

## Black Mirror: Exonerated

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**Long line:** After receiving a traffic ticket in a small town, Wilson Bush must win over the crowds to win his freedom in an extralegal battle against public perceptions.

### **Main Characters:**

WILSON BUSH - a 27-year-old man traveling through the countryside on his way home from a business trip. He is average in every sense of the word: class, appearance, wealth and demeanor.

CHIEF - the no-nonsense chief law enforcement officer for the area surrounding Freeport.

TOM MADISON - an incredibly well-liked elderly man living in Freeport.

K.B. - a powerful and exceptionally qualified perceptions counselor. She is stunning and charismatic, but these features intimidate Wilson and others like him.

**Setting:** The story takes place in a near future or alternate present where the government requires every citizen to have an augmented reality implant, and focus is placed on residency in one of the 11 federal judicial districts instead of one of the 50 states. Freeport is a small town similar to the coal mining villages of Appalachia, and Herdstone is the equivalent of Denver, Colorado. It is a sleek and large city, but it is not quite as expansive as New York or Los Angeles.

### **Synopsis**

WILSON BUSH talks on the phone while he drives through a winding country road. He comes to an intersection and spills coffee on himself when he takes the turn a little too quickly. He looks down to clean up the mess as his car speeds by a speed limit sign. After taking care of the spill, Wilson passes another sign that says, "Welcome to Freeport – District 4 - population 257." Wilson stops at a convenience store, buys another coffee and peels out of the parking lot. He quickly leaves the town and passes a sign that says, "Come back soon." While at work he receives an alert of a traffic violation

through his civilian MASS implant, a government-sanctioned augmented reality device. The notification explains he is due back in Freeport to plead his case for the speeding ticket.

Because Wilson is not a citizen of the district, CHIEF gives him a briefing on the laws and procedures of the district's absolute democracy where everyone gets a say in the judicial system. The MASS system updates when residents turn 18 to allow users to vote in the local polls. Eligible citizens receive an alert that the polls are open, and they can choose to view content or abstain from participating. Wilson only needs to receive less than 50% downvotes to be pardoned from his speeding ticket. He has to serve a punishment and pay all fees associated with the crime if his downvotes exceed 50%. Chief points a webcam at Wilson and then begins reading his case file to start the proceedings.

TOM MADISON sees the alert and immediately recognizes a picture of Wilson's car from traffic surveillance cameras. Tom then comments on the video's master-feed, a live timeline of dialogue and voting results, saying that Wilson broke his car's windshield after Wilson kicked up a rock as he sped out of the store's gravel lot. Traction spreads, and claims continue to increase Wilsons' fee as more citizens join the master-feed.

The hour-long livestream and voting period ends, and the vote is split. Negative downvotes don't have the majority, so the claim goes on to a larger market. Unlike small claims courts, higher courts require a majority of positive votes. Chief suggests Wilson hires a professional to help him with the "appellate market." Wilson agrees and searches for a professional perceptions counselor. Wilson finally selects K.B., a stunning and powerful woman from one of the largest public image firms in the country.

K.B. says larger votes usually do not turn out well, and the severity of the punishment is based upon the total percentage of downvotes. Wilson expresses his concern about the financial burden that a larger audience would bring because he would already struggle to pay off the claims from the original court. K.B. suggests Wilson participates in a new televised program, "Exonerated," that would expedite the case to a larger market and have an opportunity of being thrown out entirely.

Wilson agrees to the offer and is immediately taken to the largest city in the district, Herdstone. K.B. arrives the next day and escorts Wilson to the studio where “Exonerated” is filmed. K.B. gives Wilson a few last minute tips while they walk to the stage and hair and makeup teams work on his appearance. Another show representative comes and asks Wilson to sign a waiver. Wilson does so, and the representative immediately puts a small memory device on his right temple to copy the data from Wilson’s MASS implant.

Producers motion for Wilson to take the stage, and he introduces himself to the trial’s host. The host explains how the public has the ability to vote whether he continues to the next interview until he reaches the final round and competes against three other candidates for complete exoneration. The farther a candidate progresses, however, the higher the stakes become because a larger audience means the potential for more downvotes and added claims to his fee.

Wilson begins his tour well, but eventually critiques the district’s democratic system and the mentality of rural communities. His tangent triggers a flood of downvotes and comments in the master-feed. The major backlash propels Wilson’s case to national attention and the final four. The hate and negativity toward Wilson in the master-feed continues, and the national media villainize him. Numerous groups debate and discuss his situation and commentary about him is constantly on the master-feed leading up to the series finale.

In the final segment of “Exonerated,” the host says a large secret will be revealed in this season finale. Once it is Wilson’s turn to take the stage after the others have gone before him, the host tells him that he won’t need to do much talking today. The host presses a button and the show begins broadcasting the recorded data from Wilson’s MASS implant. The recording shows Wilson’s point of view while driving through Freeport.

The road is overlaid with an augmented reality navigation map, but in the far right corner of his view is an inserted video chat window with one of his friends. As the car drives the winding roads, the

audio from their conversation is littered with racial slurs and extreme racially-charged remarks about the people Wilson encountered on his business trip. Wilson’s positive perception rating ticks down to 0%, and the claims total increases to over 1 million dollars as the recording offends more people.

Wilson stares at the master-feed in disbelief when two officers enter the studio, put him in handcuffs and lead him out of the building. The last thing Wilson sees is a road sign saying, “Slow – speed monitored by MASS Systems.”

