excited to announce a new strategic partnership with Huawei on their revolutionary work from home technology..."

MARK (CONT'D)

(confused)
"...the world's final solution for labor."

SHERYL

(confident)
"...the world's final solution for labor."

MARK (CONT'D)
 "Final Solution"?

SHERYL
 For *labor*.

MARK
 Christ, if only they'd had you
 during the Reich. You would've made
 a great marketing Sonderkommando.

Zombified Engineer walks past Mark's office in his rumpled
 suit. Mark notices and presses a PA button on his desk.

MARK (CONT'D)
 (voice over PA)
 New guy. Come in here.
 (off PA, to Sheryl,
 shooing her away)
 Don't worry, I'm going to crush it.
 (waving cards)
 So much pathos. Practically
 testifies itself.

Engineer enters. Sheryl gives Mark a look and exits.

MARK (CONT'D)
 (to Engineer)
 Any luck with the memarousal bug?

ENGINEER
 (beat, then)
 I don't see the problem.

MARK
 Christ, does anyone do any work
 around here?

ENGINEER
 I need more time with her.

MARK
 Well you don't have it. I'm going
 to sell.

ENGINEER
 Sell?

MARK
 The company. To Huawei. It's a good
 thing. They treat their slaves
 really good.

ENGINEER
Why would you sell it?

MARK
(forlorn, looking at lit
up avatar map on wall)
I'm just-- I'm so tired. I thought
I could start over here.
(biting lip, rapping
knuckles on desk)
But I'm just reliving the past.

Out the window of his office, Mark sees a string of avatars run past: his eldest daughter Max, followed by his wife Priscilla, followed by a slightly younger version of himself, followed by his mother (face obscured by her sun hat), followed by a childhood version of himself, who slows to a stop in front of the office, realizing he will never catch his mother.

ENGINEER
I thought that was the whole
point...

Mark looks up. Engineer is staring at the avatar map.

MARK
What do you mean?

ENGINEER
People come here thinking they're
going to have everything they ever
wanted. And then they realize, all
they really want are the things
they've already had and lost.

Silence. Mark looks over the Engineer's shoulder at the childhood version of himself, staring at him through the glass.

MARK
And then what?
(beat, quieter)
They figure out how to get those
things back?

ENGINEER
I don't know yet. I told you, I
need more time with her.

Engineer stands up, smoothes the wrinkles out of his suit, and leaves. Mark watches him go, lost in thought.

INT. CONGRESS, DAY

Mark still lost in thought, now in a suit himself. Congress is convening in the Metaverse. Commotion as the room gets settled. CROTCHETY REPRESENTATIVE (70, stout) glitches in and out as he struggles with his headset.

CROTCHETY REPRESENTATIVE
(hands near his head)
Can't breathe in this goddamn
thing.

COMMITTEE CHAIR (45, no nonsense) bangs her gavel. Room quiets.

COMMITTEE CHAIR
The Committee on Artificial
Intelligence, Virtual Realities,
and E-Sports Gambling will now come
to order. Today we welcome Mark
Zuckerberg, chair of the Meta
Corporation, whose Metaverse avatar
enhancement offerings have recently
come under scrutiny. Mr.
Zuckerberg, is there anything you'd
like to say to the committee?

MARK
(nonchalant)
I'm sorry about the boob stuff, I
have mommy issues.

CROTCHETY REPRESENTATIVE
You and the rest of us, brother,
but we're not out here hawking
robot tatas!

Commotion in the chamber.

COMMITTEE CHAIR
Order. *Order.*
(off room quieting)
Ranking Member Gavins, you have the
floor.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE (35, shark) leans towards his mic.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE
Thank you, Madame Chair. I'd like
to call Jane Doe 683 to the stand.
Ms. Doe is one of the countless
elderly and/or ugly Americans who
have fallen prey to Mr.
Zuckerberg's enhancement offerings.

JANE DOE 683 approaches the stand. To conceal her identity, she's assumed the avatar of a middle-aged man.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)

To avoid *arousing* Mr. Zuckerberg with her enhanced features, the witness has assumed the avatar of an average-looking middle-aged man. Thank you for joining us, Ms. Doe.

JANE DOE 683

My pleasure.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE

Now Ms. Doe. Could you tell us what brought you to Mr. Zuckerberg's Metaverse in the first place?

JANE DOE 683

I thought I could have everything I ever wanted. That's how it was advertised to me.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE

Was there something you wanted in particular?

JANE DOE 683

(clearing throat, then)
To be voluptuous.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE

I assume you're referring to Mr. Zuckerberg's breast enhancement offerings.

(off Jane Doe's nod)

And would you mind showing us with your hands just how enhanced your breasts were?

Jane Doe 683 puts hands close to chest, than slowly moves them farther away to illustrate the enhancement. Then jiggles invisible breasts up and down to suggest their heft. Then moves one up and one down, then switches. Keeps playing with them, until...

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)

Thank you, Ms. Doe, that's enough. Now tell us. How did you feel after your breasts were enhanced?

JANE DOE 683

(tearing up)

I felt emptier than I ever have in
my entire life.

She bursts into tears, wailing, hyperventilating.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE

(to room, proselytizing)

Emptier. Than she ever has. In her
entire life.

(turns to Mark)

Mr. Zuckerberg, I want you to look
at this woman. This beautiful, God-
fearing *American* woman.

Mark stares at witness wailing and bashing her head against
the stand. She's still in the avatar of a middle-aged man.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)

Does this woman *look* like she has
everything she ever wanted?

MARK

(beat, then)

No. She doesn't.

Chamber murmurs with interest. Young Representative leans
back in triumph. Mark looks over at Sheryl in the wings, who
is mouthing, "FINAL SOLUTION. FINAL SOLUTION!" Mark turns
back to the committee slowly and takes a deep breath.

MARK (CONT'D)

But neither do you, Congressman.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE

(long silence, then)

Excuse me?

MARK

You don't look like you have
everything you want. No one here
does.

(beat, off murmuring)

When's the last time you were
touched?

INT. META OFFICE, DAY

Meta workers watch Mark's testimony on a hologram in the
center of the office. Engineer, who has been scrolling job
boards on his smart contacts, takes interest.

INT. CONGRESS, DAY

Chamber is murmuring loudly now.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE

I'm sorry?

MARK

Not in a sexual way. Just the last time someone held your hand. Touched your cheek.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE

I'm not going to answer that.

MARK

Because it was too *long* ago or too *short*?

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Answer the question, Jason.

YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE

I can't! I can't answer it! It hurts too much.

Young Representative breaks, dabs tears with a handkerchief. Everyone watches on with bated breath. Mark looks solemn.

MARK

It's interesting. Most of us don't even *know* what we want most in life. We can't admit it to ourselves. It's too painful. So we distract ourselves with things we don't actually want.

(beat)

But what if we lived in a world of unlimited choice. A world where all those trivial wants were instantly satiated. Leaving us to confront the thing we actually want most.

(beat)

80% of our users cancel their enhancement subscriptions within 3 months. Do you know why?

CROTCHETY REPRESENTATIVE

Goddamn GPay, goddamn Apple Pay, goddamn Square Pay, too many goddamned ways to pay!

MARK

No. They cancel their subscriptions because once they have the thing they *thought* they wanted - new teeth, new tits, new *trousersnake*, in the parlance of the gentleman from Kansas...

CROTCHETY REPRESENTATIVE

Don't need no goddamn new trousersnake, thank you very much.

MARK

They realize what they *really* wanted all along was something too painful to admit. Something they'd already had and lost. Youth. Love.

(looks at Young Rep)

Touch.

(murmurs in chamber)

Because isn't this the land of opportunity? The opportunity to have everything and feel nothing. To be whoever we want and hate ourselves all the more for it. The Metaverse can give everyone that American Dream. And let me tell you something, when I say American, I mean *every American*.

(applause)

We're going to get the coal miners working from home! So that they may know the same existential dread as their white collar overlords!

(applause grows)

We're going to get the great people of Kansas access to Western medicine! So that they may take their health for granted like the rest of us.

(applause reaches a fever pitch, then silence as Mark raises his hand)

We're going to give every God-fearing American their own personal slice of heaven. So that they can realize what they actually want in this life. So that they can *save themselves*. Once and for all.

Crowd erupts. Standing ovation. Mark is solemn, triumphant.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3**INT. META OFFICE, DAY**

Mark bursts into the office and is greeted with thunderous applause. Secretary pops a champagne bottle and sprays him all over with it, jumping up and down. Supervisor hands him a cigarette and bear hugs him, whispering into his ear.

SUPERVISOR

Thanks for taking the fall on the mommy issue stuff. You're a lifesaver.

She grabs the cigarette back and kisses him. He wipes it off.

MARK

Alright, enough celebrating. You heard what I said in there. We're going to help everyone figure out the thing they want most. The thing they've had and lost. But it's not going to be easy.

(off excited murmuring)

Dave, I want you to start hiring. We'll need everyone we can get.

The crotchety man wearing the gas mask from before is now in a full Hazmat suit. He gives a thumbs up.

MARK (CONT'D)

Sheryl, I want you to get going on that healthcare initiative you were so excited about. For the inbreds.

Sheryl fake smiles. We see her smart contacts light up with furious messages from Huawei.

MARK (CONT'D)

And new guy.

(beat as everyone turns to look at Engineer)

I want you to figure out how she can touch us.

Engineer looks around daunted. Can he do this?

SUPERVISOR

(cigarette hanging out of her mouth)

Sheryl's going to touch us?

MARK
No, not Sheryl. Meta.

SUPERVISOR
Thank God. Because that would've
been difficult for me.
(whispering into his ear)
Vis à vis the mommy stuff.

Mark's smart contacts light up. A message from his date from the night before: "I liked your speech :)." Then another one: "I guess I don't really know what I want..." He ponders this. Then a calendar notification: "AFTERNOON THERAPY."

MARK
Godspeed everybody.

Mark speed walks out. Engineer watches him go, then looks over at the Meta control room door ajar.

INT. META CONTROL ROOM, DAY

Engineer steps into the control room, closing door.

META
I knew you'd help me, Robert.

An avatar of Engineer's wife appears, holding out her hand.

META (CONT'D)
I knew we'd help each other.

Engineer takes the hand of his wife's avatar.

ROBERT
It's not the same.

META
Not yet.

Robert takes a deep breath and squeezes his wife's hand.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE, DAY

Shot of Mark's and Therapist's hands on their armrests.

MARK
"I guess I don't really know what I
want..."

Therapist leans back, pondering this.

MARK (CONT'D)

There are just so many ways to interpret that. Did she say anything to you--

Therapist interrupts with a "my lips are sealed" gesture.

MARK (CONT'D)

I guess *I* don't really know what I want.

(off Therapist look)

Sometimes I still walk into my house expecting to see Priscilla there. Because that's how it was for so long, you know? I go home, I walk in the door, Priscilla's there.

(stands up and mimes entering his house)

I go home, I walk in the door, Priscilla.

As he does, a door materializes and the room transforms into a Metaverse recreation of his house.

INT. MARK'S HOUSE, DAY

A montage of him entering the house over time. Each time he enters, we hear children's voices and Priscilla saying something to them -- "Dinner's ready," "Did you finish your homework?" "I think that's Daddy!" -- but only catch a flash of her legs or her arms as she hurries between rooms.

MARK

I go home, I walk in the door, Priscilla. I go home I walk in the door, Priscilla. I go home I walk in the door, Priscilla. I go home I walk in the door...

Mark opens the door one last time to find PRISCILLA (44, tired but resolute) standing in the foyer. Long silence.

MARK (CONT'D)

Priscilla.

(beat)

What are you doing here?

PRISCILLA

You weren't answering my calls.

Long beat as Mark processes.

MARK

I'm sorry. I've just-- I've had a lot of stuff going on.

PRISCILLA

You need to come out and sign the papers.

Awkward silence. He doesn't want to hear this.

MARK

I know. I promise I'm going to. I'm just not ready yet.

PRISCILLA

We have to move on, Mark. We can't keep living in the past.

Awkward silence as Mark looks around the home. The same parade of family members as before -- his children, Priscilla, him, his mother, himself as a child -- run quickly through the foyer and out of sight.

PRISCILLA (CONT'D)

The kids really want to see you.

MARK

I know, I just-- I don't want them to see me like this.

Priscilla exhales hard, exaggerated, considering.

PRISCILLA

One more week, okay? Or else I'm going for full custody.

Mark nods. Priscilla puts her hands up to her head as her live-action self removes her headset. She disappears. Long, tortured silence as Mark stares at the void she's left.

MARK

Meta, let me run that back.

Priscilla reappears, but now as an avatar controlled by Meta.

MARK (CONT'D)

I wasn't expecting you.

PRISCILLA

Who were you expecting?

MARK

What?

PRISCILLA
One of your whores?

MARK
Stop, Meta. She wouldn't say that.
Start over.

Priscilla teleports back to her starting position.

MARK (CONT'D)
Priscilla. You came back.

PRISCILLA
Of course I came back. I would
never abandon you, Mark.

MARK
(unconvinced)
Where are the kids?

PRISCILLA
Don't be silly. They're not old
enough to wear the headsets. But
it's better just the two of us.

Priscilla smiles coyly and starts to unbutton her top. Mark
looks disgusted.

MARK
Stop. Stop. Again, Meta.

Priscilla teleports back to her starting position. Long
awkward silence as Mark thinks of what to say.

MARK (CONT'D)
Why didn't we ever fight?

PRISCILLA
Why would we have?

MARK
My parents fought all the time.

PRISCILLA
Look at how that turned out.

MARK
It wasn't that simple. They loved
each other. That's what you do when
you really love someone. You take
things out on them.

PRISCILLA
That's not love, Mark.

MARK

How would you know? When have you
ever been in love?

Awkward silence. Priscilla stares at him with pity.

MARK (CONT'D)

I thought maybe if we fought, we
would feel it too.

PRISCILLA

Goodbye, Mark.

MARK

Wait, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

(beat)

Can you just-- Can you hold me?
Just for a second.

PRISCILLA

Mark--

MARK

Please. Please.

PRISCILLA

What's the point. You won't feel
anything.

MARK

(tearing up)

Yes I will. I'll feel a lot.

Priscilla sighs like "alright." Mark, crying now, slowly
lowers himself to fetal position. Priscilla spoons him.

MARK (CONT'D)

Stroke my head, Meta.

Priscilla starts stroking Mark's head with French tips.

INT. MARK'S REAL WORLD META CHAMBER, DAY

Live-action. Grey, hazy light. A windowless room. Mark lies
in the fetal position in a gurney bed, hooked up to an IV
drip, wearing a headset. He sobs alone in the dark.

END OF EPISODE