

Plausible Deniability

by  
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EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - LAWN AREA - NIGHT

TITLE: ELECTION DAY. NOVEMBER 6TH 2024 11:45 EST

Lincoln's statue acts as backdrop. A darkened stage lights. Election signs bounce in the air. A crowd roars in glee.

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR, 45, sits at a constructed interview desk.

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR  
Oh, it looks like they're ready!  
Ladies and gentlemen, your  
President and Vice-President-Elect!

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - STAGE - BACKSTAGE AREA

Behind the curtain, Four SECRET SERVICE AGENTS surround MALE SHADOWED FIGURE and FEMALE SHADOWED FIGURE.

FEMALE SHADOWED FIGURE  
Ready?

MALE SHADOWED FIGURE  
Always.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - STAGE - FRONT AREA

Spotlights shine. Music booms loud. The crowd responds.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - WOODED AREA

VLADIMIR, 26, sees people as clay to be molded, walks thirty yards away from stage. He lifts and presses a remote.

A cable news van explodes near the stage. Nothing is spared. Blood and bodies litter the perimeter. People run screaming.

The interview desk is in shambles. Police vehicles burn. Vladimir walks away.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - FRONT STEPS

On the front steps of the Lincoln monument, the hand of Male Shadowed Figure drops lifelessly next to the broken wobbling head of Lincoln's statue.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

TITLE: SIX MONTHS EARLIER

Vladimir sits at a cluttered desk. He downs a shot of liquor and touches the laptop. It beeps back in response.

VLADIMIR

Begin audio recording. June 6,  
2024. Fifty six years ago today the  
United States was robbed of a soon-  
to-be-president. A country altered,  
propelled down a road never meant  
ventured by those in his Party.  
With Capitalism soon dead; a new  
socialist republic would have taken  
its rightful place. Utopia.

Vladimir looks past the laptop at a TV.

ON THE TV

ROBERT KENNEDY(RFK), 35, waves to campaign crowd. He's shot.

BACK TO LIVING ROOM

Vladimir downs another drink. He stands and paces the room.

VLADIMIR

A Utopia denied by the will of  
faceless power brokers. Shadow  
governments. Puppets and patsies.

ON THE TV

SIRAN SIRAN, 23, RFK's shooter, is escorted by authorities.

BACK TO LIVING ROOM

Vladimir grabs the bottle and finishes the alcohol.

VLADIMIR

Which led to illegitimate,  
scrupulous leaders, neither by the  
people or for the people.

ON THE TV

RICHARD NIXON, 64, resigns. The TV banner says WATERGATE.

BACK TO LIVING ROOM

Vladimir turns back toward the laptop.

VLADIMIR

We, the people, must create a new path. A bold path. As a great American once said, "by any means necessary". Stop recording. Print.

The printer starts. Vladimir takes the finished sheet.

He walks to a bookcase filled with history books and campaign memorabilia. There's a framed picture of BEN DODD, 52 and BETH DODD, 49. A poster shows SENATOR DODD FOR PRESIDENT '24.

Vladimir drops the sheet on the bloodied, dead body of Senator Dodd at his feet.

VLADIMIR

By any means necessary.

Vladimir walks to the door with the laptop and exits.

INT. COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - DAY

A spattering of students fill rows of seats that diagonal downward to the podium where KATE YOUNG, 39, lectures.

Kate, a life spent teaching the mistakes of others while learning nothing from her own, gnaws on an apple. She points upward to the large projector screen.

KATE

There is a girl in a black and white polka dot dress. She says "we got him, we got him!".

Kate waves her hands wildly as she mocks the girl's actions.

KATE

Have you heard of this RFK conspiracy theory? A Netflix or Amazon Prime documentary? No. We can find The Spongebob movie as a "top pick" for us, but little on the multiple corroborated stories like Miss Polka Dot. The man who would be president, struck down just as he came to his apex.

A STUDENT, 19, yells out.

STUDENT  
Spongebob rules!

Kate turns, her glorious trance broken. Deflated, she looks at the faces of her students and realizes most barely listen.

KATE  
APOCALYPSE NOW, Oliver Stone's JFK, the MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE. What's the common denominator here, people? I know you all watch plenty of movies. Some of you are doing it right now instead of listening --

TAIESA (TAI) ZHANG, 24, inspired by the inspiration of others, blurts out.

TAI  
They're all crazy!

Students laugh. Kate squints through the dimly lit room.

KATE  
Who said that?

Tai stands. Back straight, she looks ready to salute.

TAI  
Tai, professor! They're all nuts!

Kate's eyes squint on Tai's location. She inspects Tai for a moment longer than needed before she responds.

KATE  
Yes. Miss... Tai. They are all crazy to some degree, but also anarchists. Out to sabotage the system to create their better one. Do they act alone or does someone have to whisper in their ear?

TAI  
Oooh! Great questions. I'm going to love this class!

The Student's voice pipes up.

STUDENT  
Sit down, pet! The teacher already has her apple.

Tai's eyes seek and find the Student. Her demeanor darkens.

TAI  
 Shut up, you waste! Keep watching  
 Spongebob! It's your IQ level zone!

The Student withers in his seat and clicks his phone off.

KATE  
 Uh, OK. Let's all remain calm.

Tai peers at her phone buzz. Kate sighs and bites her apple.

TAI  
 Oh crap! Professor Young, can I  
 borrow the projector for a second?

KATE  
 What? I mean I don't know how to --

TAI  
 -- Never mind. I got it. You really  
 should change the default password.

KATE  
 What? How did you....

ON THE PROJECTOR SCREEN

CNN caption: BREAKING NEWS. SENATOR DODD MURDERED IN OFFICE.

BACK TO AUDITORIUM

Kate's speechless. Tai's eyes widen.

TAI  
 Whoa. Anarchists.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Tree-lined landscape, impeded by headstones below and the  
 outline of the Washington Monument in the distance above.

A funeral in progress. Powerful suits and their bodyguards  
 stand silent. A 21-gun salute finishes. People head out.

A large, framed photo of Senator Dodd sits on a wooden stand.

Kate walks over and puts her hand on the shoulder of BETH  
 DODD, 49, unwavering in her grace. She stares at the picture  
 before she turns to Kate; a tear washes in her smile.

BETH  
I knew you wouldn't stay away.  
Benjamin knew too.

Kate notices Beth still touches the picture behind her.

KATE  
Beth, I'm so... I never thought....

Beth moves her hand around and puts it over Kate's hand.

BETH  
We live. We learn. We... carry on.

They embrace. Each weep in the other's compassion.

BETH  
Take the ride home with me.

INT. LIMOUSINE - MOVING - DAY

Beth presses the button and closes the glass partition to the driver. She pours drinks and hands one to Kate.

KATE  
That was quite a showing.

BETH  
A performance. Phony bastards.  
We all know the risks of public  
office, but, until it actually  
happens to you... it's not real.

KATE  
Has there been leads?

BETH  
Oh, the FBI have all their normal  
crazies at the top of their list.  
The Weather Underground has  
resurfaced to some degree. As if  
those extremists ever went away.

KATE  
(beat)  
But you don't buy it?

BETH

Kate, it's not the same out there. Ever since 9/11, it's been hard to know the good guys from the bad guys. And I'm talking about the politicians on the Hill.

Beth turns on the mounted TV and clicks through channels.

KATE

That's nothing new, Beth. The Big Three cable news networks began selling their agenda even before 9/11. The O.J trials kicked it off.

ON THE TV

Pundits screaming on the Big Three cable channels.

BACK TO LIMO

BETH

This is different. When Ben started his campaign, he received the usual partisan hate mail threats. But then we saw more detailed threats to get out of the race. I started to hear chatter. Noise from another politician Ben worked beside for years. They weren't really close. Ben had a few closed door calls with him. Kate, I caught snippets, threats, unlike any I've heard a politician make. Nasty. Volatile.

KATE

You're not insinuating--

BETH

I'm not. But I'm saying it's more than a hunch; less than an accusation. And the FBI? They'll botch the investigation in their own time and way. Hilary's emails? That cost her an election.

Kate glances back out the window.

KATE

Why am I in this car, Beth?

Beth gulps down her drink while Kate starts to sip hers.



BETH

I need a favor, Kate. I need you to do what you used to do best. Investigate this for me. You can get where the FBI is too clumsy --

KATE

-- Beth, I'm a professor.

BETH

Kate, you're more than that. Ben taught you much better than that.

Kate finishes her drink and stares at Beth for a long moment.

KATE

Who's the politician?

Beth clicks the TV remote until she stops.

ON THE TV

BILL THORNTON, 56, born to be a politician or weatherman, smiles as he waves to a small crowd in a cornfield.

THORNTON

And that's why after the terrible tragedy that has taken the life of my good friend, Senator Benjamin Dodd, I am compelled as an American leader to pick up the torch that was similarly extinguished for JFK, RFK and MLK. This cannot end with one man's death. Thus, I will jump in the Presidential race and continue with the hopes and ideas we both shared. So, today I'm announcing my candidacy--

BACK TO LIMO

Beth hits the MUTE button.

KATE

Beth, who's the politician?

Her haze broken, Kate points in disgust to the TV.

BETH

Him.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Active crowd. People dance, some shoot billiards, most drink. Kate sits at the bar. BARTENDER BARRY, 45, hands her wine.

BARTENDER BARRY  
That's already your third of the  
night. Hot date coming?

KATE  
The only other warm body in my bed  
tonight has a tail and purrs.

Barry smiles and walks away. TED, 35, a trust, but verify and then don't trust type of guy, enters and sits next to Kate.

TED  
Come here often, hot stuff?

Kate raises her brow before she sips wine.

KATE  
That didn't work in college either.

Barry walks over.

TED  
It did with my wife. Just a water  
with lime. Give my buddy another.

Barry nods and leaves. Kate grins.

KATE  
Still sober after all these years  
later. My hero.

TED  
Nah. I'm no hero. Though, not a  
good week for one of yours. I'm  
sorry, Kate. How was Beth?

KATE  
Strong. Unyielding. Just like Ben.  
Back in college, I thought he was  
destined for greatness. One of the  
country's best lawyers. Even a  
better investigator. I thought he  
was going to change the world.

TED

Well, Being a twenty-one year old wide-eyed optimist will do that to you. Until reality sets in. We have really twisted people out there and they know how to see me coming now.

KATE

Ben may have seen it coming.

Ted pauses his drink. He places it back down.

TED

And so, now I'm on official FBI business? Because then I'll have my first drink in a long time. I spoke to Beth. But... what don't I know?

KATE

It may be nothing. If you get me clearance to Thornton's campaign as a documentarian for the university--

TED

This isn't theoretical or a case study. This is now. And volatile.

KATE

Ted, I know the FBI uses civilian assets for low risk undercover work. I can do a documentary of a candidate... and, look around.

Ted sighs. He looks up at the wall-mounted TV. Thornton's on.

TED

I'll be in touch.

Kate nods into her wine. Ted pats Kate's shoulder and looks at the TV before he exits. She looks up at Thornton on the TV. Her smiles fades. Another hand touches her shoulder.

TAI

Professor Young?

Tai stands tall as Kate turns her way.

KATE

Oh. Hello. Miss....

TAI

Zhang. I'm in your class. Me and a few girlfriends are out.

Tai turns to the dance area and waves at two drunk women. A PURPLE HAIR GAL, 25, laughs and waves back.

TAI  
I'm on my way to tinkle. You?

KATE  
Tinkle-free, thanks.

TAI  
A sense of humor too! Love it! No, seriously, is this your spot?

KATE  
I've been here once or thrice. And whatever comes after thrice.

Tai looks up at Dodd on the TV. She sighs.

TAI  
I still can't believe what happened to him. His poor family.

KATE  
Beth will be fine. She strong.

TAI  
Beth? Do you know them?

KATE  
Oh, well. I did. Years ago. Time doesn't heal all wounds. But death; it does. For me, at least.

Tai's light attitude dissipates. She rubs Kate's shoulder. Kate tightens up. Tai lets her hand drop off slowly.

TAI  
I'll leave you to your thoughts. See you back in class soon?

KATE  
I, uh, will be taking a leave of absence. I'll E-mail the students.

TAI  
What? Why? I'm doing my post-graduate work on exactly your curriculum. Bummer.

KATE  
I'll be back after the election.

Kate looks up at Thornton on the TV. She tightens her grip on the napkin under her drink. Tai notices.

TAI

Uh-huh. OK, well, see you around.

Tai walks toward the bathroom. She looks back at Kate.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A darkened room glows from the light of three side by side TVs. Each TV has one of the Big Three cable new networks on.

Vladimir sits at a desk. He views files of candidates.

ON THE TV

PRESIDENT REED, 68, a man who has few equals, since he respects no one, stands at a podium and pretends he's not reading the Teleprompter. The ad-libs are obvious.

PRESIDENT REED

My marvelous Press Secretary has allowed me a moment to give an update on our investigation into Senator Dodd's death. Horrible tragedy. Horrible.

BACK TO APARTMENT

Vladimir rises and pins a picture of Thornton on a large bulletin board. He crosses out Dodd's picture with a marker.

The rest of the pictures are all the candidates of both parties as well as President Reed, VICE PRESIDENT OLIVER POLK, 64 and House Speaker JOAN DUNNE, 62.

PRESIDENT REED (V.O)

But the American people can rest assured that I will have the perpetrator apprehended shortly.

Vladimir turns and scoffs at the TV. He turns back and circles President Reed's picture on the board.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Kate drives on the highway. She answers her mobile phone.

KATE

Forty-eight hours? I'd have thought you had more oompf than that?

TED (V.O)

It took me seventy-two to authorize cornhole boards in the parking lot. Go pack. It'll be dropped off soon. This is hush-hush, Kate. No jokes. If you're caught, the FBI will claim zero knowledge. You know this. Your cover is now for PBS.

Kate drives past and stares at the Lincoln Memorial.

KATE

PBS? Honest Abe wouldn't tell a lie.

TED

Yeah, well. Dead men tell no tales.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Cluttered room outfitted with shelves and tables of books. Kate meanders in and tosses her bag on the chair as her cat jumps out of the way. She stares vacantly around the room.

KATE

Sorry, Lady Cat. Momma needs to clean this place. One day.

She walks over and types on her laptop. Her printer outputs photos. She walks to a large bulletin board on the wall and rips off the newspaper articles on it.

She push-pins the photos on the board. Senator Dodd on top. Thornton underneath. A "?" underneath that.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Modest decor. Simple design. Passengers come and go.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Older style interior. People move about to their seats. Kate walks to the far end of the train car where SECURITY SAM stands, 36, a man of few words but many physical weapons.

KATE

Morning. I'm Kate Young. I'm here to document Senator Thornton's campaign run for PBS.

Kate holds up camera equipment and credentials. Sam quints.

THORNTON (O.S)

It's OK, Sam. Let her by.

Thornton grins, since he lives as if the camera is always on.

THORNTON

Katherine. Welcome to the campaign.

Kate squeezes around an immovable Sam and shakes Thornton's hand. They sit in a booth with a table.

KATE

It's just Kate, sir. Thank you for this opportunity.

Thornton signs photos of himself. He sips his whiskey.

THORNTON

No worries, Katherine. PBS is a fine organization. My campaign welcomes you with open access.

Kate smiles as she views the perimeter. Staffers sit and work phones a few rows of seats away.

KATE

So, this train is interesting?

BILL THORNTON

Well, I thought a presidential campaign should be old-fashioned. A meet-the-people sort of thing. It's romantic; harkens back in time. I think that's what everyone over thirty wants; a simpler time.

Kate nods; impressed. Thornton smiles as he looks down.

THORNTON

Shouldn't you be filming this?

Kate awkwardly raises the camera and grins. CAMPAIGN LEO, 34, bubbly as a soda gone flat, comes over.

THORNTON

Leo, meet Katherine. She'll be documenting our run.

CAMPAIGN LEO

First one you're documenting? Alone?

Kate ingests the skepticism. She motions to speak.

CAMPAIGN LEO

What in the hell...

They all watch Tai run down the isle toward them. Sam blocks.

SECURITY SAM

Stop!

Sam seizes Tai's arm and forcefully braces her to the wall. Tai flips her shoulder and drops Sam to the floor. She grins.

KATE

Wait! I know her.

CAMPAIGN LEO

Jesus. She's the rest of your crew?

Tai stares at Kate and waits for her to get it. Kate nods. Sam grunts upward. Tai backs away with her hands up.

TAI

Oops. My bad!

CAMPAIGN LEO

Right. Well, you can wait in the other car until we clear you.

Tai glances out before she smiles at Thornton. She shifts her body to accentuate her figure. He notices. They all do.

TAI

Sir, this is a thrill, and honor, to be here. Even though my family is one of your biggest donors, that won't stop my covering you fairly.

THORNTON

Oh, well. That is good to hear. As Sam said, once we verify--

TAI

-- And seeing you on TV does no justice. You remind me of Michael Douglas in that President movie!



Thornton smiles and stands tall. Campaign Leo rolls his eyes.

THORNTON  
Sam, let her by. I think we're all  
set here. Kate? Any other crew?

Kate glances at Tai. Her smile is electrifying. Kate sighs.

KATE  
No, sir. She's more than enough.

INT. TRAIN - BEDROOM CAR - NIGHT

A MALE PORTER, 32, opens the door to a simple bedroom and dresser. Kate and Tai walk in. Kate drops her bag.

PORTER  
Well, this is it.

KATE  
Well, no, it isn't.

The Porter sees Kate shake her head. Tai raises her brow.

PORTER  
Oh. OH! Your room is next door.

The Porter walks back out. He taps a door between the rooms.

PORTER  
There is a connecting door.  
(winks)  
I'm very progressiv--

Tai slams the door in the Porter's face.

TAI  
Men. All the same. Too much porn.

KATE  
Well, if some didn't bask in it,  
you wouldn't be here right now.

TAI  
Huh? Oh! Too true! Thornton seems  
like a sweet, older coot. Not my  
type though. I like--

KATE  
-- How did you know where I was?

Tai plops on bed and folds her legs.

TAI

I watched some detective guy.  
Colombo. He'd have to go through  
crazy ways to figure things out.

Tai holds up her Iphone.

TAI

Now? We all carry supercomputers. I  
saw you grasping your napkin at the  
bar at Dodd and Thornton on TV. It  
wasn't hard to Google you. Worked  
for Dodd out of college. Looks like  
you had a falling out over a--

KATE

-- How did you know I was here?

Tai reaches into Kate's jacket pocket and pulls out an Apple  
Airtag. Kate steps back in shock.

KATE

You put a tracker on me?

TAI

\$29. Colombo would of loved Apple.

Kate grabs the Airtag from Tai's hand. Kate opens the window  
and tosses it out. Tai springs up and looks out.

KATE

At the next stop, you're going to  
tell Thornton you've been called  
home. Family emergency. Make one up.

TAI

Well, there is no family. That, was  
made up. Orphan. On my own in and  
out of foster homes until I was 18.

KATE

What? What if they check you out?

TAI

You mean like they were checking me  
out like candy at a carnival? No.

Tai slides close up to Kate's face. Both widen their eyes.

TAI

And what I'd make up won't be as good  
as your PBS babble. You owe me \$29.

KATE

How did you floor Thornton's guard?

Their silent stare is broken by a bell's RING on the room's speaker. Tai smiles and opens the room's connecting door.

TAI

Dinner time! Dress nice, professor.  
I expect an A in your class by the  
time we solve your mystery.

Tai grins and slams the door closed. The lock clicks. Kate rubs her face. She turns on the TV and walks to the bathroom.

ON THE TV

News anchor, BRUCKNER DARSON, 45, volatile during a nap, hosts a panel of PUNDIT A and PUNDIT B, liars in suits.

BRUCKNER

A week after Senator Dodd's death, we still have chaos in the waning days of the Democratic primary race. While Dodd almost had this locked up and Mayor Zeke now is the frontrunner, no one can win outright now. But, the remaining candidates can fight it out at the convention. Can you explain?

PUNDIT A

It's fairly easy. All three make a speech at the convention then Delegates and Super delegates start voting until there's only one left.

PUNDIT B

Spoiler alert: That neither easy nor simple. Thornton is a stunt, but it should nab him a few states before an embarrassing loss. Which is why no other hopefuls jumped in the race. Godspeed, Senator.

BRUCKNER

Godspeed, indeed. In finding a new President and a psychotic killer.

EXT. CABLE NEWS STUDIO - NIGHT

Bustling city street hosts the building where Bruckner's filming is in progress. Posters surround multiple TVs in the windows. Vladimir stands and smiles at Bruckner on the TV.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Historic layout. A large TV hangs in the famous room.

ON TV

Dolph Tritzter bangs his notes on the table.

DOLPH TRITZTER

Let's go to a just released video  
from President Reed.

President Reed grips the podium and squints at his cue cards.

PRESIDENT REED

Ladies and gentlemen, I come to you  
tonight to update you on the death  
of Senator Dodd. We now have  
verified the authenticity of the  
attack by a terrorist known as The  
Wolf. Sick. A sick individual.

BACK TO OVAL OFFICE

The TV broadcast plays while Reed storms into the room. VICE PRESIDENT OLIVER POLK, 58, goes along to get along, scurries in behind Reed. (COS)CHIEF OF STAFF BOB, 41, a puppet with wireless strings, follows and shuts the door.

PRESIDENT REED

Who the fuck wrote that speech!

COS BOB

Sir, it was the same per--

PRESIDENT REED

-- It was shit! Garbage! I had  
better writers on my reality show!  
Why am I giving the terrorist his  
five minutes of fame! I have a  
fucking re-election coming up!

VP POLK

We need to inform the public that--

PRESIDENT REED  
 -- I didn't ask for your opinion!  
 The public needs to hear what I  
 decide to them. That it's all good!

Reed grabs and lights a cigar. He looks at his recording on the TV of Polk standing quietly behind him.

PRESIDENT REED  
 (sneers)  
 Stay silent. It's your best trait.

Polk looks down. Bob glances back at the TV and points to it.

COS BOB  
 Uh, Mr. President....

ON THE TV

BREAKING NEWS. HOUSE SPEAKER JOAN DUNNE, 68, an unbending will for change, shakes hands with SOUTH KOREA PRESIDENT, 58.

BACK TO OVAL OFFICE

PRESIDENT REED  
 Son of a bitch.

Polk and Bob connect eyes. Reed pushes past them and walks to the TV screen. He puts out his cigar on Dunne's face.

INT. TRAIN - DINNER CAR - NIGHT

Kate walks past the booths and tables to a small crowd of supporters with Thornton. Kate stops by Campaign Leo.

CAMPAIGN LEO  
 He's like a kid in a candy store.  
 At least he does now. The first  
 time he ran for the Oval a dozen  
 years ago... not so much. Speaking  
 of candy, here comes more of it.

TAI (O.S.)  
 New race. New babies to shake.

Kate looks behind at Tai, dressed up in a skirt and heels.

KATE  
 "HANDS" to shake. Kiss babies.

TAI

Whatever. I can barely remember to feed my fish. Ready to roll camera?

CAMPAIGN LEO

Anyway. Grab some shots from here. It makes good background feed when music runs over it in the TV ads.

INT. TRAIN - BAR CAR - NIGHT

Void of other patrons, Kate and Tai sit alone at a table.

TAI

That was an interesting dinner. Thornton does have more charisma in person than watching him on TV.

KATE

Not a lie there. Impressive.

The train door opens. Thornton walks in, suit jacket hung over his shoulder. He slides into the booth by Kate and Tai.

THORNTON

Well, that went well. Darn well.

KATE

A decent crowd for a Friday train.

THORNTON

Had you said that the first time I tried running, I would have died three times from embarrassment. When I listen to these people now, I can really hear their hearts. They're struggling.

TAI

They always have been. Sir.

Kate nudges Tai under the table. She gets it.

The GRIM BARTENDER, 30, walks over from the bar counter and puts water cups down. Thornton's cup slashes on his hand. The Grim bartender wipes it away without much of a word said.

A large green ring is on his finger. The Grim Bartender leaves. Thornton shakes his head and grins.

THORNTON

What's different now is that everyone is into politics. It used to be just a certain subset of people. They knew the rules. They knew the game. Now, it's raw. It's personal. It's... Did you see the ring on the bartender's finger? It was a ROCD ring. He spilled my water on purpose.

KATE

A President Reed fan?

THORNTON

Yes. Say what you would about that crazy, old fox, but while there's a madness to Reed's method, and yes, I don't have that backwards, he's formed a cult that will long outlive him, even if he loses re-election. **Regain Our Country's Destiny.** In that god awful green.

TAI

And the green signifying...

THORNTON

The color of money. Correct. In my twenties, I would have taught that bartender some manners. In my thirties or forties, I would have had my staff do it. Now? At 64? Do you know what he deserves? To know how I can earn his vote.

Tai nods and looks at Kate, who gulps her wine.

THORNTON

Let's run these lines again, minus the ass-kicking. Is the camera ready?

The train door opens and MAYOR ZEKE, 38, his vocabulary bigger than his accomplishments, strolls over to them.

MAYOR ZEKE

Well, my dissident opponent quenches his thirst.

THORNTON

English, Zeke. English. The voters can't keep up with your verbs.

MAYOR ZEKE

They can keep up with my rising  
poll numbers, old man.

THORNTON

And there's the true Mayor Zeke.

Zeke grins. Tai sighs; rises. She looks in both directions.

TAI

Nature beckons. In the next car?

Kate nods. Tai opens the door between cars and disappears.

EXT. TRAIN CAR - NIGHT

Vladimir stands in the darkness between cars on the opposite end. He screws a silencer on his gun and opens the door just enough to aim toward Thornton and Zeke in the distance.

The Grim Bartender squints and notices Vladimir. Vladimir hides his gun as the Bartender walks over and steps out.

GRIM BARTENDER

Something interesting out here?

VLADIMIR

Why yes. Have a closer look.

Vladimir seizes him by the throat. With a lunge downward of the Bartender's jacket sleeve, Vladimir spins the jacket off the Bartender as he thrusts him off the train.

INT. TRAIN CAR - BAR CAR - NIGHT

Kate fiddles with the camcorder. Thornton notices Vladimir adjusting his jacket as he walks straight at their table.

THORNTON

Oh, they switched bartenders? Maybe  
this one is a fan of mine.

Kate and Zeke reciprocate Thornton's smile. Vladimir grins as he reaches behind for his gun and closes their distance.

The car door bursts open and Security Sam enters. He sees Vladimir as he briskly walks to their table. Vladimir removes his hand off his gun. Sam squints at Zeke.



SAM

Sir, everything OK? Tai walked by and said you needed me, but you told me to wait in the other car?

THORNTON

Hmm? What? No, We're fine.

Perplexed, Sam looks around. Vladimir holds his face angled off without turning away. He removes the cups from the table.

VLADIMIR

I am closing. Anything else?

THORNTON

Oh. No, no. I have work to do.

Vladimir nods and walks back to the bar. Sam turns back to the door as Tai reenters their car. She walks over and grins.

TAI

Now, it's a party. Another round?

KATE

We can get another...

Kate looks toward the bar area. Vladimir is gone.

SAM

Tai, why did you say he needed me?

TAI

I said you need a drink. Chill.

Tai shrugs and lifts the camcorder. Kate stares toward the far end of the empty car. The door clicks closed.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE PARK - NIGHT

TITLE: INDIANA PRIMARY

Small town feel. Flags flying; a gazebo decorated with stars and stripes banners. A sporadic crowd cheers on Thornton as he parades around a small stage. A sunset in the backdrop.

Kate runs the camcorder. Tai's head is buried in her phone.

TAI

Well, CNN has made the call.

KATE

Did he at least make the top three?

Campaign Leo storms past. He yells on his phone.

CAMPAIGN LEO  
I don't care! Get him here by  
morning! We're on to Plan B!

Kate lowers the camcorder. She turns to Tai.

KATE  
Dead last by how much?

TAI  
Know how they say polls have a  
margin of error of 3%? He got 3%.

Kate turns as Campaign Leo end his call and approaches.

CAMPAIGN LEO  
We're having a news conference  
tomorrow morning at the Town Hall.  
So, after you grab a few interviews  
with Thornton voters, pay them if  
you have to, get some shut-eye,  
because the party starts tomorrow.

Leo makes a call and storms off. Tai looks over at Thornton.

TAI  
Do you think he knows yet?

Kate looks up at Thornton on the stage, still doing  
handshakes and hugs. Kate takes a deep breath.

INT. HOTEL - KATE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Small town simple. Kate sits with wine in hand. TV is on.  
Cell phone rings. Kate looks at hers. Realizes another rings.  
She takes it out of the camcorder bag and answers.

KATE  
I'm not used to a burner phone. So,  
a week in, and he's just... a  
politician. Vain, a bit shallow, a  
bigger camera-ham than I realized.

TED (V.O.)  
Dig deeper. After today's defeat,  
he may pull out. Then you're out.

The call ends. Kate looks at the phone and puts it away.

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Rickety wooden floor covered with folding chairs. Some old-timers sit and sip from their Thornton-branded water bottles.

Kate stands with the tiny pool of media outlets as she videos a THORNTON FOR PRESIDENT banner above the stage. Tai enters.

KATE

Hung over?

TAI

No. Migraine. Don't judge me.

Kate turns the camera in Tai's face. She slaps it away.

TAI

Stop. Don't turn on me.

KATE

Where's all that zest? The zeal?

Tai holds up a bottle of Excedrin and her water bottle.

TAI

Locked away until these go to work.

Low fidelity band music starts piping through the old speakers. Everyone turns to the stage. Thornton enters. He waves to the spattering of applause and stops at the podium.

Thornton looks at the audience. He takes a deep breath. Nods.

THORNTON

It's because of you that I took to these streets. It's because of you that I'm putting it all on the line. It's because of you that we will win this race!

Some rise and applaud. Most just sit and slap their leg.

THORNTON

And because of you, I want to be crystal clear on Day 1 what my administration will look like. I'd like to introduce my Vice President, Senator Dick Vale!

The rest of the audience makes their way to their feet and applauds. The media outlets make calls. Tai looks at Kate.

TAI

Oh my God. Really?

KATE

Hail Mary. Void of grace.

SENATOR DICK VALE, 73, his best days behind him in style, flair and influence, walks out from behind the stage curtain.

Vale walks into the open arms of Thornton. They embrace. Thornton sits as Vale takes to the podium.

VALE

Thank you. Please, have a seat.

The audience sits. Tai watches her phone run amok with news.

VALE

You know, I've been around a long time. A long time. But until recently, I've never felt the need to expand my undying support for my state's constituents to a grander audience; the American people all across this great country.

TAI

(whispers to Kate)

He's going to make a short story long. These old timers always do.

Campaign Leo fingers the "quicker" circle in the air from behind the curtain. Vale nods.

VALE

Which is why when I my good friend Bill jump into this race after Senator Dodd's passing, I knew I had to think larger than myself. And my state. We need leadership! When Bill tapped my shoulder to travel this journey, I said let's take the road; to victory!

The audience rises and keeps a steady applause. Thornton shakes Vale's hand. They both raise their arms for victory.

The media outlets snap their final photos as Tai types away furiously on her phone. Kate glances her way, but Tai turns. Kate sees Zeke grin by the doorway. He shakes his head "no".

INT. TRAIN - BAR CAR

Mostly empty. Staffers sit working. Thornton sits with Vale in the distance. As Kate approaches, Thornton's angry tone and gestures to Vale flip on a dime. He smiles to Kate.

THORNTON  
Katherine! Come; join us.

A silence hangs over the table until a storm blows in. Tai. Kate pulls a chair over. Tai sits. Dick shakes Tai's hand.

THORNTON  
Dick, this is Tai. She and Kate are documenting our campaign. For PBS.

KATE  
So, this was quite a surprise.

THORNTON  
Some things are born of necessity. Others have time to be nurtured. Once Ben passed, action had to be taken. Dick was my only choice.

Thornton looks at Dick, who does his best to smile.

TAI  
And why go public today?

Thornton frowns. Kate notices. Everyone does.

THORNTON  
Ask again with the camera. Nicer.

Tai flinches. She slowly lifts the camcorder. Thornton grins.

TAI  
Senator Thornton, can you give us some insight on today's announcement about Senator Vale?

INT. TRAIN - BAR CAR - OPPOSITE END - NIGHT

Campaign Leo stares at the TV over the bar. He peers over his shoulder to where they all sit far down. He looks at the TV.

ON THE TV

Dolph Tritzer, hosts a panel of PUNDIT C, 35, and PUNDIT D, 46. A split screen of Thornton and Vale is on the screen.

DOLPH TRITZER

So what should we make of this?

PUNDIT C

Well, what does Thornton have to lose? Besides this race, which is all but done. I say go for it. Announce your whole cabinet and this season's Super Bowl winner.

PUNDIT D

I agree with you. I'd say this hurts his chances of a future run, but that ship has sailed. Sorry, I mean that train has left the station. Literally. I mean, what's with that?

BACK TO TRAIN

Leo sighs. He looks back at them and then types on his phone.

INT. TRAIN - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Kate walks up to her door. Tai steps up to hers. She waits.

KATE

Well, good night.

Kate pauses before she enters and shuts the door. Tai bursts through the connecting door with two drinks in her hands.

TAI

Time to recap over a nightcap!

Tai hands her a drink and plops on the bed. Kate looks at the open door and drink. She takes a breath and leaves it open.

KATE

Well, to recap, Thornton's smile was phony, but his words rang true. They are known to be close in the Senate. But, there was some words exchanged before I approached them.

TAI

His attitude was pinballing all over on me. That's more than stress. So, now what's this got to do with Dodd? Let's start with worst case. You think Thornton had him killed?

Kate pauses in her sip. She stares at Tai.

TAI

Get out! That's it? Wow. I would have thought it was more like a typical D.C. marital scandal.

KATE

Look...

Tai puts her best baby-face eyes and smile to work.

TAI

No, I'm sorry. Really. Forgive my thinking out loud. My generation, right? A.D.D and me.

KATE

Listen. I am looking into this.

TAI

I knew it! Cool! For who? FBI? CIA?

KATE

No one. Ben was my friend. I'm sure the alphabet agencies are on it.

TAI

Right, right. You learned his investigative ways and found that Governor's kidnapped daughter, right? I pulled up that article. I vaguely remember it. That was your fifteen minutes of fame, huh?

KATE

My concern was her. Not airtime.

TAI

Sure, sure, of course. Well, this time you wont need the FBI or CIA. They have scores of trained agents and Mission Impossible gadgets, but don't have the most important part.

(beat)

Me.

Kate downs the rest of her drink and walks to the door.

KATE

Good night. You.

Tai sighs and leaves. Kate smiles.

INT. VFW HALL - NIGHT

Perimeter lined with a jukebox, pinball machines and folding tables with coffee and water. A few dozen voters toil about.

TITLE: ONE WEEK LATER. POLLS CLOSED.

Kate runs the camcorder. Thornton is on stage at the podium.

THORNTON

Ladies and gentleman, thank you.  
While me may have fallen short  
tonight, we have risen tall and  
showed that we are a force.

Tai walks over to Kate and holds her phone up.

TAI

Well, he almost made it to 10%.

THORNTON

We are not done! We're taking this  
all the way to the convention floor!

The band music pipes from the intercom. People clap. Kate and Tai see Campaign Leo arguing with Vale behind the curtain.

TAI

Whoa. Still recording?

Thornton trudges backstage past Vale and Leo. Kate nods.

EXT. TRAIN TERMINAL - DAY

A platform full of passengers come and go. Kate walks with her luggage. The burner phone rings. Kate answers.

KATE

The tension mounts after the polls.

TED (V.O.)

And data about him and Dodd?

KATE

Nothing to set off alarms. I've  
poked some of his staffers. I  
haven't had alone-time with Vale.

TED (V.O.)

That old coot may know something  
without knowing he knows. Work him.



Kate smirks at the phone before she motions to put it away. She receives a text and lifts it back up.

ON PHONE

00000 - Trust only those you know have no agenda.

BACK TO KATE

Kate calls the number. It shows disconnected. She responds.

KATE - Who is this? 00000- Irrelevant

KATE - What's your agenda? 00000- Irrelevant

KATE - Who doesn't have an agenda? 00000 - Just the  
person in your phone's reflection.

BACK TO KATE

Kate sees herself in her phone's reflection. She looks all around. No one has eyes on her. She walks up to the train.

Tai films Thornton as he steps up to a microphone. Three other media outlets film it. Tai notices Kate.

TAI  
Hey boss. You OK?

KATE  
Fine.

Thornton straightens his tie and smiles to the crowd.

THORNTON  
Thank you for seeing us off. The  
Election Express is full steam to  
the Democrat Convention, like us!

A few people clap. Thornton pulls Vale out of the train door, who fakes a smiling wave. Tai squints to Kate.

TAI  
God, I hope we don't derail.

Tai boards the train. Mayor Zeke's entourage boards the train as Zeke stops in front of Kate.

MAYOR ZEKE  
That was just sad. Why don't you  
come document the winning side?

KATE

Thanks, but I have a job.

MAYOR ZEKE

Documenting short stories? The convention will be his finale. Besides, our side is more than politics. You and Tai make a cute couple. My husband agrees.

KATE

Excuse me? Why would you say that?

Kate blushes. Zeke winks before he turns and boards.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW - TRAIN LEAVING STATION

Scenic view of the countryside. A long, twenty-car train barrels along, hugs curves and ducks tunnels. Rain falls.

INT. TRAIN - BEDROOM CAR - DAY

Kate enters and tosses her bag on the bed. She knocks on the connecting room door. Tai opens and hands her a wine glass.

KATE

Just making sure I know what's behind door number two.

Kate sips her wine. Tai laughs and walks into the room.

TAI

Danger, Will Robinson!

Kate sits and puts her feet on the bed. Tai sits on the bed. Kate swirls her glass and stares at her wine. Tai smiles.

TAI

I've been poking around both public and gossip forums online.

Kate rises and walks into the bathroom. She slams the door.

TAI

Ugh! I don't like the gossip, but a true clue is glue for me and you.

The sink stops. Kate opens the door and stares at Tai's grin.

TAI

I knew that would open it.

Kate leaves the door ajar and resumes washing her hands.

TAI  
So, after Dodd had an affair with  
his staffer Olivia--

KATE  
-- Stop. Don't rehash what I know.

TAI  
(beat)  
Right. That was bad for you, wasn't  
it? I can imagine. Was it because  
he was your mentor?

Kate stares at herself in the bathroom mirror. She shuts the water and slowly dries her hands. She steps out of the room.

KATE  
Because I brought Olivia into his  
life. Because I was in love with  
her. Because I had to look in  
Beth's sobbing eyes and....

Kate lifts her wine and finishes it. Tai diverts her eyes.

KATE  
Does the online gossip have that?

The room intercom plays the dinner bell announcement. Tai slowly slides off the bed and moves toward her door.

TAI  
I need a shower. See you at dinner.

She shuts the door behind her. Kate lowers her head and sobs.

INT. TRAIN - DINNER CAR - NIGHT

Moderately crowded. Vale sits at the far end and signs an autograph for an elder women. As she leaves, Kate approaches.

VALE  
Sit down, my dear.

Kate sits on in the booth. She moves to lift the camcorder.

VALE  
Let's not do that just yet. Not  
sure if you remember, but I tried  
this myself. Twice.

Kate motions to speak, but has no data to dispense.

VALE

It's a rhetorical question. It's like asking what NFL team finished last, twice, eight years apart. The answer is; it doesn't matter.

Vale savors the rest of his drink. He licks his lips.

KATE

What made you say yes now?

VALE

Say yes? That's funny. Try saying no to Wild Bill Thornton. When the camera is off, he can be as ornery a bastard as God let slip out of his heavenly grasp. And when he wants you to do something, he's going to get it from you.

Kate's lip quivers. Vale pours another glass.

KATE

Did you know Senator Dodd?

Vale pauses before he take another sip.

VALE

I did.

KATE

How well did Bill know him? Did they have any type of falling out?

Vales runs his finger around the glass lip of his cup.

VALE

That's a pretty pointed question to lead with for his documentary. It's D.C., Kate. Everyone has a sin in their soul and a hatchet destined to be buried in it. You should know.

(beat)

You want to know about Dodd and Thornton? Well, we're not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy. Got me?

Kate stares at Vale. Campaign Leo approaches. Vale laughs.

CAMPAIGN LEO

We need to talk. Now.

Kate doesn't realize Leo is talking to her. When she does, she rises and follows Leo down to the other end. Leo stops.

FAR END OF TRAIN

CAMPAIGN LEO

Anything you want to tell me?

Kate doesn't keep eye contact. Her mouth is dry.

CAMPAIGN LEO

PBS? Bullshit! With all the craziness going on, with Dodd being murdered, and we get some bookworm professor with an agenda!

Kate looks back to Vale as a few heads turn in between.

KATE

Leo, look. I --

CAMPAIGN LEO

When this train makes its next stop, you and that crazy assistant better be off it. When the Senator hears about this, you'll be lucky he doesn't have your head!

Leo exits the train car next to him and slams the door. Kate looks back at Vale, who has dozed off on his own shoulder.

INT. TRAIN - BAR CAR - NIGHT

The OLD BARTENDER, 62, cleans a counter void of customers. Kate slumps in a booth nearby. Empty glasses on her table.

Kate receives a text. She lifts her phone.

ON KATE'S PHONE

00000 - Stay vigilant.

Kate - Who is this?

00000 - Thornton is hiding something. Where is he? Think.

BACK TO TRAIN

Kate stares at an old photo of her and Dodd. And OLIVIA, 21.

TAI (O.S.)

You had nice hair. So did she.

Kate flinches. She scurries the photo away and looks up at Tai. Her hair is elegantly pinned up and her dress is tight.

KATE

Wow.

Tai ingests the desire in Kate's eyes. She smiles and twirls.

TAI

Thank you. So what did I miss?

Kate's glum look returns.

KATE

Where have you been? I came back to your cabin but you didn't answer.

TAI

Sorry, my migraine came back and I had to lay down for a bit.

KATE

Well, have a seat for the update.

Tai looks around and see a jukebox. She walks over to it.

TAI

I've been laying on my seat for hours. Hey, guess which old movie I watched over and over?

She hits a button. "Be My Baby" by the Ronettes plays. She starts to slowly sway. Kate's brow rises. She dances Kate's way and puts out her hand. Kate declines.

TAI

Don't make me call Security Sam.

Kate still refuses but Tai yanks her up in her arms. Kate resists for a minute but laughs before she sways with her.

Tai puts her head on Kate's shoulder. Kate takes a nervous breath. Their eyes find each other. Their lips move close.

KATE

Sam.

Tai's eyes are closed. Her lips ready.

TAI

Tai....

Kate breaks their embrace and looks around the car.

KATE

Leo said "when he would speak to Thornton". WHEN. If Leo already knew our PBS story was a sham, he would have told Thornton before he came to me. Or send Sam for us.

TAI

Wait, what? They know?

Kate paces in circles. Tai steps back.

KATE

I haven't seen Thornton or Sam all night. Vale was alone.

TAI

What are you saying?

KATE

Thornton isn't on this train.

A fierce explosion tears the far end of the car off. Flames destroy the bar. The Bartender is torn out into the smoke.

Kate leaps and grabs Tai out of the way of the tables and chairs crashing all around them. The car turns on it's side.

EXT. BRIDGE TRESTLE - NIGHT

Amidst the flames, steel girders fall into the ravine below. Train cars fall along with the track into the darkness.

INT. TRAIN - BAR CAR

The ripped open end of the car teeters over the torn tracks below. Bloodied, Kate hangs near the edge about to fall out when Tai lunges and grabs her arm with both hands.

KATE

Get back. Let... me go.

TAI

Shut up! Just shut up!

Kate blacks out.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Kate is in bed. She opens her eyes. Groggy, half aware. There's no one else in the room. She blinks, but the time between blinks is unknown. SUSAN, 54, stands in front of her.

Susan, dressed professional, pulls a chair next to the bed.

SUSAN  
Welcome back.

Kate blinks and squints. Her haze starts to lift.

KATE  
(hoarse whisper)  
Where am I?

SUSAN  
A hotel. In California.

KATE  
You're Senator Vale's wife. Susan.

SUSAN  
Good. You're coherent. Rest your voice. You've been out for days.

Kate tries to sit up, but she flops back. Sue touches her.

SUSAN  
I buried my husband yesterday.

Kate squints. Sue maintains her composure. Barely.

SUSAN  
Officially; it's being considered a structural failure. Right over the goddamn ravine. Where, between the current and weather, they still haven't recovered all the deceased.

Kate looks out the window. It's typical California sunny.

SUSAN  
I should be grateful. Zeke's husband and Leo's wife as well. Their bodies were recovered.

KATE  
Tai? My assistant? She saved me.



SUSAN

(beat)

She's among those not found yet.

Kate looks back out the window at nothing. She thinks aloud.

KATE

This is my fault. Mine.

SUSAN

It's not. I told you what's been officially reported. For now.

KATE

What about Senator Thornton?

Sue doesn't attempt to finish. She takes a deep breath and rises. Sue walks to the door and puts her hand on the knob.

SUSAN

The documentary is far from over.

She opens the door. Sam stands against the outside frame. Sue walks out as Thornton walks in and shuts the door.

KATE

You bastard!

Kate tries to spring from the bed, but collapses under her own weight. Thornton steps to Kate, still on her knees.

THORNTON

Katherine. Get back in bed. Please.

Thornton tries to help Kate into bed, but is shrugged off. Kate lifts herself into a chair. Thornton sits across.

KATE

Why weren't you on that train?

Thornton gleans with interest. He nods as he pours a drink.

THORNTON

You hit your head hard, Katherine. You see, I was on the train. It's a good thing I was up front shaking hands with some crew.

Thornton sips his drink.

## THORNTON

Two of them testified to that. I did say it's all gotten too partisan, but when needed.... The convention is in a week. I'm not replacing Leo. I'm going with the staff that's left. I need you ready. I am so sorry about Tai.

Thornton leaves. Kate rubs her temples. She reaches for her luggage and unzips a hidden compartment to remove the dead burner phone. She plugs it in to charge and turns on the TV.

## ON THE TV

News anchor MONICA PESCOW, 44, a surgeon of social cuts who's often sued for malpractice, hosts PUNDIT E and PUNDIT F, 32.

## MONICA PESCOW

If this was a political thriller, most of you at home would not pay your budgeted money to see something so unbelievable. Bill Thornton's VP and campaign manager sadly perished in the train accident along with many other passengers. Where does he go next?

## PUNDIT E

The Academy Awards? I honestly don't know. He says he's going to the convention, so he will get his remaining minutes of fame in the form of a speech. Good luck, Bill.

## PUNDIT F

There's also word that he'll have Senator Vale's wife, Susan, at the convention for support. We know her to be a fierce fighter for women's rights, and as a Republican, the marriage that she and Dick, a Democrat, shared, was one of the most inspirational D.C. stories of not taking your work home with you.

## BACK TO ROOM

Kate shuts off the TV. The burner phone dings with voicemails. Kate grabs it and hobbles into the bathroom.

INT. HOTEL - BATHROOM - DAY

Kate runs the shower; sits on the closed toilet. She calls.

TED (V.O)

I was amazed to see you made it off that train. You know we will have to formally interview you.

KATE

I'm fine. Thanks for asking. He wasn't on the train, Ted. The bastard knew the bomb was on it.

TED (V.O)

I'm very glad you're alive, Kate. We haven't gotten a report back yet. Preliminaries show the bridge was past due for repair. And Tai--

KATE

A bomb blew in the next car! She's dead! Because I let her stay!

TED (V.O)

She sounded like a smart kid.

KATE

Woman.

TED (V.O)

Kate, my deepest sympathies. But, this won't be in vain if you stay on it. Thornton had a helicopter pick him up in all the chaos before the authorities even had a chance to speak with him. But he checked out when we interviewed him.

KATE

With not a scratch on him.

TED (V.O)

Oh, sweet Jesus. Turn on the news.

INT. HOTEL - KATE'S ROOM

Kate hobbles back in and turns the TV on.

ON THE TV

Dolph Tritzer introduces a video clip in-screen.

DOLPH TRITZER

Breaking news; A week after the horrible train derailment, we now have our first claim of responsibility. A video has been released online in the last few minutes from an individual identifying himself as "The Wolf". Let's have a look.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - TIME UNKNOWN

Vladimir wears a wolf's mask that covers his eyes. He sits at a desk wearing Army fatigues with a chest patch that says G.I JOE. A bloodied American flag is his only visible backdrop.

VLADIMIR

Women and men; your attention span has waned to where I believe you are trying to fast forward right now. So, I shall be brief. Your democracy is not a democratic process. It is an illusion. Much like Hollywood productions. Except they yell "cut" and make edits before you see the finished product. I will do no such thing. I will make the right changes with you, the audience, in on every step of the way. I asked Dodd to step out of the race because of his past transgressions on society, but he disagreed. So, I yell "cut". Bill Thornton was asked to bow out for his ineptness to lead. As we see, he did not. There will always be collateral damage. If the other candidates do not heed my advice, we see sequels to my blockbuster.

The video cuts off.

BACK TO HOTEL ROOM

Kate clicks off the TV. She lifts out the camcorder and plays its recording. Kate stares at the small screen on it.

KATE

Ted, what's going on here?

TED (V.O)

Our animal is stepping up his  
production from his first letter.

(beat)

Kate, you can stop now. As he said,  
they'll be collateral damage.

Kate freezes on the shot of Tai waving Kate not to film her.

KATE

I have a convention to attend.

INT. DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

A large, indoor stadium. Raucous, boisterous crowds wave  
signs for multiple candidates. TVs everywhere.

TITLE: DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

INT. DEMOCRAT NATIONAL CONVENTION - MEDIA ROOM

Monica Pescow hosts PUNDIT G, 34 and PUNDIT H, 41, at a desk.

MONICA PESCOW

Well, we made it. Only ten short  
days after a terrorist train attack  
on Senators' Thornton and Vale, the  
Democratic National Convention will  
happen here today. And possibly  
because of the attack, and the bump  
it gave Thornton, for the first  
time in years we will have a  
contested convention. Thoughts?

PUNDIT G

This is something out of a Tom  
Clancy novel. The Wolf! I didn't  
think politics could get any  
stranger, after four years of  
President Reed, but I've been  
proven wrong again. Yes, we've seen  
Thornton get a slight bump in  
surviving his assassination, but  
what he going to do for an encore?  
He's still an alter boy short of a  
Hail Mary moment to win it here.

PUNDIT H

Amen. But, he'll get his goodbye  
speech, so who knows? Let's hope  
The Wolf won't have the last word.

MONICA PESCOW  
Who knows, indeed. Stay tuned....

INT. DEMOCRAT NATIONAL CONVENTION - ON THE FLOOR

Roped off by States, scores of rowdy people chant and scream for their candidate. Kate walks around with her camcorder.

She nears Thornton's fans, a small but passionate crowd. She raises her camcorder toward ROWDY RON, 45, drunk and loud.

KATE  
We're here at the convention with fans of Senator Bill Thornton. Sir, can you share why he's your man?

ROWDY RON  
WHOO! WILD BILL IS AWESOME!!

KATE  
What policy of his do you support?

ROWDY RON  
WHO CARES ABOUT POLICIES! HE SURVIVED A TERRORIST ATTACK LIKE HARRISON FORD IN AIR FORCE 1! WHOO!

Kate lowers the camcorder and grins a nod before she leaves.

ZOE WATERS, 28, southern charm powered by a northern cynicism, waits with her arms folded. Kate stops.

ZOE  
If you put that in the documentary, it'll look more like a Reed reel.

KATE  
Right. OK. So are you still doing your old job now that Bill elevated you to his campaign manager?

ZOE  
"Acting" campaign manager. It gives Leo's memory the time and respect he deserved. Besides, after today, I'll be back in Georgia doing polls for Sweet Tea versus Unsweet. Yay me.

Kate nods. The arena lights start to flicker and music plays. Kate raises the camcorder towards the main stage.

INT. DEMOCRAT NATIONAL CONVENTION - MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

Thornton holds the podium amid mild applause. The music ends.

THORNTON

Ladies and gentlemen, in elections' past, we debate, not coronate our representatives. It's time to return the levels of power exploited by my party... and let's face it, the other party, back to you. We, your elected officials, have forgotten our civility. We've forgotten how to have a discussion. And in the last thirty years, we've reduced our attention span down to sound bites for The Big Three.

A smattering of applause allows Thornton to sip his water.

THORNTON

I'm up here to simply be myself. To stop playing the game. I know you can take it. I even think you want it. Need it. Everyone just wants to trust the person beside them.

He waits for a reaction to stop him, but it doesn't come.

THORNTON

Where is it written that a Democrat is a fool with money and weak against the enemy? Where's it written that every Republican doesn't care about the union worker, women or minorities? Who the heck wrote that book?

The cheers grow, as does his inspiration.

THORNTON

Well, I'm here to rewrite it, to return it, to what our founders intended. No, wait. I'm sorry. When you do this as long as I have, you just automatically spew out things that just do not ring true anymore.

THORNTON(cont'd)

When we start every interview with focus group-tested speech lingo like "The American people deserve" or "Our founders", we've already lost sight that what a bunch of white men did a few hundred years ago, is not written in cement for today's world. We must adapt, and include others into the party and rise above pettiness. As Mohammed Ali said, let's shock the world!

INT. DEMOCRAT NATIONAL CONVENTION - MEDIA ROOM

Monica peers up from her notes and looks at Pundits' G and H.

MONICA PESCOW

Is the applause getting louder?

PUNDIT G

I thought he was already cut for a commercial? Those new Sketchers sneakers are hot. Did you see them?

PUNDIT H

Did he just say something about Reed and Speaker Dunne? Is that laughing?

INT. DEMOCRAT NATIONAL CONVENTION - MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

Thornton lets the laughter subside as he nurses his water.

THORNTON

I mean it. Look closer next time. I'm not wrong about their haircuts. But in all seriousness, this is our vision. With the heaviest of heart, we must continue on this journey for my friend and running mate, Dick Vale. And with that in mind, I would like to introduce to you, my new partner in this journey. The only person I could even consider. A person with the courage and the strength to not only inspire a nation, but to inspire myself to move forward, knowing your lives are what matter well beyond my own. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Congresswoman Susan Vale!



INT. DEMOCRAT NATIONAL CONVENTION - MEDIA ROOM

Monica puts her hand to her earpiece. The two Pundits gasp.

MONICA PESCOW

Did he just introduce the deceased  
Senator Vale's wife, Congresswoman  
Susan Vale, a Republican, as his  
new VP running mate? Oh my!

PUNDIT G

Amazing! This is incredible!

PUNDIT H

This is either the biggest  
miscalculation in the history of  
political races....

The crowd roars. It deafens the Media room occupants. Pundit H fixes his earpiece as he peeks over the wall to the crowd.

PUNDIT H

... or the most brilliant move yet.

INT. DEMOCRAT NATIONAL CONVENTION - ON THE FLOOR

Kate rotates the camcorder around to capture the cheers. She looks to Zoe, who shrugs her shoulders.

WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Reed puffs on a cigar. The TV monitor on the wall shows the announcement of Susan Vale. Reed jolts up in his seat.

PRESIDENT REED

You've got to be shitting me!

Bob rushes into the room. He scurries over to the screen.

COS BOB

Sir! We had no advanced knowl--

Reed grabs and throws a glass ashtray at Bob, who ducks as it shatters the TV screen. Reed jumps up.

PRESIDENT REED

Why the fuck do I keep you around  
here! You're useless! Useless!

Reed glares at Bob as he storms out of the room.

PRESIDENT REED  
Get my fucking VP in here. Now!

Bob sighs. He calls on his phone as he walks over and opens a closet. There's multiple identical TV screens.

COS BOB  
Tammy? Yes, send the techs. And  
have Oliver come here. Quick.

INT. DEMOCRAT NATIONAL CONVENTION - STAGING ROOM - NIGHT

Dressing room lined with mirrors and high director's chairs. Kate sits waiting as Thornton edges into the room with Zoe.

Zoe pushes the door shut and seals off the view of Sam holding back media on the other side. She leans on the door.

ZOE  
Oh my sweet Lord! Havoc!

Thornton smiles as he saunters to the bar. He pours a drink.

THORNTON  
Reporters; keep them off balance  
and they'll roar for more.

Kate's squints and points to the camera.

KATE  
I'm sorry, is that on-the-record or  
off? I don't know what anymore.

Thornton looks to Zoe and smiles.

THORNTON  
See, that's why I like her. She's  
not kissing my ass to keep a job,  
like some bloodsuckers in my life.

ZOE  
I see. Well, then you'll love this;  
pull another surprise like this VP  
announcement on me, and I'll have  
some quite unladylike Southern  
words for her camera as I quit.

Thornton laughs as he touches up his hair in the mirror.

THORNTON

Such zeal! Such fire! And that's what this campaign, hell, my whole career, has been missing. No more.

Zoe's phone vibrates with texts. She exits the room while she answers a call. Kate rises and approaches Thornton.

KATE

What kind of crazy--

THORNTON

-- Turn it on.

Thornton's smile vanishes as he steps into Kate's face.

THORNTON

No unneeded takes. Turn it on.

A moment of nothing leads to Kate's blink. She turns it on.

THORNTON

(smiles)

...and that's why the craziest idea would have been to not pick Susan Vale for the Vice Presidency. She's qualified, a leader and just the inspiration the country and I need.

Thornton walks away and stops with his hand on the door.

THORNTON

Buckle up, you may revive your few minutes of fame before it's over.

He exits. Kate lowers the camera and stares in the mirror.

INT. CABLE NEWS STUDIO - DAY

Rolling camera swings in the backdrop of a well lit room. Dolph Tritzter sits at his anchor desk.

TITLE: TWO WEEKS LATER.

ON THE TV SCREEN ABOVE DOLPH

- Thornton and Susan hold hands up in victory at convention.
- Thornton does TV interviews. Susan does her own.
- Susan at a Woman's Rights luncheon.

- Thornton wears an Elk hat at the Rotary Club meeting.

BACK TO ANCHOR DESK

DOLPH TRITZER

I'm Dolph Trizer reporting live. After an incredible two weeks since the Democratic National convention nominated Senator Bill Thornton after multiple rounds of voting, we have another shocking announcement about to take place. Let's go live to the White House media room.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

A small, packed auditorium of reporters sit and stand. Reed walks up to the podium and adjusts the microphone. VP Polk follows and stands solemn behind Reed.

PRESIDENT REED

I want to thank you all for joining us here today. With our convention coming up very shortly, I wanted to make an announcement that will benefit you, the American people.

Reed turns to Polk. Polk moves forward toward the microphone.

PRESIDENT REED

Oliver, the floor is yours.

An expressionless Polk forces a grin as he adjusts the mike.

VP POLK

Thank you, Mr. President. I also want to thank you again for the wonderful opportunity you presented when we won the highest offices in this great country. I'll never forget the policies we implemented to help everyday Americans.

(beat)

And in doing what's best for them, and ultimately my health, I want to share my status. Over the last few weeks I've had a series of tests reveal heart issues that I need to address without further delay.

VP POLK(cont'd)

Along with my beautiful wife,  
Theresa, we have decided it would  
not be fair to President Reed or  
the people of this great country if  
I continued in this race.

Reed steps up and puts his arm around Polk's shoulder and  
pats it a few times. Reed squeezes back control of the mike.

PRESIDENT REED

And we know you're going to beat  
this thing and be the stronger for  
it, Oliver. Beat it to nothing.

Reed nudges Polk, who grimaces and finds his original spot.

PRESIDENT REED

And because Oliver has a fantastic  
eye for talent, I agreed with his  
recommendation for the most  
qualified person to move forward  
with me on our journey for re-  
election. Ladies and gentlemen,  
Governor Sandy Balin!

From behind the stage curtain, SANDY BALIN, 44, all her  
political clout fits inside her size 1 Barbie doll outfit,  
saunters out and waves as she hugs a waiting Reed.

The media room is a buzz with whispers. Sandy takes the mike.

SANDY

Thank you! President Reed, Vice  
President Polk and thank you to the  
great people of North Dakota who  
gave me the opportunity! Oliver has  
big shoes for me to fill, but these  
pumps on my heels stomped out crime  
back home and won't fail me now!

Reporters wince. Reed hastily steps back in front.

PRESIDENT REED

We'll see you all at the convention!

INT. CABLE NEWS STUDIO - DAY

Dolph Tritzer now sits flanked by PUNDIT J, 45, and PUNDIT K,  
43. They all stare speechless at each other for a moment.

DOLPH TRITZER

There you have it. In one of the most highly unusual political moves we can remember, the sitting Vice President has stepped down from running for re-election. Thoughts?

PUNDIT J

Honestly, at this point, I would have been more shocked if something this unprecedented didn't happen.

PUNDIT K

The unprecedented President. Movie scripts are writing themselves now.

DOLPH TRITZER

There's been chatter that The Vice President was told by President Reed to step down because the polls show Senator Thornton and Vale leading by 4 points in nationwide polls and Reed now wanted a woman on the ticket. Your reaction?

PUNDIT J

Horrified? Token female anyone? But after Reed ran for office just to get his reality show renewed, I stopped being shocked by politics.

PUNDIT K

Yikes! To think better ratings would have spared us the last four years. We're entering sweeps week. Reed knows "must-see" publicity. Maybe The Wolf has a view.

EXT. INDOOR STADIUM - REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION - NIGHT

Kate exits a cab and looks up at the indoor football arena.

TITLE: TEN DAYS LATER

Kate answers her phone as she walks to the entrance.

KATE

Your timing is impeccable. Are you watching me as I watch our man?

TED (V.O.)

Of course. Turn left.

Kate looks left towards the portable toilet. She walks right.

KATE

No, but you had a 50/50 chance.

TED (V.O.)

Listen, I know you need to capture footage tonight, but keep your eyes open. There's been social media chatter about something going down. Maybe The Wolf. Maybe not.

Kate looks up at the massive picture of Reed on the marquee. Picketers are roped off by police up ahead.

KATE

I may wind up in that toilet yet.

INT. REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION - ON THE FLOOR - NIGHT

Massive, cheering crowds wave Reed signs. The spotlights zoom across the stands and floor area. Kate pans it with her camcorder and sees Reed take to the stage above to cheers.

Kate notices thirty feet straight ahead what appears to be Tai, who stares at Kate. A sad grin is across Tai's face.

Kate blinks. She moves the camera in Tai's direction just as a slew of fans block her view with their signs.

Kate moves around the crowd but doesn't see Tai. She sees a similar Asian woman watching Reed on the Jumbotron. Kate notices Vladimir in a darkened stairwell twenty feet away.

Vladimir raises his wolf mask over his eyes and turns and smiles at Kate. Kate raises the camcorder on him just as he lifts a rocket launcher out of his long coat and fires at the Jumbotron. It blows up the screen showing Reed.

Sparks and debris rain down. Lights go out. Chaos ensues. Fans scream and run for their lives. People are trampled.

EXT. REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

People run in all directions. Kate barely exits unscathed and staggers toward the curb. She's yanked into a windowless van.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

The interior houses state-of-the-art electronics. FBI GUY, 34 and FBI GAL, 32, sit and work the computers and gear. Kate's pulled in by Ted as the door slams shut. Kate shutters back.

KATE

Ted! What in God's na--

TED

--What did you see in there? You had the camera on Reed on stage and then you jerked it to the floor. Why? Who did you see?

KATE

You hacked my camera feed?

TED

Kate, I don't have time to explain to your inner child how the real world works. Was it The Wolf?

Kate's mouth hangs open. Her eyes answer instead as she nods. Ted curls his lip. He bangs on the metal siding.

TED

Fuck. Fuck!  
(to FBI Gal)  
Get word on the floor. He's in.

Kate's hand trembles. She rewinds the camcorder and stares at the small screen. Ted turns back and peers at the screen.

TED

What is it? What else did you see?  
(beat)  
Who else did you see, Kate?

Kate ends the tape. She stares at Ted.

KATE

Just toilets.

Ted's silent reaction is to fling the door open.

TED

Keep your eyes open, Kate. You're now seeing the deeper you get into the game, the more you realize you didn't know shit about the rules.



EXT. REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Kate steps out of the van as the door slams closed. The van drives off as people still run screaming all around Kate.

Kate raises the camcorder and films the fiasco.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Thornton sits at his desk writing a letter. The wall TV is on and shows a split-screen of cable news networks.

Kate knocks and enters, She sits in front of Thornton's desk.

THORNTON

Quite a night you had. Are you OK?

KATE

At this point, I couldn't define what constitutes as "OK."

Thornton rises and steps to his bar. He pours a drink.

THORNTON

I was a kid during the 1968 Democratic Convention. What a mess. Then, despite impeaching Nixon and 9/11, we still believe we've evolved above turbulent periods such as this. Apparently, we haven't.

KATE

And yet, despite sexual scandals and the partisan division, four years ago we had the most votes for a Presidential election. Ever.

THORNTON

Which tells us what? That sex still sells and rage equals engage.

KATE

God help us all.

THORNTON

God helps those who help themselves. That person can then help others. That's why I'm going to win this whole damn thing, Kate.

Thornton swills his drink down as he stares at the TV.

THORNTON

Multiple polls since the convention attack added three more points to our side. Reed gained no sympathy for the attack. They caught him on a hot mike saying not to cancel the rest of the convention. Why? Not for the safety of his constituents. No, it's because of ratings and the advertisers would need a refund. That man is a buffoon.

KATE

Well, your convention speech was certainly inspirational. I'll give you that. You're the next RFK.

THORNTON

With a better hotel exit route.

They almost share a smile, if it wasn't so wrong.

THORNTON

So, we pushed the flight to Ohio for the children's hospital back a day. I now have a meeting tomorrow with Dunne. That woman gets more milage out of the Speaker position than anyone I've seen. And I've seen some ladder-climbers.

KATE

Well, she's out of rungs or you would have had more competition.

THORNTON

Joan? President? No. She hates the camera as much as Reed loves it.

KATE

True. I've seen her mandatory weeklies with the press. Painful.

THORNTON

Which is why she'll love when you stick your camcorder in her face for the documentary.

Thornton smiles. Kate sighs. The TV behind them is on.

ON THE TV

The TV shows anchor, Bruckner Darson.

BRUCKNER

And of course, Thornton and the rest of the progressive Left have made sure not to waste a perfectly good terrorist attack by fund raising off of it. Don't ask how, because you wouldn't believe it. But, if they think people are more worried about President Reed's open mike versus our open borders and the terrorists pouring thought it, well, they'll be seeing those same people in the polling booth, and the streets of the Capital. The Wolf will look like a pansy comp--

BACK TO OFFICE

The door opens and Thornton walks in with Joan Dunne.

TITLE: TWENTY FOUR HOURS LATER

Thornton walks to his bar and pours two drinks. Joan sits.

THORNTON

It's good to see you. I don't think we've really had a one-on-one since your first time around in this gig.

JOAN

Yes, well, we easily had all three chambers back then, I didn't have to work as hard to keep it as I'm doing now. My time is scant.

Thornton tries to hand her a drink but she waves him off.

JOAN

With Reed, I need my wit sober.

Thornton sits. He finishes his drink and starts on hers.

THORNTON

Good times. Why are you here, Joan?

Joan looks around the room. She lifts the remote off the table and raises the TV sound high from its mute position.

JOAN

As you know, Reed is down four to five points in this morning's poll.

THORNTON  
Which is great.

JOAN  
Which is dangerous.

EXT. OFFICE - HALLWAY - DAY

Security Sam stands vigilant up against the door. BODYGUARD BOB, 45, stands stoic next to him. Kate walks up to them.

KATE  
Morning, Sam. I'm here to film  
Speaker Dunne and Bill's meeting.

BODYGUARD BOB  
House Speaker Dunne doesn't do  
photo opps. Move it along.

Kate looks from Bob to Sam. Sam sighs.

SAM  
Bob is her security detail.

Kate is about to speak when the yelling coming from within Thornton's office precedes the door flying open. Joan storms out past the three. Her lip is curled.

JOAN  
Don't try me, Bill! One party!

Joan motions to Bob to leave. She locks eyes with Kate.

KATE  
Uh, Can I get a picture of you and  
the Senator? For the documentary?

Thornton emerges from his office. He smiles. Joan doesn't.

JOAN  
Photoshop it. No one will care.

Joan stomps off with Bob in tow. Once gone, Thornton laughs.

THORNTON  
The rich may get richer and the  
mean get meaner. But crazy stays  
steady. Let's get the show on the  
road. We got a flight in two hours  
to the children's hospital.

Thornton enters his office and shuts the door. Loud music starts playing from Thornton's office. Sam grins to Kate.

SAM  
Welcome to the jungle.

EXT. PRIVATE JET - AIR - DAY

A midsize plane cruises through the clear sky.

INT. PRIVATE JET - DAY

Off-color white panels surround beige leather seats that face inward. Thornton, Kate and Zoe sit exhausted.

THORNTON  
That, was some over-nighter. Now I remember why I never married.

ZOE  
Well, there's dialogue we'll leave off your highlight reel.

THORNTON  
Now, now. I feel incredibly bad for those poor kids. So much so that I know I couldn't handle the pain of watching my own slip away.

KATE  
More of your "Keeping it real tour?"

THORNTON  
My parents adopted my brother Lee when he was ten. He was in a foster home and ran away twice before we took him in. So yes, I do care.

Zoe and Kate share a glance before they look elsewhere.

THORNTON  
Which is why, God rest her soul, I allowed Tai to stay with us.

Kate's face doesn't hide her surprise. Thornton grins.

THORNTON  
Of course I knew. Do you think I'd allow anyone to join my campaign? Did you think you were the only one who knows how to investigate?

Kate motions to speak words that have yet to be thought.

ZOE

Oh God!

Thornton and Kate follow Zoe's eyes to the mounted TV.

ON THE TV

CNN newsroom. Dolph Tritzer sits at his anchor desk.

DOLPH TRITZER

To repeat the breaking news,  
Speaker of the House Joan Dunne,  
has been rushed to Mercy hospital  
after a terrorist attack has taken  
the life of her bodyguard and  
driver. Let's go to Bake McSpout,  
live on the scene.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

A concrete labyrinth is surrounded by ambulances and police cars. Lights flash everywhere. BAKE MCSPOUT, 44, visions of being a war-time correspondent who couldn't even handle the battle for child custody, lifts the microphone to his mouth.

BAKE MCSPOUT

Thank you, Dolph. We're at the sight of a horrific scene that took place earlier today. House Speaker Dunne was leaving a Women's Rights luncheon where upon her limousine's exit from the lower level of this garage, a man with an AR-15, apparently stepped in front the vehicle and opened fire. We can now confirm both the driver and Dunne's bodyguard are dead.

DOLPH TRITZER (V.O.)

This is horrible, horrible news. Can you tell us the House Speaker's current condition?

BAKE MCSPOUT

Dolph, all we are being told is that she was found practically on the floor of the back of the limo with her bodyguard over her.

BAKE MCSPOUT(cont'd)

The assumption here, as they are sworn to do, is that her bodyguard Robert Brinkley, gave his life by shielding her from the gunfire. We're being told she has suffered a concussion and lacerations from the glass, but she is stable.

BACK TO PLANE

Thornton clicks the MUTE button. He sits, deep in thought. Kate studies Thornton's face as Zoe hastily makes a call.

KATE

Sir? Are you OK?

THORNTON

Hmm? What? Yes, thank you.

KATE

It looks like she's going to be OK.

THORNTON

What? Oh, yes. That is good. Good to hear. So, you didn't get any footage of us yesterday, correct?

KATE

When she stormed out? No.

Thornton sits in thought until the silence becomes uneasy.

THORNTON

Let's make sure we leave any of the meeting off the documentary.

Kate holds her reaction. Thornton rises and makes a drink.

THORNTON

Zoe, Prepare our statement. I'm running for the highest post in the land, but with a lock on the House, that tough, old bird will remain number three whether I win or lose.

EXT. PRIVATE AIRPORT RUNWAY - NIGHT

Thornton and Zoe walk off the rolling steps on the tarmac to a limousine. Kate enters her own car and makes a call.

INT. MOVING CAR - NIGHT

Kate drives with Ted on speaker.

TED

Six weeks until Election Day. Talk.

KATE

Talk or just move my lips? Is my car bugged for video or just audio?

TED

Let's remember you came to me, lady. So holster your attitude or you can ride that horse back to the classroom right now.

Kate mulls over the ultimatum. She bangs the steering wheel.

KATE

Thornton was more relaxed after the train incident. But the Dunne news rattled him. I can't tell if it's because she almost died, or lived.

TED

Interesting. Stay on it. We're expecting other news to drop soon.

Kate's phone dings multiple times. She glances at it.

ON KATE'S PHONE

Live video of Monica Pescow at her anchor desk.

MONICA PESCOW

Let's go to the video just released online by The Wolf. Let me warn our viewers that this contains graphic content unsuitable for all audiences.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION

Vladimir wears his wolf's mask and sits at his desk, still in Army fatigues. The bloodied American flag remains a backdrop.

VLADIMIR

I have decided you are all culpable in crimes against humanity.



VLADIMIR(cont'd)

Whether by the direct actions of power-hungry politicians or your vote cast in their favor, you are guilty. Since you have corrupted the term "justice", I am now your expedited jury and executioner. And because both political parties are in it for their own needs, I, the Wolf, am the one true Independent. Here to keep them honest. It is in that vein that I show you what happens when true wolves like Joan Dunne get in bed with communist nations and autocratic dictators.

The Wolf plays a video.

ON THE VIDEO

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE - DAY

The concrete structure houses Joan Dunne's limousine as it's being riddled with bullets. After it's over, the POV moves closer to the limousine.

Through one of the shattered tinted windows, the reflection shows The Wolf as he holds an AR-15. There's a camera mounted on his chest vest. The video ends.

BACK TO VLADIMIR

VLADIMIR

It appears Joan Dunne survived by cowardly hiding behind her bodyguard, showing once again that everyone is but a prop in her game. Stay vigilant. I only play offense.

BACK TO THE CAR

Kate places her phone on the car holder.

KATE

Ted, how is this guy, this... lone wolf, not been caught yet? There's a camera everywhere.

TED

The fuck has a knack to disable the right ones just before he attacks. It isn't easy, Kate. Never has been.

The call disconnects. Kate clicks it off but a text appears.

ON THE PHONE

00000 - Careful at the debate. Kate - What do you know?

00000 - I know that I don't know enough. Or I'd be elsewhere.

BACK TO CAR

Kate clicks her phone off.

EXT. COLLEGE UNIVERSITY - ARENA - NIGHT

Aerial view descends on a large dome on a college campus. Lights shine upward. SWAT vehicles and law officers surround the arena. Protesters picket and scream behind gates.

TITLE: THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

INT. ARENA - STAGE - NIGHT

Standing room only. Media, politicians and law enforcement fill the seats. Reed and Thornton walk out and shake hands. Kate stands off to the right of the stage filming.

TOM CAR, 54, moderates the debate. He nods to the candidates.

TOM CAR

I want to thank both candidates for joining us here tonight. Our country has seen times that require vigilance. Tonight is no different. We will continue to persevere and move forward. Let's begin.

A loud POP-POP sound is heard. Reed grips his podium and ducks downward. Tom flinches to his left. A few screams break the audience from its silence. Thornton never moves.

TOM CAR

Ladies and gentlemen! Please remain in your seats. I'm being told the sound is two large bulbs overheating and shattering.

Thornton looks at Reed and shakes his head in laughter.

THORNTON

I guess if something isn't explicitly on cue cards for you....

Kate films the difference in reaction of both candidates.  
Reed seethes as he leans upright and straightens his suit.

PRESIDENT REED

I'd like to know many drinks does  
it take for you not to hear that.

TOM CAR

(beat)  
Let's begin.

INT. ARENA - MAIN STAGE/BACKSTAGE

Behind the curtain, two mounted TVs side by side play.

TITLE: TWO HOURS LATER

Monica Pescow sits at her anchor desk on one TV.

Bruckner Darson sits at his desk on the other TV.

ON THE TV (split screen)

<p>MONICA PESCOW Wow! What a debate! I can't--</p>	<p>BRUCKNER -- believe what we saw tonight! An absolute --</p>
--	--

<p>MONICA PESCOW -- shalacking and deconstruction of another politician --</p>	<p>BRUCKNER -- the likes of what we've not seen in many a debate! The robust points--</p>
--	---

<p>MONICA PESCOW -- made by the winner tonight shows --</p>	<p>BRUCKNER -- the true victor of the our next election will be --</p>
---	--

<p>MONICA PESCOW -- Senator Bill Thornton.</p>	<p>BRUCKNER -- President Ronald Reed.</p>
--	---

INT. NEWS STUDIO - STAGE 1 - NIGHT

Bruckner sits smiling at his desk. The CAMERAMAN, 45, rolls  
back the wheeled camera stand as its red light goes off.

CAMERAMAN

And we're in commercial.

Bruckner stops smiling. He loosens his tie and exhales.

BRUCKNER

What a fucking joke. Battle of the messes. Average versus savage. At least they're good for ratings.

INT. FOX NEWS STUDIO - HALLWAY

Bruckner walks to the darkened area and lights a cigarette.

INT. FOX NEWS STUDIO - STAGE 1

The Cameraman adjusts the lens and looks at his watch.

CAMERAMAN

Commercial's almost over, Bruck.

The Cameraman looks toward the hall. Bruckner is gone.

CAMERAMAN

Bruck?

INT. ARENA - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Kate opens the door and enters to see Thornton and Sue laughing. Zoe is on the phone. She gives Kate a thumbs up.

THORNTON

Come join us for a drink.

Kate walks over and accepts the drink. Sue smiles.

SUSAN

Looks like this is going to be easier than we thought. Reed was rattled from the beginning when those two spotlights blew out.

KATE

They did just happen to blow. True?

SUSAN

(beat)

Of course. I can't wait to debate that bleached blonde. One and done.

THORNTON

Three more weeks, two more debates with Reed and I'll look forward to his peaceful transfer of power.

Kate stares as they laugh. She notices the mounted TV shows The Bruckner Darson banner. Bruckner now has a guest host.

Kate gets a text.

ON KATE'S PHONE

00000 - Don't get distracted by the noise. KATE - Explain?

00000 - They're wolves. In sheep's clothing. KATE - Names?

BACK TO ROOM

Kate stares at her phone but there's no more texts.

EXT. NEWS STUDIO - NIGHT

Monica Pescow walks out of the studio building into a cab. The Wolf follows the cab in his car.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Kate swills wine at the counter. She stares at the wall TV and looks at her notebook of thoughts and images.

The Purple Hair Gal walks by toward the bathroom. Kate notices. Ted walks in and sits next to Kate.

TED

We need to stop meeting like this.

KATE

I know that's not a bad pickup line or movie reference, is it?

TED

No. I don't have the luxury to not wonder who's trying to kill someone at some point, somewhere.

KATE

So I have a few thoughts--

TED

You're off the job, Kate.

Kate's at a loss. She tries to point at her notes and speak.

TED

You're out of time. So are we.  
You've failed to prove a link  
between Thornton, Dodd, the Wolf,  
and hell... anything really. Tell  
Wild Bill PBS needs you elsewhere.

Ted rises and puts his hand out. Kate is slow to reach in her jacket, but she returns the burner phone and credentials.

KATE

I'm not done.

Ted turns and heads out.

TED

You never started, bud. I'll need  
the camcorder back.

KATE

I disabled your audio/video chip  
after the convention. The least you  
can let me do is keep it for--

TED

There's a GPS tracker in it. High  
tech FBI shit your guy at Best Buy  
couldn't find. I needed to know  
when you were somewhere you  
shouldn't be. Bring it tomorrow.

Kate watches Ted exit. She bangs the counter. The Purple Hair Gal notices as she passes. Kate turns her way.

KATE

Oh, wait. Miss? We have a common  
friend. Tai. She was here with you  
and another woman about six weeks  
ago. I just wanted to say that--

PURPLE HAIR GAL

I don't know anyone named Tai.

Kate closes her mouth. She removes her phone and shows the picture of Tai transferred from the camcorder.

PURPLE HAIR GAL

No. I don't know -- Oh wait, yes. I  
remember now. That's right! She had  
great shoes and a matching handbag.  
She was standing here with you  
waving at us? We laughed at her and  
waved back. How drunk was she?

Kate tries to smile with her, but it doesn't show.

PURPLE HAIR GAL

Uh, anyway. Have a good one.

She flashes a fake grin and scurries off from sight. Kate lifts her phone and Googles Tai's name. No info found. Kate reaches behind the counter for her camcorder bag and exits.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM AREA - NIGHT

Elegant layout complete with couches, table and Thornton sitting at a desk. Zoe hands him papers to sign.

The door opens as Sam let's Kate in. Kate staggers and drops in a seat in front of Thornton's desk. Zoe stops.

ZOE

I'll be in my room.

She heads out the door. Thornton puts his pen down.

THORNTON

Zoe, be a dear and send Dot in.

Zoe nods as she exits. Thornton lifts his drink up.

THORNTON

I'd offer, but I'd say there's no room left in your bloodstream.

KATE

PBS needs me to--

THORNTON

Let's cut the shit, my dear. Ask what you've been here to ask.

They stare each other down. In Kate's haze, she's unclear if she blinks first. It doesn't matter anymore.

KATE

What did you have on Dodd?

Thornton studies Kate's face. When the door opens, he smiles. Enter DOT REVERE, 19, a beauty, graceful as a gazelle.

DOT

You wanted to see me, sir?

THORNTON

I wanted to thank you for all the grass roots footwork you've done back home. You deserved to be here.

DOT

I am so thrilled! It's my first time in D.C.! Well, anywhere on a plane outside of Kansas.

THORNTON

Well, we appreciate your help. Please say hello to Katherine.

Dot puts her hand out. Kate forces a smile and a shake. Dot excuses herself and exits the room. Thornton sips his drink.

THORNTON

She's a lovely girl. Hopefully when she sees what type of swine lurk around this city, no less in our political system, she'll remain in Kansas and find a better job.

KATE

I asked you a question. Dodd.

Thornton sits back down.

THORNTON

Because, in the end, for Dot, there's no place like home.

Kate motions to speak before she furrows her brow.

KATE

Dot? Dorothy? From Kansas?

THORNTON

Starting to put the pieces together? Do you know who couldn't? Dodd. You see, when he had an affair with your girlfriend Olivia, he did a piss poor job of following up what happened when she fled him, you and left everything in D.C. behind. Can you guess where she went? And put her child up for adoption before she eventually overdosed a few years later?

Kate's eyes widen.



KATE

She's dead? She was pregnant?  
Wait. Her mother lived right  
outside of Kansas. Oh God....

THORNTON

And Dodd? For a well-known  
detective, he did a shit job of  
following up on his sins. OR didn't  
care. Neither at the time or when  
he announced his run for President.

Kate slumps back in her seat.

THORNTON

I always do my diligence. I put out  
feelers on who's going to run to  
represent our Party. I was less  
than pleased. Tax fraud, marital  
affairs? Sure. That's the usual.  
Dropping children into the foster  
system? Not good. When I told him?  
Let's just say that arrogant prick  
had some mighty unkind words for  
me. I returned the sentiment.

Kate's eyes tear. She holds as strong as she can.

KATE

Why did you let me join you?

Thornton gleams into Kate's soul via her eyes.

THORNTON

To know your game. I figured you  
had to be a better private-eye than  
your mentor Dodd. But you really  
didn't know anything, did you? Now  
I'm thinking Beth led you down  
this, didn't she? Overheard  
something about something? Well,  
shit. Go figure.

Thornton laughs and finishes his drink. He rises.

THORNTON

Do you want to hear how crazy this  
all is? When y'all boarded the  
train out of Oklahoma, I took the  
short trip over to visit Dot.  
That's why I wasn't on the train,  
Kate.

THORNTON(cont'd)

I wanted to offer her a job on my campaign and keep the media jackals away from her. Hide in plain sight and they'll never find you. Crazy, but true. So you see, in a way, you and Dodd saved my life. And if that's the reason the Wolf chose Dodd, well, it is what it is.

Thornton walks to the door. He opens it and Sam enters.

THORNTON

Goodbye, Katherine. I wish you well in your search for what it seems has eluded you for a long time.

Sam helps a stunned Kate out the open door.

THORNTON

Your worth in this world.

Thornton's closes the door.

EXT. HOTEL - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Kate walks out into a light rain. She obliviously muddles past a bar until she stops to avoid a shove and yell fight between three men with ROCD hats and two minorities with shirts that say Black Lives Matter. She crosses the street.

Kate walks past a darkened, closed down building. A black windowless van pulls up aside and abruptly stops.

The Wolf whips the side door open and knocks Kate out with the barrel of his gun. He drags Kate in the van and leaves.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A deserted area filled with garbage and broken furniture. Kate wakes tied to a chair. HOSTAGE A and HOSTAGE B are tied to chairs with hoods over their heads.

The Wolf walks over with a gun. He smiles at Kate.

VLADIMIR

Welcome back. I have to say. You are a pain in the ass. Do you know this? No surprise though. No lover. No kids. Few friends.

Kate stares. The Hostages stir and make muffled noises.

VLADIMIR

Ah, looks like our company wakes.

Vladimir pulls the hoods off to reveal Hostage A as Monica Pescow and Hostage B as Bruckner Darson with mouth gags on.

KATE

Oh, no.

VLADIMIR

Oh yes, my document friend. It is time for you to work.

Vladimir unties Kate. He puts a pair of handcuffs on her wrists and shackles her feet. He hands Kate a recorder.

VLADIMIR

Film, camera girl.

Kate looks at Bruckner and Monica's horrified faces and watches Vladimir twirl his gun. Kate turns the recorder on.

Vladimir removes the gags from Monica and Bruckner.

BRUCKNER

Listen, I -- This is not nec --

MONICA PESCOW

-- If I'm not seen by my doorman --

VLADIMIR

Quiet! There are no monologues happening here tonight!

The Wolf thrusts the gun toward Monica's head. She screams. He thrusts it toward Bruckner, who screams louder. The Wolf lowers it. He laughs.

VLADIMIR

As I thought. When you are not constructing your propaganda without challenge, you are weak.

Monica cries. Bruckner throws up on the front of his suit. Kate looks around and spots her camcorder bag on a table.

KATE

May I stand? I can't get the best angle. My back is also wretched.

The Wolf smirks. He nods. Kate rises and continues to record.

VLADIMIR

Let me cut right to the end of our show. One of you "news" people will die tonight. The other lives to see ratings bonanza when you tell of it.

Kate falls down and thrusts the recorder into the concrete floor. It shatters. The Wolf looks down and sighs.

KATE

I'm sorry! The leg shackles --

The Wolf kicks Kate in her stomach. Kate spits blood. Vladimir walks over and returns with Kate's camcorder.

VLADIMIR

Remove the SD card. Put it in yours. Let's continue.

Kate complies. She turns its on and aims at the hostages.

VLADIMIR

As I said, one of your shows will be cancelled. Permanently.

(beat)

Decide.

Monica and Bruckner gaze at each other and then to the Wolf.

MONICA PESCOW

Excuse me?

BRUCKNER

I'm not deciding anyone's fate. I'm a news host.

VLADIMIR

And you shall make news tonight.

Kate's hand trembles. The Wolf puts his gloved hand on the camcorder to stop the shaking. He nods to Kate.

VLADIMIR

Steady. If you are not capable of making history, at least record it properly. Or wind up in it.

MONICA PESCOW

Shoot him.

Everyone looks at Monica. Bruckner is dumbstruck.

BRUCKNER

Excuse me?

MONICA PESCOW

You're separated, though no one knows it yet. Your wife's lover has been talking to us. No kids. No re--

BRUCKNER

-- You fucking lesbian bitch! And your life is more valuable why? Because you fucking liberals think--

The Wolf shoots Bruckner in the head. His blood and brains scatter everywhere, including on Monica's face.

MONICA PESCOW

Oh my God! What -- why did you --

VLADIMIR

I didn't do anything. You did.

MONICA PESCOW

I didn't tell you --

VLADIMIR

-- Yes, you did. You looked at the camera and told "we the American people", and yes, I was born here, what you think should happen. Who should live and who should die. Just like you tell your audience in subliminal messages each night. And you selfishly chose yourself. Why?

Monica can't clean the blood off her face. She's hysterical.

MONICA PESCOW

I DON'T KNOW! I DIDN'T WANT TO --

The Wolf shoots her in the head. She dies. Kate screams. The Wolf takes the camcorder and pushes Kate down into the chair.

KATE

I thought....

VLADIMIR

I lied. Just like they do nightly. You see, I have my agenda as well.

The Wolf shuts the camcorder. Kate watches the light go dim.

KATE

You never we're going to let either  
of them live, we're you?

VLADIMIR

Oh, of course no. They are pariahs.  
It is just about ratings for them.  
Their true ideology is greed. They  
neither believe the brainwashing  
they spew or care about the  
audience they deceive. And, as we  
see, without a script....

The Wolf smiles. He aims the gun towards Kate's face.

Bruckner's body slumps and he falls on The Wolf's foot. He  
steps back in disgust and pushes Bruckner's body off.

The Wolf peels his gloves off. Kate sees he's missing the top  
half of his left pinkie finger.

VLADIMIR

He is trouble even in death!

The Wolf switches his gun to his right hand and aims at Kate.

KATE

Wait! Please! I have to know why.  
Who are you working for?

A faint sound is heard. The Wolf leans his head backward. He  
smiles and raises both his hands in the air.

VLADIMIR

Now, the show begins.

TED (O.S)

Freeze! Drop the gun!

Ted and six officers rush in, guns raised. The Wolf quietly  
kneels as he drops the gun to the floor. His smile remains.

An officer removes the shackles from Kate. She sits shaken.

TED

It's good to see you. Alive.  
This... is not good.

KATE

You got my camcorder signal!

TED

Kate. No. That was just a joke. We got an anonymous call that someone saw you dragged in here. Someone may be tracking you, but it's not me.

Kate stares at Ted. The Wolf winks at her as he's hauled off.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kate shuts her door and drops on her couch crying. Lady Cat nuzzles her. Kate looks at her bulletin board of photos.

She walks to the bulletin board and rips off all the photos. She push-pins the photo of her, Dodd and Olivia.

KATE

You're worth it, Olivia.

MONTAGE

- Kate works on her laptop and crosses out photos on board.
- ON TV - Reed announces the capture of The Wolf.
- ON TV - The Wolf in handcuffs led by Ted in FBI building.
- ROCD constituents chant as Reed waves from a moving car.
- Dolph Tritzter airs debate highlights of Reed and Thornton.
- Kate sleeps with books on her face as the sun rises.
- Debate highlights of Sue and Sally at a college arena.
- Kate looks at a text from 00000. It says STAY VIGILANT.

END MONTAGE

INT. CABLE NEWS STUDIO - NIGHT

Dolph Tritzter sits at his anchor desk with Bake McSpout.

TITLE: ELECTION DAY. 7PM EST.

DOLPH TRITZTER

Good evening to all our viewers around the world.

DOLPH TRITZER(cont'd)

After a gruelling two year campaign by a field of candidates, we are finally counting the votes of the last two standing; President Reed and Senator Thornton.

BAKE MCSPOUT

That's right, Dolph. And in these last two weeks, we've seen a steady rise to a 5% lead that sits across a series of polls for President Reed. This generally sits outside the 3% margin for error. As our first polls have just officially closed here in the East, I'd imagine he's feeling pretty good about his chances for reelection.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Reed sits smoking a cigar as he watches three mounted TVs, all showing one of the Big Three cable networks. He smiles.

Sally and twenty staffers chat and laugh. Bob turns to Reed.

COS BOB

The first group of states are officially done and announcing shortly. Congratulations, sir.

Reed ignores Bob's outstretched hand. He blows smoke instead.

PRESIDENT REED

Get my wife's hotel on the phone and make sure the ballroom is charging for liquor until I arrive. Then I'll announce drinks are on the house during my victory speech.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM AREA - NIGHT

Thornton sits at his desk. He watches the TV next to the kitchenette. Zoe and Sue stand and watch. Sue is glum.

SUSAN

That's the first three states against us. This better not be a blowout, Bill. I've lost enough.

ZOE

Considering what's happened, we--



THORNTON

No. Look closer. We expected to lose these states by a much wider margin. Something is happening.

Zoe leans over and types on her laptop. Sue looks over.

ZOE

He's not wrong.

Sue looks at Thornton. He winks and sips his drink.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Kate walks in and sits at her favorite spot at the counter. Bartender Barry hands her wine. Kate looks around at the even amount of ROCD and Thornton zealots loudly chanting.

BARTENDER BARRY

They started early Like they were buying tickets to see a rock concert. Just nuts.

KATE

Well, this may be over early if it keeps up for Reed.

BARTENDER BARRY

I don't know. Thornton just had the last two go his way.

Kate hears cursing and boos from the ROCD crowd as the mounted TVs show another state go for Thornton. Barry smiles.

BARTENDER BARRY

What's the saying? "Stay tuned"?

BEGIN MONTAGE

- ON TV - Dolph Tritzter shows each candidate winning states.
- Kate looks at more ROCD fans fill the bar. They're angry.
- Reed kicks over a food cart next to his desk as he screams at COS Bob and points at the TV. Interns quickly exit.
- Thornton sits calmly and sips his drink. The TV shows him winning two more states. Sue and Zoe work the phones.
- Ted sits in his office watching the results. He has files and photos of The Wolf and the candidates on his desk.

END MONTAGE

BACK TO BAR

There is little standing room in the bar. There are more Thornton shirts than ROCD hats and clothes, but the ROCD crowd senses the inevitable. Kate looks to Bartender Barry.

KATE

This is actually about to happen.  
You may want to call the cops. Now.

ON THE TV

Dolph Tritzer bangs his notes against the desk.

DOLPH TRITZER

At 10PM Eastern Standard Time, CNN  
can now make a projection. Senator  
William Thornton will be named the  
47th President of the United States.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Staff scurry in the hallways as the door flies open and Sally huffs in. Reed is on a rampage. COS Bob is on the phone. Lawyers are huddled in the room.

SALLY

We can't have lost this thing!

PRESIDENT REED

We? Get the fuck out of here, you  
stupid bitch! You were a mess at  
that debate! She embarrassed you!

Sally shutters back. Reed grabs COS Bob by his jacket collar.

PRESIDENT REED

Get a camera ready now!

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM AREA

Sue hugs Zoe. Staffers rejoice in the room. Thornton stands among the crowd, but alone in his mind. His trance breaks as he makes eye contact with Dot hugging an intern. She smiles.

He looks at a photo of Dick on his desk before he hugs Sue.

SUSAN

I can't believe... Dick...

THORNTON

We did this for him. And for all the Dots out there. All the people without a voice. We got a second chance to do this right, Sue.

Sue kisses his cheek. Her tears run. Thornton turns to Zoe.

THORNTON

Miss Manners, please confirm the celebration site. Let's get on stage before midnight Eastern.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Kate is surrounded by a crowd cheering for Thornton. The ROCD fans grow louder as they scream at Thornton supporters.

KATE

How long did they say, Barry?

BARTENDER BARRY

I couldn't even get 911 to answer.

Kate looks up at the TV. Her eyes widen.

KATE

Oh, this isn't going to help.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE

Typical TV backdrop of the flags surrounding the desk. Reed sits with his hands calmly folded, though he's tense.

PRESIDENT REED

Ladies and gentlemen. As we have all watch the votes coming in tonight, there has been concern by my staff and I that there is something seriously fraudulent happening. Seriously fraudulent.

COS Bob looks at the lawyers off to the side. They shrug.

PRESIDENT REED

The Democrats have pushed for an obscene amount of mail-in votes, with no proof of identity on the backside. We can't allow this to stand.

PRESIDENT REED(cont'd)

I was ahead in most states before a flood of so-called early mail-in votes suddenly overtook me. Therefore, I will not concede this race until a full investigation concludes what took place in this wonderful, wonderful country today.

BACK TO BAR

Kate stands up and looks at the amped ROCD crowd, then Barry.

KATE

They need to cut him off before--

ON THE TV

PRESIDENT REED

And to my ROCD supporters, do not bow to their liberal pressure to conform. Stand strong and stand tall. We will prevail!

The feed cuts back to Dolph Tritzer. He's not his calm self.

DOLPH TRITZER

To our viewing audience around the world, please remain in a peaceful state of mind. CNN's voting team confirmed the validity of every state we call and this is currently in line with all other news networks who have made their calls.

BACK TO BAR

Kate feels bodies pushed against hers. ROCD zealots shove and curse Thornton fans, who push back. She gets a text.

ON KATE'S PHONE

00000 - Now the fun begins. The Wolf will be at Thornton's celebration at the Lincoln Memorial.

Kate - He's in federal custody.                    00000 - Look at this.

BACK TO BAR

Kate looks at two photos that pop up. She's horrified.

KATE

I need to go, Barry. Watch it.

Barry nods as he grasps his bat under the counter and yells to the crowd to stay calm. Kate pushes out of the bar.

EXT. BAR - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Crowds of supporters scream at each other. Some fight. Kate runs down the street past two burning cars. She calls Ted.

TED (V.O.)  
Well, maybe your documentary will be a hit, after all.

KATE  
The Wolf is going to kill Thornton!

TED (V.O.)  
Kate, stop. He's locked up tighter than your virginity was in college.

KATE  
Get everyone to Thornton's celebration! Now!

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Ted sits at his desk. Kate abruptly ends the call. Ted thinks for a moment before he types on his laptop.

ON LAPTOP

A video feed labeled The Wolf opens full screen. A black box over it says FEED DISCONNECTED. Ted dials his desk phone.

TED  
This is Agent 54393. I need the floor guard for The Wolf's cell.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - LAWN AREA - NIGHT

TITLE: LINCOLN MEMORIAL. 11:45 EST

Lincoln's statue acts as backdrop. Election signs bounce in the air. A darkened stage lights up. A crowd roars in glee.

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR, 45, sits at a constructed interview desk.

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR  
Oh, it looks like they're ready!  
Ladies and gentlemen, your  
President and Vice-President-Elect!

EXT. FRONT OF STAGE - NIGHT

Spotlights shine. Music booms loud. The crowd responds. Vladimir, dressed as a Secret Service agent, leaves his post.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - LAWN PERIMETER - NIGHT

Fans chant Thornton's name. Guards hold them out. Kate scurries out of a cab and runs up to a barricaded perimeter.

KATE

I'm on the Thornton media team!

GUARD 1

Access badge?

KATE

It's inside with my equipment bag!

GUARD 1

Right. Call for them to bring it.

Dot walks up. She smiles.

DOT

She's with us. I can escort.

The Guard looks at her. He also notices another FAN trying to sneak in. He pulls Kate across and turns back to the Fan.

KATE

Where's Thornton? I can't get any of them on the phone!

Her terse attitude surprises Dot.

DOT

Uh, backstage getting ready.

Kate runs off in the direction of the large stage up ahead.

KATE

Get them far away from the stage!

EXT. STAGE - REAR - NIGHT

Kate furiously scans the crowd as she jogs up to the barricade of cops and military. She gets a text.

ON KATE'S PHONE

00000- Look to the perimeter. Easiest access. And escape.

BACK TO KATE

Kate sees Vladimir in the distance leaving the crowded area.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - WOODED AREA - NIGHT

Trees line the desolate area. Vladimir walks to a quiet spot and lifts a remote. Kate runs and tackles him to the ground.

The remote drops. Kate punches his face before she's kicked away. Vladimir rises and puts Kate in choke hold. Kate gasps.

VLADIMIR

Think you have it all figured out?  
You have not a clue.

Vladimir tightens his grip. Kate's about to die when a thud is heard. Vladimir releases his grip and falls unconscious.

Kate's blurred vision can't see the person cradling her. When it clears, Tai's face is inches from her.

TAI

Oh, thank the stars! I was seconds  
from giving you mouth to mouth!

Tai smiles. A tear forms in Kate's eye. She grins.

KATE

I... knew you couldn't be dead.  
You live to zing me.

TAI

I do, but it was safer to play dead  
to keep an eye on you. I should  
have told you earlier, but I'm--

Tai seizes backward. Her eyes bulge and she gasps as she's pushed to the ground by Vladimir. A knife is in her side.

Vladimir kicks Kate in the face. Kate drops back in the dirt, bloodied and barely conscious. Vladimir fixes his jacket.

VLADIMIR

Your heart clouds your judgement.  
You were too blind to see who was  
on you the whole time.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - STAGE - FRONT AREA

Spotlights shine. Music booms loud. The crowd responds. Thornton and Sue walk out hand and hand. Smiles; waves.

SUE V

You did it. Dick is smiling on us.

THORNTON

Amen. A new day starts right now.

BACK TO VLADIMIR

Vladimir walks a few feet and picks up the remote and clicks it. In the distance, a van explodes. Nothing is spared.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - NIGHT

Kate wakes up. She's battered, bruised and groggy. Ted sits next to her bed reading reports. He notices Kate is awake.

TED

Thanks for not killing my day.

KATE

(grins)

What day is it?

TED

The next day.

KATE

Who's the next President?

TED

Well, that's a little more complicated. Sue is dead. Thornton is in a coma. Not expected to live.

Kate looks out the window. It's raining. Hard.

KATE

The Wolf?

TED

(beat)

Wolves. Yeah, once we got the satellite feed back up, he was just sitting in solitary confinement with a big smile on his face. Fucking twins. How did you know?



KATE

A tip. One was missing a tip.

Ted opens his file. One picture shows Vladimir with no left pinkie finger. Another photo shows his brother has one.

TED

Right. Take a ride with me.

HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ted pushes Kate in a wheelchair to a room with a cop guard.

TED

So, you may want to express all your moral outrage now, Kate. So it's less dramatic in a minute.

Kate doesn't get it, until her expression indicates she does.

HOSPITAL - ROOM - NIGHT

Tai lays in the bed sleeping. Kate hobbles upright next to the bed as Ted walks to the other side.

TED

She'll live. Luckily, the knife didn't penetrate any vital organs. Don't be too hard on her, Kate. She was doing her job for me. Us.

Tai starts to wake. Ted heads out the door.

TED

I'll give you two the room.

As the door shuts behind Ted, Tai opens her eyes and smiles.

TAI

Hey, stranger. Come here often?

Kate doesn't smile. Tai senses her trepidation.

KATE

No, usually people aren't trying to kill me for a living.

TAI

Really? After I saw you teach....

Kate grins this time. Tai smiles again but lets it fade.

TAI

I'm sorry. I really am. But, I had to keep my cover. You know, "in the best interest of the country and the American people" yada, yada. Be lucky you got me as your Angel. You should see some of my peers. Bathing is like optional for them.

KATE

Are you telling me I wasn't the only civilian asset?

TAI

Oh, hell no. Every candidate has -- Oh crap, I think the meds have me loopy. Forget I said anything or I'll have to kill you. Really.

Kate smiles and holds Tai's hand. The TV in the room is on.

ON THE TV

Dolph Tritzer sits at a desk. Bake Mcspout sits to his left.

DOLPH TRITZER

In what may have been the most shocking Election Day in our nation's history, the President-Elect and Vice President-Elect were targets of a terrorist attack that killed well over eighty innocent people. Susan Vale was pronounced dead on the scene. Bill Thornton remains in a coma, though early reports indicate his brain activity may be beyond repair.

BAKE MCSPOUT

Just a horrific display of violence at one our nation's most symbolic monuments to a man some would say our greatest President. Beyond tragic, it puts us in uncharted territory as to what happens now.

DOLPH TRITZER

By that you mean who will assume the Presidency on Inauguration Day?

BAKE MCSPOUT

Yes. President Reed, despite his shenanigans last night in lieu of a concession speech, does remain President until that day on January 20th. After that, who can say?

DOLPH TRITZER

Correct. As this country has never seen a situation like this, the answer may lay theoretically in legal writings, but there could be litigation challenges longer than Bush v. Gore. Regardless of that outcome, they were both alive.

BAKE MCSPOUT

And if Bill Thornton dies and his Vice President is also deceased, does this fall to the third in line? House Speaker Joan Dunne? Herself recovering from an attack by the same terrorist that we have now learned were twin brothers.

DOLPH TRITZER

There might be a legal argument for that. Would Joan Dunne want the role? She has never expressed interest in her political career.

(beat)

Hold on, I've just received word that President-Elect William Thornton has passed away from his injuries suffered in last night's attack. He was 64 years old.

A stock photo of Bill Thornton appears above them his dates.

BAKE MCSPOUT

This is truly a sad day in our nation's history. Stay tuned....

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kate sits at her desk. She stares at her board of photos.

TITLE: TWO DAYS LATER

A knock on the door has Kate open it to see Beth. She enters.

BETH

Thank you for seeing me.

Beth walks to the board and looks at her husband's photo.

BETH

Ben would have been proud of you.

KATE

Would he? I'm not sure how much that means to me anymore, Beth.

Beth sighs. She looks at the names under the photos and removes Dot and Olivia's picture. She studies them.

BETH

She has Olivia's eyes.

She tacks the photos back up. Kate lifts and swills her wine.

BETH

That was a tough time. Ben and I were still in the early years of our marriage. It is twice as hard to make in work in D.C.

KATE

No excuses, Beth. Olivia's death was not a learning period.

BETH

It was not. And I'll carry that for the rest of my time. But out of every ash rises a phoenix. I am happy to hear Dorothy survived.

KATE

She did. By looking for me. She was far enough away to be sheltered. We spoke. I tried to convince her to go home, but Reed offered her a job as an assistant to his Chief of Staff. Reed never let's a tragedy get in the way of P.R optics.

Beth sighs. She walks over to Kate and holds her hand.

BETH

Goodbye, Kate. Thank you.

She senses no hug. In a moment, she's gone. Kate stares at the board when a quick knock reappears. She opens the door.

KATE

Did you forget--

Tai lunges and kisses Kate hard on her lips. She pulls back out of reaction, but then embraces Tai's passion.

TAI

I hate progressive train porters!

Kate smiles and shuts the door behind her. Tai walks around trying to place her red handbag down.

TAI

What a mess! I don't know where to put my new bag down and I love this bag. Ugh! Is Hoffa buried here?

KATE

Wow. That's pretty good. So you also watched some documentaries as a kid? Besides the other shows?

TAI

Sitting around orphanages between foster home gigs didn't often a bevy of entertainment other than TV.

KATE

The FBI recruited you right out of High School after graduation?

TAI

Yeah. Let's just say my genius IQ, and nice legs went far around a room full of nice men in bad suits. Or vice versa. My head still hurts.

KATE

So even before Ben's death, Ted knew about the chatter between him and Thornton--

TAI

And was going to ask you to do the documentary thing anyway and blah, blah. Yeah, Ted's pretty smart too.

Kate curls her lip. Tai looks at the bulletin board.

TAI

Well, you figured it out. I guess you never lost your fifteen minutes of fame. You just misplaced it.

KATE

I didn't figure anything out. You were texting me clues.

TAI

Meh. After Ted chopped me out of the train wreck, he said it was to our advantage for anyone to think I was dead. But he didn't have to know about our little ding-fest.

Tai turns to see Kate fixated on the TV. Tai gasps.

ON TV

Joan Dunne talks at a press conference. Reporters everywhere.

JOAN DUNNE

And that's why after the sad passing of our beloved Party leaders, I have decided to pursue the presidential line of succession as mentioned in the Constitution, most notably referred to in the 20th and 25th Amendment. I would expect to be sworn in for duty this Inauguration Day on January 20th.

The reporters go wild. They scream questions over each other.

BACK TO APARTMENT

Kate lowers the volume. Tai stares at Kate.

TAI

What just happened?

Kate doesn't answer. She stares at Dunne's face on her board.

ON THE TV

Dolph Tritzer sits at his desk. ANN COTER, 35, sits there.

DOLPH TRITZER

Joan Dunne, has officially declared her expectance to be sworn in as the next and first, woman President of the United States. Truly remarkable. I'd also like to introduce our new anchor, Ann Coter. Your reaction?

ANN COTER

Thank you. It's my pleasure to be here. And I think Joan Dunne should absolutely go for this. It's written in the amendments and if we're g a country that continues to follow a vision our forefathers set forth, a bunch of old, white men, then let the battle begin.

Dolph holds his stare on Ann a second longer than the producer wants. Dolph regains his professionalism.

DOLPH TRITZER

Truly remarkable, indeed. In other news, President Reed has not dialed down his rhetoric of the election results. He has yet to concede and there's been reporting that he is talking to his top-level advisors about some unprecedented ideas. We'll be right back.

EXT. CAR - MOVING

Kate drives through D.C. ROCD protests are everywhere.

Burned out cars sit along roads. Shattered glass litters streets. Words FRAUD and REED RULES in graffiti everywhere.

INT. CAR - MOVING

Kate drives. Tai sleeps next to her. Kate receives a text.

ON KATE'S PHONE

99999 - Watch this video.

Kate clicks the video. She almost crashes. Tai awakes.

TAI

What the hell?

KATE

Where's your phone?

Kate does not relinquish her glare. Tai's confused, but takes it from her bag. Her thumbprint opens it. She hands it over.

Kate opens her texts and looks at it before handing it back.

TAI  
Care to share?

Kate hands Tai her phone with the video playing. She gasps.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Cloudy skies loom over the historic structure.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE HALLWAY

Joan Dunne walks to the door. She's surrounded by two Secret Service men. The door opens from the Oval office. Ted and Kate walk out. Joan is surprised by their presence.

TED  
Miss Speaker.

JOAN DUNNE  
Todd is it?

TED  
Ted, Ma'am. This is Kate.

JOAN DUNNE  
Have we met?

KATE  
Once. It wasn't memorable. But I'm good with Photoshop.

They smile, nod and leave. Joan sighs and opens the door.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE

President Reed sits alone at his desk smoking a cigar. Joan enters with her bodyguards.

PRESIDENT REED  
This is just you and me.

The Bodyguards look at Joan. She waves them off. They leave.

JOAN DUNNE  
What is it, Ron. I don't have time for emergency meetings like this. Unless you wanted to be gracious on your way out and are letting me redecorate ahead of time?



Joan sits in front of his desk. Reed's grin is not natural.

PRESIDENT REED

Cute, Joan. You know, even when I was writing your donor checks, I couldn't stand you.

JOAN DUNNE

When you pretended to be a Democrat? I remember it well.

PRESIDENT REED

Republican, Democrat. No difference. I would have run as either open ticket, but that other bitch had yours locked up. But really, it's still us versus them. Winners and losers. They just need a uniform to root for. And against.

JOAN DUNNE

You have ten minutes left. The five constitutional lawyers waiting in my office don't come cheap. But, I have to do what's best for this country. Especially after you.

Reed laughs. He lifts his TV remote and turns it on.

PRESIDENT REED

Have a look, sweetheart.

Joan sighs and turns her head. The mounted TV plays a video.

ON THE TV

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE - DAY

The parking garage shows Joan Dunne's limousine driving until it stops. Joan exits the back of the limousine and walks ten feet away to make a call.

She lowers the phone and nods to The Wolf, who steps from the shadows and is positioned on the other side of the limo.

The wolf nods back to her and riddles the limo with bullets. He nods back to Joan and leaves. She walks over to the limo and climbs back into her seat and shuts the door.

The video ends.

BACK TO OVAL OFFICE

Joan whips back to Reed. He blows a puff of cigar smoke.

JOAN DUNNE  
This is not what is--

PRESIDENT REED  
Stop. I don't care.

JOAN DUNNE  
You can't prove-- I--

PRESIDENT REED  
Our country can't have traitors,  
Joan. We can't. We won't.

Reed hits a button on his desk and four Secret Service men enter and surround her chair. She's flabbergasted.

JOAN DUNNE  
This will rip this country apart!

PRESIDENT REED  
Oh, I have a fix for that. Get her  
out of here.

They are about to touch her when she stops them. She regains her composure and stands. She fixes her pants suit and exits.

As the Oval office door shuts, Reed laughs and blows smoke.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Ted and Kate walk across the front entrance to waiting cabs.

KATE  
Do you think there's any chance  
Reed cuts her a deal? Maybe pass  
laws she would have otherwise....

Kate looks at Ted's raised brow.

KATE  
Right. Tear her and the country  
further apart. Got it.

TED  
His fans, sorry, constituents,  
won't accept anything less.

KATE  
What about Vladimir? Do you think  
he stays on the down low?

TED

Maybe. For a while. Every week there's five more inspired by these loons, so, I have job security. How about you? Back to school?

Kate gets a text.

ON KATE'S PHONE

TAI - I'm sorry for everything that will come out. When it does, don't judge. It's never that simple. Take care. X0X0X0

BACK TO KATE

KATE

(beat)

No. It's winter recess. And I was thinking I need the vacation time.

They shake hands then hug. Each grab their cab and vacate.

EXT. RESORT AREA - BAR - DAY

TITLE: BAHAMAS. TEN DAYS LATER.

The sun resides over the palm tree-lined pool. Guests lazily soak up the rays and leisurely swim. The bar tables surround the hut of alcohol. Waiters wait; bartenders tend.

Vladimir wears a baseball cap and sunglasses. He exits the pool and walks to the bar. The FEMALE BARTENDER, 30, smiles.

VLADIMIR

A bottle of water, senorita.

She grins and hands him a water bottle. He drinks and turns.

KATE (O.S.)

Excuse me.

Vladimir's smile drops upon recognition of Kate sitting at a table. Vladimir looks around. Kate smiles.

KATE

Please. Sit. No scene needed.

Vladimir scans the perimeter and slowly sits.

VLADIMIR

You've come a long way. To die.

Vladimir removes a switchblade from his bathing suit pocket. He opens it under the table. Kate's eyes gaze its way.

KATE

There won't be time for that.

VLADIMIR

You're here for answers, Miss. Documentary? What is my goal? Who do I work for? Do you Americans not understand that everything is not as complicated as you think it is?

KATE

Ah, right. Your brother claimed to be American. Your accent is similar, but not as identical as your looks. You spend time in a lot of foster homes. Some different, some the same. Some globally. It also makes sense how you were able to pull some things off. The two of you. Well, that and working for the most powerful woman in America.

VLADIMIR

Anarchists work for no one. We shake the system and let the chips fall where they may. If we accept funding for the cause along the way, so be it. How did you find me?

KATE

Honestly, I wasn't looking for you.

Tai exits the ladies room in a bathing suit and her red handbag hangs from her shoulder. Her reaction when she sees Kate is nothing she planned for. Kate locks her gaze on Tai.

KATE

It took some digging. More than the FBI apparently did when they recruited her. But the time you, her and your brother spent in orphanages really was really impressionable on young minds. Foster parents that were part of the Weatherman Underground extremist groups. Ties all the way back to Dunne in her early years that have been all but forgotten. But not completely, huh?

TAI  
I said don't judge.

Vladimir's eyes cross and his head drops on the table.

TAI  
Jesus. Is he dead?

KATE  
No, just drugged by Agent Alvarez.

Kate nods to FEMALE BARTENDER who is AGENT ALVAREZ. She nods. Kate lifts Vladimir's water bottle and swirls it. It's clear.

KATE  
The sleeping powder is clear. If you see slight purple particles...

TAI  
I remember that training class.  
Lethal in a few hours.  
(beat)  
How did you find me?

Kate hold up her Iphone.

KATE  
\$29 Apple Airtag. I sewed it right into the liner of your new bag back at my apartment.

Tai's eye bulge. She looks at her bag.

TAI  
You bitch! You ripped my liner?  
I love this bag!

Tai takes a deep breath. She sits by Kate and looks around.

TAI  
Standard flood the zone? Half these guests are agents? What's the signal?

Kate raises her left arm in the air and most of the guests stop eating, drinking and moving. They all look at Tai. Kate lowers her hand and they resume their charade. Tai nods.

TAI  
Impressive.  
(beat)  
Now what?

KATE

Well, we know you filmed the Dunne shooting. There are reflections of you in your footage. Thank you for sharing it. Whether you knew the brothers were going to kill the driver and bodyguard or not is unknown. We also don't know if he stabbed you on purpose to clear you, knowing that you wouldn't die from that wound. We don't know if you're still undercover since you just left the FBI without further notice. To be honest, Ted isn't exactly sure when and where you crossed the line and I still don't know what Ted knows. So, yeah. I'm just finishing my civilian duty.

TAI

There aren't lines in the agency to cross. There's just the perspective of where they're blurred and can be crossed for the greater good. Say hi to Ted for me.

Kate puts her hand up to her earpiece and nods.

KATE

He says you can stay and take your chances in court. Or get up and go. He owes you at least a head start.

Tai looks around. She locks eyes with Kate. She smiles before it dissipates. Tai gets up and walks away. Once she is out of view, the Agents lift Vladimir up and haul him away. Kate lowers her head. Moments pass.

TAI (O.S.)

So you finally figured something out and yet you think I'd see this court thing through without my Ray Ban sunglasses? You're slipping.

Kate looks up. Tai puts on her sunglasses and smiles. Kate shakes her head and rises. They walk out toward the beach.

KATE

We don't know what we don't know. So, who's next? Where does this end?

TAI

Well, take one anarchist down...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

President Reed walks to the podium of a standing room only crowd of reporters and cameramen.

PRESIDENT REED

I'd like to thank you all for being here today.

(coughs)

In light of the horrible attack that claimed the lives of Senator Thornton and Susan Vale and the situation with Speaker Dunne, I have consulted with five constitutional lawyers.

(coughs)

Excuse me. There's no water up here?

Reed coughs. He looks to COS Bob, who is nudged a bottle of water from Dot. COS Bob hands it to Reed, who drinks it.

PRESIDENT REED

Thank you. As I was saying, These lawyers have advised me that it is within my power in unprecedented times to call for martial law in the form of extending my presidency until we can have a Presidential election in two years. This allows potential candidates to form their campaign and challenge my campaign in a mere twenty-four months.

The room erupts. Reporters scream questions while some make calls on their phones. Reed grins and drinks the water.

Dot stares at the water bottle's tiny purple floating particles. Her sweet grin turns dark.

TAI (V.O.)

... and another disillusioned sheep will radicalize and take their place to finish the mission. By any means necessary.

PRESIDENT REED

(smiles)

We're going to have a good time.

FADE TO BLACK.