

MESSIAH COMPLEX INC.

By Joe Dorsch

Note: This is filmed as a documentary.

FADE IN

SUPER: Part 1 - Follow Me

INT. LOCAL LIBRARY - DAY

TREY (34) is talking to a crowd of a few hundred people, all packed into the library. The children are seated on the carpet directly in front of him. Behind them are the adults - parents, news anchors, photographers - some sitting, some kneeling, some standing.

Everybody is giving Trey their undivided attention as he tells the kids a story.

TREY

Once, there was a dad who had two kids, a boy and a girl. He cared about them. A lot. And he said that he would always be there for them. But one day, he had to leave. The boy and girl didn't know why, he just had to go all of a sudden.

(the children are fixated on the story; the occasional camera light flashes in the back)  
Now, the kids thought he was coming back soon, because he said he'd always be there for them. And they waited all day, and their dad didn't come back. And then another day. And another. And then it was a week. And they didn't know where he was, they were really confused.

YOUNG BOY LISTENING

Were they scared?

TREY

Of course they were. They didn't know where their dad was. He had never disappeared before. And so, as kids do, they started to grow up. Now the boy, he was really upset. He was mad, he was sad, and he was unhappy, because his dad said that he'd always be there, but now he was gone. The boy didn't know what to do! And so as he got older, he started getting angry, and he didn't do well in school, and he didn't like being with the other kids. And some days he just sat by the door all day, hoping his dad would come back.

YOUNG GIRL LISTENING

But what about the SISTER??

Everybody chuckles, including Trey.

TREY

Well... the sister decided to make her dad proud. So she worked really hard in school, and she made friends, and she liked to read and write and paint and sing, and even just be in her room and cry sometimes. Because she really missed her dad, and she never forgot about him. But she did the best she could to have a normal life, and take care of herself and her brother. Because you know the brother, he just sat around a lot, like a grumpy old cat.

(the kids giggle)

So - question for you all. Who do you think the dad is going to be prouder of when he finally gets home? The brother or the sister?

SEVERAL OF THE KIDS

The sister!

Trey nods and smiles. The moment is ruined as the adults barrage him with questions and camera flashes.

BEGIN SEQUENCE

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

A surprising breakout in the field - known simply as Trey - the 34-year old from Phoenix would be the youngest president in history.

EXT. LOCAL PARK - DAY

Trey is working alongside the groundskeepers. All of them are sweating profusely in the Arizona summer heat, but none seem to mind - their conversation is lively and upbeat.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Trey is sponsored by Messiah Complex, a startup with the explicit goal of, quote, finding the country's next spiritual guru, a unifying cultural icon for our troubled times.

EXT. CITY BLOCK - DAY (cont.)

Random pedestrians are giving their opinions on Trey.

MAN 1

I feel like the climate has been suffocating, and he's the breath of fresh air - I'd love to meet the guy, honestly, seems to be the real deal.

WOMAN 2

He reminds me of my nephew - rest his soul - it's so nice to see the young people standing for what's right and decent these days!

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY (cont.)

Trey is sitting on a bench at a luxury mall with a disheveled homeless woman. The security guards are asking them to leave, but Trey tunes them out and listens to the woman tell her story

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

In just two months, Trey has gone from being an unknown to becoming what many are calling a viable contender, and he's already polling at 2%.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY (cont.)

Trey is playing a game with some local teenagers, and he's completely ignoring the media circus trying to get his attention from the sidelines.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Citing his lack of political experience and relative obscurity, his rivals are attacking him as unfit for the role, and are calling the candidacy a publicity stunt for Messiah Complex.

BACK TO PEDESTRIAN INTERVIEWS

WOMAN 2

He hasn't got a bat's chance in hell of winning, but sure, I'd vote for him.

MAN 2

I hate politics. Hate 'em. With a passion. This young man is the first and only one who I would feel GOOD voting for. He's something special.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY (cont.)

A crowd is gathered to see Trey. Among them is a Furry in a giant blue dog suit. Much to the horror of the onlookers, Trey high-fives him and does a chest-bump.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Trey's campaign hasn't released many specific policies, which could prove problematic closer to the debates - but for now, his initial viral success seems to be just what voters want.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY (cont.)

Trey is enjoying the latest superhero flick with a rowdy group of special-needs adults. The theater manager is asking them to leave. Trey is ignoring him and having fun throwing popcorn with the others.

WOMAN 3 (V.O.)

To be honest, I couldn't care less if the boy even runs at all. I'd hate to see him corrupted by the swamp.

BACK TO PEDESTRIAN INTERVIEWS

WOMAN 3 (cont.)

I feel bad saying this, I almost DON'T want to vote for him, I just want to invite him over for dinner! That's what this country really needs right now - God bless him!

END SEQUENCE

INT. MESSIAH COMPLEX OFFICE - DAY

STEF BAKER (41) is being interviewed by ERIN FIELDS (25 - she's rarely seen, since she's always behind the camera).

STEF

So I had the idea because of my ex, ironically, but we would always fight about which candidate was best, and which policies mattered most, and what the country needed, and how even within one party we can't agree on anything. And as a joke, he said something to the effect of, "I bet Jesus couldn't last two days before being ripped apart as something-phobic and insensitive". And after we broke up, I got to thinking, would someone like Jesus be a good candidate?

Erin is also interviewing BRAD HIGHTOWER (57) - the two interviews were filmed in different rooms at the office, and are intercut throughout this scene. Also include occasional footage of Erin filming their office.

BRAD

My name's Brad Hightower. I've been in the business world, in some capacity, for over 30 years now. Analyst, manager, head-hunter, event planning, public speaking, consulting, PR, HR - you name it, I've probably done it. And I mean, I've been to conferences where 'holistic life coaches' get paid a thousand dollars a minute to tell CEOs to take their shoes off and buy quinoa. And for all that... I've never worked anywhere quite like here.

BACK TO STEF

STEF

So I quit my job as a teacher - high school math - and started the company, kind of as a joke, but also I just wanted to try something new. And I was surprised, there are hardly any costs - we have the rent for the office, three salaries, electricity... That's about it. And the speaking fees and guest appearances add up quicker than we thought, so, we already broke even.

BACK TO BRAD

BRAD

I had just moved to Phoenix, and I saw that the company was hiring an administrative assistant. And who wouldn't want to at least try out a place called MESSIAH COMPLEX? I was intrigued, to say the least. So I applied, and it turns out, not many people with my level of experience were interested in the position, so I got it.

BACK TO STEF

STEF

Once I hired Brad as my assistant, we put out a want ad for the next Messiah. Which I'm sure people thought was a joke at first.

BACK TO BRAD

BRAD

Almost immediately, we started doing interviews. And I've done hundreds of interviews before, and I've RUN hundreds of interviews myself, and, again, never seen anything quite like this.

BACK TO STEF

STEF

We didn't even look at their resumes. The application was literally: name, age - because they had to be at least 35 in time for the election - and that was it. The job description was something like, the wording was 'modern day cultural and spiritual icon/Christ figure'.

BACK TO BRAD

BRAD

(chuckles)

That was quite the process...

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY (cont.)

Several different candidates are shown being interviewed. These include:

- A man shrouded in gold balloons, all of which have Jesus's face printed on them
- A woman dressed as Elvis, who's chasing a macaw around the room

-- Somebody in a full-body rainbow morphsuit that reads 'Buddha Loves U'  
-- The Dude from The Big Lebowski, drinking a bottle of milk with his feet propped up  
-- A shirtless college student singing the chorus to Blur's "Chemical world" and playing the ukulele  
-- Rashida Jones in a nice business suit

BACK TO BRAD, WHO SIMPLY NODS WITH EYES WIDE

BACK TO STEF

STEF

We spent almost a month, working twelve hour days, six days a week, just interviewing potential candidates.

BACK TO BRAD

BRAD

There were a few basic questions we would start with, but really it was a conversation. And not in the way that every 21st century business SAYS that their interviews are just a 'conversation', I mean, it was VERY casual.

BACK TO STEF

STEF

We truly were getting to know the candidates as people, because that's the job - somebody who connects with people. Which, as we learned - well, I'm sure Brad knew already - as I REALLY learned, having never interviewed people before, connecting with people is not a given.

BACK TO THE INTERVIEW ROOM

Another series of candidates. Brad and Stef are on the other side of the camera (offscreen for the most part).

1) Male STONER with a pizza delivery outfit.

STONER

I would say nothing, so that they all absorb their inner emptiness.

2) Female MAD SCIENTIST with frizzy hair, a labcoat, goggles, and a poodle.

MAD SCIENTIST

I would tell them that only SCIENCE can give people ANY satisfaction, and it's already too LATE, because we have IGNORED science for generations, because people never LEARN!

3) Male PRIEST with goth makeup, piercings, and a cigar.

PRIEST

Take your clothes off! You have all been repressed for too long, so enjoy, indulge, ENLIGHTEN yourselves, and just FUCK!

4) Male BIKER with a mohawk and dog collar.

BIKER

I would succinctly, but effectively, outline the central tenets of Marxism, Buddhism, and I'm thinking Kafka, and urge them to develop a synthesis of the three.

5) Female MIME, who pantomimes being crushed by a giant weight. She collapses to the ground and doesn't get up. After a few seconds. Brad (previously offscreen) walks over to make sure she's okay.

6) RASHIDA JONES as herself.

RASHIDA JONES

Wait, is this not an audition?

BACK TO BRAD

BRAD

Most of the candidates, it was an immediate 'No'. No, no, no... then somebody who seemed normal would walk in, and we'd think, 'Maybe?'. And then they would open their mouth, and it was back to 'No, No, No, Definitely No, No, No...'

BACK TO STEF

STEF

I think all the qualified people either had jobs or thought it was a joke. And then we met Trey. And apart from LOOKING normal - because we'd had a handful of candidates who were, for lack of a better word, presentable - he was just, he was very approachable. I don't even... he just, it was like we had known him for years... and he was so, amicable, and sensitive, and calm - you've seen his videos, he just has that presence.

TREY IS BEING INTERVIEWED. UNLIKE THE OTHER CANDIDATES, HIS APPEARANCE IS AVERAGE AND INOFFENSIVE. BRAD AND STEF ARE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM, OFFSCREEN

STEF

If you had a chance to speak to everybody on the planet for five minutes, what would you say?

TREY

Hmm... Would my speech would be translated?

STEF

Yes, assume everybody can understand you.

BRAD

First one to bring that up...

TREY

(chuckles)

I would say... I'm sorry things are so hard right now, but you're not alone, and everything's going to be just fine.

STEF

That's it?

(Trey nods)

You wouldn't use the rest of your time, even though you know people would be listening?

TREY

Nope. That's really all that a lot of people need to hear.

BRAD

What if they think it's trite, or insensitive, or too short? Or they tell you that things AREN'T going to get better?

TREY

I'm sure a lot of them would. It's possible that NONE of them like it, or maybe there's only one person who takes it to heart. Maybe somebody who lost their job, or just had a kid, or just left an abusive relationship, or just got INTO an abusive relationship. Maybe that's what that one person needs to hear to make it to the end of the day, to survive, to feel some comfort... But if I can save that person, then it's worth it.

BACK TO STEF

STEF

And that was it. We had him. The second he left, Brad and I just looked at each other, and then we wrote a note on the door that said 'no more interviews at this time', and we were done.

BACK TO BRAD

BRAD

At that point, we actually bothered to do a background check. The next day, we called him back in to get his references and history. No issues with his previous employers, no criminal record, no unpaid parking tickets, social media gaffes... I mean he worked at an animal shelter, he was perfect. So we hired him. I guess the only 'catch' was that it took us a month of sorting through everyone else before we found him!

BACK TO STEF

ERIN

Where is he right now?

STEF

He's at a rally. That's his main event for today. Which reminds me, I need to check on some appointments... Are you good to talk to Brad? I promise tomorrow will be more interesting with him being here.

ERIN

Yeah, that would be great.

BACK TO BRAD

BRAD

I'm actually leaving soon... there's a light rail stop by the rally. Do you want to join me? I won't be staying, but it'll be a good chance for you to see Trey in action.

ERIN

Sure, let me just pack all this up.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PHOENIX - DAY

The sun is slowly setting. Erin is walking away from the light rail station.

ERIN

First thing tomorrow?

BRAD

We'll be there!

Brad waves goodbye. Erin turns her focus to a crowd ahead. Several hundred people are clustered around Trey, who's squatting on a park bench and answering questions.

REPORTER

What's your position on marriage equality and the LGBTQ community?

TREY

What's your position on farming?

REPORTER

Farming? I don't, I don't follow, I don't have a position per se, what's the relevance?

TREY

Humor me. You eat, so why don't you have a strong opinion on the institution of farming?

REPORTER

I mean, I have thoughts, but I don't have that strong of - I guess that living in the city means I don't have to worry about it. I mean, I can if I WANT to, but I don't really care HOW people farm, as long as it's sustainable, and as long as we have food. But being a farmer just seems so outdated and 20th century, and I have other opportunities and interests to...

(suddenly it clicks)  
Okay. Hmm... well, I haven't - that's certainly a new way to think about sex, interesting to see what readers will think... Are you good if I run with the analogy?

TREY

I am, I look forward to the article.

REPORTER

Thanks. Farming, hmm...

The REPORTER mumbles to himself as he leaves, both puzzled and apparently enlightened. Trey smiles, then addresses the next question - this one is from an ANTI-VAXXER.

ANTI-VAXXER

On behalf of mothers everywhere, I want to know whether you oppose vaccinating children-

(the crowd starts harassing her)

Because as a - QUIET! - do you support parents' rights to not vaccinate - I'M TALKING HERE!!

TREY

Let her be!

(after a few seconds, the crowd quiets down)

Do you have children?

ANTI-VAXXER

I have a daughter.

TREY

What's her name?

ANTI-VAXXER

Rose

TREY

And how old is Rose?

ANTI-VAXXER

She's seven. Eight in September.

TREY

That's awesome. And do you love her?

ANTI-VAXXER

Are you kidding? Why do you think I'm out here talking about this? Of course I love her, what kind of mother doesn't!

TREY

I know you do. And what does Rose think about being vaccinated.

ANTI-VAXXER

Well, I - I'm sure she agrees with me, since I'm her mother.

TREY

But you haven't asked her?

ANTI-VAXXER

I- well,...

She pauses, not sure how to respond. The crowd starts shouting at her again, but this time, she doesn't yell back at them. Erin tries to get a better look as Trey leans in close to the woman.

TREY

Love is not coercive. Your daughter will be fine.

The woman is stunned, and slowly walks away - oblivious to the booing and taunting of the crowd. Trey looks at her sympathetically before going to the next question.

SOCIAL WORKER

How do you find true happiness?

TREY

What have you tried so far?

SOCIAL WORKER

Everything that people say you need - things that REALLY make you happy, not just what culture says you need. So like, I'm a social worker, so I'm helping people every day. I decided to give up chasing the American Dream years ago - I'm not married, I don't have kids, I don't plan on having a house, couldn't care less about having a lot of money or cars or STUFF... I volunteer outside of work, I give to charity, I don't live on much - enough to survive, but I donate a lot - and I try to be a decent person and get along with everyone.

TREY

It sounds like you have it figured out. How is that not fulfilling?

SOCIAL WORKER

It is, kind of, but I still feel like I'm missing something, you know? Like it's just not quite - it's definitely better than the alternative of living for myself, but it still seems...

TREY

Not enough?

(the man nods)

Well if it's not worth it, then why do it?

SOCIAL WORKER

What do you mean?

TREY

I mean, if you're not happy with your life, why aren't you changing anything?

SOCIAL WORKER

Because this is what every religion and great thinker and philanthropist has said that you need to do - even if it doesn't seem like it's worth it in the short run.

TREY

But there must be something else driving it. Why do you, you specifically - why do you wake up in the morning and choose to keep living this way?

SOCIAL WORKER

I suppose... I guess, I want to change the world, and make an impact, and I want people to remember me - in a good way - and leave the planet better than how I found it.

TREY

That makes sense. But the truth is that you can't change the world, or make a lasting impact - once you accept that, then you'll be happy.

SOCIAL WORKER

Are you serious?

(Trey nods)

You're joking right?

(Trey shakes his head no)

Geeze man... I can change the world if I want, anyone can - can you imagine how shitty things would be if everybody thought like that? My god, I can't believe people ask you for advice...

TREY

You're right, what do I know?

Trey smiles sincerely at the man, then goes to the next question. Much like the other two, the man doesn't know quite how to respond at first. After a few seconds, he scoffs at Trey and leaves.

SUPER: Part 2 - The Man Caught in Hate

INT. MESSIAH COMPLEX OFFICE - DAY

Trey, Stef and Brad are sitting around the conference table discussing the plans for the day. Erin is recording.

STEF

First, nice job yesterday. I've seen a lot of good buzz - for the most part. There was one article that stood out...

(she scrolls through her phone)

"A new level of offensive: sex is just as pointless as farming. Trey's 'enlightened' non-answer shows his blatant disregard for the LGBTQ community, as well as the millions of farmers who make up the backbone of..." you get the idea. Not to coach you, but maybe warn us before you throw a curveball like that, okay?

TREY

In my defense, it legitimately seemed like he was on board with the idea, in a good way.

BRAD

They usually do. Don't sweat it, you had a lot of good moments.

STEF

Agreed. So, today. First, you have a speech at ASU. Topic is: does social media make us angrier? Then a two-hour lunch with some of the mayors, and after that a press conference with some of the other lower-tier candidates. A few of the major news outlets will be there.

TREY

What about the Kentucky shooting?

STEF

I'm not, I wasn't aware there was one...

TREY

It was a few weeks ago. An unarmed kid, Caleb Newton, they're announcing tonight whether the officer is going to be charged.

STEF

Oh. Right. I suppose we could go to Kentucky if you really wanted to.

(to Brad)

Can you check on flights for tomorrow?

BRAD

On it.

TREY

No, I want to be there tonight.

STEF

You have other commitments - not to say this isn't important, it is, and we do want you to be- what if we left later today, after the press conference was over?

TREY

(contemplates for a few seconds)

Social media doesn't make us angrier, it just seems like it does. Tell the mayors to spend those two hours visiting the child crisis center in Mesa. My guess is they've never been. And as for the press, I had enough yesterday.

Stef and Trey lock eyes stubbornly for a minute.

STEF

Alright. Kentucky it is.

INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - DAY

Brad is asleep in the seat next to Erin. Trey is a few rows ahead of them, kneeling in the aisle, and casually talking to a woman named STACY with her baby son, Bryce.

TREY (quietly)

You know the question about theodicy, I assume?

STACY (quietly)

Of course. God is all powerful. HE - how convenient - is all loving. And there's suffering. And since those three can't coexist, it doesn't make sense to believe in God.

TREY

I agree. And the religious response is terrible, because they just minimize the pain. They see that Bryce has sickle cell anemia and say, 'well God has a plan for that, so stop complaining - you just need to learn something.'

STACY

It's horrible. That's why we left the church.

TREY

I don't blame you. I'm curious, have you heard the third choice, the one that'll REALLY get you sent to hell?

STACY

(chuckles)

Enlighten me.

TREY

So, think of the great spiritual leaders in history, or even just moral teachers, and assume that they represent the ideal 'God', like they're the best example we have of the divine.

STACY

Okay.

TREY

See, they're all loving, and they never try to ignore the pain and suffering. But they're also powerless. They're usually like Jesus - lambs to the slaughter. It's like that picture of Tiananmen Square, with the guy in front of the tanks. Technically the tanks were more powerful, the man in front of them was helpless. Except HE is the one we look up to.

STACY

So you're saying that God is helpless?

TREY

Yeah. If he, or she, or it, is real, then it probably cares about us, but can't do anything to help us. They're not oblivious to the pain - but they also can't fix it.

STACY

I guess that's a nice thought. But you- but you would be living as an atheist anyways, because there'd be no point to believing in a God who couldn't DO anything.

TREY

Exactly. You'd be an atheist who doesn't hate the idea of God.

STACY

Hmm... are you allowed to say that, being the spiritual leader of the country and all?

TREY

I hope I'm not THE spiritual leader, otherwise we're in trouble...

STACY

I was gonna say...

(they both chuckle)

Well thank you, you're even nicer in person. I'll let you get back to the rest of the plane, I don't want to steal you for the whole flight.

TREY

It is a long flight...

STACY

That it is. Which is why I'll be taking a nap. Have fun Osteening it up.

TREY

That's pretty low.

(they chuckle again)

Good to meet you Bryce.

Bryce is nearly asleep; Stacy waves his hand at Trey, then reclines her seat to rest. Trey walks back to his seat right in front of Erin. Almost immediately, a man from the front of the plane, PASTOR WHITMORE, walks over to Trey.

PASTOR WHITMORE

Name's Whitmore, I'm a preacher, you have a few minutes? Trey, right?

TREY

Yeah, have a seat.

PASTOR WHITMORE

I'm fine. I actually have a joke for you.

TREY

Nice! Let's hear it.

PASTOR WHITMORE

What's the world's longest sentence?

TREY

I dunno, what?

PASTOR WHITMORE

Hell. Which is where everyone's going if they don't repent. The truth is that God hates you, and me, and them. He hates all of us, and it's only by his GRACE that we are not burning in hell for eternity. But most of you will. And when I see a man like you - a wolf in sheep's clothing, trying to deceive people, filling their heads with lies and false hope - it just boils my blood to hear that sort of blasphemy.

TREY

Oh? What do you mean?

PASTOR WHITMORE

I mean, it's DECEIT! It's UNGODLY. It goes against the word of the Lord as revealed in the B-I-B-L-E, a book which our nation has desecrated and ignored and tossed by the wayside. We used to be built on Christian principles son, this whole country, God used to favor us. But as it says in Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Lord is consuming us with fire. Our sin is open and public and vile. The homosexuals, the negroes, the A-rabs, the wetbacks, fornicators, Hollywood - those who want to 'liberate' us are DAMNING us.

TREY

Wow. That's pretty bad.

PASTOR WHITMORE

Don't patronize me boy. You're their golden calf, their mouthpiece. You cozy up to the minorities and the queers and you tell them God loves them like they are. God hates them. They are disgusting. They are worthless in his sight.

The passenger in front of Trey, NICK, has had enough.

NICK

Oh my God, dude, shut the fuck up.

PASTOR WHITMORE

See this? This is what I mean - country is being overrun with apostates. You do NOT take the Lord's name in vain young man!

NICK

But I can say 'fuck'? Oh, okay, FUCK. YOU.

(to Trey)

I can deck him if you want.

PASTOR WHITMORE

And the Lord saw man, and he was FURIOUS, because they MOCKED him, and they SPAT upon him, and they DEFILED THEMSELVES with UNHOLINESS!

Bryce starts crying, other passengers are complaining, but Trey doesn't say anything - he just listens to it all.

NICK

Seriously, man, shut the FUCK UP!

PASTOR WHITMORE

As it was with SODOM and GOMORRAH, so too will the Lord purify his chosen people! And they will be cleansed and made WHITE, pure as SNOW, and all those SINNERS shall ROT in the fire of the worm that CANNOT be QUENCHED!

NICK

That's it!

(he stands up to confront the pastor)

You crossed the FUCKING line. Now leave us all the fuck alone, or I will kick your racist ass, and NOBODY here will help you.

The passengers give Nick their support and start shouting at the pastor, who shouts back. Finally, Trey stands up and approaches Nick.

TREY

(to Nick)

Can I talk to you privately?

(Nick is confused)

Please. Trust me.

Trey and Nick go to the front of the plane. Pastor Whitmore and the other passengers are still arguing. Erin focuses in on Trey and Nick, but can't make out what they're saying. After a minute, Trey walks back down the aisle. Nick asks the flight attendant for the intercom microphone.

NICK

Excuse me, hi, just a quick PSA...

Everyone settles down, including Pastor Whitmore, who returns to his seat. Tensions are still high though.

NICK

So, well, I can NOT believe I'm saying this... I would like to apologize for my outburst. I know there's a lot of-

(sighs)

I know there's a lot of hate in this country, seems worse than ever, and I certainly haven't helped, and - well, to paraphrase, let him who is without hate cast the first stone.

(the passengers grumble)

I know, I know. Believe me. But if we hate people who hate us, we're stooping to their level. Now I don't agree with ANYTHING that man has to say. I'm sure none of you do either. But he is FREE to say it. Just like WE are free to put on our headphones and ignore him. Sound good?

PASTOR WHITMORE

The Lord can't be deceived son. Your lies might fool them, but you can't fool God.

NICK

(ignoring him)

Also, in case you guys didn't notice, Trey is on the plane, and you should talk to him, because he's smarter than he looks.

(the passengers laugh)

And I'm done.

Nick thanks the stewardess and walks back to his seat. He smiles grudgingly at Trey, Trey nods and smiles back. Nick just rolls his eyes. As another passenger walks over to Trey, chanting fades in.

CROWD

Black lives matter! Black lives matter!

EXT. LOUISVILLE COURTHOUSE - NIGHT

Trey is making his way through the crowd of protestors. Surrounding them are police officers in riot gear - they aren't attacking, just keeping a close watch.

CROWD

Black lives matter! Black lives matter!

Trey keeps walking through the crowd. Suddenly they all go quiet for a few seconds. And then -

MAN IN CROWD

Not guilty! They found him not guilty!

There's a collective gasp. People start shouting and crying in despair. Trey finally reaches the center, where Caleb's mother MAVIS NEWTON is weeping softly.

MAVIS

He was only twelve, he never hurt nobody, he didn't do nothing wrong. He didn't do NOTHING wrong, he was TWELVE. And they're not gonna punish him, nothing, letting him go!

TREY

Ms. Newton? I'm so, so sorry for what happened.

MAVIS

Who the hell are you?

TREY

I, I can't imagine what this... I'm sorry.

Trey goes to hug her, but she stops him.

MAVIS

Wait... I recognize you, why are you here?

TREY

I wanted to help. I thought that-

MAVIS

You wanted to help? Why didn't you stop this? Why did you let this happen?

TREY

I'm so sorry for everything.

MAVIS

Why, because you got a photo op? I've seen you with the police, and the mayors, and the media, and you never talk about us. Why are you here tonight, to torment me? To remind me that you didn't do ANYTHING to help? Did you think that just by BEING here, that would make it ALL go away somehow? I know what you stand for, you're a pacifist. You just want everyone to get along.

(Trey is speechless. Mavis slaps him across the cheek)

You have the luxury to be peaceful. You have the privilege to avoid a life of violence. You get to sit in front of your cameras and tell people to be kind, and forgive, and forget, and move on, because you are not HERE every DAY, every NIGHT, fighting for your LIFE against a system that does not give a DAMN whether you're alive. And then you have the GALL, and the AUDACITY, to try and make me feel better, and tell me everything will be okay. Where were you earlier today? When they were spraying us with tear gas. Where were you last week, when they threw us in jail for disturbing the peace? Where were you THREE MONTHS AGO when my Caleb begged for mercy, and that cop shot him in cold blood? Tell me! Why didn't you stop it?? You could have done something, talked to somebody, passed a law, used your influence to make a change. You've got all those connections, you know EVERYBODY, right?

(Trey is sobbing)

You don't really care, you never have, and you never will. You are just like all the others - you worthless, pandering, self-absorbed fraud.

Trey bites his lip, tears streaming down his face, and runs away to the outskirts of the crowd. They start chanting even louder. Trey collapses on the ground, throws up, and beats against the asphalt in agony.

CROWD

Black lives matter! Black lives matter!

BLACK LIVES MATTER!

BLACK LIVES MATTER!

BLACK LIVES MATTER!

SUPER: Part 3 - With Great Authority

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Trey is sitting on the grass with several dozen others - an eclectic mix of homeless people and protestors from the previous scene, who have all gathered to hear Trey speak. Even Mavis is there, skeptically pacing along the edge of the group with her arms crossed.

Brad is off to the side, reclining under a tree. Trey's attention is on a HOMELESS MAN.

HOMELESS MAN

What about that shit where he was all, 'you gotta cut your eyes and your hands off or you're goin' straight to hell'?

TREY

He said, and did, a lot of extreme things. My theory: he just wanted to be remembered. I mean, imagine if he had just said, "guys, try to keep it in your pants". Nobody would've cared, or remembered, or written it down, right?

HOMELESS MAN

So he wasn't serious?

TREY

I hope not! I think he was just trying to get your attention. And apparently it worked, because we're still talking about it.

HOMELESS MAN

Shit...

TREY

(pointing to a woman with her hand raised)  
Yeah, go for it.

PROTESTOR 1

What about prayer? Isn't it pointless if God already knows everything?

TREY

I think it's helpful for people to be able to vent, and it's not a bad way to start. But it should be the FIRST thing you do, not the ONLY thing. Like, people pray and then think 'I don't have to do anything else, God has it covered'. When in reality, YOU should be the one doing something, and you shouldn't wait around for God.

PROTESTOR 1

Amen!

PROTESTOR 2

Preach!

MAVIS

What about love your enemies?

TREY

What about it?

MAVIS

Should you?

TREY

Nope. I think Jesus got that one wrong. Because the real enemies aren't PEOPLE. They're systems, and inequalities, and scarcity, and racism, disease, bad weather, biology... but WE are not each other's enemies. A better way to live would be: 'Love EVERY human, but hate the things that make the world broken.'

Mavis nods - still hesitant to accept him, but willing to keep listening. Trey smiles and goes to the next question.

Erin focuses on Brad while Trey continues his Q and A session in the background.

ERIN

What has been the best moment of the campaign so far? Wait, before we get to that... would you even call it a campaign?

BRAD

Technically I have to.

(chuckles)

No, it's definitely a campaign, but it's what I would consider a 21st century approach to politics that the DNC would never risk trying on their own. Insofar as he's not a politician, he's not already famous, he has no experience - he's not exactly donor material, yet. But he knows how to engage people, and that'll be what matters.

ERIN

For the debates, you mean?

BRAD

Exactly. Which, if this here is any indicator, he'll be phenomenal.

ERIN

He certainly stands out... So what would be one of your favorite moments? Not necessarily a viral moment, just one that you personally remember?

BRAD

Hmm... I would say, if I had to choose, the whole 'scandal' with Zachary Lawrence. Did you hear about that?

ERIN

I know it caused some outrage, but I'm only loosely familiar with it...

BRAD

Well, we had a meeting with Zachary Lawrence. Young guy, CEO of Gen-Z Pharmaceuticals, he actually tweeted to Trey that he wanted to meet up and chat. So Trey went over to his place for dinner, and Zachary told him, "I can't do this anymore. We're robbing people, and it's immoral, and I'm gonna change. People before profits."

ERIN

Oh, right right - and then he backtracked.

BRAD

Yep. We thought we had a victory, he even issued a press release publicly apologizing on behalf of the company, and said that things would change. And then the next day, boom - he announces that drug prices are going up, some by thousands of dollars. And he retracted literally everything he had said. Naturally everyone ripped him apart, called him a liar, a coward, it was a bloodbath.

ERIN

But Trey was fine, right?

BRAD

Oh yeah. It wasn't his fault. It was the big pharma company. No, we were in the clear. Well.. some people were upset that Trey didn't explicitly condemn Zachary, but by and large, Trey was not the problem.

(he takes a sip from his waterbottle)

Now that's where the story ends for most of you. What you don't know is, that evening, Zachary reached out to Trey again. He wanted to meet up for dinner a second time.

ERIN

But he didn't apologize, did he?

BRAD

He did actually. We go over to his house again. And Zachary just loses it. And he starts sobbing, and he says he feels terrible, and he begs Trey for forgiveness. And Trey is calm, and he forgives him, and he says it's not his fault.

ERIN

Well now I see why people were upset. Why didn't Trey say anything, I mean, doesn't he care?

BRAD

That's what I thought at first too. But Trey's philosophy is that people aren't the problem, and that includes greedy CEOs. Zachary just happens to be the face of the company, but he doesn't call the shots. And even if he wanted to change company policy, the board would replace him with somebody else. So... off the record, Trey has been meeting with him in secret. He gives him advice about managing his income so he can donate more to charity. And also, what are ways that he can make gradual, long-term improvements to the company without losing his job.

ERIN

That's crazy... I guess that makes sense why you wouldn't publicize it.

BRAD

Right, because we don't want him to get fired. Trey knows how to play the long game. And if he were to yell at Zachary like everyone else, then he would never have learned that Zachary was trapped, and nothing would've changed. See, it's easy to find the good in good people. It's a lot harder to find the good in bad people. But to do what Trey does, and not label anybody as 'bad' in the first place - that's a whole other level.

ERIN

But will that attitude help him in the debates?

BRAD

I certainly respect it, but it's a lot for some people to swallow. Hopefully his reputation will precede him, or maybe the idea will catch on as people - hold that thought.

Stef has just arrived. Brad stands up to greet her.

BRAD

Good flight?

STEF

Eh. How long has he been here?

BRAD

Most of the morning.

STEF

Awesome. Well, I just found out that there's an ecumenical fair a few miles south at the University of Louisville. So you can take him to that while I grab lunch -

(to Erin)

you're welcome to tag along -

(to Brad)

and we will catch up with you guys afterwards.

BRAD

Sounds good, I'll get the car.

STEF

You don't have to leave right this second, but I told them you'd be there in the next few hours.

They say goodbye, then Erin and Stef leave while Trey and Brad stay at the park a bit longer.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Erin is interviewing Stef while they eat lunch.

ERIN

So what's been one of the harder parts of the campaign?

STEF

Good thing the boys aren't here... when I had this idea, I knew that I didn't want to nitpick, or micromanage, or make everything sound scripted. Whoever we found, they would be their own person, which meant they could say what's on their mind - which is a double-edged sword, I've discovered.

ERIN

Oh?

STEF

I've had to bite my tongue, literally sometimes - like that article from yesterday, comparing sex to farming - who says things like that?

ERIN

But I'd think, from what I've seen of him, he wants to make everyone happy. It doesn't seem like he would intentionally offend anyone.

STEF

He doesn't. That's the problem. I wish he would. Because if he outright offended people, or said something objectively tasteless, then at least I would have a legitimate reason to have a talk and correct him. What he says isn't offensive, it's just BIZARRE. Like, the whole Trump question. Everybody in the party, to some extent, gladly admits that he's an awful president. You know what Trey's response is?

ERIN

Wait, does he support him??

STEF

I'll let you decide. His response was: "I support any president that the people of this country elect." He didn't say anything else.

ERIN

Hmm... I guess you could argue that Trump lost the majority vote, so, technically, the people of this country didn't elect him...?

STEF

Maybe that's what he meant? We spun it that way. But that's my problem: I'm constantly trying to clean up these messes he makes, again, not by saying anything OVERTLY bad, but by being so cryptic and ambiguous.

ERIN

That does sound frustrating.

STEF

I tell you... They ask about climate change, and his response is to rant for twenty minutes about how the planet is doomed, and our grandkids won't live long enough to raise their own kids. Or they ask about the latest mass shooting, and he literally - I kid you not - he made eye contact with every single reporter in the room, and then said: "you all know better than anyone that nothing changes if nothing changes."

ERIN

What the hell...?

STEF

Right? What do you do with that??

ERIN

That's.... yikes.

STEF

Oh, and the MeToo movement - which has to be the easiest thing for him to get right - he said: "as a man, I don't feel that I can give an opinion on the topic." Which I salvaged, thankfully, by saying that, "Trey recognizes that women's voices need to be heard, so he is respectfully staying out of the conversation for now, but he fully supports the movement, blah blah blah..."

ERIN

But still...

STEF

Yep. Obviously, he isn't too keen on taking my input, because we hired him under the pretense of: "you can say what's on your mind". And Brad loves it - so I haven't pushed as hard, yet, because I know it's still early in the process. When he starts debating though... And not to say I regret choosing him. I mean, he's electric, and people love him, I think, so I'm glad we're endorsing him. But I don't know how to rein him in without sacrificing that spontaneity and uniqueness that he brings. Right now it's just a baby elephant, but soon it'll grow up, and then it'll take up the whole room, so...

(her phone rings - it's Brad)

What now... sorry.

(she walks away from the table)

Did you guys make it okay?

(she mouths 'just a minute' to Erin)

Uh-huh. Shit... on our way.

She hangs up, walks over to the table impatiently, leaves money for the waiter, and storms out with Erin.

EXT. ECUMENICAL FAIR - DAY

Over fifty religious groups from all faiths are represented at the fair. Many of their tables and booths have been knocked over, flyers are scattered everywhere, and the event is in total disarray as they try to clean up.

Trey is shouting from inside a police car - the door is open, but he's handcuffed in place. Brad is talking to the POLICE OFFICER. Erin and Stef have just arrived.

STEF

What the actual heck...

POLICE OFFICER

Ma'am, I'd keep your distance if-

BRAD

She's with the campaign.

STEF

(to Trey)

Are you fucking kidding me?

TREY

They're liars! You can't treat people like sheep! Let them find God for themselves! Spirituality is not a group you sign up for, it's an experience!

STEF

This is beyond unacceptable.

TREY

You make people feel guilty for choosing the 'wrong' religion - you recruit them, and guilt them, and close them off! You scum, don't you have any decency?! People have the right to think, not to be told what to do!

STEF

I'm sorry officer. We'll cover the damages.

POLICE OFFICER

We expect you to. Now are you going to cover bail too, or do we get to keep him overnight?

BRAD

I didn't promise anything either way.

STEF

You hear that? That's your paycheck!

TREY

They don't care about people, they treat them like numbers, or stories for their newsletter, but they don't respect them.

STEF

Are you done?

Trey quiets down.

BRAD

You can keep him overnight, it's-

STEF

Normally I'd agree. But we have a dinner later - last minute, I already said he would be there.

(to Trey)

You owe us big time.

(to Brad and the officer)

How much?

POLICE OFFICER

We can work it out at the station.

The officer shuts the door to the car and drives a fuming Trey to the station. Brad, Erin and Stef follow.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

The 'Yes Men', a well-established satirical activist group, are hosting a dinner/fundraiser. One of the hosts, JACQUES SERVIN, is speaking at the front of the room. Brad, Stef, Trey and Erin are seated nearby.

JACQUES

Our next guest needs no introduction.

He walks offstage. Everyone laughs, then cheers as Trey steps up to the microphone.

TREY

I'll probably get yelled at for this, but this is a nice change from earlier. I don't know how many of you saw, but I had a little... 'incident' at a religious scam-fest, um, sorry, 'ecumenical fair' - you can watch it all on Youtube - so thank you for being a reasonable audience. And a special thank you to my handlers for making sure I could even BE here tonight.

He gestures to Stef and Brad; everyone applauds. Brad smiles and waves sincerely; Stef follows suit, trying to mask her frustration from their potential donors.

TREY

It's ironic that I was hired as a 'spiritual' leader, given that I'm an atheist. I'm really not opposed to religion or spirituality as long as it doesn't hurt innocent people. Actually, you guys would probably appreciate this story. So I grew up evangelical, which meant I was right and everyone else was wrong. Obviously.

(the crowd chuckles)

And in college, I took a comparative religions class. And I'll never forget, one of our quizzes, it was just two quotes. One from Jesus, one from

Joseph Smith. And we had to give a commentary for each one. So for Jesus, I said it was profound, and beautiful, and it's the sort of advice people need to follow to make the world better. And for Joseph Smith, I said it was heresy, and dangerous, and if the world followed his advice, we'd be doomed. And then the professor said, "by the way, I switched the quotes. The one from Jesus was actually said by Joseph Smith, and vice versa." And my jaw slammed into the floor, and I was like, "where do I sign up to be an atheist?"

(the crowd laughs with him)

Now again, I don't have a problem with religion. But I want people to be able to look at an idea as just that - an IDEA, not in the context of who said it - and evaluate it on its own. I don't like religions that endorse people. I like religions that endorse ideas, regardless of the people who come up with them. That way you have to actually think about what you believe, and not just have an all-or-nothing filter that says "EVERYTHING Jesus says MUST be right" or "EVERYTHING Joseph Smith says MUST be wrong." You know what they say, ideas are worth spreading...

(several people laugh)

On a COMPLETELY unrelated note, I'm giving a Ted Talk in a few weeks from now. And I don't know how over the top satirical it should be, so... open forum. Tricks of the trade, what advice do you all have? How far should I take it?

People start murmuring and chatting with each other. They calls on a woman in the back, and the group begins an open dialogue about how to give relevant, comic speeches.

As this happens, Brad and Stef sneak off into the lobby. Erin follows them discreetly, but stays hidden. Their voices are lowered, nobody else is around.

STEF

Why didn't you do something to stop him?

BRAD

I tried. I kid you not, he got out of the car, WHILE we were driving - we were a block away, and he just books it. So I'm stuck looking for a spot, and by the time I catch up to him, he'd already ruined everything. I'm with you, I don't like this either.

STEF

It's just... nothing I say gets through to him. I don't know if it's just a guy thing? Like, maybe if it came from you, he would listen? But it's driving me crazy. And sometimes I can deal - like now, he's fine, he's killing it. And when he drops a Trey-bomb, it's usually open-ended enough that we can diffuse it. But how do we make this one look good?

BRAD

Of course, this wouldn't have been a problem if he had taken it out on Republicans at a gun fair.

STEF

Right. Or ANY event with controversy - I mean, how much more 'safe' and diverse can you get, it's literally people from ALL backgrounds trying to get along. We might just have to call it an off day, honestly, hope it blows over...

BRAD

Or just call today a two-for-one? The dinner and the park this morning? Two good events. The fair? One bad event. On the balance, he had a good day.

STEF

That would certainly be HIS argument...

BRAD

I'll try and talk to him tomorrow.

(Stef glares at him)

I WILL talk to him tomorrow.

STEF

Thank you.

BRAD

I mean, you're the one who got him invited tonight, so we should be thanking YOU.

STEF

And I also brought him to the fair... C'est la vie.

They make their way back towards the ballroom. Erin ducks out of sight just in time.

SUPER: Part 4 - Deviant

BLACK SCREEN FOR FIVE SECONDS. SUPER: 2 Days Later

INT. TREY'S APARTMENT - DAY

This is a Youtube video that Trey just posted. The title is: "Big Announcement"; the views are already racking up.

TREY

Here's a fact. If I get elected, I guarantee that nothing will change on my first day in office. You will wake up, and you might be excited, or scared, or anxious - but your life will be the same. It won't magically be better the second I'm sworn in. And I know that seems obvious, but nobody seems to actually believe it.

I've come to see politics as a huge scam. It's a way for people to put the burden for changing the world on somebody else. It allows you to ignore the problems in your life and instead expect that somebody else will fix them. When in fact YOU can make a difference, and YOU can make your life better, and YOU can be a Messiah.

So on that note - I'm dropping out of the race. I'm quitting Messiah Complex. Now I'll still travel, and meet people, and speak at rallies and parks and conferences... Literally nothing else about me is changing. I just can't keep up the charade that politics actually matters.

Also, as a thank you to my donors, and as a way to inspire them to make their own change, I will be refunding all donations 100%. So go out there, use that money for good, stop waiting for the world to change for you, and change it yourself.

INT. MESSIAH COMPLEX OFFICE - DAY

Erin is filming Stef, who is angrily cleaning the office. Stef's phone is playing a news broadcast in the background.

NEWS ANCHOR

...dropped out of the race unexpectedly. His supporters have quickly taken to social media, posting videos of community service projects and acts of kindness, with the hashtag 'BeAMessiah'...

The video pauses and the phone starts buzzing. Stef throws it against the wall.

STEF

He didn't tell us ANYTHING. I only heard about it because NBC called me and asked for a comment - which made me sound REALLY professional - and then I looked up the video and called Brad, and Trey hadn't told HIM either!

ERIN

Do you think he's doing it for attention? Like a publicity stunt?

Stef looks at her condescendingly, then continues cleaning.

ERIN

I just wasn't sure if this was the sort of thing he might backtrack on later.

STEF

Oh mo, he means this. I'm the one who makes him backtrack. He never does it on his own. If he says he's dropping out, or that politics is a waste of time, or that he'll be PAYING BACK ALL OF OUR FUCKING DONORS, because THAT'S possible, then he's serious.

ERIN

Oh shoot, yeah, I hadn't even thought about the money... how are you, I mean, will you have to take out a loan? How much did you guys have, was it over a million? What's your plan?

STEF

(throws her hands up incredulously)  
What part of 'he didn't tell me ahead of time' makes you think I have a plan?

ERIN

Sorry.

Stef continues cleaning out the office, Erin roams around with the camera. After a few seconds:

ERIN

I still can't believe how bold it is... It's sort of impressive. Even for a candidate who drops out, it's... You're sure this isn't just some roundabout way to get even more votes?

STEF

He's done! Okay? Why do you care? It's not like he disappeared, so you can still make your fucking documentary!

ERIN

I'm just curious. But good to know that you think I'm so insensitive. Super encouraging.

STEF

You're right, you're right. My issue is with him, not you. I'm sorry. I just need some time to process everything without a camera in my face, but as the team mom, my job never ends, even when my child quits.

Stef continues shoving supplies, notepads, flash drives and cables into a trashbag. Erin rummages through another trashbag that's sitting by the door. Inside is a laptop.

ERIN

Is this his?

STEF

Yeah. Because heaven forbid he stop by the office and say goodbye first.

ERIN

May I?

STEF

You know what? Sure! Have at it! Like I care.

(Erin sets the laptop on the conference table and powers it on)

Part of me wants to sell it, because we need all the money we can get. But then I think, Trey's an adult, and it's his decision to give away free money, so he should be the one to pay for it. And he did quit the company, so it's not MY problem anymore, right?

ERIN

Makes sense to me.

STEF

You're funny, thinking that anything that happens in this office makes sense.

(Erin chuckles)

Also, if you find something interesting, let me know first? I'd like to keep up the illusion that I'm still part of what's happening.

ERIN

Sure thing.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Trey is speaking to a large crowd of supporters. Brad is at the front, recording the event on his phone.

BRAD

This is day one of Trey being on his own - I'm Brad Hightower, recording for posterity. Let's see what's going on...

TREY

And people are so obsessed with leaving a legacy, you know, 'making their mark' on the world. Which is pointless. I mean, you could literally save an entire city and nobody would remember you. Think about it. Let's say the city was being surrounded by enemies, and you're not just a random person, you're literally the poorest person in town. But you're also secretly a genius - nobody ever noticed it, but you're insanely smart. And you come up with a BRILLIANT idea to stop the attack, and you save everyone. And they make you a hero. And you get the key to the city. And they name a national holiday after you. And now nobody will ever forget you right? Right??

(pauses, crowd cheers in agreement)

Wrong!! A thousand years later, nobody will care! You'll be completely forgotten, because life sucks. So what's the point?

MAN IN CROWD 1

That's bullshit! The world doesn't need more fucking pessimism!

TREY

It's not MY pessimism, sir. That story's actually in the BIBLE - Ecclesiastes 9. Read it. People have always been pessimistic, this isn't new - literally nothing changes over time.

He stops - there's a commotion in the crowd. A car is driving along the sidewalk, honking at people to get out of the way. The national anthem is blaring from the car's speakers. People are shouting at the driver to stop.

The driver parks the car in the middle of the plaza, a few yards from Trey. The national anthem is still playing loudly. The driver steps out - it's a young woman with tattoos, piercings, purple hair, and a backpack.

MAN IN CROWD 2

Get the fuck out of here!

TREY

Leave her alone! Everybody quiet!!

They settle down. The woman is silent while the music keeps blasting. She unzips the backpack and takes out a laptop - she displays it to the crowd for a few seconds, then tosses it in the backseat of the car. She takes out her phone, displays it too, then tosses it in the backseat.

She does this for all the items in the backpack: earbuds, her wallet, a stack of cash, USB drives, a few pieces of clothing, her birth certificate and social security card, and finally the car keys. The crowd is growing restless.

As the song nears its finale, she pulls a bucket of lighter fluid from the trunk and pours it all over the backseat. As the final note plays, she lights a match and tosses it in. The car quickly bursts into flame. She takes a bow.

WOMAN IN CROWD 1

What the hell's wrong with you, bitch? You trying to get us all killed??

WOMAN IN CROWD 2

Somebody call the police!

MAN IN CROWD 3

You could've sold all that and used it to help people, fucking cunt!

WOMAN IN CROWD 3

(to Trey)

Aren't you going to say something?

TREY

(to the woman who burned the car)

Keep up the good work! Seriously, that was great!

She flips Trey off and scowls, then walks away - though she doesn't get very far before being assaulted and beaten up by the mob. Trey tries to calm them down.

TREY

Guys! GUYS! EVERYBODY STOP RIGHT NOW!

(they settle down)

Give. Her. A Fucking. Break! She gets it - even if you don't like it, let her go. We'll call the fire department, we'll clean it up, don't worry. But she's actually DOING something, while the rest of you are just listening without doing anything different!

The crowd grudgingly lets her leave, but they're still restless and irritated. The car is slowly burning in the center of the plaza.

TREY

Now, I'm not saying you should be an arsonist - but let's be realistic. A hundred years from now, will anyone remember the shop owner who took care of his family? Or the CEO who made her company record profits? No. You'll remember the woman who lit her car on fire. She'll go down in history, none of you will, so stop kidding yourselves.

He's interrupted again by two women who approach him directly. One of them has a camera. Brad zooms in - it's Stef and Erin. Cut to the perspective from Erin's camera.

STEF

Can you give me the microphone?

TREY

Of course. What's this about?

Stef ignores his question, takes the microphone, and addresses everyone. As this unfolds, over a dozen cops have arrived, and are slowly making their way through the crowd.

STEF

My name is Stef Baker, FORMER manager at Messiah Complex, and we have a few questions for Trey.

TREY

Ready when you are.

STEF

What is your response to the recent FBI investigation?

TREY

What investigation?

STEF

We found thousands of pornographic images stored on your hard drive.

(the crowd gasps)

Sorry, I should have clarified. They were images of CHILDREN.

(everyone goes silent)

We contacted the FBI right away. They've already opened an investigation. What is your response? How are you going to spin this?

The tension is palpable. Trey casually takes the microphone and addresses everyone.

TREY

I'm guilty, but I don't think it should be a crime, and I'm not going to apologize.

The crowd immediately begins harassing him. The cops are getting closer.

STEF

So, wait - you're saying you KNEW about it?

TREY

I did. That's what I'm into. And I don't think sex with kids is a problem. I wish it were legal, people get too worked up about it.

The crowd is furious. The cops are ready to pounce.

STEF

Is this a joke? You're lying, right?

TREY

You know me well enough by now. When do I ever lie? This is like all the things I stand for - people are behind the times, I'm just trying to show them a better way to live.

ERIN

But they're KIDS! How the hell is that okay?!

TREY

I mean, if they're asking for it...

The crowd has had enough. They swarm to attack him, but the police get him first. They put him in handcuffs and try to fight off the crowd while dragging him away. Trey doesn't protest, he just smiles arrogantly.

SUPER: 4 Months Later

INT. STEF'S APARTMENT - DAY

Erin is recording Stef - she's watching an interview with a PRISONER. The headline underneath reads: 'Former Candidate Trey Davidson found dead in cell'.

NEWS ANCHOR

But weren't you worried about the consequences when they found out you did it?

PRISONER

Shit no, I WANTED them to know I did it.

NEWS ANCHOR

But what about having 20 years added to your sentence?

PRISONER

What, are people pissed? I mean really, who doesn't think we're fuckin' heroes?

NEWS ANCHOR

We?

PRISONER

Yeah, we all was in on it. Cuz I was like, 'we don't fuckin' deserve to be here, we ain't done nothin' wrong. We didn't get no due process. But THAT GUY, that fuckin' chomo, he got off easy, so we gotta make him pay.' And we did, shit, we made him PAY, I tell ya...

NEWS ANCHOR

But he DID receive a life sentence, I wouldn't call that getting off easy.

PRISONER

What, you on his side? He got to LIVE. He didn't suffer like them kids in his pictures. God, it makes me sick that fuckin' psychos like him-

Stef turns it off. She exhales slowly.

ERIN

Too much?

STEF

It's just... it's over. It feels like - I mean, a year ago I didn't even know him.

ERIN

Do you miss him?

(Stef rolls her eyes)

Sorry, joking. Do you regret any of it?

STEF

No, because we got a dangerous person off the streets, so it was worth it.

ERIN

Do you feel guilty about it? About supporting him before you found out?

STEF

I feel STUPID, and I'd be lying if I said I didn't feel like it was my fault. But then I tell myself, 'it was his crime, not mine'. And I know I did everything right.

ERIN

Do you think he faked it?

STEF

What does that mean? How do you fake doing something illegal?

ERIN

It's just - well, did you read anything about the timestamps on the pictures?

STEF

No, I was a little preoccupied with reporting CHILD PORNOGRAPHY to the FBI.

ERIN

Sorry... but for what it's worth... they found that all the images had been downloaded that morning around 8:20, and his video announcing that he quit was posted at 8:00.

(there's silence)

That's why I asked, but I'm not saying he definitely faked it. It's just... I dunno.

STEF

You think he planted them on purpose? Like he WANTED to be arrested?

ERIN

Yeah... but maybe he was... maybe if - I mean, so he was always a pervert, but maybe he changed the dates so that you and Brad wouldn't be held responsible. You know? That way you guys could have plausible deniability?

STEF

You think we didn't already? Are you saying we knew and protected him? Are you fucking KIDDING?

ERIN

No no, sorry, I'm just... I know you guys didn't know, and he's a criminal, and it's not your fault. But I don't understand why the times are so close. It's the one thing about all this that doesn't make sense.

STEF

And the best part is... it's not my problem now. Honestly, I just don't care at this point. I want to put it all behind me. I have a new job, and a boyfriend, and I feel like for the first time in weeks I can finally move on. Okay?

ERIN

But don't you want to know the whole story? Try to figure out his motivations? It all just seems so fascinating - horrific what he did, yeah, but he's such an interesting antagonist...

STEF

Can you just stop?? This is ridiculous! I already know his motivations. He wanted to be remembered. He wanted to live on after he died. And he said several times that you only get remembered if you do something really extreme. So this was his chance - he had the spotlight, he was already secretly a pedophile, he probably just had the images stored somewhere else. And he waited until the right moment, moved the pictures over, and purposely let people find out. Why? So that everyone would hate him. So people would keep talking about him after he died. Just like we're doing right now. Which is why I need you to leave, because he doesn't deserve a legacy.

(pause)

Do you get that you're giving him exactly what he wants? This isn't okay. He was a piece of shit. He died a piece of shit. And he needs to be forgotten like a piece of shit. I am not feeding into this sick obsession anymore. I am moving on, because that is the only reasonable way to deal with this. Now leave me alone, grow up, and find a better way to waste your time.

EXT. LOCAL PARK - DAY

Erin is interviewing people walking by.

WOMAN 1

He's a fucking pervert.

MAN 1

He got what he deserved, he was a monster.

WOMAN 2

Rapist. Child molester. Scumbag.

MAN 2

Same as everyone else - like the lowlife he was.

INT. EMPTY RESTAURANT - DAY (cont.)

Brad is sitting across from Erin. He's motionless. Silent. He looks empty as he stares blankly past the camera.

ERIN

How will you remember him?

(Brad doesn't react)

Is everything okay?

Brad is silent for a few seconds.

BRAD

I distinctly remember the first time I actually did something that mattered. I was 21. I had just had a terrible job interview - not because I was unqualified, but because I was boring. They said to my face that I was the most uninteresting person they had ever met. Which really got to me - but at the same time, I had always known I was a loser, and I was kind of glad somebody had finally pointed it out instead of lie to me and tell me I was important.

Well, in the heat of the moment, I said that they should just hire my friend, because he was much more interesting than me, so he would be perfect for the position. And I scrawled his name and number on my resume and stormed out of the room.

Come to find out, they took me seriously, and they called him, and they hired him. And two months later, they called ME to thank me for recommending him. They said they were lucky to have him, and they wondered if I wanted to work as a recruiter.

And ever since then, my life has been about finding people. Because apparently I'm only as valuable as the people I know. I gave up on the idea that I would be special, or that I would be the next best whatever. My purpose was not to be exceptional, but to find somebody exceptional.

So, you can imagine how... VALIDATING it was to find Trey. It took me 36 years of being a loser, but with him, I would go down as the guy who had helped discover the next Messiah. And I was even okay to let him be the focus. I knew I wasn't the center of the story. But without me, I knew there wouldn't BE a story. And I truly believed my whole life was suddenly worth it, because it had all been building to Trey.

(they're both silent for a few seconds)

Do you know how much this has broken me? Or how completely nothing I feel? I can't cry. I can't get angry. I can't think. I can't work or feel or matter or care. It's like the second he was arrested, everything was muted. Like the world just powered off.

The worst part is, everyone assumes I'm upset because of what he did, and because he's a criminal, and I must be kicking myself for not knowing about it. That's not what bothers me.

What bothers me is that I immediately knew how this would all play out. I knew that nobody would respect him. Everybody would hate him. They would demand that he be remembered as a monster. They would disregard his entire life - all those moments that they were so inspired by, suddenly none of it matters. Because people are clueless, and in their minds, you're either good or bad, and there's no room in between.

But of course I can't say that. Otherwise I'm supporting a child molester. So you have a guy who actually made a difference in the world, and there's a lot we can learn from him, and a lot of things he did right. And it was because of ME that he got to spread his message. And just like that, his life has zero value. And if I don't treat him like an ultimatum, if I even entertain the possibility that his life might have been worthwhile, then I must be a terrible person.

(he pauses one last time)

My life was so pathetic, the only way I could matter was if I helped somebody else live on... And I couldn't even have THAT.

He exhales slowly, pulls out a revolver, and shoots himself in the head.

FADE OUT.