

TRUTH BOMB

Written by

Kristofer Pitzek

k.pitzek@gmail.com
(951) 550-9108

INT. THO'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

JAMES (25) -- chiseled, Black, all brawn -- is asleep in a rat's nest of sheets. A PHONE is partially obscured by women's underwear.

He wakes up. Pats around half-consciously. Sits up. Pats again, now with panic. Stops. Behind him: a view of DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES. We're a dozen stories up.

WE FOLLOW his shirtless torso through the room. DJ equipment and posters starring a VIETNAMESE GIRL with purple hair -- "BAE BALENCIPRADA" -- abound.

JAMES
(calling out - "TAH")
Tho?

Distantly, we hear the siren song of the digital era -- the TIKTOK COUNTDOWN.

INT. THO'S APARTMENT - LOFT - CONTINUOUS

CU ON THO (yes, "TAH") (26), the girl in the posters. She's emotionally stunted and has no idea.

She faces a social media influencer's three tools: phone; ring-light; tripod.

THE COUNTDOWN CONTINUES as incense smoke winds its way to her face. She takes a breath, eyes closed, then they open wide as DARK LATIN ISLAND POP MUSIC begins to play:

THO
Hey y'all! Thank you so much for
loving my new single--

JAMES (OS)
(distantly)
Tho?

Tho clears her throat. Restarts the COUNTDOWN. Then MUSIC:

THO
Hey y'all thank you so much for
loving my new single--

James, essentially naked, steps into frame.

THO (CONT'D)
Yes? You're in my shot!

JAMES
Have you seen my phone?

THO
James. What if I was streaming?
People can't be out here thinkin
Bae BalenciPrada having a
boyfriend.

JAMES
But I'm not your boyfriend?

THO
They'll think I'm queer-baiting.

JAMES
But you are queer.

THO
But they won't think I am.

JAMES
But it doesn't matter what they
think.

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You haven't seen my phone?

INT. THO'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

RINGING. James is fully dressed. Rummaging through Tho's bed.
MORE RINGING. He finds his phone. Admires the mess.

JAMES
Quite a session, huh?

THO
What am I your therapist?

Not funny.

THO (CONT'D)
Can you leave, please? I have to
get a couple more videos done
before dinner.

She compulsively scrolls through TikTok. A TikTok news video:

TIKTOK PUNDIT
 (on phone)
*--Russia is literally
 creating human clones to
 fight in a global war--*

JAMES
 I thought we were going to
 dinner together?

She looks up from her phone:

THO
 Pete and Bri already saw us arrive
 together at a social thing once
 this week. Twice is a pattern.

JAMES
 (blinks)
 What if we told them we're seeing
 each other? You know, *just* them?

Tho gets a DM from "MARC TELLIER":

Yoo waddup wit it tonight?

Above this message are some flirtatious emojis... from both parties...

She locks her phone quickly. Kisses him.

THO
 (spacing)
 What?

JAMES
 Nevermind. I'll see you tonight.

He kisses her forehead. He smiles. She smiles.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

James's smile falls. He takes a breath. Walks off.

EXT. RESTAURANT GARDEN - GOLDEN HOUR

PETER (25) and BRIANNA (23) sit at a table. Peter is loud the way every try-hard finance bro is, every encounter a potential business opportunity. Brianna is quiet, put together, face perpetually in phone. Peter watches Brianna.

PETER
 Hey, babe? Remind me: do you have
blue eyes?

BRIANNA
 (absently)
 Mhmm.
 (then, looking up)
 What?

She locks her phone. She doesn't have blue eyes.

PETER
 Oh! *Right*. They're *hazel*. You've
 been looking at that phone so long
 I nearly *forgot*--

Brianna picks her phone back up -- her home screen a picture
 of YOUNG JAMES, PETER, and BRIANNA in high school--

BRIANNA
 JP asked me to book his flight back
 to LA. I have to finish before I
 start drinking.

PETER
 It's Friday night. At nine. He
 can't book *one* flight on his own--?

Tho approaches, out of breath.

THO
 Yo! Where's James?

Tho and Brianna kiss cheeks, Brianna without removing her
 eyes from her phone.

PETER
 Hooking up with some new thot.

BRIANNA
Thot, Peter?

THO
 Who?

PETER
 I'm just speculating. What? Are you
 trying to smash on our boy?

THO
 James *is* beautiful. But James is
 James.

BRIANNA
 Peter. *Smash*?

PETER

He's leaving to play pro ball. He should be playing the field... before -- you know -- he plays on the *field*--

THO

What?

PETER

Playing the field--

THO

No. What do you mean he's leaving?

PETER

He's moving to Colorado to train with the Rapids.

THO

That's *snacka skit*.

PETER

No. You don't say "that's." It's just "snacka skit." Like "bullshit."

BRIANNA

(not looking up)

He's right.

THO

Why didn't he tell me he's leaving?

Brianna takes a SHARP BREATH. The others look at her.

BRIANNA

My boss's wife's dog has cancer.

She fully looks up for the first time.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Do I send flowers?

THO

Flowers are nice.

PETER

For a sick dog?

THO

(to Brianna)

Did you know about James?

Brianna is back to her phone. She responds with a SHRUG.

Tho checks James's Instagram: scant posts of him playing soccer. Nothing about leaving. She refreshes the page. Still nothing. Confusion and concern spread across her face.

WE HEAR Tho's song play from a nearby table: THREE GIRLS watch Tho's TikTok. They look over, star-struck.

She ignores them, texts James:

Why didnt u tell me ur leaving?

Meanwhile, Peter watches Tho and Brianna -- scornful of the phone-obsessed.

Tho gets a call from her Dad. She winces. Declines it.

PETER

Wow didn't know we were going to
have such a nice time together.

He chugs his cocktail. Plucks a hair from his head, puts it in his drink, and looks around for a waiter--

Tho receives a text--

Dad: *Call me back.*

-- but she sets her phone down.

THO

Sorry. That was rude of me. What do
you want to talk about? NFTs? Elon
Musk? Pending nuclear war?

PETER

Impending. Hold on.

A waiter comes to him.

PETER (CONT'D)

Hey my drink had a hair in it. Can
you... I don't know. Get me a new
one?

WAITER

Right away I'm sorry about that.

Brianna suddenly looks up.

BRIANNA

Do I address the flowers to my
boss's wife or the dog?

INT. VAN - LATE NIGHT

FAROOQ (24), bleached hair under a cap pulled low, quiet and shrewd, drives along Sunset Boulevard to BAD TRAP MUSIC.

REVEAL BLACKED OUT BRO in back, head hung low over phone. He's plugged into the aux cord. Farooq peeks at Bro in the rear view as Bro lurches a little.

FAROOQ

Do you need to puke, my friend?

No answer. Instead, Bro pulls something up on his phone -- he's on autopilot...

Farooq looks at his own phone -- one mile to go -- suddenly MOANING cuts over the BAD TRAP MUSIC. He looks back at the rearview -- Bro is passed out again, but -- and we only barely make it out -- PORN is playing on Bro's phone.

Farooq pulls over. Spins.

FAROOQ (CONT'D)

My friend... HEY!

Bro wakes up. Stares at Farooq blankly.

FAROOQ (CONT'D)

Your ride's up.

Bro looks down and calmly unplugs his phone -- the radio automatically begins playing:

RADIO HOST

--a series of nuclear missile tests
in the region--

Bro shuts the door.

RADIO HOST (CONT'D)

--as some kind of show of military
might--

Farooq turns the radio off. Quiet beat. Blinks in disbelief.

Then a HALF-NAKED MAN SLAPS at the van window -- SHOUTS something unintelligible -- Farooq instinctively grabs for the center console -- opens it to reveal A HANDGUN.

But the Half-Naked Man continues on flailing, muttering...

Farooq shuts the console. Takes a breath. MUSIC continues...

He begins to drive again.... until the MUSIC CUTS OUT to an INCOMING CALL:

FAROOQ
(answers)
Ammi? Are you feeling okay?

AMMI (OS)
Farooq? Why did you call?

He deflates.

FAROOQ
(tenderly)
You called me, Ammi.

AMMI
The man knocked on the door again.

Judging by Farooq's reaction this isn't the first time.

FAROOQ
That's okay. Don't answer.
(checking phone)
I have one more ride. Are you
feeling alright?

AMMI
Farooq? Why did you call?

Farooq winces as he pulls over --

FAROOQ
I'll be home soon, Ammi. Okay? I'm
on my last ride.

The van door slides open to...

FAROOQ (CONT'D)
I love you.

REVEAL JAMES. Farooq hangs up; MUSIC BEGINS again. James settles in.

FAROOQ (CONT'D)
Downtown?

JAMES
Yeah. Thank you.

Farooq nods. Drives. Silence.

And James gets a text from Tho. He didn't respond to the last one, which reads:

Why didnt u tell me ur leaving?

JAMES (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Damn it Peter.

The new text reads:

*Missed you at dinner. See u at the
warehouse party?*

His eyes wander.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What is this, man? Middle Eastern?

FAROOQ
(offended, but hiding it)
It's Pakistani.

JAMES
(not privy to the offense)
Right on. I dig it.
(beat)
You from there?

FAROOQ
My mother is.

Farooq turns it off. Holds the aux cord out for James.

JAMES
Oh. Uh.

James plugs his phone in. THO'S MUSIC plays immediately.
Loudly. He fumbles to turn it down.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Oh my bad. Shit.

James nods his head to the beat awkwardly.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm actually hooking up with the
girl who produced this--

FAROOQ
You're hooking up with Bae
BalenciPrada?

JAMES
Uh. Well actually it's on the sly
so--

FAROOQ
Isn't she gay?

Farooq peers skeptically at James in the rearview -- you? really? -- and now that they've made eye contact, James's face changes.

JAMES
Hold up. Do I know you?

FAROOQ
Doubt it.

James checks his phone.

JAMES
Farooq -- yeah. We went to
Centennial together. AP Algebra.
Remember?

Farooq is silent.

JAMES (CONT'D)
James Reed?
(beat)
You don't remember me?

FAROOQ
Sorry my friend. You must be
thinking of someone else.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE WAREHOUSE CLUB - MIDNIGHT

Peter, Tho, Brianna in a long line outside a warehouse. Tho's arms are crossed. Peter takes a big, anxious drag of a vape pen. Brianna is stuck to her phone.

PETER
Babe, work your magic on the
bouncers. It smells bad out here.

Defiant look from Brianna.

BRIANNA
Tho can't work her magic?

THO
No way. Dudes like that see queer
like this and short circuit.

Beat. Bri stomps to the front.

THO (CONT'D)
Okay so. I know we agreed we would
never talk about this...

Peter threatens her with his eyes.

THO (CONT'D)
But you haven't told anyone -- no
one -- about what we did last year,
right?

PETER
No, Tho, that would single-handedly
end my relationship.

THO
So you haven't told J?

PETER
No. Especially not James, Tho.

THO
Okay.
(beat)
I told Bri.

TWO FANS of Tho's approach suddenly:

FAN
Oh my god I love you! Can we get a
selfie?

Tho waves them in and smiles.

THO
I told Bri you kissed someone while
you guys were on a break.

FAN
(camera ready)
Smile!

They smile.

PETER
We didn't just kiss, Tho. We rented
a wine chateau in Temecula and had
sex for four days straight.

The fans awkwardly stand there.

FAN
Why are you yelling at her?

THO
 (to Fans)
 It's okay. He's troubled.
 (to Peter)
 I didn't tell her it was me. I told
 her you kissed *someone*. I had to.
 First to see how she'd react but
 also because it's girl code.

PETER
 Girl code.

FAN
 Yeah. Girl code.

Beat.

PETER
 Are you saying that because you
 believe it or because she said it?

FAN
 You're a creep.
 (to Tho)
 Bye! You're amazing!

THO
 You're amazing!

Fans walk off.

PETER
 You're sick and depraved.

THO
 I kept our promise, Peter.

BRIANNA (OS)
 Hey!

Brianna steps from the front of the line, waving them over.

FRONT OF LINE --

BRIANNA presents Tho and Peter facetiously as they step up.

A BOUNCER looks at Tho and Peter. He starts to LAUGH. Peter, Brianna and Tho frown.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)
 She's TikTok famous.

THO
 Hi.

Brianna shows her phone. Bouncer evaluates.

BOUNCERS
Sure. Lose the guy.

INT. VAN - SAME

THO'S MUSIC continues. James drafts a text message to Tho but then deletes it. Then he gets a CALL from her.

JAMES
Hi.

THO
Hey what's up?

JAMES
(beat)
Uh... just on my way.

THO
Can you pick us up?

JAMES
I mean I'm coming to you--

THO
Yeah we're going somewhere else now
just change the destination to 347
Sedol Ave and add us as a stop.

He taps at his phone.

JAMES
Let me see if I can change it...

An alert pulls Farooq's gaze to his phone. He sets his jaw. Glares at James in the rearview.

FAROOQ
Did you change your destination?

JAMES
Yeah is that alright?

Farooq closes his mouth. Accepts the change on his phone.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE WAREHOUSE CLUB - NIGHT

Brianna's face is in her phone. Peter walks up with two beers. He CRACKS one to chug it. A STREET VENDOR with a cooler walks by.

PETER
(bad accent)
Gracias, hombre!

VENDOR
(waving)
Okay!

Tho is a few feet away. Clears her throat. Then to phone:

THO
Okay y'all I've gotta say, I've
been to a couple warehouse parties
put on by Mood Conductors and wow I
don't see it. The people they let
in -- no offense -- they're chasing
a scene not a vibe...

The van pulls up.

BRIANNA
(not looking up)
Tho.

Tho puts her phone away. Peter chugs his second beer. They
all walk silently to the van.

INT. VAN - MOMENTS LATER

The door slides open. James's face falls.

REVEAL THE CREW -- a lineup of unenthused faces. They get in.

PETER / BRIANNA / THO
Wassup my boy. / Hey. / Hi.

PETER
(to Farooq)
Hey man do you have a trash bag or
something?

He holds out the two empty beers.

FAROOQ
No.

Peter looks at the cans, holds onto them.

They all buckle in. The sliding door closes.

FAROOQ (CONT'D)
Wait. You're Bae Balenciprada.