

The Cult of Truth – Synopsis

Frank Bone, a young indie journalist in his 20s who prides himself on always working alone, finds himself infiltrating a gang's drug operation incognito in his city's dank outskirts. When the drug shipment arrives, things go awry and Frank is exposed as a rat. He barely escapes with his life.

Upon returning to his apartment, Frank publishes his story about the gang activity to his website. He is soon confronted by his landlady and she reminds him that he's behind in his rent and threatens to kick him and Willy, his depressed younger brother who lives with him, out of their apartment. Frank, facing eviction and meager ad revenue through his site, is distressed over his financial situation. He then receives a call from a large non-profit news organization, Indie Fire. They want to meet with him about a job offer that promises unprecedented freedom and exposure as an investigative journalist, a hefty salary and a generous signing bonus. However, he must first complete a story for Indie Fire by himself about the shady activities of a corporation, called Country Bird.

Frank takes up the assignment. He attempts to get the story on Country Bird the following day but fails and returns home. Upon arriving home, he discovers that Willy has attempted suicide. Luckily, he didn't overdose and Frank manages to wake him. Willy is remorseful and states that he now knows what to do.

The next day, Frank re-attempts to get the story on Country Bird. He manages to gain access to a key presentation but is soon outed as a spy. A kindly seeming older man, Mr. Searing, intervenes in Frank's predicament, introduces himself and a mysterious organization he's founded, called Searing Truth. Mr. Searing also allows Frank to escape. At home, Frank decides to attend a Searing Truth guest event.

At the event, Mr. Searing gives a rousing speech and allows members to share how much money they've contributed to the organization. Surprisingly, Willy happens to be one of the members and reveals that he's also given a large amount of money to the organization. Frank drills Willy about the money outside the auditorium but Willy is resolute.

Consequently, Frank decides to investigate Searing Truth instead of Country Bird with Indie Fire's permission. The next day, Frank visits the Searing Truth headquarters and asks to become a member. In order to become a member, Frank undergoes an inoculation of what the organization calls an anti-stress vaccine. He is then shown an introductory video about the organization with other prospective members. However, due to the effects of the so-called anti-stress vaccine, Frank has a hallucinatory-like experience that makes the message of the video uncannily persuasive. Frank is able to fight off the attempted brainwashing by frantically reciting a journalist creed. After the video, all the newly brainwashed members and Frank are invited to a big members-only event that evening. Frank is now fully determined to put an end to Searing Truth.

A strange meeting with Mr. Searing inspires Frank to form a team of other talented young people, who've been contacting him over the past few days, to pull off a live online broadcast to expose the organization. The assembled team infiltrates Searing Truth's members-only event but a diversion by Frank backfires. Mr. Searing then threatens to reveal Frank's real identity to his enemies and has Frank locked in a back room, incapable of communicating with his new team.

However, the team continues their mission and their live online broadcast gets the attention of the city's sheriff and statesmen who ultimately confront Mr. Searing. The sheriff tells Mr. Searing that he's under arrest but Mr. Searing runs away. Mr. Searing attempts to escape with the swindled money but is confronted by his now confused members who start to realize they've been duped and chase after him. Mr. Searing ultimately surrenders to the police and leaves in their custody.

By working with a team and not getting the story by himself as Indie Fire requested, Frank fails Indie Fire's assignment and their job offer is rescinded. But Frank doesn't mind. He now has success and happiness as part of a team.