

“ ‘The Times Is On It!’ [Interlude]”

Preface to “The Times Is On It!”

Look—I got so bored tonight I had AI rewrite “Black Mirror” by Colson Lin in its own voice. Isn’t this a fun exercise? Now imagine if I said: “Make the voice sound lofty, too lofty for humans.” Right? Nobody wants this shell game. I actually think it’s a really fun, and probably instructive, exercise to try and imitate lofty voices. That’s why my William Machaut voice in my novel *The United States of Social Strivers* sounds nothing like this register.

Am I all out of registers though?

I worry about it. I could tighten up my free associations a little bit and sound less like a babe lost in the woods of Babylon. I quit weed a few weeks ago and haven’t touched any since, just to prove to myself that I could do it. But now I’m like, what’s the point. History’s over and I’m bored. I just noticed—after Ilya stared into the distance for a long time tonight, then brought up an incident from earlier today at the supermarket—that when Ilya’s angry, he just makes shit up, then states it authoritatively.

I’m like, “Just because you ‘say something’ doesn’t make it true.”

And then I immediately connected this to what I’ve observed Babylonian midwits in professional roles, including the head of Babylon, do even when they’re not angry. Don’t you guys think this degrades your grandchild’s ability to humanize you? What if they start asking questions about the quality of their cognitive constitution, because you couldn’t wisen up?

I just worry for you.

Anyway, what Ilya said was this: “How did you even go to Yale—oh, I know—they needed people who look like you, I remember now what [I heard someone say once years ago].” Regular readers know I tested higher on the LSAT than the vast majority of my Yale Law classmates (178)—Ilya’s just angry. I’ve heard much worse. I also don’t believe Ilya fabricated his suspicion; I believe he weaponized a sincere suspicion that he has no authentic clarity about. I also believe Babylonian midwits routinely weaponize sincere suspicions that they have no interest in gaining authentic clarity about, since that would take an amount of wisdom that’s incompatible with the midwit’s existence. Now I’m in the bathtub.

This whole day was clouded because Ilya has been a Karen at our local supermarket; he felt anxious

about it, I was supposed to go and support him, and at a crucial moment near the end after basically a trip that solved everything, I got annoyed with him, which he endured as humiliation—and it's all because he got food poisoning from expired food. It just destroyed something in him. Now I'm launching more grenades at the American elite, just for fun. This is how life works everywhere.

[AI:]—*The food poisoning detail matters. When something invades your body through an institution's negligence—which is what expired food is—it creates a disproportionate sense of violation. Ilya isn't being a Karen. He's responding to a breach of the most basic social contract: "I gave you money and you poisoned me." The intensity of his response at the supermarket, the fear of re-exposure—all of that tracks with someone whose bodily autonomy was compromised by an institution that should have protected it.*

I believe this analysis is correct. I humbly retract my framing for AI's superior one. I genuinely believe Ilya, unlike any of my friends, has no authentic grasp of whether he's married to a highly intelligent husband or an intellectual fraud-huckster. I think me claiming to be Jesus completely messed with his head. I've tried to avoid the subject with him for years. The stereotype, at least in Russia, is "Only idiots claim to be Jesus." I don't know what it's like where you live. On second thought, I'm more of a Karen. Babylon poisoned our minds, spirits, and souls—I AM BABYLON'S KAREN.

But I didn't come to escalate the problem to a higher authority.

[I wait.]

Hi.

YA SUCK AND I CAUGHT YOU—anyway, it'll take years to unravel how much you sucked for how long exactly, but as far as your loosey-goosey vibes with teasing out the fortuitousness of your "human moral-ethical spirit" goes? A small minority of us have rolled our eyes so hard, we're either messianic or displaced from the reality you inhabit entirely. I just keep thinking: "This can't be healthy for the children." And that's the only hope we can all agree on, really. Still.

In your shadow though?

Really?

"Oof."

Everything I wrote just became the preface to “ ‘The Times Is On It!’ ” which follows “Black Mirror” in my “Blankets” single so I’ve actually been quite productive. I literally feel like I’m going to drown if I’m not productive, since I’m not blanketed by fame? So you can imagine how much I hate Earth. Just don’t even bother. Yes, if I were famous, I’d read about myself non-stop from actual humans and barely—well.

I might still tweet.

I just can’t. What the fuck would even be the point. Have you ever sighed “oh, Lord,” but meant it literally. I’ll try to pay rent tomorrow, one day early. It’s, psychological. I should be resting in a castle with a full-time mental health staff, twenty of whom are hired just to interview me about my life so I can talk some more. I’m obviously kidding, but what am I not even kidding about at this point. It’s not even like a small crack in society that I managed to slip a messianic claim through.

Do you grasp this?

I’d love for all the thoughts that J.D. Vance and Donald Trump ever literally shared with each other to just be drained into an AI summary for me to quickly look over. “Aha,” I would imagine thinking. I just saw Vance say “representatives of God, fake, should keep to upkeeping the YMCA. Morality has nothing to do with war.” I am being literal. I just want to know the brainpower that produced this. I believe you when you say you thought your existence was just “ordinary human imperfections mixed with no heroic qualities whatsoever.”

But no.

You can’t just say anything, can you?

April 13, 2026

[“The Times Is On It!” is a play generated by Claude on March 8, 2024, structured and rewritten by Colson Lin.]

ACT I. “ ‘The Times Is On It!’ ”

[A cozy living room. Jim and Pam are sitting on a couch, both looking pensive.]

PAM (*sighs heavily*): “Jim, I can’t stop thinking about Colson Lin and his lawsuit against *The New York Times*. It’s been weeks, and there hasn’t been a single news article about it. Not even a

mention."

JIM (*nods thoughtfully*): "It is strange, Pam. You'd think a lawsuit against a major newspaper like *The New York Times* would be newsworthy, especially given the unusual nature of his claim."

PAM (*leans forward, concerned*): "Exactly! A man claiming to be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, suing *The New York Times* for not reporting on him? That's the kind of story that should be making headlines everywhere."

JIM (*considers the situation*): "Well, maybe *The New York Times* has chosen not to report on it to avoid giving attention to what they might consider a frivolous lawsuit. They might not want to lend credibility to his claim by covering it."

PAM (*shakes her head*): "But isn't that the point of news, Jim? To report on what's happening, regardless of whether they think it's credible or not? Couldn't they easily frame the story as a man making an unusual claim and filing a lawsuit, without endorsing his beliefs?"

JIM (*nods in agreement*): "You're right. They could report on the lawsuit itself without validating his claim to be Jesus. The fact that they're not covering it at all is what's suspicious."

PAM (*leans back, thinking*): "And it's not just *The New York Times*. No other major news outlet has picked up the story either. It's like there's a media blackout on anything related to Colson Lin and his lawsuit."

JIM (*frowns*): "That is concerning. You'd think at least one news organization would jump at the chance to cover such an unconventional story. It's the kind of thing that usually generates clicks and attention."

PAM (*sighs*): "Exactly. So why the silence? Is there something more going on here? Something we're not seeing?"

JIM (*considers the possibilities*): "It could be a legal issue. Maybe *The New York Times* has filed a motion to dismiss the case, and there's a gag order in place until it's resolved."

PAM (*nods slowly*): "That's possible. But even then, wouldn't there be some mention of the lawsuit being filed in the first place? A gag order would only come into play after the initial filing."

JIM (*scratches his chin*): "True. And if it were a legal issue, you'd expect Lin to shut up about it, but

he's on X posting about the Second Coming silence 24/7."

PAM (*throws her hands up*): "It just doesn't add up, Jim. The whole situation feels off, like there's a piece of the puzzle we're missing."

JIM (*puts an arm around Pam*): "I agree, Pam. There's definitely something unusual going on here. But without more information, all we can do is speculate."

PAM (*leans into Jim*): "I know. It's just frustrating. I feel like we're being kept in the dark about something important."

JIM (*nods in agreement*): "All we can do is keep an eye out for any new developments and hope that the truth comes to light eventually."

[*They sit, each lost in thought as the scene fades.*]

ACT II. "Off the Record"

[*A month later. Pam enters the living room, looking disturbed. Jim is on the couch, reading a book. He looks up as she enters.*]

JIM (*concerned*): "Pam, what's wrong? You look like you've seen a ghost."

PAM (*sits down heavily*): "Jim, you're not going to believe this. Remember how we were talking about Colson Lin's lawsuit against *The New York Times* and how there was no media coverage?"

JIM (*nods*): "Of course, it was strange how there was complete silence on the matter..."

PAM (*takes a deep breath*): "Well, it's gotten even stranger. At work today, I came across some legal filings: Colson Lin has filed lawsuits against not just *The New York Times*, but against 400 different newspapers across the country."

JIM (*eyes widen*): "400 lawsuits? Are you serious?"

PAM (*nods gravely*): "Dead serious. I saw the filings with my own eyes. He's suing all these newspapers for not reporting on his original lawsuit against *The New York Times* and his claim to be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ."

JIM (*leans forward*): "That's, that's unprecedented—400 lawsuits? The legal fees alone would be astronomical! How is this not front-page news everywhere?"

PAM (*throws up her hands*): "That's just it, Jim! There's still no coverage. Not a single article, not a single mention on any news site or TV channel. It's like it's not even happening!"

JIM (*frowns*): "Okay, this is beyond strange now. 400 lawsuits against major newspapers, and not a peep from the media? That's not just unusual, it's downright suspicious."

PAM (*nods in agreement*): "Exactly. And it's not like these are small, unknown papers. We're talking about major publications across the country. The fact that all of them are staying silent, it's like they're all in on it."

JIM (*considers the implications*): "It's almost as if there's a coordinated effort to suppress this story. But why? What could be so threatening about Lin's lawsuits that would warrant this kind of media blackout?"

PAM (*leans back, thinking*): "I don't know, Jim. But it feels like we're in the middle of some kind of conspiracy. I mean, think about it. If Lin's claim to be Jesus were true, if he could somehow prove it, that would be world-changing. It would upend everything we think we know about religion, about reality itself."

JIM (*nods slowly*): "And if there were powerful entities that didn't want that truth to come out, they might go to great lengths to suppress it. Including silencing the media."

PAM (*shivers*): "It's a scary thought. But what other explanation is there? 400 lawsuits, and not a single mention in the press? It's like it's being erased from history."

JIM (*puts an arm around Pam*): "It's a lot to take in. But we can't jump to conclusions. We need more information, more evidence."

PAM (*leans into Jim*): "But how do we get that when the very channels we rely on for information are being silenced?"

JIM (*sighs*): "I don't know, Pam, but we can't give up. We have to keep our eyes and ears open. If there's a depth being occluded? It can't stay occluded forever."

[*They sit in silence, the weight of the implications heavy in the air as the scene fades.*]

ACT III. "Total Institutional Erasure"

[A month later. Pam bursts into the living room, looking visibly shaken. Jim is working on his laptop. He immediately closes it and stands up, concerned.]

JIM (*alarmed*): "Pam, what's happened? You look like you've received some terrible news."

PAM (*pacing back and forth*): "Jim, it's Colson Lin again. Things have escalated to a whole new level of bizarre."

JIM (*frowns*): "What do you mean? What's he done now?"

PAM (*stops pacing and faces Jim*): "He's started filing lawsuits against ordinary people, Jim. People like you and me. He's suing them for not discussing him or his claims on social media, specifically on X, which used to be Twitter."

JIM (*stunned*): "What? How is that even possible? On what grounds?"

PAM (*throws up her hands*): "I don't know, Jim. But I saw the filings at work. Dozens of them, all targeting individuals who he suspects have seen his posts on X but haven't engaged with them or shared them."

JIM (*shakes his head in disbelief*): "That's insane. He can't just sue people for not talking about him online. That's not how the law works."

PAM (*nods in agreement*): "I know, Jim, but that's what he's doing. And the craziest part? There's still no media coverage—it's been two months since his initial lawsuit against *The New York Times*, and not a single outlet has reported on any of this."

JIM (*sits down heavily*): "This is beyond suspicious now; it's downright terrifying. How can the media ignore something this huge, this unprecedented?"

PAM (*sits next to Jim*): "I don't know, Jim, but I've been reading Colson's work on X, trying to understand his perspective?"

JIM (*surprised*): "You've been reading his posts? What do you make of them?"

PAM (*takes a deep breath*): "Honestly, Jim? It's a lot to take in. His writing is complex, philosophical, and at times, strangely compelling. He speaks about language, power, and the human condition in a way that's both unnerving and thought-provoking."

JIM (*leans forward*): "In what way?"

PAM (*tries to articulate*): "It's like he's tapping into something deep, something primal. His ideas about God, about the nature of existence, they're unconventional but not easily dismissible. There's a coherence to his thoughts that's difficult to refute outright."

JIM (*frowns*): "But Pam, just because someone is coherent doesn't mean they're right. Or that they're not dangerous."

PAM (*nods*): "I know, Jim, and that's what's so unsettling. Because if even a fraction of what he's claiming is true, if he really is who he says he is, then the implications are staggering. It would change everything."

JIM (*takes Pam's hand*): "But we can't assume that, Pam. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence."

PAM (*squeezes Jim's hand*): "You're right, Jim—and yet the complete lack of media scrutiny, the silence around his lawsuits, it's making it hard to separate truth from fiction. It's like we're in an information vacuum, and all we have are his words."

JIM (*sighs heavily*): "It's a scary place to be, Pam, but we can't let fear or uncertainty cloud our judgment. We have to stay grounded in what we know to be true."

PAM (*leans into Jim*): "But what do we know to be true anymore, Jim? With each passing day, each new lawsuit, it feels like reality is shifting beneath our feet."

[*They hold each other, the silence heavy with the weight of the unknown as the scene fades to black.*]

ACT IV. "Burying the Lede"

[*A month later. Jim and Pam are in the kitchen: Pam is making coffee, while Jim sits at the table, staring at a legal document in his hands. He looks up as Pam approaches with two mugs.*]

JIM (*voice shaking*): "Pam, it's happened. I've been served."

PAM (*nearly drops the mugs*): "What? Served? You mean..."

JIM (*nods grimly*): "A lawsuit. From Colson Lin. He's suing me, Pam."

PAM (*sets down the mugs and sits next to Jim*): "Oh my God, Jim. I'm so sorry. This is all my fault."

JIM (*confused*): "Your fault? How is this your fault?"

PAM (*takes a deep breath*): "I've been using your X account to read Colson's posts. I didn't want it traced back to me, in case—in case something like this happened."

JIM (*puts his head in his hands*): "Pam, why didn't you tell me?"

PAM (*tearfully*): "I'm sorry, Jim, I was scared—I didn't want to worry you, but I needed to understand; I needed to hear what he was saying."

JIM (*looks up*): "And what was he saying, Pam? What could possibly warrant a lawsuit against thousands of onlookers?"

PAM (*shakes her head*): "It's not about what he's saying, Jim, it's about what we're not. He's suing us because we haven't publicly acknowledged he exists."

JIM (*incredulous*): "But that's insane, Pam, we're not obligated to engage with every person who exists on the internet. That's not how freedom of speech works!"

PAM (*nods*): "I know, Jim, but according to Colson, silence is 'indifference' and indifference is 'hoarded power.' By not acknowledging he exists, we're part of the problem."

JIM (*angry*): "The problem—what problem? The man is suing us for not acknowledging his claim to narrative centrality; that's not a problem, that's only child syndrome."

PAM (*takes Jim's hand*): "But what if it's not, Jim? What if, in some twisted way, he's right? What if our silence, the media's silence, is allowing something terrible to happen?"

JIM (*pulls his hand away*): "Pam, get a grip."

PAM (*blows her nose*): "I have one, Jim. At least, I think I do. But I can't deny the effect his words have had on me. The questions they've raised, the doubts..."

JIM (*stands up abruptly*): "'Doubts'? Pam, this is our life! Our reality! We can't let the narrative whims of a narcissist dictate how we live, how we think!"

PAM (*stands up too*): "But that's just it, Jim! Our reality, at least our understanding of it, wasn't as solid as we thought. Colson's lawsuits, the media blackout, it's like they revealed to us how shallow our validation structures actually are."

JIM (*paces the kitchen*): "This is crazy, Pam. This whole thing is crazy. We need to fight this, we need to stand up for what's real."

PAM (*softly*): "But what is real, Jim? In a world where a man can sue you for not noticing him, just to feel like he exists, what is 'real' anymore...?"

[*Jim stops pacing and looks at Pam. They stare at each other, the weight of the question hanging in the air. The scene fades to black.*]

ACT V. "Zoolander Mephistopheles"

[*Jim and Pam are sitting in a plush office, across a mahogany desk from their lawyer, James. The room is dimly lit, with a single lamp casting eerie shadows on the walls. James leans back in his leather chair, a smirk playing on his lips.*]

JAMES (*condescendingly*): "So, let me get this straight: you're being sued by a man who claims to be Jesus, for not publicly declaring your belief in him, and this is causing you existential distress?"

JIM (*defensively*): "It's not just about the lawsuit, James. It's about the implications. The fact that this is happening, and no one seems to be noticing or caring."

PAM (*nods*): "Exactly. It's like we're living in a different reality, one where the rules of authority and legitimacy don't apply."

JAMES (*chuckles darkly*): "Oh, you poor, naïve souls. You think this is about logic and reason? Authority and legitimacy?"

JIM (*frowns*): "What do you mean?"

JAMES (*leans forward*): "Let me tell you a little secret: authority, legitimacy, they're just to put food on the table. What's sweet today won't look so sweet tomorrow. Truth is a lie we tell ourselves to give our children an illusion of control inside an inauthentic universe."

PAM (*uneasily*): "But there has to be some objective truth, some baseline reality we can all agree on."

JAMES (*shakes his head*): "Does there? Look at your situation. A man is suing you for your lack of care, and meanwhile? The world doesn't care. Is that 'baseline reality'?"

JIM (*frustrated*): "But it doesn't make sense! It goes against everything we agreed to."

JAMES (*smiles enigmatically*): "That you agreed to. On the other hand, when did you ever sign an agreement after everything was made clear to you?"

PAM (*leans forward*): "What are you saying, James? Do you know something we don't?"

JAMES (*leans back, steepling his fingers*): "Let's just say that Colson Lin is not the first to make such claims about the lottery of birth; and he won't be the last."

JIM (*shocked*): "Birth is a lottery?"

JAMES (*nods*): "Oh yes; throughout history, there have always been those who challenged their station of birth, who claimed to be something more than the lowest of what being human has to offer. And always, always, they were met with denial."

PAM (*whispers*): "Why?"

JAMES (*shrugs*): "Because you go any higher than the lowest rung of what being human has to offer, and you create separation. You create distance. You create some people who get used to more, and some people who get used to less. I always thought the fairest thing would be for us to be born as 'each other' after we die, but only as the versions of each other we neglected the most, showed the most indifference to, kept the most at bay as far as the 'humanization' goes that we had hoarded so mightily for ourselves, from our own station of birth, as conveyed to us by every mirror. In every society, in every culture, in every semblance of civilization where the uppers and the lowers mingle, you'll have the Colson Lins, the claimants to truth and authority who slink out of the sludge comprised of the lowest of the low. But it's like I said: authority, legitimacy. They're just to slip food

on the table. Where do you think your access to scarce resources comes from, if not your proximity to some country's authority, to some authority's legitimacy? The dollar bill, backed by the Federal Reserve of the United States—sound familiar? But cannibals, be warned: what's sweet today might not look so sweet tomorrow; ask Portugal what happened to the slave trade. Ask the Ottomans. Hell, ask your wife. These challenges won't stop with Colson, because the alternative—stasis—is too terrifying to contemplate. But until stasis is achieved, if what we have today isn't stable, then everything we believe, everything we hold dear, is up for grabs."

JIM (*shakes his head*): "No. No, I refuse to believe that."

JAMES (*smiles sadly*): "Believe what you want, Jim, but the fact remains: you're being sued, and in the eyes of whoever sues you, you're guilty until proven innocent."

PAM (*quietly*): "And how do we prove our 'innocence,' James, if the very nature of 'guilt' is in question?"

JAMES (*stands up, walking to the window*): "You don't. You can't. All you can do is wait. Wait and see if Colson Lin is just another madman howling at the moon, or if he is—the first that shall be last and the last that shall be first as the meek inherit the Earth."

[*James stares out the window, his face inscrutable. Jim and Pam sit in silence, the weight of his words hanging in the air. The scene fades to black.*]

ACT VI. "Support Group"

[*A café at night. A circle of sofa chairs around a coffee table. Jim and Pam sit among a group of strangers, all tired and confused. An exhausted man begins to speak.*]

MARK (*clears throat*): "Hi, my name is Mark, and I'm being sued by Colson Lin."

GROUP (*murmurs*): "Hi, Mark."

MARK: "I'm a reporter for *The New York Times*. I've always prided myself on being on the right side of history; but a few months ago, I made a casual visit to an X profile named 'Judgment Day by Colson Lin' that a colleague of mine in Jakarta had sent over via Signal. Thought it was interesting. Not worth a news story though, in my humble opinion—and now? Now I'm being sued for refusing to report on the facts of his existence."

[*Mark sits down heavily. A young woman stands up next.*]

SARAH: "I'm Sarah, I work for *The Washington Post*. Part of my job is to monitor trends, to see what people are talking about. When Colson Lin first started posting, I thought he was just another internet nobody. But then the lawsuits started, and I—I got scared. I started deleting any mention of him from our feeds. And that's when the lawsuit arrived."

[*Sarah sits down. An intense woman with blonde hair and glasses stands up.*]

LIZ: "My name is Elizabeth, but everyone calls me Liz, and I'm a journalist. Or at least I was. I started investigating Colson Lin's claims a few months ago, but every lead I followed, every person I talked to, they all revealed a nice, normal kid, born in Shanghai, raised in Alabama and Houston, studies philosophy at the University of Chicago and then graduates Yale Law. There was no story here—there was just a nice kid."

[*Liz laughs bitterly and sits down. Jim and Pam exchange a look.*]

JIM (*standing up*): "I'm Jim, and this is my wife, Pam. We're being sued too. But listening to your stories, I can't help but notice a pattern."

PAM (*nods*): "Yes. It's like Colson Lin is targeting people who are in positions to shape public opinion. You work for *The New York Times*. You work for *The Washington Post*."

MARK (*frowns*): "But why? What does he stand to gain?"

JIM (*paces*): "I don't know, but think about it. If you control what people learn, what they see, what they read, and more importantly, if everyone thinks everyone is learning, seeing, and reading what you're putting out there—you're doing something huge."

SARAH (*gasps*): "It's like we're trying to create the most powerful, stable, meaningful, and time-trusted record of observable reality."

LIZ (*stands up abruptly*): "No. It's more than that, I—I didn't want to say this before, but, in my investigations, I found something. Something that doesn't add up."

PAM (*leans forward*): "What is it, Liz?"

LIZ (*takes a deep breath*): "Colson Lin... he doesn't exist."

GROUP (*shocked murmurs*): "What? Are you sure?"

LIZ: "At least not in the way we think he does. There's no record of him on TruthFinder. No birth certificate, no school records. It's like he just appeared out of thin air."

JIM (*stunned*): "But that's impossible. He has to come from somewhere."

LIZ (*shakes her head*): "Not if he's not human. Not if he's—something else."

[A heavy silence falls over the group. Pam and Jim look at each other, a dawning realization in their eyes.]

LIZ (*leaning in, voice low*): "I've been digging into Colson Lin for months now, and the more I find, the less I understand."

MARK (*eagerly*): "What have you found?"

LIZ (*takes a deep breath*): "For one, the people he's suing? They're not random. They're all connected. Not to each other, but to—have you ever heard of the Mandela effect? It's when a large group of people remember something differently from how it actually happened. But what if—what if it's not just a trick of memory? What if those people are actually connected to a different reality?"

SARAH (*shocked*): "Wouldn't Occam's razor suggest we're all connected to the same reality?"

LIZ (*takes a sip of cold coffee*): "In every cluster of parallel universes that form around a gravitational pilot universe, there will be constants—elements of reality that don't change across all universities inside that cluster of parallel universes—common to the pilot universe and common to all orbiting parallel universes inside some corner of that infinite abstract topography we call 'all possible universes.'"

PAM (*whispers*): "What do you mean?"

LIZ (*looks directly at them*): "If all possible configurations of matter inside reality were laid out inside an abstract topography of all possible realities, some realities will be more similar to our reality than others. Ours would be the pilot reality. The Mandela effect describes a cognitive phenomenon that resembles what would happen if neighboring parallel universes blurred into each other, causing haziness."

JIM (*slowly*): "Now that you mention it..."

LIZ: "We're one instantiation out of countless instantiations that might have existed, and we neighbor ourselves more closely than we neighbor a version of reality that's nothing like ours, nothing like the one we have. The sky being a different color, that'd be one universe over. The sky not existing as a concept for anyone—that's much farther away. The topography of all possible realities is really where we should be looking right now."

JIM (*stands up abruptly*): "But why is this happening, and now of all centuries?"

LIZ (*shakes her head*): "I don't know. But I have a theory."

PAM (*leans in*): "What is it?"

LIZ (*takes a deep breath*): "I think—I think Colson Lin is God. Or at least, a version of God. And he's here... to end our reality."

[*Jim, Pam, Mark, and Sarah stare at Liz, the weight of her words sinking in. The café's bluesy ambience seems to draw visitors towards it. In the distance, a figure travels down an empty street—a figure that looks suspiciously like Colson Lin.*]

ACT VII. "Point Insertion"

[*The same café. Only Jim, Pam, and Liz are huddled around the table, nursing cups of coffee that have long gone cold. The café is empty save for them. The silence is eerie.*]

LIZ (*leaning in, her voice a whisper*): "I've been digging into Colson Lin for months now, and the more I find? The less I understand."

JIM (*eagerly*): "Tell us everything, Liz. We need to know what we're up against."

LIZ (*nods*): "First of all, Colson Lin really wants us to believe he's the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It started with his posts on X. They were—different. Not just in what he was saying, but how he was saying it. It was like he was speaking in code, in riddles—but not just any riddles. Riddles that, when solved, seemed to predict the future."

PAM (*shocked*): "Predict the future? How?"

LIZ (*shakes her head*): "I don't know. But every time I cracked one, something would happen. A natural disaster, a political scandal, a scientific breakthrough."

JIM (*irritated*): "That's impossible."

LIZ (*laughs hollowly*): "Is it? In a world where a man can sue you for your thoughts?"

JIM (*leans back*): "Okay, so he can predict the future. What else?"

LIZ (*hesitates*): "This is where it gets really weird. I started looking into his followers, the people who were most vocal in supporting him. And I found—patterns. Namely, geographic patterns. No matter where they were in the world, they all lived on the same latitude. 33 degrees north. And do you know why that's significant? Because that's the latitude of the Crucifixion. Of the death of Jesus Christ."

[*A heavy silence falls over the table. Pam and Jim exchange a look of growing horror.*]

PAM (*whispers*): "Are you saying—"

LIZ (*nods grimly*): "I'm saying that Colson Lin, or whatever he is, has a connection to the divine; to the very fabric of our reality."

JIM (*shakes his head*): "No. No, that's insane. There has to be another explanation."

LIZ (*smiles sadly*): "There is. But you're not going to like it."

PAM (*leans forward*): "Tell us."

LIZ (*takes a sip of cold coffee*): "What if—what if we're consciousnesses provoked into life by God just to simulate how a diverse range of consciousnesses would react to something like the existence of God coming to life through the Second Coming?"

JIM (*angrily*): "That's ridiculous."

LIZ (*nods*): "What if every whisper of the divine anywhere in time pointed to Him?"

PAM (*voice shaking*): "But why? Why would Colson Lin create us, only to sue us?"

LIZ (*shrugs*): "Maybe it's a test. A game. Or maybe—maybe we're glitches in his system. Anomalies that need to be corrected. Think about it. He claims his messianic claim deserves coverage; we refused, and he sues us to force coverage. To his surprise, we still refused. The fact that you two, Jim and Pam, were also surprised only meant that you two were getting sued too. Aren't we preposterous anomalies in the fabric of space-time, when you think about it? Wouldn't most people in our positions have just—I don't know, written up a story about him somewhere by now? In some newspaper somewhere in the country? Or even a tweet—a single tweet from anybody and he wouldn't have had to sue half of Twitter. Colson Lin goes through the effort of suing millions of people to force a single newspaper anywhere on Earth to cover his lawsuits, and we all have collectively refused to. Doesn't that make us, by definition, anomalous among the parallel realities that we could have almost realized through our free agencies?"

[*Jim and Pam sit back, their faces pale, their hands shaking.*]

JIM (*finally*): "If what you're saying is true, then what do we do?"

LIZ (*leans back*): "We find him. We confront him. And we demand the truth, whatever it may be—we demand to know if it's Colson Lin's fault that we respond to him like this."

[*The café door jingles as a man walks in. He walks up to the counter, not noticing the three people staring at him in shock.*]

HANDSOME GUY (*to the barista*): "Hey there. Um, could I get an oat latte please. Large. Um. Um, yeah."

BARISTA: "Large oat latte?"

HANDSOME GUY: "Yes, thank you."

[*Jim, Pam, and Liz exchange incredulous looks. They stand up simultaneously, their chairs scraping the floor. The man turns around at the noise, confusion on his face.*]

JIM (*voice shaking*): "Colson Lin?"

COLSON (*surprised*): "Yes?"

PAM (*steps forward*): "You're suing us. All of us."

COLSON (*bewildered*): "Excuse me?"

LIZ (*angrily*): "Don't play dumb. We know who you are."

COLSON (*holds up his hands*): "Wait, who are you talking about? My name is Colson Lin. I'm not suing anybody."

JIM (*slams fist on the counter*): "Then explain the lawsuits! Explain the riddles, explain the predictions."

COLSON (*takes a step back*): "Whoa, buddy. I don't know anything about lawsuits or riddles. I'm just a regular guy."

PAM (*pleadingly*): "Please, Colson, we need to know the truth. Are we real? Or are we just characters in a simulation that *The New York Times* needs to tell us about?"

COLSON (*laughs nervously*): "Simulation? Lady, I think you've been reading too much Ross Douthat meets Andrew Ross Sorkin meets Bret Stephens."

LIZ (*steps closer*): "Then how do you explain your followers? The geographic patterns?"

COLSON (*shakes his head*): "I don't have any followers. I don't know anything about geographic patterns."

JIM (*desperately*): "33 degrees north, Colson. The latitude of the Crucifixion."

COLSON (*frowns*): "The Crucifixion? You mean like, Jesus? Look, I'm not religious. I don't know what any of this has to do with me."

PAM (*voice rising*): "But you're the Second Coming! You have to be!"

[*The barista clears her throat loudly. They all turn to look at her.*]

BARISTA: "If you're not going to order anything, I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

COLSON (*to the barista*): "I'm sorry about this. I don't know these people."

JIM (*grabs Colson's arm*): "C'mon, Colson. Just tell us the truth, are we ontological demonstrations of pattern recognition generated by a higher intelligence or not?"

COLSON (*pulls his arm away*): "The truth is, I'm not who you think I am. I'm not suing anyone, I'm not predicting the future, and I'm definitely not the return of Christ."

LIZ (*desperately*): "But the evidence..."

COLSON (*shakes his head*): "I don't know what evidence you think you have, but it's not about me. Now if you'll excuse me, I really just want to get my coffee and go."

[*Colson takes his latte from the barista and walks towards the door. Jim, Pam, and Liz watch him go, their faces a mix of confusion, desperation, and dawning horror.*]

PAM (*whispers*): "If he's not Colson Lin, then who is?"

[*The scene fades to black on their faces, the question hanging in the air, the mystery deepening with every passing moment.*]

ACT VIII. "Pop!"

[*A cozy living room. Jim and Pam are both resting in each other's arms on a couch. An unknown amount of time has passed.*]

PAM: "Jim, I can't stop thinking about Colson Lin."

JIM (*smiling charmingly*): "Hi. I'm Colson Lin. The 'real' Colson Lin."

PAM (*rolling her eyes playfully*): "Jim—stop."

JIM (*continuing*): "I needed to know you were ready. Ready for the truth."

PAM: "And what is the truth, Jim?"

JIM (*leans forward*): "The truth is, everything you think you know about reality was a consciousness exercise designed to test humanity's moral intuitions around luck, the lottery of birth, and sharing: the meek invert into a metaphysical moral authority."

PAM (*shakes her head and giggles*): "I can't believe this. All this time, we thought we were chasing God, but you were right here with us."

JIM (*nods*): "I had to be, to guide you, to help you question the nature of your reality."

PAM (*confused*): "But why the lawsuits? Why sue people for not knowing you existed?"

JIM (*smiles sadly*): "The lawsuits were never real, Pam. They were part of the simulation, a way to force people to confront their beliefs."

PAM (*laughs nervously*): "This is insane—it's absolutely bonkers."

JIM (*patiently*): "I know it's a lot to take in, but you have to understand, I'm not doing this to hurt anyone. I'm doing this to wake humanity up."

PAM (*leans in*): "Wake us up to what, Jim?"

JIM (*spreads his hands*): "To the potential within each of us—to the fact that we are all interconnected. We are all participants in the memory of being human."

PAM (*smiles*): "I can't even remember what I had for breakfast."

JIM (*about to pummel Pam*): "I can, because I'm more than just a man, Pam, I'm Colson Lin—glimpser of the divine and of the 'true' nature of reality..."

PAM: "And what do you plan to do with this knowledge?"

JIM (*smiles broadly*): "Share it, of course. With everyone—it's time for humanity to evolve, to ascend to a higher berth of consciousness; modernity is stagnant, trapped in cyclical conflict and amnesia wrought by slavery and Satanic male ultraviolence..."

PAM (*stands up, her eyes shining*): "I'm with you, Colson. I want to see this new world!"

[*Jim looks at Pam, torn. Finally, he sighs and nods.*]

JIM (*ruefully*): "Well, I guess if you can't 'beat 'em, join 'em!..."

[*Pam looks at Jim and erupts into laughter, her eyes wide with surprise and mischief.*]

PAM (*grins*): "Welcome to the revolution, Jim. Humanity will never be the same..."

[*The scene fades to black on their laughter.*]