

CULT OF PERSONALITY

Pilot - "Her Maculate Conception"

Written by

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TEASER

EXT. VALENTINES' COMPOUND - MORNING

High in the hills of Topanga Canyon, California, sits a LARGE RANCH HOME, surrounded by lush gardens and grazing livestock. It's pastoral, idyllic, and tranquil as fuck.

WHUP, WHUP, WHUP. Maybe not. NEWS HELICOPTERS jockey for position in the sky above the quiet sanctuary.

Surrounding the compound, it's mayhem: LAPD, FBI, ATF, and KFC (delivering breakfast) crouch in silence, eyes and guns locked on the old wooden structure.

Topanga Police Captain JASON DIXON — 50s, gruff, borrowing Sam Elliott's mustache — GROWLS into a megaphone.

JASON

A real leader doesn't hide behind his followers, Simon... You know who did that? Bin Laden did that. You're not Bin Laden, are you?

INT. VALENTINES' COMPOUND-SHARING WATER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Large open space, polished hardwood floor. A giant WATERBED occupies one corner of the room, and a mammoth JACUZZI TUB fills another.

A life-sized hand-painted PORTRAIT OF A TALL NAKED MAN in his fifties, sipping water from a fountain, hangs above the bed.

30 PEOPLE, ranging in age from 12 to 80, sit in a circle on the floor, holding hands. They're dressed in threadbare earth-tone robes and their eyes are closed, as they recite a repetitive CHANT. These are "THE VALENTINES."

VALENTINES

(in unison)

..Thou art God. The family protects the family. The family is love. God is love. Thou art God. The family shelters the family. The family is love...

(and so on)

One lone figure stands outside the circle. This is SIMON DUCIS, the man from the painting. He is now dressed (fortunately) in a bright white robe, ignoring his followers, and staring expressionless out a tinted window. He MUTTERS to himself.

SIMON

He's right. Dixon's right. It's
time for me to face the music.

Though his voice is low, the others hear, and the chanting abruptly STOPS.

STEPHANIE — 20s, uber-granola, nervous even when she sleeps — BURSTS from the group, LEAPS to Simon, and FALLS to her knees, wrapping her arms tightly around his legs.

STEPHANIE

No! You can't! They'll take you
away from us!

Simon looks down at Stephanie with loving eyes. He brings his hand to her face, and gently lifts her chin.

SIMON

Stephanie, my sweet, sweet girl...
If they destroy the school where
you learned... do you lose the
knowledge you gained there?

He addresses the entire group now, with reassuring warmth.

SIMON (CONT'D)

If they tear down the hospitals
where you were born... do you cease
to exist? Hell no, man.

He makes his way around the circle, briefly caressing each adoring face as he passes. He LIMPS SLIGHTLY.

SIMON (CONT'D)

This body of mine is but a vessel,
a structure in which to house my
essence. I'll never leave you —
ever — even when this body does.

He looks directly to BETH — 50s, maternal, but with a cleavagy free-love vibe.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Beth, if the plan fails... take
them to Andromeda.

Beth nods.

Reveal Stephanie STILL CLUTCHING SIMON'S LEG, as he drags her around the room. He smiles down at her.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Now it's time to let go.

EXT. VALENTINES' COMPOUND - MORNING

Cops squint into THE SUN, as it rises behind the structure.

At last, the front door CREAKS open.

Slowly, a tall figure emerges from the darkness with his arms stretched out to the sides, hands open and empty. It's Simon, and he's smiling like a kid on Christmas.

JASON

Hold your fire! Hold your fire!

Sights remain locked on Simon, but the command is obeyed.

JASON (CONT'D)

(into the megaphone)

Okay, Simon, you're doing the right thing here... That's far enough.

(then, lowering the bullhorn)

Been waiting a long time for this, psycho.

Simon stops moving. Jason creeps toward him, gun first.

JASON (CONT'D)

All right, good. Now slowly lower yourself to the ground.

Simon doesn't budge.

JASON (CONT'D)

C'mon, pal, we're almost there...

Officers GRUMBLE to each other. What is this whack job up to?

JASON (CONT'D)

We're not fuckin' around, Simon!
Get your face in the dirt! NOW!

Simon remains frozen. Then, finally, he speaks...

SIMON

Thou art God.

With those words, his arms stretch out further, his smile grows even wider, and he begins to LEVITATE OFF THE GROUND.

The officers PANIC. Is the heat playing tricks on them? Simon RISES HIGHER.

JASON

Hold still, Simon, that's an order!
Ya hear me? Quit... FLOATING!