

LINE OF SUCCESSION

"Pilot"

Written by

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TEASER

EXT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

A crowd of CONGRESSMAN, AUDIENCE MEMBERS and PRESS line up behind a metal detector. GUARDS wave them through.

HAKEESH BIKIR, 32, Indian, sets a plastic case on a security conveyor belt.

He holds up a photo ID badge, a GUARD checks it.

Hakeesh walks through the metal detector.

The guard stares at the x-ray of the case, inside: wires.

GUARD

Open it.

Hakeesh opens the plastic case. The guard peeks inside, silver microphones, a large mixer, cables. The guard waves him in.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

SECRET SERVICE AGENTS scour the majestic empty chamber. Dogs sniff around desks, agents check under seats with mirrors.

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

PRESIDENT JEFFREY, 52, regal, sits behind the elegant Resolute Desk, he stares at a printed script.

A KNOCK. NELSON JONES appears in the doorway. Nelson is 51, bald, small glasses, a desk jockey if there ever was one.

NELSON

Mr. President. It's time.

Jeffrey looks up and smiles.

INT. ENTRANCE HALLWAY - HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

President Jeffrey and Nelson rush through the monumental hallways of the house chamber.

NELSON

After the address you'll be meeting Governor Alvarez.

(MORE)

NELSON (cont'd)
He's in town, just wants some face
time to take back home.

JEFFREY
How are they doing?

NELSON
Still recovering but they are getting
along fine.

JEFFREY
Schedule a trip next week, I'd like
to see if there's anything more I can
do for them.

Nelson nods, jots it down in his notebook.

NELSON
You know your speech?

JEFFREY
Yes.

NELSON
It'll be --

JEFFREY
Nelson...
(chuckles)
I know the speech.

Jeffrey and Nelson walk into the house chamber entrance.
They stop, face each other.

JEFFREY (cont'd)
Thank you, for everything.

Jeffrey and Nelson hug, pat each other on the back.

NELSON
Enjoy this last one, sir.

JEFFREY
Have we done any good?

NELSON
We've done great.

Jeffrey smiles at Nelson as he disappears into the chamber.

NELSON (cont'd)
Knock 'em dead, Mr. President!

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

The room squirms like a living organism. CONGRESSMAN, REPORTERS and television CAMERAS OPERATORS settle in.

Hakeesh strategically places microphones at the front of the chamber. He adjusts the podium microphone, nervously.

The SERGEANT AT ARMS, a bald man, 62, stands tall, walks in and bellows --

SERGEANT AT ARMS

Mister Speaker. The President of the United States.

The chamber ERUPTS with applause as Jeffrey enters, he greets people as he passes.

Jeffrey steps up to the podium, greets the VICE PRESIDENT and SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, all smiles.

A hush rolls over the auditorium as Jeffrey leans in to the microphone.

Hakeesh rolls up the mixer controls.

JEFFREY

Thank you Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President --

An USHER points to an empty seat, MRS. HOFFMAN, a classy, 47, waves him away, she checks her phone, impatient.

INT. SECRETARY OF STATE OFFICE -- DAY

A woman MOANS. A desk RATTLES back and forth, a photo of Mrs. Hoffman vibrates off the desk and SHATTERS.

President Jeffrey speaks on a television.

JEFFREY (V.O.)

-- members of congress, my fellow Americans everywhere.

The Secretary of State, RALPH HOFFMAN, 54, peppered hair, passionately kisses --

CAROLINE SANCHEZ, 26, stunningly gorgeous. Caroline lies on the desk, her legs wrapped around Hoffman, his pants around his ankles.

CAROLINE
 (between moans)
 Shouldn't you be there, Mr.
 Secretary?

HOFFMAN
 It's a waste of time.

Hoffman smiles, kisses Caroline.

HOFFMAN (cont'd)
 I'll be late.

KNOCK! KNOCK! Hoffman looks at the closed-door.

EXT. SECRETARY OF STATE OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

BILLY, 27, the most average man, everyone would be quick to forget his name, knocks again.

BILLY
 Sir, the State of the Union has
 begun.

HOFFMAN (O.S.)
 Just a minute!

MOANS of ecstasy emanate from behind the closed-door.

A moment passes, the door FLINGS open. Hoffman rushes out, buttoning his shirt.

HOFFMAN
 I left twenty minutes ago.

Hoffman flees as Billy looks in at Caroline, she pulls her skirt straight, flashes him a smile.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

Jeffrey glances around the room as he speaks, he makes eye contact with Nelson and at Hoffman's empty seat.

JEFFREY
 Six years ago I asked you to put your
 trust in me, that my campaign
 promises were not shallow offerings.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

Hoffman rushes through a hallway, he speed-walks slow enough to avoid attention as he struggles to button his jacket.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

AGENT MONROW watches Hakeesh turn away from his mixer and rush towards an exit. Monrow chases.

JEFFREY

Despite the progress we have made,
this congress stands on the precipice
of --

An EXPLOSION at the podium rocks the entire chamber. The President, Vice President and Speaker of the House are blown back.

Four more EXPLOSIONS in quick succession around the front of the chamber.

EXT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

Hoffman rushes up the steps. He stumbles as the explosion shakes the ground beneath him.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

Chaos ensues as Monrow rushes to the stage, he kneels next to the bleeding president, checks for a pulse but he's gone.

EXT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

Bystanders scatter as SCREAMS echo inside the chamber, congressmen flood out of the large double doors.

TWO SECRET SERVICE AGENTS grab Hoffman by the arms.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

Mr. Secretary, please come with us.

Hoffman looks back at the chaos. Smoke pours from the doors and windows as the Secret Service escort Hoffman away.

HOFFMAN

Where is the president?

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE**INT. EMERGENCY HALLWAY -- DAY**

A man lies flat on a gurney, motionless, dozens of DOCTORS and NURSES run with him through the hallways.

This is MICHAEL LEBOWITZ, 54, white curly hair, blood covers his face, black char marks on his clothes and body.

DOCTOR

Michael Lebowitz, fifty-four, was in the front row of the chamber. Third-degree burns to more than sixty percent, internal bleeding.

They burst through double doors into --

INT. OPERATING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The doctors and nurses grab the sheet underneath him.

DOCTOR

Three, two, one.

They lift him onto the table.

Nurses connect heart machines, the rapid BEEP of Lebowitz heart echoes throughout the room as the chaos ensues.

EXT. CABIN SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

A peaceful lake, the ultimate juxtaposition of the emergency room. Birds CHIRPING is silenced by a motor.

Two black Crown Victorians with flashing red and blue lights pull up outside the lakeside cabin.

The bright blue water reflects the sun against the wooden porch.

SECRET SERVICE AGENTS get out of the cars, they check the property. An agent opens the door for Hoffman.

INT. CABIN SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

An American flag hangs in the foyer. A lavish vacation home. Water bottles line the marble counter top.

Hoffman is greeted by Deputy Chief of Staff ANGELA PETERS, a young 45, blonde hair, very fit. She extends her hand.

ANGELA
Welcome to the safe house, Mr.
Secretary.

Hoffman shakes her hand.

HOFFMAN
What's going on?

ANGELA
The President, Vice President and
Speaker of the House have been
killed.

Hoffman sits on the couch, he stares into space and collects his thoughts. Shocked.

HOFFMAN
And Lebowitz? He's next in the line,
why isn't he here?

ANGELA
He is in the ICU.

HOFFMAN
What about my wife? She was in the
chamber. She would've been next to
him.

ANGELA
We're still trying to get an update
on your wife.

HOFFMAN
Is she dead?

ANGELA
The only casualties we have confirmed
are the White House officials. The
Secret Service is doing their best to
find her.

Hoffman rubs his forehead, unable to believe what has happened. Angela watches, her tough exterior falls as she takes a seat next to him.

ANGELA (cont'd)
Ralph... I'm sure she's alright.

HOFFMAN
Jeffrey's dead?

ANGELA
Yes.

HOFFMAN
Do we know who did this?

ANGELA
Not yet. FBI, CIA and Homeland are
investigating.

Hoffman nods, he know there is nothing he can do.

ANGELA (cont'd)
Sir...

Hoffman looks over at Angela.

ANGELA (cont'd)
If Michael dies...

Hoffman knows what she is about to say but he doesn't want
to hear it.

ANGELA (cont'd)
...you will become the next acting
President of the United States.

Hoffman stares at her, uneasy.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

The empty house chamber moments after the chaos. BLOOD
STAINS the podium and carpet, wood smolders.

Four charred areas of carpet, chairs blown back in a circle
around them.

FIREFIGHTERS extinguish the final flames, take stock of the
room as inspectors mill around.

NICK HUNDLEY, 25, a former marine-turned-field agent, broad
shoulders and a crew cut, stands amid the WRECKAGE.

Nick steps over the debris to --

NICK
Agent Monrow?

Agent Monrow steps over to Nick.

NICK (cont'd)
I heard you saw the bomber?

MONROW
I'm not sure if he was the bomber,
but I saw someone turn to run before
the bombs went off.

NICK
What'd he look like?

MONROW
Indian... Arab, maybe? I'm not sure.

NICK
He was middle eastern, though?

MONROW
It was fast. As soon as the explosion
happened I ran to the President. I
didn't see where he went.

Nick nods.

NICK
Where was he seated?

MONROW
He wasn't, he was over here --

Monrow walks Nick to the audio mixer at the back of the room, it sits among other speakers and wires.

NICK
Was he working the board?

MONROW
Yeah, before he turned and ran.

Nick looks back to the front of the chamber, he thinks a moment and traces a wire connected to the mixer.

The wire extends to the front of the chamber.

He pulls on it, comes to the end where it frays off at the point of the explosion.

He looks around at the wreckage and charred carpet. He notices the cameras, scoffs, shakes his head.

NICK
Do you have the recording from these?

Monrow nods as we cut to --

INT. SECURITY ROOM -- DAY

Nick and Agent Monrow stand in a dark room behind a VIDEO EDITOR. Rows of knobs and sliders at his finger tips.

On screen, President Jeffrey gives his speech as the podium EXPLODES.

NICK

Stop. Go back.

The editor rolls a control wheel as the video plays back, frame by frame. Nick's eyes locked on the monitor until --

The microphones EXPLODE in spectacular slow motion. The editor toggles back and forth, examining the frame.

NICK (cont'd)

Can you bring everyone in that works at the company responsible for those microphones?

Nick rushes out.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM -- NIGHT

A PACKED house. Standing room only. DOZENS of REPORTERS sit in every chair in the room, cameras and notepads ready.

CASSIE BACH, 43, short brunette hair, in another life could have been a Hollywood executive. She storms to the podium.

CASSIE

Ladies and gentleman, please.

A hush rolls over the room. Cassie looks at her notes then back to the crowd.

CASSIE (cont'd)

At approximately eighteen-hundred hours, five explosive devices were detonated in the House Chamber.

Cassie swallows hard, looks at her notes. She composes herself and looks back up at the reporters.

CASSIE (cont'd)
President Jeffrey, Vice President
Hickey and Speaker Soloman were
killed on site.

An UPROAR in the room, Cassie waits as it dies down.

CASSIE (cont'd)
The CIA, FBI and Homeland Security
are investigating the source of the
devices but no one has claimed
responsibility.

Cassie looks out to the reporters.

CASSIE (cont'd)
I'll take questions now.

The reporters ROAR to life, Cassie points to one.

FEMALE REPORTER
Who is the acting President?

CASSIE
Pro Tem Lebowitz is next in the line
of succession, he will be sworn in
after he gets out of the ICU.

The reporters YELL, pining for Cassie's attention. She
points to another reporter.

MALE REPORTER
If he doesn't make it, is Secretary
Hoffman prepared to lead the country?

CASSIE
Currently, we're not entertaining any
possibilities but Lebowitz.
(beat)
One more.

The reporters raise their hands and SHOUT, Cassie points.

LOUD REPORTER
Is the White House prepared to go to
war over Jeffrey's assassination?

The lump in her throat builds, she overcomes it.

CASSIE

The White House does not go to war
but we have many armed service men
who are dying to be told who to point
their guns at. Thank you.

Cassie leaves the podium, fighting back tears as the crowd
erupts with more questions, she walks out into --

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

-- Nelson waits for her, they walk through the hallway.

NELSON

Point their guns at?

CASSIE

Would you have preferred drones?

NELSON

I would've preferred you skipped that
question.

CASSIE

How's Lebowitz?

NELSON

He's in a coma. He's done.

CASSIE

How did this happen?

They walk into --

INT. CASSIE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Cassie sits into her chair, Nelson stands in the doorway.

NELSON

Secret Service gave me some bullshit
explanation about the television
crew.

CASSIE

He's the only reason any of us are
here, now he's gone.

Cassie breaks down, tears fill her eyes.

NELSON

Do you remember during his campaign,
that old woman from Georgia force fed
him her home made meat pie?

Cassie LAUGHS.

CASSIE

Lord, he had food poisoning for a
week.

Nelson laughs, reminiscent.

NELSON

He still gave that speech though.

A brief moment, they both smile at the memory of their
fallen friend.

CASSIE

He was a good guy.

NELSON

Yeah... I'm going to miss him.

CASSIE

Oh god, and what about Maggy?

NELSON

She's doing okay, given the
circumstances. She's strong.

CASSIE

How are you so calm?

NELSON

All we can do is press forward, catch
the son of a bitch that did this and
try to do some good in this world
while we still have time.

CASSIE

For Jeffrey.

Nelson nods.

NELSON

For Jeffrey.

(beat)

They're right you know... Hoffman
isn't ready to lead this country.

CASSIE
At least he's a democrat.

Cassie CHUCKLES, Nelson wishes that made him feel better.

INT. FBI INTERROGATION -- DAY

JASON CHO, 43, Japanese, sits in a small interrogation room. A two-way mirror on one side of the room.

Nick enters, closes the door behind him.

JASON
Is this really necessary?

NICK
Your company was responsible for the murder of the President. You're lucky you aren't in worse conditions.

JASON
Look. I don't anything about that. We were hired to film the event but we had nothing to do with that blast.

NICK
Your equipment contained the explosives, though.

JASON
What equipment?

NICK
The microphones.
(beat)
Anyone on your team acting strange?

Jason takes offense.

JASON
We vet our staff, and the Secret Service ran extensive background checks before they were allowed on the crew list.

NICK
And no one tried to sneak in?

JASON
No. They cleared our entire staff.

NICK
Do you know a Hakeesh Bikir?

JASON
Yeah. He's our audio lead.

NICK
Was he acting strange recently?

JASON
No. Why? Did he have something to do with this?

NICK
He's the only member of your staff we haven't been able to get a hold of.

JASON
I mean, he was acting normal for Hakeesh.

NICK
What's that mean?

JASON
He was sort of anti-social as of late. His girlfriend just broke up with him, I think. So he was kind of in the dumps.

NICK
Was he Arab?

JASON
I don't know. He was born in Georgia.

NICK
Where does he live?

JASON
My assistant can give you the info, call her.

Jason slides a card over to Nick.

INT. JESSICA MOOTZ'S OFFICE -- DAY

A large office. A fountain outside. Sunlight streams in from the large bay windows behind --

MINORITY LEADER JESSICA MOOTZ, 43, redhead, don't let her soft features fool you, she could ruin your life before breakfast.

Jessica speaks with a southern accent.

JESSICA

Jackson's too emotional. Nunez is the proper choice.

Opposite Jessica sits her team. FRANKLIN, 35, slick hair; OSCAR, 29, young and hungry; TOBY, 59, gray hair, feeble.

FRANKLIN

The Hill is clearing everything, it's been a while since we had to elect a new speaker under such circumstances.

JESSICA

The vote will be in a few days.

(beat)

Get with the outliers, Vasquez, Ramon, Kaplan. If they aren't with us they'll take a sizable chunk of our majority with them.

FRANKLIN

Yes, ma'am.

Jessica thinks a moment.

JESSICA

We need the Office. President Jeffrey's assassination is our gain.

TOBY

That's a little inappropriate.

JESSICA

Nothing happens in this world without someone else suffering. In order for us to win, someone else has to lose.

TOBY

You can at least let his corpse get cold.

JESSICA

The democrats have held the majority for the past three terms. Do you want immigration reform? Do you want our veterans to be taken care of?

Jessica stands, towering over Toby.

JESSICA (cont'd)
The democratic party has ruined this country. It's our duty to use this opportunity to make a difference.

TOBY
I just meant... Don't be rash.

FRANKLIN
If Lebowitz doesn't make it, we're stuck with Secretary Hoffman.

JESSICA
There's no way the Senate doesn't confirm Hoffman with a republican next in the line.

Jessica thinks, running the different scenarios in her head.

OSCAR
It's too bad he wouldn't resign.

JESSICA
That's a great idea.

OSCAR
What?

JESSICA
We discredit Hoffman, leak a story so destructive... he has no choice but to resign.

Franklin nods.

FRANKLIN
The media would rip him to shreds. The Senate wouldn't have a choice.

JESSICA
Start digging. We need something big, Watergate big.

A vindictive smile creeps across Jessica's lips.

EXT. HAKEESH'S HOME -- DAY

A quiet neighborhood, if not for the SWAT van parked on the street and the tactical assault team on the lawn with Nick.

Nick takes his position behind the SWAT team as they...
Arrive at the door and count down...
Three. Two. One. A battering ram SLAMS into the door.

INT. HAKEESH'S HOME -- DAY

Splinters FLY. The door CRASHES against the wall.
The tactical team floods into a well decorated, urban home.
Nick rushes in behind them, the tactical team swarms into every room.

SWAT MEMBER #1

Clear!

From another room --

SWAT MEMBER #2

Clear!

Finally from the back room --

SWAT CAPTAIN

Nick! Get in here!

Nick rushes through the house.

INT. BEDROOM - HAKEESH'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Nick runs into the dark bedroom. SWAT members have their guns trained to a MAN, 25, Indian, on the bed.

NICK

Show me your hands!

The man doesn't move.

Nick looks at the SWAT Captain, he nods. Nick steps towards the man, rolls him over. It's Hakeesh Bikir.

A bullet in his forehead.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. FBI BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY**

A dark room, the curtains pulled. FBI AGENTS sit along the long oak conference table including Nick. At the front...

LEILANI ALANE stands 27, her tan skin and dark hair belongs more on a beach than this heliophobic's paradise.

Behind her PHOTOS OF THE HOUSE CHAMBERS on a projector.

LEILANI

Every terrorist group trying to make their bones is claiming they were responsible for the attack.

(beat)

A Chechen group calling themselves the Brigade of Islamic Martyrs knows more than has been publicly released.

Photos appear on the projector of a group of MASKED TERRORISTS along with a map of Chechnya.

LEILANI (cont'd)

FBI Agent Nick Hundley will now brief you on our suspects.

Nick stands, walks to the front of the room.

NICK

Twenty-four year old Hakeesh Bikir was found murdered in his apartment this morning.

Nick presses a button, photos of the deceased Hakeesh appear on the screen.

NICK (cont'd)

Hakeesh was an audio engineer working for Almanac Productions and was responsible for bringing the bombs into the House Chamber.

Nick presses a button, the projector changes to a long list of numbers.

NICK (cont'd)

Three weeks ago, Hakeesh had a normal call and text record, a few in and out each day. But then --

Nick highlights an area where only one number is listed ten times, no other number around it.

NICK (cont'd)
-- after January third, he only
answered to one number.

Nick stares at the screen.

NICK (cont'd)
We tried to trace the phone number
calling him, but it's a burner. We're
working on pulling any GPS data from
it now.

The lights come up in the room.

NICK (cont'd)
Whoever Hakeesh was working for is
still out there. Pressure your
informants on the Islamic Martyrs and
report back.

The FBI agents exit. Leilani gathers her things and heads
for the door but is stopped by --

NICK (cont'd)
Leilani.

She turns back.

LEILANI
Yeah?

NICK
Can you do me a favor?

LEILANI
Yeah. Anything.

NICK
My brother was assigned to the State
of the Union and I haven't been able
to get a hold of him since. Can you
do some digging?

LEILANI
Of course.

Leilani gently grabs Nick's arm.

LEILANI (cont'd)
I'm sure he's fine.

Nick nods, reassured.

EXT. CABIN SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

Water on the large lake RIPPLES as birds land. Hoffman stands on the deck. He sips from a coffee mug.

Secret Service agents mill around the perimeter.

A black car pulls to a stop. Nelson gets out and walks over to Hoffman.

HOFFMAN

Nelson... Where's Emily?

NELSON

She's in bad shape, there was a blast close to her seat... your seat.

(beat)

Where were you?

HOFFMAN

Traffic. I need to see her.

Hoffman tries to rush past Nelson but Nelson stops him.

NELSON

You can't go, it's a security risk.

HOFFMAN

I can't leave her in the hospital.

NELSON

Lebowitz isn't going to make it. We need to start prepping you to be the President of the United States.

Hoffman stares into space away from Nelson.

NELSON (cont'd)

Did you hear me?

Hoffman nods, swallows hard.

HOFFMAN

I never wanted to be president.

NELSON

The next two years are going to be the most important thing in your career.

HOFFMAN
I'm not ready for that.

NELSON
You don't have a choice.

HOFFMAN
Can I decline the Office?

NELSON
That would be a mistake. You abandon us that sends a bad message about the resolve of our country.

Hoffman takes a deep breath, looks out at the lake.

HOFFMAN
When can I see my wife?

NELSON
Once the Secret Service has cleared out the media circus.

HOFFMAN
Nelson, please... please hurry.

Nelson leaves Hoffman, alone.

INT. SECRETARY OF STATE OFFICE -- DAY

Oscar walks through an eerily empty office, he arrives at Billy's desk.

OSCAR
Billy!
(beat)
Where is everyone?

BILLY
Secretary of State is with the Secret Service, everyone else is on psych leave.

OSCAR
Why are you here?

BILLY
Somebody's gotta answer the phones.

OSCAR
Billy, billy, billy. You're so much more than that.

BILLY
(annoyed)
Stop. Alright?

OSCAR
You're doing what the great men that
run this country do every day.

BILLY
I just feel like I'm betraying Mr.
Hoffman.

Oscar sits down.

OSCAR
Hoffman is incapable of running the
Free World.

BILLY
He's not that bad.

Oscar shakes his head.

OSCAR
Be honest, with me and yourself.
Would you have voted for him?

Billy thinks, shakes his head. Oscar smiles.

OSCAR (cont'd)
No one in America would have. You
can't let him take office, Billy.
It's just not American.

Billy looks at Oscar, hesitant, finally --

BILLY
He's having an affair with Caroline
Sanchez.

Oscar shakes his head, confused.

OSCAR
Who's that?

BILLY
She has that blog, The Lefty Liberal.

Oscar's eyes go wide, he's not often surprised but this got
him, he smiles.

OSCAR
She's a blogger?

BILLY

He was with her during the State of the Union. He should've been killed. Instead, he's going to be the President, all because he's a horny old man.

OSCAR

He won't be President. I guarantee it.

Oscar smiles as Billy bites his lip.

INT. ALMANAC PRODUCTIONS -- DAY

A large globe LOGO with the words ALMANAC PRODUCTIONS on a glass door. A WORKER pushes it open leading into --

A busy production office. CREW MEMBERS walk past the closed door of an office, through the window: Nick sits with Jason.

INT. JASON'S OFFICE - ALMANAC PRODUCTIONS -- DAY

Jason shakes his head. Nick has a pad of paper ready.

JASON

I can't believe what happened to Hakeesh.

NICK

Did he have any enemies, any ties to terrorists?

JASON

No, not at all. He had a lot of friends around here.

NICK

What religion was he?

JASON

What's that matter?

NICK

If he was radical --

JASON

-- For gods sake.
(MORE)

JASON (cont'd)

(beat)

He called himself agnostic, but after his mother passed away I'm not sure he believed in anything.

NICK

How'd she die?

JASON

Cancer. Couple years back.

Nick nods, writes that down.

NICK

What was the process for the sound equipment?

JASON

Hakeesh had full oversight over it. He would check everything for quality the night before a big event, load it onto the truck himself.

NICK

He didn't have any assistants?

JASON

No. He liked to do it himself. He was a perfectionist, everything had to be done his way.

NICK

Does January third mean anything to you?

Jason thinks a moment.

JASON

The third was the day we got the State of the Union gig.

NICK

How was Hakeesh afterward?

JASON

He was happy at first, like the rest of us. It's a big career boost for all of us. After a few days he just became a zombie, coming to work, going home, no socializing.

NICK

Was he social before the third?

JASON

Yeah, it was one of the reasons we hired him. Everyone got along with him.

NICK

Did Hakeesh have any friends or family?

JASON

His girlfriend was all he had, before they broke up... Alexa Wu.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT -- DAY

Felt burgundy chairs and a view that overlooks the city. Waiters in suits and ties serve drinks.

Jessica sits opposite Caroline. A waiter pours a chilled white wine into two glasses.

JESSICA

I love white wine.

CAROLINE

I'm not a big drinker.

JESSICA

That's too bad. I wanted to toast.

CAROLINE

What are we toasting?

JESSICA

Your upcoming best-selling novel. All the talk show bookings, your one-woman show tour. Pick your poison.

Jessica sips her glass, offers a cheers. Caroline stares at her, CLINKS a glass with her.

CAROLINE

I don't understand...

JESSICA

You're sitting on a gold mine, Caroline.

CAROLINE

My blog?

JESSICA

No.

Jessica leans in, whispers --

JESSICA (cont'd)

Your affair with Secretary Hoffman.

Caroline's jaw drops, she looks around to see who heard.

CAROLINE

(whispers)

I don't know where you heard that,
but I thought we were meeting to
discuss my blog.

JESSICA

If you went public with your story,
your blog would jump faster than a
jack rabbit on cocaine.

CAROLINE

Why would I do that?

JESSICA

Because Hoffman is about to become
the President.

(beat)

Every talk show will want to speak
with you, every book store will want
a memoir. Imagine that.

Caroline smiles, daydreaming.

JESSICA (cont'd)

This will skyrocket you to the front
page of every news outlet. You'll be
the envy of all the bloggers.

CAROLINE

I couldn't betray Ralph like that.

JESSICA

Sweetie, Ralph's using you. He
doesn't love you. He can't get it up
for his wife, so he has to go to a
younger, prettier version.

Caroline smiles, as if that was a compliment.

CAROLINE

He does love me.

JESSICA

Then going public won't matter one bit.

CAROLINE

No, I couldn't...

JESSICA

Honey, your blog makes a couple thousand a year, at best.

CAROLINE

I get by.

JESSICA

You go public with this story, you'll be so rich you'll never have to think of money again. Book tours, public appearances. Look at Monica Lewinsky. Assistant one day, international A-list celebrity the next.

Caroline shakes her head.

CAROLINE

No. I'm sorry Ms. Mootz but I can't betray him. It's not who I am.

JESSICA

That's a shame.

Jessica pulls out a twenty-dollar bill, tosses it on the table along with a business card.

JESSICA (cont'd)

Call me if you have a change of heart.

CAROLINE

Hey, wait!

Jessica stops, turns back.

CAROLINE (cont'd)

You'll keep this private, right?

Jessica smiles.

JESSICA

Of course, sweetie.

Jessica walks out as Caroline stares at the business card.

EXT. CABIN SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

Hoffman exits the front door, he SNEAKS past SECRET SERVICE AGENTS that put their hands up.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT
Sir, where are you going?

HOFFMAN
I'm just taking a walk.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT
We'll send someone with you.

HOFFMAN
No, that's quite alright. I just, um,
need some air.

Hoffman hurries away, a SECRET SERVICE AGENT follows.

EXT. FOREST -- DAY

Hoffman shuffles along a dirt path, the water shimmers against the green hillside as he --

Climbs up a hill to a paved road, a yellow taxi pulls to a stop. He opens the door and gets in.

The taxi drives away as Secret Service agents rush over the hill in time to watch him leave.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

Hoffman's taxi pulls into a crowded parking lot. News vans and reporters gather around the entrance of the hospital.

Hoffman exits the taxi, hurries towards a back entrance. The door swings open as a NURSE exits.

It nearly closes but Hoffman slips his hand inside, he swings the door open and rushes in.

INT. HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS

Hoffman rushes down the halls of the hospital. Some nurses stare at him as he rushes past, others have no clue who.

Hoffman steps up to a nurse station.

HOFFMAN

Excuse me, where can I find the Hoffman room? I'm her husband.

The NURSE glances at her sheet, looks back up at Hoffman.

NURSE

Room 304, down this hall.

The nurse points down a long corridor. Hoffman hurries away.

INT. HOFFMAN ROOM - HOSPITAL -- DAY

Mrs. Hoffman lies on a bed, an air tube in her mouth. A respirator breathes for her.

Hoffman appears outside the window, he stares at his unconscious wife.

He apprehensively opens the door, steps into the room and grabs his wife's hand and fights back tears.

HOFFMAN

I'm sorry, sweetheart. I should've been with you.

Hoffman cries next to his wife until --

The door CRACKS open. DOCTOR COULSON storms in, his face buried in a file, he looks up and notices Hoffman.

COULSON

Oh, sorry. I wasn't expecting anyone in here. She hasn't had many visitors.

HOFFMAN

I'm her husband.

COULSON

The blast knocked her back, she hit her head pretty hard which knocked her unconscious. We've had to release some of the pressure in her skull.

HOFFMAN

Is she going to be okay?

COULSON

Typically a blow this bad causes sever brain damage.

HOFFMAN

Is there anything I can do? I'm the Secretary of State, I can call in the best surgeon in the country or --

COULSON

-- Just be with her.

Coulson touches Hoffman on the shoulder, reassuring. Hoffman forces a smile.

COULSON (cont'd)

We have a church downstairs if you'd like to pray for her.

Coulson leaves. Hoffman sits down next to his wife, holds her hand. He leans in, kisses her forehead.

HOFFMAN

I know you can do this, hun. Please don't leave me.

Hoffman cries as he clutches her. The subtle BEEP of her heart echoes through the stale air.

INT. PRESIDENT PRO TEM ROOM - HOSPITAL -- DAY

A cardiac monitor SPIKES and FALLS as the machine BEEPS softly. Lebowitz lies covered in bandages.

His body CONVULSES. Heart RACES into a FLAT LINE. ALARMS. Nurses and doctors rush in.

DOCTOR

Get a crash cart!

A nurse appears with a defibrillator. The doctor rubs the paddles together and --

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Clear!

-- SHOCKS Lebowitz.

BEEEEEP.

The doctor spins a dial, ups the voltage. Rubs the paddles together and --

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Clear!

-- SHOCKS Lebowitz again.

BEEEEEEEEEEEEP.

The doctor places the paddles onto the cart. The flat line echoes throughout the silent room.

INT. HOFFMAN ROOM - HOSPITAL -- DAY

Hoffman sits next to his wife's bed. It's eerily quiet.

A THUNDEROUS crowd ROARS down the hallway.

Hoffman stands, peaks out the door as a SEA of REPORTERS rush towards the room.

He SLAMS the door, backs away as the reporters collide with the window like the ocean flooding the Titanic.

SHOUTS and CAMERA FLASHES echo in the hallway, Hoffman, rattled, stares with trepidation.

EXT. ALEXA WU'S HOME -- DAY

An upscale neighborhood. Perfect track homes line the block. Nick hurries up to the porch of an elegant wooden house.

He BANGS on the door.

NICK

Alexa Wu?

Nothing. He BANGS again.

NICK (cont'd)

Alexa? I'm with the FBI!

He turns and walks away but stops in his tracks. He pauses, looks back, and ear towards the house.

Silence.

Nick looks in the window. Tables are over turned, chairs knocked over, blood trails on the kitchen tiles.

Nick tries the door, it's unlocked.

INT. ALEXA WU'S HOME -- CONTINUOUS

Nick pushes the door open, his gun drawn, he scans the room.

NICK

Alexa?

No answer. He checks around the house. It's empty, clear signs of a struggle throughout.

He looks towards the basement, descends the stairs, his gun trained on the darkness.

He clicks on a FLASHLIGHT and reaches the bottom. His flashlight piercing the shadows, it lands on...

A crumpled blanket next to a pipe, hand cuffs hang from a pipe covered in blood. A plate of ROTTING FOOD next to it.

Nick scans the empty basement. He's too late.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CHIEF OF STAFF OFFICE -- DAY

Nelson sits behind his desk. Jessica saunters into the room.

JESSICA
We never get to lunch together
anymore, Nelson.

She takes a seat opposite him.

NELSON
I'm really busy, the President's
funeral is in an hour.

JESSICA
I came down here to tell you that
you've got a train coming down the
tracks for you and it's best you leap
off.

Nelson looks at her, takes off his glasses and rubs his
eyes.

NELSON
What's that mean?

JESSICA
Ralph Hoffman is sleeping with a no
name blogger.

NELSON
He's married.

JESSICA
That's what makes it so phenomenal
for me, and so terrible for you.

NELSON
Who is this woman?

JESSICA
Caroline Sanchez.
(beat)
She writes in some left winged blog
that nobody reads.

NELSON
That's a tabloid headline at best.

JESSICA

Until he ascends the Office... then
it becomes an international affair.

NELSON

No reputable publication will run it.

JESSICA

She's a dumb girl, but at least she
had the common sense to record their
escapades.

Nelson looks at her, closes his laptop.

NELSON

What do you want?

JESSICA

Consider it a favor. You get to avoid
having a President that will be
impeached in six months and I get
your help in the future. No questions
asked.

NELSON

I can't do that.

JESSICA

I'm not going to ask you to perjure
yourself. It'll be on the up and up.

NELSON

Even if what you say is true, Hoffman
is next in the line. The senate
confirms him, not me.

Jessica stands up, walks towards the door.

JESSICA

Then you better start making some
calls.

Jessica disappears, Nelson picks up his phone.

PRELAP: TAPS plays on a bugle.

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY -- DUSK

A TAPS BUGLER completes the song. DOZENS of soldiers watch
from the crowd including...

Nelson. Dressed in his finest black suit. Next to him...

MRS. MARGARET JEFFREY, a beautiful woman on any other day, her make up running from her tears. Nelson leans to her.

NELSON
I'm sorry, Maggy.

Across the yard, Jessica, dressed in black, watches as Eight MILITARY GUARDS hold an American flag over the casket, they fold the it with precision.

MARGARET
Please, don't go to war over this,
Nelson. You know that's not what he
would've wanted.

Nelson nods, noticing Jessica.

NELSON
Yes, ma'am. We'll see the men
responsible are brought to justice,
and no more.

A guard hands the flag to Margaret. She breaks down and CRIES again as Nelson fades into the crowd.

MAJORITY WHIP PHILLIP WIXLER, 54, clean-cut black hair, a two piece suit and tie, watches the casket as it's lowered into the ground.

Nelson steps next to him. The two lock their eyes on the casket as they speak.

NELSON (cont'd)
Phillip.

PHILLIP
Nelson.

NELSON
The vote for the Presidential
nomination --

Phillip waits for the request.

NELSON (cont'd)
-- I need you to kill it.

Jessica watches the interaction from across the yard. Her attention more on Nelson than on the lowering casket.

PHILLIP
You know I can't do that.

NELSON

Then don't confirm Hoffman.

PHILLIP

Why would we do that? Hoffman is one of ours.

NELSON

Hoffman has too many skeletons in his closet.

The casket is fully lowered. Phillip turns to Nelson for the first time.

PHILLIP

If we deny him, next in line is Keany... you'd rather we approve a republican than Hoffman?

Nelson notices Jessica, his eyes locked on her.

NELSON

Let their party deal with this mess. We'll get the Office back in the primaries.

PHILLIP

I'll pull some of the party, see if I can sway them.

(beat)

Everyone's got skeletons. Are his that bad?

NELSON

Afraid so.

Jessica smiles as Nelson disappears into the dispersing crowd.

EXT. PARK -- NIGHT

A quiet night in the empty park. Crickets CHIRP in the darkness. Nick walks with EMIN TASHEMIR.

Emin is 35, Caucasian, tall and muscular with a short black beard, he walks with a slight limp and speaks with a Russian accent.

NICK

How long have you been with them?

EMIN

Two years. I worked for Ayman Muktar in Russia before he came to the States and later brought me.

NICK

You run a big risk coming to me. Why now?

EMIN

It is not what I came to this country for. I was promised my freedom but they are always watching me.

NICK

And you have proof that this Ayman Muktar guy is responsible for the attack?

EMIN

I know that Ayman made that him do it, I do not know if he was acting alone.

Emin pulls out his cell phone, he hands it to Nick.

EMIN (cont'd)

I did not think they would be successful. I thought for sure your Secret Service would stop him at the door.

ON THE PHONE, photos of Ayman and Hakeesh planting bombs in microphones.

NICK

This makes you an accessory.

EMIN

I know. I am will accept my fate for my hand in this. I hope your judges will go easy on me by giving you this.

NICK

Are you willing to become an asset for the U.S. Government? It would mean no jail time.

EMIN

Yes. Of course.

Nick pulls a photo of Alexa out of his pocket, he shows it to Emin.

NICK
Was this woman captured by Muktar?

EMIN
Yes. She was held to force Hakeesh to commit the attack.

NICK
Is she still alive?

EMIN
Yes.

NICK
Where are they now?

EMIN
An empty warehouse across town.

NICK
Can you take me there?

Emin nods as they walk deeper into the night's darkness.

INT. SENATE CHAMBER -- NIGHT

Dozens of SENATORS flood the grand Senate Chamber. They take their assigned seats.

A hush rolls over as the PRESIDING OFFICER, 60's, clean-shaven, too old for the job, stands at the podium.

PRESIDING OFFICER
We've been called to an emergency session to consider the following nomination of Ralph B. Hoffman to the Office of the President of the United States. The clerk will now take the vote.

A CLERK sits at a table, calls out names.

CLERK
Mr. Abrams...

Senators form a line at the front as their name is called.

INT. HOFFMAN ROOM - HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Nelson filters past reporters that sit outside the room like vultures. Reporters SHOUT as he slips into the door.

The door clicks closed, MUFFLING the reporters SHOUTS.

NELSON

We need to get you down to the press room.

HOFFMAN

I'm not ready for this.

NELSON

Senate is voting to confirm you now.

Hoffman stares at his wife.

HOFFMAN

She always told me I'd make a good President. I never wanted it.

NELSON

Did you sleep with Caroline Sanchez?

Hoffman snaps his attention between Nelson and his wife, afraid she might wake up.

HOFFMAN

What? Be quiet.

NELSON

She's in a coma. She can't hear us.

HOFFMAN

No, I didn't sleep with her. I don't even know who that is.

NELSON

Your assistant says he saw you with her.

HOFFMAN

Saw me how?

NELSON

I'm about to be your Chief of Staff. You need to cut the bullshit with me so I can get ahead of stuff like this.

Hoffman stares at him, Nelson stares back a moment.

NELSON (cont'd)
How real is this?

Hoffman thinks a moment, finally --

HOFFMAN
(whispers)
It, uh... it happened twice. It
wasn't a regular thing.

NELSON
Once can sink a presidency. Were you
with her on the night of the State of
the Union?

HOFFMAN
Yes. She's the reason I'm alive and
my wife is lying in this bed...
(beat)
What are we going to do?

NELSON
Keep it under wraps.

HOFFMAN
What about my assistant?

NELSON
I'll see to it he doesn't speak
another word in this town.

Nelson's cell phone RINGS. He turns away and answers.

NELSON (cont'd)
Hello?
(beat)
Thank you.

Nelson hangs up, sighs, a look of defeat on his face, he
forces a smile and turns back to Hoffman.

NELSON (cont'd)
The senate has completed its
emergency vote... congratulations Mr.
President.

Nelson extends his hand, shakes Hoffman's hand.

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

A large abandoned warehouse in the middle of nowhere. No
other glimpse of humanity around. The perfect place to hide.

A beat up pickup truck illuminates a LARGE METAL DOOR into the warehouse.

Nick trails behind in his car, his lights off, window rolled down. The night wilderness echos in the distance.

The truck rolls over the gravel and parks outside the door. Emin gets out of his car as Nick comes to a stop a safe distance away.

Emin POUNDS on the metal door.

It SLIDES open. A light from inside shines bright in the dim outdoors.

TWO MEN with guns heft the door open. They shout something to Emin before...

They escort him inside. The door slides closed, the parking lot goes dark again.

Nick picks up his phone, he dials and puts it to his ear as he watches the closed door.

NICK

Hey.

LEILANI (V.O.)

Hey, Nick.

NICK

Have you heard anything about my brother yet?

LEILANI (V.O.)

Nothing yet. I'm still looking.

Nick perks up as the warehouse door slides open. Emin is SHOVED out, he tumbles into the gravel.

NICK

Shit...

LEILANI (V.O.)

You okay?

NICK

Yeah. I gotta go.

Before Leilani can answer Nick hangs up and throws his phone down. He stares out as...

AYMAN MUKTAR, 50's, Caucasian, thick beard, appears in the doorway. He steps out, a handgun held firmly...

Ayman yells inaudibly in Russian. Emin begs on his knees.

Ayman holds out a phone, Emin's phone, but Nick is too far to see that.

Ayman SHOUTS and lowers his weapon.

Emin bows his head, thanks Ayman and gets off the ground.

Ayman motions away. Emin bows again. He steps back with trepidation and turns...

His walk turns into a run as he gains distance but...

He's not far enough as Ayman picks up his gun --

POP! POP!

Emin falls to the ground. The dust barely settles as Ayman's cronies heave Emin's dead body into the truck.

The door SLAMS closed as Ayman and his men disappear inside.

Nick gives it a moment before he turns on his engine, shifts into gear and quietly rolls away.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM -- NIGHT

Cassie rushes into a packed press room. Reporters SHOUT questions at her as she takes her place at the podium.

The CROWD goes quiet.

CASSIE

About an hour ago, President Pro Tem Lebowitz passed away from injuries sustained during the attack on the State of the Union.

MURMURS and SHUFFLING from the crowd, Cassie waits for them to settle.

CASSIE (cont'd)

Secretary of State Hoffman was notified of his passing and has accepted the nomination to the Office of President.

Cassie lets that sink in with the press.

CASSIE (cont'd)
 The senate assembled an emergency caucus where they voted fifty-two to forty-eight to confirm the nomination.

Cassie looks up at the press.

CASSIE (cont'd)
 President elect Hoffman will now be given the oath of office by Chief Justice Lopez.

CHIEF JUSTICE LOPEZ, 53, Latino, dressed in a black formal robe steps onto the stage with Hoffman.

They take position opposite each other. Hoffman places his left hand on the bible, raises his right hand.

LOPEZ
 Are you prepared to take the oath, secretary?

HOFFMAN
 I am.

LOPEZ
 I, Ralph Brandon Hoffman, do solemnly swear --

HOFFMAN
 -- I, Ralph Brandon Hoffman, do solemnly swear.

INT. JESSICA MOOTZ'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jessica watches the confirmation on a television, she sips scotch, alone.

LOPEZ (V.O.)
 That I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States --

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM -- NIGHT

Nelson stands, watches Hoffman from the back of the room.

HOFFMAN

-- That I will faithfully execute the
Office of President of the United
States.

INT. CAROLINE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Caroline smiles as she watches the confirmation.

LOPEZ (V.O.)

And will to the best of my ability,
preserve, protect and defend the
constitution of the United States.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM -- NIGHT

Lopez locks eyes with Hoffman.

HOFFMAN

And will to the best of my ability,
preserve, protect and defend the
constitution of the United States.

LOPEZ

Congratulations Mr. President.

Reporters CHEER and SHOUT questions as FLASHES bulbs POP
around the room. Lopez and Hoffman shake hands and pose.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**INT. IOWA GOVERNORS OFFICE -- DAY**

A small office in the mid-west. Iowa State flags on the walls. Jessica appears in the doorway.

ANDREW FINCHER sits behind his desk, 44, handsome, it's no wonder why he was elected Governor.

FINCHER

Jessica... great to see you!

Jessica smiles, walks over to Fincher. They embrace.

JESSICA

You too, love.

FINCHER

What brings you all the way down to my neck of the woods?

JESSICA

I need to ask you something.

FINCHER

Something you couldn't ask on the phone?

They settle into chairs.

JESSICA

You heard the news, I'm sure.

FINCHER

I'm still not sure what that has to do with me.

JESSICA

Andrew... how would you like to be the Vice President?

Andrew stares at her, smiles.

INT. DIVE BAR -- NIGHT

Nelson sits in a booth. Cigarette smoke fills the air as DRUNK PATRONS slam back drinks.

Nelson sips a glass of scotch, neat.

Caroline walks in, looks around. Nelson waves her over.

CAROLINE
(to BARTENDER)
Martini, please.

NELSON
Have a seat.

Nelson motions for her to sit.

CAROLINE
Do I know you?

NELSON
You should.

Caroline stares at Nelson a moment, shakes her head.

CAROLINE
I'm sorry, I don't...

NELSON
I'm Nelson Jones. I'm the White House
Chief of Staff.

CAROLINE
Oh. Yes, of course. I know who you
are.

NELSON
No, you don't. It's fine. Look, it's
not why I asked to meet you here.

Nelson sips his scotch.

NELSON (cont'd)
You slept with Ralph Hoffman.

CAROLINE
No, I...

NELSON
Don't bullshit me, Ms. Sanchez.

Nelson leans in to her.

NELSON (cont'd)
You will never tell anyone about
this. You understand?

Caroline is taken aback. She adjusts in her seat to face
Nelson more head on.

CAROLINE
I can tell whomever I want --

Nelson turns to her.

NELSON
-- You misunderstand me. I'm not asking you. I'm telling you.

CAROLINE
I have --

NELSON
-- Nothing. You have nothing. You are nothing. You think because you slept with the future President, that entitles you to fame and fortune? You're a tiny bug on the windshield of Washington.

CAROLINE
It's --

NELSON
-- You have two options. You disappear. You keep writing your blog and everyone stays happy. Or you keep pursuing this ridiculous claim, and your life will be in shambles while I continue to run this nation.

CAROLINE
What claim?

NELSON
You're dealing with the most powerful man in the Free World, Caroline.

Nelson polishes off his scotch, he stands up.

NELSON (cont'd)
And I'm not talking about the President.

Nelson storms out the door as the bartender drops off a martini. Caroline sits, stunned.

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

The moonlight beams into the dimly lit iconic office. Hoffman sits behind the Resolute Desk.

The door swings open, Jessica and Oscar walk inside.

HOFFMAN
Miss Mootz. Did we have an
appointment?

JESSICA
No, this is slightly impromptu.

HOFFMAN
Can we schedule something? I'm about
to announce my nomination for Vice
President.

JESSICA
It's about that. You're going to pick
Andrew Fincher.

HOFFMAN
I'm sorry?

Jessica walks to the opposite side of the desk. Oscar waits
at the back of the room.

JESSICA
Andrew Fincher. Iowa State Governor.

HOFFMAN
I'll nominate who I feel is best for
the job.

Hoffman goes back to his paperwork.

JESSICA
I guess you don't mind if your little
secret rendezvous with Caroline
Sanchez goes public.

Hoffman perks up.

HOFFMAN
I don't know what you're talking
about.

JESSICA
Don't be coy. You and I both know
that this is real, and I have Miss
Sanchez waiting in the wings.

Jessica leans across the desk.

JESSICA (cont'd)
Fincher is a fantastic choice. A democratic President choosing a republican Vice President? It'll scream bipartisanship.

HOFFMAN
What do you get out of this?

JESSICA
My party needs a player in the White House. This is a victory for us.

HOFFMAN
You're committing blackmail against the acting President.

JESSICA
It's the currency this town runs on. We're only as good as our word, Mr. acting President.

HOFFMAN
My first move as acting President won't be the cause of blackmail.

JESSICA
You have two options. You nominate Fincher and you remain acting President, or you nominate Mitchell and you'll be impeached within the week.

Jessica storms out, a huge grin on her face. Oscar follows her out.

JESSICA (cont'd)
Think on it!

Hoffman stares as she disappears.

EXT. THE WEST WING HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Jessica and Oscar walk down the hall. Once out of earshot, Oscar whispers --

OSCAR
I thought Caroline wasn't going to go public?

JESSICA
Honey, if Caroline won't go public,
I'll leak the story for her.

INT. FBI BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

Nick stands at the head of a briefing table. A TACTICAL UNIT sits, eyes on him.

A photo of Ayman Muktar appears behind him, candid.

NICK
Ayman Muktar. Born in Chechnya, came
to the states on a fake passport two
years ago.

Photos change to the candid photos that Emin had taken.

NICK (cont'd)
Our asset had taken these photos of
Ayman and our bomber prior to the
attack.

Nick pushes a button, photos of large equipment being
removed from the warehouse.

NICK (cont'd)
We believe Muktar and his associates
are removing bomb making supplies
from the warehouse.

Nick presses a button, a map of the neighborhood appears.

NICK (cont'd)
Last night I witnessed an asset's
murder at the hands of Muktar. We
need to capture this guy alive but he
is considered extremely dangerous.

Nick clicks a button, the lights come up.

NICK (cont'd)
This is the best lead we have. We
can't afford to lose him.
(beat)
Let's move.

Nick and the team get up, head for the door.

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- DAY

A car parked across from the warehouse.

INSIDE THE CAR, Nick sits, his eyes glued on...

A van that just pulled up. TWO CHECHEN MEN, thick shoulders, leather jackets rush into the warehouse.

His cell phone RINGS. He looks at it: Mom. He silences it, grabs his radio and commands --

NICK

Move in.

Police cars and SWAT vans race to SURROUND the building at high speeds. Doors open. A TACTICAL UNIT rushes towards the building, opening fire.

TWO ENEMY GUARDS fall.

Nick rushes behind them, his gun BLASTING round after round.

FLASH BANGS tossed into windows... FLASH. POP. The front door is KICKED in.

INT. WAREHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

A large warehouse. Dozens of boxes line the walls. Hay covers the floor. The place is STACKED with ENEMIES.

Police SWARM the warehouse. Two men turn with hand guns OPEN FIRE...

They quickly fall. A DOZEN more enemies open fire from all around the warehouse. Bullets FLY across the room.

Ayman disappears into an underground tunnel as...

Nick rushes towards Ayman but...A SLEW of BULLETS stops him.

Bullets riddle the walls. BRICK FRAGMENTS, SPLINTERS and WOOD fill the room.

The police push forward in formation. They take cover as bullets connect all around them. Another attacker falls.

Nick FIRES as he heads for cover, he drops one before --

A BULLET hits him in the chest and...

He stumbles to the ground, firing a few wild shots. A high-pitched RING fills his ears.

The room spins for Nick as he tries to get past the pain.

The chaos in the room dies down as the last target falls.

Nick tugs at his chest, a bullet lodged in his vest. Smoke dissipates. An OFFICER helps Nick to his feet.

OFFICER
Nick! You okay?

Nick grumbles. COUGHS. He struggles to his feet.

NICK
Vest got it.

Nick notices the carnage around the room, afraid to ask --

NICK (cont'd)
Muktar?

OFFICER
Got away;.

NICK
Shit...

As he speaks ALEXA WU, 29, Chinese, skinny as a rail, stumbles out of the back room.

Her hands and feet covered in BLOOD and WOUNDS. Two OFFICERS hold her as she walks.

OFFICER
We got the girl, sir! She's alive!

Despite the pain, Nick smiles as he gets to his feet. His cell phone RINGS. He answers.

NICK
Hello?

LEILANI (V.O.)
Nick? We found your brother. He's been killed.

SMASH CUT TO
BLACK:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE**INT. MORGUE -- DAY**

Nick follows a MEDICAL EXAMINER into the large cold space. Bodies are covered with sheets. They arrive at a body, the examiner prepares to pull the sheet back.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Are you ready?

Nick nods to the medical examiner. The sheet is pulled back, BRANDON HUNDLEY, 31, if he were ten years younger Nick could be his twin.

Brandon's body looks surprisingly clean, no burns or scars.

NICK
Yes, that's him.

Nick looks away, he turns, anger in his eyes.

NICK (cont'd)
I thought they said he was killed in the blast?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
He was found outside the chamber, but the blast wasn't the cause of death.

NICK
Then what was?

The medical examiner rolls the body over, showing THREE GUNSHOT WOUNDS in Brandon's lifeless back.

NICK (cont'd)
He was shot?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Ballistics looked at the bullets, no luck on the weapon though.

The medical examiner points to the wounds. Two directly in the body's back, and one in his side.

MEDICAL EXAMINER (cont'd)
The wound pattern looks like he was shot in the back and turned towards his assailant as he was shot twice more.

Nick stares at the body of his fallen brother before he runs out the door, it SLAMS behind him.

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

Hoffman stares out the window into the garden, the Resolute Desk behind him.

Nelson walks through the door, behind him is SENATOR JACK MITCHELL, 53, slick hair cut, overweight.

NELSON

Mr. President. I want to introduce you to --

Hoffman turns around, smiles.

HOFFMAN

Jack!

Hoffman and Mitchell shake hands.

MITCHELL

We co-authored a couple of bills while we were Senators. Now look at you.

HOFFMAN

(reluctant)

Extreme circumstances.

Hoffman offers them a seat, they settle in.

HOFFMAN (cont'd)

So, what brings you in today?

NELSON

Senator Mitchell is the parties choice for our Vice President.

Hoffman smiles, looks at Mitchell.

MITCHELL

It would be an honor, Mr. President.

HOFFMAN

Are you still pushing that Libertarian agenda?

Mitchell stares at him, replies coyly.

MITCHELL

Yes, of course.

Hoffman smiles back, breaks the tension.

HOFFMAN

Better start writing your acceptance
speech, Mr. Vice President.

Hoffman and Mitchell shake hands, Mitchell leaves. Nelson
starts to follow but is stopped --

HOFFMAN (cont'd)

Nelson. Stay back a minute.

Nelson turns.

HOFFMAN (cont'd)

Jessica Mootz is holding Caroline
over my head.

NELSON

What do you mean?

HOFFMAN

If I don't elect who she wants as
Vice President, she'll out Caroline.

(beat)

I can't deal with that right now.

NELSON

I'll make this go away.

HOFFMAN

I don't want Caroline hurt.

NELSON

I know.

HOFFMAN

How's my wife?

NELSON

Swelling is coming down, doctors are
still monitoring her but Ralph...
this much time in a coma... it's not
good.

HOFFMAN

I'm not giving up on her.

NELSON

Just nominate Mitchell and focus on the next few days. Don't worry about Caroline.

Nelson leaves Hoffman alone with his thoughts.

INT. FBI INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Alexa sits in a cold interrogation room. A blanket wrapped around her. Bandages on her face. She sips coffee.

Nick stands across from her.

ALEXA

They grabbed me and Hakeesh. Took us to the warehouse. They threatened to kill us both if Hakeesh wouldn't kill the President.

NICK

How long were you there?

ALEXA

I don't know... a couple of weeks, a month maybe.

NICK

Did they ever say who they were?

ALEXA

Can I get witness protection or something?

Alexa CRIES, her breath sporadic.

NICK

Did you hear them say...
(checks notes)
...Islamic Martyrs?

ALEXA

No, they never said that.

NICK

What language were they speaking?

ALEXA

Russian, maybe. It sounded like Russian.

Nick pulls a chair up next to her, she eyes him, suspicious.

NICK
Are you okay?

ALEXA
What?

NICK
You've been through a lot.
(beat)
How are you holding up?

Alexa tears up, her hands shake. She finally breaks down.

ALEXA
I'm scared... what they did to
Hakeesh. What they'll do to me.

Nick hands Alexa a box of tissues. Alexa wipes her nose as they share a quiet moment.

NICK
What were they doing in the
warehouse?

ALEXA
They had Hakeesh there a few times.
He would bring some of his work
equipment.

NICK
Equipment?

ALEXA
Microphones and stuff.

NICK
If their plan was to kill the
President, why not kill you after
they were successful?

Nick's phone RINGS. It's Leilani.

NICK (cont'd)
They are planning another attack.

Nick answers his phone.

NICK (cont'd)
Hello?

INT. FBI ANALYST ROOM -- DAY

Leilani sits in front of her computer, alarms BLARE as the screen FLASHES red.

LEILANI

Nick, you have to get to the White House. Now.

INTERCUT

NICK

What's wrong?

LEILANI

I've been monitoring that cell number that was calling Hakeesh. It just turned on.

Leilani takes a closer look at the map.

LEILANI (cont'd)

It's in the White House Press Room.

Nick rushes for the door.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM -- DAY

The press room. Dozens of REPORTERS packed into standing room only as Cassie steps up to the podium microphone.

CASSIE

Ladies and gentleman, the acting President of the United States.

APPLAUSE. Hoffman steps up as the crowd quiets.

HOFFMAN

My fellow Americans --

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY -- DAY

Nick runs through the hallway at full speed.

INT. SANCHEZ HOME -- DAY

Caroline shoves clothes into a bag. The Presidential address on her television.

HOFFMAN (V.O.)
-- the past twenty-four hours have
been an incredible test for our great
nation.

She smiles as she zips up the bag. She grabs a remote,
clicks the TV off and hurries out the front door.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY -- DAY

Nick turns a corner. Flashes a security badge, rushes
into --

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Nick enters, Hoffman continues his speech. Nick scans the
room, out of breath.

HOFFMAN
Mrs. Hoffman always told me I would
make a great President, and I hope to
not let her, or any of you, down.

Nick looks at reporters on their phones. Frantic. He scans
the room. Other reporters text message.

HOFFMAN (cont'd)
It is with great pleasure that I
nominate --

Hoffman looks at Mitchell...

Nelson...

Jessica...

HOFFMAN (cont'd)
-- Andrew Fincher, Governor of the
great State of Iowa.

Jessica smiles as the crowd ERUPTS. Hoffman talks over them.

HOFFMAN (cont'd)
Our nation needs unity. Governor
Fincher has proven his bipartisanship
and will be a great ally in the
battle that lies ahead for us.

Nelson looks dismayed.

FINCHER

Thank you Mr. President. I graciously
accept the nomination to the Vice
Presidency.

The crowd CHEERS as Fincher shakes hands with Hoffman, they
pose for photos.

Nick looks around the room. EVERYONE talks on their cell
phones, the CHATTER in the room grows loud.

Nick pulls his phone out, dials, he presses send and looks
around the room.

It RINGS...

And RINGS...

He scans the room, everyone is looking at their phones.

It RINGS and --

FINCHER (V.O.)

-- Hello?

Nick looks at the podium where Vice President Fincher
stands, he holds a phone to his ear.

They may be across the room but Nick can clearly see him.

FINCHER

Hello? Who is this?

Nick lowers the phone from his ear, turns it off and stares
at Fincher.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

The QUIET night streets of Washington. Caroline walks down
the sidewalk, cars speed past her. She pulls out a
cigarette.

Her lighter SPARKS, finally the flame holds steady. She
lights the cigarette, puffs it as --

A BLACK MASKED FIGURE pulls her into an alley. She KICKS and
SCREAMS but is quickly muffled with duct tape.

The attacker SLAPS her.

Her nose bleeds as her MUFFLED screams fail to penetrate the
tape. He HITS her again, her body goes limp. Unconscious.

His pants UNZIP. Cars whiz past on the street, no one stops.

The attacker stands, grabs her bag and runs away.

Caroline lies motionless in a puddle of BLOOD and WATER,
gashes in her face.

Cars race past, unaware. Caroline lies in the dark alley.

Lifeless.

END OF EPISODE