

# THE TRUTH



A depressed graduate moves back home with his parents, where he tries to fix his life by vowing to always tell the truth.

Luke Hunter

Luke\_m\_hunter@hotmail.com

# INTRODUCTION

The Truth is a comedy-drama masquerading as a sitcom. All the episodes have the classic tropes of situation comedy: characters in certain scenarios where everything they do digs them deeper into a hole. However, The Truth underpins this with a current of existential dread and a desperate scream to be understood.

Jack Calvert is stuck living back at home with his parents, he can't get a job and he's a disappointment to his family. He thinks he's alone in his misery, but he is not. This is the story of a lost generation, who are struggling to find a place in a world that not only doesn't want them any more, but doesn't really need them.

Meanwhile, his family are concerned about his departure from reality, they just want him to get a proper job and settle down, so his mum and dad try all the schemes they can to reign him back in. But, unbeknownst to them, his rebellious sister is helping fuel the flames of Jack's mania.

- How do you go on Tinder dates when you live in a room above your mum?
- What's it like being told you're under-qualified for a tech job, but over-qualified for a Sainsbury's job?
- What happens if you're brutally honest to your girlfriend/boss/ marginally racist grandad?
- Your friends skipped uni and are now working, dating and having kids, while you drink your dad's homebrew and watch Netflix.

The Truth is a mix of classic sitcom comedy and GenZ existentialism, which come together to form compelling chaos.

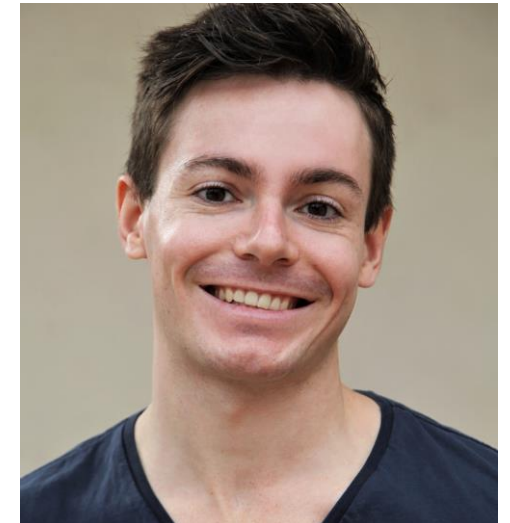
# STYLE

- What would happen if you take old sitcom style tropes, and stick a character in there with a maniacal sincerity – in the pilot, the adults are have invited the wrong boss to a BBQ (old-style sitcom), whereas Jack is having a full-on manic, cult-joining breakdown, but no one is that concerned (modern existential).
- Your nan will laugh at Liz trying to get everyone to eat her terrible lasagne. Your teenager will laugh at a suicidal man calling up the Samaritans only to get an automated answer-machine.
- It works because Jack is a manic character placed in situations that rely on deceit and secrets; but there are no secrets to Jack, he undercuts all the old tropes in a desperate attempt to find something human and sincere.
- Imagine if a character from Atlanta was in Breeders, or if David Lynch directed Gavin and Stacy.
- Or if you take the brutal earnestness of Ted Lasso and apply it to a reserved Northern family.



# JACK CALVERT

- Jack is a depressed university graduate, who moves back home and isn't ready to take the next step into adulthood. Panicked by a life without structure, he's an easy target for The Truth Foundation, a cult who recruit members to tell the truth their entire life.
- Once he starts telling the truth, Jack finds his life changing for better and worse, he no longer feels trapped and controlled by others, but his honesty makes him difficult to be around and he ends up hurting those he loves.
- He spends the season finding a balance between truth and lies and moving from an immature black-and-white way of thinking, to a more adult view of the world as shades of grey.
- We love Jack because he is an escape fantasy for all of us who have had to hold our tongue when we wish we could just be honest: interfering family members, condescending coworkers, overbearing bosses, that guy behind me at Café Nero yesterday who was having a full-on conversation on his phone ON SPEAKER – Finally Jack says what we've all wanted to.
- On a more human side, we identify with his sense of loss, the difficult transition to adulthood we've all had to go through, and we care because deep down he really does care too, he's in pain, but trying to hide it and that conflict draws us in.



“Why would I work for a tech company when I can get suicidal tendencies just from staying in bed”

# ZARAH ALVI

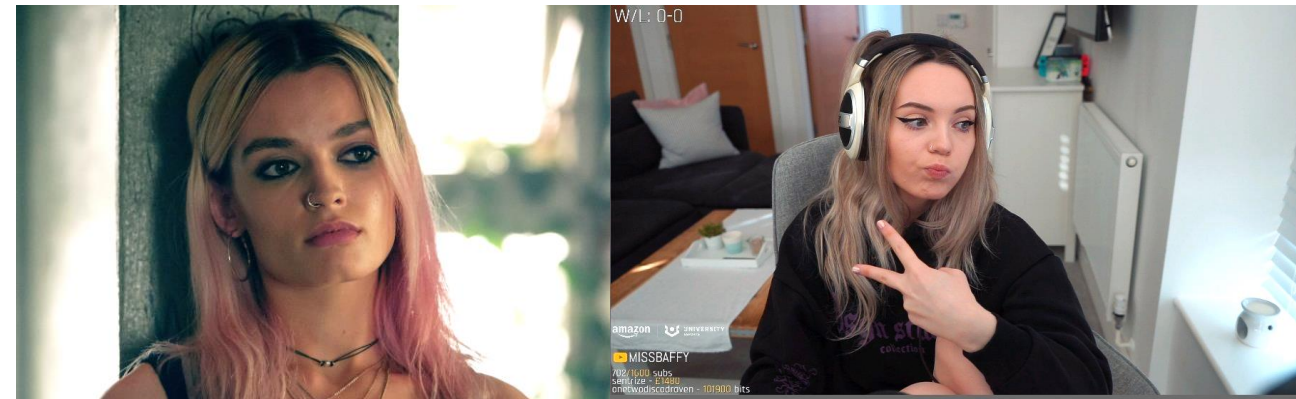
- Zarah is a liar. She knows it's the only way to survive in this world. You laugh at your bosses jokes, you tell your mum she looks like she's lost weight and you tell your boyfriend you've never had bigger. This is just how society works. We've all signed a social contract to obscure the truth and when someone like Jack comes along - all honesty, all the time - it throws that in disarray.
- After Jack reveals Zarah's lies about her fake gap year and the fact she doesn't actually want to go to uni, Zarah spends the rest of the summer haunting Jack, laughing at his failures, determined to show him that honesty is for children and nuns. But the more time she spends with him, the more she finds herself sucked into his ideology.
- We are compelled by Zarah as she is a source of conflict and tension; she's the only one who can really get through to Jack and challenge his insane beliefs. It helps that she is whip-smart and doesn't take any shit from anyone else in her life, except for her mum, who she turns into a little girl around.



“My Gap Year is sort of turning into a gap life”

# DIANA CALVERT

- Diana is Jack's 17-year-old sister, she is just going into her final year of college, but has no intention of living the 9-to-5 office life her parents want for her. She's internet-smart, edgy, cynical but extremely witty, a true Gen Z icon. She knows that the way to live her life is for herself, hustling online, trading crypto and streaming all of it.
- She butts heads with her parents over her life choices, because underneath all her bravado she is still a teenager, fueled by irrational decisions and raw emotions. Across the course of the season Diana comes to terms with her sexuality, and begins making the first truly adult decisions of her life.
- We love Diana because of her scathing wit and her determination. To any young zoomers watching, she's an inspiration for believing in yourself, even when others, especially your family, doubt you. Plus, it helps she can brutally take the piss out of Jack any time she likes.



“What can school teach me that YouTube Essays and 4Chan can't?”

# LIZ CALVERT

- A hard-working, fierce mother-bear, who measures her success by how the world perceives her family. Because of this, she pushes them to be more than they can be, putting insane amounts of pressure on them. It's already broken Jack, and even though she won't say it, she's disappointed with him, this just puts more pressure on Diana.
- In her own life, Liz is a workaholic, rising through the ranks at a finance company, but when she's offered a promotion that moves her to Europe, she has to decide if she wants family or work. Thinking she's the master-of-multitasking and can fix everyone else's problems, she often takes on too much, with hilarious results.
- Liz slowly learns to that her value isn't based on others perceptions of her. She also takes a leaf from Jack's book and stops letting society tell her what will make her happy and starts doing what *actually does* make her happy.
- We love Liz as an adult source of tension and conflict with Jack, we understand her, but are frustrated by her traditional values. But deep down we care, because she loves her children, wants the best for them and is a good mum.



“I’m not pushy, if anything I’m pullly, I’m pulling everyone in the right fucking direction.”

# AL CALVERT

- A stoic, northern father who can get lost in a crossword puzzle for an entire afternoon. Hobbit-like in his love for the simple things in life: a good ale, a freshly mowed garden, a sit on a bench in the sun. Amongst the crazy maelstrom of the rest of the Calvert family, Al is a rock and we love him for it.
- With a flat character arc, Al shows that you don't need to uphaul your life just because you can, if you're happy and content, there's nothing wrong with that, staying the course, a Zen truth which the others just can't understand.
- He's all our Dad's: bad jokes, slightly hen-pecked but loves it, head-down-get-on-with-it, supportive, loving in his own way.



“If a lass brings you a cup of tea *and* a biscuit, marry her.”



# PETER GUNN



- A caustic, foul-mouthed, Scottish rebel with a lust for life. Peter Gunn, or Gunny to his Grandkids, spent his whole life working at the same company, a workaholic drone, but now that he's retired, he finally gets to live *his* life - shagging divorcees, getting pissed on Tuesday morning, joy-riding his daughter's car, even stealing the odd pick-and-mix.
- Over the course of the season we see Gunny tinker with Jack's various honesty schemes and coming in as a wildcard at family events. We love him because he loves life. He's what we aspire to be when we're older, a true meaning of no fucks given.

# SUE ALVI



- Sue is Zarah's mum, and a born-and-bred Essex socialite. Bottomless brunches, gossip, garish dresses, big parties, bigger hair. After a recent divorce, she's throwing herself back on the town, always eager to impress, fun and fun-loving, but she's never lifted a finger if it wasn't to get it manicured.
- We love her because she's the "fun auntie (who's not your real auntie)", the one that sneaks you a bottle of vodka on your 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. High strung, larger than life and willing to fight tooth and nail for her family.

# SEASON 1 ARCS

**A Plot:** Jack takes his vow of honesty to shock himself out of depression. He actively lives a graduate life being completely honest to job interviewers, dates, friends, neighbours and members of the public, all with horrifying results. His family try to steer him away, without fully acknowledging that he's having a breakdown (something that is just not done in the North).

**B plot:** Jack and Zarah's relationship develops, starting from a point of Zarah hating Jack for revealing her lies, she constantly belittles his vow to tell the truth. However, over the course of the season, she sees it for what it really is, a cry for help. They begin to support each other, but as the start of university looms for Zarah she needs to decide what she really wants.

# TRANSITION

The overarching theme for the first season is characters going through transitional periods in their lives. As well as the A/B plots, the C plot of the season looks at the extended families transitions. Not every episode focuses on these issues, but over the course of the season we touch on each, all relating back to the idea “Would this be easier if you were just honest?”

- **Diana** – is struggling with telling her parents she doesn’t want to go to university and also coming to terms with her own sexuality.
- **Liz** – has just taken a new job abroad, where she can only see her family on weekends, Liz wonders if it’s what she really wants or whether that’s just what new society expects of her.
- **Al** – has just retired and facing the prospect of endless time, he feels like he’s earned it, but is worried because he’s seen so many old boys shut down completely after retirement
- **Gunny** – His wife died a year ago and he is adjusting to being alone, facing his own mortality as age starts to creep in and he still tries to cling on to the happiness and zest of life.
- **Sue** – A year after her divorce she is starting to date again, but it’s not like it was when she was in her 20s, she gets on the apps and it is a bit daunting, but she enjoys it and feels desired again.

# EPISODES

## Graduation (pilot):

Jack graduates uni, moves back home and falls into a depression, but in his darkest moment makes a vow of absolute truth to turn his life around. His family try to hide all the lies they tell to each other, but it all falls apart at Jack's hideous, middle-class, graduation party.



## Jobs:

- Jack heads into the city and tells interviewers exactly how he feels about the corporate world, surprisingly he doesn't get that job. But instead starts working in retail, to help staff deal with annoying WASP shoppers, including Sue, much to Zarah's annoyance.
- Meanwhile Diana tries to convince her parents that being a freelance trader is a viable career. This inspires Al to put in his retirement notice at work.



# EPISODES

## Dating:

- Jack tries out his new honesty on a dating profile, it earns him a multitude of dates which either result in a slap to the face or breakfast in bed. Zarah is determined to date too and ends up at the same restaurant as Jack and a polyamorous couple.
- Meanwhile Diana is acting as a technical dating assistant, showing Liz and Al how to have date-night over zoom while Liz is working in Europe. Diana also sets up a tinder profile for Gunny, who wants to meet 50-year-old divorcees.



## Clubbing:

- Jack meets up with old school friends, it's awkward at first, but Jack's honesty brings back old times. They end up going out to a club, where they run into Diana, Zarah and her new boyfriend. Jack realizes he still has feelings for Zarah, but a drunken Diana tries to kiss her first.
- Meanwhile, Al and Liz are worried about being boring and their marriage losing their spark, so decide to hit the clubs; which is mortifying for Diana and Jack.



# EPISODES

## Too Much Honesty:

- Jack's over-honesty starts to cause real friction: he truth-bombs a funeral, a birthday party and then breaks his polyamorous couple apart. Liz gives him an ultimatum, to start acting normal or he'll have to find a new place to live.
- Gunny confides in him that he has been diagnosed with cancer. Jack doesn't know if he can be honest, so goes round Zarah's for advice, but ends up getting drunk with her instead, leading to a romantic moment.



## End of Summer:

- Jack and Zarah go on a date, much to the annoyance of Diana, who decides to drop out of college and go abroad without telling anyone. Jack struggles to keep Gunny's cancer secret when Liz starts getting concerned. Al finally has to admit he's been lonely without Liz and doesn't want her to keep doing the Europe job.
- Finally Zarah has to decide whether go to Cambridge, she asks Jack's advice, he really does want her to stay, but lies for the first time and says he thinks she should go.



# SEASON 2

- We time-skip to Christmas time, Jack has stagnated: without Zarah and Diana in his life, and with Liz back at home full time, he has regressed to being a boy again, with even less hope of moving out.
- Zarah returns from Cambridge, bringing her new boyfriend back with her, making Jack jealous.
- Diana flies back for Christmas, but Liz refuses to speak to her daughter for “abandoning her”
- Gunny goes through chemo and gets the all-clear.

## Episode ideas:

- **No Honesty** – convinced by Zarah, Jack tries the exact opposite of what he is doing and lies about everything for a few days.
- **The Truth Foundation is in Town** – Jack finds that a rep from the truth foundation is travelling through the UK doing meetings, he goes to one of the meetings and realises it is much more cultish than he originally thought.
- **Christmas Day** – The extended family come round for Christmas day, Sue’s just broken up with her new boyfriend and is in such a state that Liz invites her and Zarah and her boyfriend over as well – it becomes classic Christmas chaos.
- **New Years** – Jack finally finds a turning point in his depression, he doesn’t pine after Zarah anymore and tries to live a balanced life. But just as he does, he hears of Liz’s plot to get him into therapy and decides to go the other way.

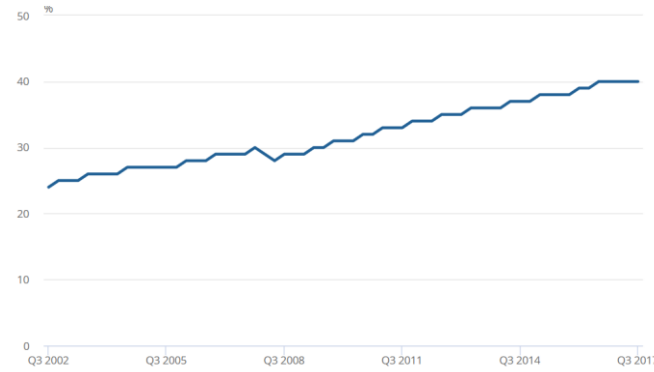
# SEASON 3+

- Jack finds a way to balance honesty and live a normal life, his on-off relationship with Zarah continues.
- Diana finally succeeds in trading and manages to move out of the house first, much to Jack's annoyance, but she invites Jack to come and live with her, staying true to her promise to always look out for him.
- Liz and Al finally have the house to themselves and can enjoy their empty nest, but find it's more boring than they thought it would be.
- Gunny finally begins to settle down and finds a way to enjoy a quiet life, meanwhile Sue meets a new man, and decides to adopt a child.

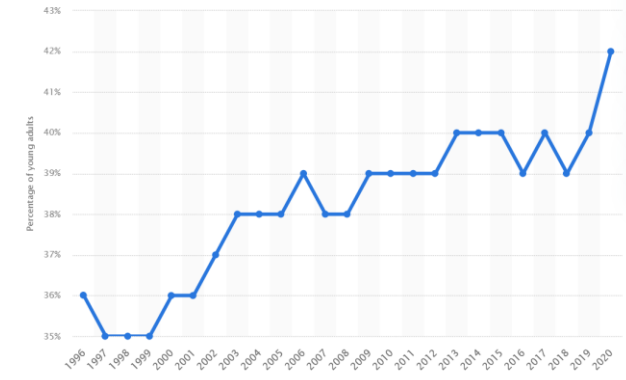


# WHY THIS NEEDS TO BE MADE

- Even as the number of graduates rose from 25% to 40% (2002-2017), the percentage of young adults living with their parents grew from 35% to 42%. There are thousands of graduates coming out of university with a degree and finding out it means shit-all, you can't afford a house, you're living back at home – back-in-the-nest syndrome is real.
- I've seen all the shows about living in London: Shoreditch parties, hookup culture, dodgy landlords, flatmate troubles, owning a niche little bakery but still finding time to meet up for coffee in the middle of the day – but that's not a reality for a lot of Gen Z in the UK. The truth is this - I personally spent a year after my graduation, at home, in the north, regressing, depressed, desperately applying for jobs where no one wanted me. The dream of my early 20s I'd been sold by TV and society was a lie.
- The Truth explores themes brutally relevant to both young and older people today: mental health, freelance society, the crumbling of the job market, economic depression, housing crisis, modern dating, the collapse of the nuclear family, hustle culture and regression.



% graduates UK



Young Adults at Home



# PRODUCTION

- Easy on the budget, with a small core cast and simple shooting locations: houses, offices, pubs, restaurants.
- Block-shooting should be simple, with many of the episodes revolving around the Calvert house.
- Easily marketable and bingeable, with a broad appeal to several quadrants.
- Great comedy roles for actors.
- Fantastic potential for guest-stars or one-off characters.