

SECOND COMING

PILOT

by

Mike Johnston

Mike.Johnston@me.com

(206) 250-7915

COLD OPEN

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

An overburdened DUMPSTER in the alley.

A MAN walks past. We don't catch his face but can't miss his flowing shoulder-length hair and GREEN SANITATION OVERALLS.

Over his shoulder, we see him steal a moment in front of the church. With a sigh, he starts for the HEAVY WOODEN DOORS.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Inside the CONFESSIONAL, the confident face of FATHER THOMAS (50) is obscured through an ornate privacy screen. Black cassock. Purple stole. He's seen it all. Heard it all.

Father Thomas' first customer of the day enters.

THE MAN

Bless me, father, for I have sinned.

FATHER THOMAS

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit--

THE MAN

Sorry, I always forget that part.

FATHER THOMAS

It's okay, you're doing fine.

(beat)

How long since your last confession?

THE MAN

Oh, yeah, right. It's... I've been away for a very long time, father.

FATHER THOMAS

(laughs)

Well, welcome back, my son. Welcome.

THE MAN

Thank you. But, uh, wow. Yeah, I'm... I'm a tad nervous.

FATHER THOMAS

No need to be nervous.

THE MAN

Yeah, you see, this is my first sin.

FATHER THOMAS
I'm sorry, do you have a list?

THE MAN
Whadda ya mean?

FATHER THOMAS
How many sins are we talking about?

THE MAN
One-- Singular. There's only one sin.
What kind of a heathen have you pegged
me for?

FATHER THOMAS
Fine. Let's start with the first one--

THE MAN
The only one. The only one since I've
returned.

FATHER THOMAS
Returned? From where?

THE MAN
You know.

The Man points to the ceiling.

Father Thomas pokes his head out the confessional door.

The Man, JESUS CHRIST (32) pops out the other door. Ever
happy-go-lucky, he throws the priest a friendly two-fingered
salute. His eyes are hug-magnets. A thousand-watt smile.

Unconvinced, Father Thomas scowls.

Jesus gestures to the crucifixion over the alter.

An uncanny resemblance.

Jesus nods him back inside the confessional.

FATHER THOMAS
I'm sorry, but you don't expect me to
believe you're actually... him.

JESUS
I expect you to hear my confession.

FATHER THOMAS
A confession, of course. I am here in
service of Our Lord--

JESUS
And I thank you--

FATHER THOMAS
But no more blasphemy.

JESUS
Absolutely, one hundred percent,
father. I am totally anti-blasphemy.

FATHER THOMAS
Very well.

JESUS
I have committed a sin of the flesh. I
have had impure thoughts.

FATHER THOMAS
That's it?

JESUS
You familiar with yoga pants?

FATHER THOMAS
Yes, of course.

JESUS
I mean, there's nothing left to the
imagination there.

FATHER THOMAS
And did you act on these impulses?

JESUS
Well, my... you know... downstairs. It-
it was angry. I mean really angry.

FATHER THOMAS
I understand. Do not be ashamed of the
body God gave you. As long as you
didn't act on your urges.

JESUS
But everyone... she could see it.

FATHER THOMAS
You didn't... remove it, did you?

JESUS
What kind of a deviant do you take me
for? I'm the Son of God, not some
sailor on shore leave--

FATHER THOMAS

Okay, there it is. Blasphemy. You're obviously not Jesus Christ, and I'm not willing to sit here and have you--

JESUS

Man, I really saw this going different. How's it goin' for you?

FATHER THOMAS

Weird.

JESUS

Yeah, me too. Okay, shoot.

FATHER THOMAS

What?

JESUS

Ask me anything. I'm Jesus. I have to tell the truth. That's my thing.

FATHER THOMAS

Okay, very well. Why are you here?

JESUS

You're two stops before work-- I'm still figuring out the bus system.

FATHER THOMAS

No, why are you confessing to me? If you're actually Jesus, shouldn't you confess to the Pope or something?

JESUS

How many bus transfers is that?

FATHER THOMAS

No, why are you here-here?

JESUS

Ah, now, that's the real question.

FATHER THOMAS

And how long have you been back?

JESUS

(calculating)
Hmm, since Tuesday.

FATHER THOMAS

Why don't you sound like Jesus?

JESUS

Trust me, I rejected a lotta rewrites 'til we found the perfect Bible Jesus voice. Granted, most of the original material was off-the-cuff, so pretty rough. Ever do any live speaking?

FATHER THOMAS

Every Sunday--

JESUS

Then you get it. C'mon, ask me the big one. Ask me...

FATHER THOMAS

All right then, if you're Jesus, perform a miracle.

JESUS

Zing! There it is. I can't--

FATHER THOMAS

Of course, you can't.

JESUS

No miracles. No telling people their fate. But if I touch you, I can still see into your soul.

FATHER THOMAS

Since when?

JESUS

Since always.

FATHER THOMAS

Why isn't it mentioned in the bible?

JESUS

Writing is making choices. We chose to focus on the more important stuff.

Sticks his finger through the privacy screen.

JESUS

Want proof? C'mon. You chicken? Chicken?

Clucks.

FATHER THOMAS

Do not touch me. Do not touch me.

JESUS

(laughs)

Okay, cough up my penance and I'll get out of your hair.

FATHER THOMAS

But you never answered my question. If you're really Jesus, why are you here?

JESUS

This isn't gonna affect my penance?

FATHER THOMAS

Promise.

JESUS

I'm preparing for End Times. The Second Coming? Judgement Day?

Realizing he might be out of his depth...

FATHER THOMAS

I'm sorry, but there might be some other people I could refer you to who are better qualified to help you with your obvious psychological condition.

JESUS

I just figured it would be better if I got more acquainted with your modern lives before passing judgment on your eternal souls-- Who you calling?

Father Thomas dials his cellphone.

FATHER THOMAS

I don't feel safe.

JESUS

You calling the cops on me, man?

The phone battery charge symbol falls from full to empty.

FATHER THOMAS

(into the phone)

Hello? Hello?!

JESUS

Don't be frightened.

FATHER THOMAS

Who said I'm frightened?

He's terrified.

JESUS

The Apocalypse, now, that's something you should be frightened of.

FATHER THOMAS

Please leave.

JESUS

Book of Revelation? We gave you a checklist. Plagues, floods, famines. Aren't you following the signs?

FATHER THOMAS

Please leave my church.

JESUS

Anywho, I told the Big Guy we needed boots on the ground. And, so, after a bit of horse-trading-- Believe me, it was a whole thing.

The priest leaves the confessional.

Whips open the other door on Jesus.

JESUS

(slowly stands)
Oh, we're doing this?

FATHER THOMAS

Thank you for coming in, my son.

JESUS

Don't I owe you, like, some Hail Marys, a couple of Our Fathers?

FATHER THOMAS

I think you've suffered enough.

Trailing at a safe distance, he shoos Jesus to the exit.

JESUS

But He signed off on it, with a bunch of "thou shalt nots," and, you know, God-speak boilerplate stuff-- But basically my original plan.

FATHER THOMAS

They're doing so much with therapeutic drugs and counseling these days.

JESUS

See, it's not like I don't hear things up there. But, hell's bells, stuff's changed in two thousand years.

(MORE)

JESUS (cont'd)
Like yoga pants, for example.
Definitely grading that one on a
curve.

The heavy wooden doors close on Jesus with a THUD.

END COLD OPEN

ACT I**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY**

A GARBAGE TRUCK rumbles through suburbia.

Add title "SOMEWHERE IN LOS ANGELES RIGHT NOW"

In utter bliss, Jesus hangs off the back of the truck. His long hair flowing in the wind.

THE TRUCK CAB

A lifetime city employee, TOWNES (54) is a no-nonsense driver. Crew chief. Has his early retirement date memorized.

DUNCAN (25) thinks of himself as a street hustler. Only nobody's buying. His third identity in five years.

TOWNES

Why we always get the weirdos?

DUNCAN

Aw, he's harmless, holmes.

TOWNES

Don't let him outta yer eyes.

Duncan turns to stare at Jesus in the side mirrors.

AT A BACKYARD FENCE

Jesus rummages through a resident's garbage bin.

ENSLEY (5) hugs MR. BUTTONS, a Teddy Bear.

ENSLEY

Whatcha lookin' for?

JESUS

It's amazing what you can learn about people by what they throw away.

Duncan closes in.

DUNCAN

(whistles loud)
Trainee!

That catches the ear of Ensley's mom, PARKER JOHANSEN (40) prattling on her phone. She storms over, pre-boiled.

PARKER
 (to Jesus)
 What the hell do ya think yer doing?

(into the phone)
 I gotta call you back.

JESUS
 Is that an iPhone? Is it awesome?

Parker clutches her phone.

JESUS
 You know, I met Steve Jobs last week.
 --Ooh, a bird!

A SPARROW perches on his finger. Tame. Chirps.

JESUS
 Do you like birds, Ensley?

The bird hops to Ensley's finger. She giggles.

PARKER
 How do ya know my daughter's name?
 What're yer names?

JESUS
 I'm Jesus Christ, Lord, Son of God--
 Savior, if you must. And this fine
 gentleman--

DUNCAN
 Leave me outta this, Cheese--

JESUS
 ... Is Duncan. Townes is the driver.

The truck horn BLASTS.

DUNCAN
 Yo, gotta skate, bro.

JESUS
 I'm sorry, but we have to leave-- It
 was delightful meeting both of you.
 Now, you be good.

PARKER
 I am good.

JESUS
 Try harder. Maybe it'll stick.

DUNCAN
Grab dem bins, trainee.

As Jesus walks away...

JESUS
And her name's embroidered on her
dress!

Yep. It is. Ensley uses Mr. Buttons' arm to wave goodbye
before Parker spins her to the house.

While the garbage truck arm spills trash into the back...

DUNCAN
Never, ever, ever talk at the rez.
Nothing but trouble, bru.

JESUS
Duncan, you gotta relax. Now, I want
you to take a deep breath with me.

DUNCAN
The Air Quality Index is, like, 85,
and we're up to our ass in garbage
truck. So, yeah. Pass.

JESUS
Breathing is so underrated and
wonderfully calming. C'mon now.

Duncan double-slaps the side of the truck.

DUNCAN
Let's roll!

INT. THE DOGHOUSE RESTAURANT AND BAR - NIGHT

It's payday at an underwhelming chain restaurant. A herd of
boisterous sanitation workers and their significant others
control four tables scooped together.

The feast reduced to shirt stains, bone and gristle. And the
serious drinking is well underway.

Jesus drains most of his beer. Pants.

JESUS
(sloppy)
I've had my share of beer, but this...
This is the finest drink ever! I must
know everything about P-B-R. Take me
to the brewer. And, and can we walk
there--? I might have to be carried.

TOWNES
We need a pitcher.

JESUS
Yes! A pitcher for everyone!

TOWNES
(aside)
Is he drunk already?

DUNCAN
(aside)
It ain't like he ain't trying.

JESUS
I don't want anyone to treat me any
different. I'm just one of the guys.

DUNCAN
Yo, dude. I ain't, like, yer daddy or
nothing, but you might be done.

JESUS
(all up in his feelings)
I bet my father's more messed up than
your father. Tell me, Duncan. What's
your father do?

DUNCAN
Works construction-- A framer.

JESUS
My father was a carpenter too-- The
good one.

TOWNES
Duncan's right. You've had enough.

JESUS
But my other father, Sky Daddy. That's
a box you don't wanna open. I know-- I
know, I was sacrificed to save the
world. You're welcome! But cruci-
fucking-fixion? Boy, that shit leaves
scars. Inside scars.

Thumps his chest. Talks to the ceiling.

JESUS
We coulda gone with poisoned wine,
smothering me in my sleep... But oh,
no. Nailed to a pole and left hanging
for hours. Thanks, Dad!

DUNCAN
Okay, Jesus is done.

Hugs his beer glass...

JESUS
No-no-no, I'm sorry. But, beer... this
beer. This beer is so damn good.

--Grabs two fists of Duncan's collar.

JESUS
We should drink beer all the time.
Let's have more, huh?

Clutches the arm of a passing WAITRESS (22).

His eyes brighten.

Quickly, the Waitress turns. Shocked.

EVERYONE
Whoa! No. Time's up, buddy. You can't
do that anymore.

TOWNES
You can't be grabbing a woman.

JESUS
(heartfelt)
I'm very sorry, miss.
(sad/profound)
I'm very, very sorry for you.

Accepting his weird drunken apology, the Waitress nods.

JESUS
(to his feet)
Do you need a hug? She needs a hug--
I'm gonna hug you.

Duncan presses Jesus back into his chair.

DUNCAN
Dude.

JESUS
See, when I touch a person, I can see
into their soul. And she needs a hug,
bad. And you need a hug too, Duncan.

Jesus wraps Duncan in a drunken bear hug.

The table laughs.

JESUS
 (whispers in his ear)
 You will be judged fairly. Friends
 tell each other the truth.

TOWNES
 Another round!

JESUS
 More beer!

CHEERS go up.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - WAY TOO EARLY

An eye opens. Closes. That was a terrible idea.

Jesus can't find a position he can hold his head that isn't
 excruciating. Abandons the couch. Groggy.

Duncan and his PREGNANT girlfriend SISSY (25) argue in...

THE KITCHEN

... Jesus shuffles in, scratching his beard. The bickering
 stops mid-sentence. Jesus adjusts to the light. Drops in a
 chair.

JESUS
 And this is the second thing I never
 wanna live through again.

SISSY
 So how long's he staying?

JESUS
 I dunno. How long you staying, Duncan?

DUNCAN
 Man, you were all juiced up last
 night.

JESUS
 Thanks for letting me blackout here.
 And thank you, Mrs. Duncan--

SISSY
 Not married--

JESUS
 Not judging... yet.

SISSY

He better not be here when I get home.

JESUS

She hasn't even seen what happened in the bathroom last night.

DUNCAN

Oh, she knows.

And she's already gone.

DUNCAN

Cap'n Crunch, coffee, then we bounce.

JESUS

I understood two of those words. And I'm Captain of what?

DUNCAN

(winks)

I dissolve aspirin in the milk.

Drops aspirin in a bowl of milk. Whips.

Sissy returns. Hands on hips.

SISSY

You're blocking me.

DUNCAN

Dude, can you move my car? You can drive, right?

JESUS

Let's find out.

Sissy slaps Duncan's keys in Jesus' hand.

His eyes brighten.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Duncan's 1979 VOLKSWAGEN TYPE 2 MICROBUS coasts to a stop. Blocks traffic.

Sissy's old VOLVO hops the curb and barrels away.

A MOTORIST in a SEDAN throws up his hands. Frustrated.

INT. MICROBUS - DAY

Jesus waves goodbye to Sissy.

Studies the gearshift.
 Drops it in REVERSE.
 Looks in the rearview mirror. Turns his head.
 Touches the gas. LURCHES. Panics. Stops.
 The Motorist HONKS.
 Frustrated, Jesus slips it in DRIVE.
 LURCHES forward. Panics. Stops.
 More HONKING.

INT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jesus returns.

DUNCAN
 You got me, bro?

JESUS
 (insecure)
 Fine-- Everything's fine.

From outside, a series of honks.

Duncan fills a thermos.

DUNCAN
 Making our coffees to-go.

JESUS
 Duncan, we gotta talk about something.

One long HONK!

Jesus glances at the window.

JESUS
 Okay, a couple things.

DUNCAN
 Hustle it up, we're gonna be late.

JESUS
 (says quickly)
 The baby isn't yours.

That stops everything cold.

DUNCAN

Why would you say that? Why would you say something as fucked-up as that?

JESUS

I'm sorry, but--

DUNCAN

But nothing. I thought we were friends, man. You said we were friends last night.

JESUS

That's... that's why I'm telling you--

DUNCAN

Don't get into other people's shit.

JESUS

Okay.

DUNCAN

(overlapping)

And don't go mouthing off to everyone, at work because it ain't true--

JESUS

I-I shouldn't have told you. But we are friends, Duncan. Aren't we?

DUNCAN

No, ese, we ain't friends. And we're leaving. And don't say another word to me the rest of the day.

Honks. Clearly coming from more than one pissed-off driver.

DUNCAN

What the hell is that?!

JESUS

Okay, I'm afraid of reverse. There, I said it.

EXT. SANITATION BASE - DAYBREAK

Garbage trucks stream out of a parking lot.

INT. SANITATION BASE - EMPLOYEE BULLPEN - DAY

Jesus squeezes a dispenser of HAND SANITIZER.

It spits goo on the carpet--

He catches a drop. Smells delightful.

He presses the dispenser again. Cups a handful.

Considers. Touches it with his tongue.

His face TWISTS.

Feet STOMP.

SPITS like a sprinkler.

Jesus drags his tongue up and down his sleeve. Licks the curtains. Dives to the floor. Frantically, licks the carpet.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Rolling a curbside bin to the truck, Jesus clocks a...

STREET-CORNER EVANGELIST

... Tooled up with a bullhorn.

His sign reads "JESUS IS COMING."

Jesus flashes a thumbs up.

SPOOKS the Evangelist.

INT. SANITATION BASE - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Jesus hovers over a discarded NEWSPAPER on a bench.

Eyes the room like he's stealing.

His lips move as he reads the headline: "MIRANDA 'RAVEN' MARX CALLED BY CONGRESS TO TESTIFY."

His eyes move to her photo...

A confident twenty-something with raven black hair.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD ALLEY - DAY

Duncan presses a GREEN BUTTON on the garbage truck.

An arm lifts a bin skyward.

THE TRUCK CAB

Townes double-takes his side mirror as...

... He catches someone scampering up the side of the truck like a spider monkey.

THE ALLEY

Townes jumps out, waving his hands.

TOWNES
Shut it down! Shut it down!

DUNCAN
What?

Townes slaps a RED BUTTON.

The mechanical arm freezes.

TOWNES
(eyes dart)
Where is he?

IN THE BELLY OF THE TRUCK

Jesus searches through dry and wet GARBAGE. Boxes, bulging plastic bags, all manner of filth.

He lifts a container. Nothing. Wrestles a bag of produce that spills open. Swims up a mound of trash and then...

A dark object... He sees... MR. BUTTONS. Keister up.

THE ALLEY

JESUS (O.S.)
(echoes)
Got it!

DUNCAN
Let me turn it back on, Townes. No one will ever know.

Duncan and Townes turn to Ensley whimpering at the gate.

She points to the truck. Cries harder. Full waterworks.

IN THE BELLY OF THE TRUCK

Jesus stretches for Mr. Buttons. At his fingertips... just out of reach... until... he snatches the Teddy Bear out of a pile of debris... **MISSING THE HEAD.**

Shocked, Jesus' face crumples.

THE ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

As Jesus tumbles off the truck...

TOWNES

What, the hell, do ya think you're doing?

... Jesus strolls to the gate...

TOWNES

You could uh got yourself killed.

... Beaming, Jesus hides someone special behind his back.

Ensley rushes into the alley. Hands out, flashing fives.

And Jesus delivers. Soft as Charmin, clean as the Pope's hat, and blank button eyes staring back at her... Mr. Buttons is whole again. It's a MIRACLE. Well, a small one.

Through tears, she grabs Jesus in the biggest and bestest hug of her whole life. All five years of it.

In a filthy overalls, Jesus swallows her in his arms.

JESUS

(looks to God in the sky)

Ah, what was I supposed to do? C'mon, how bad could it be? One tiny miracle.

PARKER (O.S.)

--What the hell?

Momma bear at the gate.

PARKER

Let go of her!

ENSLEY

But Mommy--

PARKER

But nothing. Get in the yard. Wait, what did he do to you? What did you do to her?

JESUS

I... I...

PARKER

Are you leaving pauses for me to insert the worst ideas imaginable? Because that's what's happening.

Duncan and Townes dash to the rescue.

TOWNES

No, ma'am. You got it all wrong.

DUNCAN

Yeah, it was innocent, you know. You have a sweet little girl.

PARKER

That's how you like 'em? Sweet and innocent?

ENSLEY

He saved Mr. Buttons, Mommy.

PARKER

And lured her out with her own bear? I know your names, you assholes! I'm calling my attorney.

Rages away. Ensley in tow.

Three men: Something about no good deeds.

JESUS

I... I...

END ACT I

ACT II**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD ALLEY - DAY**

A GARBAGE BIN ripe and ready.

The RUMBLE of a heavy truck approaching.

Two hands heft the garbage bin away.

The chatter of a TALK RADIO show in progress...

RADIO HOST (V.O.)
So whadda ya think uh these clowns?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
A complete disgrace! Fire 'em all.

SENIOR MALE VOICE (V.O.)
They're perverts!

SENIOR FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Where the hell was this girl's mother?

Behind the wheel of the garbage truck, Townes GLARES.

Jesus hits a GREEN BUTTON on the side of the truck.

Hydraulics whine.

A metal arm hoists the bin.

Spills trash into the truck.

Angry, Duncan chucks the bin back into the yard.

YOUNG FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
They sound like illegals.

ALPHA MALE (V.O.)
That was my little girl...? I'd blow
their (bleep)ing heads off.

The garbage truck lumbers down the alley. Stops.

Starts the ballet all over again.

RADIO HOST (V.O.)
Love the passion. And I could not
agree more. What's the city thinking,
hirin' these bums? Is there no
screening for common decency? Common
sense?! These garbage men are traaash!

Radio sound effect of a truck backing up. Dumping.

RADIO HOST (V.O.)
Stay tuned. We'll be right back.

Hands folded, Jesus raises his face to the skies.

JESUS
Okay, you win. No more miracles.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

The flock assembled and seated in pews.

Father Thomas reads from the Gospel of John...

FATHER THOMAS
... Then Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him."

A shaft of LIGHT shoots through a STAINED GLASS WINDOW and falls upon...

PARKER JOHANSEN

... Her eyes brighten. She stands in ECSTASY as if God were speaking to her while angels sang.

INT. SANITATION HEADQUARTERS - SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sanitation zealot, Supervisor ORBIN STANTON (50) takes pride in his spotless and unremarkable record.

TOWNES
(stands)
Suspended?!

ORBIN
Pending a full investigation.

Townes lunges for Jesus' neck. Duncan wrestles him back.

ORBIN
Knock it off-- Knock it off! Have a little respect, gentlemen. You are deep within the inner sanctum of a hallowed institution-- The Department of Sanitation. I mean, Jesus Christ.

JESUS
--Present.

ORBIN

What?

JESUS

Is there another Jesus Christ I don't know about?

Orbin scowls at Jesus.

ORBIN

You're obviously fired.

Innocent, Jesus points to himself.

DUNCAN

(earnest)

Now, wait, sir. He was... He was helping that little girl, get, get, get her bear, Your Honor, sir.

ORBIN

You realize there are mobs burning sanitation workers in effigy? Burning them! Outside City Hall-- Right now.

JESUS

I just don't understand a world where you can't hug a distraught child.

ORBIN

And the city attorneys-- You ever talked to one of those jackals?!

JESUS

I'm afraid to ask.

ORBIN

Well, they had nothing good to say-- I can tell you that. But they said it really loud!

Jesus bows his head.

ORBIN

Aw, this is the worst day of my life.

JESUS

I'm sure I got you beat there.

ORBIN

All I ever wanted was to be an anonymous civil servant. And now, in one human day, my entire leadership has been called into question.

JESUS
 (starts toward Orbin)
 I feel like you need a hug.

Duncan restrains Jesus.

ORBIN
 Oh, get out and lemme cry here alone
 with what little dignity I have left.

TOWNES
 No, wait. The kid!

Townes points to a television tuned to 24/7 NEWS COVERAGE.

DUNCAN
 Turn that shit up, bru.

A NEWS REPORT on the television transitions to...

EXT. PARKER JOHANSEN'S BACKYARD - DAY

Flanked by her HUSBAND (40) and Ensley...

PARKER
 ... So like I said, God spoke to me.
 Actually spoke to me.

ENSLEY
 --Jesus saved Mr. Buttons.

PARKER
 God said I owe that man an apology. He
 found Mr. Buttons before he was lost
 forever. My daughter loves that bear
 and frankly... that man's a hero.

INT. SANITATION DEPARTMENT - SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

TOWNES
 Boom!

Townes and Duncan start dancing. Badly.

DUNCAN
 Dope. Dope-Dope. Dope.

JESUS
 What just happened?

ORBIN
 I can't fire you now.

JESUS
I don't understand.

ORBIN
You're TV heroes. I can't fire a TV
hero. No one can. You're untouchable.

JESUS
Yes, TV: Jack Paar, Walter Winchell--
Townes and Duncan stop dancing.

TOWNES
(breathless)
People believe anything on TV--

DUNCAN
And social media.

JESUS
Social? Media?

TOWNES
That shit's got the world brainwashed--

DUNCAN
And it's more popular than air.

ORBIN
At least this nightmare is over.
Jesus shifts his eyes left and right.

JESUS
I must know everything about this
social media.

DUNCAN
You clownin' holmes--?

TOWNES
It's too big.

JESUS
Miranda Marx.

TOWNES
Who?

JESUS
Miranda Marx is the head of the
world's largest social media empire.

DUNCAN
Ain't that, like, New York and shit.

JESUS

I must know everything influencing society so I may judge fairly.

ORBIN

Take as much time as you need. Just remember, I did not fire a TV hero.

JESUS

Where exactly in New York?

INT. MIRANDA MARX'S WORLD HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - DAY

Elevator doors open to Miranda "Raven" Marx.

The RECEPTIONIST grabs the phone. Hits a button.

RECEPTIONIST

(a loud whisper)
She's here.

Raven cuts through the lobby without a word.

Tailed by her body man, ORCA (age unknown). He's a Sub-Zero with a head. Armani-chic and a ten-cent vocabulary.

OPEN OFFICE SPACE

A fresh-faced TEAM LEADER hangs up the phone at his desk.

Starts typing a message on his phone.

TEXT MESSAGE: "Raven has "

Over his shoulder, a familiar voice interrupts--

RAVEN (O.S.)

W-I-N-G-S.

Too terrified to look, he taps out her every instruction.

RAVEN

Raven has wings. Send. Hit send.

The Team Leader presses SEND.

Message alerts chime throughout a cubical labyrinth.

The Team Leader can't stop blinking.

RAVEN

This entire floor exists for one, solitary purpose, to watch for one single thing.

Turns to the Team Leader.

RAVEN
Main monitor.

A social media NEWS FEED appears on a 150" monitor.

Raven talks the Team Leader through the news feed.

RAVEN
Back, back, back. Down. More. There.
Stop. Zoom in.

The offending SOCIAL POST reads...

HEADLINE: "JESUS IS A HERO!"

PHOTO: Jesus and Ensley hold either paw of Mr. Buttons

LIKES: 1,000,000+

RAVEN
So, please, won't someone please, tell
me why am I the last person on Earth
to hear about this fresh Tom Fuckery?!

Horrified, every employee dives into their computer screens:
searching, scanning, scrolling.

Some openly weep.

Inadvertently, Orca bumps a TRANSFORMER figure on the Team
Leader's desk. Moves it all of one centimeter.

Sweating buckets, the Team Leader reaches. Hesitates.
Repositions it back one centimeter.

RAVEN
What, may I ask, is that?

TEAM LEADER
Uh, G-one, Optimus Prime, graded--

Orca BITES OFF its hard plastic head. As he chews...

RAVEN
Never show your soft spot, dear.
You're showing everyone where to--

In a stabbing motion, Raven THRUSTS at his ribs. Stops short.

RAVEN
... Stick the knife.

Orca swallows. BURPS.

PLANTS the headless figure back where he found it.

Raven and Orca stroll to her office...

RAVEN
(over her shoulder)
Obviously, you're all fired!

RAVEN'S OFFICE

Every form of media flashes on a dozen monitors. A mix of modern and ancient fixtures and an entire wall of mirrors. Tiny ones. Big ones. Maybe a hundred mirrors.

RAVEN
Get me everything on Fake Jesus. Start Patriot Act surveillance. Break the internet if you have to. Zip-zip.

Orca dips away.

From a news feed scrolling on Raven's phone we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

... A different news feed.

Staring into a laptop, Jesus throws up his hands

JESUS
Someone's got my name on Twitter.

On the phone, Duncan covers the speaker.

DUNCAN
Pick another name, bru.

JESUS
But it's my name!
(reads a tweet)
Hey, this guy's pretty funny.

DUNCAN
(into the phone)
Yeah, I dunno. What's it pay?

INT. KAREN DARWIN'S SWANKY APARTMENT - DAY

On the phone, KAREN DARWIN (a soft 40) moves through her sophisticated trappings. Not rich. Clearly, rich-adjacent.

A one-time local television news anchor she still has the wardrobe. Still has the looks. But it's getting harder to pull off both of them.

KAREN

Let me back up, I'm Karen Dar-win.

(beat)

You might remember me from Eyewitness News?

CROSSCUT BETWEEN CONVERSATIONS

DUNCAN

That's TV, right?

KAREN

Oh, you do remember.

(giddy laughter)

I'm flattered. But let me be clear, I'm no longer associated with those hacks. Or the L.A. News-Gazette, King City Bugle or Dog Racing Daily.

DUNCAN

We already been on TV, lady.

KAREN

But don't you want a real journalist telling your story?

DUNCAN

I dunno.

(covers the speaker)

Do we want a real journalist telling our story?

JESUS

What story?

DUNCAN

About the little girl's bear.

JESUS

That's a story? Now, Job [JOB], now that's a story.

Duncan listens to Karen prattling on the phone.

KAREN

... With my name power behind this riveting, feel-good story of the year--

DUNCAN

(to Jesus)

She seems to think so.

KAREN

I see it as an authentic "behind the scenes" blog series--

DUNCAN

Wait-what?!

(covers the phone)

It's a blog, bru. Sounds janky.

Jesus whines at the laptop.

JESUS

No one's liking me. How come no one's liking me?

(to Duncan)

Does she know social media?

DUNCAN

Yo, you know social media? Because homeboy don't know jack and we about to get up at Miranda Marx.

KAREN

(impressed)

You have a sit-down with who?

Jesus barks at the laptop...

JESUS

How about a follow-back, you-you Judas, hobgoblin?!

(to Duncan)

How soon can she meet?

DUNCAN

He wants to meet.

KAREN

I can hear the whole conversation.

DUNCAN

Then we doin' this?

KAREN

(searches for a pencil)

Absolutely. Just one question, between you and me. Does he really believe he's Jesus Christ?

END OF ACT II

ACT III**INT. THE DOGHOUSE RESTAURANT AND BAR - NIGHT**

A waitress walks a slice of APPLE PIE past Jesus.

JESUS
Oo! I want pie.

Karen and Duncan sit next to him in a booth.

KAREN
(exasperated)
Can we please get back to the
interview?

JESUS
But what kind?

KAREN
Of interview?

JESUS
Of pie. I wonder what kind of pie I
should have. I've never had fruit pie.

DUNCAN
(to Karen)
It's better if ya just go with it.

Karen touches a RED RECORD button on her phone.

KAREN
And, we're back. So, is this your
statement about the abuse of power by
religious leaders?

JESUS
Karen, you should come to New York.

KAREN
Very well. But I require exclusive
access. And, of course, first-class
airfare and accommodations.

JESUS
But first, both of you are gonna do
something for me.

An uncomfortable moment for Duncan and Karen...

KAREN
Do we put a quarter in him, or does it
pop out automatically?

DUNCAN

Ten bucks says it's something about pie.

JESUS

Drop the act.

KAREN

Drop the what?

DUNCAN

What act?

JESUS

You can't hide from the truth. Karen, you're not a journalist anymore.

Karen shudders at those words.

JESUS

And Duncan, deep down, you're one of the sweetest souls I've ever met.

Duncan softens momentarily.

JESUS

But honestly, I've heard dogs barking words that were easier to understand than some of the crapola coming out of your mouth.

DUNCAN

Yeah, okay, bru. Alright. I drop it the minute y'all drop the Jesus act.

Jesus locks into the happiest CUSTOMER in the world being served PIE A LA MODE.

JESUS

Is that ice cream with pie?

DUNCAN

I thought so. So why don'tcha tell us yer real name, ese?

Karen repositions her phone closer to Jesus.

KAREN

Oh, yes, please. This is good stuff.

JESUS

This world is far more challenging than I ever imagined. Follow me. Both of you. And I will show you the truth.

KAREN

Interesting offer. But, I, um. I can only juggle so much crazy at a time.

DUNCAN

I know Jesus Christ-- in my heart.
You're no Jesus. You a fool.

Duncan seethes.

Fascinated by the man eating pie, Jesus ignores him.

Karen checks both men. Turns off the recorder.

KAREN

Maybe, um, we should take a quick
break, before a holy war breaks out.

After an awkward laugh, she stands.

KAREN

Maybe when I get back we can do a bit
of background? A little something
about your father?

JESUS

We'll need beer for that...

Karen leaves for the little girl's room.

JESUS

... Or maybe just pie.

Jesus raises a fork full of **CHERRY PIE**.

Where it came from, Duncan has no idea.

Three **PLATES OF PIE** appear at the table.

JESUS

(chewing)
Hmm, and ice cream.

Duncan's eyes fall.

A **SCOOP OF ICE CREAM** appears next to each slice of pie.

DUNCAN

What the...?

Karen returns. Snatches her purse.

KAREN

Forgot my purse. Oh, peach, my
favorite.

As she leaves...

KAREN
That was fast.

Jesus chews.

Turns to Duncan, who slowly collapses into a kneeling position with hands folded. Head down. Contrite.

JESUS
Oh, come on, man. You're embarrassing me. Be cool. Eat your pie.

INT. MIRANDA MARX'S WORLD HEADQUARTERS - OFFICE - DAY

A long, black fingernail scrolls a tablet news feed.

ORCA
He has followers now.

RAVEN
That's off-putting. Influencers?

ORCA
No one of consequence.

RAVEN
But is it really him? Him-him?

ORCA
All signs point to yes.

RAVEN
Thank you, Magic 8-Ball. It's time I got personally involved.

ORCA
And tempt the Son of God?

RAVEN
You're aiming way too low. If it's really him, I'll use social media to turn him into a quivering bowl of insecurities like the rest of humanity. And then reap his soul.

Orca grins.

RAVEN
And on a personal note: You're not sneaking up on anyone with that much body spray.

EXT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Duncan lifts bag after bag into his Volkswagen microbus.

Karen supervises.

KAREN

I don't understand why we're messing with, with... the hippy van.

DUNCAN

If the Son of God says we're driving, we're driving.

KAREN

But I have corporate sponsors now-- We've gone viral, darling. We could fly to New York in hours.

DUNCAN

I, um, think he wants to meet people along the way.

KAREN

This, this'll take a week, And with two men... the smells alone...

DUNCAN

I can tell him you don't wanna go.

KAREN

Oh, I miss the old Duncan. You were like "The Wire" adapted for Nickelodeon.

DUNCAN

I have accepted him as Jesus, my Lord and Savior and you should do the same.

KAREN

But you know he's not really Jesus, right? So what is this? I still haven't figured out your angle.

Duncan stops loading.

DUNCAN

Honestly, I worry about him. He's coming unspooled-- And it's getting worse. Yesterday, he was arguing politics with some idiot online--

KAREN

That never ends well.

DUNCAN

One minute I can't get him off social media and the next thing you know, he's, like, making small talk with a butterfly--

KAREN

How sweet.

DUNCAN

No, it flew away and he started blubbering like a baby. I'm telling ya, every day that passes he becomes more fragile.

KAREN

Uh, have you considered he's insane?

DUNCAN

And now, he's doubting everything. For a hot second he wanted to go back to the original plan and come screaming out of the clouds on a chariot--

KAREN

And smite the wicked?

DUNCAN

The Girl Scouts. He said no one is that good. He's convinced they're raising money for something big.

KAREN

--I should be recording this.

DUNCAN

He's doubting himself, making bad choices. He needs our help. We need to teach him, you know, like, how this world really works.

KAREN

And how you gonna fuck that pig?

DUNCAN

I've been reading your blog. You make him sound like he's crazy...

KAREN

He's the gift that just keeps giving.

DUNCAN

... To get more subscribers.

KAREN
 Subscribers? This is Pulitzer
 material.

Prone in the lawn, Jesus snaps a close-up of a dandelion
 seedhead with his phone. Closes his eyes. Blows.

JESUS
 Morning, Team Jesus!

DUNCAN
 (kneels)
 Yes, Lord.

JESUS
 Ah, crackers, Duncan. Get up. And no
 one talks like that anymore.

DUNCAN
 I have offended thee.

JESUS
 (works to his feet)
 Look out now, that's Karen Darwin. You
 finally decided to follow me?

KAREN
Join you-- In exchange for the
 exclusive rights to your story.

Jesus gets everything out of a most excellent stretch.

JESUS
 Do you know about Cap'n Crunch? Duncan
 laces his with drugs.

DUNCAN
 Aspirin... Sometimes.

JESUS
 Wanna bowl?

KAREN
 Oh, that's sweet, but I'm still
 clinging to a modicum of self-respect.

JESUS
 Suit yourself.

DUNCAN
 We have a long journey ahead, Master.

JESUS
 Still not gettin' it, Duncan.

All eyes move to the microbus.

JESUS

Yes! A long journey in this
magnificent motorized carriage.

KAREN

(aside to Duncan)
We're not letting him drive, correct?

JESUS

Quick, I need to immortalize our grand
adventure, hashtag no filter.

They crowd in front of the microbus.

He snaps a selfie.

DUNCAN

First stop, Oh Lord?

JESUS

(slides on dark sunglasses)
Vegas, baby... Vegas

END OF ACT III

TAG**EXT. INTERSTATE 15 - DAY**

Scrappy brush clings to life. A dusty breeze.

A strip of asphalt cuts through cracked, broken earth. Heat waves distort blue mountains, reaching out of the horizon. The microbus putters down the lonely interstate.

INT. MICROBUS - DAY

Jesus slumbers in the back. Drools.

Duncan drives. Karen shotgun.

A SQUAWK.

Duncan's eyes move to...

RED AND BLUE LIGHTS

... Whirling in the rearview mirror.

KAREN

Oh, shit.

A California Highway Patrol OFFICER tails Duncan to the shoulder.

KAREN

Were you speeding?

DUNCAN

Just be cool.

Smiling, Jesus flops his head to one side. Still asleep.

EXT. MICROBUS - DAY

A boot drops the motorcycle kickstand.

The Officer removes his helmet. Peeks in a side mirror.

The reflection is **RAVEN** in a CHP uniform, but to the world, she looks like a male Officer.

Raven walks toward the microbus.

END OF THE SHOW