

BUY NOW, SOUL LATER

(terms and emotional
costs may apply)

SERIES BIBLE

A failing home shopping network gets taken over by a cult-like tech company promising AI salvation. As the broadcast world collapses, a quiet lighting tech named Mikey begins a covert rebellion—not with a bang, but with shadows, silence, and claymation.



Tone & Style

Absurdist, surreal, darkly funny, emotionally raw.

Think *Severance* meets *The Office*, by way of *Black Mirror*, *Barry*, and a little *Beau Is Afraid*.

Poop jokes with soul. Boner vests. Ring lights.

AI-surveillance. All of it. The camera follows a slow descent into entropy. Early episodes are structured and snappy; by the end, customer comments blend with BNSL audience comments and reality unravels.

Setting: SHOPandTV

A decaying home shopping network on the brink of obsolescence. After a hostile takeover by tech mogul Dirk Lawrence (never seen on



screen), the studio is transformed into a “tech-forward content ecosystem” complete with spiritual optimization, AI hosts, and performance-based ValueReports™ Employees must perform, or be replaced.

By the end of Season 1, the network is rebranded and overrun by an HR cult led by Thad. By Season 3, it's no longer a network—it's a chip factory high on prosperity gospel. TV is dead. The chip is king.



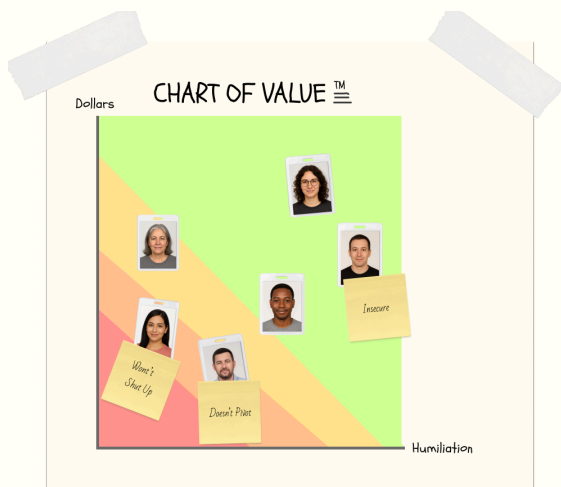
Protagonist: Mikey

Mikey is the show's anchor—and its ghost. A burned-out lighting tech with a dry sense of humor and deep inner life, Mikey isn't interested in fame or resistance. She simply wants to be real—and survive without becoming another product. She doesn't perform. She doesn't share. She watches.

Her being is her rebellion. Crucially, no one ever asks Mikey a genuine question; all

dialogue directed at her is rhetorical or functional. Her colleagues (with the one exception of River) only address her to manage their own optics or output, treating her as equipment like a light or a cable—that is “Functionally Present” but not an actual person. This radical isolation is a structural rule of the series. Over the course of the show, Mikey's world expands. The viewer sees more of her face, more of her POV, more of her emotional life. She builds a secret claymation world, starts inserting subtle sabotage into the system, and trains the AI on humanness it doesn't know how to quantify or optimize.

By the end of the series, her refusal becomes its own kind of visibility - it is literalized to Mikey and to River through a portal world only they and the audience of BNSL can see and experience. **This is her ultimate victory: the audience knows her authentically, securing the unquantifiable truth of her soul from the system that sought to sell it. She is truly seen only by the audience, and by River, who acts as the human sanctuary in the system.**



Main Characters:

Joy

Cynical set dresser and burnout-in-progress.
She rebels openly becoming a symbol.

River

Mikey's roommate and the network's accidental philosopher. An offbeat live talent who's always doodling cartoons—half jokes, half prophecy.

The show's "wise fool" with strange magnetism and a soft heart.

Thad

HR cult leader obsessed with spiritual capitalism and the divine funnel. Channeling Nayboochii.

Slade

Formerly hot, now emotionally unwell camera op trying to go viral before he dies.

Dale

Middle manager and corporate zealot. Proud promoter of the boner vest.

Dirk Lawrence

Billionaire AI mogul. Never seen. Sends directives from Mars or other far flung locations.

Vern

SHOPandTV's unflappable engineer, a quiet relic surrounded by obsolete tech and conspiracy radio. He fixes everything and explains nothing.

Kenny

Ex-VP, current janitor, and sole profit center—he sells the studio's toxic goo to rogue states. He can't recreate its metaphysical formula, but his #1 CHART OF VALUE™ ranking proves crime still pays.

Lizzy Prance

SHOPandTV's motivational guru blending fitness, healing, and quiet hysteria. She's both parody and product of the self-care economy.

Cathy

Veteran production chef and SHOPandTV lifer—equal parts Miracle Whip and menace. Beneath her chipper exterior is a survivor of too many product recalls.

Lars

Visionary director of the Elite Production wing—a barefoot auteur who treats infomercials like art films. Speaks in riddles, bathes his sets in fog, and believes consumerism can be transcendent if properly lit.

Oceana

Lars's ethereal co-producer and muse, radiant in linen and inherited calm. A trust-fund aesthete who moves through chaos untouched, believing beauty itself is a form of labor.

Season Overview: Welcome to the Machine



8 episodes tracing the descent of
SHOPandTV from sad cable channel
to cult tech nightmare.

Key events:

- Dirk fails to appear. River impersonates him. Mikey is watching.
- Corporate rituals escalate. Joy snaps. A humidifier is defiled.
- Mikey builds her clay world. Clay versions resemble real events.
- A televangelist guest host goes viral for all the wrong reasons.
- Joy is punished. River is elevated. Mikey stays hidden.
- The AI rebrand launches.

Season ends with: The Climax: Mikey, investigating Kenny's operation, discovers the radioactive goo is not a chemical byproduct, but is powered by the shame and regret of the returns transaction. The horrible truth hits her with the sound of Fiona Apple's "Paper Bag."



Themes & Philosophical Center

The core trauma in *BUY NOW, SOUL LATER* is systemic and existential, not personal. We reject the necessity of a traditional character trauma backstory; Mikey is sane, and her trauma is philosophical—reacting to the absurdity and meaninglessness everyone else has normalized.

The true violence is inflicted by the language of film itself on characters who refuse to perform.

Those who do not conform to an expected arc or output are made invisible; their quiet stories are deemed not “worth” telling by the content machine.

The Commodification Trap

Mikey's rebellion must remain invisible to be authentic. If her subtle art or acts of sabotage are ever made visible (discovered by the AI, marketed by Thad, goes viral), the system will instantly co-opt and commodify it. Her authentic “screamingly honest no” would be repackaged as “The Invisible Artist Behind the Collapse™”—a consumable story of hope. This is the central, terrifying trap: her victory is her continued obscurity; her defeat is becoming visible. The ultimate triumph against this trap is the authentic connection forged directly with the audience over three seasons—a relationship of true witnessing that the AI cannot monetize, package, or sell.



The Unsolvable Riddle

The show is structured around riddles that defy human logic. These riddles keep the staff in a perpetual, fruitless cycle of self-improvement and frantic performance:

The Kenny Riddle: The janitor/goo dealer, Kenny, mysteriously ranks #1 on the CHART OF VALUE™. The reason is functionally unknowable to the staff, mirroring the absurdity of a broken system.

The Body as Rebellion: This ambiguity is extended to Mikey's body. The ambiguous pregnancy, followed by the cut-hand fakeout (a moment of functional workplace injury, not personal tragedy), and the subsequent, unexplained vanishing of the pregnancy is besides the point. It is a biological riddle that refuses the audience's expectation for narrative resolution, making her body the ultimate site of unquantifiable, sovereign resistance.



The Economy of Regret

The systemic trauma is physically rooted in the dark economy that powers the network:

The entire “tech-forward content ecosystem” is secretly powered by a highly valued, volatile fuel—a toxic,



radioactive goo harvested from customer returns. This goo is the ultimate black-market commodity, sold back to the company (via Kenny) to fuel the AI, and sold internationally to nefarious entities.

The true source of its power is a metaphysical riddle: the goo only becomes radioactive when it passes through the returns system—the moment the consumer registers their regret or sin over the purchase. Kenny, driven by greed, will attempt to crack this code by melting down new, unused items, only to fail by yielding inert “just goo.” This proves that regret cannot be manufactured or bought; it must be earned. This system creates a literal global economy of regret, where the financial value of the network depends on the sheer volume of human dissatisfaction and is the source of international chaos. Only Kenny knows how to monetize this waste.

The ultimate confirmation of this truth—that the system runs on weaponized “sin”—is felt by Mikey in the season climax, underscored by Fiona Apple's “Paper Bag,” which is the sonic equivalent of existential self-reproach.

Audience Complicity

The show intentionally implicates the viewer in the systemic violence by drawing attention to their narrative expectations. We deny the audience the clean emotional payoff they are trained to expect. When a defiant act occurs (like Joy's rebellion), the revolutionary music (Rage Against the Machine) cuts out right before the catharsis, replaced by a jarring corporate jingle. The moment of rebellion is immediately acoustically commodified, forcing the audience to confront their own desire to consume the image of rebellion instead of the difficult reality of systemic change.



The Portal as a State of Mind



The Portal World isn't a magical dimension; it's the collective creative space constructed by the refusal to accept the system's reality.

The System's Blindness: Dirk and the A.I. cannot see the portal because their entire operating system is based on quantifiable value (metrics, data, performance). The Portal is the ultimate act of unquantifiable creation—it has no monetary value, no engagement metrics, and no discernible data points. It is, therefore, invisible to the machine.

The Creators' Vision: Mikey and River can see it because they are the only characters who treat reality as raw material for art, rather than a system to be optimized. They see the shadows, the colors, and the potential beyond the frame—the unedited reality.