

## The Truth Project

Desperately seeking the truth, a heartbroken young woman  
deceptively uses a new tech device and gets more than she  
bargained for.

25-DE01-W04

INT TECH COMPANY CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Five TECH ENGINEERS, all under 35, sit on ergonomic chairs around a conference table. ANDREA ,30, athletic build, who has never met a test she didn't ace, is one of them. A PROJECT MANAGER stands in front of an interactive whiteboard.

On the wall a digital poster announces a new author series featuring the book "Outgrowing God" by Richard Dawkins.

ON WHITEBOARD VIDEO

A PRISONER, 40s, in an orange jumpsuit, is handcuffed to a chair behind a metal table. Project Manager approaches the prisoner and places something on the nape of his neck.

PRISONER

Don't feel nothin'. It's on right?

PROJECT MANAGER

Yes. It's made to be undetectable.

PRISONER

This gonna work and git me outta here?

PROJECT MANAGER

You've been convicted of robbing a convenience store and shooting the clerk. Did you actually do it?

PRISONER

I was framed, man. I was nowhere near that store. I was with my ex. But when she caught me with her best friend, she told the cops I lied. No one believed me cuz I had priors, y'know?

BACK TO SCENE

The Project Manager turns off the video.

PROJECT MANAGER

This is one of hundreds of videos. All have been corroborated. The truth patch works.

Everyone whoops and claps.

ANDREA

So, when do we go to market?

## PROJECT MANAGER

Couple of weeks. A few bugs to fix.  
Don't forget, until the release,  
you're all bound by NDAs.

## INT ANDREA'S MOM'S HOUSE - EVENING

Andrea and her MOM, 60s, an embittered divorcée, eat a home-cooked meal in the kitchen. On the walls: photos of Andrea as World Fencing Champion three years in a row; photo of her as first chair violinist at 12; and valedictorian certificates.

## ANDREA

If you could make a person tell you  
the truth would you do it?

## MOM

Absolutely! I'd make that no-good  
father of yours admit that he stashed  
money away before the divorce.

## ANDREA

Why did I even ask?

## MOM

What about you?

## ANDREA

I'd ask Justin why he didn't even have  
the courtesy to break up with me in  
person. Why he just disappeared.

## MOM

Good riddance. You dodged a bullet.  
You remember my friend, Lily? Her son  
just finished med school, top of his  
class and he's single. I'll set you  
up.

## ANDREA

Oh, look at the time. I should go.

## INT ANDREA'S CUBICLE AT TECH COMPANY - DAY

Andrea sits at her desk. She should be working, but she is mesmerized by addictive social media. On a whim, she tries to find Justin on numerous platforms, but no luck.

## ANDREA

(sotto voce)

Where are you?

One of the engineers from her team drops a box on her desk.

ENGINEER

The promotional box for the truth  
patch. Just came in. Pretty cool, huh?  
It can't leave the building.

He walks off to deliver more boxes. Andrea stares at the box, looks around, overrules her conscience, and surreptitiously places the box in her purse. Then, on her phone, she searches DILLON MARKS, Justin's best friend in high school.

INT COFFEE SHOP - EVENING

Dillon Marks, sitting at a table, stands as Andrea enters.

DILLON

Andrea! It's been ages!

Andrea holds her arms out and gives Dillon a big hug, placing the truth patch on the nape of his neck before releasing him.

ANDREA

So, you're a big shot attorney now.

DILLON

(patch taking effect)  
And you're... so beautiful. I was so  
jealous of Justin.

Andrea blushes. Hearing the truth is going to be more uncomfortable than she imagined.

ANDREA

Speaking of Justin, do you know how I  
could contact him?

DILLON

I've never seen him so sad and angry  
as when he came home from having  
dinner with your parents.

ANDREA

My parents? Are you sure? When?

DILLON

Right before graduation. He stormed  
in, said he was moving out of the area  
and needed to borrow a suitcase. When  
I pressed him, he said he couldn't  
talk about it, and left.

Andrea is speechless. Her parents, who loathe each other, met with Justin? Together?

ANDREA

So, where is he now? What's he doing?

EXT ANDREA'S MOM'S HOUSE - EVENING

Andrea, standing outside the front door, takes a patch out of the box. Then, she knocks. Andrea's mom opens the door. Andrea gives her mom a big hug and places the patch on the nape of her mom's neck.

MOM

What a nice surprise! Twice in one week! Wait...is something wrong?

ANDREA

Just wanted to talk.

INT ANDREA'S MOM'S HOUSE- EVENING

Mom, a little unsteady on her feet, walks to the couch.

MOM

(patch taking effect)

Sorry, I feel a little lightheaded.

ANDREA

Mom, why did you and Dad take Justin to dinner right before graduation?

MOM

Because he was going to ruin your life. Drag you down with him.

ANDREA

What are you talking about?

MOM

He was going to skip college and be a construction worker! He wheedled you into hanging out with that youth group at his church every week when you could have been doing something constructive. You needed to be with someone that equalled your mental prowess, your drive, your aspirations.

ANDREA

(sotto voce)

You mean your drive, your aspirations.

MOM

You were young, he was cute, I get it. You weren't thinking with your head. That's why we had to step in. First time your dad and I had agreed on anything in years.

(harsh laugh)

We offered to pay him \$40,000 in return for him moving away, changing all of his contact information, and remaining inaccessible.

ANDREA

I hope you're joking.

MOM

We felt it was more than fair. His dad was basically destitute after paying for the mom's care before she died. That amount of money? Justin would go to a trade school debt-free and possibly set up his own business.

ANDREA

And if he didn't accept?

MOM

We told him we'd make it very hard for him to work in this area. We're well-connected.

ANDREA

You're despicable, is what you are. I can't blame him for taking your blood money. He was working two jobs during high school to help his dad out.

MOM

But he didn't.

ANDREA

Didn't what?

MOM

Take the money. We were as surprised as you were when he disappeared. We got what we wanted without paying a

cent.

INT ANDREA'S CAR - MORNING

Andrea drives on the freeway as the first rays of sunlight light up the sky. The digital clock in the car reads 8:00am.

ANDREA

(speaking on Bluetooth)

Please let my team know I won't be in today... yes, I know it's last minute.

EXT INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - DAY

A secure fence surrounds a small industrial building. Within that fenced area are a few pickup trucks with signage that reads 'Hiram's Construction -- We build good foundations.'

INT INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - DAY

JUSTIN, 30s, muscular from years of construction work, teaches his apprentice, TIMOTHY, 17, how to use a circular saw. Andrea walks in and Justin nearly makes a mistake that would have required stitches. Justin hands Timothy cash.

JUSTIN

Timothy, why don't you grab us some lunch at Joe's Deli.

TIMOTHY

Sure thing, Boss. What do y'all want?

JUSTIN

Surprise us. And take your time.

Timothy leaves. Andrea throws her arms around Justin. He reciprocates not knowing to what he owes this good fortune.

ANDREA

I'm so sorry. My mom just told me everything.

JUSTIN

Now, after all these years? Why?

ANDREA

She felt compelled to tell the truth.

JUSTIN

I can't believe you're here.

ANDREA

What I don't get is you didn't take the money, but you disappeared anyway. No explanation. Changed all your contact information. Why would you do that to me?

JUSTIN

Looking back, I could have handled things better. But I was so hurt and angry and, honestly, your parents are a force to be reckoned with.

ANDREA

Believe me, I know.

JUSTIN

My dad suggested a clean break. He said, 'Family doesn't like you? Doesn't end well. Just look at Romeo and Juliet.' Everyone said I'd find someone else, but I didn't want anyone else. I wanted you. And you were off limits. I had to get away.

ANDREA

And did you?

JUSTIN

Did I what?

ANDREA

Find someone else?

JUSTIN

No. You?

Andrea shakes her head. He leans in. They kiss. It's just as magical as it was when they were eighteen.

JUSTIN

We have some catching up to do.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - DAY

Andrea and Justin finish lunch.



ANDREA

It's amazing that you have your own company. I'm so proud of you.

JUSTIN

Speaking of which, I'm meeting someone at the Planning Department in twenty minutes. And, believe me, in construction, you never want to irritate a city official.

ANDREA

I should be going anyway. It's a long drive, and I have an early meeting.

JUSTIN

But we're on for Saturday, right?

ANDREA

Absolutely. You go. I'll clean up.

Justin starts to leave, turns, comes back and gives her another kiss.

JUSTIN

God is good. He answers prayers.

Justin leaves. Timothy reenters and sweeps the floor. Andrea throws the trash out and notices an incongruous toy wooden sword and shield hanging on the wall. In faint brown marker on the sword's hilt are numbers spaced as follows: 4 23.

TIMOTHY

(laughs)

I see you've met Spirit and Faith. His grandpa gave them to his dad and then his dad to him. They remind us to put on the armor of God each day.

ANDREA

And the numbers? Something happened on April 23?

TIMOTHY

(laughs)

Nah. It's a verse in Proverbs. Those things are really old. The punctuation marks wore off a long time ago.

INT ANDREA'S CAR - DAY

Andrea's phone rings. It's her mom. Andrea FaceTimes.

MOM ON PHONE SCREEN

I know you're on your way to work, but I wanted to apologize about last night. I felt a little off. I don't remember much of our conversation.

ANDREA

But you're feeling better now?

MOM ON PHONE SCREEN

Totally fine. Must have eaten something that didn't agree with me.

ANDREA

So, I reconnected with Justin. We're going out this Saturday. He told me he still loves me.

MOM ON PHONE SCREEN

And you believed him? Foolish girl. You've always been too trusting. For all you know, he has a bevy of girlfriends that he quote loves. En garde, Andrea. En garde.

INT ANDREA'S MOM'S HOUSE - DAY - 14 YEARS AGO - FLASHBACK

Andrea, 17, is dressed in her fencing uniform and carrying her epée and mask.

MOM

Lindsay picking you up?

ANDREA

No, Justin. He got time off work so he can watch the match.

MOM

Boys are only after one thing and they'll lie to get it. Guard your heart against men like you guard your heart in fencing. If you let them in, they'll only take advantage of you. Trust me, I know.

INT OF ANDREA'S CAR - DAY - PRESENT

ANDREA

Is she right? Am I being stupid? Is he  
just playing me?

She glances over and sees the truth packet box peeking out of  
her purse. She makes a U-turn and places a call.

ANDREA

I need to take another personal day.

EXT INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - DAY

Andrea takes a patch out of the box in her purse. Torn, she  
starts to put it back but needing to know the truth overrides  
her better judgment.

Justin pulls up in his truck, surprised but thrilled to see  
her. She wraps her arms around him and places the patch on  
the nape of his neck. He pulls away, reaches behind his neck,  
and yanks it off. She's surprised he felt it.

JUSTIN

What the heck is this?

ANDREA

A device my team has been working on.

JUSTIN

And you thought it was okay for me to  
be one of your guinea pigs without  
asking me?

ANDREA

Okay, I'm asking. Will you wear it?

JUSTIN

What does it do?

ANDREA

It's a truth patch. Kinda like a truth  
serum but not as invasive.

JUSTIN

Hard no. Now, how about you tell *me*  
the truth? What's really going on?

ANDREA

I haven't seen you in over a decade.  
You say you love me. I need to be

sure. I can't let you break my heart again.

JUSTIN

So, you were going to deceive me to get to the truth. That's messed up.

ANDREA

It sounds bad when you put it like that.

JUSTIN

It sounds bad, period. Do you even know what truth is, Andrea? My dad, who's color blind, sees green where I see orange. Three eyewitnesses to a crime will give three different accounts of what happened. There's only one real truth, Andrea. One. You won't find it with any patch. And you don't need to lie to get it.

Justin gets back in his truck and peels out. Andrea feels paralyzed. What has she done?

INT INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - DAY

Andrea, trembling, feels faint and stumbles to a chair. She pulls out her phone and Googles 'one truth'.

AI OVERVIEW ON HER PHONE SCREEN

An AI Overview is not available for this search.

Strange. Andrea researches other sites.

ANDREA

(reads)

Truth is divine wisdom manifested in Christ. Jesus is the model of the living Truth--mercy and love. Truth is the moral compass that leads our life.

Andrea digests this mind-blowing concept. Her eyes are once again drawn to the sword and shield. She pulls up Proverbs 4:23. Enthralled, she keeps reading. Her phone rings.

PROJECT MANAGER (V.O.)

Andrea, our launch is in one week. Gone two days in a row? Unacceptable. If you want to keep your job, you need

to rethink your priorities.

ANDREA

That's exactly what I've been doing.  
In fact, please consider this my 30-day notice.

INT INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - EVENING

The moon shines through the window. Justin walks in. Andrea sits alone at the table.

JUSTIN

I thought you'd be long gone by now.

ANDREA

I quit my job. It was compromising my health.

Justin has tried to remain aloof, but this throws him. He's immediately concerned and rushes to her.

JUSTIN

You're sick?

Andrea stares pointedly at the sword and shield.

ANDREA

Yeah. It's my heart. It's the source of life, and I was guarding it the wrong way.

Justin understands, smiles, lifts her up and holds her close.

JUSTIN

Is that so?

ANDREA

Turns out I need to keep horrible things from coming out of my mouth, look straight ahead, and keep my feet from evil.

JUSTIN

Yep, it's a whole body workout, and it's not easy. I do love you, y'know.

ANDREA

I believe you.

FADE OUT

