

MEMBRANE

INT. YOUTUBE VIDEO - DAY

FRANCIS BURMAN (30s), sports a Hawaiian shirt in front of an impressive looking collection of miniatures and a Gold Million Subscriber Plaque. He is midway through the exit of his most recent video. The quality of his video is superb and the colors are almost neon.

FRANCIS

Alright, guys. That'll do it for this episode of Tiny Lives. Super pumped at how this build turned out. I'm headed off to a much needed vacation as you can all tell by this amazing shirt that I'm rockin'. If you liked what you saw, or you just love miniatures and dioramas, be sure to click that like and subscribe button. And make sure you smash that little bell so you don't miss out on--

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - DAY

CLOSE UP ON BEACH DIORAMA AS A GIGANTIC INDEX FINGER ENCROACHES ON THE BEACHGOERS'S AFTERNOON

Francis, still clad in his festive shirt, adjusts a miniature figure on the beach diorama with his index finger. He is positioned inside a home studio decorated with miniatures, dioramas, a greenscreen, and common Vlogging gear. He watches his latest upload to ensure that he didn't make any mistakes.

He watches as the likes start to roll in. With each like, there is a CLICKING SOUND. The CLICKING SOUND becomes faster until it is rapid and strange. He slams the laptop shut, unplugs the device, and places it into a cardboard box labeled, "Digital Detox".

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Francis places an unplugged wireless internet router inside of the detox box. He hears FOOTSTEPS and a soft STRANGE CLICKING sound emanating from the second floor of his large house. He pauses for a moment in terror and listens for infiltrators above...KNOCKING at his front door causes him to flinch. As he leaves the room to answer the knock, the shadow of a FIGURE moves across the walls of the living room.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

Francis opens the front door of his large but sparse Victorian home. His parlor is cluttered with boxes and junk, but it is absent of any furniture.

LORETTA BURMAN (60s) stands on the porch of the home with a few bags of groceries in hand. She covertly inspects the surroundings just beyond Francis, but does not enter. She looks at the box.

LORETTA
Is that everything?

FRANCIS
(remembering)
Phone.

Francis removes his phone and begins to power it down. He struggles to hold the phone and the detox box at the same time. Loretta places her groceries down on the porch, a good distance away from the doorway, and then grabs the box from Francis to help him. She inspects the contents. Francis drops his phone in the box.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
That's everything.

Loretta continues to go through the box.

LORETTA
You think you can you make it a week without the internet?

FRANCIS
I don't have a way to contact you if I can't, do I?

LORETTA
You could always visit. In person.

FRANCIS
We agreed not to talk about that today.

Francis glances at the groceries. Loretta stops inspecting the box and stares at her son.

LORETTA
(frustrated)
Francis, I know you are trying. And we have all been very patient with your condition, but he is dying.

FRANCIS

It took me months to get just this far. I've been working sixteen hours a day.

Loretta angrily drops the box, grabs the groceries, and enters the home. She storms past Francis.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

(yells)
Hey!

LORETTA

Working on what?

Loretta moves off screen into the kitchen and starts putting the groceries away. Francis turns around to face her.

FRANCIS

I make more in a month than Dad did in a year doing concrete. But it's never enough for you.

LORETTA (O.S.)

I didn't mean it like that. Of course we are proud of you! But what we want most for you isn't money...

Loretta exits the kitchen and moves back into the parlor.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

We want what all parents want for their children. We want you to be happy.

FRANCIS

I am happy.

LORETTA

You never leave the house. The only time I see you is when I come by to drop off your groceries if you don't text me to leave them on the porch. Is that being successful?

FRANCIS

I have over two million subscribers. My videos have been seen in almost every country in the world, but why do I even tell you that, why do I try to explain, what does it matter?

(MORE)

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

I buy this beautiful old house, and you tell me that it's too big.

LORETTA

You don't have anyone living here with you!

FRANCIS

This is why I don't want to talk to you about it. Because it's never enough. Why isn't any of this enough for you?

Loretta walks back to the doorway. She passes a n-scale model home which is covered by a wriggling centipede. This goes unnoticed. Loretta turns to Francis.

LORETTA

(snaps)

Because it isn't real.

FRANCIS

Of course it isn't.

LORETTA

There's a price for whatever this is. The person you pretend to be in your videos isn't you. I know my son. My son isn't afraid to leave his own house--

FRANCIS

(interrupting)

--I'm trying! I'm working on it. What do you think this detox is?!

Loretta stops and stares at the model house. The centipede has disappeared.

LORETTA

(gently)

My son wouldn't leave his own father to die in a hospital literally two blocks from his own home without saying goodbye. This isn't real. This isn't reality, Francis. Reality has consequences and hard decisions. There are choices in your life that can destroy you. And this choice, the choice of not saying goodbye to your father is one of them.

(MORE)

LORETTA (CONT'D)

If you decide to cross that line, then whatever is left of the son I raised, is gone. But I know that's not who you are. You are strong. You can face the reality of this moment, with us, as a family.

FRANCIS

I've found that reality can be changed into whatever you want it to be.

LORETTA

No. You're right that reality can be changed...but it cannot be undone.

Francis holds the door open for his mother. She picks up the box and begins to exit.

FRANCIS

Goodbye.

Francis closes the door. The room feels empty and cold, but he is relieved to be alone. He reaches into his pocket out of habit to check his phone, but it is not there.

INT. HOME - DAY - MONTAGE

-Francis puts his groceries away.
-Francis stares out a window.
-Francis habitually reaches for his phone.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

Francis paces around the parlor. This is interrupted by the sound of FOOTSTEPS on his porch. There is a THUMP and the FOOTSTEPS move away. Once he is assured that the visitor has left, he grabs a large homemade pole that is rested against the wall. He opens the front door.

A solitary package lies in the middle of the porch. For most people, retrieving the package is a matter a moving a few steps, but for Francis, it may as well sit at the end of a marathon.

ZOLLY ON PACKAGE

The pole held by Francis has been fashioned with a crude hook made from a wire hanger. He uses the pole to move the package inside.

INT. HOME - DAY - MONTAGE

-Francis looks at an old ship in a bottle.
-Francis eats a piece of toast.
-Francis paces around the parlor.
-Francis tries to play a banjo.

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

Francis lies on a couch in his home office and tries to read a book, but he's having a hard time concentrating. He puts the book aside and begins rummaging inside a closet. He finds an old metal cash box which contains photographs. As he goes through the stack, he finds a picture of himself as a child with his father. They are putting together models on a kitchen table.

Francis places the metal box down and exits the room. A centipede moves inside of the box and slithers across the photo.

INT. STUDIO - DAY - LATER

Francis, wearing a professional magnifying eyeglass and headlamp, hovers over a new project. He is positioned in such a way that the project cannot be seen. He is not in character nor is he recording. He hears a STRANGE CLICKING and nervously pauses.

The STRANGE CLICKING starts up again and is now constant.

Francis slowly and quietly stands up from his workbench to reveal a miniature long, creeping hallway made of styrene. The door in the miniature hallway CLICKS open on its own.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Francis anxiously exits his studio, ensuring that he makes no sound. He creeps closer to the source of the STRANGE CLICKING. A centipede entering the door of the miniature hallway.

As Francis turns the corner, it becomes clear that he is walking inside of a hallway that is a full-sized duplicate of his hallway diorama. He shuts his eyes; fearing that he will see something as soon as he opens them. He opens his eyes to find that the door to the attic has recently been opened by an unknown force.

As the STRANGE CLICKING sound continues, Francis approaches the attic door. The STRANGE CLICKING sound increases in volume.

Francis slowly sticks his arm into the opened, darkened attic doorway. He searches for the light switch and finds it. He flips the light switch but it doesn't work. The STRANGE CLICKING sound increases from above.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Using his head lamp as the only source of illumination, Francis ascends the shadowy, ancient attic stairs. He sticks his head through an opening of the attic floor and turns his head to slowly scan the dusty, wooden landscape with his head lamp.

In the corner of the room, he can just barely make out an UNKNOWN INSECT FIGURE which quickly darts out of view. Francis reacts by hastily descending the attic stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Francis races down the hallway toward his studio. He turns back to see that the Unknown Insect Figure has followed him into the hallway. He rounds the corner and pauses briefly outside of the open door of his studio. The STRANGE CLICKING brings him back to reality and he descends the stairs into the parlor.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

Francis opens the front door to his home. The world outside looks enormous and strange. He hovers just in front of the exit when the sound of STRANGE CLICKING helps give him a boost of bravery.

As he attempts to exit the doorway, he is blocked by a nearly transparent membrane. He pushes up against it, but finds that it is virtually indestructible. The STRANGE CLICKING sound increases in volume again. He pushes harder. The STRANGE CLICKING becomes almost deafening as Francis fights the membrane with every ounce of strength in his body.

He breaks through.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Francis stands on the porch of his beautiful Victorian home, drenched in sweat.

He hunches over and tries to catch his breath. He closes the front door and looks up at the outside world for the first time in nearly a year. It isn't neon -- it is reality. This is what reality looks like.

Francis walks down the path of his home and continues down the sidewalk.

THE CAMERA TILT SHIFTS TO PORTRAY FRANCIS' BEAUTIFUL VICTORIAN HOME AS A MINIATURE DIORAMA

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END