



Saul Dennis · 5 min read · Apr 17, 2025



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Donald Trump, Meet Jud Hammond.

A 1930's, Hollywood Fascist fantasy inspires an alternative vision for the Trump regime.





Ever since Donald Trump's 2024 victory, a film's been rattling around my head — an obscure film I saw in college many years ago. Until recently, I'd never met another human being who'd heard of *Gabriel Over the White House*, let alone seen it. Made in 1932, and released the following year, the movie was directed by Gregory La Cava and stars Walter Houston and Franchot Tone.

Truth is, *Gabriel Over the White House*, may not be as obscure as I think. In 2018, inspired by Trump's first term in office, Jeff Greenfield wrote about the film in Politico. Here's a link to that very interesting piece:

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/03/25/gabriel-over-the-white-house-fdr-inauguration-217349/>

One thing, though. Mr. Greenfield ends by saying that the guardrails that have prevented presidents from ruling as autocrats in the past will protect democracy today — today being 2018. In 2025, that faith seems tragically misplaced.

Now, before we go further, it will help to know what actually happens in *Gabriel Over the White House*. Here's goes:

It's 1932. America is racked by the Depression and Judson (Jud) Hammond has just been inaugurated President. Hammond, played by Walter Houston, is a feckless, glad-handing, empty suit, surrounded by the rich, powerful men who got him elected. *"What about when the people realize I'm not going to keep any of my promises."*, he says with a grin. *"You'll be long gone by then."*, the fat cat reassures.

In his first days in office, Hammond casually dismisses raging unemployment and crime as local problems, none of his concern.

One day, while racing his own police escort, Hammond plunges his car off the road. The accident leaves the President in a coma. Unconscious in bed at the White House, Hammond's time seems short. Suddenly, a gentle breeze billows the curtains of an open window. Hammond is bathed in a warm glow. In some unknowable distance, a horn blows softly. (You got it. The Angel Gabriel.)

Cut to Hammond awake, a changed — and charged — man. With John Brown-like intensity, the new Jud Hammond is a champion of the little guy, of fairness, of work for those who need it, of government as an engine of the greater good. In short, a champion of an un-named New Deal. (Backed by money from William Randolph Hearst, the film was an unabashed plea for President-Elect Franklin Roosevelt to rule as a dictator if Congress and the Courts stood in the way.)

"I've read the Constitution...As President, I have quite a bit of power." That's Hammond, in a joint session of Congress. In short order, he uses the threat

of martial law to force Congress to adjourn itself, indefinitely. Meeting with an army of the unemployed. Creating WPA-like projects. Tackling immigrant-driven crime with summary executions — at the Statue of Liberty, no less. The new Jud Hammond can't be stopped, literally. (Curiously, Hammond's issue with bootlegging isn't criminality. It's cash flow. He wants the government in on the action.)

Hammond turns his attention to the nation's finances. He's obsessed with the debt owed the US by our Great War allies. Hammond threatens the nations of the world with destruction from the air. All must disarm, immediately. The monies saved will be given to the US to pay back debts. With our Treasury coffers sufficiently topped, America will now guarantee world peace — or else.

All that. In just 86 minutes. No wonder the film ends with Hammond collapsing as world leaders gather to sign his peace deal. Another breeze. An ethereal glow. An ever-so-mournful horn in the distance and America's martyr dictator departs for the beyond.

The power of perverse parallels.

The fictional story of Jud Hammond and the reality of Donald Trump are, in many ways, fun house mirror reflections of each other. Distorted. And damning.

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Hammond doesn't govern. He rules. As a dictator. Trump, armed with lawless executive orders and a Republican Congress that has adjourned its duty seeks the same.

For Hammond, illicit alcohol is an excuse to trample law, due-process. For Trump, fentanyl serves the same purpose.

Hammond wants to rid the country of 'immigrant crime' — Italian organized crime. Trump wants to rid the country of 'immigrant crime' — Latin American drug gangs.

Hammond believes America's allies are ripping her off by not paying their war debts. Trump believes America's allies are ripping her off by not paying enough for their own defense.

Hell, both men have a penchant for nicknames.

Lastly, divine intervention plays a critical role in both men's the story.

For Hammond, it offers a perverse kind of redemption.

For Trump, a bloody ear in rural Pennsylvania supercharges the MAGA mantra that he is, indeed, God's instrument.

God's instrument. Hmm...Makes you wonder. Quite a few people who voted for the current President are experiencing a bit of buyer's remorse. Perhaps the divinity that helped The Donald dodge a bullet feels the same. In that case, it might be time for another intervention:

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Hi and thanks for reading this far. As far as I can tell, screenplay format is not a seamless fit for Medium. Please use your scroll bar to page through what follows. It works better. Thanks, again.

INT. WHITE HOUSE OVAL OFFICE — PRESENT DAY — DAYTIME

The President's inner sanctum, from our shared imagination. American flags line the space, standing guard. Tall windows face the mature trees of the Great Lawn. In front of the windows, the oaken mass of Resolute desk, the President's desk. Opposite the desk are two large couches, separated by a low-slung table. End tables and armchairs dot the space, all held together by a large oval rug. The look is traditional. What's going on is anything but.

PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP

sits behind his desk, leaning back and looking up at a wall-mounted TV. He's got a TV remote control in one hand, a partially eaten hamburger in the other.

MOVING CLOSER

We see and hear FOX news anchors fawning over something the President has done. Trump smiles and grunts approvingly to himself.

STEPHEN MILLER

Trump's Deputy Chief of Staff, sits on a couch hunched over an end table.

CLOSER IN

Miller is gleefully playing with a diorama of a guillotine scene from some moment in French history. Whispering cruelly to himself, he moves tiny figurines here and there, pretends to march the next victim up the stairs and into place, makes a childish squeal of delight as the blade falls and a head rolls.

ACROSS FROM MILLER, ELON MUSK AND RFK, JR

sit side by side on another couch, their attention focused on an open laptop.

MUSK
(excited, pointing with
his fingers)
Just hover the cursor and, wallah,
they're fired.

2.

SUDDENLY, A DOOR CLOSSES LOUDLY:
 TRUMP, MILLER, RFK AND MUSK TURN THEIR HEADS TO THE SOUND
 A MAN STANDS CALMLY NEAR THE CENTER OF THE ROOM. THIS

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Gentlemen-

STEPHEN MILLER
 (aghast at the intrusion,
 rising)
 -Who the hell? How did you get in
 here?

WRATH OF GOD
 (calm, without missing a
 beat)
 I'll get to *who*...As for *how*, I
 don't know, you have been doing a
 lot of firing.

STEPHEN MILLER
 (reaching for a landline
 phone handset)
 Ridiculous. I'm calling security.

Without a bit of menace, the Wrath of God steps towards
 Miller.

STEPHEN MILLER
 (spastic, scared, holding
 the handset like hammer)
 Get away from me.

The Wrath of God gently but firmly takes the phone from
 Miller, placing it back in its cradle.

WRATH OF GOD
 Why don't you sit down.

As if by command, Miller sits back down on the couch.

3.

ACROSS THE, MUSK IS HAVING NONE OF IT

He jumps up from the couch, much like he did at that Trump campaign rally. Crouching, he raises his fists, preparing to fight.

MUSK
(excited)
Watch it. I could have taken that twerp Zuckerberg, if he hadn't chickened out.

With the smallest wave of his hand, the Wrath of God gently makes Musk collapse into an unconscious heap.

RFK, JR. MAKES A STAMMERING MOVE

to get up, then thinks the better of it. Another wave of his hand and the RFK, Jr. is unconscious, too. Glancing at Miller, the Wrath of God nods and Miller is out cold.

THAT'S ENOUGH!:

AT HIS DESK, TRUMP RISES, PISSED

DONALD TRUMP
Enough. Magic tricks? You think I've never been to Vegas? Who are you? What do you want?

The Wrath of God sits in straight-back armchair across from Trump.

WRATH OF GOD
I...am the Wrath of God...
Officially, *The Wrath of God Made Flesh*, but that gets a little wordy, don't you think? Mr. Trump, you and I are going to have a chat.
Sit.

Not budging, Trump gives his best mug-shot scowl. The Wrath of God nods his head in the direction of the slumped over men, wordlessly saying *You want to think about that?*

Trump sits, smiling weakly.

WRATH OF GOD

Very good...CASUALLY BRUSHING HIS
PANT LEG...You know, they laugh
you, behind your back...MOTIONING
TO THE UNCONSCIOUS MEN... These
clowns...MOTIONING TO RFK, JR...
Well, maybe not *that* clown...But
they do...They, and the tech
bros...the bankers...the White
Nationalist knuckle-heads...Even
the folks at Fox...SEEING TRUMP'S
FACE FALL...Really. When you're not
around, they call you President
Chump...

Trump silently mouths *President Chump*, not getting it.

WRATH OF GOD

(helping Trump think it
through)

It rhymes with someone's last name.

Trump's face flashes angry recognition, *hey!*

WRATH OF GOD

(insincere, indignant)

I know. It hurts...They're using
you...Using *your* larger-than-life
hold on the American public to do
awful things. Things that, in the
end, you'll take the blame for.
Donald, you've got to stop.

DONALD TRUMP

That's President Trump...And what
if I don't think what I'm doing so
awful?...

THE WRATH OF GOD

My boss has considered this.

DONALD TRUMP

What? You gonna kill me with one of
your tricks? I mean, hell, Mr.
Wrath of Whatever – WRATH MOUTHS
GOD – Where were you for all the
other awful people out there..
Hitler?...or..who was the other
one...with a moustache?

WRATH OF GOD

Stalin? Saddam? Pinochet? There are a lot awful moustaches out there...Look, we spoke to all of them...the tyrants..the dictators...the ones who were just plain dicks. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't...Here's the thing, my boss has real thing about you humans and your free will... CONSPIRATORIALLY...Between us, I don't think it's worked out so well...But he is the boss...LEANING BACK...So, no... I'm not going to kill you. But really - why go there...SHAKING HIS HEAD...Donald, Donald, Donald - do you really want to go down as the most hated President in history? The most hated man in history?

DONALD TRUMP

Hated, feared...That's real leadership.

The Wrath of God rises, walking around the room. He casually handles objects, small sculptures, busts of past presidents.

THE WRATH OF GOD

Oh, you talk a good game, but we both know the *real* ratings are in being revered. Loved. Admired. I mean, how many people read *Mein Kampf* as compared to watch *The Apprentice*?

Trump gesture towards Wrath, *you watched The Apprentice?*THE

WRATH OF GOD

You bet. And if you used your power for good...Well, there's no telling how big you could get...Think about...The man who really tackled Climate Change...The guy who took on the Elites, *for real*...Who called out a rigged economy for what is is, and made it work for everybody...Who looked racism right in the eye and "uh-uh, not on my watch"...GENTLY PICKING UP A BUST OF LINCOLN...Why, by the time you got done, no one's even going to remember all those other guys...

DONALD TRUMP

Yeah, but I don't believe in any of those things...

WRATH OF GOD

(a slight laugh)

Believe? Donald, you don't believe in anything – except Donald. And money. And I'm talking about the grift of a lifetime.

DONALD TRUMP

Go on...

WRATH OF GOD

Think about it...You save America, and the world...use your awful genius as a force for good...No one is going to mess with you...Your base? They will become *the* base...Not 50%. The whole darn country...And that country is not going to settle for you leaving in four years...Good-bye 22nd Amendment... RESPONDING TO TRUMP'S UNCOMPREHENDING LOOK...The one that say you can only serve two terms...Hello President *for life* That's a lot of time corruption... for your hand out and money coming in...And the people will be more than happy for you to take your cut...

Trump leans back in his chair, wrapping his head around the idea.

DONALD TRUMP

For life...GESTURING TO MUSK, MILLER AND RFK,F...But what about these guys, all the others? What are they going to do when I do all this?

WRATH OF GOD

What are they going to do? Exactly what they've done. Take a knee and shut up...

Trump smiles to himself. He knows it's true.

7.

DONALD TRUMP

OK. But how to I explain this to my followers...Those idiots really believe this shit. What do I say to them?

WRATH OF GOD

Wait. I am hearing this right? Donald J. Trump is asking how he explains himself...to anybody? When you send back a steak because it's not overcooked like the 9th circle of hell, do you explain yourself?

DONALD TRUMP

Hell, no.

THE WRATH OF GOD

Hell, yes. If anyone asks, you just say this how you're making America great again from now on – got a *problem with that?*

DONALD TRUMP

I get it. I get it.

Suddenly Trump straightens, angry.

DONALD TRUMP

Wait...What I am saying? This is a con. You're here to con *me*. I can't believe it. I almost went for it....Christ–

On *Christ*, the Wrath of God gives Trump a look "*really?*"

DONALD TRUMP

–Ripping off America has been so easy, I'm loosing my touch..going soft...Well, Mr. Wrath of Whatever, it's not happening...Tell your boss no deal...

With a theatrical sigh, the Wrath of God gently puts down the bust of Lincoln, walks back to the chair and sits.

WRATH OF GOD

You got me. Me con you..What was I thinking...SLUMPING, HUMOROUSLY DEJECTED, CROSSING HIS ARMS...There is no getting one past you... But...BRIGHTENING, SITTING UP..What did you say?...Those other idiots...they really...believe...

The Wrath of God rises, walks around the room, talking as much to himself as Trump.

WRATH OF GOD

Maybe I have chat with Mike Johnson. The Speaker is always making a show of what a Christian he is...SMILING MORE...Can you imagine when he finds out that the guy who really is his boss is very disappointed...Why, the Republican Congress will be howling separation of powers...Or maybe Majorie Taylor Greene...When she learns the universe really is run by an old, Jewish – OK, part Jewish – guy, and he's got way more than space lasers ...TURNING TO TRUMP... Impeachment... And I don't think three will be a charm...

With a jaunty salute to Trump, the Wrath of God heads for the office door, to leave.

WRATH OF GOD

(a spring in his step)
No. There is no fooling you...TO HIMSELF...There's always Clarence...What wouldn't he do for a bigger RV?...

DONALD TRUMP

(nervous)
Wait! You made your point.

Wrath takes his hand off the door knob, smiling to himself.

DONALD TRUMP

(a little pathetic)
Here's the thing...All this good you want me to do...You're talking honor... honesty...
(MORE)

DONALD TRUMP (CONT'D)
integrity...courage...I've got
none...

WRATH OF GOD
Hey, you got a thesaurus back
there?...SOFTENING, COMING CLOSER
TO TRUMP...You're right, you've
got none of those qualities...No
qualities at all, come to think of
it..That's why we're going to do it
together...LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN...
with a little help from you know
who. It will be our little secret.

DONALD TRUMP
(grumpy, knowing he's
beaten)
What's next?

THE WRATH OF GOD
Well...MOTIONING TO UNCONSCIOUS
MEN..first, I'll clean up this
mess...Then you need to get ready
for a news conference. It's gonna
be a doozy...

DONALD TRUMP
Hey, one thing...If we're going to
work together, I need to call you
something...The Wrath of God is a
mouthful...a nickname...something.

THE WRATH OF GOD
You've got point... THINKING...How
about...Bob? Simple. Fast. Easy to
remember.

DONALD TRUMP
Bob. Yeah...Bob...

THE WRATH OF GOD
(breaking the 4th wall
with a mischievous
smile)
Bob. As in Beelze-bob...

CUT TO BLACK: