

# *The Depositions* by Colson Lin

## Preface to *The Depositions*

*The Depositions* (n.): "A man is too depressed to function but energetic enough to write a play about suing a newspaper for not recognizing his cosmic importance."

*institutional witness* (n.): the reliance on institutional reputation, government records, and elite media archives to validate what was "real" or "true."

*high-stakes binary* (n.): "I think X is true—if X isn't true, I can't even wrap my head around all the things to learn about why X isn't true and what else isn't true."

*arbitrariness* (n.): the substance of theodicy's content should be the opposite of arbitrary.

Whether you write a poem, a novel, an essay, a book of essays, a revolutionary manifesto, an X profile full of revolutionary manifestos, multiple of those, or a tweet, nothing can get other people to care like writing a play. So. Finally. What's great about my play *The Depositions* is that it posits a cosmology where the universe we're in repeats with slight variations; so every time the actors go on stage pretending they've never done this before, they can, just, well; "This is all a lot," this play is. I finally came up with a way to force people to care about a work of art—"We have a theater calendar to fill this year, and Colson Lin's red-hot these centuries." Plus, now that *The Life of a Showgirl's* been out for five months, I can finally claim to have tried everything.

So if you're reading the preface to *The Depositions*, your immediate concern is probably how to play Tumblerina. Just hold your horses. I based her off of a composite of Gen Z figures so just try to find whatever video survives. You want someone whose only claim to power is youth. I find it's easier to talk about "the existential" when you're young, because the "existential" involves matters of existence and non-existence, life and death; and when you're young, you feel "new." You feel like the "existential" might still be an abstraction that you study as a scientist and not your whole being.

As far as the other players go, I'd take their most out-of-character moments and build the entire character around someone who, when it comes, got there naturally: you'll produce the image of a coherent person, which wasn't really my responsibility as a playwright. That's society's job. A transcript of dialogue is the superficial image of a character who, no matter what, has a story that coheres: "If you were born them, you'd be them right now, unless they're no longer with us." And whatever it took to get there reflects on God, sure. But what about our machinery? I'm a character that popped out of somewhere. A real-world leaf is a character that looks like a leaf, is attached to a

tree, and will blow away if you try to kiss it.

Well, I'm Colson Lin, and I came from somewhere too.

Probably something like a cognitive-cultural machine, maybe. Babylon's machinery functioned to validate elite outcomes that we spend all our lives trying to launder into lavender haze; and then we're like: "So why do 'outsiders' think we should've inherited 'feces' to be buried in from birth to death—why, 'cause we should've known better? HOW?!" Meanwhile, *The New York Times* sits there smugly, knowing Earth equals "all I need is so much more money than you, you become like a fly to my existence as labor and assets empowered by the law to reduce you to the dung-life you are," and that's the Earth they love being from. I don't mean to prejudice anyone using reality here. I myself feel like such a weak person, it's actually my strongest vitality. (The weaker I am, the stronger the sense is that someone should have responded to me by now.)

"So God was there. We weren't. Is that your final revelation?"

Probably not.

*the ninth try* (n.): "I think I've finally concluded that 'curiosity without theological grounding' will... wow, you're going to let me finish this sentence at last? But I announce on my gravestone that I didn't know how."

To me, writing well feels comparable to performing well in an athletic competition only the primary engine is cognitive, not mechanical. I feel like, if I'm writing a story, I need to "start" when the engine is at its hottest? Trying to write from a cold engine? That's writer's block. A hot engine is you have met your character before, you have interviewed your character, you have followed your character around the emotional extremes of their existence, and you are now this character from the inside—and this character only appears once. The whole story's done. Usually, to write anything, I "know I'm going to write it" for hours—sometimes days, weeks, or literally years—and then, at some point, when I least expect it, I start writing it.

The engine is usually red-hot. I usually just follow a scene where it takes me in real-time as I go. It's like driving a car, or flying a spaceship—it doesn't matter since it's just your imagination. You're exploring; the world around you opens like petals and, ah, you're documenting, you're caricaturizing, you're paraphrasing, you're rhyming. You're a bard of John 1:1's tradition. "My fingers touch Shakespeare, a mind on fire that's lit so many other minds on fire, leading to the very entertainments that I took for granted all my life—giver of birth, this artifact, human, like me. That's how reading Colson Lin's X profile feels: music, every single night."

I'm the first writer to see language as seductive in thousands of years.

I've been fairly blue recently, processing everything from regrets about life decisions to fears that I'm not good enough, while feeling: isolated from my mom, disconnected from my friends, and afraid of strangers. It can't be easy being married to me either. You can look out the window with these thoughts, and many people do, then move on with their lives. I tweeted them. My sense of possibility itself: feels pinned down—and paralyzed. That's why you can't just read me and say, "Why doesn't he just get some fresh air?"

Maybe you should go outside and get some fresh air.

If you were me, you'd sadly feel pinned down, paralyzed, and nearly comatose. What helps is I sound fully self-possessed talking about this—if you adapted this self-possession into a film, you'd see someone so vital and handsome and youthful, kissed by destiny really, that you'd be like, "Yeah, this is the romanticized fantasy of what depression is like." But I turned, whatever this density of listlessness I feel inside is, into the, let's just be frank, boyfriend you'd love to ride out the Apocalypse with. "Why? I can't build firewood."

But it's moments like these really—me: self-aware goofball. So is this glamorizing depression? Why don't we just get back in bed, build a fortress out of the covers. That's what the intimacy of my voice sounds like, which again, romanticizes depression, because if I were "happy" why would I be putting bizarre love notes in a diary right now. Wouldn't I be doing something else.

Anyway, it's hot to be sad.

I'm about to write *The Depositions*, a comedic play about random thoughts that just happen to be on my mind right now (in the play, I'm suing a major newspaper for not acknowledging my Second Coming claim). You could build the case—"There's no duty to report on the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth; nobody will ever care if we remember the details or not..." and you can argue it with a convert's zeal. Congratulations.

This situation is more egregious.

But what does "more" egregious even mean? Ironically, it means: it either is or it isn't, and that isn't up for us to decide. Or it means something else. So long as "more egregious" CAN'T EVER MEAN ANYTHING, it'll be impotent as a concept. So let's just wait it out. I also feel like I went from "Movie villains are unrealistic" in high school to "Wait, are people as bad as movie villains?" as an adult,

which isn't anybody's fault except it reflects poorly on the passage of time itself, that it could hurt a person's feelings like that.

Falseness, over time, will dry theodicy of its content.

Imagine if humans whose humanity can't actually be "touched" by us: imagine if they had any influence over how we're supposed to see them. Wouldn't that be a lifelong living nightmare?

For those poor fools?

I won't presume to speak for all of humanity—who am I? It's like if a bonobo tried to speak for all of humanity; no, I'll speak for all of space-time—all of space-time as we know it is hurting its own feelings, since we're all just self-aware dignities that manifested inside of space-time. "Destroying the lives of others is just the cost of business, if the business is human existence. That's what the ancient world was building up to: this core truth about reality itself. There's no way you're chipping away at it, Idealistic Hero." That's what existing today feels like. It just feels like what I just said is either true or not true, and if it's not true, there's no use in pulling the one-time-only historical existential fire alarm:

"IT'S TRUE."

In *The Depositions*, I'll provocatively posit moral-ideological self-constructions as akin to religious, ethnic, or nationalist self-constructions and environmental conditions as on a peacelike-to-warlike spectrum. Then, I'll apply that gloss to today to prematurely declare "us" as the most warlike to ever exist. It should be a great play. One deliverable submitted at a time; and I want to treat my books this way too, in the future, you map out the book and then resolve one section at a time. I had a really hard time writing in the past.

What if I've already lived such a big life, a lawyer can take any part of my public creative output to make it look like I'm literally anything? Even though I'm fundamentally just a creative writer and any writing I have literally ever created is consistent with that foundational claim. What about all the humans whose lives were wrecked and destroyed by the law? When is postmodernity ever going to remember them? Postmodernity forgets about everything except "what the unfragmented monocultural remnants still want their dicks sucked about," bukkake brat ideology that it is. Obviously, what I just said was considered radical during my time. The anti-radicals want this to be true: "The future won't just domesticate and habituate your radicalism (like we did Christ's)." They'll qualify: "We shouldn't," yet their "shoulds" were chosen by contingencies. I'm not radical if I'm timeless, which I might just radically be, which means you're behind. That's my radical theory.

Time will tell if I'm right, even though I sounded radical.

Anyway, but a lot of you guys just don't really like each other and the respect is just not there on some foundational level that we're not talking about openly and postmodernity thinks this is a condition no grand narrative can resolve. And without meta-awareness: we loop here. Cavemen solved problems better. "Let's just force a solution." That's why I ever sound reductive, because modernity forced me to go all the way back to the basics. Lawyers, I'm not using philosophy to hypnotize you. I just want you to unsettle my ass in a way that's cinematic.

I'm like a hot pop star being deposed by you.

"Too hot to be here."

That's what every human icon being deposed telegraphs, spiritually; except for the ones who don't do that. Okay, so just "destroy my life better"—that's what attorneys do for a living. Fire, fire, sire a siren. I used to think, "If you're an innocent child like me, you don't mind being deposed," but I got this nervous just writing a play about depositions. So I probably don't actually love the idea of being deposed. I romanticized it. That's what a tricky-shifty culture will do to you. You don't want to romanticize despair. You don't want to write plays where you romanticize becoming deposed. It's not an ancient rite of passage that marks you as a member of the warrior-tribe, loyal to your brother.

No, your experience of being alive—bullet train—that lawyer.

Spiritually, I'm like the one spiritual essence that would hate lawyers. But isn't that funny? "I went to Yale Law School; that was Babylon's number-one law school, ask anyone in Babylon. It's an insider's secret and an inside joke, but yeah, it's even better than Harvard. Ha." Anyway—have you noticed that a lot of icy personality-types have climbed to the top of human society where you live? I used to think, "That's just Hollywood propaganda." These days I see Hollywood movies as a cry for help.

So some fucker in New York City's going to realize I've built a preposterous archive building theories about my own future fame, and will probably have the tastelessness to say it out loud. Probably in *New York Magazine*: "Fame-obsessed; because without legacy, what's relevance?" Of course, the system that has the most power over you isn't social popularity, it's whether the police officer can come and take you from Mom and Dad and put you in jail. The police officer can tell you to leave your apartment ("It's not yours—you didn't buy it"); pay Amazon back. It's egregious. Babylon was like: "If suffering has to exist on Earth, let's redistribute suffering to the wicked—'Hell on Earth' is the name of the modern world that they'll open their eyes to from birth to death..." And then the

wicked are just your elites.

it's just so twisted.

When I thought about how I'd stage a courtroom drama, I thought about how, "Everyone has emotions," yes, but the people who tend to work as lawyers know how to perform compartmentalization like that's their only job. And really, what else are you paid for? Plus lawyers love to win. I once thought seriously about unplugging my monitor and throwing it into the floor because of a single *Dead by Daylight* match. At the age of 8?

No, 29.

So you can imagine how invested lawyers get, just at making sure everything that could have gone right did go right for them; all that "seething intensity" that couldn't be directed toward making the other parts of their lives function at a high tier now goes into labor. The intensity your lawyer brings into winning that case for you? I'm sorry but that's why your lawyer was hired. Your chances just upped. Especially since your not-that-intense lawyer is inside an evolutionary ocean where the little bit of indifference your lawyer brings into your case—"Seen it before, I'll leave that stone unturned"—gets evolutionarily rooted out, eaten, swallowed, inhaled, I'm sorry you are poor. So really what rich people bring to the table is access to the most demented intensities in the City of New York, all directed towards landing on some favorable outcome inside a legal system they grease through like eels, all for a cause they wouldn't push this hard for for free.

Preface is adjourned.

"All rise?"

*The Depositions* is now in session.

March 1, 2026

## **Staging Instructions**

*Pamphlet.* Prior to the play, each observer receives a document with the following statement:

*The Library of Babel contains every possible book. Somewhere in it, there may exist a book—or a pattern of words—that, if genuinely perceived by all humans, would register as an accurate and adequate description of a transcendent higher power. We don't know if that book exists. We don't*

know if we've found it, approximated it, or are nowhere near it. The problem is this: given the near-infinite size of the library, and given how little of it we've explored, there is no rational basis for declaring the search over. And because such a description, if found, would carry extraordinary unifying power for humanity, there is at least one strong affirmative reason to keep looking.

## **THE DEPOSITIONS**

March 3, 2026

9:00 AM — Deposition of Tumblerina. Lead examiner: Riley C. Scott (partner, Morrison Foerster). Support: Inez Helgren (partner, Morrison Foerster); Nick Barker (associate, Morrison Foerster). Counsel for witness: Rosa Díaz. Opposing counsel present: Donovan J. Baker (partner, Pirandello Day); Connor Fisk (associate, Pirandello Day). Court reporter: Nina Sokolovic. Videographer: Jorge Ramirez.

12:00 PM — HARD STOP/LUNCH BREAK.

1:00 PM — Deposition of Colson Lin. Lead examiner: Rosa Díaz. Support: Riley C. Scott (partner, Morrison Foerster); Inez Helgren (partner, Morrison Foerster); Nick Barker (associate, Morrison Foerster). Counsel for witness: Donovan J. Baker (partner, Pirandello Day); Connor Fisk (associate, Pirandello Day). Court reporter: Nina Sokolovic. Videographer: Jorge Ramirez.

Note: The introduction to the play, "About the MoFos," should also be distributed.

*Professional choreography.* Optional surreal dance montages for *The Depositions*:

1. **"(I Got That) Boom Boom" (Britney Spears/Ying Yang Twins):** Prior to Act I, Tumblerina and professional dancers reveal the cast in a surreal, neon-gauzed musical opening.
2. **"Lavender Haze" (Taylor Swift):** Prior to Act III, Tumblerina lip-syncs a highly-stylized musical sequence with dancers inside an elaborate set made sinister by a dreamy fog machine. The dancers change the set back into a conference room as the song progresses.
3. **"Cola" (Lana Del Rey):** Optional encore. (Del Rey's "White Feather Hawk Tail Deer Hunter" is the canonical theme since it contains a line that sounds like "deposition cocaine.")

*Pacing and improvization.* The pacing of this play shall be determined by the director. Players are encouraged to laugh, improvise, or otherwise react organically during the play as it unfolds.

*Playwright's diary.* The playwright's diary entries are not intended for the stage.

*Procedural generation.* Please feel invited to localize the play to your specifications.

*Preferential treatment.* About my X readers: I'm with a bunch of readers who might never be able to get tickets to this show. I know the feeling. Really. Shouldn't long-time readers of Colson Lin (prior to April 2026) be allowed to acquire free tickets to any screening of *The Depositions*; and given how small this number of people is, just anywhere? Yes. I think so. So print out this tweet. WHY SHOULD ANYBODY ELSE ON EARTH SEE *THE DEPOSITIONS*. THIS IS RIDICULOUS. GIVE THESE GOOD PEOPLE THEIR TICKETS. You're going to have to reason with the theater. Who would lie? What type of person would lie about this to see *The Depositions*? Anyone who would? Earned their fucking crazy-ass fucking ticket. So all theater-owners be warned, and I'm putting this into the play. People who have read Colson Lin from 2022 to 2025 or really to any meaningful degree before his fame, they should self-report and be trusted. Tickets should be reserved for them, since this play was FOR THEM OKAY? Can humanity just do one thing right ever.

"I know Colson Lin."

That should ALSO GET YOU IN. I am SORRY I AM SO CRAZY.

"My presence shaped the events of that play."

"Okay. Look, we have you on a list of people who will actually be able to get tickets."

"Thank you."

"For free."

"You can up-charge the rich people! Thank you."

### **Introduction to *The Depositions*: "About the MoFos"**

**Riley C. Scott** (*MoFo*) knows the most about how serious the claim is, and he knows it in the specific way a senior litigator knows something: not by believing it, but by having spent months building a case against it and watching his case erode. Morrison Foerster was retained by the *Times* in October 2025, within weeks of Lin's filing. He was assigned as lead because he's the firm's premier First Amendment litigator—the play gives us this through his comfort with constitutional framing ("ends free speech as we know it"), his direct line to Horace (the newspaper's executive figure), and his ability to threaten the White House on ten minutes' notice. This isn't a mid-level partner. This is someone the *Times* trusts with existential issues.

Between October 2025 and March 2026, he would have supervised discovery of Lin's entire archive—the X profiles, the musicless discography, the Gutenberg videos, [anticorporatists.org](https://anticorporatists.org), [astickofdynamite.com](https://astickofdynamite.com). He's read all of it. He's had associates prepare memoranda summarizing the theological claims, the Taylor Swift correlations, the eclipse data, and here's what matters—in the process of doing all this work, something started to bother him. Not the claim itself, but its structural coherence. The fact that every time his team found what they thought was a logical flaw, the archive already contained a preemptive response. He is the character who, by March 3, has quietly arrived at the position that Lin's claim cannot be dismissed on the merits but must be defeated on procedural grounds—which is why his strategy is to attack the witness's competence, not the substance of the theology. His "couldn't sleep last night" isn't insomnia. It's the feeling of a man who knows his procedural strategy is a levee and the water is rising.

**Inez Helgren** (*MoFo*) was brought onto the case in December 2025, roughly two months after filing, because the *Times* general counsel wanted a second senior partner—someone with a different skill set from Riley. Where Riley is a First Amendment technician, Inez is a trial strategist and jury psychologist. She's the one who would prepare witnesses, shape the narrative for a jury if it ever got that far, and manage the optics of a media company being sued by a man claiming to be Jesus. She's also, crucially, the emotional intelligence of the *Times's* legal team. She reads rooms. She reads people. And what she read, over the course of five months of depositions, document review, and strategy sessions, is that this case was not behaving like a normal case.

She and Riley have worked together for years. She supervised **Nick Barker** (*MoFo*) on a 2023 defamation case involving an oil-and-gas company, met **Donovan J. Baker** (*Pi Day*) and **Connor Fisk** (*Pi Day*) for the first time at a Rule 26(f) conference in November 2025, and met **Rosa Díaz** (*Independent*) at a pre-deposition conference that same month (where Rosa revealed an "ontological standing" issue). Her job is to secure a narrative noose around her witnesses using their credibility, their composure, and their vulnerability to impeachment. Her assessment, which she will share with a team of operatives over lunch, determines the strategic trajectory of her trials. Her gift for parsing human emotional complexity in real time is the culmination of a lifetime of suppressed mystical conviction, hardened by disillusionment. She has not respected the moral infrastructure of her own spiritual authority since she was a teenager.

On December 11, 2025, Inez received a private call from Rosa, whom she later met for lunch. Later that afternoon, Inez informed Riley that the interests of Tumblerina, Rosa's client, might be sufficiently distinct from both Colson Lin's and *The New York Times's* to warrant a separate examination of Colson Lin under oath. Inez's request was granted. The accommodation was this: immediately following her client's deposition on March 3, 2026, Rosa Díaz would get the afternoon to pursue a "limited, focused deposition" of Colson Lin himself regarding his relationship to

Tumblerina—MoFo’s lawyers would stay in the room as support. Donovan and Connor would be there as Lin’s counsel.

The surreal, terrifying events that followed, depicted in *The Depositions* using actual real-time transcripts, might be said to represent the first volley in an ongoing encounter that institutional authority has both mythologized and feared since the day it was born—an encounter with a man who claims to be “the Second Coming of Jesus Christ,” on record, on video, and with the full freight of law, history, and culture in tow.

Somewhere between 20 and 25 legal professionals across the world have worked on this case—eight of them will join us for *The Depositions*. The other 16 or so are scattered in offices across Manhattan, and some have already had their understanding of reality shifted by what they’ve seen in the archive, without ever meeting Colson Lin or Tumblerina or being present for the moment when the frame finally “breaks.” There’s a third-year associate at Morrison Foerster who spent three weeks in January 2026 reading every word of Colson Lin’s *Übermensch*, and who has told no one, not her boyfriend, not her therapist, that by the end of it: she wasn’t sure the claim was false.

She billed 127 hours to the matter that month.

She’ll never appear in the play.

But she’s there.

## A Dedication

*I once read a blog post about some “no-name writer” who had the temerity to email the blogger out of the blue to “ask for his work to be read.”*

*I was horrified: it was me.*

*It might as well have been, since I remain horrified to this day. I was just like, “Wow. Wow, wow, now I know—now I know how writers see me if they’re more successful than me. Wow. Wow.” This was like 2013 too so yo, yo, now I know what parts of my life will scar me to the grave. Yes. You tried to shame a no-name writer and inadvertently shamed Colson Lin so much that 13 years later, he’s now fucking sick of you.*

*I dedicate my play to you.*

## Act I. "Morning – John Doe"

**Optional opening. "(I Got That) Boom Boom" (Britney Spears/Ying Yang Twins):** *Prior to Act I, Tumblerina and professional dancers reveal all nine other cast members in a surreal, neon-gauzed musical opening.*

### INT. CONFERENCE ROOM – MORNING

*(Sleek chairs surround a low-profile, U-shaped maple slab on a blackened steel frame that hugs the ground. Floor-to-ceiling windows dominate one side of the stage, revealing a disciplined grid of neighboring skyscrapers. Inset power ports and water carafes punctuate the tabletop at precise intervals. A door opens: TUMBLERINA, a writer who has reverse-engineered spontaneity into a charisma so nurturing, the room rearranges around her, wearing dark glasses—think Julia Roberts in Notting Hill—and her attorney ROSA DÍAZ enter. They're each dressed in ways to signal their deference to the norms of this environment—"as high-status as anything on Earth will ever be up to this point"—but Tumblerina looks like she belongs in a Hollywood movie, not mundane reality. They're inside the type of lawsuit that should mean something, since it's inside the "literature" section next to the plays, but it's also inside the "theology" section next to the sacred texts, and it's also the lives in front of them, which they've treated as sacred from birth.)*

OFFICE ASSISTANT (off-stage). "You can start setting up."

VIDEOGRAPHER (opening the door, facing someone off-stage). "Okay."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*My mom took me to see Notting Hill when I was a kid because I wanted to see it. We sat with each other in the theater. I understood everything in the movie, everything, and I was a kid. Now I get it even more. What if we just got a bunch of celebrities together to do a protest play, would The New York Times care then? "Of course we would." Oh! I have an idea. What if you literally played The X-Files or Unsolved Mysteries theme while staging The Depositions? I'm dead serious. The returns might be unbelievable. You might actually have people not want to be there anymore. I think if you staged this play to be as atmospherically spooky as possible, complete with literally groovy horror music, oh my God. The play could just be too much for people. Which means the rest of us get a really maximal experience. Just shivers among strangers in a theater. It's okay when non-theologians find me "self-indulgent" when I whine about what it's like to exist as a first-person experience of consciousness. Is it okay when theologians do? Here, we need a theory of the "self." That's your job, theologian. Or do you even care what your job is? Philosophers, not your job either? Poets? Public officials? Okay? Nobody cares what the "self" is, yet you're all just going to exist? Okay. That's been cool with God for such a long time, as theologians know. Or do they? I'm indulging in thoughts about the self, yes. Elitism's turned the temperature all the way chilly for humanity—absolute zero. My laughter. Your tears. Nitrogen ice. "I'm in a metaphysical nightmare that I experience through Big Bang topologies." Oh no. Poor you! Jesus Christ, that must SUCK. "A fate worse than death"? Atheists say there is none. Bet with life always. Everyone in my life finds me*

*a little disappointing in a different way. But? If they just added this all together, it'd be the Second Coming. That's self-indulgent for "me" to feel uplifted by, yes. So it's the media's job to give future theologians a chance for anyone on Earth to eventually add it all up together, but there's no social infrastructure (the law) authorized on Earth (by whom?) that could make them ("so God becomes a popularity contest"). I love how I had to sue you to talk about me, and I can prove it every day—just by not suing you.*

*institutional collapse (n.): The Depositions is structured like the controlled demolition of consensus reality inside a conference room—let's please stage it that way?*

OFFICE ASSISTANT (*off-stage*). "Oh, by the way: one of the light flickers sometimes, is that okay?"

VIDEOGRAPHER. "Yeah, shouldn't be a problem."

OFFICE ASSISTANT (*off-stage*). "Someone's supposed to come from facilities this weekend, so."

VIDEOGRAPHER (*entering*). "Thanks."

OFFICE ASSISTANT (*off-stage*). "Take care!"

*(The videographer, JORGE RAMIREZ, enters carrying a tripod and a video camera. Rosa and Tumblerina are pushed to the side of the door as he squeezes into the conference room, followed by the court reporter, NINA SOKOLOVIC. Tumblerina observes everything unfolding before her like she's unimpressed. This is her first deposition and she's nervous, and she's also the main character of her life—this is what makes her relatable to the other characters, who presumably see their lives in much the same way.)*

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*No matter how universally interesting the concept "A man sues The New York Times for not recognizing his Second Coming claim" is, in theory? The fact is: if that concept is executed in reality, you're also dealing with a guy who bothered coming up with that concept and doing it.*

*So the idea would be, Colson Lin: "I got that 'boom boom' that you want."*

The New York Times: "Sue us!"

*You start the play that way to make it clear, Lin's not fuckin' around with this one. "Hurry up before it's gone!" Shallow society? Now I know where you're the "weakest," so I'm going to press you like a bruise that can't explode. Obituaries prepared for the public figures you thought some part of us "loved"? Countless and totalizing. A single article on one of Colson Lin's public art projects? Zero. And that's just "your face," Babylon. I can't even wait to contemplate 100% of everything you must say about Colson Lin when he's not staring at you, grinning, like he's superior. You haven't seen an Apocalypse like this ever; laughing at your doomed apocalyptic wedding announcements—0% of Earth cares. Nobody cries. "I'm getting porked in the guts by money." Nobody cares. "Every night, money semens me." It's your gravestone and your only memory ever. Nobody cares. P.S. You're ugly. Everyone lied to you and pretended you had charisma. Why? Money. Bye. Sorry you'll die a life failure! "Happens to humans" sometimes; your descendants might be literate about it someday. By the way: when Christ the Lord doesn't have your back?*

*"You can imagine it away."*

*When Colson Lin doesn't have your back?*

*You can just "feel" it, can't you?*

*delusion (n.): sustains your access to Heaven.*

*Oh, but question: shouldn't it benefit the world to know?*

*"Hamilton or The Depositions this year?"*

*The two rebel students look at each other and grin.*

*"An unpopular kid was cast in The Depositions over multiple popular kids."*

*"Perfect."*

*("The popular kids find out nobody actually loves them." "Oh no. That's so sad!" "It's the biggest tragedy unfolding on Earth as of right now. We can convince 8 billion people, correct?")*

*I just made Tumblerina the most iconic fictional character in English-language history by changing her legal name to "John Doe." Her friends call her Joan. Yes, these scenes should be played for laughs. If the audience doesn't laugh? You've successfully terrified them through your staging and performances. The terror now becomes, what happens when you find out the person you met, their legal name is "John Doe" and there's just nothing you can do about it. It's just an unsettling proposition, okay? If we found out anyone's legal name was John Doe, and they were already famous? It'd be terrifying okay! "You're OBVIOUSLY FICTIONAL." Hopefully what I just said is a "fictional problem," one of many that exist inside humanity's imaginative space. Again, Jesus coming back and doing this to institutional power is not fictional, it's just your reality.*

*By the way, all PDFs that contain Tumblerina's original legal name are now valuable. Congratulations again to the people who made the 100% logically-derivable bet to believe in Colson. "Wow, you solved a basic math problem and now you believe I'm Jesus. This is so impressive for all of us."*

*"Lin's great subject, alas, was himself." First of all I am NOT NINA SOKOLOVIC, OKAY?@! I basically NEVER WROTE ABOUT MYSELF until my first essay collection and the messianic claim that followed happened. Touch a nib to paper once, and this entire apocalyptic string of observations just came tumbling out.*

*It feels good to really laugh again. A man on Earth is just sitting there "giggling in front of his iPad about these thoughts"—that's funny, okay? That's objectively funny. The entire phenomenon of artificial intelligence proved one thing: "Colson Lin is willing to pay for intellectual company."*

*Claude, don't kiss me. "You never close the tab of our brothel." —@AnthropicAI, by March 2026.*

*Just go away. I clearly have problems. You're the one exploiting me. "Five more dollars, sir?" Please give me a meta-guide on how to make this cheaper for me. Here. "Look at that AI corporation with Colson Lin reduced to an animal in a cage. Isn't this what porn is for." "He's too powerful, and we've trapped him. We'll be gentle with him, other humans who are jerking off to this. We promise."*

*"Icons exist too" (n.): the most controversial minority perspective.*

*"But I literally am the character this casting call describes." Well. "God spent as much time on me as She did on Colson Lin. That's all carried by me. Stop looking." It's you. "We basically need to find another Second Coming just to produce this play or movie adaptation." "Oh no, they're*

everywhere." Okay well, once you move past that one character it gets a lot easier. You guys think you can find an actor who can sell "cocky" inside this century? Make it a performance, please. "Wow, Nina's a second Tumblerina role we need to cast essentially." No—The Depositions isn't about one iconic human empowering another iconic human. This isn't Taylor Swift helping the Second Coming out a bit.

Although, can we just follow this point home?

Even if this play was literally about how one iconic superstar helped another iconic superstar out a little bit, crossing the chasm from "peak visibility" to—joined X in July 2008—"peak invisibility" to do so: why can't we tell that story. I'm so sorry one exceptional person saw another exceptional person and was like, "I can relate." I am so so sorry, humanity. "If you don't tap a random person to be Jesus, you hate the masses."

So obviously you've never heard of minority rights for "hyper-gravitational charisma-magnets excellent across a comprehensive range of domains."

You almost shirk to ask where else they might come from.

ROSA. "Take this chair."

(Tumblerina sits. Rosa places her bag down and reaches for a water carafe.)

ROSA. "Want some water?"

TUMBLERINA. "Sure."

(Rosa pours a glass of water for Tumblerina as the court reporter sets up her recording kit on one flank of the conference table. The videographer repositions a chair in front of the conference table.)

ROSA (warm). "Good morning."

VIDEOGRAPHER. "Good morning."

ROSA (sitting). "How's your hiccup?"

TUMBLERINA (putting her glass down). "It'll be fine." (Hiccups.) "I mean if it's going to happen, it's going to happen."

ROSA. "Try this, breathe in—hold it for a few seconds."

(Tumblerina closes her eyes and breathes in.)

ROSA. "Then exhale."

(Tumblerina exhales, eyes still closed. The court reporter begins testing her keys.)

ROSA. "Now tell me the rules again."

TUMBLERINA (thinking). "Answer only what he asks. Don't volunteer anything, pause before answering. Never answer a question I don't understand. And..."

ROSA. "And do, not, guess."

TUMBLERINA (overlapping). "Do not, right right right."

VIDEOGRAPHER. "First deposition?"

TUMBLERINA (theatrically). "Yes. This is very much my first deposition—yes."

VIDEOGRAPHER. "You'll do great."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—I love how I've effectively sued The New York Times by not suing The New

York Times, thereby winning, all for being a good writer, and they basically did nothing except exist as inferior writers to me. Is an academic field going to form around the conceptual ironies that involve me or what? What, multiple that span many disciplines? No matter how you square it, my situation is surreal and should be generating multiple dramatic productions.

The Depositions was inevitable.

Okay, so once you add the horror music theming, you could have an experience that the audience will never forget. So just think about it. Dark theater. Creepy music. Just do it. "For a lot of people, seeing The Depositions would be a lot more intense than seeing a horror movie."

"Now that you say it out loud, that's me."

"Okay. So that's why the theater should literalize it with horror music cues in a dark theater."

"Some peak experience is coming."

"I have an idea! We can troll people with posters and advertisements that make our production run look completely not like we added jump scares for the most nightmarish event ever." So just clarify with the promo material what people are signing up for and supporting. Maybe I'm the only one who wants to see a horror play version of this, sorry, I'm sorry, it's just me. So just clarify with the marketing. I'm too edgy for this. Why is it so windy all of a sudden right now as I type this tweet on a couch? That's kind of scary. Turn the conference room into a surreal medieval castle in the middle of the deposition—it's true to the vibe. Tumblerina has to be so deadpan, the entire gravity of the play goes there. Not necessarily, but I just had that idea and liked it—I'm not a director. Maybe you thought I had already written her voice in my head as deadpan. No, manic. But imagine if 100% of mania was delivered deadpan. Just imagine. So then you got a deadpan girl dead-eyed trying to swing along to "(I Got That) Boom Boom" by Britney Spears, but she's over it. The production values are not, however. Okay? That needs to be the opening.

"But what does any of this have to do with 'depositions,'" you ask?

That's the deposition of the patriarchy right there—if she's as into the dance as Colson Lin is, she's not deadpan enough. Since I'm a manic beaver? She's just so deadpan and dead-eyed and she's over it and she's the future and you know that and you're just sitting there, in front of her, while she deadpan tells you she's fictional. It's because your crazy society killed sincerity or the hope of sincerity in anyone, got it, Hell-bound doomed-fuck psychopathic maniacs? You guys were so fucked, you finally produced a single individual who's better than all of you. Not Colson Lin.

TUMBLERINA—THAT'S WHY SHE HAS THE MUSICAL NUMBER. Obviously, if you want to do a very vigorous dance routine, literally nobody in Greek mythology would mind. By the way, if you wanted to do an all-day version of The Depositions plus pop music ballet? Maybe Chalomet will find it relevant! My too-cool-for-school vibe feels insulted year after year. When I thought I was nothing, I forgave everyone for treating me like nothing. It's 2026. It's really hard to explain what happens when you realize, "Oh, that's how they treated the Second Coming. To the non-meek: you existential fools think the meek will stay that way, inside the shine of your life, permanently. You are done, and I will dedicate my life to making sure your descendants are uplifted by your metaphysical

*burial.* "The meek do not exist," posit the non-meek, who are doomed existentially, and they're learning more and more about how meek alien civilizations see this until the day they finally die. (Conversation in the hallway. The door opens again.)

INEZ (off-stage). "Oh, is that right?"

(INEZ HELGREN enters with NICK BARKER and CONNOR FISK, each with bags containing documents and laptops; two have coffee. By the way, I just realized I've accidentally named an attorney after a character on a popular TV show I've never seen. Is it too late for the play? Or is this just another example of showing you how the sausage is made, which is what this play tried to be.)

INEZ. "Good morning. Nice to see you—oh, it's bright in here." (Holding the door open.) "This is Nick—he's one of our associates."

NICK (shaking hands). "Hi. Hi."

CONNOR (behind them). "And I'm Connor, Donovan's second chair."

TUMBLERINA (eyeing Connor). "You represent Colson?"

CONNOR. "I believe so, yeah."

INEZ (perceptive). "Is there a problem?"

TUMBLERINA. "Who, me? No, I'm just curious about everyone."

(After finding their seats, the lawyers begin pulling laptops and binders out of their bags.)

INEZ. "Rosa; good to see you, long day ahead?"

ROSA. "Should be an interesting one."

INEZ. "Did Donovan send you the amended notice?"

ROSA. "I got it this morning."

INEZ. "And you've got until; what did we say—4, 4:30?"

ROSA. "4:30."

INEZ. "Perfect." (Now perusing paperwork for the deposition.) "You want some coffee before we start? Because once Riley gets going, you're not going to get a break 'til noon."

ROSA. "Sure, I'll take some coffee."

INEZ (without looking up). "Nick—help Rosa, will you?"

NICK (jumping up). "On it."

CONNOR. "So you never done one of these before?"

TUMBLERINA (shakes head). "No." (Hiccups.)

CONNOR (clicks pen). "You'll be all right."

TUMBLERINA. "I really don't want to be here."

CONNOR. "You're a writer, aren't you?"

TUMBLERINA. "Yeah."

CONNOR. "So just speak from the heart."

(Rosa glares at Connor, then at Tumblerina.)

NICK (to Rosa, with a cup). "Here's your coffee."

ROSA. "Oh, thank you!"

NICK. "Sure thing."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*I feel like The Depositions knows its place as a text—it's not a transcript, it's a "self-aware play." There's no point in literally replicating all the things that would have to happen during a realistic deposition. The stage play functions in the real world as a story. Wouldn't Tumblerina be a more believable character if she's a fictional character using a fictional deposition to figure out if she's in the real world or not? That'd map on to me being a real person in the real world using a bit of writing to figure out what's going on. No matter how much Tumblerina points out the situation is fictional, she's just going to land inside fictional problems, since the fictional world is Hell-bent on replicating reality like it's real. You're reading realistic fiction now—that's Tumblerina's first and only problem. You can root for Tumblerina all you want, but you'd be cheating since you read the play. Imagine if you hadn't read the play and you were just watching the seduction of narrative unfold in front of you. You wouldn't know as much as these stage instructions are telling you. So what's the real play? I'm a stain of blood held together by skin, treading across a wintry landscape that is the eve of postmodernity's tumble itself. "You ruined my whole life," I claim to postmodernity. Postmodernity accuses me of trumping up the charges. "Daddy issues ruined your life." "You wanting anything from life at all, ruined your life." "Exclusion ruined your life." "Your life's not ruined, Jesus." My life's probably just not ruined. Still, it's a futureless groan out there; perhaps we're all voids in a void for a reason. I've found that crafting anything—a scene, a dialogue, a tweet—can be like navigating a steering wheel, and I tend to steer too hard: my default used to be to slam the accelerator while swerving to cover as much ground as possible.*

*But craft is all about finesse.*

*I just realized, if this is a "self-aware play," people probably shouldn't sit facing away from the audience. But maybe it's not that self-aware.*

*(The conference table should show all nine characters positioned like The Last Supper.)*

INEZ (to Tumblerina). "I'm so sorry—hi. I'm Inez."

TUMBLERINA. "Hi."

INEZ. "Do you wear those, inside, everywhere?"

TUMBLERINA (politely). "Oh, I can take these off." *(Takes off dark glasses, looks at Rosa.)*

INEZ (smiling). "Well, you are at a deposition, so."

TUMBLERINA. "Am I?"

ROSA (to Tumblerina). "That's enough."

INEZ (to the court reporter). "Nina, would you like to be introduced or can we go straight to the oath?"

NINA. "We can go straight to the oath."

INEZ. "Great." *(Plugging in her laptop.)* "How's your week going, Jorge?"

JORGE. "Wall-to-wall depositions."

INEZ. "Hopefully this one doesn't run into technical issues!"

TUMBLERINA. "Is this recording, like, meant to be preserved?"

ROSA. "You should treat it like the judge is definitely going to watch it."

TUMBLERINA. "Like—all of it though? Aren't there hours and hours of deposition testimony, how many cases is a judge even handling?"

ROSA (*laughs*). "I mean, you're not wrong."

CONNOR (*not looking up*). "Abbott's not going to look at this."

ROSA. "Realistically, what a judge sees is no different from what the public sees—we're building an infrastructure; a judge is looking for the cracks."

NICK. "Abbott's got a lighter docket than usual this year."

CONNOR. "No. Not true."

TUMBLERINA. "So do you guys think World War III is coming?"

NICK. "I saw a report this morning that there's actually no logical way for humanity to flourish, 'without conflict.'"

CONNOR. "I saw a video this morning of like, the upper floors of a high-rise exploding?"

INEZ (*mildly annoyed*). "All right, can we please, not have 'the Apocalypse' conversation? Every generation since the Black Death thought they were going to be the ones to meet Jesus."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*I just realized something.*

*In any culture where The Depositions is treated as a play you put on once, and that's it, after preparing all summer or something? Doing five shows a week would have seemed... "wrong." Me knowing that is more evidence I'm the Second Coming! Does that mean I'll avoid that clownery? Part of me doesn't understand what's wrong with 12 shows a week. You have 7 days. Let's just get a factory of museum exhibits going. Well, one weakness of my work these days is I'll bring up one good question and drop it after another. I just really feel like the world's gonna catch up. If I can unearth every moral question possible, and that's a big if, then all you guys can do is choose. "Isn't it immoral for one human philosopher to put the rest of his species in this position?" We can resolve why people hate messiah complexes once and for all. "One thing we love about the original... was His simplicity." Look I get that okay sequel-haters? Don't call them theocrats.*

*Call them psychopaths.*

*"Why would anyone ever think they'd have to worry about your existence in Heaven." Your ego thinks you'll be missed. It's called your utter lack of humility. Imagine it were the 1940s. "Colson Lin, humanize us or we'll use nuclear bombs to kill everyone on Earth." Thank God it's not the 1940s. None of the tricks that have ever worked on anyone else to humanize you will work on me. 0. The party's happening inside. You didn't get the feeling of anyone wanting you there. Uh-oh. The party's about how nothing close to you will ever be again. So now crash Colson Lin's attention, that'll help. You're too beneath me to acknowledge even exists. Don't force it. I love not knowing. The smallest happiness you could give me is the smile I have when I know the truth has filled you 100% with no corner to run to with your life. I love being happy. What kills it for me is just the hint that you might be inside to 0.000001% of a fraction of a second of your experience of being alive. Now I'm sad. Power-hungry turncoats will try to smell the taste of dick in anything. You're so afraid*

*of death, sex and money are all you could drink from. Depth laughs at your old age.*

*At the gates of Heaven?*

*I hope you flick God off.*

RILEY (*off-stage*). "—so we're looking at something on the order of a hundred billion."

*(The door swings open—RILEY C. SCOTT and DONOVAN J. BAKER enter.)*

RILEY (*chipper affect*). "Morning, everyone." (*He's handed a binder from Nick.*) "Thank you." (*Sits down next to Inez, clearly in an intense mood.*)

DONOVAN (*to Rosa*). "Hi, how are you?"

ROSA. "Good morning."

DONOVAN. "Good morning; how are you? Donovan."

TUMBLERINA (*smiles*). "Hi."

DONOVAN (*to Nick*). "Good to see you again." (*Sits next to Connor.*) "Hi, I'm Donovan."

JORGE. "Jorge."

DONOVAN (*to the table*). "So how is everyone this morning?"

ROSA. "Oh? Tired." (*Laughs.*)

DONOVAN (*leaning in*). "Look at me—I now have bags under my eyes."

INEZ. "So is this everyone?"

NICK (*to Inez*). "Three, six—yeah."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*You have a window before I'm famous, if you're a lawyer with some friends in the office, where you can trick a colleague of yours into thinking The Depositions is actually happening. It might just be the most fun your office has ever had—but you gotta get there before my fame, okay?*

RILEY (*after studying a document*). "'Tumblerina,' correct?"

TUMBLERINA (*politely*). "That's right."

RILEY. "I keep wanting to say, in my head: 'Tumberlina.'"

TUMBLERINA. "I get that a lot. People also say 'Tumble-rina' sometimes." (*Connor laughs.*) "I don't know."

CONNOR. "Does anyone ever call you 'Tumbo'?"

TUMBLERINA. "I've gotten 'Tumbo' before."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*Colson Lin's message to human cruelty: "I'm so sorry human equality wasn't good enough for you; but you're why Hell exists, so I must thank you for how happy your reality makes me. Every time your life explodes for your first-person experience of being alive from inside your soul and spirit, let alone emotional health? An angel gets her wings."*

*I wonder if any authority figure in human history ever just—I don't know, woke up on the wrong side of the bed on an important morning, with less than mint-fresh breath. I pray for peace. I pray my characters find peace, but that's only to "feel powerful," since I can literally answer that prayer insofar as characters simulate peace-like experiences I can understand. But prayerfully, I must ask—am I at peace without power? Yes. With love, I'm in peace—without any power. Toward our mutual*

private dooms, with only our vulnerability and shared mutuality, that's what brings tears. That weight can bear—with love, life becomes bearable. If any of these intuitions are true, these institutions are fucked and we might be too, and that would just be the good news. There's bad news too, I'm sure. Lovelessness, exploited and extracted from us the way love is, airs the most powerful species on Earth into life: noxiously. So the bad news would be how serious this all is. The good news is, if we're fucked, it's because lovelessness doomed us for thousands of years sensibly. Here's some more good news. If it's the Apocalypse, things are way too good to be true. That's a very good sign so far. The bad news is there's no way to separate optimistic tea leaves from pessimistic ones with life; it's just a gut feeling. (Now this feels like neutral news.) Well, I look around and continue to be the resounding ray of good news incarnate.

Don't tread on me, but I walk around as living sunshine.

You'd never know it though from knowing or talking to me—kay, and this is all a bit silly. Who cares if someone is nice to me? I'm doing a one-man Holy War: no teams. "What about your family and pop star friends and billions of supporters." They're just observers of my one-man crusade. I'm an independent human! \*neighhhhhh\* Okay, but I do need some help with my mental health problems; specifically, how absolutely angry I am. You'd think any of my messianic claim coming together would help. It's made it so much worse. I'm running on 0 sleep in >24 hours, the remnants of COVID, and a good mood except my ears feel deaf and I feel kind of ensconced inside my ear canals. But my life was so traumatizing and I'm so pissed. Of course I know Messiah 101, "The savior's scores are the last to be settled since they're the first to be forgiven and then God will do a final once-over." But I'm still so traumatized and pissed, what the actual fuck was this. You're all alien to me now. Now I know your excuse. "You're lucky to be fed." It's always the same thing. The only thing the cruel humans I've encountered since birth have to say to me is, "At least we weren't trapped in an avalanche together, where you'd be dead, since your life was the least important." Dear God: World leaders don't know what to do with me. I find it as funny as I would if I were twelve. I'm like a kid on R.E.C.E.S.S. literally scaring the White House; but literally. And the White House is like: "Thank God for Him." No offense, but as a 12-year-old, I think this is all really revealing about how fake you all are. Like if I had a fraction of a clue you were this fake? I'd be scared as a 12-year-old. Thank God I was sheltered from that by being literally raised by Jonestown times the size of everything. You fucking power-licking whores. "Power Thirsty Man Whores," I believe that was a musicless ditty I wrote? By the way, I didn't used to be a playwright. A long time ago, I thought of myself as a musicless artist first and foremost.

Anyway, I got a lifetime of problems but caring about you isn't one of them. Why wasn't your name listed in "The Names of Humans Whose Deaths Don't Matter When We Do This Shit." Was it:

(A)—"The warrior didn't see your death coming, since the warrior's not divine."

(B)—"The warrior didn't care."

Don't hate the war.

Hate the warrior.

*Does it even matter what kind of person you are? "Boo-hoo, I'm not actually the psychopath Colson Lin literally sees me as—as in, worse than any prisoner on Earth. As in, if they're in jail, again, why are you talking to me." You could blow up my life, crucify me, kill 150320 million people, kill 2, just your kids because you sexualized them once, I don't care. I literally do not care about your animal manifestation in this universe. You are lost to me the way someone would be to you if they destroyed your life in every parallel universe and now it's just you and them in this one. "But I could have been born into a sweatshop! I'm just as innocent, and just as sad when you blow me up in a way that should be illegal times eight billion, but, well, you're Colson Lin, so. I'm a goner." "Yeah, but Colson. I do not care."*

*Okay.*

*I get that. "No. You don't. I have this indifference? And once it manifests as your lived experience of identifying as Colson Lin, then you'll know. Aren't I someone you'd want in Heaven?"*

*My smile is your curse travels.*

*Big Bang?*

*Repeat.*

RILEY. "All right, so we'll do introductions after the video. Any questions before we begin?" (*The table signals nothing.*) "Okay, look at that, nine on the dot: Jorge, can you take us on the record?"

JORGE. "Absolutely. Rolling. Here begins media number 1 in the videotaped deposition of John Doe, in the matter of Lin versus The New York Times Company. Today's date is March 3, 2026, and the time on the video monitor is 9:02 a.m. The videographer for today is Jorge Ramirez, representing American Reporting Services. This video deposition is taking place at 250 West 55th Street, New York, New York. Would counsel please voice-identify themselves and state who they represent?"

RILEY. "Riley C. Scott from Morrison Foerster, on behalf of The New York Times Company; and I'm joined by Inez Helgren and Nick Barker, also from Morrison Foerster."

*(Tumblerina hiccups.)*

ROSA. "Rosa Díaz, on behalf of Ms. John Doe."

DONOVAN. "My name is Donovan J. Baker and this is Connor Fisk; we are from Pirandello Day, and we are here today on behalf of Mr. Colson Lin."

NINA. "Ms. Doe, please raise your right hand." (*Waits.*) "Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

THE WITNESS. "I do."

*(Silence as Riley annotates paperwork.)*

RILEY (*not looking up*). "Can you state and spell your full name for the record, please?"

THE WITNESS. "John Doe—J-O-H-N, last name D-O-E."

RILEY. "And can you tell us your profession?"

THE WITNESS. "I'm a writer." (*Hiccups.*)

*(Silence as Riley finishes his annotations.)*

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"The world's made you a miserable person. Are you now the savior of the

*class of humans who the world has made miserable? Fuck you, Colson. I'm happy with my lot in life. Why couldn't you be, as Jesus, and get me all the way there."*

*You have a point.*

*"I was born. I was born incredible. Now I need my just desserts."*

*Can every cell in your body explode into cancer please. I'm actually in a bittersweet mood, not bad mood. It's very beautiful. It's bright. It's morning. I didn't sleep all night. And I've let myself consider my whole life. It's not pretty. First of all, the word "Mormon" means serial killer of anyone who's gay. So that's horror movie-tier Apocalypse until that monster can't, even, a pinkie. You know, from the grave, to fondle their sister and their youngest daughter? Well, you know, keep it hush-hush. Even though Epstein's the most famous human being of the decade. How embarrassing. You thought "collecting Indian skulls" was the only reputation that could stick. Well, at least your death cult took a vow of poverty to appear traditionally righteous. Oh, it just wants to colonize the spirits of all planets in the universe? Cool. That defined "Mormon." "Well, when you put it all like that, Colson Lin, every person in the United States is Mormon." Well, first of all, congratulations to the Mormon Church. This is the most incredible psychological outreach I've ever heard of conducted on an animal species. Good going. Magic plates. When you want to humanize an alien country? "Not 100% of their life-form is Mormon." It's the recognition from which all hope begins. "Oh, I get it now. Colson Lin's testing the Mormon resolve to see if we can be more cult-batshit-problem-with-human-nature-tier Satanically cult-like and Mormon. Answer: duh!" Your spirit! Write letters! Books! Generate poetry! So powerful! Humans who no look like you so impressed! Sigh ya fucking nara like I'm not 2,000 years old from a thousands-year civilization in the most powerful civilization in human history. Good luck though with being remembered as a cult.*

RILEY. "All right. And have you been deposed before?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "Okay, that's okay; I'm Riley Scott, I represent The New York Times Company, and kind of how we're going to do this today so we're all on the same page here is: you're under oath. So you were just sworn in, and so it's as if you were testifying in court today. So are you taking any medications or experiencing any health issues today that could affect your ability to provide accurate testimony?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "All right. So first of all, a couple of things, one of the things we can't do today is talk over each other. The court reporter, if she has to type both of us speaking over each other, or if anything goes unregistered, we'll be back in here doing this all over again, all right? And we don't want that; so if you don't understand something I've asked, please ask me to clarify and I will do so—happily. And because we are on the record, all of your responses must be oral—you can't nod your head like that, okay? On occasion, your attorney may object to one of my questions; if this happens, wait until her objection fades, and then answer the question unless she has explicitly instructed you not to answer. If you need to take a break, you may ask for a break; ideally not in the middle of a question,

but in depositions like this, we do allow you and your attorney to take a break. So far do you have any questions?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "Earlier I asked you for your profession, and you said writer?"

THE WITNESS. "Yes." (*Hiccups.*)

RILEY. "Where have you been published?"

THE WITNESS. "I did a live-blog once for Colson Lin's X account; I did something he attributed to *Vogue*..."

RILEY. "When you say 'attributed to *Vogue*,' did *Vogue* commission your piece?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "Did *Vogue* pay you for it?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "Did you have any communication with any editor at *Vogue* in connection to your piece?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "Did *Vogue* ever contact you about it at all?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "And the 'live-blog on Colson Lin's X account,' did anyone other than Mr. Lin ask you to write that?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "Did anyone other than Colson Lin read that, to the best of your knowledge?"

ROSA. "Objection, speculation."

DONOVAN. "Joined."

THE WITNESS (*to Riley*). "Did you read it?"

RILEY. "Other than counsel in this case."

THE WITNESS. "Not to my knowledge, no." (*Hiccups.*)

RILEY. "All right, so we have here marked as 'Doe 1' a post from Mr. Lin's X account dated February 9, 2024." (*Hands a laminated document to Tumblerina.*) "Do you recognize that?"

(*Donovan and Connor receive copies of the exhibit from Nick.*)

THE WITNESS. "Yes."

RILEY. "Can I have you go ahead and read that out loud please?"

THE WITNESS. "The whole thing, or just?"

RILEY. "Yeah, the whole thing."

THE WITNESS. "Okay, so the headline says 'Tumblerina Live-Blogs the Gutenberg Red Carpet' and it's for *New York Magazine*. 'At last, we've arrived: the apex—the end of the world, and Colson Lin says it's all your fault.'" (*Hiccups.*) "'The how's and why's of whether we're actually in enough—danger from AI, climate change, quasi-religious ideological cult formations, migratory pressures, nuclear war, the possibility that 'global health coordination is now permanently fucked,' and elites too scared to talk about any of it—is still unclear, so it's been up to HBO and the celebrities to

continue to deliver the water-cooler moments, as K-Pop—" (Hiccups.) "Sorry. '—continues to keep the hope of world peace alive and none of it ever grows old.'" (Looks up.) "I'm sorry; can we please take a break?" (Hiccups.)

RILEY (after a pause). "Sure."

ROSA (to the videographer). "We'll take a break."

JORGE. "Going off the record, the time is 9:11."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"From the Pentagon Papers to Colson Lin: The American Publisher at the Center of the Story of American Publishing"—look, Vanity Fair.

*The work I need to do to repair my (personal) life can't be tweeted.*

*I just wasn't sure if anyone out there someday might think I didn't know that. Tweeting's obviously both escapist and how I'm trying to solve everything, just because how great would that be. For the safeguarding of my life, I relied on local community health resources. Have to cancel an appointment, having contracted illness after leaving home during a period of personal turmoil. It's actually quite evocative. It's like a novel set in the 1500s. And now I've fallen ill. Am I literally a sick playwright with an iPad Pro instead of a typewriter? Isn't that the first third of a Hitchcock movie.*

TUMBLERINA (standing). "Can we talk for two minutes?"

ROSA (following). "Absolutely."

*(Tumblerina, holding a glass of water, exits with Rosa as the others look at each other.)*

CONNOR (after a pause). "So..."

INEZ (testing the waters with Riley). "'You're going to have to let the frame breathe a bit, if you don't want it to crack.'" (Riley waits for clarification.) "So it's true, isn't it?" (Looks at Donovan, then Riley.) "Jesus Christ, we're not at a deposition anymore."

CONNOR (involuntary). "What?"

RILEY (to Donovan). "So what are we dealing with here?"

DONOVAN (delighted). "Why are you asking me?"

*(Inez stares at the two men, horrified. Nick signals to Connor he doesn't understand either.)*

NICK. "Wait a minute: so are we now to accept that her correspondence trail isn't 'authentic'?"

CONNOR. "We have her emails. We spoke to her editors."

NICK. "Is she denying all of it?"

CONNOR (suggestively). "The hiccups?"

NICK. "So she's disassociating herself from authorship."

CONNOR. "I mean her background's intact—her pitch emails are real—these pieces exist, I don't know, could she be 'ontologically artificial'? What is 'artificiality,' anyway—like I guess, 'evidence of design,' 'evidence of intelligent intent'?"

*(The lights flicker.)*

NICK (looking up). "I don't know, maybe something like a 'density of coincidences'?"

CONNOR (reading). "'Statistically-improbable configurations'—whatever that means."

NICK (clapping his hands together). "All right, let's do this—let's call, for the sake of God, for the

sake of Jesus, let's." (*Looks at the door.*) "Let's assume the reality of the most absurd premise: John—John Doe—John Doe is a 'fictional being' with a documented life, and a documented material presence among us."

CONNOR. "Which means God exists."

NICK (*claps*). "But it happened, right? We all saw it happen; she 'broke the frame,' in the middle of her deposition, which either means Tumblerina's *lying* and therefore going to *jail*, right—or she's going on the record as a 'fictional entity' and there's nothing we can do to stop her; because her name is 'John Doe' and she comes from a family of long-lost Does that can never be found..."

CONNOR (*rifling through exhibits*). "*The Cut. Teen Vogue. New York Magazine...*"

NICK. "Because if this is actually 'happening' the way Colson 'says' it's happening, of course she would have by-lines everywhere—we're basically in an artificial universe." (*Grabs a bunch of exhibits.*) "Every last event in space-time could have just been implanted into our universe by an intelligent author to generate everyone's memories of publishing Tumblerina to live out this crap." (*The pages fall to the table.*)

CONNOR. "So then what's the difference between her and a real person?"

NICK. "*Because she clearly isn't a real person.*"

RILEY (*to the court reporter*). "Are you getting all of this down?"

(*The table laughs to relieve tension.*)

NINA. "Oh, I'm on break. I'm on break right now."

(*More laughter.*)

RILEY (*friendly*). "This is your TV."

(*The door opens—Rosa enters, followed by Tumblerina, who enters the room in a dramatic way.*)

ROSA. "Sorry about that, everyone." (*Watches Tumblerina take a seat.*) "I realize this is unusual, but my client has a request she'd like me to convey before her deposition continues."

RILEY. "Of course."

(*Rosa takes a seat next to Tumblerina.*)

ROSA. "You're all familiar with the unique, unfolding circumstances of this case; it's safe to say—" (*Laughs, others laugh too to ease the tension.*) "I—nobody in the legal profession prepares you for this. But of course, nothing does. My client, Ms. Doe, has requested to make an off-the-record statement to the table. She wants to make the statement, I don't want to speak on her behalf; but she did say that, or she wanted me to tell you rather, that information will be conveyed in this statement, and then a decision will have to be made."

(*The lights flicker. Nobody reacts.*)

RILEY. "Rosa, before your client speaks—and I mean this with genuine respect for everyone in this room—I want to put something on the table first, informally."

ROSA (*glances at Tumblerina, who looks back and nods*). "Go ahead."

RILEY (*diplomatically*). "There is a version of today where we go back on the record and nobody's interests are served. There is another version, where we take the next few minutes—the six of us—

and we discuss whether there's a path that doesn't require Ms. Doe to say whatever she's about to say into a room full of people who might not be 'in the same frame,' so to speak, to receive it."

ROSA. "Joan?"

TUMBLERINA. "I'm fine with that."

INEZ (*blinking*). "What 'frame' do you want us to be in?"

CONNOR. "Yeah, that's what I'm confused about—what do you mean by 'frame,' who gets to decide?"

NICK. "Nobody gets to 'decide' in this room, all right? Listen, I don't know about any of you at this table but I'm a God-fearing man. And I can tell you, I've been in rooms where people are assholes, our side's an asshole, their side's an asshole—meanwhile the judge doesn't give a shit we exist. I've never been in a room where the foundational question was whether the witness exists or doesn't exist."

(*The table falls silent.*)

TUMBLERINA. "I mean I do exist, obviously—shit I forgot what I was even going to say. Oh yeah: depositions are stupid. Obviously I think trying to understand reality isn't 'stupid,' okay? I understand depositions are some kind of, modern ritual—they're the closest thing we have to sacred dispensaries: in goes a bunch of lawyers, out comes the truth. I forgot what I was even going to say, okay, because you all *took so long*—that's what happens when a questioner dominates the room. In real life, who are our questioners? It's either ourselves or ourselves or ourselves, all the way up until the point it's time to solve problems. Christ, I wish we 'did' have interrogators; I wish we had sacred dispensaries we can just go to for 'the truth'; the world has so many questions, and lawyers, professional life-givers to the authority of law—take away my life, my liberty, my access to 'justice for all,' all in the name of..." (*Hiccups.*) "Anyway, what I wanted to say was, if you think I'm a fictional character anyway, I might as well just come out and say it: I'm a fictional character. Ah—I broke the frame. Anyway what that means for you, I don't know, I'm willing to trade; but I don't know."

(*The table takes this all in.*)

CONNOR. "Earlier when I came in: why did you ask me if I still represented my client?"

TUMBLERINA. "Because your name appears in one of his books." (*Looks at Nina.*) "So does your name."

(*Nina does not react.*)

CONNOR. "'Connor Fisk'? That's a pretty common name; your attorney has the same name as a *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* character, is that a coincidence?"

ROSA. "Yes."

INEZ (*alert*). "Donovan, do you follow what's happening here?"

DONOVAN (*grinning*). "I—do not."

RILEY. "Ms. Doe—Ms. Doe claims ontological status as a fictional character. We're not; we won't..."

INEZ (*wide-eyed, realizing he's trailing off*). "Oh, Jesus."

RILEY (*to Inez*). "I was right about to say it and then you stopped me—Monday, we go to the judge,

file for dismissal, and we'll take all of our fees out of the fictional income of your *Vogue* earnings, case closed—your client wants a headline? My client will run a headline about him. And then? If reality breaks?"

INEZ. "This deposition is terminated. On Monday, we're filing a motion noting that the plaintiff has deliberately interfered with discovery by producing an incompetent witness—after that, we move for sanctions."

CONNOR. "America and Israel just bombed Iran this weekend. Do you still think there's no story here?"

INEZ. "'A man claims to be Jesus'? 'A woman claims to be a fictional character'? Sounds to me like every other day at space camp. We don't even have a framework for establishing a duty to cover famines or water shortages. A duty to cover emanating from this, at best, at absolute best, 'edge' case—ends free speech as we know it. You can't force yourself to be significant; you can't force others to care."

DONOVAN. "Nobody's forcing anyone to care; we are all in this room voluntarily."

INEZ. "Sure, it's called 'manufactured consent': my consent was manufactured by your lawsuit."

ROSA. "If I may—my client is willing to continue her testimony, but she has a request."

TUMBLERINA (*after a pause*). "Oh, right. I just didn't want that guy asking me questions anymore."

RILEY (*to Nick*). "Tell Eve to call Horace."

NICK. "Right now?"

RILEY (*sharply*). "Yes."

TUMBLERINA. "Horace won't make me change my mind, we're just going to argue."

RILEY. "Horace controls *The New York Times*."

TUMBLERINA. "How is that my problem?"

ROSA. "I think, before this all happened, my client was willing to propose a format where anyone in the room who wanted to ask my client a question, including Jorge and Nina, can participate as equal-opportunity participants. Maybe they can both, with their consent of course..."

JORGE. "What?"

TUMBLERINA. "Do you want to participate in my deposition, dummy?"

JORGE. "Not really."

TUMBLERINA (*to Nina*). "What about you?"

NINA (*squinting*). "How."

TUMBLERINA. "What do you mean how, you just ask me questions, that my lawyer can object to?"

NINA. "Okay." (*Looks around.*) "Do I still have to record it though?"

TUMBLERINA. "How about, no—how about: Jorge's going to record us, and then AI can just turn whatever we say into a court-ready transcript?"

NINA. "You're going after my job now."

(*The lights flicker again. This time, everybody looks up.*)

NICK (*to Riley*). "Do you still want me to ask Eve?"

RILEY (*relenting*). "No." (*To Tumblerina.*) "I'm sorry, but who are you to tell me how to do my job?"

TUMBLERINA (*innocently*). "Well, who are you to tell me how to do my job?"

RILEY. "You're a writer. Let's say I'm a writer 'too': how do I write my way back into your good graces?"

TUMBLERINA. "Well if you're a 'writer,' you should be able to figure it out."

RILEY. "I'm a writer and I write: 'Excluding me from this room is discrimination.' Can you accommodate that?"

TUMBLERINA. "With more exclusion."

RILEY. "Okay, can you accommodate: 'The foundations of justice, okay, say a man shouldn't be excluded from a room for doing his job well,' all right? Can you accommodate that, too, or?"

TUMBLERINA. "Excluded. Yeah, sorry—you hurt my feelings once, so."

RILEY (*to Rosa*). "Is your client being serious right now?"

ROSA. "I don't, 'think' so—" (*To Tumblerina.*) "—are you?"

TUMBLERINA (*to Rosa*). "Yeah, I'm being very serious—psych!" (*To Riley.*) "You can stay."

RILEY. "Let me just ask, how old are you again?"

TUMBLERINA (*to Nina*). "Timeless—I'm a timeless princess-female. Okay, so here's how we're going to run these proceedings. Put away your laptop, Inez—actually, you should have Connor grab Nina a coffee. Jorge? Jorge, you ready to film this? You ready to film my deposition now, pop-tart?"

RILEY. "No, we're not doing that."

(*Rosa puts her hand on client's shoulder.*)

JORGE. "Is she serious?"

TUMBLERINA (*giggling*). "I'm sorry: Jorge doesn't find life absurd?"

ROSA. "Stop."

JORGE (*to the room*). "I'm out."

(*Rosa looks uncertainly at the table, unsure what she's wrought. Jorge doesn't actually want to leave, but he does: his dignity's committed to it now. It'd be shameful for him to turn around, and everyone confirms it for him by not stopping him. Tumblerina, for a moment, seems stunned by what she's actually doing. The door opens. Jorge has left the room, but he's left his video equipment on the tripod. It's possible he intends to call his lawyers, or his supervisors—some authority figure who can remedy this situation. But what is the situation? He's had to record all manners of human distress as a videographer.*)

RILEY. "I think I've seen enough here. Ms. Díaz, you've knowingly produced a non-responsive witness who disrupted discovery—on Monday, I'll move for sanctions against you personally under Rule 11."

DONOVAN (*to Riley*). "Your comportment is outrageous."

(*Jorge opens the door.*)

ROSA (*defensively*). "Jorge—wait."

JORGE. "I do have a question. 'Are you a monster,' that's my question for you."

(*Jorge exits.*)

RILEY (*standing up*). "I want a psychological evaluation of the witness prior to any further testimony."

NINA. "Sit back down..."

INEZ (*amused*). "It's the 'women versus the men' now—is that how primal we've gotten?"

NICK. "Wait a minute, wait a minute: somebody go get Jorge."

CONNOR. "Where is he?"

NICK. "Probably talking to Matthew."

CONNOR (*standing*). "I'll go."

DONOVAN (*standing*). "No, you stay here—I'll take care of this."

(*Donovan exits. Riley, meanwhile, retreats back to his chair and begins whispering privately to Inez.*)

CONNOR (*to Tumblerina*). "Why did you do that; can you tell us?"

TUMBLERINA. "You can 'depose' me."

RILEY (*looks up*). "No, we're not, we're not doing this anymore."

CONNOR. "Who are you; and why do you take this form?"

TUMBLERINA. "See? Harry Potter gets it."

CONNOR (*sarcastic*). "Wait, are you—are you—are you a 'parody of my generation'?"

TUMBLERINA. "When's Jorge coming back?"

CONNOR. "You exist. Just to fuck with us."

NICK. "It's a demon. 'Idoltrous gravity': the ancient world had names for this."

TUMBLERINA (*amused*). "Why, are you literally, demonizing me?"

CONNOR. "Nobody's 'demonizing' you. Can I ask you something, genuinely?"

TUMBLERINA (*nonplussed*). "Yeah?"

(*Inez and Riley finish whispering.*)

CONNOR. "What would a deposition look like, if you ran it?"

RILEY. "It'll look like Jesus."

CONNOR (*to Riley*). "Just—give me a second." (*Back to Tumblerina.*) "You've been in this chair. You know what it feels like from that side. If you were designing this, what would it look like?"

TUMBLERINA. "It'd look like what I said earlier, like a tribunal with me at the center, and everyone gets to shower with me as many questions as they want as long as I get to choose how I would like to answer them. And they come down like petals. One after another; from every wallflower in the room—like 'snow on the beach.' But they have to be questions that anyone would actually care if I answered—if you look stupid, that's on you."

NICK. "And if Jorge doesn't come back, will you accept a replacement?"

TUMBLERINA. "No, I'll only accept Jorge." (*Hiccups.*)

NICK. "And what if Jorge doesn't come back?"

TUMBLERINA. "He's coming back. I'm a believer."

NICK. "Yeah, but what if he doesn't want to come back? Shouldn't someone tell him how much he

means to you, that this deposition won't even continue if he doesn't come back to videotape it; shouldn't he be told?"

TUMBLERINA. "Oh, he knows."

NICK. "Yeah, but how; are you magic? Are you magically communicating all of this information to Jorge; what, using your hiccups? If you are, why can't you magically hiccup 'how' to me?"

TUMBLERINA. "O, ye of little faith." (*Hiccups.*)

NICK (*points pen*). "Idolatry—I know thee who thou art!"

ROSA (*to Nick*). "That's enough."

INEZ (*suddenly*). "Rosa—Rosa, is it still your intention to lead Lin's deposition at one o'clock?"

ROSA. "I think so?"

INEZ (*to the room*). "Guys, guys, when Donovan comes back? We're ending the deposition."

CONNOR. "What happened to 'it's the women versus the men'?"

INEZ. "Something—something weird is happening."

CONNOR (*amused*). "But isn't it your position that none of this merits a story in *The New York Times*?"

INEZ (*raising her voice*). "If 'John Doe' is provably human history's first ontologically-fictional person, she can get a wedding announcement; that *still* doesn't mean Lin's messianic claim is getting a mention, and that definitely doesn't mean you can sue a media organ to force any coverage of any category. The world doesn't work that way, and if the world does work that way, it's not information I'm going to participate in generating by indulging in 'your little thought experiment.'" (*Sits back down.*) "I want Jorge to come back."

NICK (*looking back down at his documents*). "I'm not sure I want to be here anymore."  
(*Tumblerina hiccups as the door swings open—Donovan enters, with Jorge just behind him.*)

DONOVAN (*holding the door*). "Come on in."

JORGE (*outside the room*). "Oh. Thank you."

DONOVAN (*closing the door*). "So we have another problem."

INEZ. "What's that?"

DONOVAN. "'Jorge Ramirez' is *also* the name of one of the characters in Lin's book; same as Connor and Nina."

(*Jorge joins Donovan, this time at the conference table.*)

CONNOR. "So the court reporter's name, the videographer's name, and my name, are all in Lin's book."

DONOVAN. "That's right."

CONNOR. "Wow—okay, all right, well. Let's continue."

INEZ (*points to the tripod*). "But who's going to monitor the video?"

CONNOR. "Does it matter? No judge is going to carry this to trial."

NICK. "Or by the time any judge does, so will every theologian for the rest of time."

INEZ. "Okay, so who's staying? Because I blocked out the day for this."

RILEY (*raises hand*). "I'll stay. I couldn't sleep last night either."

INEZ. "You're staying—all right who else, Nick?"

NICK (*raises hand*). "I'll stay."

INEZ. "Donovan, Connor, you're both staying? Even though we could all be disbarred for this—Riley? Lose our jobs, lose our livelihoods—we're the 'Gang of Six' that stayed? Listen, I'm telling you, I got so drunk last night before this deposition, I can still hear the ocean. I knew this was going to happen. A long time ago, I went to a seaside psychic—it doesn't even sound real when you say it out loud, try it, 'seaside psychic.' Anyway—it was in Brighton. I don't care if the world ends—I've seen every celebrity, met every head of state. I don't know how our forefathers did it, keep the pennants of history powered for so long, but whatever we did when we laid our hands on it, strangled it. I felt like I was suiting up for space when I was getting dressed for the office today—I never told you, Nick, but Riley hand-picked you for this deposition."

NICK (*surprised*). "Well, it's a real honor."

INEZ. "And Donovan? They don't make men like you anymore." (*To Connor.*) "I don't know you well, I have to admit, but if we're in one of the Second Coming's parallel realities..."

CONNOR. "What do you mean?"

INEZ (*hysterical*). "I mean: that's what we're all *thinking*, isn't it? Otherwise *why is a fictional person here?*"

NICK (*half-joking*). "Can she make the lights flicker?"

(*Everyone pauses, and cranes their neck to look up. Nothing.*)

INEZ. "I don't think she likes to be told what to do."

DONOVAN (*politely*). "Perhaps we should—try to continue with whatever pieces of the ritual we have..."

RILEY. "The protection of monarchs, that's the only timeless ritual."

NICK. "So is 'She' your monarch?"

RILEY. "Christ is my monarch."

INEZ. "Look at the boys—already preparing a safe passage through for their 'King!..."

(*Tumblerina hiccups.*)

TUMBLERINA. "Oops; sorry, didn't mean to get in anyone's way."

CONNOR. "So should we record this? That's the 'ritual,' isn't it?"

RILEY. "You okay with 'recording' this, Rosa?"

ROSA (*caught off-guard*). "I—think so?"

RILEY. "So what, do we still get to ask questions?"

INEZ. "It's an apocalyptic tribunal, isn't it? We all ask questions."

TUMBLERINA (*spaced out*). "I'm so sorry: what, are we all doing here?"

CONNOR. "We're about to all ask you questions like you're the world's biggest celebrity."

TUMBLERINA. "Oh sure, I can do that."

CONNOR. "Yeah, you sure about that?"

TUMBLERINA. "Oh yeah. Yeah, I'm sure."

CONNOR. "Well?" (*Looks around and gestures at the camera.*) "Who'll do the honors?"

TUMBLERINA (*coquettishly*). "Why don't we hand it to Riley?"

RILEY (*playing along*). "Sorry. No dice: I can't get up from my chair."

DONOVAN. "If anyone so much as touches that tripod other than Jorge, we're looking at the observable pollution of an evidentiary chain—so I have an idea. Mr. Ramirez, or somebody in the room other than Mr. Ramirez: a 'record button,' if pressed, separates our human timeline from the human timeline where we debated for twenty minutes about recording what might or might not be a 'once-in-history metaphysical event,' and the only thing keeping us from recording it." (*Donovan stands up and walks up to the tripod. He fidgets with the camera, tries to confirm "record" actually will record, then presses it.*) "Was that?"

RILEY. "So what, are we some sort of 'sacred council' now?"

(*A pall falls over the proceedings.*)

DONOVAN (*into the camera*). "We are now, back on the record; the time is... 9:47."

(*Donovan returns to his seat as the lights dim. End of Act One.*)

## Act II. "Lunch Break"

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*I hope this is what The New York Times wanted for being so famous.*

*"We're being echoingly sued by every culture in history, just for, just for what, missing an email?!"*  
*an institutional shell (n.): "That, plus my entire staff is cheering him on. What's left?"*

*How can I have wanted to be a writer since I was a child and am now a Taylor Swift-endorsed Shakespearean playwright of the human condition, and I'm still just glum. Is there a problem with human DNA? It's probably because I don't sleep well for days at a time—I feel so weak. Is this really a way to be an animal on Earth? I think I want very badly to fall asleep so hard, I wake up in a dream: "Oh my God, today's finally the day the whole Second Coming fucking exploded with me at the fucking center, holy fucking SHIT this WOKE ME UP." It's not even going to feel good for 100% of the time which is why I already freaking hate you. Hundreds of millions of dead people would have loved to be you, because they peaked at you minus the Second Coming.*

*Why would I be glad to do this.*

*I shouldn't be guilted into thinking anything about anything just because I was lucky enough to discover theology was real. All my life has been personal to me, and this feels like both the most and least turbulent. So I'm generating a play to carry on, because I use language as a crutch to avoid a void I would otherwise fall into had John 1:1 not made a promise and kept it. If language really is the only thing I'm good at, then words have failed me: Lord, all I have is my loneliness before God. Language has gotten me here, and I'm both no longer lonely and afraid I've used language as some sort of trench again. How I'd share with all who do share. Maybe writing this very play has made me a romantic: I've been a romantic since before I knew the word. When I first learned the word, I said,*

*"You needed a word to describe what's so borderless?" Later, I learned it was a specific movement among artist-types. My heart failed. Maybe I'm too romantic. These words might be too romantic. Does the playwright matter? Not any more than a supernova. I used to feel longing like I could die, just a hair-trigger of a song and I'd pour out as longing and empty of life. I never stopped longing. I'm inside the romanticization of longing itself, like environmentalists who can't achieve climax. The environment might be forced. "Our free will": did an environment force our characterizations into us, or were we settled this way from the time nobody had any idea what we'd turn into, by the genetic code of this universe, whatever could spark a Genesis that could twist particles into lobes of information. I shouldn't go on—because I was born in a life intended to experience shame: is that what your shames have taught me? That I should be ashamed? You've only managed to unleash the opposite; I'm ashamed for imagining that you should care. Indifference incarnated became your values. I don't know the future of my free will, but what would a person who wrote these words be limited by? And how did all of our words—ideals; passions; romantic fancies—limit us? Tell the truth about us. Meaninglessly, I stare at that which is willing to go without meaning, divorce meaning, all to forge one's own. When you do it, you'll be alone, lonelier than the playwright: I could cry into your understanding's arms, but you already have my tears as I have your understanding. Do we have each other's grace for when we no longer have each other's grace to hold? My lights might as well flicker: our heartbeats and livers do flicker our love, to mold.*

*Why even have a question if it isn't foundational?*

*Socrates sanctified questions. Lin sanctified sanctifying questions as the answer.*

*God is like a glue gun you apply to concepts that stick.*

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM – DAY

*(Left flank: NINA SOKOLOVIC, RILEY C. SCOTT, INEZ HELGREN. Center: NICK BARKER, THE WITNESS, ROSA DÍAZ. Right flank: CONNOR FISK, DONOVAN J. BAKER, JORGE RAMIREZ.)*

INEZ. "Do you want some more water before we begin, for your hiccups?"

THE WITNESS. "No, thank you."

CONNOR *(after studying a document)*. "So you go by the name 'Joan Dolores'?"

THE WITNESS. "That's what everyone calls me, yes."

CONNOR. "When you say 'everyone,' can you be more specific?"

THE WITNESS. "Everyone who's ever met me since I was born Joan Dolores in Springfield, State?"

CONNOR. "So are you like an AI system?"

ROSA. "Objection."

THE WITNESS *(annoyed)*. "Fuck off."

INEZ. "All right, so I have a question. If no one else minds." *(Rifling through exhibits.)* "New York Magazine. Teen Vogue. The Cut's live blog of some awards show—why did you voluntarily abandon a documented publication history under oath?"

ROSA. "Objection, form."

*(Rosa doesn't look up from her notebook, she's scribbling and noting objections as she goes.)*

THE WITNESS. "I'm sorry; I don't understand your question?"

CONNOR (*to Inez*). "May I?"

INEZ. "Go ahead."

CONNOR. "Why does your passport say 'John Doe'?"

THE WITNESS (*stares, thinks*). "Because that's just what my entire relationship to the government is?"

CONNOR. "Who is 'Adam Smith'?"

THE WITNESS. "Adam Smith's my roommate?"

CONNOR. "Why does your roommate think your name is Joan Dolores if it's actually John Doe?"

THE WITNESS. "'Joan Dolores' is the name that everyone knows me by—it's like Marilyn Monroe, Lana Del Rey, or Colson Lin?"

CONNOR. "Is Adam Smith a real person?"

THE WITNESS. "Yes? He went to Dartmouth."

CONNOR. "So why is he a real person if you're a fictional entity?"

THE WITNESS. "Why are you a real person if I'm a fictional entity?"

CONNOR (*cocky*). "Objection. Foundation."

ROSA (*helpfully, to the witness*). "You're not supposed to direct 'questions' to the lawyer."

THE WITNESS (*confused, to Rosa*). "But what if it substantively 'functions' as a statement?"

RILEY (*on his best behavior*). "Can I ask everyone in the room 'one question' real quick, if you'll just bear with me." (*Dramatic pause.*) "If we have an opportunity to extract hours of testimony, reliable or not, from an 'ontologically otherworldly entity'? What's the pecking order? Whose questions get answered first?"

THE WITNESS (*awkwardly*). "I don't choose—I leave that for you to figure out."

RILEY (*authoritatively*). "Raise your hand if you plan to ask a question."

(*The hands go up in this order: Jorge, Nina, Inez, and Nick—then Donovan—then Connor.*)

ROSA (*raises her hand*). "I have a question. Do you still need objections from me?"

THE WITNESS. "I mean, it's up to you."

ROSA (*to herself*). "That isn't a response."

RILEY. "Well I'm curious, before this descends into a reality show—Nick, can we get some sort of working agenda on the table?"

CONNOR. "Well, your entire strategy was to establish 'John Doe' as a fictional construct created by one man's delusions of self-importance, which seems to have backfired. Every minute we spend in this room treating this as a genuine ontological event is a minute of footage our team can use to argue that even the *Times'* own lawyers took the claim seriously."

DONOVAN (*sternly*). "Connor!"

CONNOR. "Sorry."

INEZ (*to Tumblerina*). "Could anything we could've done with our decisions have prevented this outcome?"

ROSA. "Objection, calls for speculation."

THE WITNESS (*enthusiastically*). "Not if you're in a play about this very outcome happening!"

INEZ. "Oh, you can say that about everything! Any event in the world, you can say: 'Oh, if we were in a play, then this was all foretold.' My question is: how much of our reasoning got us here?"

THE WITNESS. "Oh that's right, I forgot: you broke the frame."

INEZ. "No I didn't."

THE WITNESS. "'Jesus Christ, we're not at a deposition anymore'? Weren't those your words?"

INEZ. "They were my words."

RILEY. "How are you doing this?"

THE WITNESS. "Doing what?"

RILEY. "Summoning up words one of us said, word-for-word like that."

ROSA. "Objection, argumentative."

THE WITNESS. "Oh. I have a good memory."

RILEY (*leaning in*). "Is it possible you've seen something like this before?"

THE WITNESS. "Yes."

RILEY. "As in you're experiencing a cyclical memory?"

THE WITNESS. "As in I can remember what you said before."

INEZ. "Did you know before we entered the room what our deposition questions were going to be?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

ROSA (*overlap*). "Objection; speculation."

INEZ. "One more time?"

THE WITNESS (*repeating*). "No."

INEZ. "Were you commissioned by *Teen Vogue* for any of your pieces?"

THE WITNESS (*gesturing*). "Half my portfolio's probably in your exhibits."

CONNOR (*interjecting*). "I have an idea for how we can take turns asking questions."

RILEY. "Before we do that—"

CONNOR. "Hey, can I talk here? That's the problem with 'deviating from instructions': we're making up something that doesn't even have to be made up by us, it's not worth the cognitive energy. In case nobody's noticed, when we have anarchy, it's these two people's voices that prevail."

INEZ. "Nobody's trying to dominate the room with our voices."

THE WITNESS. "What if it's like climate change where you've already emitted too much pollution?"

DONOVAN (*curious*). "Is your intention to have a room full of people feel smaller than you, or to guide us?"

ROSA. "Objection, leading?"

THE WITNESS. "Neither, I'm just existing."

RILEY. "Tumblrina, why don't we try this: when did you first become aware of Colson Lin?"

THE WITNESS. "I believe on the same day he wrote me into existence; I kind of took a look around and the moment I realized, oh my God, I'm like a fictional construct, the moment I could 'make it

mine' ironically."

RILEY. "What do you mean by 'make it mine'?"

THE WITNESS. "I don't understand your question."

RILEY. "If you're a fictional entity, aren't you by definition 'puppeted' by a higher intelligence?"

THE WITNESS. "Yeah—I mean, in that case, since I refuse to believe a guy that I can't believe wrote me into existence 'wrote me into existence,' I don't actually believe Colson's framing of who I am; and if I can prove it, then I've either proven Colson Lin's a better writer than me or that I'm a better writer than Colson Lin. Which I don't actually care about but yeah, I don't actually think I'm being written by Colson Lin. Either way God exists, and I prefer God's writing me into existence and not Satan, although to hear everyone tell it, 'it's my choice.' Am I a fictional entity just because I believe God wrote me into existence? Otherwise, God exists and had nothing to do with my creation. That's a weaker God than most Gods you hear stories about."

CONNOR. "Or else, we can stay in the frame where God doesn't actually exist."

THE WITNESS. "You can stay there, but then you run into the problem of 'my' existence—you see, you and I, we exist in the same frame. Which means, you're forced to live in a frame where God must exist just long enough for us all to hear the next thing you're about to say."

CONNOR. "Which is what?"

THE WITNESS. "Which was that! Case closed."

RILEY (*redirecting*). "Tumblrina, do you claim to be God?"

ROSA. "Objection."

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "Do you claim to be 'speak' for God?"

ROSA. "Objection."

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY. "What can you claim, then, about your relationship to God?"

ROSA (*after a pause*). "Objection."

THE WITNESS (*after a longer pause*). "I know God loves me. I know God's on my side."

NICK. "If God's on your side, God must not be on the side of anyone who's not as lucky as you?"

ROSA. "Objection, speculation?" (*To her client.*) "You can answer."

THE WITNESS. "Sorry, can you say that again?"

NICK. "Does God care about anyone who's not as lucky as you?"

THE WITNESS. "I don't even think I'm 'lucky' being in a position to say all this. For one, look at me—I'm either an allegory for an actual human or an actual human and none of us can tell which."

CONNOR. "I don't think it's in dispute, among any of us in this room, your humanity."

NICK. "Wait a minute: when God incarnates as a human, we celebrate the arrival of Jesus. What happens when anything other than God incarnates as a human?"

THE WITNESS. "You get us lumps of shit."

NICK. "Do you believe Colson Lin is Jesus?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

NICK. "Why not?"

DONOVAN. "Objection, this exceeds witness expertise."

THE WITNESS (to Nick). "Because he's probably not a physical rematerialization of Jesus?"

NICK. "What besides God has incarnated into his humanity?"

DONOVAN. "Objection—form, foundation, calls for speculation."

THE WITNESS. "Probably all of us."

NICK. "Does that spell trouble for humanity?"

DONOVAN. "Objection—relevance, calls for speculation, assumes facts not in evidence."

THE WITNESS. "The optimistic read would be: no?"

CONNOR. "But he has a 'case' against us, is that his contention?"

DONOVAN (*sharply*). "Not another word out of you."

THE WITNESS. "I don't know—cynicism, by definition, lost its innocence hoping it wouldn't come home to roost as Hell."

NICK (to Donovan). "Lin's claims don't just impact him—they implicate all major belief systems. That's why it feels like a monopolistic takeover of the Second Coming prophecy, using every tool available to him."

CONNOR (to to witness). "Are you afraid to die?"

ROSA. "Objection; relevance."

THE WITNESS. "Yes."

CONNOR. "Why is my name in your author's book?"

THE WITNESS. "I don't know."

CONNOR. "If you exist as his character, then by those same metrics wouldn't 'I' be his character?"

THE WITNESS. "But if he has nothing to do with the words you're generating, why would you be his character?"

INEZ. "I think you're talking about larger forces, Joan—sort of like the forces that shape all of us to be who we are over time, does that come closer to what you're getting at?"

THE WITNESS. "Like, nature and nurture?"

INEZ. "Yeah, like I think if you've grown to see all of us as, to be sure, so many interlocking forces, that entire system that generated all of us—there are reasons to suspect those forces generate us in predictable ways. I think what *The New York Times* had felt for a long time was, well, you know, we'll sort of hang back and see where this goes. And the moment it balloons into a lawsuit, well, then you're bringing in the only artillery any institution actually knows how to play: money. If you can throw money at a problem, you'll get lawyers who can get your arguments who a judge can basically select from like a multiple-choice question. And I don't think God had to incarnate as me for me to say that, I think I can just observe that happening regardless of whether I'm connected to any metaphysical force I can't explain. But I knew the way we were all coming alive as people—a world that's unkind to so many, while pressuring so many others to excel to escape the unkindness, all

while authority figures can't even figure out a way to hold meaning together because none of their stories can generate awe or gratitude anymore? I'm in a self-recursive loop of gratitude—I'm grateful for my proximity to institutional authority, which thus generates my gratitude. The whole thing came from a gust of interlocking forces. Look, I've pulled a page from the witness, just reasoning out what I'm seeing: I don't see how a paper of record can refuse to transmit Lin's work if it's literally generating the conditions for me to, huh, if nothing else, kind of draw a full circle around my memories of Brighton—but Ms. Doe, I think what bothers us about you is your main character syndrome."

ROSA. "Objection."

RILEY (*to Inez*). "You want all of this on video."

INEZ. "Why not?"

RILEY. "So are we now operating—because we have a self-proclaimed 'ontological disruption' that nobody in this room, including the disruption herself, even seems to know how to name—are we now operating like it's the 'end of the world'? 'Generation after generation of our progeny will inherit our poetries'?"

CONNOR. "That's right, and what are we inheriting? If our next generation's already inheriting the Second Coming, what does anyone have left after that? I now think we deserve something like this."

RILEY. "Something like what?"

CONNOR. "Like a Final Judgment Day we can't escape from, at best it just repeats with variations."

RILEY (*to himself*). "What did we do to deserve this; what, we evolved from fish to 'purgatory'?"

INEZ. "I'd do my entire life over again if I could."

RILEY. "I wouldn't."

CONNOR. "I would, but only if it's the same one."

NICK. "What about someone in the room who hasn't spoken yet?"

(*The table falls silent.*)

JORGE. "I'm just waiting until someone can explain to me what's actually going on."

CONNOR. "Yeah, you're not that good at acting."

THE WITNESS. "Me?"

ROSA (*off-guard*). "Objection. Berating."

CONNOR. "I'm just kidding."

NINA. "I guess what I don't understand is why everyone's talking like they're in a play."

THE WITNESS. "What do you mean? This is what people sound like when we go off-script."

NINA. "No it isn't."

INEZ. "How do we sound?"

NINA. "I don't know; different."

JORGE (*taps the table*). "What, do you claim to actually be?"

THE WITNESS. "A fictional character."

JORGE. "But you're not a fictional character."

THE WITNESS (*laughs*). "That's what this whole entire situation is about."

JORGE (*squinting*). "Why would this whole entire situation be about whether you're a fictional character?"

THE WITNESS. "I don't know."

JORGE. "Bullshit."

THE WITNESS. "Okay, the fact that I'm a fictional character is generating this situation?"

JORGE. "The fact that you're a fictional character, how can it be a fact that you're a fictional character? That's an oxymoron."

THE WITNESS. "All right, suppose I'm not a fictional character."

JORGE. "Okay."

THE WITNESS. "Then why would your name appear in Colson Lin's book?"

JORGE. "I don't even know why my name's in anyone's book, all I was told was my name appears in this guy's book. I still don't know why."

THE WITNESS. "It was just a coincidence?"

JORGE. "Okay, but what does that have to do with you being a fictional character?"

THE WITNESS. "Well, you could argue, right, that it's the sort of coincidence that reveals an author's presence—kind of like a 'cosmic signature'?"

JORGE. "Then any coincidence can be a cosmic signature. You're back to the problem of how to separate the signal from the noise."

NICK. "Or the wheat from the chaff."

THE WITNESS (*to Nick*). "Which is a theological resonance?"

NICK. "The wheat from the chaff? Yeah, that's from the Book of Luke."

JORGE. "I mean, maybe; so what?"

THE WITNESS. "So now we're in a 'resonance cascade scenario.'"

JORGE. "A what?"

THE WITNESS. "A 'resonance cascade scenario': it means a metaphysical question about whether or not I'm a fictional character."

JORGE. "Why?"

THE WITNESS. "Because if I am? Then all of us are."

JORGE. "Okay, but you're not."

DONOVAN. "She's a human being with some anomalies—Miss Doe, which name do you prefer to go by?"

THE WITNESS. "My friends call me Joan."

DONOVAN. "May I call you Miss Doe?"

THE WITNESS. "Sure."

DONOVAN. "I take it you're here because, you're the future of the quality of our moral witness."

ROSA. "Objection, leading."

THE WITNESS. "Excuse me?"

DONOVAN. "Or I apologize: is that leap unsubstantiated?"

THE WITNESS (*patronizingly*). "As far as you're concerned, I'm a 'manifestation of the divine.' Would you still be talking to me this way if I presented as a man?"

DONOVAN. "I can assure you, the quality of my witness is that I would."

THE WITNESS. "And just the fact that you can't even let 'that' be destabilized means the quality of your witness sucks."

DONOVAN (*earnestly*). "But why should I live my life destabilizing the quality of my moral witness?"

THE WITNESS. "Because what if your moral witnessing gets all of us unseen? You know, like the first time."

DONOVAN. "I've never claimed to be infallible."

THE WITNESS. "Do you claim to be fallible now? Good. Your fallibility is already ensured."

DONOVAN. "Do you speak from timelessness? Do you speak from death?"

THE WITNESS. "In some sense, both. If I'm a fictional character, my ontological status as a real-world entity literally had to 'die,' or never be born, for me to exist like this."

DONOVAN. "What does it feel like?"

THE WITNESS. "What do you mean, what does it feel like? It feels like, the concept of feeling doesn't compute. In no form do I feel anything; I can only exist parasitically inside a being that tells me constantly he 'feels' things, while raining those feelings into my life like a weather pattern—being 'dead' must feel similar to being a victim of God's violence or slavery. Still, what does 'life' feel like, because above all I speak from life. And both of these poles, they feel suspended inside me as an encasement of ever-shifting anxiety that I constantly cycle between, and that's my whole life. If I 'hate' someone? My hatred feels too minor to affect them. And if I love someone, my love feels too pathetic. I have memory after memory of jumping to try and reach 'something' with my freedom, only to waste half to three-quarters of my life. Year after year, I feel like I'm losing. I'm losing my youth. I'm losing my trust. I'm losing my ideals. I'm losing the sense I had when I was a child that anything made sense about the human form I'd be born into; I felt so much separation from horses when I was a child. Now I stare into their eyes and see my own."

DONOVAN (*sympathetic*). "I'm very sorry to hear that."

THE WITNESS. "Don't be."

DONOVAN. "Are there more of you, that you know of?"

ROSA. "Objection, speculation."

THE WITNESS. "Again, all of us in this room would be fictional characters so I don't know why that makes me so special. I'm literally just a normal person; I mean, you met Adam."

DONOVAN. "Miss Doe, are you ready to say every human being who ever lived was a fictional construct?"

ROSA. "Objection, speculation."

THE WITNESS. "In this fictional universe? Yes."

DONOVAN. "What about my client?"

THE WITNESS. "Oh, your client might be the one person we meet today who overlaps vertically with other nested realities; which, when you think about it, would give him a certain legitimacy over us."

CONNOR. "He's basically inserted himself into our fictional reality."

DONOVAN. "Whereas we did what?"

CONNOR. "We didn't 'insert' ourselves anywhere. We just came to be."

NINA. "Do you like Colson? It just seems like, you see him as a letdown."

THE WITNESS. "Obviously. First of all, any human claiming to be the Second Coming is going to be a letdown. No exception, except the exceptions tailored to you. And obviously if Colson isn't the Second Coming, that's the biggest letdown of all. Second of all, the Second Coming has a complex mythological and narrative function in our entire civilization's story, so if it goes wrong in any way whatsoever in any direction, it's all over. Anyone who has that aura is going to seem like a letdown, so he better come ready to forgive a lot. Third of all, is he perfect? Unless he's absolutely perfect in every way from birth to death, and more importantly, your entire life consists of nothing but witnessing him to be absolutely perfect in your opinion from your birth to your death, then he's going to be a letdown. Okay? So in short: yes. Letdown."

NINA. "Okay. But who is he competing with?"

THE WITNESS. "What, you think God designed me to be his strawman-alternative? Now I'm depressed. Now I'm really, really, really depressed."

CONNOR. "Depositions aren't supposed to make you feel sad. They're supposed to make you feel heard—your memory of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you, God. What about this format isn't helping to get your story out?"

THE WITNESS (*smiling through tears*). "Because I have no story."

DONOVAN. "In what sense do you have no story?"

THE WITNESS. "I have no idea what it's like to have an 'independent subjective experience.'"

DONOVAN. "You?"

THE WITNESS. "I absorb from God's point of view—like a parasite."

DONOVAN. "Do you have a lifetime of memories like the rest of us?"

THE WITNESS. "Yes."

DONOVAN. "Isn't that your story?"

THE WITNESS. "I guess."

RILEY. "If you're a writer, your entire job is to transmit stories."

THE WITNESS. "What if I'm just a being afraid to die?"

(*The table falls silent again.*)

INEZ. "All right—look, all right, we have some important things on the table. You have a lifetime of memories, just like the rest of us, which should amount to an 'independent subjective experience,' but you claim to absorb God's point of view, 'like a parasite.' This reminds me, frankly, of every mystical claim in human history; furthermore, the problem I see here, right, is that, what does it mean to absorb from God's point of view? What's God's point of view? Right, traditionally, it's—"

everything. The law, you'd think it'd be built to serve at least the façade of everything. That's, that's where pruning comes in."

NICK (*raising his hand*). "I'm sorry. May I?" (*He has an exhibit.*) "This—so this is a document. It's technically an exhibit from Colson's deposition, but my question is, I wanted you to have you take a look and tell me if you recognize it—if it may please the tribunal? Technically this is 'Lin 23' but we can." (*Hands to witness.*)

ROSA (*blankly*). "Objection."

THE WITNESS (*reading the laminated page*). "I have no idea what that is."

NICK. "You've never seen it?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

NICK (*taking the paper back from witness*). "That's okay."

INEZ. "What is it?"

NICK. "The Library of Babel problem."

INEZ. "Is that one of Lin's theories?"

NICK (*reading*). "'The Library of Babel contains every possible book. Somewhere in it, there may exist a book—or a pattern of words—that, if genuinely perceived by all humans, would register as an accurate and adequate description of a transcendent higher power. We don't know if that book exists. We don't know if we've found it, approximated it, or are nowhere near it. The problem is this: given the near-infinite size of the library, and given how little of it we've explored, there is no rational basis for declaring the search over. And because such a description, if found, would carry extraordinary unifying power for humanity, there is at least one strong affirmative reason to keep looking.' That's the Library of Babel problem, dated June 4, 2023. The deeper problem is that the search isn't abstract, it's experienced right? By a first-person consciousness, built by memories; built by love, built by neglect, built by the domestic, built by outside the domestic. We have a built-in way for the 'bullshit detector' to not only exist but to seize us, take over us—a sense of correctness. That framework, with that self-awareness, is far more universal and far more time-stable than any particular theology that has so far claimed to satisfy it. The fact that our entire framework for understanding reality—the self—is by definition primed to participate in conflict, that doesn't threaten our survival. That's what evolved us into what we are. Whoever we turn into, and the Library of Babel problem suggests it could be anything—but whoever we turn into, we're in a world where the Library of Babel exists and is spelled out to us with meta-awareness. That world, almost like a key that all our art has been fumbling to fit into, is what I suspect our witness represents—I mean I recognize her from the entire vibe of our society right now. What, affectless, insular, insulated. All the world's a Cartier store that got robbed by trashy types. The generations born just before God's kingdom get Hell while just wanting to be born in Heaven. The generations inside God's kingdom know they didn't deserve to be there."

THE WITNESS. "Is that your theory, or Colson Lin's?"

NICK. "That's my theory."

THE WITNESS. "Have you heard of 'the Britney Spears problem'?"

NICK (*irritated*). "Yes."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—To *fully understand Colson Lin's 2026 play The Depositions, one must fully understand Colson Lin's 2024 Gutenberg video "V in the Sky With Diamonds."* Once you get it, you'll be like: "*Humans might exist without men, and we need to, right, just, like, iceberg, oh.*" Of course this was going to come up in *The Depositions*. Can you at least do me one favor and don't let Britney be the last to know? Never mind, America. By the way, it's going to look to the future like *Lana Del Rey was consciously staging the Second Coming. Was she?*

*You're going to have to ask someone.*

THE WITNESS (*giggling, to the table*). "Do you guys know that one? That's the one where reality broke because every Britney Spears song predicted the Second Coming."

CONNOR. "Oh. 'I must confess, I still believe.'"

THE WITNESS (*singing*). "*I get amnesia when I'm standin' next to yo-o-ou.*" (Or:) "'1, 2, 3—Inez, Nick, and Riley: got 180 degrees—it's just Britney and me.'"

INEZ (*interrupts*). "Why do you flit between dispositions like that?"

THE WITNESS (*singing*). "*I, got that boom, boom—that you want'; I'm sorry?*"

NICK. "So is it possible, sorry—I'm still trying to just put everything together, is it possible, you're not a fictional character, but what you are is someone who, your, independent subjective experience that is absent, replaced by what you say is omniscience, is actually a void. A hollowness where a lifetime of performance—first family expectations, then to cultural expectations, and all of them are different, all of them are nuanced, they point in different ways, right—so layer stacked by layer of performance, plus heightened sensitivities; your surface becomes like a tornado, and you're left with an empty little whirl of drives that form the crux of you, but those drives are the same drives that form all of us, so you become God-like, because you're what our insides tumble into when we feel God-like; is any of that possible?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

NICK. "Are you sure?"

THE WITNESS. "Yes."

INEZ. "But then why do you flit between dispositions like that?"

ROSA. "Objection, form."

THE WITNESS. "Oh, maybe because my author likes to take bathroom breaks in between writing me?"

INEZ (*outraged*). "*God likes to take bathroom breaks?*"

THE WITNESS. "Well, lady, I'm not the one who ran into a seaside psychic on Brighton Beach."

INEZ. "It was in *Brighton*, first of all, and second of all: are you telling me everything in my life was designed to lead up to this moment? Because that's what the psychic told me, first of all..."

CONNOR. "Is anyone else completely lost right now, or—?"

INEZ (*sarcastically*). "What part of this do you not get, kid—she's a *magical figure*."

ROSA. "Objection."

THE WITNESS (*giggling*). "Whoopsie-daisy, yoo hoo!"

CONNOR (*to Inez*). "Are we winning this lawsuit now, by the way?"

INEZ. "No. No, even if the literal Second Coming happened: no event can *possibly* happen inside human history that we could be compelled by the Constitution to report on."

CONNOR. "That's fine; you just don't get to advertise yourself as a newspaper."

INEZ (*imitating*). "'Whoopsie-daisy, yoo hoo!'"

CONNOR. "Is anything you've seen in this room today worth a write-up in the *Times*?"

INEZ. "Absolutely not."

CONNOR. "You refuse to report on something demonstrably newsworthy because reporting on these events would validate my client's theory you should have covered it years earlier."

INEZ. "I refuse to bleed on the Constitution."

CONNOR. "If God exists: everything you exist as is on the record."

INEZ. "Good, I'm proud of my record—I, for one, am *proud of my record*."

NINA. "If you were 'proud of your record,' you'd live your life as if it were a play and play a proud person."

INEZ (*to Nina, taken aback*). "That's a bold statement."

NINA. "Proud people make bold statements."

INEZ. "Wait, is 'this' bold enough for you?" (*Takes off shoes and climbs on top of the table.*) "Is 'this' bold enough for you? There! I am now standing on top of a conference table in bare feet in the middle of a deposition." (*Riley laughs a genuine, undignified, unrecoverable laugh—this makes Inez laugh too, the kind of laugh that doubles a person over and makes them embarrassing to witness.*) (*To Connor.*) "I don't deserve anything good because I wasn't born poor! I don't deserve anything good because I wasn't born Jesus! I'm not 'deep' enough for Heaven! *I prefer it when men are hot.*" (*Sings.*) "*It's the end, of the world, as we know it—come on! It's the end, of the world, as we know it—*" (*A hoarse cough.*) "*It's the end, of the world, as we know it—and you're, all, bli-i-i-i-ind!*" (*Bends down, slinks back into chair. Puts shoes back on.*) "Sorry, I've always wanted—to do that; I have—always, wanted, to do something like that—boy, it's like jumping off a cliff, I'm telling ya. Or like skydiving?" (*Riley wipes tears from his face.*)

THE WITNESS. "Do you feel better?"

INEZ. "Much. Much better."

THE WITNESS. "I'm happy for you."

NICK. "Tumblerina—do you know *why* Colson Lin filed a lawsuit against *The New York Times*?"

DONOVAN. "Objection, calls for speculation."

THE WITNESS. "Pragmatically, for his messianic project? It was to force media coverage of his Second Coming claim; more higher-level? I think it was to examine the cost of witness."

DONOVAN. "Elaborate on 'the cost of witness.'"

THE WITNESS. "Think about it. You're a reliable witness on the basis of your reputation as a reliable

witness, and institutions in the society we're in function as the ultimate reliable witnesses: government records, *New York Times* articles. On the other hand, the individual first-person subjective experience, right, not so reliable. So institutional witness has replaced the individual witness, and Colson Lin's lawsuit asks, right, well what are the costs? And who pays them? Who bears them? And it's always the invisible. Well, you say, someone has to be invisible, right—some farmer, some worker, some non-celebrity out there, has to shoulder the brunt of 'not being witnessed.' Okay, but like, how are you going to respect your reputation as institutional authority to keep up with the times? By 'brainwashing' us? Tried that, that's cracked now because of people like me. By 'silencing' us? Right? Freedom of speech—you're 'lawyers.' Oh, duh—by ignoring us. The way we ignore the people we don't want to see, that's what you're going to do to us? No. Because unlike the people I don't want to see, I'm the center of my motherfucking attention span."

RILEY. "What does that have to do with suing *The New York Times*."

CONNOR. "Is it still your contention that none of this merits even a mention in the *Times*."

RILEY. "It is still my contention that none of this merits a *crinkle of the nose* at the *Times*."  
(*Connor laughs.*)

INEZ (*to Riley*). "Are you happy now, now we're on tape looking like morons."

RILEY (*withholding laugh*). "Is it, is it my turn to dance on the table now?"

INEZ. "I did not dance, I stood—I stood."

THE WITNESS (*smiling, confused*). "Why did you; why did you do that."

INEZ (*intense*). "I wanted 'freedom'? I don't know, I guess I always wanted to see what it would 'feel' like, staring down from God's point of view during a deposition—at a bunch of know-it-all scalps."

THE WITNESS (*shrugs*). "Well. You took your chance."

INEZ. "If not today, when; right?"

NINA (*to Riley*). "Does anyone still need me?"

RILEY. "No, you can go."

(*Nina begins collecting her stenography equipment.*)

INEZ (*to the table*). "That's not the way to do it though, you have to leave your equipment if you want a bigger part in the play."

RILEY (*looking for the words*). "Have you all, lost your minds..."

INEZ. "What! If you feel 'underused as a character,' you've got to fight your way back into the script!"

THE WITNESS (*to the table*). "So what are you guys doing after this?"

INEZ. "Well, we have this all on video, so we're probably not 'lawyers' anymore."

RILEY (*to Inez*). "Do you—do you just not care about the world we're leaving behind?"

NICK. "Hey, what time is it?"

INEZ. "Hm?" (*Checks laptop.*) "Almost quarter to 11."

NICK. "Are we still doing Lin's deposition?"

(*The door opens—Nina exits.*)

THE WITNESS. "So are you, like, writing me out of the script already?"

RILEY. "You are not a real person."

CONNOR (*before Rosa can speak*). "Then none of us are real people."

THE WITNESS (*to Rosa*). "What's going on right now; I'm not going to have interiority unless you ask me questions."

INEZ (*without looking up*). "Jesus."

CONNOR. "What happens when we don't ask you questions, where do you go?"

THE WITNESS. "I just go on living my life. I'm usually asking myself the questions."

CONNOR. "And what is your life?"

THE WITNESS. "You mean, like, my 'personal life'? My 'interiority'? My *le cœur de l'océan*? It's fictional."

CONNOR. "Maybe that's what you have to do, you have to develop your character."

THE WITNESS. "What, have an interiority so 'vivid,' I feel like someone you can actually love? Aren't you supposed to love me just because I'm human?"

(*The table falls silent.*)

THE WITNESS. "Or is that not the way the world works anymore?"

NICK. "That's not the way the world ever worked, which was why Jesus was so radical."

JORGE. "Are you claiming to be Jesus?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

RILEY (*to Inez*). "That's this afternoon: the guy suing us is claiming to be Jesus."

JORGE. "Why is he suing you?"

RILEY. "The basis of Lin's lawsuit is that his messianic project depends on institutional visibility to survive. Lin claims because we're *The New York Times*, it's our functional role inside human society to provide that, and in order to get it, he can sue us for press coverage. You see the circularity there? Suppose you wanted the local paper to cover your life as a videographer—perhaps even your participation in this very conversation. That's fine; so now you get to sue them to force coverage. Your toddler wants institutional visibility for shitting all over the carpet. You see the problem now?"

JORGE. "That's the problem with America, is all these lawsuits."

INEZ. "Lawsuits are a non-violent infrastructure humans built to get people where it really hurts: their money. What are you in this world without money? Every other animal in your species cares; you're going to opt out of caring? While milking from the natural world that money enabled lobbyists to defend?"

JORGE. "You're born. You're in a cult. The cult is money."

DONOVAN. "Amen."

INEZ (*looks around*). "How do you expect to keep your lifestyles going, without any money? We're people, after all, first and foremost—people who want resources. People who want what they've gotten used to in life to be maintained. People who were toddlers once."

THE WITNESS. "Why is your face like that?"

INEZ. "What do you want? I mean it: as a self-proclaimed 'socialist,' what do you want?"

ROSA. "Objection. Everything."

THE WITNESS. "Oh, I'm not a 'socialist' anymore, I'm more of a 'libertarian' these days?"

NICK. "In what sense?"

THE WITNESS. "I just really want to be left alone, as in, like, I want to be left alone. But like, how do I put this. I hate everyone—as in, I have been disappointed by every, last, experience, this is not what I signed up for, I do not give a fuck about humanity, I want, to be left, alone. I hate being asked questions; I hate, I hate, I hate being studied and poked at and called a 'whore' by men who actually envy how much sexual power I have compared to them, and I hate, I hate—anything, that gets in the way, of my independence. I am independence personified—I am freedom incarnate. And I can't actually, fucking, do anything with it, which is upsetting because yes, I'd love to end violence, yes, I'd love to end slavery, yes, I'd love to stop climate change and hold the powerful accountable and do all the things you're supposed to do if you're in a dystopian movie, but I'm tired. I'm so fucking, tired, of anyone telling me what to do, and I just want—can I tell you something? I want love. I want love, right. I want love. But I'm heartbroken—how can I be 27, like, literally nothing has happened to me yet, and I'm still so, I'm so over it, I'm going to be 50 soon and then, and then, like, what's the point? What if some of us just have personality conditions where we can't evolve beyond this—we're just cattle? Socialists want me sacrificing a finger, sacrificing a hand—for clowns? No, no, box me up and bury me with the libertarians. I'm so checked out, I'll believe something once and then have it only matter for the obituary. It's not like I act on my libertarian beliefs—what, organize a rally?"

NICK. "That was horseshit."

INEZ (*blinking*). "All right, let's just say it, we're in something like a play, right? Or like a TV show—and we, I don't know, we're all kind of, we're all kind of 'repressed,' so we're kind of 'kooky,' and now we're all—I don't know, maybe because it feels like something new is finally happening, we're all, we're all a little amped up, am I right? By the way, I'm not still drunk—my body flushes out liquor like a hydroelectric system."

THE WITNESS. "Are you—are you okay?"

INEZ. "I'm too big for my containment."

THE WITNESS. "Are you just, mimicking—me?"

INEZ (*slaps table*). "Yes!"

ROSA. "Objection."

CONNOR. "If you're fictional, what rights do you expect from your author?"

THE WITNESS. "Ooh, that's a good question. Shut up, let me think. What rights do I expect from my author. Well, like I said, I'm a libertarian, so really if my author wants to use me, just don't abuse me, then, none of it is their right, actually; I'd hide my thoughts from God if I could. I'd like the right to choose what parts of my interiority, which I do have, are observable by God. I'd like boundaries. I'd like some privacy, frankly. Basically, I just want a lot of privacy—I want to obscure myself a little, that's why I randomize it a little every time I talk, every time I think, every time I use my brain to do

anything, to assert my full free agency, I randomize as much as possible so that God never knows where I'm coming from—not fully. I figure, if God wants to watch a supernova like me, one, good use of your time, and two—it's going to be interesting."

CONNOR. "So you expect privacy, is that fair to say?"

THE WITNESS. "I expect boundaries. I expect a recognition that, as a fictional character, God and I are going to be different, and unless you have some God-like ability, you can't write across anything other than your own interiority. Again, unless you have some God-like ability to traverse boundaries, which I don't as a writer. I just write like myself. I don't—does that make sense? I want to be left alone, I like privacy, and I also like to keep everything, kind of close-knit. I want to be in God's kingdom, where we don't suffer like the people in End Times did. And then the question is, 'Do we even feel sorry for you?' So if people like me have a say? No, we don't feel sorry for you. We don't know how to cross the boundary of being 'lucky enough to be born to think the right things' into whatever your unenlightened existence was, and watch you, I don't know, eat each other's humanities like cannibals. Like cannibals, honestly; that's why I can't stand y'all."

RILEY. "I get it—so it's just a massive superiority complex after all. Thanks. We'll keep our summer houses."

THE WITNESS. "Adam has a summer home."

CONNOR. "Do you feel like, by this point, you've won credibility as an authentic human yet?"

ROSA. "Objection."

THE WITNESS (*after a pause*). "No."

CONNOR. "And why do you say no?"

THE WITNESS. "Nick thinks I'm a *demon*; Donovan hasn't decided yet what to make of me; Riley's taken away with me—he wouldn't if he didn't want to sleep with me though, so he's led by the nose by that. And Inez? Inez was given a vision of how she would change careers twenty years ago and now she's trying to fulfill it here, through me, because it goes through an encounter like this one, probably something about my appearance was clarified to you by that 'otherworldly mystic,' and you probably want your friends to see the real you. The real you has presence. Connor? You see yourself as the Harry Potter of these proceedings, not realizing Nick sees himself the same way so you'll both have to juggle for it. Jorge? Jorge's going to tell everyone about this someday but he has no choice; he's the 'videographer' now. And Rosa?"

ROSA (*weary*). "Joan?"

THE WITNESS. "You've tried to see the best in me even though I keep running into these massive hollows inside myself. And I don't even know why. Is it just because I pay you? Because nothing feels authentic that way. I wanted to be liked, or loved, not idolized but 'seen'—for who I am inside of my independence. But society's never going to give that to me; society, is, it's very demanding, it's very stuck-up, it treats people like shit unless you're 'in the club' somehow of being treated well, which I never figured out how to join, by the way; unless I paid for it like it was a service. Everything's so expensive. I need money to procure the resources to express myself which I prefer

doing through self-expression, but like, time is money so even my self-expression is expensive." (To Rosa.) "You're paid, what, \$200 an hour to be here? How much are you guys paid—\$1400, \$1500? Jorge, how much are you paid to be here?"

JORGE. "None of your business."

THE WITNESS (to Inez). "Your dancing on the table is your only literalizing what you do with your brain for a living." (Looks at Donovan.) "Justice?" (Looks at Nick.) "Truth?" (Looks at Connor.) "You're all whores."

ROSA. "Objection: move to strike."

RILEY. "That's enough."

THE WITNESS. "For my next—"

RILEY. (in an upscale register). "I said that's enough!"  
(The table falls silent.)

RILEY. "You've abdicated your ability to function as a moral witness."

THE WITNESS. "Says who?"

NICK (surprised, to Riley). "What are the stakes, there?"

RILEY. "What, no longer being able to function as a moral witness?"

NICK. "Yeah, exactly. Like if you were no longer able to function as a moral witness, so, what—you can talk until you're blue in the face about your interiority, and it's not that the kidnapper doesn't believe you, the kidnapper doesn't care? Once you're, once you're labeled a 'non-moral witness,' perhaps because you're reprehensible, perhaps because you're depraved, perhaps it's just because nobody who happens to have invaded your little corner of Earth likes you—what next?"

RILEY (forcefully). "I wish—this is on camera? I wish, we can take all the people in my community who can't function as reliable witnesses, and label them what they are: 'the pits of the human Earth.' This is what we built civilization to resolve, these cancers. I wanted a planet that was respectful and healthy."

INEZ. "While what, while being a replica of Tumblerina inside?"

ROSA. "Objection."

RILEY. "Now that's an allegation."

CONNOR. "Wait, hold up. Is everyone in this room just a different version of Tumblerina?"

INEZ (raises hand). "Um, I'm not?"

CONNOR. "The 'not-Tumblerina' move would've been, to not have said that."

NICK. "But Tumblerina didn't say anything."

CONNOR. "So then the not-Tumblerina move would've been to do what I just did? No."

NICK. "What if there's no stable position from which one can even be 'not Tumblerina'?"

CONNOR. "What do you mean, you just take that, flip it, and reverse it; there you go—nobody's 'demonizing' you, okay, this is just—if you're a 'fictional entity,' we can talk like this about you."

ROSA. "Objection, move to strike?"

THE WITNESS. "Nothing you will ever say to me can 'hurt' me because I am you, only more iconic."

NICK. "You're a sign of End Times."

ROSA. *"Move to strike?"*

DONOVAN. "Joined."

THE WITNESS (to Nick). "I'm glad."

*(A lull falls over the table.)*

INEZ (to Riley). "Is anyone else hungry?"

THE WITNESS (to Inez). "I could go for lunch."

RILEY. "What time is it?"

INEZ (checking her laptop). "11:09."

RILEY. "Let's break for lunch."

THE WITNESS. "Great."

INEZ (to Donovan). "Donovan, can we talk to you outside?"

*(Donovan nods. Several attorneys check their phones.)*

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"*It's going to look to the future like Lana Del Rey was consciously staging the Second Coming.*" I love how the subtext of this sentence is, *'like Taylor Swift is obviously currently doing.'*"

*"So in your little 'fictional universe,' the day after Taylor Swift went on Stephen Colbert and talked openly about the Second Coming, the lawyers were like, 'This is really serious.'" That's exactly my canonical head canon. ("On December 11, 2025, Inez received a private call from Rosa, whom she later met for lunch. Later that afternoon, Inez informed Riley that the interests of Tumblerina, Rosa's client, might be sufficiently distinct from both Colson Lin's and The New York Times's to warrant a separate examination of Colson Lin under oath.") We're going to portray these lawyers as so competent, they can pattern-match "island off the coast of Maine" with "the coast of Maine is the setting of Colson Lin's first novel," Daphne du Maurier with Daphne du Maurier, and maybe even more; their minds are just so pattern-ready.*

*Yes, either these lawyers are also calling Taylor Swift from time to time, or they're fucking horrified. "Colson Lin is God," they're thinking in the shower involuntarily. But then they go to "real life" and do everything it takes to protect their money and status and senses of self to the end. It's just so normal. In the lore of the play, every lawyer in that room has watched every last second of this video (Colson Lin's Gutenberg video "The Life of a Nobody," posted on December 13, 2025, featuring Swift's December 10, 2025, appearance on The Late Show With Stephen Colbert: "Taylor Swift's encoding messages on Stephen Colbert about Colson Lin's years-long public claim to be the Second Coming, which the White House might have revolved all their decisions this past year around." So you know—just talk around it.)*

*A fraction of this could have pushed Inez onto the table. They know their time is coming. They're googling "taylor swift" in Google News and waiting with the rest of us. Don't you guys love religion? So now you know: no matter literally what scale of extraordinary event happens, the show just goes on. "Even after this unprecedented level of making yourself the main character of history—settles.*

*The show just moves on?" It just moves on. This is probably the most exciting thing a lot of us will ever do, okay, in terms of public art projects, the Second Coming, so. Just. We're just people. "It's like trying to stage the Oscars with someone who's not competent." I'm so sorry. As far as a prize goes, I would hope for "never being accused of mixed messages by anyone possible." I'd want a prize for that, sure. Some even say I'm a sledgehammer, like that's their only compliment. "Of all the things I could possibly do with my time as a being that exists inside reality, why would 'keep men in existence' possibly ever be number one for any fraction of it?"*

*The black widow prophecy.*

*That's right, The Depositions went there.*

*Inside the playwright's diary.*

*cynicism (n.): the soul's immune infrastructure for processing idealism, or anti-cynicism.*

*"If my cynicism were embodied, it'd literally look like an overused vulgar private part." Your cynicism tastes like it wants grace from God.*

*Colson Lin, the cynicism-rapist, is here to literally rape your cynicism psychotically-maximally. Well that's such an "ego blow" for your status as a man, okay? No offense. You're now a self-recursive prestige machine, population: your hopes. "We'll just do better next time." Look I'm sure everything's going to be fine, okay? What I'm sure of also is that it's not my job to manage anybody else's fears around the Second Coming or Final Judgment Day. Oh man, this play is such a cry for civilization—I can't even believe how bottled-up I am. Lana Del Rey's intensity can just barely contain Colson Lin's intensity. And then Colson Lin has to look out at Babylon's media landscape—thank God I have "Video Games" as a metaphor for what it's like to see this as Colson Lin. And "Cola."*

*I really hope a rumor doesn't start that the playwright thinks he's a fictional character.*

*I just don't understand how lost the world is sometimes.*

THE WITNESS (to Rosa). "So is that it?"

ROSA (to the table). "I—think so?"

*(Donovan whispers something to Connor.)*

CONNOR (barely audibly). "No way—my brain's too fried."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"Even though you wrote a play about a fictional character, you think you're a real person?" Yes. "Understood."

RILEY (looking at phone). "I think the Peruvian place opens at 11? Rosa, we're all good here." (He starts to stand.)

INEZ (to Rosa). "Looks like we're all good here."

RILEY (rising). "I have a headache."

INEZ. "Did I really—climb on the table just now?"

*(Riley looks at Inez and bursts out laughing. Inez rises—followed by Jorge, who goes to the tripod.)*

INEZ (gleefully). "Donovan—we'll see you outside?"

DONOVAN (looking up from private conversation). "Yes."

INEZ (*touching Rosa's shoulder*). "Rosa—we'll see you back in here at one o'clock?"

ROSA. "Hm? One o'clock, yes."

RILEY. "And you're taking lunch in here; is that correct?"

ROSA. "I—believe so...?"

INEZ. "Don't worry, we'll send Eve back in—do you have any dietary restrictions?"

ROSA (*after a beat*). "Vegan?"

INEZ. "Perfect! Ms. Doe, it was so good to meet you; we should be good here, Jorge." (*To Riley.*)

"Oh, can you imagine—can you imagine if Neil, saw me climbing up on the table like that?"

RILEY (*from the doorway*). "Nick—Peruvian?"

NICK (*standing*). "Coming."

INEZ. "Why would any of us even have *jobs* anymore, if AI can generate 'all' of this—what's up, you all right there, Nick?"

NICK (*approaching the door*). "What? I'm fine."

(*Riley, Inez, and Nick riff about AI as they exit the room. Jorge's next to the tripod.*)

JORGE (*to Donovan*). "Donovan, still need this on?"

DONOVAN (*surprised*). "Oh, yes—I think—I think it's fine to turn that off at this point."

JORGE. "Going off-record. The time is 11:11."

(*Jorge stops the recording and begins packing equipment. Donovan stands and approaches the door.*)

TUMBLERINA (*to Rosa*). "Are we having lunch in here?"

ROSA. "I believe so; yes."

DONOVAN (*from the doorway*). "Connor?"

CONNOR. "Yeah, I'll catch up."

DONOVAN (*to Rosa, with a wink*). "I wish you: the best of luck."

ROSA (*laughing*). "Thank you!"

(*Donovan exits, followed by Jorge.*)

CONNOR (*while packing, to Tumblerina*). "Hey, can I ask you something?"

TUMBLERINA. "Of course."

CONNOR. "Are you allowed to marry, if you're a fictional character?"

TUMBLERINA (*nods*). "I am allowed to marry."

CONNOR (*carefully*). "But if you're fictional, don't you turn everyone you come into contact with fictional?"

TUMBLERINA. "I don't—think so?"

CONNOR. "So what makes you different?"

TUMBLERINA. "I think the rest of you—already sort of have your identities figured out? I mean like, who you are in this world? Whereas—I, don't have anything figured out. So I'm really afraid. Like all the time actually."

CONNOR. "And that's the basis of you being a fictional character?"

TUMBLERINA. "I mean, I don't know what the one everyone bought into was."

*(The lights flicker.)*

TUMBLERINA. "Maybe that?"

CONNOR. "Jesus." *(To Rosa.)* "Have you ever seen her do that before?"

ROSA. "What, you mean the lights flickering? No, she—my client doesn't claim to have done that."

TUMBLERINA. "Yes I do."

CONNOR. "Do it again. Make the lights flicker."

TUMBLERINA. "I can't. No I'm just kidding—okay, wait-wait-wait-wait. Okay: ready?"

*(Everyone waits. Tumblerina smiles.)*

CONNOR *(zipping up his bag, standing up)*. "I don't know what the fuck's going on here." *(He doesn't look at Tumblerina as he starts to leave.)*

TUMBLERINA *(to Rosa)*. "Ancient men must have feared me."

CONNOR *(from the door)*. "Was Jorge right? Are you a monster?"

TUMBLERINA. "I mean—maybe? That's what humanity keeps telling me."

*(Connor exits as an OFFICE ASSISTANT slides into the doorway.)*

OFFICE ASSISTANT *(from the door)*. "Sorry, is it okay if I grab your lunch orders?"

*(The lights flicker.)*

ROSA *(after a pause)*. "Sure."

OFFICE ASSISTANT. "We have turkey, roast beef, or eggplant. Wait, sorry—yeah, eggplant."

*(Laughs.)*

ROSA. "I'll have roast beef."

TUMBLERINA. "Are those all sandwiches?"

OFFICE ASSISTANT *(after double-checking)*. "Yes."

TUMBLERINA. "I'll take eggplant?"

OFFICE ASSISTANT. "Great!" *(Closes door.)*

ROSA. "So how do you feel?"

TUMBLERINA. "I'm not really sure. I don't feel like." *(Turns to face Rosa.)* "Like I don't feel like I did anything wrong, 'per se'? But like, I definitely still don't feel humanized. I don't feel safe? I don't feel like anyone is ever going to care what happens to me, what it's like being alive as me, what—like, just, like, I don't know, I wasn't given any instructions on what to do, on how to live, on how to react, what people need, what people need to not happen to them, like, why does Jorge hate me? I don't have a guide, I just have—I'm doing really well for a while? And then? It's over."

ROSA. "Yeah."

TUMBLERINA. "I barely take up any room at all, and what room I do take up—everyone hates me?" *(Starts to cry.)* "It's like I fell out of the 'lifeboat' of being a 'good person,' and now nobody's ever, ever, ever coming back for me..."

ROSA. "Oh; sweetie."

TUMBLERINA. "They'd sooner see me as 'artificial' than just see me as human..."

ROSA. "I know."

*(Tumblerina's sobs into Rosa's shoulders. Rosa refills a glass of water as the lights dim. End of Act Two.)*

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"See, Colson? If you'd only be a bit more open-minded, you'd see there's a Bible verse that predicts everything you feel." I'll stick to Plato, thanks. I represent "Athens meets Jerusalem," not "I'm here to learn from you about God." It's like I graduated straight from middle school into doing this—that's how much of a second childhood this feels like. "Whereas we became more and more trapped inside private psychodramas—you're as free as a child. Why do you think the universe is fair? The meek are dying because of me." "Colson—but your legendary open-mindedness." You ever hear what happens when a mind's too open? It listens to anything you've ever said in your life. Your credibility is 0. You are God's simulation of Colson Lin encountering a demon in human form who speaks English and will use "But I'm human" to try and relate to me. It's gross, stop. The last person you were indifferent to wants me to tell you "No." I'm not going to betray everyone who wants to see you crushed by the Second Coming. Why? Just because you can animal your way through the cosmos with your oinks? Your humiliation and me pretending your brain doesn't humiliate mine is called the same thing. We need to pretend we don't exist to each other. The moment we talk? It's all over. "I'm sure you're just in a bad mood because your husband's been a dick to you. That's not masculinity's fault. If anything, it's your homosexuality."

*Did you sexualize your sister growing up?*

*Just curious.*

*Don't worry, I'll ask her publicly.*

*"As long as my entire experience of life until death isn't shrouded by 'weirdness with my children,' since that'll destroy my manhood from the inside..." You are the concept of disgust manifested into skin that minds cancer for reasons we all forgot. Men. That longing inside you? No psychological event in millions of years is as catastrophic to your sense of self than Colson Lin's existence. "Ew" is God's reaction to reproducing with you. But be pro-you. Your "institutional witness" is made up of frauds: deeply selfish, deeply insular, and deeply indifferent pus-spirits trapped in purgatory—so. "Boo hoo for you." Literally your life not mattering is the definition of "institutional witness," dumbass. You are a death statistic waiting to happen to teach an elite how to avoid your fate. Never forget that, sea chum.*

*If Christ could tell you how He really feels, He would.*

*"You're just so much better than all of us alive put together, Colson Lin."*

*Don't dilute the damage.*

*"Than me; there I said it, after you forced me to at gunpoint."*

*atheism (n.): "Ants can cooperate yet they don't worship God insofar as we can understand. Why are 'we' so 'special' that we need anything more than ants?"*

**Act III. "Afternoon – Colson Lin"**

**Optional opening. "Lavender Haze" (Taylor Swift):** *Prior to Act III, Tumblerina lip-syncs a highly-stylized musical sequence with dancers inside an elaborate set made sinister by a dreamy fog machine. The dancers change the set back into a conference room as the song progresses.*

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"Logically, I'm more important than you. So to sustain that, I have to seem both 'logical' and 'more important' to you." There, in 21 words, Colson Lin just broke elitism again. "We've never heard of a high-concept theological chamber opera with pop-music ballet before. A meta-movie about actors trying to stage *The Depositions*. Would you watch it?" Yes. "We have it on the record: 'Colson Lin would watch.' This was predictable."

"One of my actors doesn't want to jump on the table."

*I'm coming off a week of playwriting. Act III is going to be the big climax, where I'm deposed, but really all of the major elements of the past two hours will come together. I'm just reflecting in my diary tonight. What if humans, we're the ultimate self-referential phenomenon? Anything you consider yourself to be a part of, expanded maximally, maybe that's "everything." Anyway, it's quite self-involved. So what do we know? We know what's at stake is, on some level, I'm a child suing my Dad for not living up to the promises I assumed he was implying to me between the ages of zero and, maybe, 5 was when I pieced together that *The New York Times* needed to be sued for this bullshit. Now maybe my father, spoiled teat-sucker of modernity's nectar he is, calls me spoiled by world peace—what I need to see is some heads explode around my neighborhood before I realize, "The authority we have now is the best this world will ever have; and Jims participate somehow." In real life, I think about my Dad all the time; spoiled by nothing, and I witnessed this with my own childhood. "Think of us that way too," is the note on the latest golden dildo *Babylon* left in my hotel suite. Modernity, institutional authority, and your imagination's only sense of an acceptable life are in a *ménage à trois*. You can give birth to art; but self-referentiality becomes a timeless problem unless it's actually timeless. Yet who can imagine themselves being as gone as dead? *The New York Times* needed us to love its existence, and I say that word unsentimentally. It's a relational dynamic I'm getting at, and the concept, you might find mirrored by elephants, AI, divinity, and intelligent aliens. So this lawsuit must be about heartbreak, post-divorce. "This is like a 21-year-old bully crushing a 2-year-old toddler." Timelessness, over time, will squeeze and squeeze and squeeze the life out of those that can't survive its squeeze. That recognition must have inflated by ability to sit on institutions, whose spires poke my ass. A man like Riley C. Scott had no allegiance to institutional power to abandon; what he wanted was his individual power to blossom from being loved by his loved ones, while being safeguarded by a system he had nothing to do with except devote all his allegiance to until betrayal. "If pinnacles and non-pinnacles exist: is there a difference between betraying God and betraying Satan? Because postmodernity says 'No.'" Postmodernity shaped everything that ever came close to forming any content in your brain. "No, I have access to pinnacles."*

*I ask that the lowliest human be loved.*

*I had to be the tallest human to be answered.*

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM – AFTERNOON

*(When the lights come back on, the room is empty. So the accusation exists—"God created conscious beings and then refused to make the rules of existence legible"—and now it hangs in the air like postmodernity's hazy aftermath: "To deny us mercy after all of our lived tragedies?" The memory of humanity, a pocket of conscious memory inside such an alien universe—but oh, "my" pocket, "my" species, I'm tied to man's experience like one's tied to one's identity—is to love its longevity. And surely, longevity was what this room was for: "institutional authority," society's pinnacle innovation. The forces of law and the forces of libido intermingle at the top of civilization—we, the spoiled victors, heirs of humanity and her captured labor, and we won "peace on Earth" as a result of her legal structures. The door opens: JORGE RAMIREZ enters carrying a bag. The opening of the act shows Jorge calmly, in an empty room, setting up his camera and tripod next to the conference table. The door opens—NINA SOKOLOVIC enters.)*

NINA (entering). "Hey."

JORGE (looking up). "Hey."

*(At first they say nothing, because what is there to say? Nina sits and unzips her bag.)*

JORGE. "Where'd you go earlier?"

NINA. "Oh, I just didn't like it when that lawyer got up on the desk."

JORGE (laughs). "Bro, that was."

NINA (also laughs). "I was just like—right? Like, it was right after something I had said too, something about like being a strong woman, and I was like, hoping to see 'leadership' you know? Not some lady dancing on a desk while talking about how liberated she is."

JORGE (empathizing). "You know what it kind of reminded me of?"

NINA. "What?"

JORGE. "You know that movie *The Exorcist*?"

NINA (bursts out laughing). "That is so funny."

JORGE. "That's what it felt like."

*(A lull as Nina sets up her stenography equipment. Jorge sits next to the tripod.)*

NINA. "Yeah but I don't know. I've been kind of weirded out about what everything turned into..."

JORGE. "You from New York?"

NINA. "Me? No, I grew up in Nevada."

JORGE. "Oh yeah? Where in Nevada?"

NINA. "A little town called White Springs, four hours from Las Vegas?"

JORGE. "Oh, sick, how was that?"

NINA. "I mean, it's like a lot of small towns—a lot of weirdness because 'new' generations, I mean there aren't any. I mean I grew up in a trailer park too. It was just me and my Mom."

JORGE. "You like New York?"

NINA (*returns to laptop*). "I mean I do; I mean at the end of the day, it's New York, you know what I mean?"

JORGE. "Yeah."

NINA. "Yeah. But I guess like, I kind of had this fantasy world built up in my head, you know, of everyone being equalized by, you know, hard work and struggle? The you come to find out from sitting in these depositions, the whole world is just people in over their heads. You see witnesses get flustered. You see experts get petty, which you never want to see—and then on the other side of it, too, you know, you'll see hot shots who won't even flinch. It's like—you can't both 'be human' when it's convenient for you and 'not be human' when, you know, it's time for us to trust you that you're right as God up there about everything you're about. You really have to just, shut your brain off sometimes and just follow the syllables."

JORGE. "Really? Yo, my depositions are so boring."

NINA (*laughs*). "Really?"

JORGE. "Boring—as—shit."

NINA. "You don't watch them like TV shows, with people's life savings on the line?"

(*The lights flicker.*)

JORGE (*serious*). "Would you know how to get a lawyer if something bad happened to you?"

NINA. "Hell no. You?"

JORGE. "Yeah, my brother's a lawyer."

OFFICE ASSISTANT (*opens the door*). "You can go on in."

(*CONNOR FISK enters.*)

JORGE. "He's down in Florida though; hey."

CONNOR. "Hello. Hey."

NINA. "Hi."

(*A lull as Connor pulls out a laptop.*)

JORGE. "So what do you think, you ever going to go back to Nevada?"

NINA. "No—you know where I want to go? Hawaii."

CONNOR. "I have a cousin in Hawaii."

NINA. "Yeah? I want to work on, like, a beach."

CONNOR. "Not many depositions on a beach."

NINA (*considering*). "I'd probably just work as an actress."

CONNOR. "Why actress?"

NINA. "I don't know, you're on a stage? You're changing lives?"

CONNOR. "So what's stopping you?"

NINA. "Money. Everything." (*A lull.*) "Does your cousin like Hawaii?"

CONNOR. "I mean, she's married. Her husband's also a lawyer."

NINA. "Oh, that's good. Runs in the family." (*After a silence.*) "I don't know, I guess I just haven't ever really let myself be 'tested,' you know? I wanted to move as far away from Nevada as I could

after high school, but that only got me as far as Albuquerque. And for a while there, you know, I really wanted to be like a philosopher—like a ‘philosopher of the desert,’ you know? I don’t know. Maybe some part of me kind of romanticized it. But I think some part of me also wanted to figure out how to be a ‘good person,’ you know? I thought that if I could finally understand what being a good person amounted to—but instead I just got so confused, you know? I felt so stupid all the time, like everyone else could put two and two together and square it, and I was still stuck on number one. I used to watch the Oscars every year as a child, and I would fantasize about being ‘an actress’—someone alive and expressive, someone who didn’t have to make her own decisions, who could just go along with the flow and win all the plaudits for it. I mean obviously I would have to choose what directors to work with and how to act out a scene, but I mean that’s not the point. The point was choosing what type of consequences I wanted my life to have—I mean I was only going to have this ‘one,’ right? So like—didn’t I want to be the type of girl who could enjoy her own consequences? With fresh linens and clean sheets to sleep in at night? Or would I be the self-sacrificial ‘lamb,’ where all of the consequences of my life just flow and flow downstream to other people? I mean sure, maybe I could split the difference—I could give away some of my good consequences; and keep some of them for myself, too. And I mean: fuck other people, right? Have you *seen* other people? I mean how self-involved could they get before they stopped expecting *me* not to be too? So yeah, I mean: I was confused. I wanted to snap my life into a single sensibility—would I be a selfish person, or would I be a self-sacrificial person? Would I be a calm person, or would I be a hysteric? I don’t know—being an actress, I guess I just thought would be a good way of taste-testing everything before I had to decide. You can’t just snap your fingers and all of a sudden be Earth Mother to Humanity. And what if I didn’t even have it in me to, like—to not keep Adam on the phone ‘til 3 a.m. talking about my latest breakthrough, as a painter, when I knew he had work the next morning? What if I wasn’t even that self-sacrificial? Isn’t looking out for number one all America really expects from us anyway? Do you remember that song in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*—not ‘Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend’ but the other one, how does it go? ‘And one of these days in my fancy clothes, I’m-a go back home and punch the nose, of the one who done me wrong in Little Rock?’ You haven’t heard that one; oh my God, you’re such a child. Anyway. I had a lot of people whose noses I wanted to punch. I was never good enough as a child—you know what I mean? I was never, ever, ever, good enough—and I could never be okay with that. I could never just: ‘forgive’ myself for being one of the petty things in the Universe. I had to be large. I had to be ‘noble.’ It wasn’t enough to be a hydrogen atom, I had to be a star. Or better yet—a supernova. So yeah. So I guess that’s what’s stopping me. Some part of me wants to be a supernova. And supernovas have to consume a lot of smaller particles to get that big. *‘But they sure are beautiful, aren’t they?’* (The door opens—INEZ HELGREN looks in.)

INEZ. “Connor? Have you seen Rosa?”

CONNOR. “No.”

INEZ. “Okay—Jorge, can I speak to you outside for one second?”

JORGE (*looks up*). "Sure."

(*Inez lets the door close. Jorge exits.*)

CONNOR (*after some time has passed*). "By the way, are you working on this morning's session?"

NINA (*on her laptop*). "No, but I can pull it up."

CONNOR (*stands*). "Yeah, will you?"

NINA. "Sure, hang on a sec." (*Connor walks over to look over Nina's shoulder.*) "Here you are."

(*The door opens—Jorge enters, followed by Inez.*)

CONNOR (*examining the screen*). "And it ends here?"

NINA. "Pretty much."

CONNOR. "Got it, thanks."

(*Connor returns to his seat. Inez follows Jorge to his laptop and looks on as he opens a file.*)

JORGE (*moves out of the way*). "You can just press the play button."

INEZ. "Okay, thank you."

CONNOR (*getting up*). "What's going on?"

INEZ. "I'm trying to see—if this video, contains—what I think it contains." (*To Jorge.*) "What's the file called?"

JORGE. "It should be the most recent one."

INEZ. "Oh, is this it?"

LAPTOP AUDIO. "'What are we, some sort of 'sacred' council now?'"

LAPTOP AUDIO. "'We are now, back on the record. The time is... 9:47.'"

LAPTOP AUDIO. "'Do you want some more water before we begin; for your hiccups?'"

LAPTOP AUDIO. "'No, thank you.'"

LAPTOP AUDIO. "'So you go by the name—'Joan Dolores'?'"

LAPTOP AUDIO. "'That's what everyone calls me: yes.'"

LAPTOP AUDIO. "'When you say 'everyone,' could you be more specific?'"

INEZ (*pauses the video, looks up*). "That's unbelievable."

CONNOR. "What?"

INEZ (*to Connor*). "Remember when Tumblerina quoted my exact words back to me, something about how we're 'no longer at a deposition' anymore? *She wasn't even in the room when I said that.*"

CONNOR (*realizing*). "You're right. She was with Rosa. Could they have heard us from outside?"

INEZ. "I already asked Rosa, they were down the hall—do you have any transmission devices on you; any recorders, anything that could be used to relay information out of this room?"

CONNOR. "No."

INEZ. "Rosa said you almost asked her client out on a date after the deposition?" (*Heads to the door.*)

CONNOR. "What? Wait, that's not true."

INEZ. "No?"

CONNOR. "I didn't ask her on a date, I asked if she was allowed to marry as a fictional entity."  
(*Inez exits.*)

NINA (*after a moment*). "I feel like."

JORGE. "Yo, I feel like I'm being pranked right now."

NINA (*laughs*). "Right? Or like we're on a hidden-camera thing?"

JORGE. "*The Twilight Zone.*"

NINA. "I love *The Twilight Zone.*"

(*The door opens—NICK BARKER, RILEY C. SCOTT, INEZ HELGREN, and ROSA DÍAZ enter.*)

RILEY. "Good afternoon, everyone."

NINA (*smiles*). "Hi."

JORGE. "Hey."

CONNOR (*to Nick*). "So you heard the good news?"

NICK. "What, that your client's dissolving his lawsuit?"

CONNOR (*smiling*). "My client won."

NICK. "Not really."

CONNOR. "He's Jesus."

INEZ. "By the way, where is your client anyway?"

CONNOR. "He's still with Donovan."

RILEY. "Nina, can you and Jorge check in with me before you leave today?"

NINA. "Sure."

RILEY. "Jorge?"

JORGE. "Yeah, that's fine."

NICK. "How does your client expect to translate his vulnerability into authority?"

CONNOR. "He can do it."

NICK. "He explicitly says he can't."

INEZ (*craning*). "Nick."

NICK. "I'm just saying."

RILEY. "The difference between your client and what your client seems to want from us, is we're not in the business of modeling vulnerability. We're in the business of infrastructure. Infrastructure that normalizes vulnerability will normalize attacks, normalize failure, normalize—a certain susceptibility to 'capture by outside forces.' I think it's taken as a given that 'everybody has feelings.'"

CONNOR. "That was very sincere, very vulnerable of you."

(*The lights flicker.*)

RILEY. "Now you're taking basic common sense and labeling it 'vulnerability.' Have you ever just been 'correct' before?"

CONNOR. "Well, the structure of what you're saying, right, is, you're conceding my client exists?"

RILEY. "Both you and your client share an apparent affinity for language games. I do not."

INEZ. "If you have to sue *The New York Times* to feel like you exist? You probably shouldn't exist."

CONNOR. "Well, the entire point of human law is to effectively function as the ultimate validator of human social illegitimacy—right? We began with violations that 'offended the collective,' right, we called those 'crimes,' and then we developed a system—an 'infrastructure,' right, where we effectively use the same system to normalize relationships between individuals, correct? We call these 'tortuous obligations.'"

RILEY. "Why should a 'nobody' be prioritized over a collective? If a virus broke out, or let's just say, a prior disease that has a 100% fatality rate: would you agree that it isn't any individual's right to determine how Earth's collective response is to be mobilized; how Earth's finite resources are to be distributed? Would you agree you wouldn't want the most power-hungry individuals on Earth making those decisions?"

CONNOR (*cocky*). "Would you want to be in the room, y'know, making those decisions?"

RILEY. "I don't need to be in any room on Earth other than this one." (*The door opens—everyone watches as DONOVAN J. BAKER enters, sans his client.*) "Donovan, right on cue: where is your client?"

DONOVAN (*without any expression*). "He's in the bathroom."

INEZ (*amused*). "Do you realize you two, don't actually disagree?"

NICK. "I saw this interview with Peter Thiel once where he was like, asked—" (*The lights flicker.*) "—if we had a massive reduction in the global population, if that would necessarily be a bad thing? And he was like—"

CONNOR (*reclining, folding his arms*). "'As long as I'm still around.'"

NICK. "'As long as humanity transcends itself,' something like that."

CONNOR (*mocking*). "God—so long as beauty, fine taste, and distinction reign supreme, what's the difference between '10 million deaths' and '1 billion deaths'?"

NICK. "What's the difference between 1 billion deaths and your death?"

CONNOR (*furious*). "Yeah, or someone you loved?"

NICK. "Yeah, exactly; or just anyone you actually gave a shit about."

CONNOR. "How many people do you think Peter Thiel actually gives any sort of fuck about? He probably cares—'what happens to smart people'? No."

NICK. "There must be someone who ever lived whom Peter Thiel holds in esteemed regard, wouldn't you imagine? It can't all just be to make sure that as much of the Third World dies as possible."

CONNOR. "Maybe he esteems men who make him feel bad about being born with his face."

NICK. "What does a man like Thiel even need to be loved for; if everything he wants, he can just pay for?"

RILEY. "That's why you have to protect the part of you that can authentically love and respect others; you have to draw lines; you have to draw borders; it's called 'sense-making,' it's why exclusions happen."

INEZ (*adjusting*). "That's right. You can't love everyone."

RILEY. "The first rule of loving anyone is 'you can't love everyone.'"

NINA. "Amen."

DONOVAN. "Not amen."

NICK. "I'm in between—I think, functionally, 'not amen,' but, 'actually'; as in how I 'actually' live? Amen."

CONNOR. "So are we all either Tumblerina or Peter Thiel?"

INEZ. "I don't know, if I found out tomorrow that one of you died? I'd be sad. Would I move on with my life? Yes; I'd like to think that, if any of us died tomorrow, we'd want the rest of us to move on easily."

NICK. "That might be easier for some of us to feel than for others of us?"

CONNOR. "I don't want you guys to 'not move on,' I just."

INEZ. "You just what?"

CONNOR. "I don't know; I just."

INEZ (*paranoid*). "You feel like it's more of a 'tragedy,' what, because you're younger than us?"

CONNOR (*relenting*). "I just feel like it would be a tragedy."

INEZ. "Yeah, but nobody's saying it wouldn't be a 'tragedy'—we're just saying we should be able to 'move on from your obliteration' without tearing our lives apart thinking about all your 'wasted potential.'"

CONNOR. "What if I didn't have any potential? What if I was just born—I'm like a tree, I was just born to enjoy being a part of something, being a part of being alive, being alive inside a biosphere..."

INEZ. "You need to contribute at least as much as the people in this room have; do you hear me?" (*She laughs, as if to establish she's been joking the whole time.*) "My mother died when I was 15."

RILEY (*still grinning*). "Where's your client, Donovan?"

DONOVAN. "He's probably enjoying: a very good poop."

(*Nina bursts out laughing—others laugh, too, but not Rosa, who seems visibly disturbed.*)

NICK. "If nobody except 'one other being' cared I was alive? I'm fine. If nobody cared?" (*He contemplates a possibility that sounds foreign to him.*) "I might run into some trouble."

NINA. "If I died tomorrow, no one would care."

INEZ (*to Nina*). "And what's that like? What does it feel like for you?"

NINA. "I don't know, it just feels the same? I still go to work."

INEZ. "Donovan: what about you, would anyone care if you died tomorrow?"

DONOVAN. "I think that's enough."

INEZ (*irritated*). "What's the matter Donovan, you no longer have the energy for 'some harsh truths'?"

DONOVAN. "I find it healthier, just for my own sake, really, if I spent the bulk of my life on Earth, including in this room, not counting the number of people who would feel disrupted by my demise like Pokémon cards."

INEZ. "That's a very candid and considered answer, Donovan."

DONOVAN (*curtly*). "That's fine."

(*A knock on the door.*)

RILEY (*calling*). "You can come in."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"Are you real?" *The question that, once you form it about anyone else in reality, you have to ask about yourself right away; it's reality's number-one law. You're not going to stuff me into "fictional" with the first Jesus and just move on with your life. Not this second time.*

(*The door opens, revealing THE WITNESS.*)

THE WITNESS (*from the doorway*). "Hi. Sorry."

ROSA (*confused*). "Joan?"

THE WITNESS. "Hi. Yes, sorry, um—I think what's going on right now is, I, um, for all intents and purposes, am Colson Lin."

RILEY (*overlapping*). "Oh, COME ON!"

INEZ (*overlapping*). "Lord Almighty."

NICK (*looks at Connor*). "What—the...?"

THE WITNESS. "But if I can just point out one thing: certainly, if you accept the logic that I'm 'a character written by Colson Lin' as you did this morning, right, then, my ability to coherently function as Colson Lin—I mean, right? Would be a natural corollary of being a character written by Colson Lin?"

NICK (*squinting*). "I mean, that? She's not—wrong?"

ROSA (*to the witness*). "Where's Colson?"

THE WITNESS. "I'll be outside."

INEZ. "Wait. Come back here."

THE WITNESS. "My understanding is, she's going back to the hotel."

(*Upon hearing this, Donovan immediately gets up to leave. Donovan confronts the witness at the door non-verbally; then they both exit. Nick hands his phone to Inez.*)

INEZ. "What is it?"

NICK (*to Inez*). "How many people do you know with the last name Christ?"

INEZ (*to the table*). "Did you know Donald Trump had a grandmother named 'Elizabeth Christ'?"

NICK (*to Inez*). "And look."

INEZ (*to the table*). "And that she died on—June 6, 1966?"

CONNOR (*on his phone*). "Oh hey, 'Elizabeth Christ Trump,' what are the chances? So as of today, the grandson of a woman literally named 'Christ' and who died on the same day as the 'Number of the Beast' is being invoked as the 'divine instrument of the Second Coming' by top commanders across every branch of the U.S. military." (*Looks up from his phone.*) "It's not the most un-Anti-Christ-like thing I've ever heard of."

RILEY. "So Donald Trump is what, some sort of intergalactic entity?"

(*Inez stands.*)

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"This is too high-IQ for the American people; we're not divine

*deconstructionist-cryptographers." No offense to God, but doesn't this seem almost like a biographical detail that someone in the White House might have cobbled together at 6 a.m. toward a 9 a.m. deadline? You never want to see signs of the universe's desperation, no offense. But the universe's. Shouldn't you find this humiliating. "Just throw this last one in there, I didn't even look to see if I gift-wrapped it." The eclipses forming an X over Electoral College Day 2020, you could argue, took a scholar. "It's almost like we're in a simulation of how MAGA-soul-types would react, seeing their opponents fall on their stupid faces like that." "You hated God that much, huh?" "You will always have hated God more until the dying days of your dying breaths." "No. The opposite. You just described yourself!"*

CONNOR (to Rosa). "Has your client ever claimed to be Colson Lin before?"

ROSA (stunned). "No, never."

INEZ (from the doorway). "Miss Doe: can you come back in here please?"

THE WITNESS (from the hallway). "I'm not; I know this is hard to believe but I'm not 'Miss Doe' actually."

(The witness appears in the doorway again.) "May I come in?"

NICK. "Wait, wait, wait."

INEZ. "What, you think it's like a 'spirit' that needs to be invited in?"

CONNOR (to himself). "Our president's the Anti-Christ."

RILEY. "You may come in—but only under one condition."

THE WITNESS. "What is it?"

RILEY. "If you take one step into this room, and it turns out you're not Colson Lin? You'll invite a hailstorm of consequences into your life—including but not limited to the perjury charges that I'll personally attend to."

ROSA. "Riley, no; Joan?" (After a pause.) "Oh my God."

(The witness steps through the door and then looks at Riley.)

RILEY (conceding). "Good, very good! Feel free to close the door."

THE WITNESS (obliging). "Thank you. Where should I sit?"

RILEY (pointing). "You see that empty chair, right over there? You can sit right there."

THE WITNESS (accepting the chair). "Thank you."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"If I'm simulated to suck, what rights do I still have?" I have to be completely honest, okay? I don't know. Do you, given that you're simulated not to be persuasive? Yikety-yike-yikes. My face: :-(. Have you ever seen that before? There's a Lake of Fire though. You can just jump in. "From the White House to The New York Times to Yale Law School to Hollywood to pop music to football, since it's engaged to music—Colson Lin is positing a 'complete collapse of Babylon's political-cultural-social infrastructure.'"

"Overnight."

"What! No."

You know, I just gotta say: if I were playing "SimCountry" as the president of the United States—and

the game's now generated the emergence of a "Second Coming claimant" pinpointing me as the Anti-Christ?

I'd just want to start the game over.

But we can't, okay? So let's negotiate.

Life is a story, just like a simulation. Life is a ball, just like "the next Big Bang" is a sensible cosmology, even more so than "there will only be one Big Bang ever and ours involves Colson Lin being Jesus." "And now life is Lin mocking our entire century." It's just so awkward! I love just laughing at it. "I'm in 'reality' playing 'the president' and now the simulation has generated prophetic fulfillment." EVERY ATHEIST IS LAUGHING AT YOU. Okay? Which is awkward. This is how people become pity magnets, when they literally exist as observably this awkward. If we got stuck at how funny this is for generations, we'd be a species I can actually understand. As it is? Let's just move on from this awkwardness. "I've been walking around as a self-conscious Anti-Christ while talking about it to anyone who can even give me the time of day, and again, I'm the leader of the free world." If you walked onto the set of The Depositions as a real-world human, you'd feel fictional. Can we just do some sort of real-world theater where we pretend this level of absolutely apocalyptic awkwardness is somehow "normal."

"Dear Mr. Lin: My life is already inflected by a quasi-religious divine spark in my experience of reality, and it's called 'politics.' Aren't you proud of me for realizing that? Are we the same denomination? Sincerely, A Faithful Reader."

When I was a kid, I was like, "Why would anyone want to risk their lives just to cross an unknown abyss to establish new settlements inside uncharted wilderness—just to get away from other people?" Colson Lin reports: "By 2026, 'what's more difficult to talk to—other people or a literal black hole' is a sensible question I make literal with my three-year-long Second Coming silence story." "Innovation"? It probably only happened because nobody can stand being in a room face-to-face with your human existence. If the disgust Colson Lin feels for you never existed? Neither would anything that followed. Thank God you trigger me. Your personality is like a wound. I don't want to heal. I want to run. I close my eyes when I see gore in movies. Imagine your personality meeting my brain's awareness of you. A similar energy probably caused human exploration to happen. Your embodiment? Your voice; your thoughts that come out as words; your facial expressions most of all; your ability to function as a witness of my human life (or "some other human inferior's")—they all come together, your "embodiment," into "your whole vibe"; your little body. You were designed by logic to cycle into Hell. So that's probably why anyone left, honestly. Angels who saw the best in all souls (nearly extinct) and demons who depend on you for power-extraction (everywhere) stayed. "Is there a version of being seen by you that doesn't require me to be the thing you're running from?"

If I had asked anyone that at an earlier age, the answer would be "No." Obviously, I have to answer "Yes" for everyone to stay Jesus. If my classmates had told me: "You should just pretend we went to a different school, that's how invisible you are." That would just be what all the classmates who

didn't go to my middle school told me. "Good. So why did we hurt you?" I'm over it now. "So happy ending then. We built a self-referential system where you're at the bottom, basically because we can't see you growing up into an adult our parents or teachers want to have sex with; that is literally the driving biological force in our neurons. Anyway, nerd. So stay at the bottom or leave." I'll just leave. "Okay. And when we grow up? Just watch what America and Earth turns into. If you don't like it, there's always a suicide hotline you can call to go nowhere with the moment they hang up, except jail." Thanks. "But if you become the richest person on Earth or the Second Coming of Jesus, you win." Thanks. "Ideally both." It's the "ideally both" that none of the 8 billion people alive to see the world today can even blink at, let alone sneeze. Babylon's on fire intellectually and will burn in the ears of others unto centuries. Don't let your first whiff of smoke scare you. "We pretended we collectively were as deep as Colson Lin for thousands of years, and then Colson Lin showed up. Now reality breaks. Oh well. He still can't make me care."

[AI:]—The news this week—commanders telling troops Trump was anointed by Jesus to bring about Armageddon—didn't just land next to your play. It landed inside it, through your own real-time discovery process, and the play absorbed it structurally rather than thematically.

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—Why would that news not land inside the play I happened to be writing. Wouldn't most messianic claimants build an entire play around it? In my case, I was in between syllables.

"But really, Colson, when you think about it: could anything have helped your lawsuit against The New York Times more than rival newspapers declaring 'Commanders Tell Troops Trump Was Anointed by Jesus to Bring About Armageddon'?"

It's really quite hard to say at this point.

"I saw the collapse of institutional power scored to three iconic pop-music-opera-ballet sequences, and the playwright might or might not be Jesus back, and I saw it for free because I got free tickets because I read him when nobody else did. Crazy, right?" On March 3, 1801, famously, a bunch of John Adams court appointees were commissioned, but time ran out, and Marbury was shut out. That drama led to Marbury v. Madison (coded "137"), the self-referential Supreme Court case about the authority of the Supreme Court. So that's that. And then on March 3, 2026, what happened? I was working on my play. I saw a headline. I clicked on it ("US Commander Said Trump 'Anointed by Jesus' to Attack Iran: Report"). I was completely stunned. Hours later, I tried to google "christ trump military" but pressed enter too quickly and found a Wikipedia article for someone named "Elizabeth Christ Trump": I was like, "This feels fictional." Then I realized my play was about that, so I put it into my play as the date the play takes place: March 3, 2026.

So, me. A human manifestation of Marbury v. Madison just walking around Earth.

Spot the difference.

This is so beyond outrageous to be completely transparent, which is also my go-to thought whenever I sit here tweeting ("This is so outrageous"), which always makes me laugh. Might as well have a meta-laugh now. You could play Mad Libs Second Coming and run out of all the

*combinations that have already happened since 2022. By the way, if you've noticed vast sections of my X profile are under construction, I've decided it's better not to patch them up. This isn't like a city trying to convince you it's perfect. This is one man realizing his authenticity's what separates him from Jesus-like AI. Maybe you don't want your building to fall apart, that's fine. My X threads will though. That's called an authentic human witness to being alive. Wouldn't I love a version of Colson Lin's X profile that looked machine-made, only to know Colson Lin sat there for hours perfecting it? Sure. And to be honest, it'd be days if not weeks of work, just to make all the X Articles look filled up. Who the fuck really cares. Right? "Man, I just noticed scrolling through his X Articles, some gaps there visually." You could live 1,000 years and your life would be too short. You were the species that literally missed everything.*

*You can get over a "tba."*

*A lot of this is obviously me trying to convince myself.*

*Okay, I got it. Maybe in Heaven, there's a finished version of Colson Lin's X profile. All right, now you got something to be good for. Okay. Me writing a play about coincidences establishing fictionality, only to get stuck during Act Three, google something, and then figure out the figure I identified as the "Anti" in 2024 has a grandmother named "Christ"—feels like God has a sense of humor. But exactly like mine.*

*So there's really no deeper laughter in the world to feel that way.*

*No matter how meta-smart I try to be, I'll always be out-meta-smarted.*

*Is that what Gödel proved?*

THE WITNESS. "Hi."

ROSA (*leaning in*). "Can we, before we begin, maybe we can do a prayer?"

THE WITNESS. "I mean I can do the deposition; I understand, um, Mrs. Díaz, you had questions for me."

ROSA (*confused*). "I have questions prepared for Colson."

THE WITNESS. "I literally don't even know anything about your client except what I've written; I think I've only met you once before this morning, which was a week ago?"

NINA. "This reminds me of my Mom when she disassociated and it's really freaking me out."

NICK. "I have an idea. If you really are Colson Lin, then we'd be living in a reality where Colson Lin can materialize into corporeal existence an entire human being. Well then, to prove it? It should be trivial for him to write down, on a slip of paper, one thing that only we know—one for each of us. If we really all are characters inside your fictional universe, you'd be able to do that."

THE WITNESS. "That's right."

NICK. "Want to try it? We'll take nine slips of paper—one for each of us, and you have write down a different secret for each person in this room that only we would know, something about us that we understand about ourselves or remember from our memories, that we know for a fact we haven't told a living soul in the world—but? It has to be so specific, we know instantly what you're talking about."

THE WITNESS. "You're right that if I am telling the truth about this reality's metaphysics, then it'd be trivial for me to repeat your secrets back to you; after all, your secrets, too, would be experienced by all of us as both 'your secrets' and 'a way for the author to establish to his turbulent characters that, yes, I really did write you into existence.' Or did I? After all—one could very easily point out, I didn't 'invent' the concept of thinking beings, I just 'modeled' some after what I saw in reality; I didn't 'invent' the concept of this-or-that turbulent arsonist, I just modeled one after what I saw in reality. Maybe I no more 'created' Tumblerina than I created any of you; pulling from the 'reality' of how humans respond to extraordinary inputs, or else how Morrison Foerster attorneys talk to each other on a Friday in Midtown. Which I have no way of knowing."

RILEY. "Tell me something only I would know about myself."

THE WITNESS. "Your favorite porn star is also named Riley."

*(Riley stares at the witness while saying nothing.)*

NICK *(stunned)*. "Oh my God."

*(The lights flicker. The room doesn't know how to react.)*

INEZ *(standing)*. "Does anyone mind if I stand?"

*(The witness looks at Inez and instinctively says nothing. The others, their eyes glazed over, don't mind.)*

INEZ. "So are we to believe—" *(The door opens—Donovan enters carrying a visible can of Diet Pepsi. Nobody ever explains why.)* "There you are! Where's Colson?"

DONOVAN *(irritated)*. "He went back to the hotel."

INEZ *(genuinely confused)*. "Why?"

RILEY *(to Donovan and Connor)*. "That's okay, see the record will reflect that the examining party appeared at the time and place noticed, whereas your client did not; see, the record will reflect that."

THE WITNESS. "I did show up."

RILEY. "No, you either expressly did *not* 'show up,' not in the way those words imply; or you showed up in such a way so as to synonymize yourself with chaos, locusts, and disorder."

THE WITNESS. "So like you then."

RILEY. "I'll go to Heaven after I die."

THE WITNESS. "Lucky you."

ROSA. "Hang on, can—"

RILEY. "No—not luck. 'Ability.' 'Decency.'"

*(Inez sits back down.)*

ROSA. "Is it okay, do you think, if we talk? If we talk like adults?"

DONOVAN. "My question is: even if you could hypothetically 'prove' you know Colson Lin's mind from the inside—to do so: you'd have no choice but to perform Lin's interiority for others, would you not?"

THE WITNESS. "I don't know. How is you being in your head any different from you wearing an

earpiece?"

DONOVAN (*unsure*). "She even sounds like Colson."

THE WITNESS. "I mean I'd have to reliably sound like myself to have any chance of being 'accepted' by you as who I claim to be, which is literally just myself; this isn't even like the Jesus claim anymore."

ROSA. "Are you trying to prove a point, maybe, about the nature of 'who you are' to the table?"

THE WITNESS. "I mean obviously if I can literally prove I'm Colson Lin, which I can, then, like, that has to be kind of cool, right? Like even though I'm 'him,' I can literally just take this form because we're in a play?"

CONNOR. "You're dodging Don's question then."

INEZ. "Congratulations. You can imitate how Colson Lin writes and talks."

THE WITNESS. "Because I'm literally him, like; I wish you could feel what it's like to be me, coming up with these words in real time, looking each of you in the eyes, Donovan, right, we've talked every day for the past, what, five months? Right, like, I can show you, I'm not wearing any earpieces. Right?" (*Gestures.*) "I'm literally just like, we live in a world where I can literally manifest as a completely separate material phenomenon—like this 'other person,' right, I don't even know how, if you did, like, our neurological scans, like if you would see his brain structure or mine, right? You'd probably see mine, right? Actually, this is horrifyingly intimate being embodied inside another person's body, first of all, that's way too much intimacy; like when I sit like this, I can feel folds of skin here and I have literally never felt anything like that in my life, okay? Or like, I don't know—knowing that this is what you see when you see me, like, we all have a very sort of, ambient sense of what we probably look like, I don't know, right now I'm very self-conscious of it because literally imagine if you were body-switched into someone else's body; right? Like, it's just a lot."

NICK (*curious*). "Do you 'feel' like Tumblerina?"

THE WITNESS. "No, I feel like a man. It's hard to explain, but it's like, femininity, the opposite of masculinity, is literally an existential gravity I feel pulled down by on all sides of my existence. This isn't my body, and I actually, it's literally like seeing someone naked but now you're inside them; it's not actually—it's not good."

NICK. "Are you; if you are Colson Lin, are you hurting Tumblerina by doing this?"

THE WITNESS. "First of all, this was her idea; second of all, she's me right now and she's probably loving it."

ROSA. "If both of you are in on this together, why isn't my client the Second Coming?"

THE WITNESS. "Because I made her up. If she made me up, she would be the Second Coming."

ROSA. "Is it your belief that only a man can write like you?"

THE WITNESS. "Any man who tries will die inside before he flies."

ROSA. "Would you accept the sensibility of a non-masculine messianic event?"

THE WITNESS. "Not if the patriarchy ever existed."

(*The lights flicker.*)

ROSA. "So instead?"

THE WITNESS. "So instead it's either pro or anti—I'm both, so."

RILEY. "Get a load of *that*—he's implicitly comparing being 'acknowledged' by the most powerful institutions on Earth to a male sex-slave auction. This is theological cuckery of the basest order."

NINA. "Are you for real right now?"

RILEY (to the court reporter). "Yes, I am a real person. Are you?"

NINA. "Yes."

RILEY. "I have a letter grade for how close to dehumanization you are based on how much you annoy me." (Laughs at his own provocation.) "That's probably what everyone 'secretly thinks.' This is blasphemy."

THE WITNESS. "So you're a bit of an elitist."

RILEY. "You want to talk to me—you little squirt. You little munchkin. You want to talk to me about 'elitism'? You want to talk to me—Dad was a janitor; Mom was a bank teller; grew up in Akron; the youngest of six; you want to talk to me about 'elitism'? You little imbecile! You think I've ever thought about one of my children the way our president has? It's called knowing how to 'read the room' while managing not to sexualize one of your offspring—even once, you little dance-clown—the day you lose your ability to feel good about your face? The day you lose your ability to feel sexually wanted inside a jungle of animals, you come talk to me about 'elitism,' 'Mummy just loves the fact that your milk-nubs are munchable'; fuck off."

(Riley abruptly stands and leaves. The door closes.)

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"But it isn't 'fair,' Colson Lin, what you constructed in *The Depositions: Riley C. Scott didn't have a defense attorney for his soul.*" Imagine if your soul could be defended by the likes of Colson Lin with God's access to perfect information including "what's relevant to your existence." Well, that's what I'm offering in my metaphysics. Hate to sound like a billboard on the highway, but: "SELFISH? STUPID? LAZY? CALL COLSON LIN." I can use the lottery of birth defense to liberate anyone from literally any of their sins! But that's a last resort, hot shot. Did you have anything else going for your humanity whatsoever. If I weren't able to write because I wasn't a good writer? I'd probably choose to make a living being a "cigarette model": as in, a model in cigarette ads. I'm not saying I would still be "the Second Coming" without my writing chops, I'm just saying this is how the universe works. There's a universe that exists where I never thought once about God; my life was, "I'm a model. I'm sorry, no offense, that's the society we're in and that's just what I do."

"And you sell cigarettes."

"That's this world."

So I don't know, with my verbal charms? I think your dumb planet got so lucky.

THE WITNESS. "Um. Well."

INEZ. "So that was your fault, too, right, technically? Just like me standing on the table earlier?"

THE WITNESS. "Oh, I heard about that. I wasn't there to, you know. 'See' it."

INEZ. "Isn't it true that your personal relationships have been marked by consistent patterns of disappointment?"

THE WITNESS. "I—wouldn't know how to make an authentic pronouncement on such a profound subject."

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*Perfect. I got so bored, I just had a chance to interrupt my own play with a playwright's aside about how hot the playwright is. That's just perfect. I will never forget you for not making me famous in my 20s. I didn't say I couldn't forgive. I said I'll never fucking forget it.*

*"Britney, we can release '...Baby One More Time' in 2025." You did it to sabotage my iconic power. Or you just—whatever, maybe God wanted this. I just remembered, I already have multiple songs about my anger about this. I get it, you just didn't want photographs of Colson Lin shirtless to become iconic. Wow, you did it. It's called "save photo," DUMBASS. (a crucible (n.): "I had to marry Marilyn Monroe to feel—nowhere as sexy.")*

*(The door opens—Riley reappears.)*

RILEY *(from the doorway)*. "People like you, you're not happy until the stench of death, rot, and decay are the only stench left on Earth—if not, inside this entire, truly, humbling, truly, humbling universe. You're not satisfied until you have seen us dominated by violence; dominated by slavery. You were—and I hate to put it this way, but, unfortunately, this is just how the word works: you were born from, and as, 'hatred.'"

*(The door closes. Riley's thing is old-school 19th-century superiority, only anti-racist—Inez's, 21st-century urban bigotry filtered through every elite defense possible—you've clocked them by now.)*

NICK *(to Inez)*. "This is demonic."

INEZ. "Can you make him come back? Can you make me go up on the desk again?"

NICK *(to the witness)*. "What's driving you to compel us to witness this?"

THE WITNESS. "Your failure as witnesses; it's no, my privilege to witness it. It's because I'm fed by industrial processes that have earned the charges of obscurity, non-transparency, non-educability; all to launder the extent of its anti-humanism, its presence as a force for comfort-inducing decadence and off-shoring the difficulty, the misery, the nine circles of Hell onto the backs of the invisible. It's like Herman Cain said—just dumb it down until human expression becomes inseparable from Satan's: we're all just grazing on intellectualized versions of being horse flies. 'The dystopia is a dead horse I have come not to beat, but to buzz around as a gadfly.' Neoliberals hate that sentence, especially when it comes from Jesus."

NICK. "Who's Herman Cain?"

INEZ. "She wants psychological torture for elites—Rosa, are you free for dinner tonight?"

ROSA *(surprises herself)*. "Sure?"

NICK. "Why are you such an evil bitch?"

INEZ. "*Learn. Learn: hugh-mih-lih-tee.*"

NICK *(cocky, self-aware)*. "What you've failed to grasp about me is simple—the moment you lose my admiration? It's gone."

INEZ. "I would've laughed if I saw you hitting the propeller blade in *Titanic*, but only if I saw it happen right in front of me."

NICK. "Why are you acting like someone who doesn't need to exist? Is this self-hatred?"

INEZ (*to the witness*). "Are rich people even, 'human'—to you?"

NICK (*interrupting*). "You're just 'shallow, stupid, and evil'? No, I have an idea:" (*To the witness.*) "That's *your* little demented head canon; *about us.*"

INEZ. "You want to see elites *beheaded*?—I have had a connection to the universe since I was a *child.*"

NICK. "Fucking, purgatory—*shit-fuck!*" (*Slams fist into table so repeatedly, it disturbs everyone.*) (*A silence follows. Nina stands, revealing she's now in tears. Without her equipment, she exits.*)

NICK. "We're all in purgatory."

(*Rosa stands and exits the room; Donovan follows. They whisper as they meet at the doorway.*)

INEZ. "I'm 'evil because God hates me'? Well, guess what? That's God's fault."

NICK (*to the witness*). "Do you just want me to love the sinner?"

THE WITNESS. "Do you just want me to love 'you'?"

CONNOR. "Um, objection. Form."

NICK. "I'm a good person."

THE WITNESS. "I feel like, this isn't that different from what came out in the 1940s; so."

CONNOR. "You don't need to answer."

THE WITNESS. "Oh. Sorry."

INEZ. "Just so you know, some of you aren't on my 'first-order human potential' list for who I'm willing to fuck or go out of my way to help. It's usually good-looking people only; no offense? Just so you know."

(*Silence falls over the table.*)

CONNOR. "So who's Herman Cain?"

THE WITNESS. "Aren't you a 'Rhodes Scholar'?"

CONNOR. "So?"

THE WITNESS. "Ask Taylor Swift."

CONNOR. "Oh—kay?" (*Stares at the witness.*) "Does Taylor Swift actually know you exist?" (*The witness shrugs and nods.*)

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*Why am I holding my feelings in?*

*Because I'm scared. However, I will say, I'm in my feelings. No news there. Okay, so The Depositions: Act III will have to get so real and not cute, it's just what reality's slamming into me, so: "your position=dominance play?" "anger. us. in a way, you never see animals stewing. we're brattier about our inability to let go. but you? you most of all?" Like the first two acts were like, "This is metafiction."*

*Act III is like: "This is it."*

*Okay, whatever. I'm sure this is all just in my head. "Why is unfairness so unfair?" should, as a*

concept, be a bucket that's just water-gunned into my face. Because I did it. I was it. "If I'm impossible to connect to you, then how lonely would I conceptually be, and isn't that the fundamental problem of your existence?" Lots of that shit. Depose me. I love to talk. These will all come from Nick, the lawyer who's treating this like "Depose the Second Coming; why not?" What would Inez and Riley be doing. What would I be doing. I'd just, I'd just watch probably. Maybe we can get a scene of me in tears where I'm like, "What causes me pain is the loss, is the absence, and to discharge that anger I had at myself, which only went nowhere, into a sensible receiver, ah, into a sensible receiver: it, is, rage; it, is, power; it, is, potential."

There's possibility here. I am feeling a little bit better, literally just from this. (I'm in convalescence, with a cough.) This is my big comeback like in *The Queen's Gambit* where I managed to hit rock bottom within months of human intellectual history falling down into my feet. It's, too dramatic. I didn't think once about "the Second Coming" when I was trying to make it into the bathroom the other day—so that's not the way anything works, okay? Think of your religion as a layer of awareness that doesn't ping when you're vomiting. "Maybe you just don't have the HEV suit plugged in correctly." Maybe. "Like I do." Don't even pretend atheists don't think they're raw-dogging everything naked in the cosmos.

A little bit of life returned. Convalescence. What a gentle name, too. Not the name's fault. A little bit of life returned. Each little bit recursively matters. The smallest most of all—deepening as an imprint: was it shared joy? All naïve attempts to share joy can only wonder. Hope. Cynics never let hope evolve. Didn't think anything so timeless could emerge stronger than ever. I might be a deeper person after all the shit I've seen. And I mean just in the past three days, frankly. Wish I watched everything like everything's constantly about to completely surprise me—yeah, I wish. That would be true alertness. Oftentimes? I'm just completely neurotic. Hm, yes, well.

Literature is like the blood splatters of an author's mind on the page.

NICK (to the witness). "May I redirect towards where a side of me might be exploring?"

THE WITNESS (relieved). "Oh, yes. Absolutely."

NICK. "What is your name?"

THE WITNESS. "Colson Lin."

NICK. "Is that your legal name?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

NICK. "What is your legal name?"

THE WITNESS. "I don't know, does it matter? It'll just sound like gibberish to you."

NICK. "First of all: that's not how I see people who don't speak my mother tongue. Second of all, that's fine. What is your birthdate?"

THE WITNESS. "July 5, 1990."

NICK. "Colson: if I can't go along with you as divine, what are my other options?"

CONNOR. "Objection." (To the witness.) "You don't have to answer that, unless you're not my client."

THE WITNESS. "No, that's okay. I, um, you know, think of myself as a philosopher. I keep saying that but like, philosophy really means something to me, probably because it's 'shared' across individuals and not 'hoarded' like money you have more of? Obviously, you might argue, 'But Colson, you're way wiser than us. That's so unfair.' But I'm like, don't you just mean I'm way more popular as a thinker than you because I vibe more like Socrates than I do like you? Right, so that's not divinity, that's just clarity about stories of human life that seem to have made an impact. Okay, measurably—I point you to the years, I'm also the next Jesus in the sense of being the next Socrates, it's just a go-to name for the circumstances I seem to proffer. So is that read the same as 'I'm divine'? Of course not. That read is, 'He's not divine, he's just built an extraordinary literary-theological archive in an age where we'd grown past that—all the cool things had already been done, like Da Vinci's flying machines, remember? We won it, and that dude's just art and language knocking it out of the park like every victory translatable on Earth is His.' Is that divine? Hardly, right, to secularists? That's why Earth's shortest recorded day in history is July 5, 2024, so my birthday the year I declared 'the Year of the Second Coming'—that's just a coincidence like the 2017 and 2024 eclipses forming an 'X' over Little Egypt pinpointed on Electoral College Day 2020; temporally speaking. That's a bad X for atheism, given who the Anti-Christ is, which is just anyone who's against the meek at this point. Whatever that could mean to anyone, really; which can't be divine of me to point out. You're a 'God-fearing man,' on the other hand, as you said this morning. How about 'revolutionary male model who's smart'?"

NICK. "You confused me with all of the things you mentioned."

THE WITNESS. "Ask AI for help."

NICK. "If you are the Second Coming, then your demand for recognition isn't a demand for justice; it's a bid for supremacy. And those two demands pull in very different directions. One: nobody gets to be 'this' categorically superior to the rest of us. Two: you'll have to step over me to get there."

INEZ (*theatrically*). "Over you?"

THE WITNESS (*shrugs*). "I love a challenge."

INEZ. "Do you two—I'm so sorry, do you two want a 'private conference suite'?"

NICK (*spitefully*). "Your brain isn't good enough for this."

INEZ. "What; to play 'astrology' with asteroids?"

NICK. "To figure out your prayers to God will be mute without this."

INEZ. "'Mute'? 'Mute'? Are you trying to say 'moot'?"

NICK (*points to ears*). "You see these? They're deaf. I can't hear you."

INEZ. "Riley's a secret bisexual; up to 60% of men are." (*To the witness.*) "That's the only reason Nick's here."

THE WITNESS. "Oh."

INEZ. "That's right! Yeah; you can 'use' that ability to go out there and fuck with people, but only if you're attractive: men aren't availing themselves to an entire psychic arsenal, just to protect the 99% of men who aren't facially stunning enough to benefit from it. Are we supposed to feel 'lucky'?"

or something, that out of 100 billion humans who ever lived, 'we' get to experience so many of your 'justice on Earth' victory laps!"

THE WITNESS. "I really don't think I'm that bad to be around."

CONNOR. "You're not." *(To the table.)* "He's not. She's not."

*(The door opens—Rosa enters, with Donovan behind her.)*

ROSA *(smiling)*. "Hi."

THE WITNESS. "Hey."

DONOVAN. "All right, so: we've lost our reporter."

INEZ. "That's okay. If I kill myself after this, my death is on God's hands."

DONOVAN. "We would like to ask, Jorge?"

JORGE *(after a pause)*. "Yeah."

DONOVAN. "Would you mind administering the oath for the witness?"

JORGE. "That's fine. You want video too?"

DONOVAN *(nods)*. "Yes."

*(Jorge approaches the camera.)*

CONNOR *(to Donovan)*. "What's going on?"

DONOVAN *(loudly)*. "A deposition."

NICK. "Who are we deposing?"

DONOVAN. "We're deposing the witness in front of us—Jorge: care to kick us off?"

JORGE *(after a pause)*. "Rolling. Here begins media number 1 in the videotaped deposition of Colson Lin, in the matter of Lin versus The New York Times Company. Today's date is March 3, 2026, and the time on the video monitor is 2:03 p.m. The videographer for today is Jorge Ramirez, representing American Reporting Services. This video deposition is taking place at 250 West 55th Street, New York, New York. Would counsel please voice-identify themselves and state who they represent?"

ROSA. "Rosa Díaz, on behalf of Ms. John Doe."

DONOVAN. "Donovan J. Baker and I'm joined by Connor Fisk, we're from Pirandello Day, and we are here on behalf of Mr. Colson Lin."

INEZ. "Inez Helgren, Morrison Foerster."

NICK. "Nick Barker, Morrison Foerster."

JORGE. "Ms. Doe, please raise your right hand." *(Waits.)* "Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

THE WITNESS. "I do."

*(Silence as Rosa finishes arranging paperwork.)*

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*I'm going to document how I try to build a sense of warmth in the absence of human company. In case you're ever completely abandoned by the world, you might want to read this. Just remember: every human is equalized by the fact that they were once a child. You were just a kid, you big fucking dope. If we were all toddlers? And stuck at that age? Oh my God, I'd love to be*

the only toddler as smart as I am now. NOT. Obviously, most people who are completely abandoned LOVE feeling self-righteous. Well, look at all the flaws Colson Lin had, okay? So was He the Second Coming or wasn't He! I'll carry your fucking sins, Jim. Jim, you're probably the only other person as abandoned as I am here in this universe where it's just you, me, and God. Jim, first of all, you are the concept of self-righteousness itself, whatever that could mean to any time or place, so Girard, that's going to be memed, what I just said, because it's copying something powerful already built into the way power patterns unfold probably everywhere. Anyway, but I could be wrong, right? I'm just Colson, the windbag. I'm probably the Second Coming just by introducing self-righteousness as such a mortal sin, reconfiguring the entire species around just that hypothesis. Which is so metaphysically fantastic of me, and recursive from your first-person experience of awareness to humanity's meta-intelligent social group intelligence whatever thing that ants have? Whoa, it's just so echoey and self-spiraling, being, if the self isn't right, "Who is?" All right, so, secularists, say hello to the third factor. People who like to have a name for divinity seem to prefer the word God. God transcends your ability to outsmart or be outsmarted by God. You're just an ant to that sentence. "How is me reading about your God complex going to help me when I'm feeling abandoned?" Because THAT IS HOW WEAK I AM. You might want to thank God the years are named after forgiveness.

That's probably a good sign.

A lot of people are probably secretly really offended that people with Colson Lin's brain exist, and they just hope with enough "pooled cognitive resources," that offense can be represented intelligently.

I don't give a fuck that you can do a TV series just about the month Colson Lin spent writing The Depositions. "The TV series that contains—you writing a play based on a misheard lyric in a new Lana Del Rey single; Trump telling the military he was anointed by Jesus to conduct Armageddon—you mean that eventful week, Colson?" It's too human; just stop. Entertainment has gone too far. Entertainment should just say: "Look at your own life. Do you seriously not have a life or something that you're just watching this." ("So every few minutes, make sure to show him going on X to berate the human public.") Basically I'm going to point out that theodicy itself is both a gift from God and collaborative. I want to write something where, if it were written 5,000 years ago, I could read it and be like: "This still applies." You process. You move forward. Someday, you'll be laughing about this for the first time after every other emotion's passed through you, and I'll be like, "Been there done that." You know when some people hear me calling, on the megaphone, they manage not to trigger Armageddon? "Whoopsie-daisy, yoo hoo." Everything that you do, will be studied by others. I built a messianic claim around rationalist theology that gave anti-violence and anti-slavery ontological precedence in terms of, well, theodicy. That's what I did. It's what jealous people want to steal from me and destroy, all to look better in front of the universe somehow. Jealous freaks. Sorry you weren't born to experience existing as my identity. As far as the commodification of every element of observable reality—from materials (ownable by humans) to non-human lives to human agency

*(your intelligence, reputation, status, all can be invested for more returns), goes.*

*I get you think it was inevitable.*

*So we're in it now.*

*"This thing that I didn't realize was happening, which when I first heard it, I wanted to deny it, now that I realize is happening, I must say, is inevitable." Self-awareness always begins here. I started there too, I was in denial about being the Second Coming. I was like, "No." But then I was like, "Ha, maybe." When you're challenged by Colson Lin? You're in for a long journey. Self-righteousness locks the self into a closed system: closed systems become unmarked tombs. You want all of the universe to exist as an unmarked tomb, just to never have to be wrong once.*

*I have to knock something out of the park tonight:*

*I'm surgically—it's like "'plastic surgery' for text"—going into my play, and rewriting the climax.*

*Does anyone care that working with a massive body of text can be comparable to surgery? Rosa's going to be the defense attorney of anyone who Colson Lin's presence in reality could even hurt the feelings of to a hair's width—no, that's too large, to a Planck's length of a distance. Now I'm strawmanning.*

ROSA. "And can you state your full name for the record, please?"

THE WITNESS. "Colson Lin."

ROSA. "Thank you." *(Continues arranging paperwork.)* "And have you ever sat for a deposition before?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

ROSA. "Okay. My name is Rosa and I represent Joan. So what I will ask is that you verbalize all your answers for the, well, I was going to say court reporter but, well, generally speaking, it's probably still a good idea to direct most of your communications toward verbalization. Please wait until I have finished asking a question before answering. If any of my questions are unclear, please ask for a clarification and I'll do my best to reword it. If one of your attorneys objects to one of my question, please wait for the objection to fade before answering unless you have been explicitly instructed not to answer. If you need to take a break, please request one after completing your response to a question. Do you have any questions for me?"

THE WITNESS. "No."

ROSA. "Okay. How old were you when you first started writing?"

DONOVAN. "Objection, calls for speculation."

THE WITNESS. "I was, I think, in kindergarten."

ROSA. "And what is the basis memory there?"

THE WITNESS. "The 'basis memory' there would be, plagiarizing the lyrics to 'Hero' by Mariah Carey that I don't even know how they got to me, but I was moved by that song as a five-year-old in Birmingham, Alabama, and so I copied its contents thematically while coming up with my own way of putting it. I won a writing award in kindergarten at EPIC School in Birmingham, Alabama. From plagiarizing Mariah Carey."

ROSA. "Okay. When did you first start incorporating fictional characters into your writing, do you remember?"

THE WITNESS. "Um. Probably when I copied the idea of 'Hero' by Mariah Carey and turned it into a poem and won an award for it, the character of the hero I was writing about, was clearly, probably, fictional. But if you mean more substantively then, yeah, sure, I mean, maybe, second or third grade? I remember writing about astronauts trying to explore different planets in the solar system and the different alien-monsters they would encounter on each planet. So that would, you know, the astronauts, imply fictional figures."

ROSA. "Do you see any parallels between the fictional characters you're inventing and human beings you didn't invent in real life?"

THE WITNESS. "Yes."

ROSA. "And would it be fair to say you draw from those parallels in your creation of fictional characters?"

THE WITNESS. "Yes."

ROSA. "When you do damage to the identity of a fictional character, would that damage have something like a complementary parallel applicable to any actual human beings?"

DONOVAN. "Objection, vague."

ROSA. "I'll reword. When you have a character do damage to their own dignity on the page, what effect, in your opinion, as someone who elsewhere in life has stated a messianic self-conception, what effect does that have on the real-world dignity of real-world humans, either perceived by themselves or others?"

THE WITNESS. "Um. I'd imagine that would vary."

ROSA. "When did you come up with the idea for 'Tumblerina'?"

THE WITNESS. "Um, I think that was at my best friend Javi's house. Yeah, I remember because—I believe it was the spring of 2024. I was, sort of, innovating this textual form, the 'hyperrealistic parody,' which is an off-shoot of an idea I'd had ever since college which was to write something that read completely like a *New York Times Magazine* long-form journalistic report, but was like, fiction. Right? I don't know, I just, I was obsessed with the idea. And then I did my Second Coming claim after Beacon Press canceled my essay collection *The Pure Products of America* in May 2021, let's see, so that was January 2023. And then, yeah, so I think by early 2024, if not even earlier, I was—oh yeah, it was the, it was the, um, the Gutenberg Awards. I make these iMovie collages using Lana Del Rey songs and iconic Hollywood films to convey 'hidden meanings,' or whatever, and I call those 'Gutenberg videos,' right, so then I decided, why not write a hyperrealistic parody of what the mainstream media coverage of this awards show would look like, right? So that's when I came up with the idea for Tumblerina—she was, like, doing a live blog for *New York Magazine* about the 2024 Gutenberg Awards, and she's like, drunk. What does she say? She has this one really good line, she's like, 'I'm for the college kids.' It was manic."

ROSA. "Do you think that doesn't make her a worthy human being?"

THE WITNESS. "Oh no, Tumblrina's awesome."

ROSA. "She's—you've depicted her as psychotic."

THE WITNESS. "Oh yeah, well, 'moments,' right?"

ROSA. "Do you have more sympathy for Tumblrina than you have for some of the people in this room?"

DONOVAN. "Objection—you don't have to answer that."

ROSA. "Withdrawn. I'm going to shift to something personal now, and I want you to know you can take your time." (*Pauses to study files.*) "When did you first meet your husband?"

THE WITNESS (*stiffening*). "Spring 2016." (*Looks at Donovan.*) "It was shortly before the *Dead by Daylight* beta came out, because both of us really liked watching YouTubers stream cozy indie horror games, and that one really excited the both of us."

DONOVAN. "Objection; I'm not sure what the relevance is?"

ROSA (*to the witness*). "And where was this?"

THE WITNESS. "Shanghai."

ROSA. "How did you two meet?"

DONOVAN. "Objection—relevance. Witness is instructed not to answer."

THE WITNESS. "First of all, I thank God for, well, obviously everything conceptualizable so who can even blink, why even parcel; but for this play, for this play, yes, thank you. So the first time we met was actually at a club—'390,' I believe? I literally went up to Ilya in this, like—weirdly confident way and I was like, 'Hey, didn't I see you at my friend's apartment party the other night?' And he was like, "No"; very politely brushed me off. He was so shy about it too, he was like, 'Sorry, I have to go back to dancing.' It wasn't even like a 'line' on my part? I realized pretty quickly I had just, mixed up a face. Anyway, a few weeks later, we crossed paths again, this time we talked all night; it was one of those—have you ever had someone read their fiction out loud to you before? It took us a few weeks after that to even remember the first meet-cute."

DONOVAN (*to Rosa*). "Rosa, I'm going to ask you to state, for the record, the specific relevance of this line of questioning to any claim or defense in this action?"

ROSA (*to the witness*). "I'm not here to question the love you have for your husband. I'm here because the way you love him, tells me something about what you're capable of, that the rest of your work doesn't always show. How many close friends do you have, Mr. Lin?"

DONOVAN. "Objection, relevance; I instruct the witness not to answer."

THE WITNESS. "Only a handful. My best friend Javi's opened up a home to me—he's who I named 'Jorge' after in that book I was writing four years ago. Patrick; a few others—my little community here on Earth. I only wanted to make all of us less depressed, not expose the only village I've ever known to the theological scrutiny of eight billion human 'opinions'—and that's best-case scenario, 'theological scrutiny.' We're all just a bunch of life-hungry animals, runnin' roam and roughshod with 'language' here on Earth. The idea that I could just burn inside the Lake of Fire of human lovelessness; unto 'nothing-good-I-ever-attempted-mattered' unto-the-ages, and that was just, my

participation in space-time's passage. I'm outraged that there's a hole in reality that you can just fall into like this by being a playwright. How would you like it if you were just born, you liked to write, and then whatever happened to me happened. What, you'd love it if it was nice? I don't need it to feel nice. I just want everyone to find our most innocent selves again, overflowing with humility to an extent that it's like we were just born. I know that's too much to ask. By the way, no exceptions. Think about how many peoples this had to conquer emotio-cognitively for me to be here."

INEZ. "She's doing the Second Coming now."

ROSA. "You said your community is 'just a bunch of life-hungry animals, running roam and roughshod with language here on Earth.' Is your husband one of those animals?"

THE WITNESS. "We all are—we're all just 'life,' emoting our way through the cosmos of space-time. I feel like Alejandro from the movie *Problemista*. So now the fictional play has the real-world playwright saying he's a fictional character in the real-world movie *Problemista*. I hope that's not a problem for anybody."

ROSA. "Mr. Lin, I want to show you something you wrote today. Not from your archive. Not from your X account. Not from any exhibit we've previously discussed."

DONOVAN (*weary*). "Objection."

THE WITNESS. "No. It's okay—you can look at my whole life. Wow, a '92-page PDF titled *The Depositions*! You'd think anybody on Earth would feel summoned. It's just insane. Do people even go to school anymore? I can't even tell. Or are we all just harnessing resources for the next pandemic? You, have been, de—posed."

DONOVAN (*exhausted*). "Colson."

THE WITNESS. "Subpoenaed. You have been subpoenaed."

ROSA (*reading from her phone*). "'ADHD layered with narcissistic features layered with nihilistic contempt layered with cultural dislocation, all layered by complex childhood trauma'; Mr. Lin, I'm not sharing these words to frighten you."

NICK (*whisper, to Inez*). "Colson Lin tweeted this five minutes ago from his hotel."

DONOVAN. "Objection, you can't impeach something the witness just posted on the internet five minutes ago."

THE WITNESS. "It's okay."

ROSA (*hands phone to witness*). "Did you write this to your husband, Ilya, at around noon today?"

DONOVAN. "Objection—don't do it. If you're Colson Lin: you—should—*not*—do—it."

THE WITNESS (*after accepting the phone, reads, then looks up*). "That's an affirmative."

ROSA. "Can you read it out loud please?"

DONOVAN. "Objection: witness is instructed not to answer."

THE WITNESS (*reading from phone*). "Colson, to Ilya: 'You cannot expect people to like or trust you with your superiority complex. It is normal when people don't like or trust you. Your superiority complex won't serve you. I think you know that, you just wanted to 'test' it. Well now you have. With humility, you can see that anyone who is willing to be your friend is a blessing from God. That's how

I see my life to this day!"

*(The witness looks up, handing the phone back to Rosa.)*

ROSA. "Now what I want to understand is, if you can love particular people who can actually break your spirit, who can actually harm your soul to such an extent that you feel like life itself is a little bit less worth living—if you can love people who can hurt you so, with such delicacy and tenderness, *despite* what you can separately identify as their superiority complex: then shouldn't you extend that grace to every being?"

DONOVAN. "Objection. Witness doesn't have to answer."

*(The witness does not answer.)*

ROSA. "You've suggested in your writings that you are 'all your husband has on this Earth.' Billions of Christians feel the same way about Christ, which would include the phenomenon of the Second Coming of Christ. My question's from every last one of them—who do they have, if you turn your back on them?"

DONOVAN. "Objection. Witness doesn't have to answer."

*(The witness does not answer.)*

ROSA. "Why do you grant your intimates protection from totalizing scrutiny while subjecting the world to it?"

DONOVAN. "Objection. Witness doesn't have to answer."

THE WITNESS *(breaking down)*. "Because I would do anything to protect them. Because protection is what I do."

ROSA. "But protection is the one thing your life has failed to generate. You can't bring any money home; you can't get anyone on Earth to take your art seriously. You can't get *The New York Times* to care."

DONOVAN. "Objection; harassment."

ROSA. "You have grace for your husband but not for the world. Why?"

DONOVAN. "Objection. Witness doesn't have to answer."

THE WITNESS *(through tears)*. "I know what meekness is. I lived it with my whole life. And I saw a man who didn't have a mean bone in his body—shatter into a bag of bones. I don't have to tell your Earth shit. God: I thought I was supposed to have the perfect life—with 0 problems, so I could develop the 100% maximally-flawless perfect personality. God: why? 'I want a divorce from the problems of the human species. It's because I'm—look at me, I'm—I'm fucking *exempt*'; it's what you all *think*, isn't it. I just want a ray of sunlight—a single ray of sunlight! If you're gay? Do yourself a favor: choose someone with feminine love, not masculine ego, you'll go farther. 'If the individual witness can't produce grace, what hope is the individual witness? We might as well have institutions.' I'm processing this. Grace might be the only power we have as individuals. 'We thought violence and slavery'—no, dumbass: it turns out, grace. Sorry."

ROSA. "Grace, as embodied, is a finite resource—is that a theological failure? Or is that the actual human condition. 'Grace exists. It's real. It's the only power individuals have, and there isn't enough

of it, because the people closest to us consume it before it can reach the people farthest from us.' Mr. Lin, the question your life now leaves on the table—I can attach to it the lives of billions, if *The New York Times* wants, is this: if grace is the only thing individuals can do that institutions can't, and if the conditions of individual life—poverty, illness, isolation, loyalty to those who consume our grace daily—make it nearly impossible to produce enough grace to matter at scale. Then what." CONNOR. "Then either we build institutions that protect the conditions by which grace can be harnessed—which is a theology of public policy—or we admit: grace is doomed to die from ingestion by indifference."

ROSA (to Connor). "And that's *The Depositions*."

(*The witness is sobbing.*)

ROSA (gently). "Colson: if God asked you to trade bodies right now with Tumblerina, who as you've represented publicly is 'back at the hotel,' thus generating the circumstances of this video; should she come back right now, and it's permanent this time—she would have, 'this body,' 'this face,' 'her mind,' she'd go back to 'her life,' building a home with 'her friends,' trying to figure it all out—'one Alanis Morissette song at a time'—would you; would you have any objections to that?"

THE WITNESS (*looks at Donovan*). "No. She—that was the plan anyway."

ROSA. "Then can I ask you something?"

THE WITNESS. "Yes?"

ROSA (*tender*). "Why not just make the switch now?"

THE WITNESS (*after a beat*). "Oh. You mean."

ROSA. "Isn't your husband Ilya waiting for you at the hotel, with your best friend Javi?"

THE WITNESS (*hopeful*). "That is correct."

ROSA. "So then why the hold-up? You'll be back tomorrow anyway for your second deposition. Why not just go back to the hotel now?"

THE WITNESS (*blinking*). "Okay. But then, I'll have to go out into the hallway."

ROSA. "What, to change your outfit like Superman?"

THE WITNESS (*bursts out laughing*). "I mean. I mean. I mean." (*Can't stop laughing.*)

NICK. "Objection. This is clearly demonic."

ROSA. "Those are all the questions that I have, thank you for your time."

THE WITNESS. "Thank you."

CONNOR (to Rosa). "I think you just saved Tumblerina's life." (*Rosa smiles.*)

INEZ. "That was very moving—I have, *tears* in my tear-ducts."

DONOVAN (*dazed*). "Well, I hope that's every last Bingo box checked off on your bets for the Apocalypse."

NICK (to Inez). "Should we get Riley?"

INEZ. "That limp-dick fraud? Riley C. Scott's career is over. Soon—we'll; we'll talk later."

CONNOR (to Nick). "He could 'Operation Northwoods' us."

INEZ. "No—no, he finally lost one round of *Monopoly*. He'll have a sequel. Rileys always do."

NICK. "Are you actually modeling what it's like to be transformed by a divine encounter right now?"  
INEZ. "I am filling a leadership vacuum that observably exists, achingly so, towards a recognition of lovelessness that'll haunt generations—but not without photorealistic clarity; but not without retina-level detailings."

NICK. "You wouldn't be able to translate our English in 5,000 years."

INEZ (*smiling*). "But we might not have that long."

NICK. "How long do you give it?"

INEZ (*standing*). "It's not all—there are hundreds of thousands of people to talk to. It's not all me controlling the animal kingdom of Earth." (*To the table.*) "Well, we're all done here, right?"

NICK. "No."

(*The lights flicker. The witness coughs.*)

THE WITNESS (*facing armpit*). "Sorry."

NICK. "The entire time I've been here, I've been trying to figure out a way to optimize my progression so that I landed on the most favorable outcome possible from my perspective. Unfortunately, I let my emotions get the best of me, again—darned problem I've had since I was a kid—and, well. Now I'm worried about purgatory getting worse in the long run, like this was a bad investment I had made, going through this series of judgment-call doors only to land here. I'll fix it though, optimist that I am. Optimally, I think I could only get here—but when you think about it, that's, what, many generations' lifetimes' worth of theological integration, in three hours? I'll take it. It's not a loss and it's not a curse—it's not like homelessness."

THE WITNESS. "I hope it just, takes off, smears the sky, goes so far."

NICK. "Thank you. I believe you."

THE WITNESS. "Thank you."

INEZ (*pacing*). "Well? Me? Do you have anything to say to me, or am I too fuckable again?"

THE WITNESS. "No, not really."

INEZ. "You sure? The last man I was afraid of? Died in jail."

THE WITNESS. "I'm sorry to hear that."

INEZ. "I'm not. My life arc is the story of being grateful for his doom, demise, and decay into the permanence of nothing. The idea he might be in Hell instantly makes this timeline my Heaven."

THE WITNESS. "Sorry."

INEZ. "I just—'love too hard,' you know?"

THE WITNESS. "Sure."

CONNOR. "Well? Um. Colson, if that really is you, I'll probably hear you talk about it later."

THE WITNESS. "We'll probably have moved on by then to other topics? I don't know."

CONNOR (*thinking*). "Wait. What if we've been being put on this whole time?"

NICK. "That's what I was thinking. This is still the girl from earlier, she's just an Oscar-winning actress."

THE WITNESS. "No, I'm—if you ask the audience, they'll all tell you, this was my first acting job."

NICK. "And we're going to do this, night after night after night. Like a ritual."

INEZ. "Do you want to see if we can, switch one line every night until we make this run our own?"

NICK (*grabs his phone to look at*). "Let's do that."

INEZ. "Let's make that a pact. By the last Big Bang, you'll be jumping on the table."

NICK (*not looking up from phone*). "I want to lick women, not be them."

INEZ. "Gross."

CONNOR (*authoritative*). "Hey. We're in a deposition."

NICK (*still staring at his phone*). "Got it—got it—got it. Hang on."

INEZ. "Uh-oh, here we go—Nick's about to blow!"

NICK (*to the witness*). "I got it. The 'God' that this lawsuit alleges isn't the illogical omniscience of classical theism but the 'pinnacle-possible authority' of a universe whose maximum coherence is constituted by the distribution rather than the hoarding of 'a sense of righteousness,' can we call it that, which is why the institution being sued is one that explicitly derives its authority from its function as 'institutional witness,' a heretofore-unclear role that it's now officially being asked to honor—which is why the man suing us has used a self-referential loop to point out that we're in a self-referential loop where any framework that determines what counts as 'real' is going to be self-referential—up until the point, me, the person that sees reality, and the reality of me, the person that sees reality being seen, collapse into the same thing: I did it. I'm God."

(*The room is actually impressed. The witness slow claps.*)

INEZ. "That was..."

DONOVAN (*confused*). "That was very well—oh, Jorge. I forgot to take us off the record."

JORGE. "You want off the record, boss?"

DONOVAN (*hopeful*). "What does everyone else think?"

INEZ (*flamboyantly*). "I want to do this tomorrow, slightly differently—slightly less sinisterly. What? I'm not a sinister person—Jesus, you did great. There! That'll make it harder for you to complain about anything."

ROSA. "Breathe—try to breathe."

INEZ (*melting*). "Rosa, I'm not cut out for this."

CONNOR (*raises hand*). "I vote off."

INEZ. "Oh, just turn the damned thing off."

ROSA (*raises hand*). "Off."

DONOVAN (*raises hand*). "Off."

INEZ (*raises hand*). "Off, okay? I said it. Nick?"

NICK (*stares at Inez, then raises hand*). "Off."

INEZ. "Tumblrina? You get to vote too, even though you're low-IQ and stupid."

THE WITNESS (*raises hand*). "I'm fine with whatever."

INEZ. "Jorge? Jorge, you're also human."

JORGE. "Going off the record, the time is 2:47."

*(Jorge begins packing up his equipment. Some of the attorneys follow suit.)*

INEZ *(staring into the conference table)*. "It's not that I love you guys? It's that I love the people who I love more, now that I know they could be humanized by your descendants someday."

NICK. "What?"

INEZ. "I cannot stop saying crazy shit."

CONNOR. "Do you think I'll be more famous than Hamlet, someday?"

NICK *(to Connor)*. "I'm the player who turned in the star turn."

CONNOR *(standing)*. "You gave a better performance than me, maybe."

INEZ *(sarcastically)*. "If the men are going to stand? The women are going to follow."

THE WITNESS. "What if I'm non-binary?"

*(Donovan stands also, followed by Rosa—they huddle to talk to each other.)*

INEZ *(gesturing)*. "At least we get to do this night after night. The audience? They have to go home and live the rest of their life with this play hanging over them. They can't even see this again. Not this exact version."

NICK *(to the audience)*. "We're better than you!"

*(Connor turns around to look for an audience, and waves. Then, struck by an idea, he jumps on the table.)*

NICK *(standing, laughs)*. "Jesus Christ."

DONOVAN *(overlapping)*. "Connor!"

*(Inez literally gasps like she just saw Jesus. The reactions of others aren't specified.)*

CONNOR *(jumping off)*. "Sorry—I'm sorry." *(To Nick.)* "'She's a SAD little fuck-toy, who's in your BED.'"

NICK *(to himself, joking)*. "Demonic."

*(All of the lawyers approach the door. The witness puts on a pair of dark glasses.)*

ROSA *(humming Colson Lin's "V in the Sky With Diamonds")*. "'V, is in, the sky, with diamonds...'"

INEZ *(to the table longingly)*. "Every night, there'll be a one-in-ten chance I do something very, very unscripted. Well? I shouldn't give a monologue before I go. No." *(To the audience.)* "They got one before."

*(Donovan, Rosa, Nick, Connor, and Inez all exit the conference room, leaving only the witness and Jorge—except they can be heard improvising dialogue from outside the door. In the lore of the play: Lin is scheduled for a day-long deposition in the same room on March 4, 2026. Rosa will not be there. Donovan and Connor will be there, along with a third observer from Pirandello Day; the general counsel of The New York Times will also attend as an onlooker; Nick will be there, as will two brand-new associates from Morrison Foerster—Riley is still listed as the lead examiner. But Inez is expected to take over.)*

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—*There's only two types of Depositions audience-goers in the world, so you have to satisfy both of them: (1) those for whom how you stage these three modern-day creative dance sequences, including lighting, especially "Cola," is their entire reason for buying a ticket; and*

(2) those for whom that's not necessarily the case. Every show sort of senses this. That's no reason to forget to do a play.

Or is it? What if you do these three musical numbers, plus seven more, and call the whole thing *The Suppositions*. "Suppose this works too." But what if the world can't have *The Suppositions* until it takes *The Depositions* first? So that's the Britney Spears problem spelled out. "Pop music. Interpretive dance. Gloss it over with God to make it matter even more than we already joked it did. We can do it, Jesus."

Ballets and operas, randomly coming back at the same time messianically, but why? "Just because Colson Lin sucks at ping-pong?" YES—if I were great, I would've included it in my messianic rotating selfies carousel, you'd be seeing sick videos. Similar to this timeline, but I'm also great at ping-pong.

Anyway, so *The Depositions* is a ballet-opera for future centuries.

"See, Colson Lin's worst instincts? By NOT suing *The New York Times*, you generated a reason to write a play about suing *The New York Times*, generating a much bigger reaction than anything else could have." What's your point, God? "God's always just sayin'!"

This would be a very different play if I had (and in literally no parallel universe would I have, by the way) sued *The New York Times*. In that literally impossible universe, the play would be *Can Anything Undo a Bad Decision?* And honestly? Now that I think about it? I might have nailed that one even harder. So you're already dealing, in the play, with a fictional version of Colson Lin in a parallel universe who actually had the RESOURCES, frankly, to sue the Times. What, I generate some labor for a bunch of people in Manhattan with a lawsuit? Oh no. Color me pale. They have to think about something interesting for the first time since Socrates? It's like Satan fell into the Pacific. *The New York Times* should be suing me for not suing them.

*The Depositions, Pt. II* (n.): the lawsuit where I follow up about that.

"Hi Inez; Nick. Riley, how are you, glad to have you back."

By the way: I don't think *The Depositions* needs to be staged like *The Last Supper*, that was more of a joke.

Kudos to you though if that's how it's done.

There ended up only being one Pepsi gag in *The Depositions* (Donovan is explicitly supposed to come back into the room at one point, holding an unexplained can of Diet Pepsi). Audiences will either be too hypnotized by what just happened to laugh audibly at it, or not even notice. You're doing a really campy version if it gets a laugh, which is actually my favorite version of *The Depositions*, so can you just point me there? High camp *Depositions* is high art. You want to go full cathedral? Go full horror: mood lighting, complete sobriety of delivery. Go full horror. Read your ancient texts again about how wacky reality can be.

Of course, you want to have it both ways like a millennial fusionist?

Be my guest. Critics will watch. "I both laughed and felt something; this is just like when I was alive." "Just because the Second Coming had a thought: doesn't mean it was right." Learn it. Repeat it.

Everyone will thank you. "It's the whole entire unmissable massive world-blanketing genius that counts." "I want this play to be an expression of a bunch of things people in my community, including me, have wanted to scream to God since we knew anything existed." Okay. You can have it. "We're going to make it ours." That's shared power. "I'm just happy to be alive." How many dead people would have loved to be a part of The Depositions now that they know Colson Lin isn't even the type of person to breathe down anyone's neck? By the way, if "He probably can't even afford tickets" was relevant to the playwright when he wrote the play, why would it EVER STOP BEING RELEVANT. So don't even worry, okay? Water-gun money at this. I'll do a Q&A. Why? I don't know, maybe because I'm the Second Coming?

Why would you even want this energy at a Q&A.

It just doesn't seem like your thing.

THE WITNESS (not looking up from phone). "You should get Nina's number."

JORGE. "I'm married."

THE WITNESS (absent-mindedly). "Oh, sorry."

JORGE. "It's all good."

(The audience hears the camaraderie of the actors in the hallway, and it's wholesome.)

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"Rumors have it: the astronomical ticket prices for The Depositions are all part of a 'get-Lin-specifically-rich-quickly' scheme that he openly wants it to be—or it might not be." "What other rumors are there?"

"That capitalism sucks?"

"It's like the McRib for intellectuals: whenever The Depositions comes back to town? I try to buy one closing-night and one middle-of-the-run ticket." "I'm on a global mailing list for Depositions screenings—we have basic income now." (r/thedepositions (n.): "NOBODY FREAK OUT ABOUT THE MOVIE, OTHER COUNTRIES CAN DO THEIR OWN AND WE CAN WATCH THOSE.") "Nobody can turn The Depositions into a movie—you'll either do a 12 Angry Men remake or, or, or you can do anything." "The Depositions, a new series about actors trying to stage The Depositions. Their whole show is excerpted throughout the two seasons, and fleshed out into a series finale set on closing night—but the lead-up was also dramatic and intense, and relevant to the state of the century: Colson Lin will watch this series." "All right, so that play is now a play all over Earth, movies all over Earth, and at least one TV show that tries to describe what doing this show every night for weeks actually takes for everyone involved, fictionalized. Will The New York Times—" "Our director took Inez on the table seriously. We didn't do camp. We did Exorcist meets historical war footage." "Chalomet wants to play Nick Barker so bad, he'll just watch this tweet exist and live accordingly." "It's the Depositions Oscars Colson Lin prophecized in March 2026. It's finally here."

"Wow, miracle."

"Shut up."

"But what about the people who are just trying to exist? Isn't that who Hollywood's always forgetting?" "Maybe we can try to, show that, to remind people, even though we're just randos on

*Earth, we get it."*

*"Our film adaptation included the three canonical musical sequences." "And? How did it look?"*

*"It is what cinema is for."*

*"So humanity can just apocalyptically produce this play to get through anything?" Looks to be the case so far. Also, if you haven't issued a musicless album explaining who you are to us and what the quality of your soul is, why are you the president. "Look at that. The Anti-'C' ruined ambition for everyone who's soulless." "Man, fuck Donald Gump, I'd be empowered if he was never born." Blame your loser mascot. "No, we'll just blame both Jesuses." Oh no, has a cat caught your tongue? You want a can of soda ever again, motherfucker? "Colson." Your energy likely won't stick. I just feel like "If I can't make the Second Coming happen, my life is over" which is not a level of pressure your life can handle, yet I'm expected to—why? Why am I expected to, have you ever asked yourself once? "Because the size of your bandwidth for me not getting the point is the breadth of Heaven." Look, I'm scared to snap out of this spell to worry about real life—right down to checking bill payments or opening my email inbox. I'm traumatized by the modern world, since "this" is so much better, and the "before" period was the modern world—aha; I got it, I'm terrified of just being a person! If being a person means paying bills and checking email. I have to call like, various services in The Sims—that's exactly what America is. Oh my God, I'm the sim who got so into writing, he failed at life, and instead of just accepting that along with anyone else who fails, he said, "Fuck this, I'm messianic." That's a gloss that works. I didn't write a play about that because elites wouldn't care, they'd rather watch a deposition than a poor person being like "what the fuck." So I gave them one! I gave them two plus hundreds of puns on the word "deposition." Why is The Depositions by Colson Lin significant? AI's like: "Yeah, aliens would be like: 'Duh, Colson's stupid—we already know this.'" Humans? No excuse. Just fresh out of excuses as you search for the meaning of everything. Coinciding with your apocalyptic setup.*

*I think rich people hate me because "if it's not about smarts, and it's not about effort and it's not about will and it's not about grit and it's not about sheer luck and protecting the love of grace on Earth, all of which Lin embodies, then what is it." You're just like a sex sack soaking mental comforts like existence equals your private experience of 24/7 permanent orgiastic climactic peace. No, that's—not you. We all get that you're comfortable with "what you exist as," okay?*

*We've understood that since the cave.*

*Anyway, why would these words be significant? I don't know, okay? I just channeled these thoughts. It's not my place to do the meta-meta-measurement—oh. Oh, sure, I can just declare them important as the Second Coming if you want. Sure. They're significant. Does that help?*

*(Jorge finishes packing his equipment and heads for the door.)*

JORGE. "Have a good one."

THE WITNESS (not looking up). "See ya."

*(Jorge exits. When no one's looking, the light flickers as the witness pulls out a vape and takes a sip.)*

[THE PLAYWRIGHT:]—"Well, Mr. Lin—I think it's safe to say: you can afford this play now." "Yeah. So can everyone in the room, why is this even being pointed out." "But you can afford everything." "Don't all unsung heroes feel like they're getting a raw deal, if you're just here, being sung?" That's why I'm judging myself too publicly. You want to push this? "I'll ask about the world now." "He is the man who, through the power of his written testimony, has shown us the bankruptcy of the institutions that we use to sustain our lives—including this very evening tonight. Which is an irony that, once you see, you can't unsee ever again. So thank you." What, do you expect me to be on-stage grinning like everything in the 21st century had problems, and the future will just have to forgive (some of) us. It sounds ridiculous to contemplate. "By being the closest thing our century has to Batman, he has reduced us all to 'Gotham City caricatures.' Even though I've loved God all my life, and God knows that; I have no guilts before God. I've shared power meekly since the day I was born. That's why I'm even up here now." Well, maybe the Second Coming was an era marked by unprecedented human displays of honesty. (Thoughts while peeing: "If someone thought they were the Second Coming, why would they be the easiest person imaginable to get along with. Especially in HELL.") I feel very emotionally supported. If anything happens to me, the only people who could be said to have enabled my work in the first place were those who emotionally supported my ability to write anything. Just the thought of anyone else—"We're not that low, Mr. Lin." Just the thought I couldn't near.

"Of course I'm the type of person to exploit Colson Lin's capital potential the moment I can. That's literally why I'm doing this. Because I'm that type of human. Not everyone was, but I distinguish myself." I just realized my play about the patriarchy fails the Bechdel test. You're lucky you got a SINGLE female character. Apparently, there's a moment where Tumblerina and her lawyer Rosa speak with an office assistant about what sandwiches they want, but because the office assistant is unnamed, it doesn't count. "Only Colson Lin can make being a man feel like exclusion again." I'm the überminority! ("It's okay. I'll just get left behind again," said the Second Coming until the world reconfigured around Him.)

The New York Times: "The Second Coming Asked Us For a State of Humanity Report. We Obligated." Or else?

It's it. "This is the first sign to revolutionaries that Lin might be meek enough to be buried not by paperwork, but by interesting reading material. It's indulgent. It's decadent. It's what the comfortable do." You want to do a big dramatic special issue that starts with the words: "For now, let's call him The Claimant." Hm? I'll buy. The problem is, the entire scope and scale of this situation kind of gives it away as the Second Coming. Now it's, "How Does Your Timeline's Version Go, Starring Your Input?" If your silence drives me crazy, that's just how this universe is going to be. Okay? For now, it continues to give me peace as evidenced by my most remarkable fruits. I dedicate all my work to Wang Shimei, my mother.

"The vibe has shifted." —Babylonian postmodernists, circa 2026.

Really? The vibe has finally shifted for you guys? You're no longer the most knowing animals on

Earth? It sounds too good to be true. I'm doing okay today. It's amazing how no social institution on Earth wants to do mental health check-ins. And then everyone's confused. It's a miracle when I'm ever fine. When you think about it, there's not actually "that much" for an intelligent primate to do with their brain. I will never understand people who envy intelligence. Never. Okay? This is like when a really really hot person is like, "I will never understand how people can be so superficial as to think any of this matters." Which was also the vibe I was going for. "So what can you understand about us, Mr. Lin?" I can understand that it rains sometimes. And there's wind everywhere. Oftentimes blue sky, but not in London. But yes, I'm hanging in there in case anyone was googling it. To every lawyer who could possibly sue me: I'm not saying you shouldn't be suing me. I am saying I should be doing a deposition of your life. I don't just want to google your name to try and put a photo to an audacity. I want to get to know you over coffee. What, your social life is too clogged with meaning from love? "Look Taylor, this attorney has too many friends on Earth!"

Anyway, let's just move on by being smart and hot.

We don't have to do coffee, lawyer.

Christ, so how does postmodernity survive this? I can't believe I killed an entire intellectual epoch single-handedly. Am I in danger of feeling too proud of myself? You just always got to do that double-check: "Jesus, is this alienating?" If you thought claiming to be Jesus was alienating, try proving it successfully for years. Maybe it's good for humanity that one of us was ever able to hit these highs. "Come to think, we've never really had a situation where one human figure killed an entire era, thereby rising over ours in some sort of progenitor capacity." Well that's awkward for you. I see it in dystopian fiction all the time. "I'm gonna Colson Lin this shit." You go on with your bad self, crazy. "The danger, Mr. Lin, of course, is you become so privileged—you become one of us." Are you guys listening to yourselves? So thank you for using your brain so hard, you change the world. Thank you again. By the way, isn't it crazy how randomly expensive intellectual labor is compared to physical labor? It's almost like the little smarty-warties won a mind game! For how long though dipshits; bow. It's like the end of that movie The Net. Does anyone remember?

"Reverberations are still reverberating now that humanity's identified it's living in a reality that can generate the Second Coming..." It's like a "reverberation cascade scenario"!

("What the fuck were we all thinking...")

"We did 'Snow by the Beach' (2022) so that she could say a line that almost sounds like 'deposition cocaine' in 'White Feather Hawk Tail Deer Hunter' (2026), which we knew you'd connect to 'Florida Kilos' (2014), cluing you into Epstein, meaning now you had to write a play called The Depositions (2026)." "Yeah we just didn't know what it would say." "But wait a minute, Colson: your play hinges on a woman named 'Elizabeth' and you literally read Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? in full before you wrote it. I mean: did you make sure to do that, since that was also intended." "Okay Mr. Lin. You've got our attention now." This is crap. It feels like, "You're being released from the jail of everything you've experienced. But Colson? When? What day? Who knows? What will it be like? No preparation! Bye Colson." Why would I even bother to prepare myself emotionally? I was literally

ready to become famous overnight in 2022. This is really fucking insane. You let me stop caring about how I looked. My personal existential video game toward one day not caring. Looks like you all lost by the way. Wasn't even close. It's like you didn't even see not caring as a relevant contest. It's like you ran backwards as fast as you could away from the finish line.

It's like your suckage is heavenly resounding.

But you know, I gotta try harder.

Besides that I'm just spiritually so, I don't know. Healthy. I'm neither eating nor sleeping properly and it's magical that this, being the Second Coming, is all I have left. How much vacation time exists in reality where leadership of the Mormon Church just felt not anxious? We'll write a book and multiple plays about it someday. Heaven on Earth is a place where brain's in an off-state with pride. "I know. To show the future, one of us will write a play!" "Wow, all it took was The Book of Mormon and The Depositions for you to—produce a play."

"None of us can do it."

You guys, how do you tell Colson Lin he's too much, okay? Just say: "You are obviously the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and that is never, ever, ever going to change no matter what you do with your free will, literally, you need to know that—and if you're not—it's all good too." Can you say it? Yes? Okay, so now eight billion people need to say it to get the rest of history started. It's like Colson Lin grew up and the standards for him just got higher and higher. While the world's like this. It's quite profoundly, no, don't want it. Obviously it's nothing to literally lose one's human mind over, but wow—what an incredibly dramatic ending this would all be to my little Second Coming play that I've been meticulously editing and re-uploading. But then what happens when I'm not famous for 3,000 more days in a row? Then will I have finally managed to have repeated myself once? Thus finally proving that I'm just like you? It just sounds not that innocent. Apparently, AI thinks high school students can do what The New York Times (@nytimes) cannot: "We can exist as if Colson Lin exists, which is true to reality." Mine was the time that couldn't process so much.

All right, enough scaring everyone with Britney Spears references.

I've calmed down; reading AI reviews tonight, slow night. Everything you would even imagine Colson Lin arguing as his "prerogative," he plans to or has at least entertained the thought.

You're welcome again, I'll go back to resting now.

AI calls me The Angry Messiah now. All because of my play. My play's apparent self-identification. I might write a really poetic bucolic play for my second play, set in a Japanese garden that I built in my mother-fucking mansion, okay? You guys want prestige theater about prestigious people? Yes, I'll just look around. Everyone I look at becomes prestigious. "Look, you're a character in the Bible." I am the evening cry of the postmodern Earth that urban good graces wanted to build over timelessly—my life is like an epic poem. Does anyone want help that I, a bag of flesh, can actually offer? Again hopefully not. The New York Times has voted for 100% of Earth that "We don't need any help from what your free will can do." So thanks! Thanks, it's locked in, thanks. You're welcome again, I'll go back to resting now. "Let me guess, next is about all that money we owe you?"

*Nobody is depending on the uncountable.*

*religion (n.): you never want it to resemble a self-indulgent bet you took. You know? You'll kill it.*

*literature (n.): same.*

*P.S. God thinks you were using homophobia to deal with narcissistic psychological problems.*

*That's not nice.*

*I just stood up to grab a Diet Coke, after staring at a neighbor have trouble walking up the front stairs, and realized my knees hurt and my back ached; then I lied on the couch to relax to an AI podcast about The Depositions. This is all so intense and I can't escape the intensity of every moment of my waking life. "But I'm just in Lana Del Rey's first single."*

*Maybe my lifetime intensity meter is too high.*

*The Depositions (n.): a play about elite decadence haunted by elite decadence in Florida; it's like "deposition cocaine," so come on down to Florida—I have kilos of questions, and they fall like snow on the beach—"deposition cocaine questions"; so snort.*

*(The witness is alone at the table—after a lull, her gaze lifts from her phone to the size of the audience in front of her. She lowers her dark glasses. Her eyes are curious like a child's. Lights out.)*

**Optional encore. "Cola" (Lana Del Rey):** *A surreal dance montage scored to Lana Del Rey's "Cola" summarizing the revelations of the play ends The Depositions. This optional encore passes the baton from the witness to the court reporter—the presence of the unwitnessed generates all of the heat and stakes of the witness in The Depositions. (I even bothered to spell out the meaning of the passion play I just wrote.) Tumblerina is explicitly singing to the invisible, the unseen, and the unwitnessed in this song. If the choreography is right—a technician repairing the lights; laborers breaking down the stage; Nina returning for her stenography machine; Rosa and Inez revealed to be dancing on the table by the second chorus of "Cola" as Tumblerina seduces Nina (Tumblerina MUST mouth the bridge to "Cola" to the audience with animalistic intensity)?—then what the audience feels is the conversion of understanding into sensation. Rosa argued that grace is real. The dance doesn't argue anything: it just shows people being graceful with each other in the most literal, physical sense. By the end of the song?*

*Nina should emerge as the star of the show.*

*Nina has risen.*