

Kesler

written by

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INT. ADMISSIONS OFFICE - DAY

Kesler is speaking directly to the camera sitting in a chair across from the desk.

KESLER

Well, I can see myself on
billboards everywhere. Times
square, Hollywood, uh... Europe.
Uh... I see platinum plaques all
over my home studio and grammys
galore. But most of all... I see
myself on beaches in the Bahamas,
working with Jay-Z and Pharrell...
(beat)
and taking my freedom before you
know it with enough life left to
enjoy it.

Kesler goes into dreamland for a second and snaps back to reality.

INTERVIEWER

Wow, I asked about 10 year goals,
not your lifetime. Those are pretty
high aspirations you have there.

KESLER

Well, I believe that the bigger you
dream the higher you'll go.

INTERVIEWER

That's an... interesting take on
life...

The interviewer write's on her clipboard

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

One final question Kesler, why the
music program?

KESLER

It's...the only thing I've ever
dreamt about. Every day and night I
dedicate myself to being the best
musician I can be. My girlfriend
says I'm obsessed
(chuckles)
But every great career starts with
an obsession.

INT. STUDENT UNION - DAY

In the student union, there are places to order food and a whole bunch of tables and eating spaces. Certain spaces are designated by signs that say things like "conversation" and "dining". These signs section off the student union and guards stand by to make sure that people aren't in the wrong sections breaking the rules. There is also a protest for women's rights going on outside the student union.

Ann and Gus are sitting in one of the conversation areas. Gus is playing a prison simulator game on his phone.

ANN

Doesn't it just make you so
excited?

GUS

(glances up from his game,
then back down)
You know it doesn't.

ANN

C'mon Gus, its a brand new year!
You can put everything behind you
and start fresh! Like starting a
new game.

GUS

Only if that game is a sequel that
let's you load in previous game
data, and those barely exist
anymore.

Ann looks confused.

GUS (CONT'D)

(glares at Ann)
Last year still counts. This year
is nothing new.

ANN

Fine... but you have to admit,
finally getting into our majors is
pretty cool.

GUS

Yeah if your name is Ann and you
love adding and subtracting numbers
with dollar signs in front of them.

ANN

Look, I know you didn't get your desired major, but at least you have a direction now. Try looking on the bright side. Trust the process.

GUS

I don't care. All I want is to get out of this insane asylum.

Someone tries to bring food into a conversation section and a guard stops him and a bit violently escorts him to the right section.

ANN

Keep your voice down. Besides, chancellor Ceil knows best. He just wants you to realize your full potential.

GUS

This school is already my only option. I didn't have the privilege of a choice.

ANN

It's not about privilege, its about hard work and letting the school do it's job.

GUS

Yeah, yeah.

Then some frat bros walk in with a beer pong table and offer everyone a beer. They go into the study section and start playing beer pong. They invite the guards to join in and play. One of the other kids try to play, but the guards push him away.

Gus watches this and sighs.

GUS (CONT'D)

Dumb greeks.

ANN

Careful...

Kesler walks up to the table.

KESLER

I got the audition!

Ann jumps up and hugs Kesler

ANN

Ahhh!! Congratulations!!

GUS

Good job man, maybe there's still hope for one of us.

KESLER

Don't get too excited for me, Gus
(sarcastically)

Gus smiles, but doesn't look up.

KESLER (CONT'D)

Woah a smile to?

(to Ann)

You must have him in a good mood.

Gus frowns again.

ANN

Yeah right. You shouldn't be too happy either. You still have to pass this audition. Which song will you perform?

KESLER

Not sure yet, but I've got until 3 to decide.

ANN

Perfect, you two should come to the sorority house and we can celebrate, maybe go to the cliffs too?

KESLER

I would love to, but I got work soon.

ANN

Right, well, I'm headed there anyway, I'll see you guys after the audition.

Ann and Kesler hug again.

ANN (CONT'D)

Congratulations again, and I love you.

GUS

Aww thanks.

Kesler laughs and Ann shoots Gus a look.

KESLER
I love you too.

Ann leaves.

GUS
Kesler, I really am happy for you,
I hope you make it.

KESLER
Thanks, bro. Me too.

INT. KESLER AND GUS' DORM - DAY

Kesler and Gus walk into their dorm room. Gus is playing Wonka's World of Candy on his phone.

KESLER
You couldn't be more wrong.

GUS
Puzzle games are the perfect games.
It's so simple. There's one correct
answer and you have to figure it
out. There's no extra obstacles, no
confusing level up systems, it's
just a man and his mind against the
computer.

KESLER
That's so boring.

GUS
Okay, what's the best type of game
then?

KESLER
3rd person, open world, exploration
games.

GUS
Sure just go with the mainstream.

KESLER
Are you kidding? Each game is
unique and they let you do whatever
you want! I want as many enemies in
the way as possible so I can show
them who's boss.

GUS
Can't beat a good puzzle.

KESLER
(chuckles)
Whatever man.

Kesler sets his book bag on his bed and notices a golden ticket on his desk. He picks it up and reads it. It says "The path to billboards, platinum plaques, and grammys is near. The path to your freedom starts here." Under that is the address/name of the train station.

KESLER (CONT'D)
Hey, Gus, have you ever seen one of these before?

He holds up the golden ticket for Gus, who is turning on his console, to see. He turns and looks at it for a second then finishes what he was doing.

GUS
No, but I've heard of them.
Basically says it leads to all your hopes and dreams and all that crap?

KESLER
Pretty much.

GUS
Hmph, if that were true, everyone would be there instead of here.

KESLER
I guess...

Kesler stares at the ticket for awhile. It seems to glow in his hands.

GUS
Don't you have to go to work?

KESLER
Yeah...

Kesler stares at the ticket a bit more, then puts the ticket in his drawer and closes it.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Kesler is sitting at his desk at the kiosk in the library. Students are studying in unison and flipping pages at the same time. The room is dead silent.

Kesler has his headphones on and is listening to his different songs to see which one he should perform at his audition. Then someone comes up to the desk. They try to get Kesler's attention without making any noise, but Kesler isn't looking up. Finally Kesler notices them and he pulls his headphones around his neck and picks up a whiteboard and writes on it.

KESLER

Sorry, how can I help you?

The student picks up another whiteboard and writes back.

STUDENT

Hi, I need a laptop charger.

KESLER

Mac or windows?

STUDENT

Mac.

Kesler nods and gets up carefully and quietly to go to the back and get a charger. As he walks away from his desk, his headphones unplug from his laptop and the music blares at full volume. Kesler quickly rushes over to the laptop and pauses the song. He looks up into the library and sees the whole place staring at him angrily. Then he turns around and sees his boss giving the same stare, only angrier. His boss pulls out a white board and writes quickly.

BOSS

Go home, NOW!

Kesler picks up his whiteboard and writes back.

KESLER

But sir, I need the money!

The boss erases "Go home," so the board just say "NOW!" and thrusts it towards Kesler.

Kesler tries to write something else on his board, but the boss snatches it from him and points to the door.

Kesler turns around to grab the other board from the student and accidentally plays the song again on his laptop. He pauses it as quickly as possible and looks back at his boss who's arms are crossed. Kesler nods sadly and closes his laptop and leaves the library.

INT. ANN'S SORORITY HOUSE - DAY

Ann and her sorority sisters are hazing a few new members.

NEW SISTERS

As a member of Beta Zeta, I believe in the permanence and loveliness of it's ideals. I believe in self fulfillment, and will strive to contribute my share to the progress of mankind. I believe that I am a citizen of the universe, and I will execute my role to the best of my ability. I believe in the Chancellor and his ability to guide us to our destiny. I believe in Beta Zeta!

Then they put bags over the girl's heads and lead them into another room. Ann stays behind to clean the living room, when there is a knock at the door. She answers it and Kesler steps in.

ANN

Kesler? I thought you had work.

KESLER

I did, but they were overstaffed so I decided to leave early so I could focus on this audition.

ANN

You made noise again didn't you?

KESLER

Yep...

Ann looks disappointed.

KESLER (CONT'D)

I know what you're going to say. I'll find a way to make up the money.

ANN

I know you will...

KESLER

Anyway, killing this audition is more important right now. Want to help me pick a song?

Kesler pulls out his laptop and starts playing different songs out loud.

KESLER (CONT'D)
See this one is fun, but I feel
like it might be too simple.

He changes to a different song.

KESLER (CONT'D)
This shows my technical ability,
but it might be too long.

He changes to another song.

KESLER (CONT'D)
This one is my favorite, but it
kinda says some bad things about
school...

Ann sits down next to Kesler. She is silent for a bit as she
listens to the song, then she pauses it.

ANN
Are you sure you want to do music?

KESLER
More than anything in the world.

Ann looks down.

KESLER (CONT'D)
But... you don't want me to?

ANN
It's not that... I want you to be
happy, but a music career isn't the
most secure.

KESLER
I'm not doing it for security. I
know it could be hard for me for a
few years, but I believe in myself.
I could see me being as big as
Kanye, pre-Kardashian. He never
gave up on himself and it paid off.
Why can't that be me?

ANN
Of course it could be you, Kesler.
But how long will it take to get
there?

KESLER
Only time will tell. All I know is
that as long as I never give up,
I'll make it.

ANN

So what if it takes 5 more years?

Kesler shrugs.

ANN (CONT'D)

What if it's 10?

KESLER

Then it's 10.

ANN

20?

KESLER

Ann, what are you trying to say?

ANN

(sigh)

Here's my plan for our life together.

KESLER

I've heard this a thousand times.

ANN

Listen. I see us graduating and getting married soon. We are both working jobs with room for growth within our companies. Making the world a better place. A few years after that, we have two kids. A boy named Jack and a girl named Jill.

KESLER

I thought we agreed on Pablo and Frida?

ANN

First of all, no, and second, that's exactly what I mean. We don't have the same plan. You don't even have a plan.

KESLER

I have a vision, it's more spontaneous.

ANN

Kesler...

KESLER

Okay, okay, I hear you, but I promise everything will work out.

ANN

Look at me, I need you to seriously think about the future you picture for yourself and tell me if I am included.

KESLER

Of cour--

ANN

Don't answer now. Think about it. Actually think about it.

Kesler nods solemnly.

ANN (CONT'D)

Now don't be late for your audition. Good luck.

They hug and Kesler leaves as the sorority sisters come back in the room with the new members who are dressed to look just like the other sisters. They party as Ann looks out the window and watches Kesler leave.

INT. AUDITION AUDITORIUM - DAY

Kesler is still listening to his songs trying to decide in the warm-up room with a bunch of other contestants. He is getting a bit nervous now. You can faintly hear the songs that are being performed and they all sound largely the same. They are also playing real instruments which Kesler doesn't know how to play.

STAGE HAND

Next!

Someone with a trumpet walks onto the stage.

A guy sits down next to Kesler.

CONTESTANT

What instrument you play?

KESLER

The computer.

CONTESTANT

Oh, you're one of those beat-makers.

KESLER

Well, I rap too. I make all my own stuff.

CONTESTANT

Wow, that's really... different.

Kesler nods and keeps flipping through his songs.

CONTESTANT (CONT'D)

You nervous?

KESLER

Just a little bit.

CONTESTANT

You've got nothing to worry about,
I've seen hundreds of people
audition. I know the formula.

KESLER

The formula?

CONTESTANT

You want them to remember you at
the end of the day, right? So you
need to stand out as much as
possible. Choose the song that's
the most unique. Also, never look
at the judges, they hate that.

KESLER

Really? Wait, who are the judges?

CONTESTANT

Two professors in the music program
and the Chancellor?

KESLER

The Chancellor!? Doesn't he have
better things to do?

CONTESTANT

(Shrug)

And then--

STAGE HAND

Next!

CONTESTANT

Oh, that's me. Good luck.

The contestant gets up and goes on stage. He stares straight
at the judges and plays a song that sounds just like all the
others. Kesler looks confused, then shakes his head.

Kesler goes back to flipping through songs to perform. One of them sounds very different and another sounds like the songs everyone else is performing.

STAGE HAND

Next!

Kesler gets up and goes onto the stage.

He walks on stage and sees the chancellor sitting in the middle of two other professors. Then he quickly looks away.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

State your name.

KESLER

Kesler Freeman?

The chancellor nods and Kesler starts to set up. He is nervously plugging cords into his laptop and moving the mouse between two songs. He hesitates, then chooses the one that sounds very different. He turns around and looks at the judges again, then looks away.

He starts his performance, trying to be as energetic as he can. People in the back are looking at him confused. Kesler glances at the judges again and the two on the edge look to be enjoying it, but the chancellor is not feeling it at all. He tries to liven it up by doing other things like being more energetic and dancing, but it isn't really working. Kesler decides to ignore him and just focus on doing the best he can. He finishes the performance and the judges on the sides clap. Then the judges hold up their mics.

JUDGE 1

I like your energy Kesler, and I've never heard anything like that. You've got skills.

JUDGE 2

I agree. Your confidence could use a little work, but you could offer something fresh to the program, Chancellor?

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Your performance was uninspired and lacked all regard for the art form. Your composure was horrid and the song was terribly simple offering no opportunity for higher thought. You will go to your advisor's office and select a new major.

KESLER
Wait... That's it? What about--

CHANCELLOR CEIL
Next!

KESLER
I have other songs, let me just--

CHANCELLOR CEIL
Next! Mr. Freeman.

Kesler is devastated as he collects his stuff and walks off the stage. In collecting his things he knocks some stuff over and it takes him an uncomfortable amount of time to leave. The next contestant comes on stage and Kesler is still wrestling with the cables. He finally gets his things and leaves the stage as quickly as he can.

INT. OUTSIDE AUDITION AUDITORIUM - DAY

Kesler walks out of the auditorium with his head down and sees Gus and Ann. Gus is playing Breadth of the Wild on his Switch and he is standing on the edge of a cliff.

KESLER
Thanks for coming, guys.

ANN
So? How'd it go?

KESLER
I didn't make it... I have to meet with my advisor to find a new major.

ANN
Aww, I'm so sorry.

Ann gives Kesler a hug.

GUS
Yeah, that's too bad, man. Welcome to the club.

KESLER
Welcome to the club? No, This isn't over, I can just show them a different song.

GUS
There's no second chances here.

KESLER

They've only seen a piece of what I can do, once they see everything, there's no way they say no.

GUS

They already have. Trying to change their minds is a waste of time.

KESLER

No, they just made a mistake, that's all.

ANN

The chancellor doesn't make mistakes.

KESLER

Please, Ann, he's not God.

GUS

Blasphemy.

ANN

The chancellor knows best. He knew my purpose even before I did. You remember, I wanted to be a poet but he saw my real talents. He pulled me aside and put me on the path to accounting where I am excelling and getting job offers as a sophomore. I would never be here if it weren't for him.

KESLER

What? You give him credit for that? No, you were struggling so you went to your adviser for help and you decided that you wanted to do accounting. The chancellor had nothing to do with it.

ANN

But he orchestrated it. If you just let him take the wheel he won't lead you astray. He's trying to save you from going down the wrong path. What if your music isn't good enough and you got rejected from real jobs instead? Then what would you do?

KESLER

I would keep practicing until I was good enough.

ANN

And what if you never will be?

Kesler stares Ann down. Then the contestant who went after Kesler comes out celebrating.

ANN (CONT'D)

Let the chancellor guide you.

KESLER

I don't need guidance. And if you won't support me, I'll do it myself. I'm used to it by now.

Kesler walks away.

INT. ADVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Kesler is sitting in the chair on the opposite side of the desk defeated and still holding all of this music equipment.

ADVISOR

Engineering?

Kesler doesn't look up or respond.

ADVISOR (CONT'D)

Communications?

Nothing.

ADVISOR (CONT'D)

Accounting?

Kesler glares at the advisor.

ADVISOR (CONT'D)

I can't help you if you don't speak.

KESLER

I want to do music.

The adviser sighs.

The chancellor walks into the room. Kesler turns to see who it is and quickly turns back around.

ADVISOR
Code blue, sir.

The chancellor nods and the advisor leaves the room.

Kesler doesn't look up, half angry and half intimidated.

The room is dead silent as Chancellor Ceil walks to the side of the desk with the empty chair. He looks down at Kesler

CHANCELLOR CEIL
How are you doing, son?

Kesler doesn't answer.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)
I understand, believe it or not,
I've been on your side of the desk
before.

Kesler still doesn't answer. The chancellor turns around and walks towards the window.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)
You see, many many years ago, when
I was a student, I wanted to be a
writer. I was young and ambitious
and I was certain that writing was
my one true calling. However, while
I was spending time in fictional
worlds, the real world required
something more of me. I had always
had an affinity for finding the
potential in others. My colleagues
often came to me for guidance.

The chancellor glances back at Kesler who's head is still down.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)
I had to sit in that very chair and
have my hopes and dreams pried from
me for the greater good. It wasn't
easy. I fought tooth and nail for
my fantasies, but I had to
understand that my life served a
greater purpose. Eventually, I
became a guidance counselor, but my
journey didn't end there. Now I am
chancellor of the very university
that I attended with the ability to
guide my students to their
individual promised lands on a
national scale.

(MORE)

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)

Sitting in that chair, I was blind,
but now I see. This is bigger than
you, it's bigger than me.

The chancellor seems to get lost in thought for a second and Kesler looks up at him finally. Then the chancellor comes back and turns back toward Kesler.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)

Do not do yourself a disservice.
You have the opportunity to make
this world a better place. Don't
let your will get in the way.

Kesler bows his head again.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)

I want to help you find that
opportunity sooner rather than
later. That is why you must declare
a major this week.

The room is silent for a second again.

KESLER

There are no more auditions?

CHANCELLOR CEIL

No more auditions. But I promise
you, if you lend me your trust, we
can create for you a fulfilling
future, together. What do you say.

The chancellor extends his hand to Kesler. Kesler stares at it for a second, then looks back up at the chancellor. Then looks at his music equipment. Then back at the hand. They shake.

INT. WRITING CLASS - DAY

Kesler walks into class and sits next to Ann.

ANN

So excited we're in the same class
now!

Kesler doesn't answer.

The professor walks to the front of the class.

PROFESSOR

Okay class, turn your books to page
29.

Everyone turns their books at the same time, but Kesler is a bit late. This visibly annoys the professor. Ann sits up very attentively.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

For our newcomers, we will start with a bit of a review. Last class we began on the structure of a successful essay. So what is the first element required for a great paper.

KESLER

(under his breath)

Thesis statement

Someone raises their hand.

PROFESSOR

Kelly.

KELLY

A thesis statement?

PROFESSOR

Correct, and what are the two things a good thesis statement must do?

KESLER

(a bit louder)

Say the topic and your argument.

Someone else raises their hand.

PROFESSOR

James.

JAMES

State the topic of the paper and... um... state your three points?

PROFESSOR

That is 50% correct and 50% is not good enough. The second thing a good thesis must do is state your argument about the topic.

Kesler chuckles to himself. Ann shushes him.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Now, as the essayist, what is your number one job.

Ann raises her hand. Kesler notices and stands up quickly.

KESLER

To make your argument in a short
and sweet kinda way.

The whole class turns and looks at Kesler afraid for him, Ann glares at him angrily. He smiles at Ann. The class slowly turns back around to see what the professor will do.

PROFESSOR

Mr... Kesler is it? In my classroom
we do not speak out of turn. Since
it is your first day, I will
overlook your offense. Do it again,
and you will fail my class, do you
understand?

KESLER

Yes Ma'am. I apologize.

Kesler sits back down.

PROFESSOR

Nevertheless, he is correct,
although put simply. Your number
one job is to be clear and concise.
Now on page 29 you will notice...

The professor turns back around and starts writing on the board. Ann takes notes angrily and Kesler laughs a bit and starts to pay attention again.

INT. KESLER AND GUS' DORM - LATE DAY

Gus is in the room playing GTA V and he is in a club. Kesler and Ann walk in arguing.

ANN

I know, but you really didn't have
to embarrass me like that.

KESLER

How did I embarrass you?

ANN

How? By blurting your answer out
like you were at an auction or
something.

KESLER

You're just mad 'cause I knew the
answers before you.

ANN

This isn't a competition, but whatever. If that's what it takes get you engaged in your schoolwork, then it's worth it.

KESLER

Whatever.

GUS

Hello to you guys too.

Kesler goes to his desk and starts to set up his music stuff.

ANN

What are you doing?

KESLER

I had a new song idea. It's about you minding your business.

ANN

Well how about a song about you doing your homework?

KESLER

We have homework?

ANN

Yes, it's due tomorrow morning. You don't have time to play with your music stuff.

KESLER

Why don't you yell at Gus? He's probably been sitting there all day.

GUS

Uh-uh don't bring me into this.

ANN

Super geniuses have time to play, not us.

GUS

Thank you.

Ann throws a book to Kesler who catches it and sighs. He opens his drawer to put away his keyboard and sees the golden ticket. He stares at it for a few seconds. It's almost speaking to him. He looks back at Ann who is doing something on her laptop.

ANN

Hurry up, I don't want to be here
all night.

Kesler looks back at the ticket and puts his keyboard on top
of it and closes the drawer.

Kesler and Ann work on homework while Gus is in the
background playing GTA V. (On screen they work for a good 15-
30 sec. And it's super boring)

INT. KESLER AND GUS' DORM - NIGHT

Kesler is laying in his bed and Gus is still playing GTA.
Kesler looks at his watch in his bed and turns over to see
Gus still playing. He sighs and waits a bit more. Then Gus
finally dies in the game by falling off of a cliff and turns
the game off. He crawls into his bed and puts some headphones
on then turns away from Kesler and goes to sleep. Kesler
slowly turns over to make sure Gus isn't moving and he gets
out of his bed. He is still fully clothed. He opens his
drawer and grabs the golden ticket. He checks to make sure
Gus is still asleep then sneaks out of the room.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Kesler is at the train station looking at the ticket and
waiting for a train to come to pick him up. He isn't sure if
he should get on or not. He looks at his watch then back to
the ticket, then at the tracks. Then he notices that there
are piles of wood and broken skateboards and other broken
down vehicles. Some people are on the tracks trying to build
things. He also notices the info windows so he goes up to
them.

INFO WORKER

How are you doing this evening?

KESLER

Hey, I'm good. Um is this the train
station?

INFO WORKER

Yes sir it is.

KESLER

When's the next train come?

INFO WORKER

Oh I've never seen a train arrive
here on it's own before.

KESLER
But this is a train station?

INFO WORKER
Sure is.

KESLER
With no trains?

INFO WORKER
Correct.

Kesler looks back at the tracks.

KESLER
So what are the tracks for?

INFO WORKER
A train, I would imagine.

KESLER
But there's no trains?

INFO WORKER
Correct.

Kesler looks extremely confused.

KESLER
Ok, so where do the tracks go?

INFO WORKER
What does it say on your ticket?

Kesler looks down and reads it again.

KESLER
It basically says paradise.

INFO WORKER
Then that's where they go.

Kesler looks at the tracks again.

KESLER
So how am I supposed to get there
if there's no train?

INFO WORKER
However you want. You can walk
though it is a mighty long walk. Or
you can build a vehicle.

KESLER
Build a vehicle?

INFO WORKER
Yes, we have all sorts of resources
for sale that you can use to build
the vehicle of your choice.

KESLER
Do you give me tools to build with?

INFO WORKER
We have those for purchase as well.

KESLER
You can't just sell me a car?

The worker breaks out in uncontrollable laughter.

INFO WORKER
Oh I'm sorry, no, we don't have any
of those, but you could try buying
one someone else already made on
the tracks.

Kesler looks at the prices on the wall of the different tools
and resources.

KESLER
How do you expect anyone to pay for
all this?

INFO WORKER
Not to worry, you will make more
money on your journey, if your
vehicle is efficient enough.

KESLER
How will riding on this train track
make me money?

INFO WORKER
That's for you to figure out.
Alternatively, if you don't have the
funds, you can go next door and
they will lend it to you, but
you'll have to pay it back whether
you make it to your destination or
not.

KESLER
I don't even know how to build
legos, how am I supposed to build a
car?

INFO WORKER

There are plenty of online resources, or you can enroll in one of the several classes that your fellow travelers offer.

KESLER

This is insane.

INFO WORKER

Many feel the same way.

KESLER

Who would give me this useless ticket?

INFO WORKER

Nobody knows, some say it's God.

KESLER

Don't tell me you mean the Chancellor...?

INFO WORKER

No, God.

The info worker looks into the stars.

KESLER

Right...

Kesler starts to walk away.

INFO WORKER

If you change your mind, we'll be here, happy to serve. No rush.

Kesler sits on the stairs and stares at the people building their own vehicles. Then Raven approaches him.

RAVEN

Hey, you waiting on a train too?

KESLER

I don't even know anymore. That guy says I have to build my own train.

RAVEN

He told me the same thing.

Raven holds up her ticket. Kesler shows his.

KESLER

You know if he's messing with us?

RAVEN
Don't sound like it.

Kesler stares at his ticket.

RAVEN (CONT'D)
So what brought you here?

KESLER
Well, I go to school down the road
and I just found this ticket on my
desk. I thought I should at least
check it out.

RAVEN
The school thing not working out
for you?

KESLER
Not really. They rejected me from
the music program and forced me
into a journalism major. I thought
this ticket would have more answers
for me...

RAVEN
I feel you...

KESLER
You in college too?

RAVEN
Nah, I'm Kanye's best album.

KESLER
My beautiful dark twisted fantasy?

Raven laughs.

RAVEN
I might be that too... but no.

Kesler looks confused.

RAVEN (CONT'D)
College Dropout

KESLER
Oh you trippin. Everyone knows it's
dark twisted fantasy.

RAVEN
Not for me.

KESLER

Explain.

RAVEN

I got nothing to explain, but I can school you some other day.

KESLER

Then explain why you dropped out.

RAVEN

They didn't understand me man. All they did was hold me back. They wouldn't let me create like I wanted to so I threw up the duces.

KESLER

Amen to that.

RAVEN

Even if I stayed, what was I gonna do? Graduate and work some boring corporate job making someone else rich? No sir. That's if I got a job at all. Nah I wasn't 'bout to throw my life away like that. I would love to see the whole system burn.

KESLER

I don't know about all that, but I know what you mean.

RAVEN

Just keeping it real with you... uh

KESLER

Kesler.

RAVEN

That's a cool name Kesler, I'm Raven.

KESLER

Back at you Raven. So what do you do now that you're a dropout?

Raven looks around to make sure no one is listening in.

RAVEN

I manage performance artists at this underground club down the way.

KESLER

For real?

RAVEN

Yup, it's the best thing I've ever done. I Emcee the shows, get my artists the crowds they deserve, and throw some crazy festivals at the cliffs. I got everything I could've ever wanted.

KESLER

If you're life's so great, why are you here?

RAVEN

Just 'cause it's good don't mean it can't get any better. You see what it says on here? I had to check for myself. Now that I know, I'll go back to the party.

Kesler looks down at his ticket again.

KESLER

Must be nice...

RAVEN

Why don't you come with me? You make music right?

KESLER

Yeah, but--

RAVEN

Then boom, let's go. I can squeeze you in the lineup for tonight.

KESLER

I don't know...

RAVEN

Like the man said, this train station will always be here if you don't like it, C'mon.

She stands up and holds her hand out to Kesler.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

You can't sit around waiting for someone to give you a chance. You've got to be aggressive. Take it for yourself.

Kesler looks at the ticket one more time, then puts it in his pocket and grabs her hand. She helps him up and leads him to the club.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Kesler and Raven walk into the club and the music is extremely loud and the place is packed with people dancing, drinking and smoking. There is someone on stage performing and the crowd loves him. Kesler immediately likes the vibe and starts to bob his head a bit.

KESLER

I've never seen anything like this.

RAVEN

Good, we keep it a secret so they don't shut us down.

Kesler listens to the performance a bit more and gets more into it. Raven starts to dance a bit.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

You like them?

KESLER

Oh yeah, they're great!

RAVEN

That's Dotwav, I can introduce you later.

KESLER

That'd be dope!

They dance a little more.

RAVEN

I'll sign you up to go next.

She starts to move towards the stage and Kesler grabs her arm.

KESLER

Are you kidding? I can't go after these guys.

Raven pulls her hand away.

RAVEN

Wait here.

She continues to the stage and talks to the DJ. Kesler goes to the bar.

BARTENDER

What'll it be?

Kesler looks at the menu, but doesn't recognize anything, then he looks at the people next to him.

KESLER
One of those.

BARTENDER
The sidewinder?

KESLER
Sure.

He turns and looks at the performers, then at Raven who is still talking to the DJ and gets more nervous. He pulls out his phone and starts to scroll through songs. The bartender comes back with his drink.

KESLER (CONT'D)
Thanks.

Kesler grabs the drink and tries to drink it like it's water and the taste and burning sensation takes him by surprise and he spits it out. Then he pushes his drink away. He looks back out into the crowd, but can't see Raven anymore, so he gets up and moves towards the door. As he is about to grab the door nob, Raven grabs his arm.

RAVEN
Where you going?

KESLER
I just needed some air.

RAVEN
Don't you run away on me.

Then the set ends.

RAVEN (CONT'D)
You're up.

Raven drags Kesler towards the stage.

KESLER
Wait!

She drags him all the way up on stage and grabs the mic.

RAVEN
Let's hear it for Dotwav!

The crowd cheers.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

Now we have a newcomer to the stage tonight, so y'all go easy on him. Give it up for Kesler!

The crowd cheers again. Kesler points to a song on his phone and gives it to the DJ and nods. Then he walks on stage and grabs the mic.

KESLER

Wh--What's up? I'm Kesler. H--How y'all doin' tonight?

The crowd cheers a bit less enthusiastically.

KESLER (CONT'D)

Alright, uh, DJ, drop that beat.

The song starts playing and Kesler tries his best to get into it and do his best. The crowd isn't really feeling it though. Kesler starts to rap nervously with little conviction and messes up some of the words. The crowd is completely silent not knowing what to do.

CROWD MEMBER

BOO!

CROWD

BOO! BOO! BOO!

The crowd starts to throw stuff at Kesler and Raven frowns then tells the DJ to cut the beat. Kesler walks over to Raven and gives her the mic.

KESLER

I shouldn't have come, I knew I wasn't ready.

Kesler tries to walk past her, but she stops him.

RAVEN

Hey, anyone brave enough to stand in front of these idiots on the mic has got what it takes. You just need a little help.

Raven pulls out a membership card and gives it to him.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

Come back tomorrow night, and I got you.

KESLER

I don't know...

RAVEN

What you thought this was gonna be easy? Please, it's gonna take some hard work, but if you stick with me, I'll take you there.

(sang)

Kesler looks at the membership card.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

C'mon, lighten up, I'll see you tomorrow.

She pats him on the back and he leaves the club as Raven gets back on stage with the mic.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

I thought I told y'all to be nice, what was that?

CROWD MEMBER

He was trash!

RAVEN

Oh he was trash? You want this mic? Didn't think so.

INT. NOTHING CLASS - DAY

Kesler is in class super tired flipping the membership card around in his hand. Then Ann sits down next to him and he puts it away quickly. Ann sizes Kesler up.

ANN

Late night last night?

KESLER

Yeah, Gus and I stayed up playing games.

ANN

Kesler...

Kesler rolls his eyes.

PROFESSOR

Alright class, let's get started. I have just finished writing the next chapter of your textbook, so you'll need to buy it before next class. You can purchase it at the bookstore for \$100.

Kesler groans and puts his head down on his desk.

ANN

Relax, I can buy it for you.

PROFESSOR

Now,

The professor sits down at his desk.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Let's begin class.

The professor stares at everyone and is silent. So are all the students. Every student is sitting straight up and looking forward except for Kesler. One student coughs.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

If you are going to be disruptive,
you can leave my classroom.

WILLIAM

Sorry, sir.

PROFESSOR

Get out.

The student packs his things up and leaves the classroom. The professor looks annoyed as he makes noise packing up.

Kesler puts his head down and falls asleep. In his dream he is on stage and the whole club loves him. Then Ann jumps on stage and gives him a big hug

ANN

I was wrong about you all along, I
love you so much!

Then they fall into the crowd together.

Then there is a loud noise on the desk and Kesler jolts awake. The professor is right next to him.

PROFESSOR

There will be no sleeping in my
classroom, unless you want to end
up like William

Kesler doesn't say anything, but just looks forward.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Good.

The professor walks back to the front and sits at his chair and stares at Kesler.

Kesler grips the membership card in his pocket harder.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Kesler walks into the club and it's just as packed as it was the night before with different performers on stage. Kesler goes over to the bar.

BARTENDER
What can I get you?

KESLER
Sidewinder.

The bartender nods and goes to make the drink. Kesler looks up at Raven who is Emceeing and she notices him and smiles. The bartender comes back with his drink. Kesler drinks it confidently and tries not to show that he doesn't like the taste.

RAVEN
So let's not scare this one away
huh? Hit it!

Raven comes off stage and goes over to Kesler.

RAVEN (CONT'D)
So you're back.

KESLER
So I am.

RAVEN
C'mon, I wanna show you something.

Kesler finishes his drink and follows her to the back.

Once back there, they see Dotwav. They are drinking and smoking.

RAVEN (CONT'D)
Where's my 20 Gonz?

GONZ
I didn't think he'd be back, but
what's a man who can't keep his
word?

He hands Raven a \$20 dollar bill.

RAVEN
This is Kesler.

BAND MEMBER 1
Oh shoot, this the guy that got
booed off stage?

BAND MEMBER 2
Oh yeah!

KESLER
I'd rather be booed off stage again
than sit another minute in class...

RAVEN
Well we're here to make sure that
doesn't happen again.

Gonz stands up and sizes Kesler up. Then takes a long hit of
his joint.

GONZ
You just rap?

KESLER
Yeah... And produce.

Gonz looks at Raven and takes another hit.

GONZ
Let's see what you can do.

Kesler looks at Raven who nods. Kesler follows them into the
back studio.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

They get in a makeshift studio and put Kesler in the driver's
seat. Kesler starts to make a beat and everyone starts
bopping. One by one they give him suggestions that make the
beat better.

BAND MEMBER 1
Alright, let me structure it, you
start writing.

Kesler sits down and starts to write. The beat plays as
Kesler writes.

BAND MEMBER 2
Let's hear what you got so far.

KESLER
Play the beat.

Kesler starts rapping what he wrote and it is kind of deep.

GONZ
Hold up, hold up. What was that?

KESLER
See I was trying to draw a parallel
between my desire for success and
the influences around me. Don't
worry it'll make sense at the end.

GONZ
Nah, you can cut that right there.
You're trying to be all lyrical,
spiritual, miracle, nah no one
wants to hear that. Loosen up a
bit, those people out there don't
want to think, they just want to
feel. Good, bad, doesn't matter, as
long as you get in here.

Gonz touches his heart.

GONZ (CONT'D)
Re-write it.

KESLER
I feel that, I just wanted to make
something with some substance.

GONZ
Do you want the crowd to love you
or not?

Kesler is silent. Gonz offers him his joint.

GONZ (CONT'D)
Just try it again, and really feel
it.

KESLER
I got it.

Kesler declines the joint. Gonz shrugs and takes a hit.
Kesler starts writing some dumbed down bars instead.

A bit later...

GONZ
Kesler, what you got now?

Kesler raps some dumbed down bars unenthusiastically, but everyone loves it. This gives Kesler confidence and he starts to show it as he keeps going. This turns into him recording the whole song and everyone loving it. This transitions into him performing and the whole crowd loving him.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Kesler looks over to Raven, Gonz, and the band and everyone is cheering him on.

CROWD
KESLER! KESLER! KESLER!

Kesler jumps off the stage into the crowd, but they all move out of the way and Kesler hits the ground.

CROWD (CONT'D)
Ooooh... YEAH!!!!

Raven and Dotwav rush over to Kesler and help him up.

RAVEN
You did good, but you're not that good yet.

KESLER
Let's make another...

RAVEN
Go home, man, we'll see you tomorrow night.

They help him to the door.

INT. STUDENT UNION - DAY

Ann and Gus are eating inside the student union. Gus is playing Glitch Dash. Outside, there are protesters protesting their exams.

ANN
Ugh, they are always protesting something.

GUS
At least someone's trying to change something around here...

ANN
It's pointless.

GUS

What about when they protested for
equality for women?

ANN

How are we not equal?

GUS

Oh my god...

Kesler comes in and sits down next to Ann and Gus.

ANN

Where have you been? You missed
three classes already today.

KESLER

I... overslept

ANN

Well that's an understatement. You
know what, you rea--

Kesler holds up some flowers and gives them to her.

ANN (CONT'D)

Oh, what are these for.

KESLER

For always trying to bring the best
out of me. I know you just want me
to be successful, and I just wanted
you to know that I appreciate it.

ANN

Aww... Thank you.

KESLER

I also want you to know, that I had
the best night of my life last
night.

ANN

What do you mean?

Kesler looks around to make sure no one is listening in.

KESLER

The last two nights, I've been
performing in this secret club.

ANN

You what?

KESLER

They love me, Ann. I finally feel like I can be myself there. Just come to a performance tonight, you'll see.

ANN

I don't know...

KESLER

This school has been draining me ever since freshman convocation. All I've wanted was something to change and now I finally found my element. You wanted me to choose between my passion and my love for you, but it doesn't have to be that way. Please.

Ann is silent for a second

ANN

Fine...

KESLER

Thank you! I love you so much right now!

He kisses her on the cheek.

KESLER (CONT'D)

Gus you're coming too.

GUS

Whatever.

KESLER

Great.

Kesler gets up to leave.

ANN

Wait, where are you going now?

KESLER

I got to get ready, but I'll see you tonight.

Kesler leaves the table.

ANN

(sigh)

This man will be the death of me...

Gus looks up at Ann then keeps playing his game.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Kesler is on the stage performing and he's looking for his friends in the crowd that's going crazy for him. He can't find them and gets a bit discouraged, but then Ann and Gus walk into the club. Kesler smiles and points at them as he keeps performing. Ann gives him a weak smile and walks in a bit further. Gus (who is actually not playing a game) looks around and tries to move to the beat, but isn't doing very well. He is interested in this new world. Ann looks disgusted at it. Kesler finishes his performance. Then he comes down off the stage and goes to Gus.

KESLER
So? What you think?

GUS
You've come a long way.

ANN
That was... great.

KESLER
Tell me what you really thought,
Ann.

ANN
Could we talk outside for a second?

KESLER
There's a quieter place in the
back, c'mon.

Kesler tries to take Ann to the back but she doesn't move.

ANN
Just... come outside.

KESLER
Nah, I want to show you the studio.

Kesler looks at the door and the chancellor walks in and looks horrified.

ANN
Outside.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

Kesler and Ann go outside to meet the chancellor.

KESLER

What are you doing here?

CHANCELLOR CEIL

I'm here to save you from this wretched place.

KESLER

I don't need to be saved.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

You don't belong here.

KESLER

Who are you to tell me that?

CHANCELLOR CEIL

It's my job to tell you that.

KESLER

I don't go thousands of dollars in debt for you to tell me what to do. No, your job is to listen to my goals and help me get there.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

You don't understand the magnitude of your decisions. You don't know who these heathens really are.

KESLER

Those "heathens" are my friends.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Who do you think profits from your performances. Are they paying you?

Kesler is silent.

ANN

Kesler the chancellor is right. They're changing you... that song you performed sounds nothing like the intellectual ones you used to make.

KESLER

These people don't want to think, they want to feel.

ANN

You don't even sound like yourself anymore...

KESLER

Well none of that matters, they are giving me everything I ever wanted.

ANN

Everything?

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Son, listen to me. There is only one true path to success in this life. We've made it easy for you. After you changed your major, you received nothing but A's, but here you are ready to throw all that away just to feel good?

KESLER

I'm not throwing anything away. Your "perfect system" treats us like we're all the same, because we are to you. All you want is to take our money and push out fresh employees to your corporate donors. I will not be a slave to be sold.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Many of those corporate donors graduated from my university. Who's to say you can't be one of them.

KESLER

I don't want to be one of them!

ANN

Kesler!

KESLER

And you. You act like you want me to be happy, and I really want to believe that, but you have never supported anything I've done that didn't fit into your little plans. All you want is your perfect life. Well what about mine? If you really cared about me, you would be standing by my side, not the chancellor's.

No one responds, but Ann looks at the Chancellor then bows her head ashamed.

KESLER (CONT'D)

Things are finally going good for me, and my own girlfriend can't be happy for me. The only people on my side are the people in that club.

Then Gus comes out of the club playing something on his phone.

GUS

Man, that place is insane. They just had a twerking competition and--

He looks up and sees the tension.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Good evening Guster.

GUS

Good evening...

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Are you enjoying this riff raff as well?

Gus looks at Kesler, then goes over to the chancellor's side.

GUS

No sir.

Kesler shoots Gus a look and Gus shrugs nervously.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Well, Kesler, I only came to offer my advice. However, it is ultimately your choice. You can accuse me of being a crook and a slave master till your heart's content. That won't change the fact that even I don't enjoy the fantastical form of freedom you seek. When you're ready to return to the real world, come see me.

The chancellor motions to Gus and they leave. Ann stands there ashamed. They stand in awkward silence for a second.

KESLER

Why don't you leave with your beloved chancellor?

ANN

I'm... sorry... I never meant... to hurt you. I just...

KESLER

(Sigh)

You asked me to think about whether I see a future for us together, and I honestly do. But I think we should focus on the present, try to live in the moment. I see us getting married, I see us settling down and having kids, but right now, I need to chase my dream. If I don't I'll regret it for the rest of our life together.

Ann nods slowly

KESLER (CONT'D)

And if it doesn't work out, at least I tried.

ANN

I do want you to be happy... Your dreams just scare me...

KESLER

They scare me too, that's how I know I'm dreaming big enough.

Ann lets out a smile and a bit of a laugh.

KESLER (CONT'D)

I just need you to trust me.

Kesler and Ann hug.

ANN

I can do that.

Kesler goes back into the club. Ann takes out her planner and sees where she wrote about her plan for the future. She rips the pages out and nervously lets them blow away in the wind. Then she smiles slightly and walks away.

INT. BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Dotwav and Raven are in the back drinking and smoking when Kesler walks in.

ALL

Hey!

Someone passes Kesler a drink.

GONZ
To Kesler.

Gonz raises his glass.

ALL
To Kesler!

Everyone takes a shot including Kesler who can finally handle it.

RAVEN
Oh he's a big boy now.

KESLER
Always have been.

RAVEN
Oh really?

Raven checks him out.

KESLER
Not like that... besides I have a girlfriend.

RAVEN
So? Ain't no rules here.

Raven moves in closer to Kesler.

KESLER
Well I ain't yours.

RAVEN
Why haven't you introduced her to us then?

KESLER
Just 'cause I can handle y'all doesn't mean she can.

RAVEN
Please, you ain't even smoked with us yet.

Kesler looks at Gonz who hands him the blunt. Kesler smokes.

RAVEN (CONT'D)
Alright then.

She sits back down.

KESLER

Exac-

Kesler is interrupted by uncontrollable coughing. Everyone laughs.

GONZ

You'll get used to it.

He hands the blunt back. They continue smoking and time becomes lost to everyone. Everyone is also high and/or drunk.

KESLER

I just want to say that I'm really glad I found you guys.

RAVEN

I found you, fool.

KESLER

Whatever, same difference. You guys are the best.

GONZ

I'll drink to that.

He does.

KESLER

Yo, can I rap a verse I've been working on.

GONZ

Go 'head

Kesler raps a super conscious verse about freedom.

Raven and Gonz exchange looks of "I didn't want it to come to this"

KESLER

That's all I got so far, what you think?

GONZ

I thought you were done with all the smart rap crap.

KESLER

Nah, man these people need to free themselves, but if they don't think about the world it'll just keep on spinning.

RAVEN

I'm glad you feel happy and allat,
but you not free yet.

KESLER

What do you mean? You think the
golden ticket thing is true?

RAVEN

No.

GONZ

You will never be free until you
escape this world.

KESLER

Y'all ain't making any sense.

GONZ

The world we are all living in...
is a simulation.

Kesler bursts out laughing, but everyone else stays serious.

KESLER

Stop it man, I'm not that gullible.

RAVEN

We're not joking, Kesler.

KESLER

Oh yeah? Prove it.

Raven looks at Gonz.

GONZ

Let's go.

EXT. STUDENT UNION - NIGHT

The group arrives at the empty, closed student union. The
protesters are still outside now protesting unhealthy food.

PROTEST LEADER

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food
back!

PROTESTERS

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food
back!

PROTEST LEADER

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

PROTESTERS

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

GONZ

All of these organizations, the student government, the fraternities and sororities, and the protesters, are all on a loop.

KESLER

Like a programming loop?

GONZ

Exactly. They do the same thing every day, but they all serve a purpose for the school.

KESLER

Nah the organizations give the students more control.

GONZ

That's what they want you to think, but they all contribute to the school. They attract more students which makes them more money. Haven't you noticed that the protesters never stop protesting? There's not even anyone out here.

KESLER

That's just what they do.

GONZ

Oh it's just what they do?

Gonz walks in front of the protesters and waves his hands in front of them, but they don't acknowledge him. He even takes one of their signs and the person acts like they are still holding a sign.

KESLER

Alright this is crazy, just leave them alone. This isn't funny.

PROTEST LEADER

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

PROTESTERS

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

PROTEST LEADER

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

PROTESTERS

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

GONZ

Kesler, give them one of those apples.

KESLER

C'mon man, lets just go.

GONZ

Give them an apple.

Kesler sighs and picks up an apple off the ground and gives it to one of the protesters. Then they all get silent immediately. Then they start glitching and the apple disappears and the sign teleports back into the protester's hand. The protest continues.

PROTEST LEADER

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

PROTESTERS

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

PROTEST LEADER

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

PROTESTERS

Reduce the fat! Bring healthy food back!

Kesler steps back horrified.

KESLER

What? What was that?

GONZ

Everything we've said is true. You will never be truly free as long as you live here. There is one way to escape, though few have done it.

Kesler is breathing heavily. Raven notices this.

RAVEN

Alright, I think that's enough for tonight. Kesler, why don't you go home and let it sink in first, then--

KESLER

How?

Raven looks at the others surprised.

GONZ

We hold a festival every four years at the cliffs. Everybody performs, and at the end we hold the ceremony for those who want to escape.

KESLER

What do I have to do?

GONZ

You've got to take the leap.

KESLER

Off the cliff?

GONZ

You will fall so fast that the simulation can't handle the calculations and log you out of the system.

KESLER

When's the next festival?

GONZ

In two days.

KESLER

So let me get this straight. We live in a simulation, and the only way out is to jump off of a cliff?

GONZ

You got it.

KESLER

So why haven't y'all jumped?

GONZ

We are all living our dream
already, even if this life isn't
real.

BAND MEMBER 1

Plus, it's a long way to the
bottom.

RAVEN

We ain't forcing you to jump, and
we won't see you any differently
for staying. We just thought you
deserved to know the truth.

Kesler walks away toward his dorm room dazed.

INT. NOTHING CLASS - DAY

Kesler is sitting in his chair staring straight in a daze.
Kesler is thinking about what his club friends told him the
night before. The professor gives him an A+ for the day.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Kesler is sitting at his desk staring straight in a daze.
Kesler is thinking about his own goals and what he's been
doing at the club. The same guy from work before tries to ask
for a charger, but Kesler doesn't answer even though he is
looking straight at him. His boss tells him to go home again.
Kesler gets up and walks out of the library.

INT. STUDENT UNION - DAY

Kesler is sitting with Gus and Ann who are talking, but he
can't hear them because he is staring at the protesters in a
daze. He is thinking about Ann's reactions to the club and
what the chancellor said to him about "the real world."
Kesler realizes something and stands up.

ANN

Where are you going?

Kesler doesn't answer.

ANN (CONT'D)

You've been so distant all day...
Is this because of last night? I
still feel terrible about it...

KESLER

It's not that... we can talk later,
I have to figure something out.

Kesler leaves the table. Gus is playing Death Coming on his phone.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Kesler walks into the Chancellor's office and sits down.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Does this mean you've finally seen
the light?

KESLER

I only came to ask you one
question.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Fire away. I'm here to help.

KESLER

I assume that you are pretty well
off and have a seat at high tables
with important people, since you
are providing labor to their
corporations.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Is that your question?

KESLER

Just making sure. My question is,
do we live in a simulation?

The chancellor stands up and looks out of the window, then chuckles to himself.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Perhaps I should have placed you in
law school rather than journalism,
since you are asking questions you
already know the answer to.

The chancellor turns back to Kesler.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)

I assume the heathens from the club
enlightened you?

KESLER

They tried to give the protesters
what they wanted and the world
deleted it.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Ah, a classic.

He takes a sip of his drink.

KESLER

I wasn't sure if you knew.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Yes you were, that's why you are
here.

KESLER

Why haven't you told anyone?

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Some people know. Such as those
people at the table you mentioned
earlier.

KESLER

Why keep it a secret?

CHANCELLOR CEIL

If everyone knew that they were
trapped in a simulation, how do you
think they would react? It would be
pandemonium. However, look around.
This world is thriving and some
people actually make it into the
real world.

KESLER

All they gotta do is jump off the
cliff.

The chancellor breaks out into uncharacteristic laughter.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Is that what they're saying now?

Kesler doesn't answer.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)

I am one of the few people actually
trying to help you escape. Jumping
off the deep end is just suicide.
No one gets to the real world
except through me.

(MORE)

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)

You graduate from my university and get a corporate job. Then you work your way up and, after a few decades, you will be successful enough to escape. However, our simulation is the backbone of business. Even if you are a CEO, you still need it to prosper. You will likely contribute back to keeping the simulation going in the end. There is no escape.

KESLER

The last thing I would do is subject other people to this meaningless life. If I'm free, then everyone else should be too. I would stop the simulation.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

I have had countless students say the same, yet the simulation continues.

KESLER

Why should I trust anything you say? You've been against me since day one while I have a whole club telling me the truth.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

I haven't lied to you yet. I am the only one telling you the whole truth.

Kesler stands up and backs away slowly.

KESLER

I don't believe you.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Believing the truth doesn't make it any more true. Stay with me and I promise you the world. If you take that jump, you will surely die.

Kesler freezes.

KESLER

I guess we'll see just how many lies you've told me today.

Kesler leaves the office and the chancellor sighs.

INT. KESLER AND GUS' DORM - NIGHT

Gus is in the room playing video games and Ann is writing a poem, she hides it when Kesler walks in. Kesler walks in and sits down on his bed and watches Gus play for a second. He is playing one of the assassin's creed games.

ANN

You... want to do some homework?

KESLER

That's the last thing I want to do right now.

ANN

Okay... where did you go after lunch?

KESLER

I was in the chancellor's office.

ANN

You were!?

KESLER

It's not what you think... Do you guys ever feel like someone else is controlling you?

GUS

Like a video game?

KESLER

Kind of...

ANN

Not really... Everything is placed to help us succeed, but that doesn't make me feel controlled. Everything the Chancellor does is for--

KESLER

Don't tell me what they told you to say. What do you really think?

GUS

I wouldn't be surprised.

KESLER

What if there was a way to escape here and do whatever you wanted.

GUS

I'd have to see it to believe it.
Even then, I'm not sure I could go
through with it.

ANN

I understand where you guys are
coming from, but college has never
wronged me. I get good grades and
there are good secure jobs in my
field. What more could I ask for?

KESLER

A lot more. You could ask for the
freedom create anything you wanted.
You could ask for opportunities to
gain real wealth for you and your
family. They tell you that a 9-5 is
all you deserve, but we deserve so
much more. I want to leave a legacy
for my children to carry on. A
legacy of charity and free
expression. And I can't do that in
a cubicle in someone else's
company.

ANN

Why can't you build your own
business from college or the
cubicle?

KESLER

I'll be too busy paying off my
student debt to start anything.

Everyone is quiet except for the game.

KESLER (CONT'D)

It doesn't even matter. This world
isn't real.

Ann bursts out into laughter. Gus stops mashing buttons.

ANN

What are you talking about?

KESLER

I'm serious. I saw the world glitch
out for my self last night.

ANN

Kesler, stop.

KESLER

We are living in a simulation.

ANN

Okay, I think those people at the club are getting to you a bit. Did they make you do drugs?

GUS

How do you get out?

KESLER

You have to jump off the cliffs.

ANN

Okay, now you're scaring me... Are you thinking about...

KESLER

I don't know yet.

ANN

Kesler! You can't seriously be thinking about jumping.

Then Gus pauses his game for the first time ever and turns around to both of them. They are both surprised.

GUS

I think you should do it.

ANN

Gus!

GUS

If anyone can make it out, it's you.

KESLER

But what if the chancellor is right?

ANN

Right about what?

KESLER

He said that he knows the world is fake, but jumping isn't the answer to escaping...

ANN

He said that?

Ann is shocked.

GUS
Forget the chancellor, he just
wants as many students trapped here
as possible.

Gus stands up and walks towards Kesler.

GUS (CONT'D)
You are the most driven,
determined, and dedicated person I
know. You need to make it out.

KESLER
Gus...

GUS
I look up to you. When the world
beat us down you got back up. I
went to hide in my own virtual
worlds. If you can escape this one,
maybe there's hope for me too.

Beat.

ANN
If the chancellor would hide the
fact that the world is fake, then
there's no telling what else he
could be lying about.

Ann turns to Kesler and looks deeply in his eyes.

ANN (CONT'D)
I don't know what to believe
anymore. All I know is that I trust
you. Whatever you decide, I'll be
right there with you.

KESLER
Thank you guys. The festival is
tomorrow, so I guess we'll see what
happens. There is one other option.

He pulls the golden ticket out of his drawer and reads the
destination again.

ANN
What's that?

Kesler flips the ticket around to show her.

KESLER
Seems too good to be true, and no
one ever talks about it...

ANN
Whatever you decide.

Kesler gives Ann a smile.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Kesler is sitting at his desk at work and diligently answering everyone's questions and getting people what they need. Kesler keeps checking his watch eager to leave.

At the end of his shift, his boss gives him a check and lets him go.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Kesler approaches the Kiosk with some cash.

INFO WORKER
Ah, you're back.

KESLER
Let me get a plank of wood, four wheels, a hammer, and some nails.

INFO WORKER
You got it.

The info worker gets all the materials and Kesler pays for them.

Kesler goes to the tracks with a few other people and starts trying to build his makeshift skateboard. It takes him way too long to get the first wheel on, but he is excited when he does. Then he starts to play some of his inspirational music to keep him pumped up. Some people around him appreciate this music too and it keeps them inspired. He gets the second wheel on and is even more excited.

BUILDER 1
Hey, did you make that?

KESLER
Yep!

BUILDER 1
How much would it cost to get a copy?

KESLER
How much?

BUILDER 1
Yeah.

KESLER
Uh... \$2?

BUILDER 1
Alright.

The builder hands him \$2.

BUILDER 1 (CONT'D)
Send it to me!

Kesler sends him the song.

BUILDER 2
Hey, can I get it too?

BUILDER 3
Me too!

Kesler is amazed, but he starts making money.

Kesler goes back to the kiosk.

KESLER
Hey, let me get some better wheels,
some trucks, a few screws, some
grip tape, and a drill.

INFO WORKER
Wow! Must be going well.

They exchange and Kesler goes back to his board. He is having trouble putting all the pieces together.

KESLER
Hey, can you help me?

BUILDER 4
I got my own to worry about.

KESLER
I'll pay you.

The builder turns around and helps Kesler build a small, but nice looking skateboard. He tries to ride it, but realizes that he isn't going to get far on it.

BUILDER 5
Hey, you can buy my board if you
want.

KESLER

How much?

BUILDER 5

Just \$20.

Kesler looks down at his board and realizes that he is too tired to keep going like this. He hands him the money. Builder 5 runs off with the money. Kesler tries to chase, but he is too fast.

Kesler continues for a bit and has been selling his music the whole time, but now no one wants to buy it anymore.

BUILDER 1

I already got all your songs.

KESLER

I don't have time to make anything new, I have to keep building this thing.

BUILDER 2

You should get someone else to build it for you so you can focus on making new products.

KESLER

I don't have enough money to pay anyone.

They both shrug and move past him. Kesler keeps on going. After a bit, his board snaps in half and Kesler falls to the ground. He picks up the pieces and throws them into the ground in frustration as he yells. He sits on the ground for a bit, then his phone rings. It's Raven. He picks it up.

KESLER (CONT'D)

Hello?

RAVEN (O.C.)

Hey, where you at?

KESLER

I wanted to try something different.

RAVEN (O.C.)

How's that working out for you?

Kesler looks down at his broken board.

KESLER

Not great.

RAVEN (O.C.)
Well, the festival's almost over.
If you want to get outta here, it's
now or never.

Kesler looks up at everyone passing him as he sits in the dirt. Then he looks at his broken board

RAVEN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Kesler?

KESLER
Yeah... I'm on my way.

Kesler hangs up and leaves his broken board to go to the festival.

EXT. CLIFFS - LATE DAY

Kesler gets to the festival and the performances are ending. Raven is on stage with the mic.

RAVEN
Now we will begin the ceremony. Is
there anyone in the crowd who wants
to take the leap?

No one raises their hand. Raven scans the crowd. We see that Gus, Ann, and the chancellor are there. Then someone raises their hand and Raven smiles.

RAVEN (CONT'D)
Come on up.

Kesler walks onto the stage.

RAVEN (CONT'D)
My man Kesler here is our newest
member, y'all have seen what he can
do. Now it is time for him to go to
the other side. Would you like to
say some words?

Raven hands the mic to Kesler.

KESLER
I can't thank you all enough for
everything you've done for me. You
showed me the truth, and never gave
up on me.

He looks dead at the chancellor.

KESLER (CONT'D)
You have given me the courage to
follow my heart.

He notices Ann and Gus in the crowd too.

KESLER (CONT'D)
But there is one more thing I need
before I can take this leap. Ann, I
need you. What is freedom if I have
no one to share it with?

The crowd claps.

KESLER (CONT'D)
This is my decision. Join me.

He reaches his hand out to her.

CHANCELLOR CEIL
Ann, let's not do anything hasty--

Ann runs towards the stage.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)
Ann!

GUS
(under his breath)
Yes.

Ann gets to the stage and Kesler drops the mic. They embrace.

CROWD
Kesler! Kesler! Kesler!

As they are hugging they slowly tip backwards off the stage
and fall off the cliff. Once they are gone the cheers stop.
The chancellor is devastated. Kesler's golden ticket flutters
onto the stage and disappears.

Raven slips some money to Gonz.

EXT. STUDENT UNION - DAY

The chancellor is gathered with a bunch of students including
Gus holding a vigil for Ann and Kesler.

GUS
They were my best friends... All he
wanted was to be free...

Gus breaks into tears. The chancellor grabs him and guides him back into the crowd.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

This is truly a tragedy. Both of these students had great potential. Ann was working hard to become an accountant. Kesler was on his way to being a great journalist. In times like this, it is healthy to mourn. However, we must also learn from their lives. Kesler was not content with his achievements here at the university. So he sought out personal glory in dangerous avenues. He allowed those at the club to poison his mind and body, which ultimately led to his demise. I only wish Ann was strong enough to resist him.

The chancellor looks up and sees Raven in the background looking at the chancellor.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)

It didn't have to be this way, but we can't change the past. I will dedicate myself to preserve the lives of my students no matter the cost.

Raven points at her watch.

CHANCELLOR CEIL (CONT'D)

Lastly I give my condolences to their friends and family.

The chancellor leaves the vigil and starts walking toward Raven.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The chancellor and Raven walk side by side to the train station.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

I thought we had a deal.

RAVEN

We did.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

Ann was not a rebel, you could have stopped her.

RAVEN

That is not my job.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

You're only supposed to dispose of the students that pose a threat.

RAVEN

If she worked with Kesler, they might as well have taken the limitless pill.

CHANCELLOR CEIL

She was the perfect student...

Raven stops walking and faces the chancellor.

RAVEN

Then how about you do your job instead of yelling at me for doing mine. If they come to the club, you already know what's going down. This job is all I have.

Raven continues walking.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

Besides, they got what they wanted. The only true freedom is death.

They get to the train station and press a button on their phone. A car pulls up and they drive down the train tracks. Other people building their vehicles move out of the way. They run over Kesler's broken board and exit the world.

INT. REAL WORLD - ?

Then they exit the box world and unplug a dead Kesler from the simulation who is sitting next to Gus who is still going. Kesler and Ann were holding hands, but the chancellor pries them away from each other and they carry Kesler out of the room then Ann.

Raven approaches a mysterious figure in a chair. The figure pays them a little bit.

RAVEN

Where's the rest?

THE MAN
Taxes have been raised since our
last meeting.

RAVEN
This ain't even enough for--

THE MAN
Don't forget your role, Raven.

RAVEN
Yes, sir.

THE MAN
Now... Keep it up the good work.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Raven gets to the train tracks and sees her next target. She hesitates, then approaches them timidly. He sees Raven and takes his headphones off. His music bleeds out of them.

RAVEN
(defeated)
Hey... you waiting on a train too?

THE END