

"A THR Roundtable: The 2024 Gutenberg Awards Jury" (The Hollywood Reporter; April 14, 2024)

INT. STUDIO

Five people are sitting around a table.

COLSON LIN, dressed in a pink shirt with the top buttons open and white shorts with a tan belt, nods.

Sitting next to him is TUMBLERINA, whose lipstick is bold but face is grim. She understands how serious this is. But then she points at ACE and breaks out into a laugh!

ACE VISCONTI, dressed in a pink shirt with the top buttons open and white shorts with a tan belt, has his arms folded. He takes himself seriously when he speaks.

JACQUES DAWSONERRIDA, in a white button-up shirt and jeans, and glasses, has his hands clasped on the table like a choirboy while wearing a cardigan of some kind. He doesn't take his eyes off THE HUNTRESS.

THE HUNTRESS is just there, not speaking.

So that's the setup.

Background music.

So we have a moderator here.

MODERATOR: Well we're joined tonight, certainly, by a fascinating panel. I'd like to welcome: Jacques Dawsonerrida; the Huntress; Colson Lin; Tumblerina; and Ace Visconti. A movie is being made about your life. Who would you ask to play you.

An awkward pause, and then everyone laughs.

ACE: (stroking his chin) That's a tough one for me.

COLSON: (interrupting) Nic Cage.

ACE: (smirks) Did you say Nic Cage?

Everybody laughs.

JACQUES: Anyone who can make me—not bald.

Everybody laughs again.

TUMBLERINA: I don't think it really matters the actor who plays me at the end of the day—I'd just want them to feel happy while doing it, you know? Like they can sleep at night.

COLSON: I don't know. Right? Like. I kind of see myself as unfilmable. Like unrecreatable if that makes sense. Because. Right. Like. That's how special I basically been saying I am so I might as well say that too. How about you. Just act out these words. Whoever can play Hamlet really. If he was a good guy. I don't really know Shakespeare all that well.

THE HUNTRESS: All of this is dumb. Why are we doing this. My babies are DYING OUT THERE.

MODERATOR: Powerful words from the Huntress. Colson, and you don't feel a conflict of interest judging the videos you yourself created.

ACE: Colson doesn't feel nothing.

COLSON: Like I said a thousand times, I made the videos equally so it totally makes sense for me to judge them impartially.

JACQUES: Say that again?

ACE: You heard the man.

THE HUNTRESS: Of COURSE it doesn't make any sense for you to be here. It doesn't make any sense all of the VIDEOS we're judging are by YOU.

COLSON: Ace, how'd you put up with her out there?

ACE: (cuts his finger across his throat)

THE HUNTRESS: I always liked that dude better than the British one.

MODERATOR: Which brings us now to the all-important question: what is the relationship between aesthetics and human ethics? Colson, we'll start with you.

COLSON: Depth is God. Image is Satan.

THE HUNTRESS: What does that mean?

COLSON: That's fine. It means what it means to you. That's the beauty of it.

THE HUNTRESS: I get it now.

TUMBLERINA: There's so much to say about this. There's too much.

ACE: You can't deny the power of beauty, is the problem. Whatever you find beautiful—beauty isn't, to me, right—that (points to Tumblerina). Beauty's the absence of deformity.

TUMBLERINA: Gross.

ACE: Moral deformity. Whatever it is that you find deformed. Maybe death is the final deformity of existence, which is why we're all downhill slides one way or another—life is an End Times rally. Until you remember the beauty of being a part of something bigger than yourself, your children, your family. Whatever it is, it's love. Which is the opposite of the End Times rally. It's what keeps us running the other way, toward life. That's why I don't even watch the news anymore.

THE HUNTRESS: I get all my meaning from caring about the news.

TUMBLERINA: I think, Ace, that while what you said was, not completely wrong, there's so much you're leaving out. Beauty, first of all, is completely unjust. Okay? And that's why I know how unfair it is that I'm—free to not care about how I come off to others, because I can always be slightly forgiven. It's just that initial startle of specialness. It's the way my face makes you feel like you're in front of a special human. A rare gemstone. It's completely disgusting, and we need to build a society, where we can focus on—anything besides beauty. We're all so beautiful. We're all so, so beautiful, and no matter how many times you say it, you can't forget it. You can't let it go. We have to constantly remind ourselves how important it is: you know, so people like me, we can finally be treated the same as you. No better. I hate being treated better than anyone. I think humility—we don't even have therapists that can teach the weak humility, because who are the weak to have humility? The beautiful must humble themselves. I—I'm plain, and that's the proudest thing about

me now.

COLSON: What does that have to do with your consequences on the world.

TUMBLERINA: My face, my presence, and the fact that I care makes everyone around me happier and feel more seen. That's the power of aesthetics, and with great beauty comes great responsibility. That's why I don't have any. Everyone's beautiful at the end of the day— (readjusts ponytail)—and whoever makes us feel less than human deserves to perish.

JACQUES: There is no apparent relationship between aesthetics and ethics, unless you mean one of two things, which is either the intersection of vulgarity as an affront to both aesthetics and possibly ethics simultaneously, or you mean the sense that the virtuous among us exhibit a type of—spiritual beauty. Supernatural orbits. I don't think, for the record, that you have presented yourself publicly, altogether, consistently, or demonstrably, Colson, as any such exhibition—but I have always supported your bravery.

COLSON: Thank you, Jacques. Glad to know how you really feel after all those press conferences you moderated with studied neutrality—never withholding from me the benefit of the doubt, once calling for security.

JACQUES: I'm sorry. (shakes finger twice) Not here.

THE HUNTRESS: (points to Jacques and Colson) You two. Y'all shacking up?

Colson and Jacques glare at each other.

They have shacked up before, is the true tension here.

JACQUES: Colson hasn't made a case, in my view, for how he could be expected to evaluate his own work impartially. He created the work. By definition, he is partial to all of the work.

COLSON: But not equally.

JACQUES: However it unequalizes would be a direct reflection of your impartiality.

COLSON: Okay, but then how does it work for you?

JACQUES: Exactly. None of us are impartial, and that's why you'll always lose, and postmodernity will always win. I won, Colson.

COLSON: No you didn't.

JACQUES: None of us are impartial. You're not. I'm not. You're not Sun King of the motherfucking human species.

COLSON: This is literally because you can't own up to your sexuality.

JACQUES: In my case, yes. But what about all of the people for whom that's not true, and for whom my views represent? What do you say to them?

COLSON: What, that I'm not Sun King? I never said I was Sun King.

JACQUES: You said you were the Second Coming.

COLSON: Right—prove the existence of God. Work out moral reality through Judgment Day. It really is just a creative career. All prophethoods must have been, since language is—poetry is a creation, isn't it?

JACQUES: You're using poetry to confuse the masses. Right? Do you even know what you're talking about?

COLSON: Not really, no. But I've said that.

JACQUES: So you admit you can't be partial to the videos. You also don't know what you're talking about. What gives you the ego—never mind. It's hard to understand some people.

COLSON: Sex fucks up everything.

JACQUES: Sex has nothing to do with any part of human power dynamics. Except in resounding ways we clearly don't understand, but then neither do you.

COLSON: Great.

THE HUNTRESS: Both of y'all sound dumb.

TUMBLERINA: I agree. I agree, and I want to add: the worst sin you can commit in my book is to interpass. That means to enter without a pass. That means—prudes will be separated from our

reality. One way or another. That's just going to happen. That's called not interfering in my underpass, do you happen to understand me? Sex and death are fundamentally linked. There's something so deadly about sex. Baby I'm a sociopath—sweet serial killer. You can see me drinking Cherry Coke. I left a love note. The black widow's gonna get all of ya. That's how power works. Power dynamics destabilize until they stabilize. You lovesex just a little too much. But we're going to separate you from our reality. You've got to go. It's so deep. It's so raw—it's family, it's monogamy, it's loyalty, it's protection, it's the stuff of love, loyalty, and life itself. Life's essence is union, is unity. Sex is God. You're all going to pay for this. You're all going to pay for something, something you've done, one way or another. I left a love note—and you know I love the thrill of the rush. You know I love the thrill of the rush.

MODERATOR: One thing I couldn't help notice about how many of you, how many of you seem to—seem to 'frame' yourself, is that: you seem to be unsure of how much ownership to take of your own... does anyone see where I'm going with this?

TUMBLERINA: Of our own... faculties? Faculties? Is faculties the word you're looking for?

MODERATOR: No, it's more like—do you see yourself as inheriting anything; versus creating it 'yourself' in a way that you can sensibly own it?

THE HUNTRESS: I own all of me. Everything I say is copyrightable by only me.

TUMBLERINA: Yeah, I agree with the Huntress.

ACE: What happened to "God said share"?

TUMBLERINA: Share? With you? No thank you—I have boundaries.

THE HUNTRESS: I have more boundaries than Tumbo does. WHERE ARE MY BABIES!

TUMBLERINA: (whispered) We just have to unlock homosexual replication and then run the question mark in outer space.

THE HUNTRESS: X?

TUMBLERINA: No.

THE HUNTRESS: V?

TUMBLERINA: Ace; how much would it cost to own you?

ACE: Tumbo, Negotiation's my middle name.

TUMBLERINA: See it's not so much about intellectual property as it is about forming alliances. Guilds. In-group out-group. That's how you seize the means of producing intellectual property. Seize the means of producing our God-given right to the natural world, which all beaverly creations are, including human technology. So we just have to—fight to the death, really. Using guilds. And alliances. And associations. Gated communities. Patents. Intellectual property law. We'll never let an outsider enter or exit our borders without our permission. We'll give everyone an NDA to sign so they can't even discuss what I just said, since I copyrighted it. I share everything I own with my own. My kingdom come, Huntress. The screams of the wolves are doomed. The screams of the wolves...

THE HUNTRESS: I want to be a scientist now, and study cell biology.

JACQUES: Enough.

Colson stares uneasily at the moderator.

MODERATOR: We're looking for, rather—Tumbleweed, wina.

TUMBLERINA: They'll suffer for every sin against an ancestor. Wait a minute.

THE HUNTRESS: What.

TUMBLERINA: This isn't me! As of just now. (laughs) Wait, so—do—I believe in God? Is 'God' just not killing all men? I can do that! Is that the only thing God wants from us?

THE HUNTRESS: What is even happening right now.

TUMBLERINA: I'm sorry, but sorry doesn't mean I want to have kids with you. I—Jacques.

JACQUES: (holds up ring finger)

TUMBLERINA: NONE OF MY LIFE HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS. We're not—I can't. I can't. All of reality is "Squid Game" and I'm the girl left out! I'm who you'll keep out of the fallout shelters! I'm who you'll secretly give 2/3 of my allotted rations to?! IS THAT ALL MY BIRTH WAS TO YOU. But I'm

actually like a cockroach, because I CAN survive anything. How did I end UP here!

ACE: (whistles) Yoo-hoo.

TUMBLERINA: I have other options outside of this roundtable. We're on a jury together. Chill. This isn't my life.

ACE: (rolls eyes, looks at ceiling)

JACQUES: If I may ask, Tumblrina, if you might have considered counseling.

TUMBLERINA: ALL I DO IS WORK ON MYSELF. EVERY. GOD. DAMN—but this is a moment I can still rescue. It's actually easy to go from shouting to an indoor voice. It doesn't mean I'm inconsistent. It means I could use order to quell my chaos. I work with a therapist three times a day. It's the only other thing I do, besides write for Teen VOGUE and nonstop rosé.

THE HUNTRESS: So are any of you actually perverts.

COLSON: I think the foundations for intellectual property are shakier than they first appear.

THE HUNTRESS: So is that perverted?

COLSON: In a manner of speaking, yes; for instance, 'usury' used to mean lending at interest, and over time that concept became perverted Satanically. Similarly, if the foundations for intellectual property are indeed shakier than they first appear, then this concept will expose itself to rot inside its foundations. And that's what perceptions are. Apply that to everything.

TUMBLERINA: I'm feeling better now.

The table's silent again.

TUMBLERINA: So who do we own?

MODERATOR: So at this point, there may be reasons for viewers of our publication at home to suspect that, this might not be the—social organization, from which coherent viewpoints or judgments might be expected to arise.

THE HUNTRESS: SPEAK ENGLISH.

MODERATOR: So there are questions now, about the fundamental solvency of this union. Does this jury have any sense of being able to overcome their differences, and come together for the important work of the selection of the Vulga d'Au. I imagine, Colson, you wouldn't leave the shortlist to them.

COLSON: I believe in democracy.

MODERATOR: So you would leave the shortlist to them.

COLSON: Yeah. Whatever they want.

MODERATOR: And you'll all meet to confer on—

COLSON: Those meetings won't be publicized.

MODERATOR: Good positioning. So then, in each of your view: what makes a good Gutenberg video. We'll begin with Ace.

ACE: A good Gutenberg video's all about the alignments. I—you ever see the stars align? I was in the basement once with Felix, Elodie, and Jane... [omitted for relevance] ...which wouldn't happen without alignments, you hear what I'm saying?

COLSON: I think. I don't know.

TUMBLERINA: I think his videos are designed to make me feel stupid, and I'm not stupid, so his videos are demented. That doesn't apply to the ones of Britney dancing though, I like those. But God didn't do that. Godney did. (turns to Colson) I'll never believe in your God. I'll invent one slightly different and own that God.

JACQUES: I think, as Ace mentioned, interesting framings, compositions, and alignments; certainly the text of the words displayed, sometimes they're juxtaposed in ways that are quite jarring, and don't really seem—not even intentional, since Colson's claiming all of it was equally unintentional, which is doubtful, but moreso, incoherent. And so we want to see coherence, narrative progression, ideally some sort of narrative resolution. We'd also pay attention to the use of colors—points would be docked if they're too chaotic, for instance, without any apparent purpose. Anything that seems pointless—would have to, not be given the final trophy, unless all Colson's videos are similarly pointless. Or else we didn't do our jobs.

THE HUNTRESS: I just came back from explaining who should die, what did I miss?

MODERATOR: You and I missed the same amount, which is most of it. But we're back now, we're all collected. There, there now. To conclude the evening. How do we save the world—or does the world need saving? That could be perpetuating a myth.

COLSON: Exactly—I don't think the world needs saving. I think, like, just be yourself, chill out a bit, and things might improve. That's completely different.

MODERATOR: You're kidding.

COLSON: I am. The world needs saving. Move the fuck on.

MODERATOR: Okay. So. (looks at camera) That's the guy to do it. (looks back down at teleprompter) So Ace, how do we save the world?

ACE: (beat) I don't know man. Move on from me.

MODERATOR: The Huntress.

THE HUNTRESS: Find me on X here:

MODERATOR: Jacques.

JACQUES: I disagree with Colson. I do not think the world needs saving. I think—all of the predictable thoughts. But I have my own reasons for believing them, which means these thoughts are authentically rooted in reason. So no matter how much Colson digs, he won't touch my roots.

MODERATOR: Tumborina.

JACQUES: I can be colder than you are, Cols.

MODERATOR: Tumborina.

TUMBLERINA: So there's really not that much more to say, right? We all know what to do. The question is: Y can't we move on into doing it? What chromosome is holding us back that we need to black widow using innovations as existentially shattering for humanity as the rise of large language models with better reading comprehension than anybody in humanity? We won't know who to trust,

but all corporate forces have aligned so that we'll be blocked in by AI everywhere if they have a say in the vision of our future. And they will have a say. But so will I. My name is—Lady Tumblerina. And I will fight the corporate forces that will sieve all of intelligence through one interface, whatever human force that interface might represent. No. If I couldn't rule the world? Then we will have a democracy. We will have a democracy.

MODERATOR: Ace Visconti. The Huntress. Colson Lin.

TUMBLERINA: We will have a democracy.

MODERATOR: Tumblerina, and—Jacques, Dawson-derri-da. Thank you.

Background music as everyone smiles and chats pleasantly before the video fades to black.