DEEP RECKONINGS

Content Series Opportunity
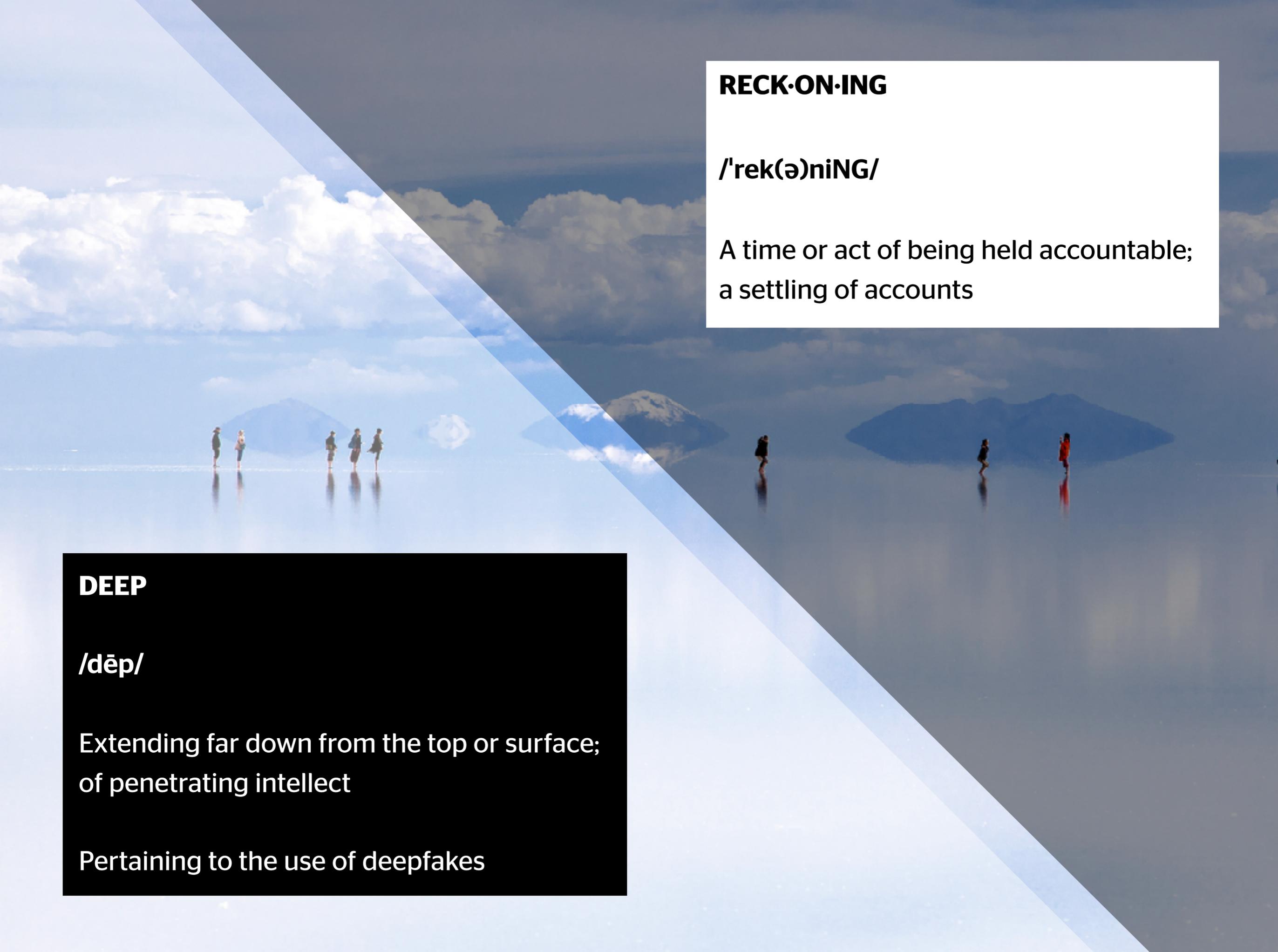
RECK·ON·ING

/ˈrek(ə)niNG/

A time or act of being held accountable; a settling of accounts

DEEP

/dēp/

Extending far down from the top or surface; of penetrating intellect

Pertaining to the use of deepfakes
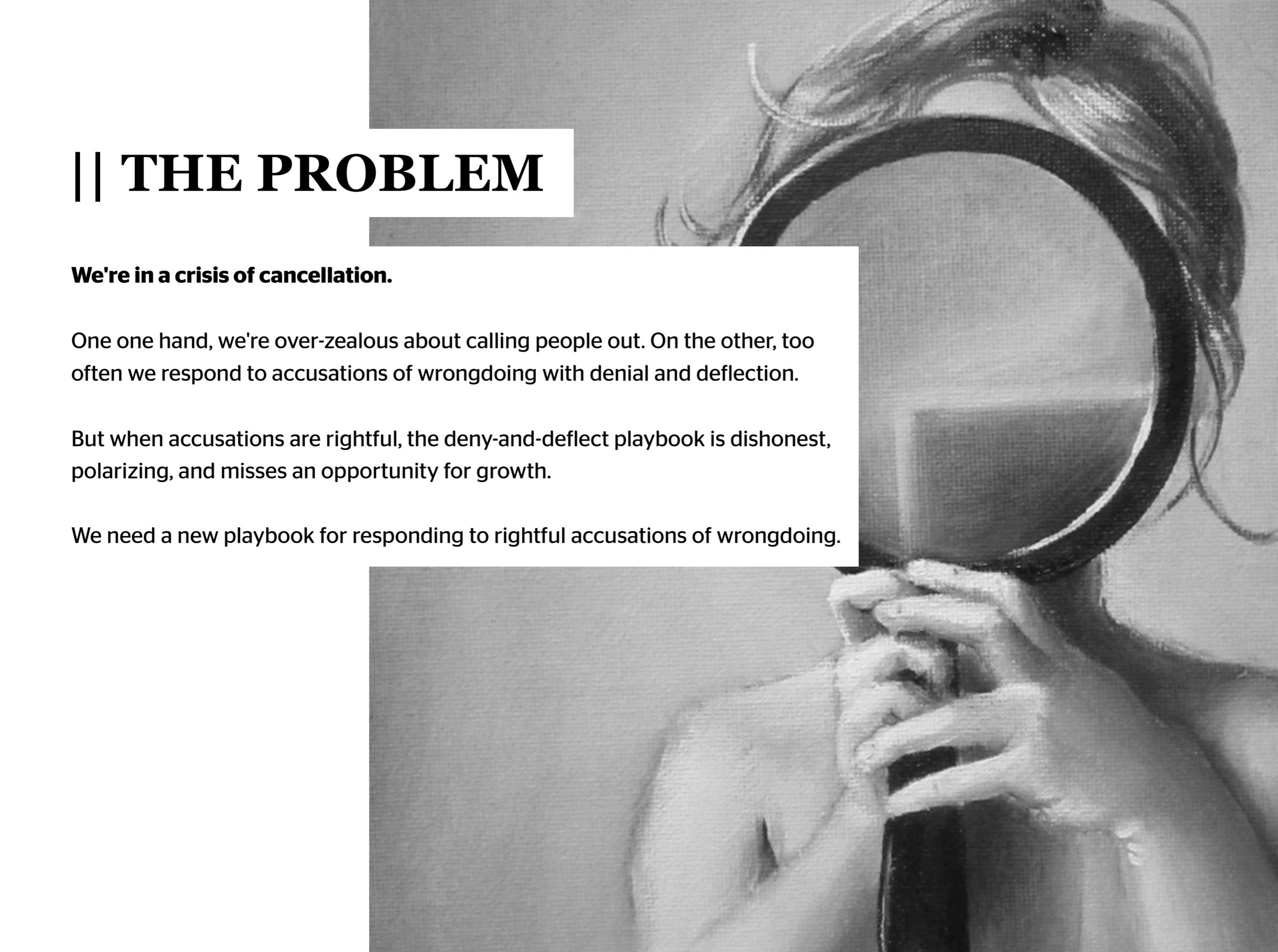
|| THE PROBLEM

We're in a crisis of cancellation.

One one hand, we're over-zealous about calling people out. On the other, too often we respond to accusations of wrongdoing with denial and deflection.

But when accusations are rightful, the deny-and-deflect playbook is dishonest, polarizing, and misses an opportunity for growth.

We need a new playbook for responding to rightful accusations of wrongdoing.

|| THE RESOLUTION

Our new playbook must be more beautiful and powerful than deny-and-deflect.

It must make critical self-reflection look stunning — so that we're moved to do it, and our public figures are moved to do it, and we make room for each other to do it.

Because we live so much of our lives in public, we need more room to be wrong, learn, change, and redeem ourselves in public.

We need more room to grow in public.

DEEP RECKONINGS

is a series of explicitly-marked deepfake videos

that imagine public figures having a reckoning

|| THE GENESIS

Deep Reckonings (www.deepreckonings.com) uses explicitly-marked deepfakes to imagine morally courageous versions of Mark Zuckerberg, Brett Kavanaugh, Alex Jones, and Donald Trump.

The videos make explicit that they're fake, and the project exists in dialogue with the broader conversation about the ethics of synthetic media. Deep Reckonings seeks not to deceive nor demean, but to imagine and inspire. In this spirit, the series explores the question: *how might we use our synthetic selves to elicit our better angels?*

Or more simply: how might we deepfake it 'til we make it?
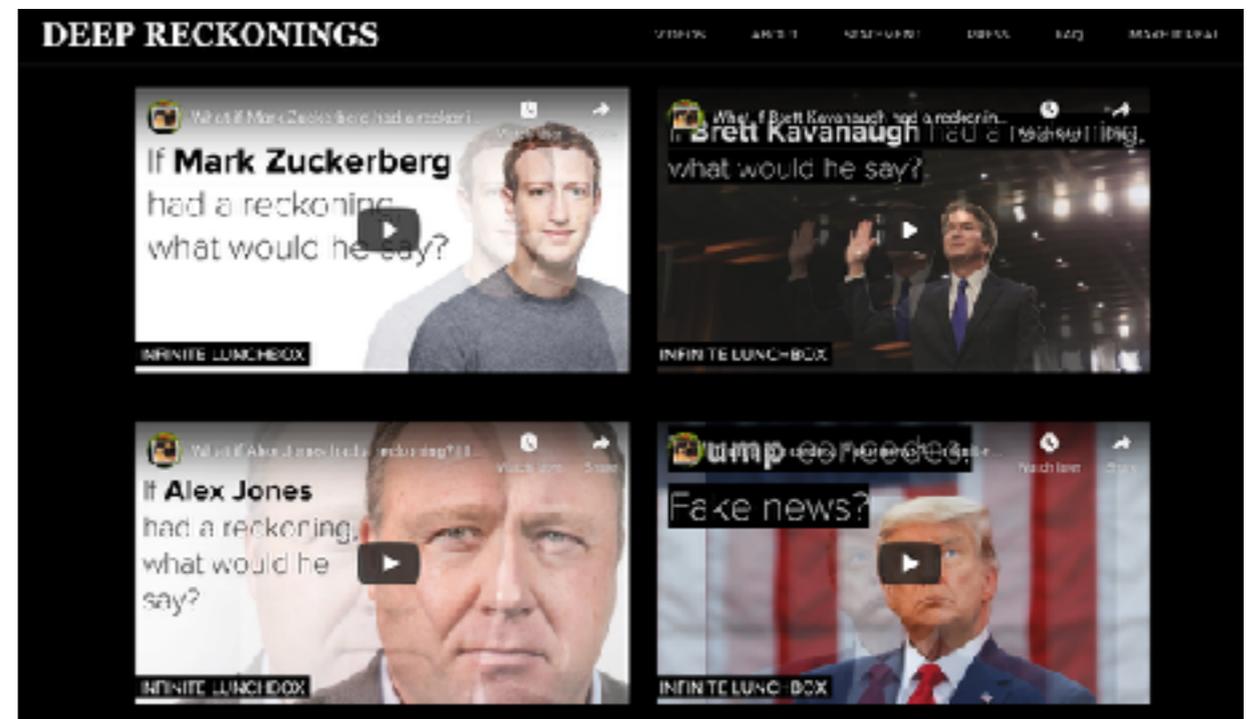
|| WISHFUL SPEAKING

'I was naive about Russian interference in the 2016 election, and I'm still being naive about domestic interference in 2020.'

'Whatever we might think about my confirmation process, there's a bigger process of social progress that I want us to celebrate and support.'

'I said I was David fighting Goliath, but I just became Goliath.'

'I don't even know what I'm winning for. But I need to win... even if it means tearing the country apart.'

|| THE CONCEPT

Deep Reckonings was originally conceived as a discrete work. But the most common question asked about the series — including by The New York Times' tech columnist Kevin Roose — is: *who's next?*

The concept is to turn Deep Reckonings into an ongoing series, in dialogue with the news cycle.

New episodes will be released on a regular cadence. Protagonists may come from politics, entertainment, and other domains. Some protagonists will be chosen for their evergreen relevance, while others will have suddenly entered the spotlight. Along with individual protagonists, episodes may feature imaginary dialogues between protagonists, such as Al Franken and Kirsten Gillibrand or Justin Timberlake and Britney Spears. Protagonists may even include fictional characters as an artful way to make the deepfakery explicit, for example the ghost of Rush Limbaugh or the Pope in dialogue with Jesus.
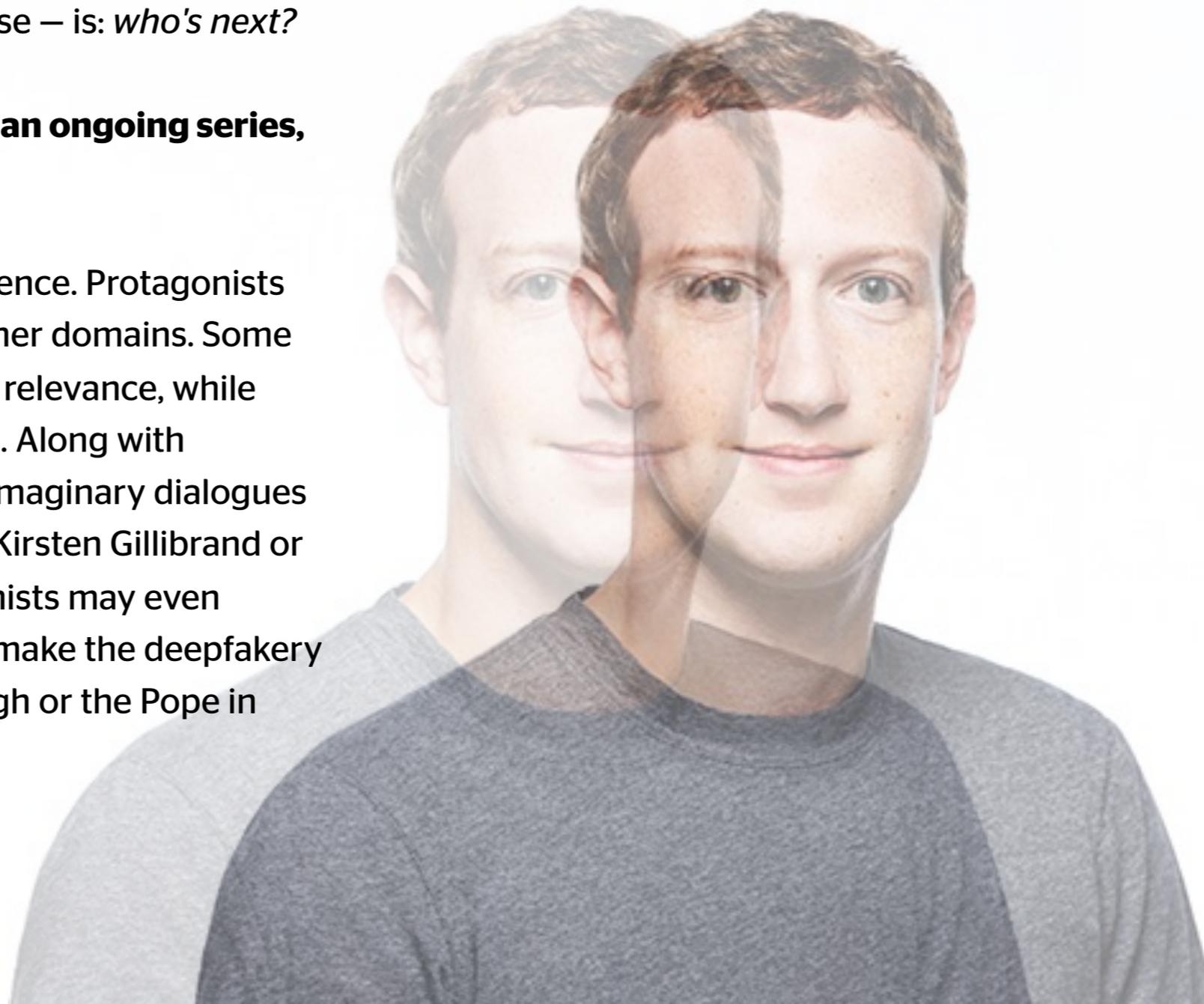
|| POTENTIAL PROTAGONISTS

POLITICS
Mitch McConnell
Mike Pence
Al Franken & Kirsten
Gillibrand

ENTERTAINMENT
Louis CK
Kanye West
Justin Timberlake &
Britney Spears

MEDIA
The ghost of Rush
Limbaugh
Jordan Peterson
Charlie Rose

OTHER
Mark Zuckerberg (redux)
Pope Francis
Bill Gates

|| THE TWIST

As a twist on the original concept, the deepfake videos can be sent to their protagonist before their release, with a compassionate provocation: *would you like to do the real thing, or shall we release the fake one?*

If a protagonist is ready to do the real thing, we'll help them produce it in a responsible way. If not, we'll deepfake it til we make it.

In this way, Deep Reckonings will be a singular mashup of fake and real — some episodes will be deepfakes, while others will be actual reckonings.

|| THE OPPORTUNITY

Deep Reckonings is looking for the right, forward-thinking partners to bring the series to life. Partners will possess both soul and substance: a willingness to be compassionate and also provocative — culturally, technologically, and politically.

The series can live on a diversity of mediums — from a digital media site, to a streaming service, to a physical installation.

Talks with potential partners are currently underway.

|| TESTIMONIALS

"Lepp decided to deepfake the kind of honest public grappling that Zuckerberg, Kavanaugh, and Jones will probably never be capable of. But what if they were? What if all of us were capable of such courage?"
—Anand Giridharadas, editor-at-large for TIME and on-air political analyst for MSNBC

"It is such a balm, inhabiting these fictional places in which the crises that haunt me today are being addressed -- painfully, imperfectly, but still: confronted rather than being left to fester."
—Cory Doctorow, former editor of Boing Boing

"Sometimes all we need to imagine a better world is to see it faked convincingly."
—Michael Garfield, FUTURE FOSSILS

"There is something manifestly hypnotic in each of these reckonings."
—Steve Heller, PRINT Magazine

"Brilliant."
—Advisor at Kleiner Perkins

|| CALL-OUT TO CALL-IN

We create the stories that create us.

We create stories that are hateful and deceptive, exacerbating public health crises and motivating political violence. We also create stories that are compassionate and *purposefully* fictional: virtual reality therapy has been used to heal disorders from PTSD to chronic pain, and psychodrama uses fictional role-play to prepare us for hypothetical futures.

According to psychiatrist and scholar Iain McGilchrist, "it's not that we create reality, and it's not that reality independently exists from us. We midwife reality into being." Let's midwife a more stunning reality into being.

Let's create stories that will help us evolve from calling-out to calling-in.

|| BIO

Stephanie Lepp is the daughter of a software entrepreneur and an artist-turned-yogi, and a graduate of Stanford and UC Berkeley. Her professional experience includes digital engagement for a successful independent gubernatorial campaign, movement entrepreneurship at a McKinsey-fueled boutique consultancy, and scaling DAYBREAKER from an NYC-based morning dance party into a global dance movement.

Today, **Stephanie is a producer whose work strives to** *hold up a mirror* **— inviting us to grow from what we see.** Infinite Lunchbox is her studio for socially-engaged media.

Thank you.

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