

**DO  
WE  
HAVE  
YOUR**

# ATTENTION

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Yellow Edit(ion)

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I am truly sorry  
it has come to this



CAPTION over BLACK reads:

2021  
(location undisclosed)

INT. ROOM ONE - NIGHT

A smallish room, black blankets covering the walls. A concrete floor.

It's dark, except for a makeshift spotlight hovering just above MR. JENNS.

Mr. Jenns, 57, white, impeccably dressed, is tied tight to a metal chair, a black bag over his head.

Mr. Jenns breathes.

A HELPER of some sort, shot from the neck down, comes in and removes the black bag from his head.

Temporarily blinded by the change of light, Mr. Jenns looks back but can't make out what the Helper looks like as they exit the room.

Mr. Jenns looks around, observes his restraints, then settles his focus on the open laptop sitting upon a small table four feet in front of him.

Mr. Jenns waits quietly.

The visual of an AUDIO SIGNAL appears. As we will learn later, this is the voice of MR. MAXWELL, masked by a digital, monotone effect.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

I'm going to say a few words, and then you and I are going to have a conversation. Do we have your attention?

MR. JENNS

I think that's evident.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Good. Then I will proceed.

There was a period after September 11th, 2001, in which advocates for the strategic use of torture and violence offered the American public a thought experiment. This scenario was referred to as the Ticking Time Bomb.

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

Proponents of this thought experiment asked, "If you knew there was a bomb that was going to go off, perhaps in a market full of shoppers or a school full of children, and you had access to the person who could prevent this from happening, would you use any means at your disposal, including violence, to persuade that person to help you stop the bomb from going off?"

This hypothetical was supposed to represent the logic and indeed the morality of a temporary resort to violence, if the circumstances demanded it. It was put forth by politicians and thought leaders throughout the country. And, sure enough, a considerable segment of the population agreed that violence, even extreme violence, was acceptable if it meant saving the lives of the innocent.

We believe that this particular thought experiment was flawed and useful only as political propaganda. Not because of the philosophical challenge it posed, but because the scenario assumed things that cannot be assumed.

We accept that our experiment here today may also be flawed. Yet we are willing to gamble on certain assumptions, because we know. The scenario we are facing is not hypothetical.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which has always been quite conservative in its estimates, has now stated we have less than a decade to initiate a plan to avoid total calamity.

Some damage may already be irreversible. But if we are to avoid the worst, to steer away from the starvation, the wars, the macro displacement, the mass extinction of plant, fish, and wildlife species, this plan must be embraced by both government and industry. It must be implemented immediately, and it must be strictly enforced.

You are here because you possess the level of power and influence to help make that happen.

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

We know this because, so far, you have used your power and influence to either explicitly derail these efforts or to water down the efficacy of said plans.

Like us, you too know the bomb is real, the bomb is going to go off, and that Climate Change has already caused suffering and death. To look at the suffering and death ahead and do nothing, to in fact hasten it merely for the sake of convenience, is to contribute directly to it. It is to commit violence. Mass violence.

It's tempting to ask. What should be done to you? Should we hurt you? Should we kill you? Should we sentence you to live the rest of your life – in this room? What is it that you deserve for the harm you have *already* caused?

As much as we may wish to arrive at an answer to these questions, we do not have that luxury. Because even if we erased you from existence, the time bomb you helped create would still exist. And we only have so much time before the ticking stops.

We do not wish to be like you. We want to do what is right *for everyone*. But we have to defuse this bomb. And we have come to a place where we must equate the two. Whatever it takes to defuse this bomb will ultimately be what is right for everyone.

And yet, as storms increase in their frequency and severity, as droughts increase in their frequency and severity, as the violence you've nurtured continues and the warming moves more and more of the planet toward being uninhabitable, you and your friends in government and industry have implored us to be nonviolent.

So tell us. What do we have to do? Nothing we have done thus far has moved you. Outside of violence, what do we have to do to change your minds? What is the nonviolence you demand?

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

If you cannot answer this, you are telling us that only violence will work. And the violence that follows will not be under our sanction. It will be under yours.

You must believe us when we say we do not want that. But you *have* to tell us.  
This is your chance to tell us.

A lot rests on what you have to say right now. I urge you to be candid and forthcoming.

Do you understand what I'm telling you?

MR. JENNS

I understand how misguided you are.  
All this self-righteous babble, after abducting a man.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

We acquired an audience with you. Under normal measures, that wouldn't have been possible.

MR. JENNS

You don't acquire an audience with someone against their will.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

What would you have suggested?

MR. JENNS

Isn't that why you have freedom of speech? Isn't that what your protests are for?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You ask that as if you would pay attention to a protest, from us. What good is speech if a million of our voices are not as loud as the whispers of your friends?

MR. JENNS

If I'm missing, it means there's a skilled team of people trying to find me. And they will find me.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

No.

No one is going to find you. No one is going to bust down the door and save you. You're alone here. I can assure you that.

MR. JENNS

Then what is it that you want? If it's money, you can just say so.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Your money is not the solution. It's the problem. It's the reason why you and your friends are the ones standing in the way. You have that power. I'm recognizing that power for the duration of this conversation. Everything that happens after this conversation will be a matter of your own conscience.

MR. JENNS

It sounds like I'm on trial.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

In a way.

But here you get to be defendant and judge. Potentially prosecutor.

MR. JENNS

I'm not following you.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

It's up to you, right now, whether the means to our end will be violent or nonviolent.

MR. JENNS

You know what happens if you try violence.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Then tell us what we have to do. What nonviolence would be acceptable to you and your peers?  
There are obviously options we haven't exhausted.

MR. JENNS

Like what?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Trucks. Equipment.  
Machinery. Pipelines.

MR. JENNS

I thought we were discussing peaceful protest.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You think property is worth more than people's  
lives?

MR. JENNS

Depends on whose property it is.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

I can't tell whether you're serious or joking.  
With this many lives at stake, you can't possibly--

MR. JENNS

It's still violence.  
The misfortune of one doesn't negate the rights  
of another.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

What about the right to self-defense? Do you  
not recognize that right? If we ensured no  
physical harm would come to any individual and  
targeting would only be in the context of how  
something is used and what it contributes to?  
I can't imagine you would think it violent to  
shoot a missile out of the air.

MR. JENNS

And I can't imagine you believe winning a  
philosophical debate with me will stop you from  
being seen as terrorists.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

We have no interest in explosions or grand  
spectacles. We just need to be able to throw a  
certain number of pebbles into the machine.  
With a proper rifle, you can disable almost  
anything from a safe distance.

MR. JENNS

There's no such thing as a safe distance.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Still, let's suppose there were to emerge a committed and sustained campaign of random sabotage and mechanical impairment. At some point, the cost of doing business would simply be too high.

MR. JENNS

That's if you could find people who were willing to go to prison for longer and longer sentences.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You take for granted a necessity defense won't work. When juries hear just how dire the warnings are, do you really think they'll find fault with such understandably desperate actors?

MR. JENNS

Maybe, maybe not. But they'll definitely find fault with you in the court of public opinion. A little artificial inflation here, a whole lot of media scolding there.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

That's assuming you *have* to tip the scales.

MR. JENNS

What else would you expect?  
I'm not going to apologize for believing in law and order. What you're describing is vigilantism.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Then let's keep within the law. Pretty soon countries are going to see more than just civil suits as an option. There's even talk of charging the worst offenders with crimes against humanity.

MR. JENNS

Didn't you say you only have a few years?  
Lawsuits can be dragged out for decades.  
And even if you were to pull off a miracle in some judicial body, it's completely unenforceable. The United States isn't going to recognize that. And there isn't a corporation worth its stock price that would comply.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

We could always take your cue and bring it to the court of public opinion.

Make it a show trial. Lay it all bare for the public to see how you used your power to actually hinder our salvation. An exercise in shaming, one the world has never seen.

After it's over, we could construct a permanent memorial. Something for posterity. So when the children of each generation ask their parents how it ever got this bad, they will point to this historical beacon. Your names, forever associated with this lasting crime.

Or maybe the crime will be so absolute that the memorial will ultimately be for those who come along after us. Those who may one day happen upon our cities, our technology, what we called civilization. Except they won't have to wonder how it was all lost. They'll know who did it. And they'll pass down that legacy as a lesson to their own. What not to do. What not to be.

MR. JENNS

How many people do you think already look at someone like me and believe that?  
Thousands? Hundreds of thousands? Millions?  
Would it matter if a few more thought it?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Would it?

MR. JENNS

No more than it would 10 billion.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

And why is that?

MR. JENNS

Because it's not true.  
I don't make the laws.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You *do* make the laws. You make them with your campaign contributions.

MR. JENNS

People can vote for whomever they wish.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Hence your choice to fund media and social media and influencers. Not to mention the think tanks and the donations to universities and the manufacturing of activist operations.

MR. JENNS

Every bit of which is legal.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Legal is a matter of design.

MR. JENNS

Then find your own designers.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You control more wealth than some countries.

MR. JENNS

You say that as if I'm supposed to feel guilt. If you know enough about me to have taken me hostage, you also know I didn't start out with money. I had to build it. I took what I had, and I made the most with it. You should take a lesson from that, and quit blaming your losses on the winners.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Is this what you think winning is? Our glaciers disappearing? Our oceans acidifying? Storms we can't defend against?

MR. JENNS

Why do you think I invested millions into renewables? I'm just as concerned about those things as you are.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You're hedging your bets.

MR. JENNS

I'm doing what I'm able to do in a market setting.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Then you won't fault us for using the market as well.

MR. JENNS

Certainly not. In fact, I'd love to hear what you have in mind.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

With the right coordination, there's a good chance we could take down your stocks. One after the other. Cut your wealth in half. Make an example of you.  
It would wreak havoc on Wall Street.

MR. JENNS

It's conceivable. But to what end?  
Threatening a handful of wealthy individuals isn't going to get you change.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Then we'll add a boycott.

MR. JENNS

What product?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

All of them.

MR. JENNS

(smiling)

That's your plan? To get Americans to quit shopping?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Of course not. It's to get the rest of the world to quit purchasing American products.  
There are already dozens of buy-America apps. If the information from those apps were to strategically find their way into the hands of international consumers *slightly more* concerned about the dangers of Climate Change, how long do you think it would take for American exporters to cry Uncle?

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

And that's just consumers acting. If longshoremen were to refuse goods shipped from the United States, it's not hard to see the politicians of those countries conveniently throwing up their hands.

MR. JENNS

We'd go to war before we'd let that happen.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

With who? Who will you go to war with? The first country you attack, you'll add twenty more to the pile.

MR. JENNS

Then we'll convince those countries to *do it for us*.

When it comes to money, there is no neutrality. No matter how much they may delight in our temporary discomfort, their leaders know. We don't forget.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Is it really worth that much? To not do the right thing?

MR. JENNS

That's not democracy. That's coercion. The moment we let outsiders dictate our rules--

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

What if it weren't outsiders?  
What if the pressure came from within?  
How many days could the politicians withstand a general strike?

MR. JENNS

How many days before we find the most unflattering images of protestors clashing with police? How many days before we discredit the organizers?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

And if none of that happens, how many days could the politicians withstand a general strike?

MR. JENNS

As many days as we tell them. There's a hundred ways for you to lose the narrative. We only have to wait you out.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Are you sure about that?

MR. JENNS

It doesn't matter how sure *I* am.  
The burden of proof is on you.

Mr. Jennis uncovers more than a hint of a smile.

INT. WATCHING ROOM - NIGHT

SHOT from behind, over the shoulder, of SOMEONE in a dark room watching on a laptop SCREEN as Mr. Jennis smiles.

SHOT from behind, over the shoulder, of SOMEONE ELSE in another dark room watching on a laptop SCREEN as Mr. Jennis smiles.

And another. And another. And another.

INT. ROOM ONE - CONTINUED

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You're so confident, in your rebuttals.  
How is it that you're not afraid?  
If not for yourself, then what about your children? Your grandchildren?  
You're not stupid. You know what's coming.  
What plans could you possibly be devising that will make it ok for you to have allowed this? You really want to isolate yourself, isolate the ones you love?  
And where will you go? Underground? An island? A floating city in the middle of the ocean? Throw your lot in on space travel?  
The gates can only go so high.

MR. JENNS

Who are you?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

I'm the one tasked with finding a tactic worthy of your mercy.

MR. JENNS

You seem quite confident yourself.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

I'm not confident.

Quite the contrary. I'm frantic.

Because it's become clear to me.

Every couple years, the world's foremost experts in climate science confirm that there is a bomb set to go off. And every time they make this announcement, the detonation of that bomb is closer to us than previously predicted.

You may not have the code, but I believe wholeheartedly you have a piece of it.

To deny us what we ask is to embrace the measures we must resort to.

It is to demand vengeance be visited upon you, decades, maybe even centuries, before your crimes can be fully realized.

If you will not save us, will you at least--

MR. JENNS

Please.

You're embarrassing yourself.

This is fantasy.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Are you saying you don't believe the bomb is real?

MR. JENNS

The bomb is real. I never said it wasn't.

It's the code that isn't.

There is no code.

There is only doing the best with what you have.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

I know you don't believe that. I know that you know the system.

You have enough money to buy the Congress twenty times over. You've got an army of lawyers *and* a reserve of judges.

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

You have phone numbers to individuals that most people don't know exist. And if you don't have all those things, you have friends who can help you get them.

MR. JENNS

And you know what keeps those friends?

It's not wealth.

It's shared interest.

And the moment you don't share their interests, they no longer see you as worthy of your wealth.

You might as well be some bumpkin with a winning lottery ticket.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

There *has* to be something you respect.

Something you'll yield to, short of violence.

MR. JENNS

If it were up to me, I'd wave the magic wand and make everything all right.

But it's not just me. It's all of us. It's everything.

It's too much to put back in place.

Mr. Jenns waits for a comeback, then delights in the lack of.

MR. JENNS (cont'd)

You know I'm right.

The pause grows, slightly morbid.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

In a situation like this, the Army Field Manual says to build rapport. Find commonalities.

Potentially befriend the person you're interrogating.

Unfortunately, we don't have the time for building. And I suspect you have no interest in comradeship.

But more than that, I can't in good conscience pretend to be your friend.

MR. JENNS

Because of my money?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

No. It's not your money.

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

It's because I know what comes next, if you don't comply.  
If you truly can't offer me an answer, then we *both* have to come to terms with the suffering up ahead. The immeasurable suffering.  
We don't want to have to break you down into another person. Where you'll say anything, do anything.  
We want you to *want* to help us.

MR. JENNS

And what if I think you're bluffing?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Like you said. We've already abducted you. We'll be seen as terrorists.  
The consequences have already been set in motion.  
What's a little more suffering?

MR. JENNS

Mine or yours?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

If yours is productive, it will be worth ours.

MR. JENNS

So that's all there is?  
Strategy?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Humanity is facing the plausibility of our planet no longer being livable.  
If avoiding that fate means us using measured instances of physical harm--

MR. JENNS

You mean violence.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

If avoiding that fate means using violence, it's difficult to conceive of a moral case to be made against it.

MR. JENNS

How do you calculate the amount of permissible violence?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

It's a good question. One to be wrestled with.  
I can say we'd prefer not to follow your lead.

MR. JENNS

What's that supposed to mean?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

What would you call the destruction caused by  
once in a century weather events, if not violence?

MR. JENNS

I'm God now? I control the weather?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

No one said you were God. But it is ironic, isn't  
it? As we brace for yet another Climate Change-  
related tragedy, you want *us* to be clear about  
what actions are synonymous with violence.

MR. JENNS

What's ironic is that I'm willing to bet I've done  
more for your cause than all of you put together.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Are you referring to the chump change you pat  
yourself on the back for? Diversifying your  
portfolio with a few shares of wind, a few shares  
of solar? While we have less than ten years before  
certain factors are entirely out of our hands?  
You called *our* efforts a fantasy. As you  
simultaneously pump money into green  
washing and window dressing.  
You'd spend millions to placate us, but you  
won't make a phone call to save our lives.

This is no fantasy for us.

We take no pleasure in these actions.

We abhor them. We feel shame that our  
civilization has arrived at this place.

And we know. Participating in this kind of  
violence will forever change us.

But we are committed to it. If that's what it  
takes.

I tell you this, not to absolve myself.

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

I tell you because I do not want you to have to experience what we are prepared to carry out. As much as I do not believe you deserve reprieve, I am trying, with every word I speak, to save you.

MR. JENNS

Whatever you have in mind is not going to work.

Righteous or not, you have to know that those actions will be counterproductive. Even the slightest act of violence will be used to tar your message. Before you know it, even your goals will be seen as extreme.

If anything, this kind of violence is welcomed. It's seen as a gift. It saves the time of having to conduct smear campaigns.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Incredible.

After all this, you're still playing games.

We have no illusions as to how our actions will be mangled to fit your narrative.

Just like you have no illusions that the same would be done with the most peaceful of protests. You said it yourself. You make nonviolence look like violence all the time.

You don't need violence as a pretext to try and discredit us.

Whatever we do, no matter *what* we do, you'll find a way to use it against us.

MR. JENNS

But this you can't come back from.

Using peaceful means, you at least have a chance.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Then tell us. Tell us what will work.

There's been peaceful climate actions for thirty years.

And yet here we stand, with less than a decade left. Nowhere near where we need to be.

You're the ones who have convinced us that nonviolence won't work. That violence is the only thing you do understand.

If I'm wrong, you have to show me. Right now.

Show us that we're wrong.

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

Show us that there is a path, any path, where we can save our future without resorting to savagery.

This, right here, in this room, in this moment, you, watching the screen in front of you, this, is your last chance.

What do we have to do?

Mr. Jenns takes a while to contemplate.

MR. JENNS

You've already done it.

I was skeptical at first. But I can see from our conversation that you didn't bumble your way into this.

You asked me to be candid with you.

I ask that you hear me out.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Please.

MR. JENNS

The truth is I want to help. I want to save our planet.

But you're right. In my position, there are certain expectations.

I want to make a deal with you.

I'm being truthful when I say that I don't know if any one of your ideas is better than any other. I only know it doesn't matter which one I favor if you can't make it happen.

So *you* decide.

Anyone of the ideas you proposed.

If you can actually make that happen, if you can corral the masses into one disciplined force putting that kind of sustained pressure on the system, I'll use whatever standing and power I have to advocate behind the scenes to acquiesce to your demands.

But you have to give me something in return.

(MORE)

MR. JENNS (cont'd)

If you can hold up your end and I hold up mine, and we actually pull this off, I need at least one of you, after it's all over, to give yourself up. To come forward and admit to the authorities what happened here today.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

That would seem to put whatever progress we would have made at risk.

MR. JENNS

Not necessarily. If this effort were to win, the public could be sympathetic to what you did in their interests. And the results would be too great to suggest reversing.

Granted, you may have to serve time. Or, like you suggested, you could end up with enough peers on the jury to walk away.

You said you were committed to the consequences of your actions. This would prove it.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

And if that person, say me perhaps, were lucky enough to walk away from punishment, what would you get out of it?

MR. JENNS

I need an out. I need to be able to show my peers once this is all over that what I did I did under duress.

Otherwise, I'll be a financial pariah.

A few seconds of silence, as Mr. Jenns waits for an answer.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

And you're being sincere? All you need is our word?

MR. JENNS

I believe you've demonstrated what you're willing to do for *your* cause.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Ok then. I give you my word.

Once we're in the clear, I'll come forward. Tell the world what I did.

MR. JENNS

Then we have a deal.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Almost.

Before we go forward, we're going to need a bit more than your word.

MR. JENNS

I'm willing to take your word. You're not willing to take mine?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

I think it's fair to say that you too have demonstrated what you're willing to do for your own personal interests.

MR. JENNS

Fair enough.

What is it that you want?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

If we were going to let you go, we would need to know you have skin in the game.

MR. JENNS

What exactly does that mean?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

It means this.

We want you to transfer all current assets to two separate trust accounts. One holding 10 percent. The other holding 90 percent. The smaller account will sit idle. The larger account we will have the capacity to draw from, up to five percent, for our organizing efforts. Also from the larger account, we will appoint a fiduciary to make sure all your bills are paid and to issue you an allowance so that you may operate on our behalf, as you said behind the scenes, without raising any red flags amongst your friends or family.

If and when there is government enactment of adequate and enforceable policy, you will receive the principle remaining from the larger account.

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

The 10 percent in the other account will go to fund mitigation and adaptation in the worst affected of the Global South.

If a period of three years has gone by and we have not achieved our goals, the reverse will happen. The remaining principal from the 90 percent will go to the Global South, and you'll receive the 10 percent.

In short, you have three years to persuade the *other* powers that be to embrace our endeavor and comply with our demands. After which, regardless of outcome, our ties will be cut.

If you go to the authorities, if you try to recover this money outside of our arrangement, I can guarantee you. It will not bear fruit. On the contrary, breaching the deal will result in a total forfeit of assets and will be understood as your abandonment of faith in nonviolence and an explicit instruction for us to engage in - last resort tactics.

Mr. Jenns takes his time, before asking.

MR. JENNS

And how do I know that this isn't just some elaborate scam?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You don't.

Just like we don't know that you won't walk out of here and call the FBI - the first chance you get.

What you do know is that, in the time you have been with us, we have not struck you nor caused you any physical trauma. If all we were interested in was your money, you would be missing most of your fingers by now.

MR. JENNS

Still. Even if you're everything you say, *especially* if you're everything you say, why only the five percent to operate on?

(MORE)

MR. JENNS (cont'd)

Wouldn't it be far more effective to put the entire amount towards your efforts and to hell with me?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

If we can't win with that five percent, the rest won't make a difference. The difference is you. You're the key. The money is only an insurance policy. It's the only way we can know you're serious.

Are you - serious?

A pause, as Mr. Jenns ponders the offer.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

We are prepared to make the arrangements.

A longer, serrated pause, as the silence begins to suggest serious reluctance.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

Do you have an answer?

More silence, even than before.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

All we're looking for is evidence of your com--

MR. JENNS

All you're looking for is everything I've built. Everything I worked to put together. You think I can just sign that over to you? I don't even know who you are.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Knowing is not the issue. It's what you don't know. And what you don't know is what will happen - if you do nothing. We're asking you to take a chance. Asking you to utilize--

MR. JENNS

You're asking me something you don't understand. Because you have no understanding of the world I live in. What it took to get me where I am.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You're right here. In this room.  
With me.

MR. JENNS

No. I'm not.  
I'm not here. I'm still out there.  
Still acting. Still making moves. Still dominating.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

I take it you're referring to the money.

You couldn't withdraw it all if you wanted,  
could you? Couldn't physically touch it.  
It might as well not exist. All in your head.  
Stacks and stacks of imaginary bills. Like a  
cartoon.  
Do you even know it exists?

MR. JENNS

It exists.  
It may just be numbers on a screen. But those  
numbers are more real than anything else in the  
world. They may be all that is real.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Do you believe we exist? Are we real to you?

MR. JENNS

In here you are.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

But not out there?

MR. JENNS

I said I would help you.  
I'll give you money to fund your efforts.  
But what you're asking is impossible.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

So you're admitting. The money that you can't  
hold, can't see. The money you'll never be able  
to spend, that your great great grandchildren  
will never be able to spend.  
That's more important. Than us.

MR. JENNS

It can't just be me. There are other people that have what I have. There are people with more. Why not kidnap them? Do to them what you've done to me. Put them here. Get *them* to agree. It's got to be more than just me.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

It isn't the money, is it?

MR. JENNS

Of course it's the money.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Then why did you say earlier, "if it's money" that we want?

MR. JENNS

I thought you would be reasonable. What you're asking? It's too much.

His words hang in the air.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You don't believe it'll work. You're not willing to let go of the money because you don't think we have a chance.

After another deep pause, Mr. Jenns relents.

MR. JENNS

What do you want me to say? I can't give you what isn't there.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You won't even try. You would rather gamble on your money being enough. Against anything.

MR. JENNS

I can't change the world.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

You're telling us that it's ok. That we have no other choice. Violence is all we have left.

MR. JENNS  
You'd eventually find out anyway.

For the next half minute, the AUDIO SIGNAL on the SCREEN barely flutters.

Then erupts.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)  
No!  
Noooooo!  
You have to try. You have to work with us.  
You have to show us something.

Please.  
You don't understand what's going to happen.

MR. JENNS  
Then tell me. Tell me what it is you're threatening me with.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)  
I can't. I can't tell you. I can only promise you that you will not be able to recover.

MR. JENNS  
Then tell me what it is. What is it that's so bad?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)  
I can't tell you that. I can only tell you that if you don't give us something, it will happen.  
And I'm sorry for that.

MR. JENNS  
Why should I believe you? If I can't know the consequence of my refusal, why should I do what you're asking?

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)  
It doesn't count if you know what's going to happen.

Mr. Jenns looks down at the floor for a few long seconds, then gently shakes his head.

MR. JENNS  
I'm sorry.  
(MORE)

MR. JENNS (cont'd)

Even if I could help you.

Mr. Maxwell returns, a few long seconds.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.)

Please. For all there is to save, I'm willing to beg you.

Please. I'm begging.

I don't know what else to say to make you believe.

You have to trust me. You have to listen. You have to listen.

We only have this moment.

Mr. Jenns refuses to look at the SCREEN.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

Say something.

Say something!

You have to answer.

Mr. Jenns stoically looks back up, yet offers nothing.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O.) (cont'd)

You don't know what they're capable of.

You don't.

They're going to hurt you.

They're going to do the worst thing.

You're allowing them to do it.

You're telling them to do it.

Please. You have to cooperate.

Pleeeeeeeeeease! I'm beg--

The visual of the AUDIO SIGNAL disappears, as the laptop SCREEN goes blank.

Mr. Jenns sits in silence.

Not knowing.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM TWO – TWO MINUTES AGO

Same setup as ROOM ONE.

As we revisit the previous two minutes, this time from the vantage point of Mr. Maxwell, we alternate between a CLOSE-UP on the face of the 51-year-old white male, his forehead wet with sweat,

and

a TIGHT SHOT of the laptop SCREEN in front of him.

An AUDIO SIGNAL is also displayed, relaying the sound from ROOM ONE. However, this SCREEN hosts a small TIMER in the corner, ominously counting - down.

MR. JENNS (V.O.)

I'm sorry.  
Even if I could help you.

As he processes what he's just heard, contemplating how to respond, the CLOSE-UP on Mr. Maxwell begins to ZOOM OUT.

We see Mr. Maxwell is also tied to a metal chair, but he is not impeccably dressed. Instead, he wears a prison-style jumpsuit.

The ZOOM-OUT stops with the camera slightly above but directly behind the laptop, still pointed at, directly in front of, Mr. Maxwell.

MR. MAXWELL

Please. For all there is to save, I'm willing to beg  
you.  
Please. I'm begging.  
I don't know what else to say to make you  
believe.  
You have to trust me. You have to listen. You  
have to listen.  
We only have this moment.

The pause returns us to the taunting laptop SCREEN, TIMER ticking down.

MR. MAXWELL (cont'd)

Say something.  
Say something!  
You have to answer.

Nothing. Only the TIMER, taking us closer and closer to zero.

MR. MAXWELL (cont'd)

You don't know what they're capable of.  
You don't.

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (cont'd)

They're going to hurt you.  
They're going to do the worst thing.  
You're allowing them to do it.  
You're telling them to do it.  
Please. You have to cooperate.  
Pleeeeeeeeeeease! I'm begging you.

The TIMER hits zero, and the AUDIO SIGNAL visual disappears.

Mr. Maxwell begins to cry.

He then screams in anguish.

A few seconds later, the CLOSE-UP face of YOUTH A, a fifteen-year-old girl, appears on the SCREEN.

MR. MAXWELL (cont'd)

(intermittently stuttering)

Please, please. Put him back on. Just put him  
back on. Give me a few more minutes. I know  
there's a way. I'll find a way.  
I promise you. I swear. Just give me two more  
minutes. Two more minutes, please.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

You know that's not what we agreed to.

MR. MAXWELL

Then give me someone else. Give me another  
chance with someone else. I'll do better this  
time. I'll study more and I'll come up with better  
arguments. I know I can do this. I just need you  
to give me this, just one more chance.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

Twenty-three days. You told us you were  
prepared.  
We gave you access to all the resources you  
needed. We let you watch the other sessions, so  
you might build on the attempts of others.  
There's no reason to believe giving you any more  
time will make a difference.

MR. MAXWELL

It will. I know it will.  
(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (cont'd)

Look, I know what we agreed to, but I need to tell you something. You need to understand something.

I didn't make those arguments just to get out of this.

In the time you've given me, I was able to reflect on who I am, what I've done.

And you're right. I was wrong. My whole life I've been wrong. I've helped put us where we're at. I've ignored the suffering. I've caused suffering. I have committed violence.

I can see that now. And I know that I can't undo the damage that's already been done.

But I can do something now, to change what is coming. I know I can do that. Not to save myself from serving sentence, but because I want to do it. I need to do it.

Every word I just said, I said because I believed it. You helped me see all of that. You helped me. I understand why you had to do this. I don't fault you for bringing me here. It's what was needed. It was the only thing that was going to make me see you, to see myself.

But I see myself, now. And I see you. And all I want to do - is to be of service.

Just let me do the right thing, right now.

Let me make up for what I've done.

I can do this. I *will* do this.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

Mr. Maxwell.

While this is encouraging to hear, your words are unnecessary now.

MR. MAXWELL

No.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

You'll have the rest of your life to prove your change of heart.

*After* we're sure you've come to terms with what you've done.

MR. MAXWELL

I'm telling you. I *have* come to terms with it. I've come to terms with all of it.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

I hope that's true. But there's only one way we can know.

MR. MAXWELL

No, but, see I'm telling you right now. You don't have to do anything. I'm ready.

I'll sign my money over. I'll go work behind the scenes. I'll do it right now.

I'll do whatever you ask me to. Whatever it takes I will do without hesitation. Just please. Don't do this.

I swear to you, I'm telling the truth.

You have to believe me.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

We want to believe you.

But we won't know, until it's real - for you.

MR. MAXWELL

No no no. I know you don't want to do this. I know you don't.

You wrote it in the scripted part. The process, this whole experiment. It's unfair.

How can I be punished for participating, if the process itself is imperfect?

Pause.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

Of course it's imperfect. But that's how you see. When it was you, when *you* refused. It was also a peer. Imploring you, pleading with you.

But you didn't know that. You thought it was one of us.

That was your answer. When you thought it was us.

It doesn't matter what the words are, how logical the argument. How moral.

If it doesn't come from someone like them, they won't listen.

MR. MAXWELL

And I'm telling you, I will do it. I will make the case. I'll do whatever you ask.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

You had your turn.  
This is what comes next.

MR. MAXWELL

No. This can't be it. There's got to be more than this.  
There's got to be something. Something I can do to convince you.  
Whatever it is, just tell me.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

Mr. Maxwell. It's you that has to be convinced.

MR. MAXWELL

I am! I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. Please!  
Let me show you. Let me prove to you that I'm not that person. I'm someone else. I have a different heart.

YOUTH A (V.O.)

I'm sorry, Mr. Maxwell. We regret it's gotten to this point. We would have preferred a different route.  
To be sure, this next part is going to be difficult. But it's the only way.

MR. MAXWELL

(throwing his head back)

Dear God.  
Help me. Help me show them.  
Let me make up for my sins. Let me redeem myself.

Mr. Maxwell closes his eyes and finishes his prayer in a broken whisper.

MR. MAXWELL (cont'd)

Let me serve you, Lord. I will give everything. I will give you everything.  
I am a changed man.  
Tell them, Lord.  
Tell them not to do this.  
Forgive me. For all I have done.  
I submit to you. I submit my whole existence.  
Wash me clean.  
Save me, Lord.  
Please.

(MORE)

MR. MAXWELL (cont'd)

Save me.

The Helper comes in and puts a pair of headphones on Mr. Maxwell.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM ONE – TIME ELAPSED

Mr. Jenns sits in silence, awaiting what's next.

Finally, an image appears on the SCREEN in front of him: A corner-view WIDE-ANGLE of ROOM TWO.

Mr. Jenns sees a man with headphones on, in a prison-style jumpsuit, tied to a chair, saying something at a laptop, the SCREEN of which Mr. Jenns cannot see.

At first, the sound is off.

Mr. Jenns focuses in on the man's face.

After about five lines of silent dialogue and a long pause, the sound of Mr. Maxwell's voice becomes audible. Yet, this time, clear, without effect.

A look comes across Mr. Jenns' face, as if he might recognize the man.

The AUDIO increases. Mr. Jenns can tell it's a recording of the previous conversation.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O)

Say something.  
Say something!  
You have to answer.

Mr. Jenns watches as his previous silence rips at Mr. Maxwell.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O) (cont'd)

You don't know what they're capable of.  
You don't.  
They're going to hurt you.  
They're going to do the worst thing.  
You're allowing them to do it.  
You're telling them to do it.  
Please. You have to cooperate.  
Pleeeeeeeeeease! I'm begging you.

Mr. Jenns watches as Mr. Maxwell begins to cry, and scream.

The image vanishes. The SCREEN is blank for five seconds.

Then the CLOSE-UP face of YOUTH B appears on the SCREEN. A thirteen-year-old girl.

YOUTH B (V.O.)

Hello, Mr. Jenns.

MR. JENNS

Who are you?

YOUTH B (V.O.)

I think you might regard me as the bad cop.

MR. JENNS

Was that Ian Maxwell?

YOUTH B (V.O.)

You know Mr. Maxwell?

Mr. Jenns takes a moment before answering. It's starting to sink in.

MR. JENNS

What did you do to him?

YOUTH B (V.O.)

The same thing we did to you.

MR. JENNS

I know Ian. He would never participate in something like this.

YOUTH B (V.O.)

The conversation you had with Mr. Maxwell was of his own will and conception.

MR. JENNS

So what, you beat him? Tortured him? Is that what you're going to do to me now?

YOUTH B (V.O.)

We didn't touch Mr. Maxwell. We only showed him that we weren't, as you said, bluffing.

MR. JENNS

How?  
What does that mean?

This time, Youth B takes a moment.

YOUTH B (V.O.)

If I were Mr. Maxwell, I would have asked you if it's wrong to convince someone of your capacity for violence. If it's the same as violence itself. Unfortunately, the time for questions has passed.

Mr. Maxwell was instructed to be vague regarding the form of danger you're in. Even then, if he had been forthcoming about the consequences of not complying, you couldn't be sure we would go through with our threat. That we could even be capable of such.

To make up for this inconsistency, we're going to give you another chance. But this time, there will be no doubt. You'll know. You'll know because you'll remember. You *did* this.

MR. JENNS

Did what? What are you talking about?

YOUTH B (V.O.)

What you're about to witness is not of our instruction. It's yours. Mr. Maxwell warned you. He told you it was going to happen. And you let it. You chose. Our violence.

The laptop SCREEN goes blank for five seconds, before

Another image appears: The WIDE-SHOT of Mr. Maxwell in ROOM TWO comes back on the SCREEN. He is watching the laptop in front of him, screaming. Because he has headphones on, we cannot hear what is on *his* laptop SCREEN.

We can only hear his anguish.

Mr. Jenns can only imagine.

MR. MAXWELL (V.O)

No, no. Not this. Please you can't do this. This isn't part of it.

You can't do this. You can't do this. You can't do this. This isn't part of it.

No. You know this isn't right. You know it. You know this isn't right. Please. I'll give you anything, I'll do anything.

You want to hurt me, I'll hurt myself. I'll kill myself in front of you. I'll torture myself. I'll do whatever it takes. Whatever you want to do. Do it to me. Hurt me. I'll hurt myself. I don't care. Please. It's me you want. I'm guilty. I'm the one that deserves it. You can do it all to me.

Just don't - do th- aaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

You bastards, you fucking bastards. I'll fucking kill you. I'll kill all of you.

Noooooooooooo! Nooooooooooooooooooooo!

Mr. Maxwell shrieks in horror.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM TWO - CONTINUOUS

MR. MAXWELL

Please kill me. Kill me. Kill me. Kill me.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!

Mr. Maxwell closes his eyes and shakes his head, so hard that the headphones fall off.

Within seconds, the Helper arrives to put them back on.

Mr. Maxwell holds shut and tries to shake the headphones again, but the Helper holds them in place. If he will not look, he must hear.

In a fit, Mr. Maxwell rocks from side to side, trying to escape the grip of the Helper. His movement is forceful enough that the chair tips sideways onto the floor.

Mr. Maxwell lays sideways in the chair, with his headphones being held on, as he sobs and screams.

MR. MAXWELL (cont'd)  
I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

Five seconds of silence over BLACK, before

INT. ROOM ONE - DAY

The setup is the same as before, only Mr. Jenns is wearing the same prison-style jumpsuit that Mr. Maxwell had on.

YOUTH C's face appears on the SCREEN, CLOSE-UP. A fifteen-year-old boy.

YOUTH C (V.O.)  
Hello, Mr. Jenns. I understand you're ready to proceed?

MR. JENNS  
I'm ready.

YOUTH C (V.O.)  
Ok, then.  
Remember, you'll read from the script first.  
Once you finish the script, the timer will begin.  
That will be your time, to say whatever you wish, as long as you do not reveal your identity or that you were in their position earlier. Nor can you reveal the specifics of what will happen if you are unsuccessful.  
You've been informed of what happens if you violate these rules.

MR. JENNS  
I understand.

YOUTH C (V.O.)  
Thirty-four days. You've read all the reports and the literature we've given you. Familiarized yourself with the various mitigation plans. You watched the other sessions.  
Is there anything else you think you might need to make your case?

MR. JENNS

No. I'm confident.

YOUTH C (V.O.)

And you feel, from what we've provided, you know enough about your peer? Enough to overcome their resistance?

MR. JENNS

I know them well enough.

YOUTH C (V.O.)

That's good to hear. We trust your approach will be effective.

Do you need to watch the end of Mr. Maxwell's tape again? For motivation?

MR. JENNS

No. I'm aware of the stakes.

YOUTH C (V.O.)

You indicated that you've memorized the script. Is that correct? We can put it on the screen if you like.

MR. JENNS

No need.  
I know it.

YOUTH C (V.O.)

And you know what to ask for?

MR. JENNS

I know what's being asked.

YOUTH C (V.O.)

Excellent.  
Your peer is being situated.  
The signal will appear on the screen shortly.  
Do you have any last questions?

MR. JENNS

No.

YOUTH C (V.O.)

Then good luck.

The Youth's face disappears. A few seconds goes by.

Then the visual of an AUDIO SIGNAL comes on the SCREEN.

A voice, that of another PEER.

PEER (V.O.)

What is this?  
Where am I?  
What the hell is going on?

MR. JENNS

I'm going to say a few words, and then you and I  
are going to have a conversation.

CREDITS begin to ROLL over BLACK to MUSIC on the right half of the  
SCREEN.

CREDITS and MUSIC PAUSE...

FACILITATOR (V.O.)

All right, sooooo. There's a little more at the end of the credits, but I think this is a good place to get things started.

Let me get everybody back on the main view here.

A VIDEO GROUP CHAT shows a man inside a box titled FACILITATOR, then shows six more boxes for AVI - 21 years old, WENDY - 26, MARTIN - 44, JAMES - 39, LIDDY - 62, and CONNOR - 57.

FACILITATOR

Looks like everybody's still awake.

That's a good sign.

Before we begin, thank you all again for coming in, and double thank you for being in the booths. I know it's a little bit awkward, but we're trying to be cautious. And we believe that doing it this way is better than focus groups in the same room with everyone wearing masks.

Anyway, as you all know, we are going to be recording this session for later analysis. And so I don't have to *extra* furiously take notes.

But only the filmmakers/interested parties will have access to this, so please be as candid as you can.

For those who've been in a focus group before, this may be a tad different than what you're used to.

But I think you'll find it stimulating and hopefully fun.

The Facilitator pauses to smile.

The FOCUS GROUP members reciprocate, some awkwardly.

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

If it's ok, I'd like to begin with you voicing any aspects of the movie that stood out enough that you thought you might mention it when we started discussing.

No one says anything.

FACILITATOR (cont'd)

Don't everyone speak all at once.

Wendy's hand goes up.

FACILITATOR (cont'd)

Wendy. And just so you know, you don't have to raise your hand. As long as no one else is talking, you can just go.

WENDY

I liked when the camera angle was coming from above the rich guy.

FACILITATOR

Mr. Jenns.

WENDY.

Mr. Jenns, yeah.  
It made it feel like we're supposed to look down on him. For like what he's been doing related to Climate Change.

JAMES

I thought the same thing. I thought it set the tone early for how we're supposed to feel about this person, even though they're in a situation that would immediately evoke empathy.

CONNOR

That's because he deserves empathy.  
Whatever he did before he got in that room doesn't mean what happens *in the room* isn't wrong.

WENDY

That's why the camera angle works. It's a reminder of who he is.

FACILITATOR

That's good.  
Anyone else have a similar observation?

LIDDY

I liked it when the camera circled *around* the hostage as--

FACILITATOR

Mr. Jenns.

LIDDY

Right, sorry.  
The way it circled Mr. Jenns as he talked.

FACILITATOR

Why did that stand out to you?

LIDDY

It made me think about the way animals of prey  
circle around the animal they're going to eat.

MARTIN

Are you saying it made you feel like Mr. Jenns  
was an animal? Or less than human?

LIDDY

I didn't think that while I was watching. But  
now that you say it like that, I guess it could  
have that effect in your mind.

FACILITATOR

Did this choice of camera work strike anyone  
else?

CONNOR

Probably not before, but if I think about him  
being like the prey, it kind of foreshadows him  
not making it out of there without something  
really bad happening.

WENDY

It's also kind of ironic, because he's so powerful  
and has probably considered himself to be the  
alpha, or like a predator, when it comes to  
business and stuff like that.

LIDDY

I guess that's true too.

FACILITATOR

Anyone else?

AVI

If you wanted to get really deep with it, you could maybe say it represented us having gone in circles trying to figure out what to do about Climate Change.

JAMES

Or that maybe the circle is painting a literal target on him.

CONNOR

Wow.

FACILITATOR

This is a really good start, with all important insights.

I like that you're joining in without having to be prompted. It's best if you all talk freely without reservation.

Before we move onto the script, was there anything else any of you had planned on mentioning?

WENDY

Well... not to get negative, but... I didn't think there was enough diversity in the cast.

AVI

What about the teens on the laptop?

WENDY

They weren't *main* characters.

CONNOR

The main characters are supposed to be pretty bad people. And there's only two main characters.

WENDY

Are you saying that people of color can't be bad people?

CONNOR

(chuckling)

No, I just think it's funny that anyone is asking for greater racial representation in unflattering roles.

MARTIN

They're not just *bad* people. In this setting, they can be seen as sympathetic characters as well.

WENDY

How do you figure they're sympathetic?

CONNOR

How do you figure they're not?

WENDY

They're there because they've been willing to watch our future go down the toilet so they can keep social status.

CONNOR

They've been kidnapped and threatened with torture.

WENDY

They're being given a choice to save our lives.

MARTIN

It's still against their will.

WENDY

So their will matters more than the future of billions?

LIDDY

You don't stop being human because you're a bad person.

WENDY

And they didn't stop being bad people until they were kidnapped and threatened with torture.

CONNOR

Is it that black and white? Good people and bad people?

WENDY

You don't think the people who refuse to save us are bad people?

CONNOR

That's the problem with your generation. You're *all* victims. You need someone else to save you because you won't do it yourselves.

JAMES

Did you not watch the movie? Everything else they've tried hasn't worked. They're literally taking action *to* save themselves.

CONNOR

You too?  
You think they're the good guys?

JAMES

You just said there weren't good people and bad people.

CONNOR

But you think they're right to do this.

JAMES

I expect they would prefer to do something else.

CONNOR

But push comes to shove, you're on their side.

WENDY

Does that mean you're on Mr. Jenns' side?

CONNOR

The one who's been kidnapped, yes.

JAMES

We've all been kidnapped.

CONNOR

Is that so?

JAMES

Being kidnapped means you've been taken somewhere you don't want to be, and you're not allowed to leave.

MARTIN

Leave what?

JAMES

This future.  
Do you not believe this is real?

CONNOR

Do you not believe this is wrong?

JAMES

Wrong is a matter of options.

CONNOR

Fair enough. But are you really telling me the guy  
in the chair--

FACILITATOR

Mr. Jenns.

CONNOR

You're telling me Mr. Jenns isn't the one who's  
been kidnapped? That actually the people who  
took him there, tied him up, and are threatening  
his life; *they're* the ones who've been kidnapped?  
Is that what you believe?

JAMES

There's more than one room in the story.  
Can you not see that?

CONNOR

I can see that we don't share the same ideas on  
what's acceptable as a form of protest.

JAMES

Are you telling me you wouldn't be ok if Mr.  
Jenns got loose from that chair and had to kill  
everyone in that place to get out?

CONNOR

If that's what it took to get free.

JAMES

Then why wouldn't you support these young  
people doing anything they can to get free from  
the future this guy and guys like him have locked  
them into?

CONNOR

It's not the same thing.

JAMES

They're not identical. But if someone is standing in front of the only door out.

CONNOR

It's not the only door out.

JAMES

You're right. They're asking Mr. Jenns if there are any other doors.

CONNOR

They're asking him under duress.

JAMES

I think they would argue that they're the ones who are under duress.

CONNOR

Sounds to me like *you're* arguing it.

JAMES

I'm just interpreting things the way I see them.

FACILITATOR

And that's exactly what we want.  
Does anyone else have anything they want to say about the visuals of the movie?

If not, then maybe we could address the script.  
Were there any particular lines that had a distinct impact on you?

MARTIN

I... I really liked... that the movie didn't use any curse words - in the conversation between Mr. Jenns and the person on the computer.  
But then the one man ended up using curse words during the torture scene.

FACILITATOR

Mr. Maxwell.

MARTIN

I didn't like that. It really threw me off and was distracting for me.

FACILITATOR

Do you think it would have gotten across the same message, or gotten the message across better, if the curse words were removed?

MARTIN

For me, yes.  
I can't speak for other people, but for me it would.

FACILITATOR

You don't think someone might have resorted to curse words in such a dire situation?

MARTIN

Maybe they would.  
That doesn't mean I want to hear it.

AVI

Would *you*? If you were in that position, you don't think you might let the wrong word slip?

MARTIN

I'm not going to say for certain that I wouldn't.  
I *can* say that I would try not to.

FACILITATOR

Did the cursing change the way you felt about Mr. Maxwell?

MARTIN

Well, I try my best not to judge. Yet when I heard those words... it almost made me have less sympathy toward him, if I'm honest.

LIDDY

But with everything that's implied to have happened to him?

MARTIN

I just didn't think the scene called for that type of language. For me.

FACILITATOR

And that's ok. Your response is as valid as anyone else's. If we want to reach a wide audience with this film, we need to have insight into different viewing tastes.

Thank you for sharing.

Were there any other issues anyone had with choice of words or language?

If not, I'm going to open it up now to general discussion regarding the script.  
You're welcome to bring up anything you like.

AVI

You said the guy who was asking the questions originally, but is screaming in the end, was Mr. Maxwell?

FACILITATOR

That's correct. Mr. Maxwell.

AVI

All right. So, if Mr. Maxwell was in the same situation before, there's no way they've had him tied up for all this time.

CONNOR

You mean he could have escaped. I wondered the same thing.

AVI

They would have to let him be untied for some things.

WENDY

Not necessarily. They could chain his leg. Or something like that.

AVI

But maybe not.

WENDY

But probably.

FACILITATOR

Why do you bring it up?

AVI

If he's got a chance to escape, even once, don't you think he would take it?

LIDDY

Maybe. It depends. We have to assume that Mr. Maxwell saw whoever did *his* session, screaming after watching what was on *their* screen. Maybe he assumed they've already taken and are holding whoever is going to be on his screen.

CONNOR

We don't know that. And even still, that might give him *more* incentive to escape. So he can save them.

WENDY

That's some macho Liam Neeson from *Taken* bullshit.

MARTIN

Please.

WENDY

Sorry.

FACILITATOR

So what do you think? Does he have a chance to escape or doesn't he?  
And if he does, does he take it?

AVI

I think I get it.  
Mr. Maxwell is supposed to be kind of the same as Mr. Jenns. Or at least he *was*. And we can infer that Mr. Jenns escaping is not really an option. Because... the whole thing is a metaphor for Climate Change. And the situation *we're* in.

JAMES

And in the film, Mr. Maxwell's only real way to escape is to convince Mr. Jenns.  
That's *his* only hope, the only *real* hope for escape he has.

FACILITATOR

Does that answer satisfy your curiosity?

AVI

I feel like it's a good analogy. I guess I was really just looking at like - having more action might sell it better, to a wider audience.

FACILITATOR

And that *is* helpful. But as we go on, I want you to think more about how the film sat *with you*.

Since we're on the subject, did anyone else have any issues with the plot?

LIDDY

I'm not sure, but...

I think if Mr. Jenns knows something bad is going to happen, or that there's even a possibility of it happening to someone close to him. Or them suffering from what happens to him... If we can assume they have his wife or kids or something like that, he's going to agree and do the right thing.

I don't think he's going to just turn his back on his own. It's not possible.

MARTIN

I felt that way too.

But I thought it even more when we see Mr. Maxwell's fate.

I don't see how anyone would end up in Mr. Maxwell's position. No one would hold out like that.

JAMES

Yeah, but powerful people are doing that right now.

LIDDY

They're doing it now because they believe their money is going to save them and their family. If they didn't have that assurance, or worse - it was guaranteed their family was going to be harmed, I think they would do the right thing.

WENDY

Are you talking about Climate Change or the hostage situation?

LIDDY

I guess both.

MARTIN

Does that mean you agree with something like this happening?

LIDDY

No, I don't. At all.

I just think if you were able to prove to someone like this the *severity* of the consequences, that even his own loved ones are going to suffer--

JAMES

Then let's say he hadn't been taken hostage. With Climate Change, there's no guarantee that his kids won't be affected. Well, maybe for his kids, but definitely no guarantee for his grandchildren, or great grandchildren.

LIDDY

You're still agreeing with me. You think what they're doing is enough to make him do the right thing.

WENDY

But he hasn't done the right thing. That's why he's there.

He represents all the people who refuse to do the right thing, even when it might screw over their own grandchildren.

LIDDY

Then I just don't think he would do it in *this* situation.

I can see it being a metaphor and all that. But it's not the same. If he could see the future *and* see his grandkids losing their home or dying in a natural disaster or something, he would definitely do the right thing. But he *can't* see the future.

JAMES

But with Climate Change, we kind of can. We may not be able to see the exact storm or fire, but we know they're coming.

(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)

Besides that, his grandchildren aren't any more important than yours or mine.

LIDDY

I'm not saying he's not a bad guy. I'm saying, because he's a bad guy, that, out there, as long as there's a possibility his money can save him, he's going to go with the money. But in this situation, his money can't save him. And he knows it. But he still isn't giving in. I can't accept him not giving in, in this situation. Even as a bad guy. That's what I'm saying.

AVI

I agree.

MARTIN

Me too.

I don't believe he would be so obstinate.

FACILITATOR

Mr. Jenns is not a real person. He's a character played by an actor named Jonathan Francis. Mr. Francis doesn't have a choice. That's the way the script is written. That's the lines he was given.

LIDDY

But we're not talking about the actor, we're talking about the character.

FACILITATOR

Yes, and the character that the actor plays does this in the script.

Are you suggesting Mr. Francis not read the lines he was given?

AVI

I think we're suggesting you write different lines.

FACILITATOR

That's not what this film is about.

AVI

Then maybe it's not very good.

FACILITATOR

You said you accepted the premise as an effective metaphor.

AVI

I do. But that doesn't mean the rest of the movie is good.

FACILITATOR

Do you think you know what would make it *good*?

AVI

I have some ideas.

FACILITATOR

You should make that movie then.

AVI

Wow. Ok.

CONNOR

What do you mean, he should make it?

FACILITATOR

Precisely what I said. When you leave here, you should make that movie.

AVI

But I'm not a filmmaker.

FACILITATOR

You could be.

AVI

What are you getting at?

FACILITATOR

This movie needs to be effective. As it pertains to the success of this idea, this metaphor premise, you absolutely could go out and attempt to make a better creative statement. But obviously that's not your part, yet. Your part right now is here, being a member of the focus group.

AVI

And I have no problem with that. It's just that you're the one implying you're not going to make changes to the film.

FACILITATOR

The filmmakers absolutely *are* open to making changes. Just not the ones you're suggesting.

AVI

Then what are we doing here if our opinion is not going to count for anything?

LIDDY

Yeah. What if we all agree?  
You're going to pretend like you don't have the power to make changes?

FACILITATOR

The filmmakers have the power; they're just not going to use it. On this.

MARTIN

Why is that?

FACILITATOR

Because that's not what this film is about.

CONNOR

But this is your film. If you have the power to change it, just change it.

FACILITATOR

That's not how it works. Besides, I'm just the facilitator of the focus group.

AVI

Ok, but you can relay what we're saying to the people who can change it. That is your job, isn't it?

FACILITATOR

My job is to conduct the focus group and then make a report from it.

AVI

But you're going to put what we just said in the report.

FACILITATOR

I'm not at that stage yet.

AVI

Are you saying you wouldn't put it in?

FACILITATOR

I may. I may not.

MARTIN

Why wouldn't you?

FACILITATOR

If I think they'd find it useful, I'll put it in.

CONNOR

This is ridiculous. If we're not even sure if what we say is going to find its way into the report, then why are we here?

FACILITATOR

You're here to play your part. And your part is to voice your opinions within the focus group. You're not entitled to be included in the report. If it makes you feel better, you may recall that I said we *are* recording.

CONNOR

Do they see the recording?

FACILITATOR

Only if they want to.

JAMES

But why wouldn't they want to? What's the point of the focus group, if they don't care to even hear what we have to say?

FACILITATOR

The focus group is for tweaks, not big changes. It's to make sure their vision isn't a total dud. But mostly it makes them *feel like* they care about what the audience thinks.

(MORE)

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

But this is getting too much into the weeds of filmmaking; we should get back to the film itself.

AVI

I'm not getting back to anything. If this is all for show or to make someone feel like they went through the motions, I'm not interested.

FACILITATOR

Of course you are. You still have lines left here, and a few good ones toward the end.

AVI

What the fuck are you talking about?

FACILITATOR

Please. You know Martin doesn't like to hear that kind of language.

Martin looks self-conscious, as Avi is both put off and begrudgingly disarmed.

Before Avi can respond--

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

Wendy, you seemed to be in agreement with the plot. Did *you* have any issues?

AVI

Don't change the subject.

FACILITATOR

I don't make the rules for the focus group. And I obviously didn't write the script. I'm just like you. Trying to play my part. But we only have so much time. So I would appreciate everyone following along. Wendy?

Equal parts irritated and perplexed, Avi acquiesces.

WENDY

Ok...

I thought the premise was pretty good. But I do feel like Mr. Maxwell could have made better arguments.

FACILITATOR

Does that mean *you* have better arguments?

WENDY

I didn't say that. But I think there were more persuasive things he could have said.

FACILITATOR

Then let's hear them.

WENDY

What? Nah, I mean I'm not trying to--

FACILITATOR

If the arguments are not persuasive, then we need to correct for that.

WENDY

You just said it doesn't matter what we say.

FACILITATOR

I said I would make a report with what I think is important.  
My first job is to hear you out, and that's what I'm doing.  
So tell me what you find disingenuous about this part of the script.

WENDY

The writing is fine. I just think--

FACILITATOR

How about we role-play?  
You be Mr. Maxwell, and I'll be Mr. Jenns.

WENDY

I didn't say I could write a movie.

FACILITATOR

I'm not trying to be provocative. And I'm not being defensive on behalf of the filmmakers, if you're worried about that. Your insights may be quite valuable. If valuable enough, it could change the outcome of the movie.  
Please. Humor me. It'll be fun.

(MORE)

FACILITATOR (cont'd)

You make the argument that Mr. Maxwell should have made, and I'll respond as if I'm Mr. Jenns.

WENDY

Ok, I... I think that I would have suggested that if he didn't relent, that they would just take someone else hostage and they would go along. And I guess I would also remind him that civilians in this country own almost half of the world's firearms.

FACILITATOR

Are you suggesting you can outdo us in violence?

You can't. We own violence. When we send out the media to report on your violence, it's because you're trespassing. You're illegally using the weapon we own.

WENDY

What about our numbers?

FACILITATOR

What about the numbers? You're assuming the population is going to all take up arms against us. When the much more likely scenario is that we would buy a marginal amount of propaganda and disinformation, and before you know it, at least half those civilian guns would be pointed at you.

And even if you can get popular support, we get the benefit of the doubt. Not you.

We can use as much violence as we want, and we will always still command a certain degree of deference.

You don't have that.

All it takes is one misstep using violence on your part, and your support will wither away.

We own violence.

Anything else?

It's not that easy, is it?

LIDDY

It's not easy because you've made Mr. Jenns into a caricature.

No one's that smug.

No one's that cold.

FACILITATOR

You don't think the character's attitude is convincing?

LIDDY

I think everyone has a heart, and that you have to appeal to their heart.

FACILITATOR

Then let's keep role-playing. Appeal to Mr. Jenns' heart.

LIDDY

I didn't say I wanted to role-play.

FACILITATOR

But you *do* want to have a future, for your kids.

Then convince me.

LIDDY

Ok.

Tell me.

Do you believe Climate Change is real?

FACILITATOR

I do.

LIDDY

Do you acknowledge the layers of suffering it has caused around the planet?

FACILITATOR

I do.

LIDDY

Do you acknowledge the increasing likelihood of a worst-case scenario and the potential suffering it will cause if we don't rectify the situation immediately?

FACILITATOR

I do.

LIDDY

Do you acknowledge that *you* have the kind of resources at hand to make a real contribution to that end?

FACILITATOR

I do.

LIDDY

Do you acknowledge that if you committed as much as 90 percent of those resources to stopping it, you would still have more money than you could ever spend?

FACILITATOR

I do.

LIDDY

Do you acknowledge that, if you helped us save ourselves, your legacy for centuries would be that of a hero?

FACILITATOR

I do.

LIDDY

Then what reason could you possibly have to not help us?

FACILITATOR

Is that all you have?

LIDDY

What else is there?

FACILITATOR

A guarantee.  
There's no guarantee it would work. And if it doesn't work, I would no longer possess what I did before.

LIDDY

You acknowledged you would still be wealthy.

FACILITATOR

But I would no longer have power.  
And in *this* world, I would be less than I am  
now.

LIDDY

How can you say that?

FACILITATOR

Because we are what we accumulate.  
For some, it's memories. For some, it's  
memorabilia. For some, it's regrets.  
For someone like me, it's having your own piece  
to move around on the board. Even if it's only a  
pawn or two, to be in the game is exhilarating.  
Once you've begun playing, you can't go back to  
watching.  
What good is achieving power if you're just  
going to give it away?

LIDDY

What good is power if we lose half the planet?

FACILITATOR

Because I know I'll be part owner of the other  
half.

LIDDY

And everyone else will despise you.

FACILITATOR

Maybe. Maybe not.  
Historians come cheap.  
And police come cheaper.  
Either way, we'll be just fine.

JAMES

That's bullshit.

FACILITATOR

Firstly, please show respect for Martin.  
Secondly, do you disagree about the guarantee?  
Or that someone with that kind of money and  
power will be just fine?

JAMES

No, I think this whole role-playing exercise is garbage.

That's not how rich people think.  
You're posing as a rich person's id.

FACILITATOR

Then what *do* rich people think about their place, in this situation?

JAMES

They try not to think.

They tell themselves that there's nothing they can *really* do.

That way, they can see themselves as victims of our ignorance, which they soon begin to suspect is really rooted in our jealousy. And all that does is make them dig in. Until their *resistance* to progress is attributed to our bad behavior fighting *for it*.

Because there are no laws to make them let go of it.

FACILITATOR

You said they try not to think about it. The scenario in the film forces them to come to terms with the consequences of their choices. So they see. They *have* the choice, to embrace a solution or to embrace their complicity.

If what it takes to embrace a solution is so far out there, you could see how easy it would be to dismiss anything you throw at them.

AVI

Then how *do* you win them over?

FACILITATOR

That's what I'm asking you.

MARTIN

Maybe it's not Mr. Jenns they're failing to convince.

The things Mr. Maxwell brought up in the movie, as alternatives to violence. Are we supposed to believe those were his examples or that they were given to him to say, to float?

FACILITATOR

Why do you ask?

MARTIN

If they're his, it's because they forced him to think about it. And he had to use his imagination. Because he's trying anything to save himself.

FACILITATOR

Did you think that's what was going on when you were watching it?

MARTIN

Not when he was saying it, because at that point we didn't know Mr. Maxwell was actually one of the powerful people too. He was just a voice on a screen. We thought he was one of the kidnapers.

FACILITATOR

So in that moment, before you found out, how did you feel about the alternatives that were proposed?

MARTIN

Honestly? I thought Mr. Jenns was right. That they wouldn't work.

CONNOR

Me too. I thought the same thing.

FACILITATOR

Anyone else?

LIDDY

I hate to say it, but even though I thought they were better than turning to something like this, as I was hearing them, I thought to myself that they sounded too radical.

FACILITATOR

Too radical for whom?

LIDDY

For the average person.

MARTIN

I think regular people would be against activists doing most of what was brought up. And regular people definitely wouldn't *participate* in anything like that.

AVI

I actually think a lot of people would see how those types of tactics could disrupt their lives, and they would be annoyed.

LIDDY

I think so too.

FACILITATOR

Even if those actions are trying to save them and their children?

WENDY

Truthfully, yeah.

FACILITATOR

Then does it matter, if they're annoyed?

WENDY

If they need public support, it does.

JAMES

Do they?

The whole point of this has been that the average person is kind of helpless to stop this. If it really is just rich and powerful people that make these kinds of decisions, then do you really need *all* the people? Or do you need just enough to pull it off?

WENDY

It would make it a lot easier if public opinion was on your side.

JAMES

What if Mr. Jenns is right? If the media is never going to be on the side of radical action, then maybe it's just about making it a war of attrition.

LIDDY

Why does it have to be either/or?  
(MORE)

LIDDY (cont'd)

Why can't we figure out a way to do radical actions that will work *and* find a way to sell it to the average person?

JAMES

That's kind of what Mr. Maxwell was supposed to be doing.

LIDDY

But he didn't succeed.

JAMES

He's not the only one. We don't know how many targets the teens on the laptop have lined up.

AVI

There's only so many people you can kidnap.

JAMES

That's why the movie is fiction. It's not really about kidnapping rich people. It's showing us that *we're* the ones who have to answer these questions. And that until now, none of us have been taking solutions seriously. And most of us won't until we're forced to.

Maybe the film isn't even about violence, but about the kind of imagination it's going to take to get us out of this. If you think about what Mr. Maxwell saw on the screen, *and* what's ahead of us, we don't really have a choice.

But that's why we *didn't* see what was on his screen.

That's what the future is.

If it's the worst-case scenario, it could be literally a hundred holocausts.

But unless we're put in the position of knowing that for sure, and believing we could really do something about it, we're not going to bother.

That's why Mr. Jenns keeps making excuses for why nothing is going to work. Because he doesn't believe it either.

WENDY

That's if you see Mr. Jenns representing us completely.

I think you might be right that Mr. Jenns could be there to represent us, but it's possible he's there to represent the rich as well. Like Liddy said, it doesn't have to be either/or.

Maybe we're supposed to get what we need from his character, but also think hard about the rich's role in all this and how we approach it.

JAMES

Mr. Jenns doesn't know what's up ahead either. But he's obviously more optimistic about his chances than we are.

Even if it's not violence, he has to lose that optimism.

LIDDY

I think the only way someone like him loses optimism is if we *don't* use violence but still make advances.

WENDY

Then it really is about finding nonviolent solutions.

CONNOR

Can I just say... Can I just say that this is crazy? You're trying to make believe this *isn't* about violence? That we're the ones who are the hostages, and it's really about finding peaceful solutions? That's crazy.

This movie is about inciting violence. It's about inciting violence on the rich. You're just reading into it what you *want* it to be about.

LIDDY

Isn't that what movies sometimes do?

CONNOR

Not this one.

The world is not a film club, or a focus group. If we sit around here and talk long enough, somebody's gonna discover it's really a romantic comedy.

(MORE)

CONNOR (cont'd)

But every average person that watches this is going to know what it's about. And if we don't acknowledge that, this focus group is worthless.

AVI

Speaking of people knowing what this really is, what genre is this film supposed to be? Aside from being a satire. Is it drama? Is it a thriller? Is it horror? Is it like a post-modern noir?

FACILITATOR

Isn't it obvious? It's a comedy. In that every line has been and will continue to be either ignored or will be ridiculed for being too on-the nose or too serious or too unrealistic.

CONNOR

So the joke's on us?

FACILITATOR

Only if "us" includes the filmmakers too.

CONNOR

If it's a joke, then it's set up to be that way.

LIDDY

That would be really cruel.

WENDY

Could that be the genre? Cruelty? The cruelest movie in the world. A fitting masterpiece.

AVI

A disasterpiece.

JAMES

Or is it something different? Something so distressed it's lost all art. Because it just can't deal with the idea that art is all we have left.

CONNOR

*Or* the genre is masturbation, and this is all just virtue signaling.

(MORE)

CONNOR (cont'd)

That the filmmakers care more than anyone else. That this movie is the most that's ever been done. That making this movie absolves them from not giving away everything they own and then running into the streets to join the pity party.

LIDDY

It's not that. I think you might have had it right before. I feel like we can talk about all this stuff, and there's all these layers that *could* apply. But it really just feels like this wink and a nod type thing.

FACILITATOR

You feel it's meant to incite.

LIDDY

Not directly, but indirectly. There's a name for it, but I can't remember what--

AVI

You're referring to stochastic terrorism.

LIDDY

Yeah, stochastic. I couldn't remember the term.

MARTIN

What's stochastic?

AVI

It's when you propagandize and fearmonger in a way that will eventually lead to someone taking it upon themselves to do something about it - violently. But because you didn't tell them explicitly to do it or what to do, you still have plausible deniability.

CONNOR

How is this plausible deniability if they're literally painting the scene?

WENDY

It's not plausible deniability because the end goal is about finding what will work nonviolently.

LIDDY

Is it?  
Because I felt like they were saying, at this point, violence is going to *have* to be part of the strategy.

WENDY

I didn't see it that way at all. I feel like the filmmakers are desperate to find anything at all that will work so we don't have to resort to something like in the movie.

CONNOR

But in the movie, that they wrote, Mr. Jenns is saying nothing else will work. What does that tell you?

WENDY

It tells you that he can't imagine beyond what his position will allow him to.

LIDDY

We're supposed to be better than Mr. Jenns. And better than the people who kidnap him.

JAMES

Or maybe we're not.  
Maybe it's both.

LIDDY

How can it be both?

JAMES

Maybe there is no better; there's only what will work.

FACILITATOR

Martin, you're shaking your head.

MARTIN

This is. This is really strange.  
(MORE)

MARTIN (cont'd)

I don't feel comfortable having this conversation.

FACILITATOR

We have to have this conversation, or else we won't know how to proceed, with the film.

MARTIN

But this feels like something different than just talking about a movie.

FACILITATOR

Perhaps that means the film is successful.

MARTIN

Well, I don't want to participate anymore.

FACILITATOR

Your participation is necessary if the film is going to be completed.

MARTIN

Why should I care about that?

FACILITATOR

I understand your discomfort.  
But the film has to be completed. Because Climate Change is still coming.

MARTIN

And you think this film is going to have any impact on that whatsoever?

FACILITATOR

Not if you don't participate.

MARTIN

I don't know who you think I am or what I can do.

FACILITATOR

*I* know who you are. And you do too.  
And you can do whatever you *decide* to do.

MARTIN

So it's all up to me. If *I* participate, that's going to make all the difference.

(MORE)

MARTIN (cont'd)

And if *I* don't, it all falls apart.

FACILITATOR

I'm not sure if I could make it any clearer.

Martin's distress is palpable.

WENDY

Look, I think the film is good, but I think they're right that it *could* give people the wrong impression.

So... maybe it could have like a disclaimer or something at the beginning.

LIDDY

That's a good idea.

CONNOR

How long of a disclaimer should we give it? We've been talking here for over half an hour, and could probably talk for two more.

AVI

He's right.

The film is only 40 minutes. You can't give a 40-minute film a four-hour disclaimer.

FACILITATOR

What disclaimer *would* you give it, if you had to?

WENDY

I would just say that this film is meant to be talked about for an extended period afterward.

LIDDY

But does that really absolve you of any wrongdoing that the film inspires?

WENDY

Do you have a better disclaimer?

LIDDY

I don't know that it's better, but I would say something like - this film does not endorse or encourage violent actions.

AVI

Don't you think putting that up front ruins the suspense of the movie?

CONNOR

I think the entertainment factor is less important than someone possibly thinking this is some hint hint stuff.

AVI

But if the entertainment factor is not there, audiences may not enjoy it enough to talk about it afterward. They could miss the potential *good* messages in it.

LIDDY

I still think you have to have some kind of disclaimer.

JAMES

You guys are a trip. How many books about murder and war and abuse are there? Do any of them have disclaimers? Do we think the author is negligent or morally culpable for the rando stranger who glorifies the violence within their fictional story?

WENDY

But there have been books that did that very thing, and meant to do it.

JAMES

Do you think that's what this is?

WENDY

I don't know. It depends on if they're willing to put the disclaimer on it.

JAMES

So if they don't put the disclaimer on it, that proves ill intent? And if they really are nefarious, but they take the extra effort to slap the disclaimer on, it absolves them of everything? A disclaimer doesn't tell you anything about them or their intent.

WENDY

It's not about them. It's about the, as you put it, rando strangers out there who might think that it really is a nudging to do something messed up like this.

JAMES

You think a disclaimer is going to stop that person? If they're that far gone, they're probably going to see the disclaimer as something the filmmakers had to do.

MARTIN

Should we take a vote?

AVI

What good's a vote gonna do? We don't even know if he's going to include this in the report.

CONNOR

And what happens if it's split? Do we do half a disclaimer?

JAMES

We should definitely not take a vote.  
I mean we all agree this is satire.  
To debate whether to give satire a disclaimer is satire in itself.

MARTIN

Satire doesn't mean it's without purpose.  
We need to know the real purpose of the film.

AVI

Maybe it's satire for the sake of satire.

LIDDY

Is there such a thing?

WENDY

Can't it be as simple as just getting people to talk?

CONNOR

Not a chance.

FACILITATOR

Do you not think this is a worthy topic of conversation?

CONNOR

It is. But the questions it's asking could be dangerous.

FACILITATOR

Questions are only dangerous if minds aren't equipped to address them.

LIDDY

Are we equipped?

FACILITATOR

It depends on your answer.  
But it's not just your answer. It's each answer that's given.  
Each part.

CONNOR

What's with all the riddles? You're not Mr. Maxwell, and we're not Mr. Jenns. You can say this is about questions. I say it's a threat. And that's the best-case scenario.

FACILITATOR

What's the worst-case scenario?

CONNOR

Somebody's gonna see this and emulate it.

FACILITATOR

That's by no means a given.

LIDDY

But it is a possibility.

FACILITATOR

It's also a possibility this causes a real stir in the circles of power. That the writing becomes so apparent on the walls, enough of them will decide to tear down those walls.

CONNOR

You know how unlikely that is.

FACILITATOR

Then maybe it will spur the kind of imagination and cooperation in the public to find a real nonviolent solution.

CONNOR

That still doesn't mean the powerful are going to give in.

FACILITATOR

You believe that, don't you? That we could devise and pull off the greatest nonviolent strategy in history, and they could still deny us?

CONNOR

I believe they could deny *this* strategy.

FACILITATOR

And, from where you stand, the worst-case scenario is someone hurting a handful of *these* people.

AVI

So it is a comedy.

FACILITATOR

Perhaps a rather dark one.

LIDDY

There's nothing funny about violence.

FACILITATOR

Precisely why it's a satire.

WENDY

Satire is not a get out of jail free card.

FACILITATOR

But is it ok to ask these types of questions?  
Or to not know which question is being asked?

MARTIN

Are you asking if the satirist is allowed this much leeway?

JAMES

You mean freedom.

FACILITATOR

That's not for me to answer.

WENDY

We can't know because we don't yet know the consequences.

FACILITATOR

But we do know the stakes.  
And we know that the movie is hopeful. That something is possible.

MARTIN

How do we know that?

FACILITATOR

If it wasn't, we wouldn't have conducted the focus group.

CONNOR

But I'm telling you the movie is not hopeful. It's going in the wrong direction.

FACILITATOR

And you're sure of that?  
You said the best-case scenario is that the film is a threat, but they still wouldn't budge.

CONNOR

I didn't say them not budging was for the best.

FACILITATOR

But you believe this story is unconvincing. That even such an extreme measure would fall short of getting the rich to act.

CONNOR

Is that what it's trying to do? Or is it just entertainment?

FACILITATOR

That's one of the things we're here to find out.

LIDDY

If the filmmakers don't know, then how are we supposed to know?

FACILITATOR

They commissioned the focus group because they believe in more than their own opinions. They believe in listening.

Raise your hand if you believe this story will get the attention of those in power, and it will get their attention in such a way that it actually gets them to course correct.

No one raises their hand.

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

Ok. Noted.

What about the general public? Is this story enough that it would move the general public to thoroughly investigate the collective power they possess, and subsequently act on that power? Is watching Mr. Jenns thumb his nose in the face of their suffering not enough to make the average movie goer walk out of the theater and devote themselves to finding a way to change his mind?

No one raises their hand.

WENDY

You're asking a lot from one movie.

FACILITATOR

Not the movie, not a digital manifestation of actors captured performing lines on a manufactured set. But the story. Is this story enough to drive home, in the minds and hearts of the general viewing public, the necessity to act? The uncompromising will to act?

No one raises their hand.

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

Ok. Noted.

Then what about you?

We already know activists are working on getting policymakers to enact legislation adequate to the task, to no real avail.

(MORE)

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

Acknowledging that that has not been enough, that all that has been tried is not enough, will this story, and all the conversation that it has sparked here today, be enough to get you to walk out of here and commit your lot to finding this missing piece of the puzzle?

MARTIN

It's not that easy.

FACILITATOR

Certainly not.  
But that doesn't mean you don't have an answer.

JAMES

We all contribute in our own way.

FACILITATOR

And that may be the truest and saddest words spoken thus far.

LIDDY

We signed up for a focus group, not a revival.

FACILITATOR.

Entertainment it is then.

With that noted, and because we only have a short time left, I want to make sure we spend some of it on the review feedback.

MARTIN

What review?

FACILITATOR

I'm going to read you some excerpts from heavily critical reviews that will be written about this film in the future, and you tell me if you think the reviews are fair.

WENDY

So wait, the reviews are fake?

FACILITATOR

No, they're very real reviews; they just haven't been written yet.

WENDY

That doesn't make sense.

FACILITATOR

I'm reading them to you for your feedback.  
You're going to review their reviews.

LIDDY

To what end?

FACILITATOR

To keep them from being written.

MARTIN

If they're true, how would you keep them from  
being written?

FACILITATOR

They'll definitely be written if we don't conduct  
this part of the focus group.

MARTIN

Does that make sense to anyone else?

WENDY

This whole hour hasn't made sense.  
At least this sounds like it could be fun.

FACILITATOR

Thank you.  
So this is the first one.  
"Not only is the film clearly not as clever as the  
writers think it is, the pacing makes it boring  
and the arguments make it pretentious."

JAMES

Ouch.

WENDY

That's rough.

FACILITATOR

So what's the counter?

LIDDY

I don't know. It's so subjective, I don't know  
how you really criticize it.

FACILITATOR

That's the problem. It's merely subjective and doesn't really make a specific counter argument. What do you say in response?

JAMES

Ok, let me try it. Not only is the reviewer clearly not as insightful as they think, the safety of such a critique only wishes it could be pretentious.

WENDY

Not to mention, one man's boring is another man's disaster.

FACILITATOR

Not bad.

Let's try another one. The first excerpt states, "With the filmmakers wearing a poor excuse for plausible deniability--

WENDY

We were just talking about that. Oh, sorry.

FACILITATOR

"With the filmmakers wearing a poor excuse for plausible deniability, the fig leaf of a plot twist isn't big enough to distract from what everyone can plainly see. These people are calling for violence."  
Anyone?

CONNOR

Well, I'm not going to counter it, because I think they're right.

FACILITATOR

But if you had to counter it.

CONNOR

*I don't* have to.

FACILITATOR

But what if you did? What would you say?

CONNOR

I'm not playing the game.

FACILITATOR

Can you not at least pretend you're wrong? Can you really not extend the benefit of the doubt, even temporarily?

CONNOR

I can. I'm choosing not to.

FACILITATOR

What if I promised you that, if you do this, the movie will not contribute to more harm, but more good?

CONNOR

You can't promise that, so it doesn't matter.

FACILITATOR

Then I'll promise you the opposite. And this is something I can promise. This film is going to be released. And if you don't make an argument right now for why this film is actually promoting nonviolence, it most definitely will have the consequences you fear the most.

CONNOR

Ok.

I can accept that.

If I had to, I would say that any accusation that - the filmmakers are hiding behind the shield of false plausible deniability - is merely another example of blame shifting from those who are not yet ready to hold the system to account, or their part in it.

FACILITATOR

Very nice.

CONNOR

It doesn't mean I believe it.

FACILITATOR

You don't have to believe it. You just needed to entertain it.

Ok. Next one.

(MORE)

FACILITATOR (cont'd)

"Thinly veiled would be giving the movie too much credit. This movie explicitly puts a target on the rich."

WENDY

I'll do this one.

The rich don't *need* a target put on them. If anything, reviewers should be demanding the rich remove the decades-long target they put on all of us.

FACILITATOR

Excellent. Smart and concise.

How about this one?

"It would be irresponsible if it weren't so stupid. Never has a film tried so hard to cover its bases while simultaneously leaving so many gaping holes."

Anyone want to take it?

LIDDY

I think I could.

Sometimes leaving holes is not a bad thing. It depends on what you fill them with.

While the filmmakers may be desperate, it doesn't mean they're irresponsible.

What's irresponsible is not finding a way to make such an attempt useful.

JAMES

That's solid.

FACILITATOR

All right, just a couple more.

"If I wanted to be generous to the premise, I would say that the film could have been so much more if it only had a budget. A movie with this kind of ambition deserves more than one room and a handful of actors.

Alas, I can't be generous to the plot. Entirely too much is given away, and at the same time more needs to be said if the movie wants to avoid being just another schlock-disguised-as-shock polemic."

Martin, how about you take this one?

MARTIN

Do I have to?

FACILITATOR

It's just an exercise.

MARTIN

Ok.

I would probably say something like: The generous critique is one not of the film but of Hollywood, or maybe society as a whole. For the only thing that makes the plot shocking or polemic is precisely how little the powerful are willing to give away - and how much more needs to be said by our politicians, and the media we trust to tell us the truth.

WENDY

Wow. Look at you.  
That was great.

FACILITATOR

I agree.

Let's do one more and then we'll move on.  
"It takes a lot of time, effort, and resources to make a movie. All of which would have been far better spent actually coming up with real solutions. Blaming the rich for your own lack of imagination may win you an activist Oscar, but it doesn't make it good filmmaking."  
Anyone?  
Avi, you haven't done one.

AVI

You do this one.

FACILITATOR

I'm the facilitator.

AVI

You said you didn't make the movie.

FACILITATOR

That's fair.

I guess I would say that... the review illustrates just how ghastly the indulgence of philosophy is - at a time like this.

(MORE)

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

That every word I speak, every word you offer in reply. It seems like a sin against our existence.

Avi claps, slowly.

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

I sense some sarcasm.

AVI

I was skeptical before. But now I'm sure.

LIDDY

Sure of what?

AVI

These are all trite gimmicks.

FACILITATOR

What gimmicks?

AVI

All of this. The disclaimers. The reviews. The way you're steering the conversation. The way, after everything we disapproved of, we get to the end, and you get us all to defend the movie.

The way we're online like this, so you don't have to actually film six people in a room.

MARTIN

What does that mean?

AVI

Don't you get it? They're going to use our focus group in the film. It's a prop. A ridiculous prop.

FACILITATOR

Bingo.  
Very perceptive.

WENDY

Wait. But I thought this was only for the filmmakers.

FACILITATOR

Well, everyone is making this film. Everyone not doing anything is making this film. They're the reason why *we're* doing the film. They've commissioned it.

The people who wrote the script? Shot the scenes, edited it? They didn't want to make this film. But our brothers and sisters who don't seem to think habitability is a necessity - have made them make it.

Sure, there was a director. But *they're* the producers of the film. They're demanding we make something to wake them up.

LIDDY

But this isn't what I signed up for.

MARTIN

Me neither.

LIDDY

You said... that *only* the filmmakers and other interested parties would see this.

FACILITATOR

You don't think the public has an interest? If you like, we can blur your faces.

CONNOR

I don't care if you blur my face. I wouldn't have agreed to this.

FACILITATOR

Why not? What's the harm? We're just being philosophical here.

Aren't we?

It isn't like there's really anything outside - threatening us, threatening our very existence and legacy as a species.

Aren't we afforded a little philosophy?

JAMES

I see what you're doing. But it is totally not ok to trick us.

FACILITATOR

What would you have said differently?

JAMES

I don't know, but I wouldn't have talked as freely if I had known it was going to be shown to people.

FACILITATOR

But don't you see? We're not going to find a fix for this if everyone is afraid to stand up and say what they actually believe. To be as forceful as *you were* during this focus group.

JAMES

We still should have known. It's not ok.

FACILITATOR

Would you take any of it back? Anything you said?  
Are you saying you didn't mean it?

JAMES

That's not what I'm saying.

FACILITATOR

Then what? I did something to get you to tell the truth about how you felt, what you believed, what you want.

AVI

Like the movie.

FACILITATOR

It's all the movie.

WENDY

Well, we don't agree. You can't use this. Whatever consent I gave in that waiver, I'm taking it back.

MARTIN

I take mine back too.

FACILITATOR

If you don't like what you said, you'll have a chance to make up for it with your own work.

LIDDY

What work?

(MORE)

LIDDY (cont'd)

What are you talking about?

FACILITATOR

I misspoke earlier, when I said you're welcome to make your own movie.

What I should have said was that we'll see how your scripts turn out.

WENDY

Scripts?

What the fuck is going on here?

FACILITATOR

For the last time, can you show a little respect for Martin?

MARTIN

It's ok. I don't care about that. I want to know too.

What's going on here?

FACILITATOR

Most of you appear to have major issues with the film.

And not one of you thought the story was enough to spark significant action.

So after we conclude, you're going to be tasked with writing a replacement screenplay. Your own take on how we get to a real solution.

WENDY

I told you before, I'm not a writer.

FACILITATOR

I didn't say it had to be worthy of a Pulitzer. It just has to be more convincing than *Do We Have Your Attention*.

CONNOR

Brother, I don't know what you've been smoking, but we agreed to be here for the hour.

FACILITATOR

No, the hour is only part of what you agreed to. You also agreed to being as honest and forthcoming as possible.

(MORE)

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

So unless you all really do believe there's nothing to be attempted and we're all done for, you have some serious thinking to do.

LIDDY

This has gone - way too far.

FACILITATOR

Going too far would be me allowing you to do nothing.

If you don't agree that we should stick with the strategy in this film, then you write your own.

Whatever alternative is up to you.

But not putting forth a strategy is not an option.

CONNOR

You can't make us do it. You can't make us do anything.

MARTIN

And I wouldn't even know where to begin.

AVI

Come on, guys. He's not for real.

It's another gimmick.

I get that you're desperate, and I wish we had answers for Climate Change too.

But this is pretty pathetic.

FACILITATOR

I agree that it says something about the state of human complacency when last resort tactics begin to look not only appealing but requisite. It is... quite pathetic.

But I can guarantee you, this one isn't a gimmick.

AVI

Sure it isn't.

Soon you'll be telling us that if we don't comply we'll be the next ones to get bagged.

FACILITATE

There it is.

That's the line I was looking for.

WENDY

What line?

LIDDY

This isn't funny.

CONNOR

You know what?

I don't know where this is going, but you can keep the gift card. I'm ready to be done.

AVI

Quit worrying.

It's all for show. It's all to get a certain reaction.

It's a metaphor.

If I had to guess, one of us is not really a focus group member but a plant to help the discussion along.

Probably James.

The point is that this focus group is as thin as the film ultimately was. And it's not our responsibility to make it any--

Someone comes from behind and throws a bag over Avi's head, placing their hand over his mouth.

AVI (cont'd)

Mmmmm Mm Mmmmm.

CONNOR

What the hell just happened to him?

That's the same black bag that was--

The same happens to Connor.

CONNOR (cont'd)

Mmmmm Mm Mmmmmmm.

LIDDY

Where'd they go?

MARTIN

Did that just happen?

WENDY

Is this real?

The rest get bagged.

All except James. And the Facilitator.

The VIDEO GROUP CHAT boxes of those bagged go blank, leaving only James. And the Facilitator.

JAMES

What are you doing?  
Where did they go?

FACILITATOR

It's a shame. You were our first group.  
I had hoped for - slightly more *promising*  
attitudes.

James' eyes dart around the booth.

FACILITATOR (cont'd)

Whatever you're thinking, I wouldn't do it.  
It's better if you stay calm. And listen.

JAMES

What's going to happen to them?

FACILITATORS

The same thing that happened to the  
filmmakers.  
They found themselves in a place where they  
had no choice but to imagine.  
To interrogate the situation.  
To come up with a story. A story different  
enough, and jarring enough, that it just might  
work.

JAMES

Why did you bag the rest and not me?

FACILITATOR

You seemed to be the one closest to  
understanding why the filmmakers went to the  
lengths they did.

JAMES

In the film, yes.  
This, no.

FACILITATOR

You say that, but I'm not so sure.  
If I gave you the choice. Write a new story, like  
them. Or conduct the focus groups for the  
stories they come up with. Which would you  
choose?

JAMES

Are you serious?

FACILITATOR

Quite.

JAMES

So, in other words, be the teens or be Mr.  
Maxwell.

FACILITATOR

Very perceptive.

JAMES

That doesn't mean I can make the decision.

FACILITATOR

Why not?

JAMES

I don't have enough information.

FACILITATOR

You have the same information as the teens, and  
Mr. Maxwell.

JAMES

How is that?

FACILITATOR

The clock.  
It was ticking for both of them.  
Just like it's ticking for me. And you.

JAMES

Everyone told you they weren't scriptwriters.

FACILITATOR

Neither were the filmmakers. Before they  
realized the imperative to act.

(MORE)

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

Besides, we're not tasking them with format. Or technique.  
They're being tasked with a story.

JAMES

And if they don't comply?

FACILITATOR

We will make sure they understand, just as the teens did, just as the filmmakers did, that to not at least try - would be to embrace the consequences of failure.  
Except *for them*, we would - speed up the outcome.

JAMES

It's not fair.

FACILITATOR

None of this is fair.

JAMES

You can't just force someone to figure out something no one else has been able to.

FACILITATOR

We're only forcing them to see the choice in front of them. The choice they couldn't see before.  
Or... refused to.

JAMES

Whatever you're looking for from them, they're almost certain to fail. You know that.

FACILITATOR

How is that any different from what you all said about the movie?

JAMES

We said that because it's a movie. It's characters and acting and lighting. Props.  
It's not real.  
We're real people.

FACILITATOR

So are the filmmakers.

JAMES

And what's happening to *them*?

FACILITATOR

The filmmakers? Isn't it obvious?  
They're taking the same risk as the teens.

JAMES

But you said yourself, we were the first focus group.  
If the next focus group thinks it's perfect, if the next hundred focus groups think it's perfect. By abducting *us*, you immediately erase all chances the movie might have had to make a difference. The filmmakers can't possibly base the fate of their movie on one focus group.

FACILITATOR

That's why they gave me the instructions they did. And the license.  
If, as you describe, a hundred focus groups had thought it was perfect, and the filmmakers simply released *Do We Have Your Attention*, it would have been going all-in on one roll of the dice.  
But we both know that a hundred focus groups are not going to think this is perfect. Because it's not meant to be perfect. It's meant to prepare people for the task. It's meant to force them to think - really hard.

JAMES

Force them to participate.

FACILITATOR

You're starting to see it.

James just stares.

FACILITATOR (cont'd)

What kind of scripts do you think your fellow focus group members will come up with? What kinds of stories will they tell?  
More than likely they'll involve strategies of a *nonviolent* nature. Albeit more extreme than they might have come up with before.

(MORE)

FACILITATOR (cont'd)

That's five *different*, thoughtfully crafted, nonviolent strategies. Multiply that by 10 focus groups, like this one, and you've got 50 strategies. The vast majority of which, no matter how aggressive or militant, would still be nonviolent at their core.

That's where you come in.

Obviously, we're not going to make their scripts into films.

The types of focus groups *you* would conduct would be to improve upon their ideas. To refine their efficacy. To collect more ideas. And to demonstrate the overwhelming support for nonviolent action.

JAMES

Do you *really* think you can get away with it? With all this? People are going to notice we're missing.

FACILITATOR

We don't need forever. And we're more resourceful than you might think. We've taken a great number of precautions to delay being caught. By the time the police put together what's *actually* happened, it'll be a national news story.

JAMES

That's when you release the film. Online.

FACILITATOR

Along with your focus group, and the ones like yours. And all the scripts that resulted. And all *their* focus groups. All the other - possibilities.

JAMES

The national news story becomes a national discussion.

FACILITATOR

But more than that, it provides the public with dozens of examples - to follow.  
(MORE)

FACILITATOR(cont'd)

Nonviolent tactic after nonviolent tactic.  
Prodding their conscience. Challenging their  
imaginations. Pressuring them to choose at least  
some kind of action.

JAMES

Leaving the original film... as a warning. For the  
powerful.

FACILITATOR

If you cannot be moved, if you cannot be  
bothered, by all the nonviolent will that's been  
mustered in these last few hours - of  
opportunity.

This is what's waiting.

James hesitates, before asking.

JAMES

And the focus group members?

FACILITATOR

The ones who offered scripts will be released.  
The ones who didn't will have to be found.

JAMES

You're not going to kill them?

FACILITATOR

We have to tell them that, so they'll see the  
choice they have to make.  
And so the public will know. That, even upon  
threat of death, these were people who couldn't  
be troubled to try.

JAMES

Knowing all this, why would I choose to be the  
facilitator for the other stories? Why wouldn't I  
just write a story - and wait to be released?

FACILITATOR

I'm surprised you don't see it.  
Before, when you said you could be the teens or  
Mr. Maxwell, I said you were very perceptive.  
But you did miss one thing.

JAMES

As facilitator, I would be Mr. Maxwell. And Mr. Jenns.

Mr. Maxwell executes the teens' story. Mr. Jenns creates the circumstances that move the teens to act.

FACILITATOR

The only difference with this is you start in Mr. Maxwell's seat.

JAMES

And end up in Mr. Jenns'.

FACILITATOR

And why?

JAMES

Because before they were abducted, they were more or less the same person.

One version of that person, left to his own devices, makes a choice to hurt. The other, faced with *different* circumstances, makes a choice to help.

FACILITATOR

But why do you end up in Mr. Jenns' seat?

JAMES

Because it's not Mr. Jenns' seat as a hostage. It's the ability to create circumstances necessary for change.

Something Mr. Jenns always had. But something someone like me, or you, or the filmmakers would never have, without this kind of spectacle.

FACILITATOR

You see now why we didn't bag you.

JAMES

And what happens if I agree - to facilitate?  
When do *I* get released?

FACILITATOR

Well, I can't tell you that, can I?

JAMES

Hence the point of not letting Mr. Jenns know what was on the screen Mr. Maxwell was watching.

FACILITATOR

There still has to be a gamble.

JAMES

I can always say that what I did I did under duress.

FACILITATOR

That's if you *were* to be released.

JAMES

Why would you *not* release me?

FACILITATOR

Because, at that point, you'd no longer be one of the focus group members. You'd be one of us.

CAPTION over BLACK reads:

September 12, 2101

Book Club - Prague  
(Norwegian Climate Refugees)

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A modest apartment, suitable for young people in their early twenties.

KJERSTIN and NAJA get comfortable on the couch. LUKAS moves his chair closer to the coffee table between them. EIRA and JORN bring out drinks for everyone and get settled on the floor.

Translated from Norwegian.

EIRA

Ok, I think we're all good. Unless someone wants to start things off, I wanted to ask, what did everyone think about the writing?

KJERSTIN

Wait, before we get into the literary stuff, when is this supposed to be again?

JORN

I think somewhere early in the century.

EIRA

It's set right after the first big pandemic of that time. I think 2020 or 2021.

NAJA

2021.

KJERSTIN

So by then, they had all the information. They would have known what was coming.

EIRA

Not everything. But they would have had an idea of the risks.

LUKAS

There's some people who say it might have already been too late by then.

KJERSTIN

It might not have.

(MORE)

KJERSTIN (cont'd)

The only thing we can be sure of is they didn't try.

EIRA

There were people trying.

KJERSTIN

Our people, yeah.  
But humans overall, they weren't trying hard enough.

JORN

I think that's what the book was getting at.

KJERSTIN

I know. I'm just saying it's like they must have been weighing the risk without acknowledging the numbers.  
Maybe they lose a few hundred thousand people, and that would have been awful. But it wouldn't have been what our parents and grandparents saw.

NAJA

For me, that's what made it even more frustrating a read. I'm reading it in this screenplay format, which is constantly reminding me how backwards they were - that the writer couldn't even get it made as a movie. It's like the biggest moment in human history, and it couldn't even be honestly discussed.

JORN

What I don't understand is how it became a cult classic as a book.

KJERSTIN

Maybe it was just good marketing.

EIRA

Yeah, but it didn't get popular until later. I think way later. It was like one of those books that only found a substantial audience after it wasn't relevant anymore.

JORN

After it was too late.

LUKAS

So why are we reading it?

NAJA

Because it's a cult classic, and we said we were going to read cult classics this year.

LUKAS

But I mean *is* it relevant? Cult classics find an audience because they resonate with a certain section of the population. This is a book that's almost 80 years old and was only successful after it didn't matter. Why are people still reading it now?

KJERSTIN

Maybe once something is deemed a cult classic, it just keeps that mystique for every new generation of readers.

JORN

Then what is it that made it a cult classic to begin with? It's got to be for something more than this thought experiment.

NAJA

I didn't think it was about the thought experiment at all. I thought it was about the focus group.

KJERSTIN

I thought the focus group was awful.

NAJA

Awful in what way?

KJERSTIN

Because they couldn't really take Climate Change seriously. Even the members of the group who were portrayed as more aggressive. Even they couldn't bring themselves to confidently endorse sufficient violence.

LUKAS

And because it went on and on.

NAJA

That's the absurdity of it. That you can't believe human beings would be so casual and tepid when they're getting ready to be swallowed up by their own concept of civilization.

KJERSTIN

That must be why it wasn't successful when it was written. The only way the focus group works is if you see it as a vehicle for the absurd. But at the time, I bet people just thought the whole aesthetic seemed out of place.

JORN

I tried to read it with two minds. Ours and theirs. Just as a story, I really liked the first part. But then after that, I get hit with this long, idiotic back and forth that went nowhere. Which I can see now is more relevant for us than it would have been for them.

LUKAS

But is that true? It's only *not* relevant for them if they missed the point. Or didn't like the point.

EIRA

Maybe that makes it even more relevant for them.

LUKAS

I think you're right. I think there's two ways you can experience it.

JORN

And both are frustrating. Just for different reasons.

KJERSTIN

It was like reading a mystery novel where you know the ending before you read the first page. And the ending is them not finding out who did it.

NAJA

What did you think about the twist?

EIRA

In the first part or the focus group?

NAJA

The focus group.

EIRA

I guess I liked it. But I have to agree. Getting there was a chore.  
What did you think?

NAJA

That's actually the part I didn't like. It just seemed like the writer was trying to reward the reader for sitting through *so much* absurdity.

KJERSTIN

That's funny you say that. I actually welcomed the twist because of how much of a drain the focus group was. But I totally see that it was kind of a sellout move on the author's part.

JORN

Going back to the absurdity aspect, the repetition is what got me. It's like the author couldn't take any chances with getting his point across about where the characters stood.

EIRA

I didn't have a problem with that as much, because I felt it was sufficient in frustrating the reader with the absurd situation people back then created. Where they literally debated the most trivial things for decades while this tsunami was right above them.  
What I didn't like was all the exposition. It was as if he didn't trust the reader to get what he was saying.

KJERSTIN

Well, apparently, they didn't. That's why it failed at first.

NAJA

Is that why it failed? The writer obviously thought they needed it explained to them like five-year-olds. Would it have done better if he was more subtle?

LUKAS

Or with maybe just better writing?

EIRA

But the first part wasn't like that. The first part was an actual story. The second part was like telling the reader why they wouldn't get what he was saying. It was almost disrespectful.

JORN

Maybe it was a challenge. To prove him wrong.

EIRA

It felt like he was painting them as inferior to him. When, in the end, he didn't do enough either. None of them would. That's why things ended up the way they did.

NAJA

I think it was just a roundabout way of him making the reader understand that they were in the focus group. That they were watching this long, horrific Climate Change movie play out in front of them year after year, and the most their discourse could produce was milquetoast good intentions.

LUKAS

Ok, but why did it have to take so long? Couldn't he have made that point with less stupid dialogue?

NAJA

That's the effect Eira was talking about. As frustrated as we were reading it, the author wanted *them* to be frustrated too, and then be embarrassed. To finally save their dignity and act.

KJERSTIN

He had to have known they wouldn't get it. Just the way he wrote the characters. If this was supposed to be some kind of microcosm, then he most certainly knew how it would be received.

JORN

Then why write it?

LUKAS

He wrote it as an "I told you so."

NAJA

If that's so, then it was an even bigger failure than if it was genuinely him trying to get people to act.

JORN

Why do you say that?

NAJA

The book was rediscovered after most of the wars had ended. That's when he became famous. After he and all the people he would have wanted to know he was right had passed on.

KJERSTIN

Then maybe it was a different type of "I told you so." Maybe it was an "I told you so" *to us*. Like his personal absolution. Maybe he never had any intention of getting others to do what was needed. Because he knew they wouldn't. He just didn't want to be lumped in with them.

LUKAS

That kind of makes him look even worse. That he knew better. That he could have tried something real, but instead wrote something that would ultimately only benefit him.

JORN

You don't think he believed there was any chance of people back then getting something from the book? I mean the first part *is* pretty good. And we can see now that it did demand more than the nonviolent flailing the system allowed.

KJERSTIN

He still had to have known they would ignore it.  
Why else would he have included the focus  
group?

EIRA

Maybe it was insurance. Maybe he was saying  
don't be like the focus group.

KJERSTIN

I don't think he had any hope the readers would  
leave more serious than the focus group.

NAJA

Maybe he was an optimist.

LUKAS

This was the work of... *an optimist?*

NAJA

You know what I'm saying.

EIRA

I don't think it's fair to assume what was going  
on in his head. The reason why I think the book  
achieved the status it did later was that it was  
only one of a few, from that time before, that  
had urged a larger conversation around violent  
resistance. All of those authors were heralded  
later. Not for the endorsement of violence, but  
dismissing the moral rebuttals of the time. Each  
of those authors pointed out how  
disproportionate the coming violence would be.  
They were philosophical arguments more than  
tactical manuals.

NAJA

But a lot of them did offer real tactical  
suggestions.

KJERSTIN

You think *this* was an actual suggestion?

NAJA

Not the one in this book, but I think it did try to  
break down the wall of what was acceptable, in  
light of what he believed would come to pass.

EIRA

It wasn't what he believed, it's what they all knew. They let this happen to our parents and grandparents. To us.

LUKAS

So do we believe he was actually trying to stop that? Or do we believe he was just doing it to save face, for posterity?

NAJA

It was obviously a risk.

KJERSTIN

That doesn't imply motive. It actually enhances his reputation.

NAJA

Not if people think he only did it *for* reputation.

JORN

This conversation is making me think that maybe the focus group was better than I originally read it.

LUKAS

In what way?

JORN

Well, look at us. We're not talking about the language or the crafting of the story in the first part. We're talking about his motive and how terrible people were back in the day.

KJERSTIN

That's because people were terrible. So terrible it doesn't matter how good the writing was, because they were going to screw all the generations that came after them no matter what. If the focus group is at all close to an accurate portrayal of people back then, this could have been the best book ever written and it wouldn't have moved anyone.

NAJA

Mmm, I don't know.

KJERSTIN

You don't think I'm giving them enough credit?

NAJA

I think you're giving us too much credit. We have a convenient vantage point to judge them from.

KJERSTIN

You think losing hundreds of millions after hundreds of millions of people is convenient?

NAJA

Of course not. But if we had a challenge *that* serious, right now? And no one around us was even concerned about it anymore than going through the motions of nonviolent protest? You think we could start a violent uprising? You think we would even try?

KJERSTIN

Again. Did they or didn't they have the information?

NAJA

They had the information, but they had no reason to believe those kinds of efforts would be successful.

LUKAS

When nothing else has worked, do you just quit?

EIRA

Not knowing whether something is going to work is not the reason you do or don't make those kinds of decisions. There were Germans who hid Jews during the Holocaust. And they had every reason to believe that they'd be found out and killed.

NAJA

That's a moral stance. No one who hid Jews had to worry if what they were doing was right. Even if they were found out, they knew they were right.

But hiding Jews is different from taking up arms.

(MORE)

NAJA (cont'd)

Committing to violence as a strategy, for something like this, is not a moral stance; it's a moral gamble.

JORN

How is it a gamble when you're faced with so many animal and plant extinctions, not to mention the potential of human extinction? Resistance was the only option.

NAJA

It was. But when you're talking about strategy and the form *that resistance* takes, violence adds different considerations.

LUKAS

You've got it backwards. That's what powerful people want non-powerful people to believe. The fact is, violence subtracts considerations. Until you can see, the only real consideration is if you win.

KJERSTIN

In World War II, the Allies committed untold war crimes. But you put that next to the Holocaust, and it becomes excusable.

EIRA

But the Allies didn't get into the war to stop the Holocaust. And in the case of the United States, they initially turned away Jews.

KJERSTIN

But the war did end the Holocaust. And the numbers in the Holocaust, and all the destruction of the war, was only a fraction of what Climate Change did.

NAJA

You're saying that they had the moral obligation to commit violence.

LUKAS

If nothing else had worked.

KJERSTIN

At some point, the numbers get so big, they become all that matter.

JORN

The gamble of violence is not on being morally right. It's on winning.

EIRA

Everyone who commits to violence thinks they're right.

LUKAS

Whether or not they were right to do it only matters to those that come after.

JORN

And what they do with what was won.

NAJA

Or what was lost.

KJERSTIN

In that moment, no loss could have been worth not opening that door.  
Wouldn't you agree?

Naja looks at Kjerstin and smiles.

NAJA

Of course.

Kjerstin smiles back.

EIRA

I think if someone couldn't agree on that, we'd probably have to kick them out of the book club.

CAPTION over BLACK reads:

# Questioning Houston - 2026

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - EVENING

OFFICER HOWARD comes in and sits down across from QUINN, a 29-year-old woman with multiple tattoos and piercings, and half a shaved head.

OFFICER HOWARD

Officer Robbins said that you were fine talking without a lawyer?

QUINN

Why would I need a lawyer to talk about my freedom to speak?

OFFICER HOWARD

No one is saying you do. I'm just impressed with your confidence.

QUINN

I'm confident in my rights.

OFFICER HOWARD

The question is why you felt the need to exercise those rights outside the headquarters of a major energy company.

QUINN

An oil company. And I was on a public sidewalk.

OFFICER HOWARD

In front of the headquarters of an energy company.

QUINN

That's the second time you've said that. Energy comes from various sources. They're an oil company.

OFFICER HOWARD

That's the second time you've clarified. I can only deduce you're targeting them.

QUINN

Why would I? Are they doing anything wrong?

OFFICER HOWARD

Wrong is a loaded term. As far as I'm aware, they're not breaking any laws.

QUINN

If what they're doing is not considered breaking the law, then I don't see how what I was doing could be either.

OFFICER HOWARD

You were out there for over nine hours.

QUINN

I'm a performance artist. We're known for our endurance.

OFFICER HOWARD

See, that's what I don't get. How is it considered *your* art when you didn't come up with it?

QUINN

You don't consider actors in a film, or actors in a play, *artists*?

OFFICER HOWARD

I guess so. But you weren't hired to be an actor.

QUINN

Consider it pro bono.

OFFICER HOWARD

You know the film was banned.

QUINN

Could you repeat that sentence?

OFFICER HOWARD

I understand. You weren't showing a film. But you *were* reading the script.

QUINN

Excuse me. I was performing the parts. All the parts. Which is not easy to do.

OFFICER HOWARD

Especially four times in a row.

QUINN

I would have had five if our city's finest hadn't shown up.

OFFICER HOWARD

I understand this isn't the first time you've had officers show up.

QUINN

And each time, it was on a public sidewalk and no charges were ever brought against me.

OFFICER HOWARD

There haven't been charges brought against you this time. We just want to ask you some questions.

QUINN

You want to intimidate me into not doing it anymore.

OFFICER HOWARD

How many more times do you *need* to do it?

QUINN

Until something gets done about the Climate Crimes being committed.

OFFICER HOWARD

Well, that's what we're concerned about. When you say something like that, I don't exactly know what you mean.

QUINN

It means I'm witness to a crime, and I'm literally calling the police.

OFFICER HOWARD

By reciting the lines in this film.

QUINN

By performing the lines. And, yes, every time I go out there, I'm alerting you to the worst crime humanity has ever conjured. Except every time you show up, you detain *me*.

Which, if I may say so, is really quite successful in terms of performance art.

OFFICER HOWARD

Why successful?

QUINN

The piece only works if you play your part. And getting cops to participate in performance art is not very easy.

OFFICER HOWARD

That's clever. But you said you plan to keep doing this until something gets done about it. What do you expect to get done?

QUINN

You're the ones showing up. I expect you to do your job.

OFFICER HOWARD

Our job is to arrest criminals.

QUINN

If they're not criminals, then your job is not what you think it is.

OFFICER HOWARD

I don't think it's us who you're expecting to show up.

I think you're doing this in hopes someone is going to get the wrong idea and mimic what was in the film.

QUINN

Don't you mean the right idea?

OFFICER HOWARD

Now see, that's what I'm talking about. You say you're exercising your free speech rights, but incitement to violence is not covered under that freedom.

QUINN

I didn't say which part I hoped they would mimic. Maybe I just want people to have an open discussion about solutions to the crisis.

OFFICER HOWARD

Or maybe you want some nut out there to hurt one of these executives.

QUINN

Has anything like that happened?

OFFICER HOWARD

Not yet.

QUINN

You're acting like only passersby on the street have seen the performance. Multiple people have already filmed me doing this.

OFFICER HOWARD

We're aware of that. The one outside Chevron went viral.

QUINN

And the only thing that has come out of it is others starting to do the performances in front of companies in other cities.

OFFICER HOWARD

That may be true. But the more people that see this, the greater chance there is someone is going to take matters into their own hands.

QUINN

You're saying those would not be my hands, is that correct?

OFFICER HOWARD

Do you think this is cute? Flirting with violence, playing with people's lives?

QUINN

I'm not the one playing with people's lives. The oil and gas titans on the top floor of those buildings are. Besides, *couldn't* people just as well mimic the focus group part of the performance and swear off violence?

OFFICER HOWARD

That's not the end of the film. The last scene is the book club, which explicitly endorses violence.

QUINN

Do you know why I got the idea to read each part myself? Because I wanted to show that we are all these things. We are all victims, we are all perpetrators, we are all accomplices, and we are all spectators.

OFFICER HOWARD

Are you saying you're the same as the men and women who run these companies?

QUINN

I'm saying that we're all responsible for doing everything we can to fix this problem. And if we don't fix the problem, it means we all didn't do enough.

OFFICER HOWARD

And what's that? What is enough?

QUINN

I think that's what the film was trying to ask.

OFFICER HOWARD

But by ending the film with the book club scene, it makes violent tactics look more than necessary. When they're not.

QUINN

Then what nonviolent solutions have we not thought of?

OFFICER HOWARD

I'm not Mr. Jenns.

QUINN

So you've seen the film.

OFFICER HOWARD

I watched your performance.

QUINN

And you didn't run out and kidnap an oil baron?

OFFICER HOWARD

There's a lot of sick people out there.

QUINN

And none of those people could ever do as much damage as the people you're working for.

OFFICER HOWARD

I work for the city.

QUINN

You work for the same people who called the police on me. The same people who've sent me cease and desist letters. The same people who've tried to get restraining orders put on me.

OFFICER HOWARD

I work for the city. But I admit. I can sympathize with a company looking out for its employees. It's not just rich people who work in that building. There's a lot of regular folks like you and me in there.

QUINN

And the people who sign their checks are sabotaging the future of those workers.

OFFICER HOWARD

In your opinion.

QUINN

By sitting here with me, asking me these questions, you're proving my opinion right.

OFFICER HOWARD

How is that?

QUINN

The reason why you're worried someone is going to take matters into their own hands is because you know it's true.

(MORE)

QUINN (cont'd)

These aren't just rich assholes who've occasionally had to break a few eggs to make their capitalist omelet. These are gangs of mass murderers.

OFFICER HOWARD

Again, your opinion.

QUINN

You'll excuse me if I can't afford to wait until history proves the book club scene tragically right.

As I was saying, these aren't just your typical oligarchs. It's a dangerous network of corporate dictators. My performance piece only states the obvious. And I'm sitting in a police precinct because you know it *is* true.

OFFICER HOWARD

If they were that dangerous, wouldn't they just take you out?

QUINN

They are taking me out. Every day. Just like they're taking you out. Our air, our water, our land, our food. Our futures. Along the way, they might pay a few fines. But they *are* - killing us all. And the only way they can do it, is if you do your job.

OFFICER HOWARD

My job is to serve and protect the people of this city.

QUINN

Detaining me is not protecting the executives in that skyscraper.

In fact, those executives would be better protected if you arrested them and put them on trial.

OFFICER HOWARD

How is that?

QUINN

Because I'm going to keep doing these performances.

(MORE)

QUINN (cont'd)

Until enough people have witnessed it, and heard what those in the book club scene said. Whether they exist in a movie or on a page or in an ethereal performance, the young people in that scene are real. 80 years from now, that's going to be the view on violence and what was warranted.

Continuing to put your focus on artists and activists like me just ensures it.

But the people in that book club don't have to be real. We could save them. We have to save them.

And we will save them. The question is if it's going to be you who saves them or someone else.

Now I think you know the only way *you* can save the kids in that book club is by arresting the people on the top floor of that building you just picked me up at. But by doing that, you'll also be protecting the people on that top floor. For if enough of those people get arrested, the ones that *don't* go to prison will revise their ethos for doing business, at least as it pertains to this particular issue.

But if you *don't* arrest those people, if you don't put an end to their crimes *legally*, someone else is going to heed the words of the people in that book club. And they're going to save them some other way.

OFFICER HOWARD

I'm pretty sure that would stand as an admission of guilt in a court of law.

QUINN

That's only because you see the world as friend or foe.

As much as I believe the men and women who occupy those positions of power are killing us, I still see them as members of my Homo sapien family. They have the capacity to change, and they too are deserving of love.

I told you. My performances are my way of calling the police on climate criminals.

Not because I hate them. But because I'm trying to get them to change their way.

(MORE)

QUINN (cont'd)

And because I'm trying to protect them from those who *will* inevitably take things into their own hands. And by giving these CEOs and executives a chance to do right by those people in the book club scene, in a way I'm doing my part to save those CEOs and executives as well.

OFFICER HOWARD

You expect me to believe that?

QUINN

Not you.  
But judges? Maybe.

CAPTION over BLACK reads:

The Judiciary  
Washington, D.C. - 2027

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

32-year-old WYATT REYNOLDS stands before a heightened semicircle of FIVE JUDGES. The COURT OFFICER steps forth.

COURT OFFICER

State your name.

WYATT

Wyatt Reynolds.

COURT OFFICER

Wyatt Reynolds, law enforcement has presented the courts with evidence of your guilt. You are being afforded the time and consideration of five members of the Judiciary. The following dialogue is a privilege earned solely through absolute honesty. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

WYATT

Sure. Why not?

COURT OFFICER

The judges will now ask you questions.

The Court Officer steps back.

JUDGE ONE

Were you or were you not, on the night of September 20th, at a screening of the banned version of the film *Do We Have Your Attention?*

WYATT

It's true I occupied a seat in the theater in question, on the night in question, at the time in question.

JUDGE TWO

No need to be smart. Just answer.

WYATT

Your Honor, I believe it's important I be precise in what I'm admitting to.

JUDGE THREE

There's not much else in question. You were picked up walking out of that specific theater exit immediately after the movie was over.

WYATT

I said I was in the theater during the time in question. But I cannot confirm that my eyes were open the whole time. Thus, I cannot confirm that I was looking at the screen.

JUDGE FOUR

Are you telling the court you were asleep during the film?

WYATT

I tend to doze off in theaters. It's so cozy and dark. You just drift away.

JUDGE TWO

You expect us to believe you paid to see a movie and then slept through the entirety of the picture?

WYATT

Only a portion of it. I paid for a movie ticket because I was supposed to meet someone for a date. He was running late, so I went ahead and got a seat in the back and started watching the trailers. I'd had a long day at work and was pretty tired and ended up nodding off. He didn't get there until about midway through. When he woke me up, we began talking. Eventually, we started making out. And that lasted until the end of the movie.

JUDGE THREE

And what was this person's name?

WYATT

A gentleman never kisses and tells.

JUDGE FIVE

It's not for gossip, Mr. Reynolds.

JUDGE THREE

And it's an order of the court.

WYATT

I don't know his real name. We met through an app. He left through the other exit, so I'm not sure you picked him up.

JUDGE FOUR

Date or no date, how do you believe this information is relevant to the proceedings?

WYATT

There's a difference between being in attendance and paying attention. I'm not saying I didn't look at the screen at all. But from what I read in the court documents, the film was banned for certain scenes. It's entirely possible that I was either unconscious or preoccupied during the scenes in question.

JUDGE THREE

So if we were to ask if you remember those scenes, how would we know whether you were telling the truth?

WYATT

That's a good point. I don't guess you would know. Without surveillance inside the theater in question, I guess you would have to take my word for it. The ban ordinance states that you must have willfully watched the prohibited content. So if, as you said, you can't know with any real confidence whether I was awake, or not preoccupied, and therefore willfully watched the scenes in question, it would seem there's too much doubt surrounding my case to convict.

JUDGE ONE

Mr. Reynolds, you are being afforded a calm and reasonable dialogue with the members of this body. Please don't take the court's patience for weakness.

WYATT

I don't. But if I may, I'm not entirely sure what I'm supposed to take from the court's interest in this case.

JUDGE TWO

You broke a law.

WYATT

Even if that were technically true, you're putting people on trial for watching a movie.

JUDGE FIVE

You sought out the event, you planned to attend the event, you paid for a ticket, you showed up, and went in. This wasn't an accident.

WYATT

The court knows that *Do We Have Your Attention* was not the advertised film for that showing.

JUDGE ONE

That's because the film is banned. The theater was showing it covertly.

WYATT

So even if you disbelieve the account regarding my lack of acuity, you have no idea whether I knew I was buying a ticket for *Do We Have Your Attention* or if I intended to partake of the advertised showing.

JUDGE FOUR

You stayed for the film.

WYATT

The film on the screen was of no concern to me. I was only there to meet someone.

JUDGE THREE

Neither of which we can confirm.

WYATT

Neither of which you can disprove.

JUDGE TWO

Should we go ahead and pronounce you guilty, or do you have anything real that would persuade us?

WYATT

I see. Well.

If Your Honors are *not* going to take my word, then at least allow me to address the reality you perceive.

Let's assume I'm lying. Let's assume I was both alone and awake through it all. Let's assume I *did* know what was playing and intended on seeing a banned film. And let's assume I loved every minute of said film. Why is my being in attendance a problem for anyone?

JUDGE FIVE

It's the reason you had for being in attendance. You wanted to see it.

WYATT

Film is art. I don't believe that art can be a crime.

JUDGE THREE

You're not being tried for making the film.

WYATT

Excuse me. I don't believe being curious is a crime.

JUDGE FOUR

Were you not informed that, under the new laws, when a film is banned, it is illegal not only to show the material, but to witness the material?

WYATT

Haven't you witnessed it?

JUDGE FOUR

We watched as part of our official duty.

JUDGE TWO

We are exempted from the law.

WYATT

And you've committed no crimes as a result.

JUDGE ONE

Our background ensures we possess the agency and mental fortitude not to be corrupted.

WYATT

Corrupted by what, references to vigilante violence or references to reality?

JUDGE FIVE

What reality is that?

WYATT

The violence of the state and its corporate partners.

JUDGE THREE

Apparently, you *were* awake.

WYATT

How do you know I don't have the same "agency and mental fortitude" that you do? You picked me and the others up as we were leaving the theater. You have no idea whether I would have done anything untoward.

JUDGE FOUR

That's precisely why you were picked up when you were. Waiting would be a risk. The law is written so that we don't have to guess.

WYATT

Then what about the other side of that coin? What if one of the people you picked up was the *one* person who watched this film and took inspiration to find more creative forms of nonviolent engagement, until one of those attempts brought about our salvation? Jailing that person would only thwart those efforts.  
Do Your Honors not worry about the fate of our planet, of our species?

JUDGE ONE

We are as concerned about Climate Change as anyone. But our role here is the law.

WYATT

And isn't the law the problem? What if this person were to pledge to you that *is* what they took from the film? That they intend to do just that? To reject violence and work for a solution within the ever-shrinking means of what is still legal?

JUDGE FIVE

Moments ago, you asked us to take your word that you were not even aware of what was on the screen.

WYATT

I didn't say I *was* that person. I'm posing a hypothetical. You admitted that waiting would be a risk. But I believe that not risking the potential of someone finding a lawful solution is far more dangerous. Unless you think there is no salvation to be had - in *nonviolent* engagement.

JUDGE THREE

You're trying to be cute. Like the detainee in the police precinct scene.

WYATT

I wouldn't know. But I assume that detainee was also being asked inane questions about a film, as the temperature outside was rising to a degree that is simply unbearable.

JUDGE TWO

For someone who hasn't watched the scene, you exhibit the same hubris.

WYATT

It's not hard to imagine that sort of inanity. Civil servants. Hassling you. Threatening to take your freedom. Making an example of you. Except the example they're making is not the one they think.

JUDGE FOUR

Please enlighten us. What example are “they” making?

WYATT

They’re illustrating beyond any question just what it is and who it is the state is committed to protecting.

JUDGE THREE

And who is that?

WYATT

The rich, powerful, and callous individuals who made this film worth making. And the ever-disconnected and unaccountable institutions that make it worth seeing.

JUDGE FIVE

I can assure you the state is committed to protecting all equally.

WYATT

You can’t possibly believe that.  
You can’t.  
If your spouse poisons you over time, they’ll go to prison.  
If a company does it, they’re forced to put a warning on the poison.  
That doesn’t sound equal to me.  
Unless you meant that the powerful are protected, not just when they’re the victim, but also when they’re the perpetrator.

It’s funny. On the way out of the theater, I asked the woman in front of me what she thought of the movie. She said it was just so so.  
Next thing I know, I have a date for a trial and everyone I know wants to see what all the fuss is about.  
Leave it to the authorities to blow up a movie that wasn’t even that great to begin with.

JUDGE THREE

Material is not banned according to its artistic merit.

WYATT

Yes, but it's not banned for the reasons you give either.

JUDGE THREE

Then why do you think it was banned?

WYATT

I think it was banned for what it got right.  
Just like the scene you mentioned.  
You even said I resembled the detainee.

JUDGE TWO

I was referring to your attitude.

WYATT

But why the scene at all? Why the ban in the plot? It's as if the filmmakers knew you couldn't stand for this type of public honesty. And from your reactions here today, it sounds like the movie got a lot *more* right. Maybe *that's* why it got banned. Maybe it was predicting the future. Or just giving a - clearer view of the present.

JUDGE FIVE

Perhaps we live in different presents.

WYATT

I think that goes without saying.

JUDGE ONE

And I think we've heard all we need to hear.

WYATT

If I may, can I just ask one more thing?

I know I've got a bit of a mouth on me. But I've never so much as gotten stopped for jaywalking. When you look at my record, my job, my background, doesn't it make you wonder? If I hadn't left the theater. If I had just stayed there in the dark and drifted back to sleep. Woke up a little later and gone back home. If I hadn't been picked up that night, but instead just - went back to my life after the movie. Do you think society would be *less* safe?

JUDGE ONE

As I said, I think we've heard all we need to hear.

WYATT

Then at least answer my earlier question. Do you believe there is salvation to be had - in *nonviolent* engagement?

JUDGE ONE

Court Officer, please remove Mr. Reynolds.

The Court Officer approaches Wyatt.

WYATT

You have no proof my eyes were even open!

COURT OFFICER

That's enough.

WYATT

Get off of me.

Wyatt is dragged out of the room.

WYATT (cont'd)

They'll get you too, over time.

CAPTION over BLACK reads:

# Chapel Hill Science Fiction Authors Meetup

Chapel Hill - 2021

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

The WRITER takes a sip of his drink, puts it down on the printed-out copy of *Do We Have Your Attention* in front of him, opens his notebook, and grins at KHALID, MICHELLE, REMY, and JULES.

WRITER

All right. Let me have it.  
Come on, now. I know there's going to be issues with it. It's ok.

KHALID

I liked the premise. But it *is* a first draft, and... I think there are a number of different directions it could be taken.

WRITER

Different than the one *I* took it.

KHALID

I'm not saying that. I just think it's wide open for what you can do with it, and you ought to consider that for the rewrite.

WRITER

That's fair. But what makes you think this may not be the best route to get to where I want to go?

KHALID

Probably because I couldn't tell where you wanted to go.

MICHELLE

Me either. Like why did you keep up with this idea that it's a film?

WRITER

Maybe it's stupid, but I had this idea that I hoped people would see the irony in having to do so much of the work on their own to envision what these scenes look like, with it being a script instead of having the same description a novel would, and that would be in line with having to not only imagine what Global Warming would have looked like for our time, but to then imagine how bad it was going to get for these characters in the future.

REMY

When you say "do the work on their own," are you drawing the parallel to how much work the average person in the story is going to have to do to fix this problem?

WRITER

That was kind of the idea. I know that reading a script is not as hard as taking on multiple industries, but I didn't want to make it an easy read if that makes sense.

MICHELLE

You want to *impress* the readers by making it extremely *inconvenient* to read your work?

Laughs.

REMY

It's such a great model for success.

WRITER

Heller kind of did it, with *Catch 22*.

JULES

You, sir, are no Joseph Heller.

WRITER

I'm not young Heller, but I think I could be a poor man's old Joseph Heller.

MICHELLE

I think old Joseph Heller would have liked that.

REMY

It'll be a great blurb for the book. "A poor man's old Joseph Heller."

Laughs.

KHALID

That's funny. But there's an issue. You're assuming today's readers are the same readers from back then. When Heller was hot.

JULES

And even if they were, that people would give a no name writer like you this much benefit of the doubt.

KHALID

Heller aside, you normally have to earn it with something a bit more accessible first.

WRITER

Accessible or better?

KHALID

Ok, better. Even you said you're no young Heller.

MICHELLE

Also, this is supposed to be sci-fi.

WRITER

Sci-fi-ish.

MICHELLE

Whatever. If it has a sci-fi element, you have to deal with the fact that so much of sci-fi is set in the future. But this is set in the present day, because of what wasn't done in the past. It is set in 2021, right?

WRITER

Yeah, it's right now. Do you think that makes it too boring?

MICHELLE

Maybe not boring, but a lot of what people like about sci-fi is the future technology, even in a dystopia. But this is dystopian in a way where we have old technology and infrastructure, and things are kind of backward. It feels like going back in time, even though it's supposed to be now.

REMY

It's like going back into the past and going into the future at the same time. Like trying to get a glimpse of what the future would look like if we just kept all our old technology/infrastructure and ways of doing things for decade after decade. It's kind of a mind fuck.

WRITER

But is it a good mind fuck or a bad mind fuck?

MICHELLE

It depends on how seriously you can take the whole Global Warming premise.

JULES

It should be easy to take it seriously, because we *did* take it seriously.

MICHELLE

I don't mean it like that. I mean we took Global Warming seriously as soon as we realized it was an issue and what it would end up doing. But you want us to believe that we both didn't take it seriously then and that we still wouldn't take it seriously decades later when it was in full devastation swing.

REMY

Why is that so hard to believe? We still have nuclear weapons, and that's every bit as much of an existential threat as Global Warming would have been. Actually, it's worse.

MICHELLE

I'll give you that. But getting rid of Global Warming was in everyone's interest. It seems like something easy.

(MORE)

MICHELLE (cont'd)

And it was something that, once we changed over infrastructure and energy policy, only had to be tweaked on occasion. But wars and fighting were never going to just go away.

JULES

But why don't wars and fighting go away?

MICHELLE

Because it's in our DNA to fight each other.

REMY

Even if I concede that point, which I don't, that's not the only reason.

KHALID

Are you talking about religion?

REMY

No, though that *is* probably a better answer than our genetics.

MICHELLE

He's talking about money.

REMY

Ding ding ding ding.

JULES

So wars are about money. What's that got to do with Global Warming?

REMY

At the time, the fossil fuel industries did the first studies on Global Warming, they didn't have to tell us. They didn't have to have the summit. They didn't have to cooperate with one another and the government. They could have done what was in their interests and kept making money.

KHALID

They *did* keep making money. It was just in renewables.

MICHELLE

But they did make somewhat less money. That's a fact.

JULES

Instead of making 35 billion in profits, a company makes 27 billion in profits.

REMY

Eight billion's a lot of money.

KHALID

Those companies are still like the richest companies on the planet.

REMY

It was still a gamble. They had no idea if some technology or some company would come along and eliminate their foothold in the market. But if they stuck with fossil fuels, they weren't going anywhere.

JULES

But it's not just refusing to change. It would take actively pulling the wool over the whole world's eyes long enough to be able to depend solely on corruption and bribery.

KHALID

That is some demonic shit.

MICHELLE

Not hard to see why some people might feel like violence is not off the table.

JULES

That's only if you believe that stalling would have worked. Like the government wouldn't have made their actions a crime. Like the news wouldn't have beat them up day and night.

REMY

I see what you're saying. It's not *just* the fault of the industries that would have directly benefited. We're supposed to accept that everyone else would have went along too.

MICHELLE

Everyone else in power.

JULES

That's not how power works. You're thinking too conspiratorially. It's like expecting us to believe, in this story, they all got in a smoke-filled room and decided they would choke the planet out so four guys in the room could make a few more dollars.

KHALID

That's not it at all though. It's not about conspiracy. It's about understanding the system. For all we know, the fossil fuel companies might have gotten together and had this very conversation. They might have even come up with plans to do all of what's in the story. But, one, they couldn't have known if it would work. It's a lot of precise brush strokes to get to that picture. Two, they couldn't have known if technology was going to come along and put them out of business anyway. And this way, they at least got the jumpstart on renewable energy. And three, there's the whole we'd be the worst humans who ever lived if we went down this road thing.

REMY

It looks like an easy decision because we weren't in the room.

MICHELLE

Because we don't have that kind of money, or power.

JULES

You actually think they took a vote?

KHALID

Like Remy said. Eight billion dollars is a lot of money.

MICHELLE

If they did, that should make us just as sick. That it was even considered.

REMY

And the irony of that vote.

JULES

The most important vote in human history  
being the most anti-democratic act in human  
history.

MICHELLE

Like it was their decision to make.

The thought sits with everyone for a few seconds.

JULES

All right.  
Maybe it's a little bit better than I initially  
thought.

WRITER

A little bit?

JULES

Only a little.

REMY

The problem is, if you have to have a group of  
people to discuss your writing with before you  
come to the conclusion that it's good, that's not  
exactly conducive to the best outcome.

KHALID

And don't tell us that's some meta bullshit  
about participatory democracy producing better  
results.

WRITER

It's only good if we get together and talk.

JULES

Oh my God.

Laughs.

The Writer pretends to take a bow.

WRITER

I really can't help myself.

Khalid and Remy shake their heads.

WRITER (cont'd)

Anyone else have any other notes?

MICHELLE

The same way it's hard for me to imagine Global Warming becoming this much of a problem, it's also hard for me to imagine there ever being a ban order like this, or the judges so smugly enforcing an order like that.

JULES

Yeah, while they were talking, I realized I was having a hard time taking *them* seriously.

WRITER

Taking them seriously or identifying with them?

JULES

Both I guess.

KHALID

Then you have to separate the two.

REMY

The past is full of examples of people acting in ways that are completely antithetical to everything we would see as rational.

MICHELLE

But this is supposed to be set right now.

REMY

And you really can't imagine any of the judges today acting like that?

MICHELLE

I know we have some messed up decisions once in a while, but nothing like this.

KHALID

That's if they're really supposed to be judges. Maybe it's a metaphor.

MICHELLE

The whole thing is a metaphor. But it's set right now. And maybe you can believe that greedy capitalist pigs would act that poorly. But judges? Even corrupt judges wouldn't act like that.

REMY

Like what? There's tons of ideological judges. There's a ton of *fanatical* judges.

MICHELLE

There's tons of them. But do you believe any of them would act like the judges in the book?

JULES

It's not nitpicking. I kind of felt the same way.

KHALID

It is hard to believe, if the world were on the verge of ecological collapse, that highly educated judges would humiliate themselves like that.

REMY

In their minds, they're not humiliating themselves. They're humiliating the person before them.

JULES

Hmm.

REMY

And from it being a body of judges, absent the jury of one's peers, we're not supposed to believe it's necessarily the same judicial system as ours.

KHALID

They're still judges.

REMY

If an order is given, it's their job to adjudicate its enforcement.

MICHELLE

As the earth's climate is going down the tubes?

REMY

I know it's a stretch, but--

MICHELLE

It's too much of a stretch.

REMY

Why? We imagine people being diabolical in fiction all the time, especially sci-fi.

JULES

Maybe that's the only reason I would consider it sci-fi. That it really would have to be a different dimension for it to happen like this.

REMY

Like a *really* worst-case scenario style dimension.

KHALID

That's why I think that the judges were more of a metaphor.

When Michelle said it's in our DNA to fight, you said it was about money. But I think of religion when I think of fighting.

Because even though it's presented as this cordial, civil conversation being had, the court setting, at least the way it's set up in the story being kind of adversarial, is a kind of fight. Not with violence but with words.

And the judges are not fighting on behalf of all the potential lives that might be lost to Global Warming. They're fighting on behalf of what they see as their civilization.

Because when you're talking about civilization and order, a lot of the time the faith in that order is far more like religion than it is law.

MICHELLE

Maybe especially for judges.

KHALID

It reminded me a bit like the judges in a witch trial.

They came there to convict. And just like a witch trial, their law degree or how intelligent they are *doesn't* matter. It's a matter of faith.

REMY

But also because they know if they don't go along with the other judges, they might find themselves in the dock the next week.

KHALID

True. But mostly, I think it's a real faith. If it was just about law, judges can admit that a law was wrong and it doesn't really impact their worldview, or their view of the system. In fact, it strengthens their belief in justice through checks and balances. But if their faith in the system is like a religion, then no part of it can be fallible. Thus the judges being so sure and full of themselves. They believe the state is infallible. And anyone questioning the state must be a heretic.

JULES

Ok. But what about what Remy said? Can't we turn that around? Because I felt at certain points, the tone of the book is like a witch trial in reverse. Where everyone who's not doing enough becomes the witch.

MICHELLE

You mean violence.

JULES

Yeah, if you swapped out the judges with the book club members? You could imagine it going the completely opposite way. They would condemn anyone who didn't think the situation warranted violence, maybe even extreme violence.

KHALID

A witch trial in reverse. That's pretty good.

REMY

Except, their perspective is far different from the judges' perspective. They have 80 years of real destruction to base their opinion on.

JULES

It doesn't mean there aren't a plethora of nonviolent solutions that could have worked, but maybe were never tried.

MICHELLE

Or thought of.

REMY

But they would probably say, what good is nonviolence if your society allows for this *type* of violence?

KHALID

That's why the judges are metaphorically religious. Religions sweep away decades and centuries of violence like it's nothing. They merely need to believe in the goodness of the God or the book, or in their case the nation. The law is the law. There is no morality above adherence to the law.

JULES

Ok, but what if in a way, that's the right course? What if their generation, worldwide, does learn all the lessons and they do move forward twenty times better? Maybe they carry human civilization forward with real peace and prosperity for centuries to come. By *not* resorting to that kind of extreme violence - and ending up with a far *better* situation for humanity, demonstrated by the stability of 2101, couldn't you sweep those 80 years away?

REMY

You can only sweep it away if you're the judges. That world is all they have to believe in. And it's nine times out of ten a crock of shit. We have no reason to believe the world the book club members live in is a good one. Or even a better one than this. For all we know, they could still be in a hellscape. They could be in an all-out fascist state instituted to keep order in the messed up Climate.

(MORE)

REMY (cont'd)

They said the book is a cult classic, but this could be a secret book club for all we know. The book could be as controversial then as it is in this time.

MICHELLE

Now that's an angle. What if you end it with them getting put on trial for reading the book?

KHALID

That it became a cult classic because it was always being banned. And maybe them reading it is this tradition of young people reading banned works and taking that chance, in the face of decades of people getting punished for it. But that's all that really keeps the work alive in people's minds.

JULES

Or considered good.

Laughs.

WRITER

So I'm glad you're going in this direction.

MICHELLE

Because you said, it being the first draft, you didn't have an ending yet.

WRITER

I've got ideas, but I haven't settled on anything yet.

I wanted to ask y'all if there seemed to be any kind of natural ending that comes to mind.

REMY

But you don't want a *natural* ending. You want it to be something messed up.

WRITER

I'm ok with that too. I just want it to work.

MICHELLE

What about what Khalid was saying about going back, or going forward, to the book club again?

(MORE)

MICHELLE (cont'd)

Maybe the end is them on trial, or maybe even in prison, for reading the book.

REMY

You can't, because they're actually a part of the script. You can't have them reading about themselves.

KHALID

Why not? There's so much other meta shit in there already. Might as well go all in.

REMY

I'm not saying it's not clever. I just don't think it's the best ending you could go with.

WRITER

Did you have any ideas when you were reading it?

REMY

I don't know if it's an ending per se. But I was wondering, as I was going through each section, what if it weren't just this one big movie? What if instead each part was a different medium?

JULES

Like a different format?

REMY

Yeah, like the first part with Mr. Jenns and Mr. Maxwell and the teens is for sure a movie in the theaters. But the focus group could maybe be something the audience had to experience by watching it online.

KHALID

Because the focus group is orchestrated as a video conference.

REMY

Yeah, it makes the viewer feel like they're in the focus group as well.

JULES

Which could make it more effective. Like they're in one of those boxes.

MICHELLE

Then what about the book club scene?

REMY

I think you naturally make that something in print. Like maybe a zine or something. It's not long enough for a novel or novella, so maybe it could be something they're supposed to download and print out.

JULES

Or maybe they're given the zine as part of the price of the movie ticket. But with instructions to not read it until after they've gone home and watched the focus group.

KHALID

That's awesome. What would the police precinct/questioning scene be?

REMY

You make that a stage play they have to attend, or some performance piece.

KHALID

Like the way it's implied by the performance artist woman being questioned.

JULES

Then what about the judges? Do you bring it back to film? You can't have two stage plays.

REMY

I think you make it a bit longer and have it as just audio, like a mini-podcast. That way, you don't see the judges' faces. You only hear them.

MICHELLE

And since the listener is not going to be on the side of censorship, it kind of makes you feel like you're the one there on trial as you're listening.

REMY

You could make the whole thing in almost any of these formats. But I like the idea of switching it up. Because it's like immersive almost.

JULES

Almost like solving a mystery.

WRITER

Not that I'm necessarily going to be able to pull off something like this. But do you all think those are the best formats?

KHALID

I was thinking maybe the police precinct could be surveillance footage of the person being questioned.

And if you need any other possible formats, maybe you could make one part of it a graphic novel, or maybe even graffiti somewhere super symbolic.

REMY

Yeah, it doesn't have to be what I said. Or this idea of different formats at all. I just thought it might be something to consider, to make it something really different.

WRITER

I like it. But I still have to figure out an ending. And with this, it would presumably be an entirely different format.

MICHELLE

As Remy was talking I was thinking, wouldn't it be cool if you could make some of it interactive, like the focus group, or the stage play? If there were elements where the viewer could interact with what's going on, and maybe even add to it. And then I thought, what if that's the end? What if the end is a real Q&A with you?

WRITER

Like an actual Q&A that was recorded?

MICHELLE

Yeah. Like maybe you do one big trial run, where after it's all over, you film the Q&A. And that's put in as the end of the movie.

WRITER

Where they get to ask why in the hell I thought I could pull off something so ridiculous.

Laughs.

KHALID

I wish there was a way you could do a different in-person Q&A for each audience.

JULES

You could. But if you did that, you couldn't ever have a nationwide release. It would have to be like a traveling release. Where people attended or viewed or listened to each section of it before the Q&A.

REMY

Like something that happens over a week?

MICHELLE

Yeah, because that way everyone attending the Q&A has put in some work of their own, and they all feel like now they're kind of in it together.

KHALID

It would also make the gravity of the questions a little weightier.

REMY

What if it wasn't just a Q&A, but it was like Michelle was saying, interactive? Like what if audience members have to take turns role-playing different scenes from the hostage scene, but for issues that are relevant to us? Each making the case for violence or not.

JULES

I definitely like it if you have someone role-playing both Mr. Jenns and Mr. Maxwell.

REMY

Yeah, because you might not even believe what you're arguing for, but *in the setting* you want to put forth the best case.

KHALID

Which is kind of like what some might feel Mr. Jenns is doing.

MICHELLE

This ends up making the format - part of the plot itself. Because it evolves from a Q&A with you as the writer into a Q&A with themselves.

WRITER

It's great.  
Buuuuuut. As you all know, I'm broke as a joke. And this would take an immense amount of coordination and resources.

REMY

That doesn't mean you couldn't do it.  
If you want it bad enough--

WRITER

I'm not saying it's impossible. Or that I won't consider it.  
I'm just asking, what if I can't? What are my options if it just stays one format?

JULES

You can still do the Q&A.  
You just make it as part of their world. Like this is the actual end of this fictional movie.

WRITER

So the Q&A is not necessarily with me, but the maker of this film, the *potentially even fictional* maker of this film, in this fictional world?

JULES

Why not?  
You've made it this banned movie, this taboo thing, throughout.

(MORE)

JULES (cont'd)

What if you end it with the movie having actually come out, without any kind of ban, and the ending is actually a Q&A session at the premiere, with the filmmaker?

REMY

So the *story* ends with the judges enforcing the ban, but the *book* ends with the movie actually coming out.

JULES

And the Q&A offers this concluding reflection over everything.

MICHELLE

With this fictitious filmmaker?

JULES

Yeah.

KHALID

Don't you think there's been enough exposition and over-analysis already?

JULES

Only in our world. But if the premiere is happening in that world where Global Warming has put them on the brink, then no amount of repetition or ham-handedness is enough until they do something about it.

MICHELLE

So it's supposed to annoy the fictional viewers into action.

JULES

I'm not saying it has to be annoying. It can still be really insightful. But the redundancy is part of the absurdity. That they keep spinning their wheels, and not really ever getting anywhere. Not actually fixing the problem.

REMY

When we know how easy it was to fix.

JULES

Only because we fixed it decades ago.

(MORE)

JULES (cont'd)

In *that* world, it seems like a hell of a task.

WRITER

What are the questions in the Q&A like?

KHALID

Maybe the Q&A devolves into something sinister. And then the doors are locked and the room gets gassed and puts them to sleep and then they wake up in their own hostage scene.

MICHELLE

No no no. That's too hack.

REMY

Yeah, you can't have too many twists. It ends up distracting you from the serious philosophical stuff.

KHALID

Then what if you have a few questions that are kind of middle of the road bullshit questions, but then the questions start going back in on the danger of a film like this? And it takes on the kind of witch trial feel of the judges scene?

JULES

Where it becomes another referendum on violence. Which is actually a distraction in itself, because it should be a referendum on their very survival and whether they're actually going to do what it takes.

KHALID

That's what I mean. The whole book has focused so much on whether it's ok to use violence. But no one seems to be asking if it's ok to die. To just skate around the solutions and watch a huge portion of humanity get wiped away.

MICHELLE

That's definitely better.

REMY

What if you leave everything the same as what we were just saying - except - the Q&A and the premiere of the film, and all of it being the last chapter, were actually set in our world? And their first questions are like ours have been, about how Global Warming would ever even be that big of a deal.

JULES

You would establish in those first questions that it's *our* reality and not the fictional one?

REMY

Yeah. That way, to them, Global Warming is like a distant fantasy. Similar to the way most people in the book's reality are treating it like anyway.

KHALID

Then what are the questions like after that?

REMY

Maybe you just do what Jules was saying and make it these reflections philosophically over strategy and creative activism and ideas of censorship and all that.

MICHELLE

But doesn't that make it feel less urgent, if you take it back to our world?

REMY

Yeah, but that's the whole metaphor. It's like a twist metaphor for the *book's* reality.

KHALID

That may be even too meta for this.

JULES

Yeah, I don't think it's bad. But I feel like you're gambling too much on the reader.

REMY

Maybe so. But the whole idea of it having been a movie to begin with makes the movie itself a distraction if it doesn't inspire people to find a solution.

JULES

And what solution are *we* supposed to be finding?

REMY

Maybe it's about the only thing that could have persuaded the oil companies and the government back then to *not* do what they knew they should.

MICHELLE

Greed?

REMY

Not just greed, but capitalism itself.

JULES

So this whole thing of bringing it back to our world is to get us to address capitalism... before it causes something like this?

REMY

Maybe. If you look around at the way the bees are dying off from pesticides and half the ocean is full of garbage, and we still have nuclear weapons to bolster economic hegemony, it's not the biggest reach to imagine that our way of doing things *could* get us to some equivalent crisis.

MICHELLE

You think people will get all that?

REMY

I'm not saying that's what it has to be. I'm just throwing out ideas.

WRITER

No, but this is good. It's all good.

KHALID

What if you do that, but then you throw in a twist that brings it back to *their* world?

MICHELLE

You and these twists. You're worse than our esteemed author here.

KHALID

No, but what if you do a Q&A just like Remy was saying? But then after the first few, you see that the next question comes from a teenage audience member. And then as they're asking their question, you recognize that they're the teen from the laptop in the original hostage scene. And all the sudden you're back in that world.

MICHELLE

Mmm, I do kind of like that.  
But what would they ask? And does that mean the filmmaker is from their world as well?

KHALID

Yeah, definitely from their world.  
It's not you. It's "the filmmaker."  
But you only see it's "the filmmaker" after the teen asks the question and the camera goes back to the stage.

WRITER

Not me anymore?

REMY

It was you - before. But now it's the filmmaker character that the focus group facilitator was talking about.

KHALID

Precisely.  
It would make the teen's question that much more jarring, going back and seeing we're fully back in that world.  
And as for what they would ask, I assume they would ask something like: How many more scenes do you need for this to work?

REMY

Because it hasn't worked yet. In their world.

KHALID

That's right. All of these sections getting added on top of one another, and it still hasn't really changed anyone's mind.

(MORE)

KHALID (cont'd)

And right outside the Q&A is a world where Global Warming is wrecking them.

JULES

So, even though it's back in their world, is it the cast member that played the teen, or is it the fictional character showing up in real life?

KHALID

The fictional character. It drives home how they're still treating Global Warming like it's fiction.

And they're basically asking what else they have to do. If this extreme threat didn't do it, what is it going to take?

I don't know if that seems too obvious a question. But just having them show up in the Q&A would be cool.

MICHELLE

Maybe the teen tells the filmmaker, "You tried," and that now he's off the hook. And the audience is like wondering, off the hook from what?

But then the filmmaker says that he's choosing to go through with it. So the audience will see. For the first time, how serious this is.

And the audience is looking around at each other not knowing what is going on. And the teen walks down to the stage and begins tying the filmmaker to his chair. And the real conclusion to the film is this audience being forced to watch the filmmaker be tortured.

KHALID

And you all said I was crazy with the twists. I told you the doors would be locked at some point.

Laughs.

REMY

So is this supposed to be like some callback to what is really on the screen for Mr. Maxwell when he's screaming? Watching someone innocent be tortured?

MICHELLE

I think so. It's like forcing them to face real suffering, and not be able to look away, like they've been looking away from Global Warming.

JULES

Except it's voluntary. It's like the filmmaker self-immolating in protest.

MICHELLE

Maybe to force the issue of nonviolence, they're committing this last resort of nonviolent protest.

KHALID

I don't know. That gives it a bit of a Jesus-y savior vibe. Taking on the pain so someone else won't have to.

MICHELLE

I'm not saying the filmmaker is right for doing it, or even that their motivation is right. I'm just saying they're willing to go this far to beg for a nonviolent solution.

JULES

But isn't it still violence? He is hurting someone. The someone is just himself.

MICHELLE

That's because he has the choice. And he also has the choice not to.

REMY

Like the people in the audience have the choice to do something about Global Warming, and not hurt themselves.

MICHELLE

Or to do nothing and bring on all this unnecessary pain.

JULES

But it's just torture. It's not them dying, right?

MICHELLE

I don't know.

(MORE)

MICHELLE (cont'd)

Maybe the Q&A ends with the torture, and the torture ends with them dying.

REMY

When you say "them" dying, do you mean the filmmaker or all of them?

MICHELLE

Just the filmmaker. The audience is left alive, so they can go and tell everyone what happened.

JULES

Wow.

KHALID

Do we have your attention?...

WRITER

And that's why I come to writers group.  
You guys are all in it.  
These are crazy good ideas.  
Crazy good.

CAPTION over BLACK reads:

# The Pitch

INT. CORNER OFFICE - DAY

PRODUCER

Look, I know you're passionate about Climate Change. *I'm* passionate about Climate Change. But this? I don't even know what this is. And what is it with this ending - where you don't even get an ending, just them giving suggestions for endings? What is that?

DIRECTOR

I admit. It's not a normal film project.

PRODUCER

That's the understatement of the millennium. This is weird at best, and weird is not enough to get greenlit. You know that. If you want to rework the first part, with the hostage, make it a feature, I might be interested in that.

DIRECTOR

It's a package deal.

PRODUCER

Says who?

DIRECTOR

Says the author.

PRODUCER

The author is a fucking nobody.

DIRECTOR

Everybody's a nobody until they get a hit.

PRODUCER

This is not a hit. It's not even a film. It's more like an art school graduate thesis. How do you even know this guy?

DIRECTOR

I don't know him.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

He's a friend of a friend. That friend asked if I would give it a read.

PRODUCER

So your friend hands you what amounts to an experimental book of stage plays that's neither been published nor produced, and you decide you have to adapt and direct it for the screen?

DIRECTOR

I think there's something there.

PRODUCER

Then let it be a book. Let it get produced for the stage. If it catches fire, then we can revisit it.

DIRECTOR

If this is going to get made, it has to get made now.

PRODUCER

If it was good, it would have been published by now.

DIRECTOR

He just wrote it this year. And it will get published.

PRODUCER

Only if you make it as a movie.

DIRECTOR

It's a good project.

PRODUCER

I'm taking this meeting because I like you; I think you're immensely talented. But this is--

DIRECTOR

You think I'm talented because of the risks I've taken.

PRODUCER

I've taken risks too.

DIRECTOR

And that's why I requested the meeting.

PRODUCER

If this were just a risk, I would consider it.

DIRECTOR

You're not giving it a fair chance.

PRODUCER

I can tell a loser when I see one.

DIRECTOR

You know my track record. I've never had a flop.

PRODUCER

You're a good director. Hell, you're a great director. And that's not something I just say. I mean it.

But even you can't pull this off.

DIRECTOR

Just hear me out.

PRODUCER

What's there to hear? It's not a film. If you expanded out the middle parts, it's possible it's a mini-series. But TV is not going to--

DIRECTOR

It's a film. It's got to be one experience.

PRODUCER

Your notes said you want to play out each suggested ending given by the Writers Group members, and maybe even add more of them.

DIRECTOR

The author and I discussed making the endings more and more vulgar, saving the most vulgar for last.

PRODUCER

You do that, and the shit will end up 4 hours.

DIRECTOR

Maybe 5.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

The *time* is the point. It's all the focus on these possible magical endings, instead of what we should be focused on in *avoiding* them all.

PRODUCER

5 hours of dialogue?

DIRECTOR

It'll keep their attention.

PRODUCER

You've got an intermission built into the fucking script.

DIRECTOR

It's a break for discussion.

PRODUCER

That's great. Maybe the audience can figure out what the hell it is they're watching.

DIRECTOR

You're making it out to be way more complex than it is.

PRODUCER

Are you kidding me? First it's a film, then it's not, then it is, then it's not. First it's about Climate Change, then it's about something else, then kind of about Climate Change, then kind of not. Never mind it weaving between this time over here and that reality over there. It lost the thread so many times, I almost forgot what the original story even was. And if you tell me that's what the author intended, because it's some kind of brilliant meta metaphor, I'm going to beat you to death with the script.

DIRECTOR

Everything in the script serves a purpose.

PRODUCER

That's assuming anyone is going to put up with it.

DIRECTOR

Are you paying attention to what's going on around us? It couldn't be more timely. There's literally millions of kids freaked the fuck out over their future.

PRODUCER

That doesn't mean those kids are going to buy tickets.

DIRECTOR

Why wouldn't they?

PRODUCER

It's not a movie. It's a fucking conference.

DIRECTOR

It's an event.

PRODUCER

By the time you're done with it, it'll be a *half-day* event.

DIRECTOR

So? Young people do music festivals all the time.

PRODUCER

That's because music festivals are fun. And you can take a shit load of drugs. This is not that.

DIRECTOR

There's a market for this.

PRODUCER

No way. It's too meta, it's too cerebral, too philosophical.

DIRECTOR

Since when do you make comic book movies?

PRODUCER

I'm all for making smart movies. And experimental movies. But this whole jerkapalooza? No one's going to take it seriously. The critics will burn you at the stake.

DIRECTOR

Critical success isn't going to get us any closer to a solution.

PRODUCER

And you think this film will?  
You know I care about the environment. When your agent told me you had a novel take on the Climate Crisis, I was eager to read it. And I'm not saying there aren't novel parts to it. But novelty is not enough.

DIRECTOR

When was the last time a movie did something no movie has ever done before?

PRODUCER

Sometimes things aren't done for good reason.

DIRECTOR

It'll get attention just for the attempt.

PRODUCER

Attention is different than commitment.  
Watching a multiple-hour movie is a commitment.  
Watching a movie in so many parts is a commitment.  
Asking people to talk to strangers - is a commitment. Most of these kids can barely look you in the eye; you think you're going to recreate the salons of yesteryear?

DIRECTOR

The film is not the point. It's the dialogue that comes out of it.

PRODUCER

But that's *my* point. These kids barely talk to their friends when they're sitting at the same table in a restaurant. You think they're going to instantly turn into campers around the bonfire? And what's there to discuss? Every section, you dissect the section before it. You're supposed to show, not tell.

DIRECTOR

The exposition is intentional.

PRODUCER

Oh yeah? Well, it comes off as you not trusting the audience.

DIRECTOR

I *don't* trust them. Things are where they're at because no one has been willing to ask questions that reflect the true threat.

PRODUCER

That may be true, but you can't make art if you don't trust what the audience will do with it.

DIRECTOR

Maybe I'm not making art. Or maybe I'm making a different type of art.

PRODUCER

Are you listening to yourself? Do you know how pretentious that sounds?

DIRECTOR

It's not pretentious; it's patronizing.

PRODUCER

Even better. You know how much kids *love* being condescended to.

DIRECTOR

It's better than lying to them.

PRODUCER

You just said you don't trust the audience.

DIRECTOR

But I'm not lying to them. I'm manipulating them.

PRODUCER

Manipulating is a form of lying.

DIRECTOR

Not if you're up front with it.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

You don't believe people will come out to something like this. But what if we make it explicit in the marketing?

"This movie is not entertainment. This movie is meant to manipulate you. Somewhere between art and propaganda, it is an experiment. On you. Do you think you're smart enough to figure out what it wants? Do you think you're smart enough to know whether to resist or to give in? One day of your life. Could change everything. Your future depends on this movie. Do We Have Your Attention?"

PRODUCER

You're nuts.

DIRECTOR

They'll take it as a challenge. They'll show up just for the challenge.

PRODUCER

They'll show up to be patronized?

DIRECTOR

They will show up to be manipulated. But only if we tell them that up front. That way they have it in the back of their mind as they ask the same questions you did.

PRODUCER

Like why all the exposition?

DIRECTOR

Exactly. You said show, not tell. But this is an interactive piece. Where the audience does the showing.

PRODUCER

Audiences aren't used to that.

DIRECTOR

Audiences aren't used to their planet burning the fuck up either. They have to know there are certain expectations of them, or else they'll look at it like an art film.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

If all people do is guess what stood for this and what metaphor was that, then it's an abject failure.

I don't want people leaving the theater sniffing their fucking farts.

PRODUCER

Then what *do* you want from them?

DIRECTOR

I don't know. It's an experiment.

PRODUCER

An experiment or a game?

DIRECTOR

It's more like a provocation. Leading them so far from the original premise is kind of like fucking with them.

PRODUCER

More like shaming them.

DIRECTOR

Not just them. All of us. Myself included. The author included. We should all be ashamed. A movie like this ever being conceived of is a show of collective shame. Just like the characters analyzing all the previous scenes demonstrates how misguided our focus is and how trivial our discussions have been. How we got this far away from the decisions we need to make.

PRODUCER

And you think they're going to get that?

DIRECTOR

I know they're going to get it. Because I'm going to make them get it.

PRODUCER

Well, I didn't get it.

DIRECTOR

That's because I didn't give you the ending.

PRODUCER

I thought all the stupid Writers Group suggestions was the ending.

DIRECTOR

I couldn't give away the twist at the end.

PRODUCER

The twist at the end is me not giving you the money to make this movie.

DIRECTOR

Come on. You know you could sell this. You've put out some of the strangest films I've ever seen. And you made money. You know you can sell this.

PRODUCER

I don't know that at all.

DIRECTOR

Even if it doesn't work in the theaters, it'll become a cult hit. I promise. You're not going to lose money.

PRODUCER

It's not the money. Well, it is the money. But it's not.

DIRECTOR

Then what is it?

PRODUCER

All studios have flops. But if this flops, it's different. I look like I took a gamble for the wrong reason.

DIRECTOR

Saving the planet is the wrong reason?

PRODUCER

No one in my cohort is going to see it that way.

DIRECTOR

Because of the not-so-subtle implications surrounding capitalism?

PRODUCER

That's part of it.

DIRECTOR

As long as you show them you made money from it, all will be forgiven.

PRODUCER

Not all.

DIRECTOR

Then what else is it?  
Is it about the violence? Because the last time I checked, your crown has some pretty fucking violent gems in it.

PRODUCER

That was violence in the good way. This is not violence in the good way.

DIRECTOR

No one in the film even gets touched. The worst thing that happens is they imply violence.

PRODUCER

The worst thing that happens is they talk about violence. And not in the good way.

DIRECTOR

What is it with this good way shit? What the fuck is good violence?

PRODUCER

Grow the fuck up, you know what good violence is.

DIRECTOR

Then say it.

PRODUCER

Good violence is the violence that doesn't happen to people like us, or it's...

DIRECTOR

Or it's what?

PRODUCER

Or - it's violence that happens in our favor.

DIRECTOR

And you don't find anything wrong with that?

PRODUCER

No more than you have, since you joined the club.

DIRECTOR

Ok, fair enough. Whatever.  
It's bad violence. They talk about it. So what?

PRODUCER

So what - is you'd have been better off just showing Mr. Jenns getting tortured and killed. Instead, you have everyone mull over whether that's an acceptable course of action for the rest of the film.

DIRECTOR

How is that worse than showing it happen?

PRODUCER

You show it, you move on. People get a nut in their pants, then go home and wash the dishes. It's fiction. And it stays fiction.  
What you're doing, suggesting it's an option? That's not fiction.

DIRECTOR

I'm not suggesting it's an option. I'm suggesting it's inevitable.

PRODUCER

Either way, you're suggesting it.

DIRECTOR

The film is about finding a nonviolent solution. From beginning to end.

PRODUCER

If that's true, then why do so many people in the script imply that they understand violence being tried?

DIRECTOR

Because it's a warning. It's a fucking preemptive prophecy. Violence is coming. And if you want to deny it, you're going to be as disappointed as the motherfuckers who keep denying Climate Change is going to get worse.

PRODUCER

I'm not denying anything.

DIRECTOR

Well, you seem to be shocked that this is on the horizon.  
We can't just fuck over on people this bad, with a violence they know is going to be worse than anything we've ever seen, and not expect those people to use violence to fight back.

PRODUCER

What's with this "we" shit?

DIRECTOR

Tell me you don't have shares in fossil fuels.

PRODUCER

Tell me *you* don't.

DIRECTOR

That's why I said we.

PRODUCER

So if I divest, will you drop this?

DIRECTOR

Stocks are only a small part of it. It's the industry you have power in. That I have power in.  
How many movies have offered a serious take on what has to be done about Climate Change? On *why* we're not doing it?  
The movie isn't about a mixed-up band of teens kidnapping some 5th Avenue asshole. It's about all of us acknowledging we have a place in this. And yes, we have power. And immense fucking privilege.

PRODUCER

There's different ways to say that.

DIRECTOR

Not to people like us. People like us have to be scared into it.

PRODUCER

That's bullshit.

DIRECTOR

Then tell me, when are you going to get arrested? When are you going to risk something precious to you?  
We've got more money than we could have ever dreamed. Why haven't we taken more chances when it comes to this subject matter? Where's our sacrifice?

PRODUCER

Don't talk valor to me. It's self-righteous. You sound like the addict who just got clean telling everyone else not to party.

DIRECTOR

You're right. I've been signing my checks to the same charities you have. But I know now, I've got to do more. And I'm asking you to join me.

PRODUCER

Pushing violence is not courageous.

DIRECTOR

I'm telling you. The author wants nonviolence, and I want nonviolence. All this is - is us doing our part to ensure a nonviolent solution.

PRODUCER

And what if the audience doesn't see it that way? What if the critics don't see it that way?

DIRECTOR

You mean what if our peers don't see it that way?

PRODUCER

What if?

DIRECTOR

Then I'll tell them. I'll call everyone we know and tell them. And I'll do a press tour just to drive the point home to viewers.

PRODUCER

It doesn't matter what you say you believe, or even what you really believe. If some shit goes down, critics will paint the press tour as covering your ass and the movie as a wink and a nod.

DIRECTOR

I'll have the cast do the tour with me. I'll get the author too.

PRODUCER

You don't get it. This kind of shit takes on a life of its own. If anyone is underestimating the project, it's you.

Did you ever stop to ask yourself: What if they don't care what you think? Or what the author thinks?

What if they care what the characters think?

What if the characters are more persuasive than you are?

DIRECTOR

As much as I *am* for nonviolence, the truth is it doesn't matter whether we're for violence or against violence. What matters is a solution getting past the institutions.

Who cares if this film is an outright call for violence? That's of almost no significance, compared to what is ahead of us.

And don't give me that bad strategy backfiring shit. We're a fucking millimeter away from the point of no return.

Now, I'm telling you I'm for nonviolence. And I *think* you know me well enough to know I'm not lying. But my biggest concern is finding a solution. And I can't make any guarantees that the solution is going to look like, or that violence won't be at least some part of that.

PRODUCER

But why the hard sell on violence throughout the script?

DIRECTOR

Because there's different audiences. Even if the big players don't see this movie, they'll get wind of it. And they need to know. The violence they're committing, the violence we're committing, is not going unnoticed. And the system isn't infallible. Eventually the autopilot is going to run into something the engineers didn't prepare for. Then you crash.

PRODUCER

And you know what happens after a crash? Lawsuits. Lawsuits for everyone in the zip code.

DIRECTOR

We have insurance for that.

PRODUCER

If it were only that simple.

DIRECTOR

It is that simple.

PRODUCER

It's a headache I don't need.

DIRECTOR

That's your answer? In the face of this future?

PRODUCER

You know this movie is not the only way you can contribute.

DIRECTOR

I started giving to the nonprofits two decades ago. Half those organizations are now relying on funding from the very industries they're supposed to be fighting.

PRODUCER

Then go start your own. You'd be a hell of a spokesperson.

DIRECTOR

Spokesperson for what? What the fuck am I going to say?

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

"Listen to me and the celebrity friends I had to beg and plead before they would be a part of this..."

I might as well sign another fucking petition.

PRODUCER

I'm not even saying it can't be a movie. But why *this* movie?

DIRECTOR

I don't know what to tell you other than I have to do this.

PRODUCER

I understand that you have to do *something*. But you don't have to do *this*.

DIRECTOR

But I do. And you have to do it too.

Can you not see? This is not the warning I want to make. But I'm making it to try and save my friends.

I'm trying to save you. And myself. This is as much for us as it is for the fucking commoner. But the commoners are out there. And the temperature is going the fuck up. And if you can remember what it was like to be one of them, you know. People are not going to wait around forever as the system kills them.

We can wait for it. But I care about our friends, even if most of them are as heartless as we've been.

So I'm not going to wait. Scaring our friends into real action is a much better way of recognizing there's a few less people at the cocktail party.

And maybe you're right. Maybe this isn't *the* way. But it's one way. And, short of me taking an AR to the next Exxon shareholder meeting, I don't know any other ways right now that are going to deliver the message with any more force.

PRODUCER

You see, it's that mentality that's going to wind us all up in a knot.

DIRECTOR

We'll lose the planet before we lose freedom of speech.

PRODUCER

Jesus Fucking Christ. Are you listening to yourself? Freedom of speech. We don't have freedom of speech. We have amplitude of speech. And amplitude is a matter of purchasing power. When you give your couple grand to that politician, and then give another twenty grand to their Super PAC, you think you're participating in some egalitarian market of deliberative dialogue? Your money is there to eclipse any and all honesty. Any and all real debate. It's about getting the most and loudest megaphones. It's about pumping the voters full of fat until election day. So we can spend the next two years eating their votes like it's fucking foie gras.

Just because the policies you and I may want are better for those voters than the other side doesn't mean it's a game of equals. The point is that if we switched over and joined all the oil and coal worshipping cocksuckers, if we just woke up tomorrow and said fuck the people we used to be. We could do that. We could make sure those poor fuckers are fucked.

No matter how much the salt of the earth use their First Amendment, we could fuck them.

Because we can outspend them.

And right now, even though we're on the right side of this, we can't get around the fact that the other side can outspend us. And they're going to outspend us.

DIRECTOR

It's more than just money. That's why it has the extreme premise.

PRODUCER

Let's say you're right. Let's say you can find a way that makes philosophical reflection on the definition of violence sell popcorn and sodas.

Let's say this script were a hundred times better and I was rock hard from the moment I started reading it.

(MORE)

PRODUCER (cont'd)

I still wouldn't put it into production.  
Because I know. I know more than you believe.  
Freedom of speech isn't real. It's just another god  
the hopeless pray to.

DIRECTOR

What are you saying?

PRODUCER

If I give you the money to make this movie, you  
don't think word is going to get out? You don't  
think our friends in *certain industries* are going  
to confer on what to do about it?  
You don't think they're going to all ante up a  
little pocket change and hire some PR firm to  
start a pressure campaign on theaters and  
streaming services not to carry this "blatant  
incitement to violence"?  
Not because it is violent. But because you used  
violence to make the point.  
For all I know, this could be the movie that really  
does save the planet. But it'll never see the first  
movie screen.

That's the punchline. If violence is the premise,  
they're not going to let you save them *from* that  
violence.

DIRECTOR

But you're acknowledging that I'm trying to save  
them.  
The before it's too late part of the movie is not  
about Climate Change. It's about the violence.  
It's about saving *us*.

PRODUCER

There's a bigger violence.

DIRECTOR

And what's that?

PRODUCER

Going back to what we used to be.  
Why do you think the splats on the streets  
increase when the stock market crashes?  
(MORE)

PRODUCER (cont'd)

It's not like these people aren't going to survive being *only* middle class, again. It's that they refuse to survive like that.

DIRECTOR

No one's talking about making the rich poor. We're talking about adjusting to a new reality where we might have slightly less than we had, in the short term. If anything, they should be jumping at the chance.

I like what we have to keep. I want to keep it. But they're going to stall so long they fuck it up for the rest of us.

When all they have to do is quit being complicit in the violence taking place right now.

That's all.

Quit funding it. Quit supporting it. Quit ensuring it.

We do that and we get to keep 70 percent of the playground.

PRODUCER

This isn't the way to convince me. I'm not our friends.

DIRECTOR

But you're the one I have to convince.

PRODUCER

It won't be a good movie.

DIRECTOR

It doesn't have to be a good movie. It just has to work.

I believe in the movie. But it's not about the movie.

It's about the window. We only have so much time.

PRODUCER

When you have no reason to believe giving up everything would even make a difference, you have all the time in the world.

DIRECTOR

Then we might as well be masters on the plantation, waiting to get murdered in our sleep.

PRODUCER

And you know what that would do? It would make it worse for the slaves on the next plantation over.

DIRECTOR

Maybe so. But that doesn't mean it won't happen again. On the next plantation over. It also doesn't make the masters right. We may debate whether it was wrong for the entire family to be killed in the revolt; we may acknowledge the repercussions for others enslaved. But we can't deny them the righteousness of trying to free themselves. Of trying to survive, with some kind of say in their lives.

If the Jim Crow South would have produced an era where black people *only* resisted with violence. Regardless of the outcome, it wouldn't have changed *why* they had to resist.

Whether it's Jews and Poles and Slavs and Gypsies before the death camps. Or Indians during Victorian brutality. You can't just say violence is not an option when a people are on their way to destruction.

If someone really did the worst things the movie implies, over and over, and it didn't work, and instead it backfired and got all the bad press in the world. It wouldn't even be a blip in history. Because it wouldn't change the fact of what's coming with the climate. Or the morality of trying to find a solution.

If we had a full-on civil war over this, and the forces ushering in Climate Change won that war? You think a hundred years from now the rebels are going to be seen as the bad guys?

I don't want violence. I don't want violence. I don't want violence. I don't believe - in violence. I'll say it a thousand times if it matters. But not stopping violence, or at least not fighting against violence, this type of violence, is a form of fucking violence.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

Like everyone who stands by and watches a people get slaughtered are a part of that violence.

I don't want people to watch the movie and turn to violence. I just want them to not do nothing. Right now there's too many of us not doing anything. If everyone, and I mean everyone, put some form of concerted effort to turning the ship around, institutionally, politically, economically, it would be enough. And no one would have to resort to violence.

But until that happens, they're just making violence a certainty. They're ensuring that what little nonviolence is being tried will not be enough. And eventually those people will give up. Just like JFK said with that whole "those who make peaceful solutions impossible make violence inevitable" quote.

PRODUCER

You're using Jack Kennedy to make your point now?

DIRECTOR

How long are a people expected to lobby peacefully, while they're being violently oppressed?

PRODUCER

If they're the *oppressed*, forever.

DIRECTOR

I can't believe you're saying this.

PRODUCER

I'm not saying I believe it. I'm saying that's the way the world works. It's the world we live in.

You want me to make a movie for a world we don't live in.

You want to get philosophical, but you don't want to get real.

(MORE)

PRODUCER (cont'd)

The reason why it won't even make it to the theater is because of just how many Normal Nates and Regular Rhondas there are that have internalized their own oppression.

You try to save those people by threatening the rich, a huge number of them will side with the rich. Because we've told them their whole lives that one day they're going to be one of us.

You want to keep the lifers quiet in their cell? You promise them a lottery. Not to be let out.

But to become a prison guard.

I didn't fuck the world up. But I know how fucked it is.

If you want to save it, you better factor that into your script. A different script.

DIRECTOR

Now who's being philosophical?

PRODUCER

This isn't philosophy. It's who we are. You think you achieved freedom. You just achieved success. Real freedom looks like something else.

DIRECTOR

You're saying you're a prison guard.

PRODUCER

In as much as I have a higher ration of freedom, yes. A much higher ration I'm proud to say.

Don't get me wrong. If you're a prisoner and you want to escape, I'll encourage you.

I'll tell you what it's like on the outside. I'll even slip you a chisel.

But I'm not the one you ask to blow a hole in the wall.

DIRECTOR

Because they'll put you back in the cell?

You're already in a cell.

PRODUCER

I am.

Just not that one.

DIRECTOR

It's a cheesy analogy.  
I expect more from you.

PRODUCER

That's your problem. You expect too much.  
Just like you expect too much from your  
audience.  
This whole climate absurdity-revolving door  
marathon?  
It's not going to enlighten anyone. It's just going  
to make them dizzy.

DIRECTOR

It's worth making.

PRODUCER

It's too heavy, it's too convoluted. It's too -  
much.

DIRECTOR

It has to be a journey, one they have to see to the  
end.

PRODUCER

But they won't.

DIRECTOR

Only because you won't put the money behind  
it.

PRODUCER

This isn't art.  
I know you think it's Kafka and Serling and  
Mailer and Malcolm all wrapped up in one. But  
all I see is a wannabe, at best.

DIRECTOR

You can sell a wannabe.  
It may even be more effective if it isn't Kafka. If  
there's less to rave about literarily, then maybe  
it's less a distraction from what needs to be  
talked about.

PRODUCER

Again. Are you hearing - what you're saying?  
(MORE)

PRODUCER (cont'd)

You want me to put my money into something you're admitting is not high art, but we're supposed to present it like high art, so everyone will talk about why it's not high art.

DIRECTOR

Yes. Because dying from Climate Change is not high art.

PRODUCER

Neither is losing millions of dollars. My dollars.

DIRECTOR

*High art* loses millions all the time.

PRODUCER

It doesn't lose you reputation.

DIRECTOR

Our reputation is flying around on private jets while women in the third world have to walk an extra mile this year to get water.

PRODUCER

I know. We're despicable. How many times do you want me to say it?

DIRECTOR

How many times *can* you say it before you're interrupted by a knock at the door?

PRODUCER

You see?  
Threats, my friend, are never benevolent.  
And you sound like a broken record.

DIRECTOR

You have to do this.

PRODUCER

Why me? There are other producers out there, other studios.

DIRECTOR

You don't want to make this film, then don't make it. But at least tell me. What do *you* think will work?

PRODUCER

So I'm the hostage now? Is that it?  
Here's my answer. Fuck you. I want a solution as bad as you do. But I know it's not for me to dictate one. You ever stop to think that the scenario you're suggesting endorses the power structure you're claiming to despise?  
If you could get the three richest billionaires in the world into your fictional lair, *and* Mr. Maxwell could get them all to agree, *and* it actually worked. You'd be saving us through dictators.

DIRECTOR

The movie is not meant to imitate.  
But if we're talking consequences.  
In order to live to fight another day, you have to be living.

PRODUCER

You're not going to give up, are you?

DIRECTOR

I can't.

PRODUCER

Of course you can. You can make a different film.  
I'll make that film.  
I'm just not making this one.

DIRECTOR

If I showed you the ankle bracelet they gave me, would it make a difference?

PRODUCER

Ha ha ha. Fuck you.  
I could look down and realize I'm tied to my chair and you've turned into a laptop with a weird computer voice coming out of it, and I still wouldn't greenlight this.  
That *would* probably make for a better ending though. Better than that stupid Writers Group shit.

DIRECTOR

You're not that far off actually.

PRODUCER

How's that?

DIRECTOR

I told you. There's a twist.

PRODUCER

Then what's the twist?

DIRECTOR

The twist is: If you don't want to make this film. If you're not going to try whatever it takes. Then I just need you to admit it. I just need you to say it out loud.

PRODUCER

Say what?

The Director hands him a folded piece of paper.

The Producer unfolds it and reads aloud.

PRODUCER (cont'd)

"I am going to do my part to make sure that my children, my grandchildren, all the generations of humanity that come after me, face a planet that was not meant for them. I'm doing everything I can to make that happen, by not doing everything I can to stop it."

Shakes his head, as he looks up.

PRODUCER (cont'd)

You really are an arrogant prick, aren't you? A delusional, self-righteous, arrogant prick.

DIRECTOR

You don't even really need to say those words, and mean them. You just have to tell me you're not making the film.

PRODUCER

I've been telling you that. I'm not making the film.

DIRECTOR  
Ok then. That's all I needed.

PRODUCER  
That's it?

DIRECTOR  
That's it.

PRODUCER  
Why do I get the feeling, all the sudden, that you wanted me to say no?

DIRECTOR  
I wanted you to say yes.  
But by saying no, you got to choose the ending.

PRODUCER  
And how do *I* get to choose?

DIRECTOR  
The last chapter.  
That's what this was?

The Producer stares, in disbelief.

PRODUCER  
You're fucking with me.  
Are you recording this?

DIRECTOR  
I had this whole monologue in my head I was going to lay on you if you said no.  
But I think we both said all that was needed saying.

PRODUCER  
Are you really recording this fucking conversation?  
Because if you are, I'm going to make sure you never make another movie again. This one or any one.

DIRECTOR  
Probably better anyway. That we both leave disappointed.  
Don't worry. I won't use your name.

PRODUCER

Fuck you wasting my time. You never had any intention of making this movie.  
This whole meeting was just to prove a point.

DIRECTOR

I had every intention of making the movie. I'm still going to try and make it.  
But you're right. The meeting did prove my point.

PRODUCER

So I *am* Mr. Jenns. Is that it?  
Is that your stupid fucking twist?

DIRECTOR

No. You're Mr. Maxwell now. You just don't know it.

The Director gets up to leave, extends his hand.

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

Thanks for taking the time.

The Producer declines shaking his hand.

PRODUCER

You really are something.

The Director walks to the door.

PRODUCER (cont'd)

And what if I would have said yes?

The Director doesn't answer, just walks out.

RESUME CREDITS from the original *Do We Have Your Attention* short film.

CREDITS continue to ROLL over BLACK to MUSIC on the right half of the SCREEN.

Seconds later, a TIMER appears in the middle of the SCREEN and begins to COUNT DOWN.

FOOTAGE appears at the bottom of the left half of the SCREEN. It scrolls upwards.

In this FOOTAGE, a new PEER is pleading at the end of their particular session acting as the Convincer.

Below this FOOTAGE is new FOOTAGE. It's the same person, delivering the first line of the script.

As that FOOTAGE scrolls up, the FOOTAGE below is yet a new PEER/ Convincer pleading as the clock ticks down.

And so on, over and over, while the CREDITS run.

The AUDIO goes in and out of each FOOTAGE so we can always hear the one in the middle, delivering the first line of their given script.

When the CREDITS are done and the TIMER reaches zero, we are left with FOOTAGE of Mr. Jenns.

As he looks directly into the CAMERA, the CREDITS and FOOTAGE disappear and the MUSIC stops.

The SCREEN is BLACK.

Mr. Jenns' WORDS appear, as he speaks them OFF SCREEN.

MR. JENNS (V.O.)  
Do we have your attention?

The WORDS remain on the SCREEN for fifteen seconds.

This is the last thing we see.

FADE OUT



