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The Influence of Masks on Behavior and its Consequences:  
Panopticism and Neoliberalism in *Below Deck Down Under*

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## ABSTRACT

This piece discusses how the *Below Deck Down Under* production crew promotes destructive behavior and cuts clips that promote unsettling moments to create a reality show an audience wants to watch. In the show, many factors influence how each star decides to act while they are working for guests on the yacht versus when they are working strictly for the camera crew, on a night out. Camera crews and hidden cameras create a panoptic environment that allows the audience to judge each star on how they react to each situation, especially when decisions are made only in the interest of the individual. The neoliberal nature of two crew members causes harm to the rest of the crew, leading to extreme measures to be taken that seem to be in the interest of the crew. The panoptic neoliberal views in the show encourage the audience to watch out for the entertainers who are not entirely focused on making money to further their power in their current group rather than furthering their power in our self-motivated society. However, the question remains if the decisions chosen were to help crewmembers, the reputation of the captain, or the production company. With eyes watching constantly, it is hard to understand the nature of everyone's choices and if they are making each decision knowing there will be a larger audience watching every moment, that is entertaining enough to make the final cut, later on.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Reality television production companies work to find individuals that will entertain their audience. They want to film people who are not afraid to speak their minds, will stand up for their ideas, and will be emotional while the camera is on them. With cameras filming an individual's every move, it is hard to hide the true motives one may have, leading to an unearthing of one's character. A larger audience, from being on television, leads to more scrutiny from the media and public. Constant oversight while being on a reality television show, due to a desire to maximize one's earnings and fame, creates an environment that can make or break an individual's reputation based on the way they act, how they are portrayed by producers, and how the audience reacts to the decisions that are made.

On reality television, reality stars sign contracts granting camera crews access to their daily lives. Usually, these crews are only interested in the drama of daily life, but sometimes they want to see more. Sometimes these crews may even place hidden cameras in a person's home to catch every moment of the star's life. Panopticism is inspired by Bentham's prison design, the Panopticon, and looks at the visible and unverifiable methods of watching individuals. His prison design featured cells encircling a watch tower that allowed guards to watch inmates, while inmates did not know if and when they were being watched. Foucault theorized that while inmates were unsure if they were being monitored, they would constantly discipline themselves as if they were. Panopticism then describes that while people may not know exactly when they are being watched, they assume they are being watched, leading them to discipline themselves and act a certain way. With the possible discipline that can come from their actions being recorded and broadcasted to a larger audience if a person is on a reality show, individuals demonstrate submissive behavior, in situations they would not normally, to avoid consequences from the media and public. However, certain obstacles— such as a lack of food or sleep, a lack of distinction between work and personal life, and the ingestion of mind-altering substances— can lead to a breakdown

of the submissive mask that changes the way individuals respond to others' actions. With a television audience, each dramatic moment caught on camera is taken advantage of by the production company to create more viewership, and *Below Deck* has hidden cameras in each crewmember's cabin that ensure they do not miss a heightened moment.

Neoliberalism is an ideology created by conservative individuals that suggests that deregulating economic institutions creates a positive effect on individuals who are motivated enough to strive for economic success. This method of self-maximization increases personal fiscal gain through nontypical means; self-maximizing means disregarding previously instated norms to prioritize individual success. Self-maximizing is taking every aspect of one's life and monetizing it to increase self-value extrinsically for a higher recognition from others in power and with money. Self-maximization can be demonstrated by situations such as signing up to be a reality television star. Both the production company and the individuals in the production can be neoliberal; the production companies find entertainers they can record to increase the profits of their work, while entertainers focus on maximizing their image monetization from a show and through opportunities afterward. Neoliberalism forces the people to work harder for their benefit. On *Below Deck*, the production company works to find and create a crew of attractive single individuals who are willing to work and live together for a few months, which they are hoping leads to drama that can be recorded and used to entertain an audience. The more intense moments that can be caught on camera lead to more viewership, which leads to more money in the production team's pocket. On the other hand, crewmembers earn money from working on the ship, as well as from being on the show, while hoping that afterward, they can gain enough followers on social media to be paid to post advertisements for more money. With neoliberal motives from the production company and the individuals agreeing to be on the show, it makes it easy to create an environment that praises drama that could be and is usually avoided in day-to-day life.

### Someone Is Always Watching

Panopticism wants to understand whether or not people will act a certain way if there is a possibility someone in power will be watching them and discipline them if they make a wrong choice. Michel Foucault elaborated on the idea of panopticism from Jeremy Bentham's prison design, the Panopticon. In this design, the prison walls are arranged in a circular shape and composed of prison cells. The cells are transparent on both sides which allows for the inmates to always have a possibility of being seen from the inside and outside, no matter the time of day. In the middle of the circle of cells, there stands a watch tower where a guard stands and can see into every cell. The guards always have the possibility of watching, but inmates cannot tell whether or not they are watched. Since they cannot tell when a guard is watching, inmates are forced to self-discipline themselves with the threat of constant surveillance and consequences for acting otherwise. Because of "Big Brother" the prisoners act in a way that is accepted by the guards to avoid negative consequences.

When Foucault explains panopticism, he compares the prison design to an individual's mode of self-governance in everyday life. Panopticism focuses on how people are always being watched, especially by the people higher than them in the social structure, which forces people to behave in a certain way. The people in higher positions create a capillary-like network that provides discipline for the actions each individual takes. The normalization of certain actions establishes right and wrong in society, which then provides a framework for what actions deserve discipline. The group or person in power, known as the sovereign power, can be disciplined by bureaucratic procedures that disagree with what the sovereign power thinks is acceptable, and allows a new sovereign power to reign. To keep a power dynamic, individuals must respect discipline in their lives, like in the panopticon. It works because no one knows when exactly they are watched, but they know there is a chance that someone is always watching. Essentially, individuals constantly feel like they are being watched, but they do not know exactly when which makes the situation visible, but unverifiable. The people's truth assumes they are constantly

watched sustains the power system in society. The feeling of always being watched by an honest entity, usually of a religious nature, helps define new truths for individuals by forcing them to make certain decisions and figure out a new way to act and manage these relationships. All of these situations cause individuals to portray themselves differently because the guards may be watching.

While being watched, people strive to portray themselves differently, in a more positive light. Individuals have the option to put on different persona which can create new opportunities in the world around them and Bruce Baer Arnold, innovation law professor at the University of Canberra, discusses how masks create animosity and privilege. The body holds an individual's true soul captive and sometimes hinders the soul from showing itself. When someone wants to gain acceptance from the people around them, they rely on this mask to increase their chances of fitting in. The individual then enjoys the perks of their new social status while avoiding some of the responsibilities they owe themselves. If individuals are successful in keeping their masks on, they have created a new identity where they control the narrative since they have "anonymization" while appearing to be genuine (Arnold). However, the individual needs to be able to maneuver their mask per society's changing norms to continue to appear genuine and remain under the radar. While self-discipline happens often in everyday life, Diaz-Bone compares traditional panopticism to statistical panopticism, when mentioning the difficulty of tracking the acceptability of certain actions. Statistical panopticism discusses how actions deemed acceptable in our society are hard to monitor "in modern societies" because of changing social expectations (Diaz-Bone). Creating parameters and monitoring what is acceptable and what is not is impossible because socially acceptable actions are not black and white and change from culture to culture. With social media and other interactive platforms, there are places for more points of view to be discussed, which can quickly change what is acceptable and unacceptable in a specific culture. However, the idea of what is acceptable changes with recent events and social issues, from group to group, and can be hidden by individuals wearing masks in public to hide their instinctual actions, which is what makes it hard to designate specific parameters of what is socially acceptable and track how people truly would react to social situations.



These parameters are hard to monitor and modernize with ever-changing acceptable behaviors in one culture, and a wide range of acceptable behaviors across different cultures. Even though individuals are still surveilled, their actions become difficult to track because of the differences in accepted behavior. This discredits statistical panopticism, and some theorist's views of panopticism as a whole because of behavior's inability to be monitored and analyzed. It proves people are constantly changing to fit the mold of what is accepted by society, suggesting everyone is masking their true intentions to be accepted by others. However, because actions society accepts are forever changing and unable to be tracked, at the moment, does not discredit this idea; while constantly learning about the world and the points of view in it, individuals can change their ways of thinking to mirror society and act in genuine ways that are reflected by changes in behavior with and without a mask.

Numerical panopticism discusses how there is a group in power that determines what is accepted in society. Through numerical panopticism, Hamman discusses the effect the lack of panoptic statistics has on power. By controlling people based on the majority agreement, the people in power assume their decision, based on the majority, will foster more acceptance. However, without reliable data to create the idea of the majority, it becomes difficult to understand how this majority is being represented. Through numerical panopticism, entities are encouraged to bring more diverse people into their group to increase a variety of points of view and their influence on society. By putting people from diverse backgrounds in these groups of power, each individual continues to watch others around them, which makes everyone equal parts "observer and observed" (Hamman). The new additions have different norms that lead to a revision of accepted activities, which then changes disciplinable offenses, and reorganizes the entity. The sovereign power may still be viewed as the head of the entity, but each higher power continues to be observed and held accountable by the individuals who make up the collective.

### Neoliberalism's Connection to Panopticism

Neoliberalism furthers the idea that the government watches over everyone in the economy but pushes for a lack of economic oversight to push for individuality-driven success. Although neoliberalism encourages individuals to be fiscally self-maximizing, it can lead to extreme self-maximizing behavior in all areas of their lives that can hurt other individuals around them. For example, production companies will take the opportunity to record people's drama-filled lives for the potential of more viewers while exploiting every embarrassing, overly aggressive, and emotional moment that could hurt an individual's image. On the other hand, stars sign over their privacy rights to participate in reality shows in hopes of furthering their fame and fortune. Neoliberal behavior can cause individuals to make every aspect of their lives profitable, whether it be for better or worse.

Brown discusses neoliberalism as individual economic actions connecting to the world's economic situation. While neoliberalism may seem like a simply self-motivating idea, Brown discusses how it would likely change a democratic government into a capitalist government. While an individual works hard for their success, this success turns into political gain because of the current democracy's attention toward economic success. Even though democracy means "ruled by the people," there is and has always been "ambiguity and dispute" as to who the "people" are (Brown 19). For an individual to feel like they have power in the modern democratic government, they feel like they need money to have a voice. Earning the most money possible allows individuals to be a part of the upper class that rules the major intuitions that rule the political spectrum; inherently this motivates everyone to perform at a higher level, earn more money, and be a part of this elite even though it is likely they will never get there. Going to the most prestigious university, gaining the most advanced degree, and applying for a promotion are all examples of relatable neoliberal avenues average individuals take. By participating in each of these activities, an individual is hoping to work for more money. Money is a driving force for the economy and politics because most of our society desires success and more money is seen as equal to more success.

Because money is always a focal point, certain cultural events, seemingly, make constant surveillance more justified. To secure constant growth and maximization for citizens who are a part of the majority, cultures will focus more negative attention on the groups of people who have been negatively stereotyped. When negative stereotypes occur, the state surveils smaller groups because of past traumas in a culture. Some minority groups are less likely to be trusted and they do not own the authorship of their lives and actions they take because of past social traumas. A stereotype creates a narrative of an individual, then enabling false assumptions to be made. These situations then divert attention away from the people who are the problem. An example of this could be Muslim individuals in an airport after 9/11; TSA may search their bags more thoroughly while white people walk through with a less intensive search (Giroux). Instead of being assumed to be innocent, Muslim individuals must prove they are not guilty, while most white people are subject to proving the opposite. The individuals without “authorship” are being forced into acting in certain ways to ensure their safety, while the individuals with authorship are left to live more freely with a neoliberal mindset (Giroux). While people of a different culture who present the same as another culture may be more accepted at first, their differences are taken advantage of and succumbed to by the different individual, similar to someone who presents as a different culture. In reality television, especially on *Below Deck*, there are people from different areas of the world who come and work together. Working on ships that travel around different areas of the world provides travel opportunities many yacht workers want to take advantage of and explore. This means on any ship there are people from many different cultures that operate more submissively, aggressively, or similarly to each other if they are of the same native culture. These situations continue to give the powerful group justification to act questionably towards the minority groups because they are trying to do the “right thing” to continue their reign.

Additionally, Bruff and Tansel recognize how social structures tend to reform during times of crisis without interference from thoughtful eyes. Restructuring can be messy in general, and when done at a time of disorganization it can create unfair power dynamics. Assigning a new leader during a time of

chaos sometimes calms the storm, but more commonly, the situation gets worse before it gets better. Reforms can lead to unstable situations that can last for decades in “judicial and administrative” roles (Buff and Tansel). On reality television, when there is a new cast at the start of a new season, there is chaos until everyone understands their roles. However, once everyone is familiar with their roles, there is a calm familiarity compared to how it started. For an individual to get fired from a reality show that thrives on drama, there needs to be a very dramatic ending that puts the cast on edge again, which invites a replacement at a time of chaos. When someone is rehired instead of being a new face, they are blindly trusted to make the best decisions without questioning their validity. By rehiring a radical employee instead of addressing a slight issue, there is room for questionable actions, but they are not super questionable if no one knows of their past. It is unknown as to whether or not the rehired individual will fit in with the rest of the cast until the roles are made clear in the new environment. If someone is fired and there is a new hire, there could be a radical new person in charge, but their power becomes accepted, because of the current state of disarray within the cast. Other reformed structures are not always at the forefront, creating an unfair environment for people who are unaware and without enough time to focus on the smaller issues. The other new employees may feel they are not in a powerful enough position to make judgments and speak up, so they go along with the new and questionable power dynamic. This allows people to gain power they otherwise would not and continue power dynamics that are not fully agreed upon with a sound mind.

### **Understanding Panoptic Neoliberalism**

Though these theories are different, panopticism encourages government control because of constant security, and neoliberalism encourages self-maximization of economic power through human capitalization and decreased government oversight. While it seems the neoliberal mode of governance may not agree with security, panoptic neoliberalism encourages a different type of monitoring. Neoliberal

panopticism focuses on monitoring chaotic individuals. Nicholas Gane further explained their connection and how panoptic neoliberalism allows surveillance that limits vigilantly and intervention from government entities, allowing them to focus more on civilizing unruly subjects, government entities, and professional institutions. This way, law-abiding citizens, who are working to increase their capital, remain free from constant surveillance. It also encourages individuals to follow society's standards so they do not receive punishment. The most problematic individual or group gets most of the attention from the governing power, but they must keep an eye on everyone to ensure order and prevent problems in the group as a whole.

Panopticism and neoliberalism encourage people to work with other individuals around them to increase their acceptance and profit. Despite the type of capital gain, individuals can hide their true intentions to further their agendas in society. Panopticism encourages acceptable behavior among individuals to avoid consequences brought on by people higher up through constant monitoring of behavior. Neoliberalism disregards traditional government structures to further individuals' profit through nontypical means, furthering their economic and political success. While thinking about both theories, individuals assume certain people manipulate the perception others have of them to further themselves. Television entertainers, and sometimes producers, create false images of their relationships with others to further their image in a viewer's eyes. Through this manipulation, the producers gain authorship of the reality stars' narratives and create more tools to further their reputation—for better or worse. However, if a higher power is constantly watching, how do people get away with false representations of themselves, the people they film, and their television shows?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Panoptic Neoliberalism and Reality Television?**

It is easy to understand how reality television is neoliberal when the stars and the production teams work to achieve more access, a higher status, and more money. The invasion of privacy is real; production institutions film every moment of someone's waking life in hopes they will record something juicy to get a better show rating. There usually are not camera crews filming the boring things, like sleeping and doing chores, because there is no reason money would come from that. Producers want to film drama that will entertain their audience and keep people watching the show so they can earn more money from gaining more viewership. Sometimes production teams hide cameras in the rooms in case something happens while they are taking a break, but usually, they do not catch much. Stars especially are neoliberal because of how they put their authorship into a producer's hands. They are at risk of being caught saying or doing something unethical or politically incorrect, cut to look like they said something that they did not, and have the whole world watch their most embarrassing moments—all of which are bound to spread like wildfire on social media. Nevertheless, they hide their true selves, by keeping the panoptic mask on as long as they can. The stars create new personas for themselves to attract a following of people that make them more money.

Some scholars, like James Wong, believe reality television does not align with panopticism because television personalities see the cameras following around, so they know when to act to get empathy from the audience. These stars also choose to sign a contract to be watched by cameramen, producers, and thousands (sometimes millions) of people across the world. Because of this, scholars like James Wong theorize that people's actions on reality television shows are governed by the people watching the show (Wong). If reality television was aired live, the public would have more input into how each cast member governs themselves through access to social media and other open forums that the cast members could reflect on. In this situation, the cast members would be able to go into the confessional, apologize, and make sure it was a part of the show if they did anything wrong or said anything they

should not have. Instead, reality television releases episodes months after it is filmed, allowing stars to apologize, if they did anything wrong, on social media after the episode has aired. Without any realization of bad decisions in the moment, reality stars cannot make their apology part of the show and the audience has no control over their actions until after they see a situation has been taken a certain way by the public and they feel the need to apologize. However, to become liked by the audience and enjoy the fame of being on a reality television show, individuals must govern themselves in a way that is authentic to themselves so they are proud of how they are portrayed. They may act differently at the beginning of the television show before they get comfortable with the cameras and other cast members, but while being filmed 24/7 for a few months, it is hard not to imagine the mask coming off at some points.

On *Below Deck*, once an individual is no longer working during a charter, the way they act is truer to themselves. Instead of mainly focusing on the typical work environment that is usually around, production focuses on the strange and uncomfortable instances that are bound to make them more money. While the typical work environment does not involve getting drunk with your fellow employees after finishing a job and going to sleep where you work, *Bravo* capitalizes on these unfamiliar moments that make working on a boat so unique. Once employees are not on the job and they are acting like their normal selves, the panoptic mask of the working version of individuals falls off as things get personal between employees. The producers take advantage of the personal moments and exploit the emotionally changed interactions that happen between the crew to further their gain and make the show more interesting for viewers. When the cast is making a decision in their personal lives, versus their professional lives, they are more themselves than the agreeable nature they portray while there are guests aboard. When individuals are looking for a distraction from their work life and to let off some steam, it seems they almost forget the cameras are still watching them and they are technically on the clock, just now it is the *Bravo* clock. When being distracted from the panoptic environment of the cameras, there is not much care for how production, the people around them, or the public may view them, so individuals

appear to take off their masks and govern themselves in an unseen way, without concern for how the sovereign power may reprimand them for their actions.

Skeptics may also argue that the situations on a show are set up by the production team to create drama and improve ratings, so no behavior is truly someone's own. They do try to formulate drama-filled situations by supplying the fuel for the fire, but not the match. Many production teams at *Bravo* encourage their reality stars to get drunk "while denying them food and sleep in an effort to intentionally degrade their mental health" (Holmes). This way, there is drama created that can be filmed for producers to increase their monetary value as stars' inhibitions are lowered. While being pushed to drink more and stay up longer, the producers are neoliberally putting the stars in an increasingly unsafe environment that is bound to go up in flames. Some may argue that the stars ultimately choose how to act, but they are forced to act in a way that provides bigger consequences. Producers pushing for these conditions may be ethically in the wrong, but it creates more money for production and the stars while exploiting individuals who are scrutinized for every action they take, even if it is not fully theirs.

### ***Below Deck Down Under***

The *Below Deck* franchise follows different private yacht crews working across the globe. Specifically, *Below Deck Down Under* follows Captain Jason and his crew as they sail across the oceans surrounding Cairns, Australia. The season starts off with 3 stewardesses—Aesha, Laura, and Margot—and 4 deckhands—Luke, Culver, Harry, and Adam—and Chef Tzarina. The stewardesses work on the interior of the boat to serve food and drinks, clean the guests' rooms, and do laundry. The deckhands work on the exterior of the boat and oversee water activities, upkeep of the exterior, and help the captain prepare for docking and anchoring of the yacht. With the most experience, Aesha is the chief stewardess and Luke is the boson, the heads of their respective departments, with oversight from Captain Jason.



The show is set up as the crew gets ready for new guests, the experience the crew provides for guests on the charter, a team meeting to discuss team performance after the charter, and the crew going out to celebrate their hard work. Throughout this endeavor, there is an 8-week charter season the crew works through, throughout 18 episodes. Throughout all of this, there are relationships between crew members that form. Close friendships are common on the yacht, especially because the crew are in close quarters for 2 months straight, although sometimes the relationships turn romantic, which is not always welcome.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **The Beginning**

Season 2, episode 1 of *Below Deck Down Under* begins with a few cuts from food service during charters, water sports, and confessionals with Luke stating all he is thinking about is “money and alcohol” (“Yes, We Cairns!”). In the opening introductions, almost everyone else talks about how excited they are to work on the boat with new coworkers. They all agree their work is hard, but that yachting pays very well, so it is worth it. After cutting to the guest experience on the yacht, the conversations are professional between the crew members, except Laura. She talks about wanting her next romantic relationship to be with her husband and, in her confessional, admits her attraction toward Luke and Adam. As day 2 of the charter ensues, Margot arrives. In her first confessional interview, she mentions how she is relatively new to yachting and is “scared about taking initiative” in work-related situations because of her past experiences on yachts (“Floating Circus”). Her previous chief stewardess was very particular about the way tasks were completed, which made her submissive in the workplace. When returning to Luke’s confessional, which housed his previous comments, Luke cannot stop talking about how beautiful Margot is. The scene cuts to Margot and Luke meeting; he greets her and keeps their interaction professional. As

he continues talking about her, he says that he will not get into any trouble. The scene cuts back to his confessional, where he talks about how he did not have a father figure around growing up, so he never had anyone around to discipline him. Instead, he says, he has always learned from his mistakes and has continued to learn this way.

These opening conversations are important because they present each cast member's personality to viewers. Each person aboard the ship has neoliberal motives that allow them to work on a yacht and justify being a part of this show. Their goal is to make a lot of money yachting, and when also being filmed they can make more money. The crewmembers attempt to engage the audience so they will have a positive experience after the show is aired and, hopefully, continue to profit off their names and likeness. However, the viewer's first look at Luke emphasizes that he likes to party when he says all he wants is money and alcohol. Luke's view on life can make the audience assume he does not take life too seriously, since he likes to let loose, but also that he does not take himself seriously. His perception of his actions encourages the audience to keep an eye on his actions in a panoptic neoliberal way because he is the only person talking about spending money partying in their opening confessional. His comment is against neoliberal ideals while *Below Deck* feeds is rooted in neoliberal ideals; as failed businessman Plautus said, "You have to spend money to make money." Luke also mentions being able to learn from his mistakes, especially since he did not have a father figure around growing up. From that, the audience can deduce he goes through with his decisions and learns from them after the fact. Either way, Luke has presented himself as someone who likes beautiful women, drinks heavily, and does not fully think through his actions. On the other hand, Margot has presented herself as someone who follows the rules and is submissive in the workplace. She does not like to put herself in a position of opposing authority and does not like to upset people. Her motivations may be rooted in neoliberal behavior to earn more money, but she does not put herself in a position where her colleagues could view her as not hard-working and not easy to get along with. Even though not every situation is considered the workplace on the show, she is constantly surrounded by people she works with. This could lead to blurring lines

between workplace and personal etiquette on the yacht because there is no separation between where each crew member works and sleeps for 8 weeks.

After the first group of guests finishes their charter, the crew gets ready to go out for their first night on the town. They go to a fancy restaurant and get dinner before going to a bar afterward. Their decision to spend all the money they just made seems irresponsible but the experience allows production and the public to see what the individuals are like when they are not working. While cutting from everyone else on the dance floor to Luke creating a plan next to the bar, production depicts how he is alone and Margot has other people supporting her. After pulling her away for another drink, Luke tells her that he is interested in her, and then proceeds to ask how she feels about they have been flirting. She is hesitant and says she does not want to ruin the positive atmosphere within the crew by hooking up with another crew member after their first charter. Without a cut in filming, Luke tells Margot she has an eyelash on her eye and to close her eyes so he can get it off her face. However, instead of doing so, he kisses Margot and she pushes him away immediately. Aesha decides to ask Margot if everything is okay directly following the situation and after Margot walks away from Luke and back to the dance floor; Margot says, "He's super aggressive and I think it's too much right now" after reflecting on his actions ("Ice, Ice, Maybe"). She further explains that even though she had a crush on him, she was not expecting it and did not want to move that fast.

After returning home from the bar, Margot and Luke separate themselves from the group and continue making out on the top deck while Luke is trying to convince Margot to go further. There are multiple cuts of Margot saying how she does not want to ruin anything between the crew with the awkwardness of how their relationship may or may not progress after hooking up, with pauses in between each instance of the rest of the crew eating noodles in the crew mess. In the crew mess, the rest of the crew is being goofy, making sure everyone is content, and wondering where Luke and Margot went. After cutting back to the top deck, Luke talks about how he feels he and Margot have gone past just flirting, but Margot brings up how it has only been a day and she does not think he is being logical, with more pauses

in their conversation for noodle breaks. Even though it is against his desires, Luke stops pushing further, after trying to convince her a few more times, and they go off separately to bed.

The situation on the crew's first night out demonstrates Luke's internal governance... or lack thereof. Once he has left his work mask in his cabin, he becomes driven to follow his desires that would have been easily dismissed if he were working. While in the work environment, he was able to only reference Margot's beauty to others and talk to her. After drinking, he made physical advancements that Margot did not welcome. He continues to try to pressure her into further advancements afterward, but once shot down multiple times he finally gives up. With the cut to the rest of the crew eating noodles, the silliness of a serious conversation between two individuals, who barely know each other, is emphasized. Luke starts to realize that he does not know Margot well enough to force her into anything, with a scene that depicts how the crew does not know each other well with the interactions they are having while they are making noodles. This type of cut also gives the illusion that the closer Margot gets to Luke, the more likely she is to not have the other crewmates for support. Without his work mask on, Luke likes to be the narrator of his own story, as well as the stories that intersect with his. On the other hand, Margot demonstrates she was true to herself and the audience from the beginning. After drinking, she continues to be a people pleaser and kisses Luke back once on the boat again, but she stays true to herself and does not go further than kissing him. Margot does not want to create unnecessary drama while furthering her career, so she recognizes she needs to keep her work life separate from her personal life, even though both are closely intertwined while living on the boat. She makes sure to stand her ground while Luke is trying to convince her to completely change the authorship of her personal life but follows his lead if he gives her orders while they are working.

Throughout the following charter, Harry and Margot are filmed having coffee dates each morning, while Luke does not seem to talk to Margot. On the show, she and Luke do not talk often, and only about work-related things while there are guests aboard. On the crew's night out after the second charter, they go to a restaurant. Harry feeds Margot a bite of his meal, and Luke gets jealous; he says that

“they’re like two 14-year-olds on a date, it’s hard to watch,” in his confessional as the camera pans back to his eyes fixed on Harry and Margot (“All’s Fair in Love and Downpour”). The camera immediately cuts to Laura trying to flirt with Adam, but he is trying to nicely reject her. The camera then follows Laura as she decides to sit on Luke’s lap, and he makes a suggestive comment, about her being about to “feel it,” and then they start kissing at the table (“All’s Fair in Love and Downpour”). While Laura and Luke are having a moment, Adam and Tzarnia go off to smoke and they talk about their other crewmates. Adam expresses to Tzarnia that he only views Laura as a friend even though she is attempting to make them more than friends. The shot cuts back to the table while Luke makes out with Laura, and it makes Margot feel jealous. After Adam and Tzarnia return, the camera cuts to Luke and Margot and they go off to talk and Luke expresses that he feels he should be allowed to do whatever he wants since they are early into the charter season, and their relationship, so he wants to have fun. When everyone returns to the boat Laura and Luke start to escalate their relationship, but Margot walks in and halts it. Instead, the whole crew goes upstairs to the hot tub and begins to play truth or dare before Laura drags Luke away again. It leads to a hookup between the two in the shower, but Luke is annoyed once Laura stays the night with him instead of going back to her bed and failing to understand their relationship is only physical. Because Luke is now treating Laura the same way he treated Margot, it leads to Margot detaching from Luke and her situation with Harry to get serious. Margot and Harry express that they like each other to each other and share a kiss before going off separately to bed.

The following morning, Luke explains to Margot how he regrets what had happened with Laura and was not looking for it to happen. To his face, she is understanding, but the shot cuts to her calling him a “f\*ck boy,” which is a boy who messes around with multiple different women at once while disregarding their feelings toward him (“All’s Fair in Love and Downpour”). In her confessional, she says that she decided she does not like him anymore and wants to move on from him. Directly after, Laura continues trying to flirt with Adam because Luke has since rejected her, but Adam continues to turn her down nicely. The scene then cuts to Laura asking Aesha to switch to the morning shift so she can work

alone with Adam, but her wishes get shot down because Margot is not strong enough to complete the night shift work. Aesha's confessional reveals she has caught Laura's manipulation tactics, but Laura disagrees with her own statements to remain, somewhat, trustworthy.

During each charter, the flirtiest interaction between crew members is when Margot and Harry have coffee dates in the morning. With a work mask on and with new guests aboard, professionalism and respect return to each crew member. When personal lives and a familiar group of people the masks of the individuals come off, no matter who is watching. This night out demonstrates that Luke's true self allows himself to do what he wants, with disregard for other people around him because he has taken off his working mask and is ready to let loose. It may be true that he did see a romantic connection with Margot but, upon his actions with Laura, it is evident that he wants a woman by his side; he does not seem to care who, but he thinks a girl will further his reputation. He does not care about what emotions Margot feels, what else she may want, and who else she may be interested in if he can still maneuver getting what he wants. While with his work mask on, Luke had been kind, even after seeing Margot with Harry every morning. When jealous in a professional setting, Luke did not have much to say or do about the situation. However, after taking off his work mask, he decided to make Margot feel the way he was feeling, and then some. Because the cuts of Adam and Tzarnia talking are interlaced with Luke and Laura flirting, it suggests Luke feels the same way about Laura as Adam does; he does not like her. Luke just does not care if his actions lead Laura to believe, otherwise. Margot decided to not make Luke's actions force her into a corner of hooking up with him to keep his interest. The way she changes her description of Luke recognizes her ability to understand when something is going to work for her or against her. Unlike Margot, Laura goes for whatever she wants when she wants it. After not getting a positive response from Adam and planting herself on Luke's lap, it initiates her getting what she wants, while in public; a make-out with someone she finds attractive. It inspires watchers to view Laura in a panoptic neoliberal way because she is acting suspiciously in the same way Luke does. Once returning to the boat and being interrupted by Margot, Laura gets annoyed, but not discouraged. She continues to force what she wants,

whether it be hooking up with Luke or trying to get closer to Adam. This emphasizes she has the same underlying face Luke does, in the way where she always gets what she wants for her gain. In Luke and Laura's situation, they both want the same thing that night, so it works out, but what if the two individuals involved do not want the same thing?

## Chapter 4 The Night of the Incidents

When going out after the third charter Laura starts her antics in the car ride to the restaurant. Before leaving the marina, and being caught on the hidden camera inside the taxi, Laura feels the need to tell Adam she is not wearing underwear, which makes him ask if he can switch his seat in the car. It prompts Adam and Tzarina to have a chat, once they arrive at the restaurant, in which he expresses to Tzarina that he wants Laura to chill out. He has told Laura more than a handful of times he is not into her romantically, while the camera cuts to Laura looking over her shoulder to see if he is on his way back, but she has not got the hint, so this evening he tells her she is only a friend to him. Their conversation is interrupted by Laura's confessional, in which she explains he must like her because she likes him. Afterward, Laura still proceeds to try to kiss him and lick his hands suggestively. At the same time, Margot is getting annoyed with Harry because he is constantly all over her and will not give her room to breathe, similar to the way Laura is to Adam. As begins to give her space, Margot turns her body to talk to the person on the other side of her, who happens to be Luke. They begin talking and it seems like they get over the riff they had after he had been with Laura. Margot was not smiley, as seen by the camera above their table, they seemed to be friendly again. Harry mentions that whenever Margot drinks to excess, she goes back to talking to Luke and ignores him.

Shortly after beginning to drink and leaving for the crew's night out, Laura fully removes her mask. She begins making suggestive comments to Adam that turn into a night of uncomfortable advances. Without fully knowing about the camera in the taxi, she makes comments that are not as forward as she had been when she knew cameras were around. She continues to go after who she wants, regardless of the multiple times Adam has told her they are friends and he wants to keep it that way. Adam continues to tell her nicely, but his niceness reveals he is not going to be mean in a situation that already makes Laura look desperate to further his social capital which can be turned monetary after the show is over. Harry is also proven to be kind when trying to talk to Margot and gives her space when she asks for it. Luke continues



to show he goes after what he wants when he starts flirting with Margot when she is overly intoxicated. She had told him previously she would not go down that road again, but instead, he opens the door when she is past the point of drunk and is about to pass out. The audience may argue that it demonstrates that Margot truly wants Luke, but soberly saying she does not want to pursue a relationship with him again and then talking to him because he is next to her is different. Before, Luke had said how much he wanted to get back in her good graces when he was in professional mode and is now doing it, whereas sober Margot does not want to pursue a relationship with him again and drunk Margot is now talking to him because she is seated next to him and does not want to talk to Harry, who is on her other side. Margot takes her mask off when she does not want to talk to Harry because she sees him more as a friend; the only reason she is seen talking to Luke is because he is close in proximity. Luke may also be concerned with how his story will be told on television. When he acts like he is above everyone around him, it is not surprising to think that he would try to convince someone to act in a way that furthers the image he wants to portray of himself. By getting the woman, Margot, back, he can further his image as a charming man while having a lady at his side.

After this night out the crew is way more plastered than normal. Upon returning to the ship, Luke tries to convince Margot to go into the jacuzzi with him and go to bed with him afterward. Because of his obvious inebriation, and Margot's, Aesha walks Margot to her room to get her some water and make sure Luke does not follow her in. The shot cuts to Luke getting ready for the jacuzzi in his room and Aesha making sure Margot does not want to join him while in Margot's room. In her confessional that took place while she was in Margot's room, she expresses how she wanted to make sure Luke did not go back into Margot's room to take advantage of her. Aesha voices to Margot how uncomfortable the look Luke gives Margot is and emphasizes how she will hang out with Margot until he goes to bed when Luke busts into Margot's room telling her it is jacuzzi time. Margot says she is not going swimming while rifling through her closet while Aesha goes to get water. After Luke leaves, Margot says to Aesha she does not want to go in the jacuzzi, but she wants to drink some water and go to bed, without Luke. The scene cuts

to Margot as she goes to bed and Luke comes in to check on Margot and talk to Laura, but then leaves the room after Aesha tells him to. During this interaction, he is completely bare, with only a towel covering his pubic area. The camera catches Luke leaving while Aesha goes to make noodles while trying to keep an eye on Margot's door, but then there is a power shortage on the shore, which causes the power on the boat to go off, and consequently, all the lights to go dark. By this point, Margot is incoherent and passed out in her bed. While there are cuts of the rest of the crew is trying to restore the power on the deck and Aesha is doing a voiceover to describe the problem, Luke busts into Margot's room and, after removing the towel, climbs into bed with her. Without any cuts, the camera crew then breaks the fourth wall and tells him to stop, then they physically go into the room to tell him he cannot be in there, and he gets up as if he will leave. Instead, he asks the camera crew to "f\*ck off for a second" and slams the door the minute the lights on the boat come back on to expose his full front ("All Wrong"). He finally leaves her room with the towel placed back over the front of himself again as he runs into his bedroom. The next episode begins with a replay of the power outage and Luke's actions before he scurries to his bedroom with Laura following him. When she asks him what he did, he tells her "I didn't do anything" before Laura goes upstairs to enjoy the jacuzzi ("Turnover Day"). Aesha goes back into Margot's room to check on her and after explaining that Luke was naked in her bed and asking if she consented to him being there, Margot denies consenting to his presence.

This situation blatantly portrays Luke as someone who only thinks about himself. As he drank more and more, his mask came off and his true way of thinking shined. Regardless of how much Margot was talking to him that night, Luke continued to try to hang out with her when he was told to leave her alone. Going into her bed naked when she was left alone for a few minutes are added circumstances that make the situation worse. Overall, it also demonstrates somewhere inside of himself, Luke knew what he was doing was wrong. Despite knowing he was not supposed to be in her room, he continues to stay when he is told to leave by the production crew. Luke was receiving panoptic neoliberal oversight from production and Aesha because he was seen to be the most problematic individual at the time. The first

time he gets out of bed to leave, he slams the door shut which creates more tension in the situation. If he only wanted to close the door to cover his nudity, he would have covered himself with his hand before shutting the door on the production team. However, because he did not attempt to cover himself, it seems he was getting up to close the door to give himself and Margot some privacy as if he were going to go further with her. After leaving the room, Luke seems to return to a state of self-governance. He seems to understand, somewhere deep inside, that what he has done is wrong when he locks himself in his room and tosses and turns until he is able to fall asleep. He is likely to have realized how the crew will view him differently, how production will make his storyline more villainous, and how the audience behind the cameras will view him after the show aired. When Aesha deals with this situation she keeps on a brave face for Margot. It demonstrates her motherly attributes when dealing with this traumatizing situation so levelheaded to Margot. It allows Margot to explain what she knew to have happened from her side while Aesha explained what Luke did when she was asleep. Without showing Margot her emotions, because ultimately this whole show takes place in a professional environment, it allows Aesha to remain in a position of authority. The intervention of the production crew also helps to demonstrate the integrity of the show. If they were only focused on ratings, it would not be surprising for the camera crew to allow the situation to progress into something more serious. However, the team did jump in after recognizing the situation for what it was, proving that they are not entirely focused on the well-being of the show's profits and do not accept illegal actions.

Upstairs, the other crewmembers are unaware of what has just unfolded while they are still in the jacuzzi. Directly after Luke's incident, Laura goes into the jacuzzi without a bathing suit on, and only a white tank top and booty shorts. She proceeds to rub her butt all over Adam when he repeatedly asks her why she is doing that since they are only friends. He asks her to stop multiple times before attempting to move away from her as she gets more aggressive with her rubbing, but she follows him. Laura keeps saying they are friends for now, but it will turn sexual after the charter season is over; Adam continues to disagree, but Laura does not take no for an answer. Adam continuously tells her to stop touching him, but

she does not stop. Once leaving the jacuzzi, Laura follows Adam into his room and does not leave when she tells him to leave. He lays down in his bed and Laura squirts lotion onto his back. She proceeds to climb up into his bunk and start to give him a massage when the cameramen jump in again to tell her to get out of his bed. Before she leaves, she gives him a few kisses and the cameramen have to ask her three more times for her to leave Adam's room and bed.

This situation demonstrates how Laura displays the same attributes Luke does once her mask is removed. She fights for what she wants, to a level that she sees to further herself. Adam's decision to continue nicely rejecting her further proves his truth of being a compassionate person; Laura continuing to push when she has not gotten any positive reinforcement furthers her manipulative and self-serving persona. Once she follows him to his room it becomes uncomfortable for viewers after seeing what had just unfolded previously between Luke and Margot, insinuating something similar may happen. It heightens viewers' awareness of the situation and gives the same uncomfortable feeling Luke made viewers feel. After being on the deck and not in the crew area when the other situation happened, both individuals were not aware of how a sexual assault situation may be handled by production. Regardless, after Laura did not leave once Adam said he did not want her in his room, followed by her trying to give him a back massage in his bed probably made production nervous after what had previously played out. Instead of letting it get to that point, production stepped in as she climbed into his bed. This *Below Deck* production crew did not want to be bystanders of sexual assault, especially after a much more emotional and traumatizing version of this situation happened not too long ago. Laura still proceeded to give him kisses goodnight, which were not welcomed, and finally left without too much of a fight. It demonstrates her dedication toward what she wants, without caring what other people involved want or about what they do not want. Because Luke's situation with Margot got to a detrimental point, Laura was not seen as the most problematic individual, at the moment, and was still acting as if she had authorship of the people around her; although, after Luke's mistake, Laura received panoptic neoliberal oversight because there was a larger concern of sexual assault, which led to her being caught acting against the boat's norms.

## Chapter 5 The Aftermath

Aesha lays in Margot's bed with her as she falls asleep before going to wake up Captain Jason to tell him about what has occurred. Before Aesha talks to Jason, there is a clip consisting of 6 blocks; two rows of 3 blocks across. The top left and top middle blocks consist of Luke, the top right is Laura, and the bottom row is a shark. In Aesha's confessional after the incident, she starts crying when referencing her own experience with sexual assault. Jason immediately grabs his mic and goes down to Luke's room, unlocks his door, and tells him to get off the boat. In his confessional, Jason tells the audience he set up a hotel room for Luke, to keep the rest of the crew safe, and planned to bring him in the next morning to talk about what had happened. Once there is a team meeting to address Luke's behavior before he returns for his meeting with the captain, Laura is seen trying to cuddle up to Adam when he tells her to stop. As Jason comes into the room, she stops, and Jason explains how Luke had hurt another crew member and tells them he will be fired. Directly afterward, Laura asks to say goodbye to Luke, in front of the group and complains that she cannot talk to him, while the rest of the crew understands how hard the situation must have been for Margot and does not care that they cannot say goodbye. Shortly after the meeting, Margot and Laura are seen preparing the boat for the next guests and Laura starts crying while explaining how she was sad Luke left. Margot explains what had happened to her and Laura tells Margot that if he had come into her bed instead, she would have welcomed him and kept him happy. In Laura's confessional, she said Luke being fired was his karma for rejecting her. After the women move on to different chores, Laura calls Margot into the laundry room and tells her Luke was "joking with her," that he was not going to rape her, and it is not fair that he got fired ("The Turnover Day").

This situation demonstrates how Aesha, Jason, and the producers have the crew's best interests in mind. The producers added the blocks comparing Luke and Laura to sharks because they take what they want, and they are viciously doing it. Like a shark, Luke and Laura are confident and charming, but when they cannot get someone else to live by their rules, they turn aggressive. Aesha depicts her protective

nature when she watches over Margot after the incident. She proves herself as someone who fights for what is right when she wakes up the captain in the middle of the night instead of letting the incident fester until the morning. Her confessionals were used by producers to strengthen this idea of her and further the idea she is there for other people. Seemingly without a second thought, Jason goes to Luke's room and kicks him off the boat which reiterates his vow to keep the crew safe at the beginning of the season, then proving that his word is genuine and credible. The producers made sure to not cut in between him finding out this information and sending Luke away to depict how Jason is also there for the best interest of the crew. Luke's response to being kicked off the boat once again reflects his ability to understand what he did was wrong. Without a fight, he gets into a taxi to be taken to a hotel without attempting to rectify his actions. This may be to preserve his image because he feels remorseful for his actions, but also because he was unable to separate his professional self from his personal self any longer. When Laura is governing herself in a way that does not align with social norms after Luke has been let go, she gets backlash from the outside. Margot tries to explain to her what happened and why it was handled so seriously, but Laura cannot seem to wrap her head around the situation. To her, it was playful and romantic, suggesting she thinks this behavior is acceptable. Without her mask to align herself with the other crewmates' opinions of the situation, Laura becomes alone in her viewpoints and ostracizes herself.

Aesha then asks Adam about how he feels about the way Laura's been treating him. He mentions her not taking him seriously when he rejects her, but not wanting to get her in the same level of trouble as Luke. Regardless, once Margot describes her issues with Laura along with Adam's, she brings it directly to Jason. Jason immediately talks to Margot and Adam individually to confirm what Aesha had relayed to him and then brings Laura in directly afterward. Laura lies about what she had said to Margot when Jason confronts her about what has happened, which only strengthens Jason's decision to fire her, as seen in his confessional.

Since Laura's values are different than the rest of the group, she is let go. Her way of living exposes her as someone controlling and not afraid to speak her mind to anyone who will listen... even the

victim of a situation. Because she wants to continue expressing her feelings until a topic is beaten into the ground, it makes sense why she wanted to be a part of the show. She wanted to be her truest self to gain a following of people who share the same values. When she lies to Jason about what she has said to Margot, it displays how she understands it was not appropriate, but also projects her insincerity toward the crew and the audience. When she has to have someone else overlooking her and determining her fate, she is able to reapply her mask, but when she does not fear having someone else govern her fate, she plays to the beat of her drum—a drum that is not socially accepted.

When doing something that does not align with the majority's values, it hurts an individual's reputation in the group and communities in the audience that also do not align with these behaviors. This is evident by the ways people comment on both Laura and Luke's Instagram profiles. Laura has a private account about her own life (@lbilene), with a link to her food account, that is public, attached to it (@cocina\_de\_laurinya). Laura's personal account only allows comments on her two most recent posts; posts that promote her experiences, on a podcast and a local talk show in Maryland, defending her actions on *Below Deck*. These posts are filled with negative comments about her character with a few positive comments sprinkled in. Even though she has not posted on the food account since 2019, there is a plethora of comments. The comments on these pictures are ardently fighting against Laura's decision to act a certain way when referencing her behavior toward Adam and her voiced opinion of Luke's actions on the show. Most of the comments call her trash, a predator, and a rapist. Luke's Instagram (@lukebonesjones) comment section is sparsely populated with only positive comments, because he has a filter turned on that allows him to approve comments before they are posted for everyone to see. Even though both individuals wanted to be on a reality show to elevate their fame, it has only elevated it negatively.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

Panopticism, neoliberalism, and panoptic neoliberalism led to detrimental effects for Laura and Luke because all the people who are aware of their actions. Observing the show through these lenses helps to explain how and why Laura and Luke had to change their approaches to life while filming and after the show aired. Without panopticism and alcohol, their masks might have not come off, leading to these events not occurring and being judged by everyone involved and watching. Without neoliberal motives to work on the yacht while participating in the show, the situations that ensued would have been kept within the crew and loved ones of the people involved, making future careers and relationships easier for the predators. Without panoptic neoliberalism, the audience on and off the boat would not have kept an eye on Laura and Luke after their questionable behavior toward other crew members, making their actions more of a shock for the people aware of the situations. In this instance, panopticism, neoliberalism, and panoptic neoliberalism kept the boat safer from the people who were creating damaging situations and educated the audience on how masking people may act if they are ingesting a substance, have a lack of sleep or food, and are making a split-second decision.

At the beginning of the season, each crew member appeared to have similar values. Everyone was respectful and positive, but shortly after getting comfortable, masks began to come off. Luke and Laura proved to be wearing masks to align themselves with the other crew members when starting the charter season. After a long day of work, a nonprofessional environment allowed Laura and Luke to act more and more like their true selves, while the rest of the crew remained in alignment with their work selves. Each person's decision on how they control themselves in a position to be accepted into or ostracized from the group, a situation which took the latter for Luke and Laura.

From the beginning, viewers kept their eyes on Luke because he portrayed himself as a party boy who got into trouble. When he was working, Luke was responsible, attentive, and respectful to his coworkers. When he went out and was not on the clock, Luke was focused on his desires without regard



to what other people may be thinking or feeling. This led the audience to view Luke in a panoptic neoliberal way because he was bound to force people into decisions they did not like. His first kiss with Margot encouraged the audience to have panoptic neoliberal oversight over him; especially when it was followed by his short-lived relationship with Laura and his assault on Margot. His actions on nights out proved that once he removed his work mask, Luke revealed his true self regardless of who was watching.

Laura was viewed neoliberally because of the panoptic situation was she in. When beginning the show, Laura appeared to accept the offer to promote herself. Because she seemed less suspicious than Luke, Laura did not receive panoptic neoliberal oversight from the audience until the second night out. After becoming intimate with Luke and continuing to force herself onto Adam, viewers understood this perception was correct. Until the night of the incident with Adam, Laura's actions seemed desperate and benign. However, during the night of the incidents, Laura's actions were proven to be harmful after fully removing her mask. She proceeded without her mask while continuing her remaining hours on the boat. Until Captain Jason talked to Laura about her actions and words, she remained maskless and proud of herself for treating Adam like she did and trying to get justice for Luke.

When releasing these episodes to the public, it caused outrage because of the inappropriate and uncomfortable nature of the situation. Laura and Luke had not just gone against the norms of their yacht, but also the norms of society. Luke was right to look more remorseful for his actions while still on camera, but it still became a problem for the crew and audience members because he did something wrong without any apology for his actions. Laura was extremely remorseless while on the show, and after posting an apology on her Instagram, continued to go on platforms to defend her views on other shows. With neoliberal motives, that lead to crewmembers working on a boat and being filmed for fame and a larger paycheck, a larger audience than the crewmembers and their loved ones were made aware of the situations that took place. This led to ostracization years after the incidents took place, and months after the episodes were released. After being on television, it is difficult for individuals to hide from their actions that production exploited on the show.

*Below Deck Down Under* proved that when people wearing masks drink alcohol, their masks come off and their true selves prevail. With professionalism involved, Laura and Luke were respectful and followed social norms. Once they were off the clock, all bets were off. Laura and Luke started dictating their actions based on their internal governance, or lack thereof. This led to all communities perceiving them by the way they decided to act when they were on nights out instead of the way they acted when they were working. Laura and Luke followed the sovereign power of the ship, Jason, when they were on duty which led to a false sense of security among them and the other crew members when Jason was not around. Once beginning to drink and without the governing force present, the whole crew took off their professional masks, but Laura and Luke proceeded to also take off their social masks and engaged in actions that only served themselves.

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