

HEROES AND VILLAINS

ENTERTAINMENT



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LITTLE GREEN

MEN



Alston Ramsay

Based on the Best-Selling Novel by
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Production
Graystone Pictures
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'LITTLE GREEN MEN'

OVER BLACK, a jaunty piece of CLASSICAL MUSIC -- the pompous musings of TRUMPETS doing their best to provide a fitting entrance for our honored guest:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY - ESTABLISHING

The humorless cement megapolis of WASHINGTON, D.C., a city whose very architecture exudes self-righteousness. Soaring white monuments and hideous Brutalist monstrosities -- home-sweet-home for the government's oceanic bureaucracy.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

Countless minions scurry back and forth in the tense moments before a TV show goes to air.

A video monitor plays the program's introductory montage, replete with the trumpet score. Various images of our fearless protagonist JOHN BANION (40s) flash across the screen. He resembles -- in looks and in personality -- a mash-up of Tucker Carlson's sneering elitism and George Stephanopoulos's smug egg-headedness.

As we draw near the table at which John and PRESIDENT MATILDA TECUMSEH (60s) sit, a PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (20s) sidles up to John and adjusts his tie.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Ten seconds.

The president bark-whispers orders into the ear of her fawning PRESS SECRETARY (40s). She's a woman at her most comfortable when chewing others' asses.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Who does he think he is, demanding
I be here in person. Arrogant
sonofabitch. If they break for a
commercial, so help me God, I will
walk out. Do you hear me? Walk.
Thefuck. Out.

PRESS SECRETARY

Yes, ma'am.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Three, two, one...

The aides rush out of frame as John looks directly into the camera with a self-assured smirk.

EMCEE (O.S.)

Welcome to 'Sunday': an exploration of tomorrow's issues with today's leaders. And now your host, John Banion.

JOHN

Madame President, it is an honor to have you in the studio this morning.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Of course. So glad we could make it work.

JOHN

I want to start by asking you why -- in light of your administration's below-par performance in a number of areas -- why you haven't fired at least two-thirds of your cabinet? Let me ask you about something else. We have sources who say that NASA, the space agency, is planning to advance the launch of the Space Station Celeste to immediately before the presidential election this fall. Would you call that a triumph of American aerospace engineering -- or a manipulation of the political calendar? You can take credit for both if you like.

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The first rule of interviewing presidents, and I've interviewed the last four, is to establish his or her inadequacy and then move on to more pressing issues.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

John, the credit for Celeste's dazzling success has to go, first and foremost, to the hundreds and thousands of men and women who have worked so hard on this project to make sure that America keeps winning not just here on earth, but also winning out there.

JOHN

And what precisely is the cost of 'winning'? Need I remind you that Celeste is now up to 43 billion dollars.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Elon Musk wrote on Twitter, and I quote, 'I could make a better space station for one-twelfth the price in one-sixteenth the time'. How do you respond to that?

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

How do I respond to twitters? I don't.

JOHN

Tweets, ma'am.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Excuse me?

JOHN (V.O.)

The second rule: impugn their motives. Suggest that whatever the cause du jour -- collapsing bridges, starving orphans, proxy wars in Asia -- that it's nothing more than politics. It drives them crazy. It's also true.

JOHN

They're called Tweets. With all due respect, the taxpayers share Mr. Musk's concerns, especially with a national debt that's blossomed to 31 trillion dollars under your watch despite your repeated promises to govern as a fiscal conservative.

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The risk, of course, is that this pas-de-deaux will initiate drone mode. Endless talking points cobbled together from last night's cable-news freak show. There's only one thing to do in those situations: split screen.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

John, let me remind you of all the good that Celeste-related research has brought to our country. Among many, many advancements, there have been great leaps forward in the technology of, to name just a few, app-controlled wheelchairs, wifi-enabled insulin pumps, energy-efficient air conditioners...

John tilts his head down so he's peering as disdainfully as is humanly possible over the top of his glasses. On the monitor, we see a split screen of the two pugilists.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH (CONT'D)

...radiation-blocking sunglasses, and by gosh, how could I forget LAWSI, the Large-Asteroid Warning System Indicator--

JOHN

But what are we supposed to do if we find out there is an asteroid coming our way?

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Well in that exceedingly unlikely event surely we would want some sort of warning.

JOHN

Not I, madam, not I. If the world were ending in short order, I would most assuredly not want to know.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

This is about beginnings, John, not endings. Let me make another point about the historic diversity of the Space Station Celeste's crew, which is giving inspiration to millions of disadvantaged--

JOHN

We'll be right back with the president after this message from our sponsor.

The president shoots daggers across the room at her press secretary as John leans back in his seat and grins.

JOHN (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

Do you want to know what the third rule is?

INT. VAL'S ENTRYWAY - DAY

John stands in a swank Georgetown entryway, where a demure INTERN (20s) hangs breathlessly on his every word--

INTERN

Yes, of course, please tell me, Mr. Banion.

JOHN

The third rule is simple. Create and host the highest-rated Sunday-morning talk show for twelve and a half years running so that you can dictate the rules to whomever you want, whenever you want.

INTERN

How did you ever do it?

John peers over her shoulder into the next room, where one of the well-heeled attendees of this brunch soiree spots John and points him out to others.

JOHN

Base human nature. The desire to be loved. Ego, pure and simple. The bigger the ego, the harder they fall. And the harder they fall--

The crowd barrels into the entry-way--

JOHN (CONT'D)

--the louder the effusive praise on another victory won thereby.

INTERN

Do you have any unpaid internships--

The Intern is pushed aside as the well-wishers make an impromptu greeting line. First up, BURTON GALLILEE (50s, African American), a warm barrel of a man and ultimate D.C. fixer. Accidentally offed a hooker? He's your guy.

BURT

Is that blood on your shoes, old sport?

JOHN

She'll survive.

Next, VAL DALHOUSIE (60s), the regal host of this gathering.

VAL

If I had known you were going to be so feral with her, I wouldn't have invited so many of her cabinet.

She winks and glides away as GEORGE STEPHANOPOULIS (himself) shakes John's hand.

GEORGE

John. Nice show.

JOHN

Do you think? I don't know. I heard you had...who'd you have?

GEORGE

Senator Mentallius. He's here, actually.

JOHN
Can he still talk? I've heard
rumors.

GEORGE
President pro tempore is not just
an empty title--

John spots his wife in the other room--

JOHN
Excuse me, George, I need to take
this.

INT. VAL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

John saunters toward his wife BITSEY BANION (30s, high strung) and the gentlemen currently entertaining her: TYLER PINCH (40s), an officious Smithsonian conservator.

TYLER
Sorry I missed the fireworks this
morning.

JOHN
Don't sweat it, guy. And how are
you, love of my life?

BITSEY
I told you to dial it back, not up.
She'll cancel now.

JOHN
No she won't.

BITSEY
I've spent the whole week with the
Secret Service.

Val interrupts--

VAL
Lunch, everyone, lunch!

INT. VAL'S DINING ROOM - DAY

John is sandwiched between SENATOR MENTALLIUS (90s, looks the part) and SENATOR GRACKELSON (70s, disheveled).

JOHN
I heard you were on TV this
morning, Senator.

SENATOR MENTALLIUS

WHAT?

JOHN

TEL-E-VISION!

SENATOR MENTALLIUS

WHAT?

John turns to Grackelson, who's currently downing a heaping glass of rose to freshen up his alcoholism-inspired rosacea.

JOHN

Is he really running for re-election?

SENATOR GRACKELSON

Man could drown a woman and still win running away.

JOHN

We need to amend the constitution to make teeth of your own a requirement for senators.

(then)

Hmmm, that might work for my column this week.

SENATOR GRACKELSON

Tread carefully, John. He controls a lot of money and god-knows-what-else. Level with me, what do I have to do to get on the show?

JOHN

Give me my hearings.

SENATOR GRACKELSON

For Christ's sake, it's an election year and I have enough problems with the pro-death environmentalists and that goddamn lizard. I can't hold hearings on -- which department do you want to get rid of this time?

JOHN

All of them, actually. There's a very compelling fiscal argument.

SENATOR GRACKELSON

Let me on, dammit.

JOHN
Be careful what you wish for, sir.

INT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

John and Bitsey continue their argument from earlier--

JOHN
Among our guests, there's
approximately three billion dollars
in net worth. She'll be there.

BITSEY
They'll make it sound like a last-
minute conflict. A briefing that
ran late. A foreign-policy crisis.
Mark my words.

JOHN
Bitsey, for the last time, she's
only a president. They come and go.

BITSEY
So do ratings.

EXT. MARINE ONE - DAY

The president's chopper lifts off from the White House and
cruises past the majestic spire of the Washington Monument.

INT. MARINE ONE - DAY

President Tecumseh grouses to her Press Secretary as her
CHIEF OF STAFF (50s) casually reads a newspaper.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
Make it sound like a briefing that
ran late. Something foreign.
Russia. Portugal. Whatever.

PRESS SECRETARY
He is moderating the debates.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
Don't we have a say in that?

PRESS SECRETARY
If we push him out, it'll look like
you're afraid.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
While he was playing squash at
Harvard--

PRESS SECRETARY
--Dartmouth--

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
--my unit was taking inbound
mortars at danger-close-range in
the Korengal Valley. I am not
afraid of some pipe-sucking talk-
show host whose idea of a bad day
is finding grit in his Wellfleet
oysters.

Marine One touches down on a golf course--

PRESS SECRETARY
Don't you think it'd be cooler if
we smothered him with honey? His
ratings...

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
When did these people get so goddam
important that the president of the
United States has to suck up to
them?

(beat, relents)
Fine. But you let him know that I
am not doing his show again.

She storms away from the chopper.

CHIEF OF STAFF
What are you going to tell him?

PRESS SECRETARY
'Great show, John. The president
enjoyed the hell out of it. Wants
to do it again soon.'

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

The president hooks a tee shot deep into the rough.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
Fuck.

EXT. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

The Byzantine Social Security Administration building -- the High Brutalist period of D.C. architecture.

INT. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION - NIGHT

NATHAN SCRUBBS (30s) swipes his ID card at a turnstyle, but it doesn't register. He slams into the immoveable bar and curses as he re-swipes his ID. If the Pillsbury doughboy were a CIA agent, Nathan would be his dim-witted doppelganger.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

At an unmarked door, Nathan puts his palm on a hi-tech scanner in the door frame. Welcome to the Deep State.

INT. NATHAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

He fires up his computer. After a couple clicks, the screen displays: 'MURCH, MARGARET. 38 YEARS OLD. 5 FT 4 IN. 195 LBS. POULTRY FARMER. RURAL RT 1, HINK, INDIANA. CRED. RATING 2.'

He scans through SEVERAL PHOTOS on the screen. In one, the woman is scarfing a hotdog.

NATHAN

Hope it was good for you too,
Maggie.

He checks a LARGE DIGITAL CLOCK DISPLAY, leans back, and cracks open a dog-eared Tom Clancy paperback.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John lies in bed in silk pajamas reading Foreign Affairs with a pile of similarly soporific magazines heaped around his midsection. Bitsey enters from the bathroom in matching pajamas and grabs one of the magazines.

BITSEY

There's an article in there about
France's decision to withdraw from
military participation with NATO in
1966. It's wonderful.

JOHN

By?

BITSEY
David Petraeus.

JOHN
That does sound wonderful.

INT. NATHAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A LOUD BEEP from the computer snaps Nathan out of a deep slumber. He pulls up a live feed with his remote crew of THREE BAGGERS (30s) -- a 'bagger' being a term that'll come into sharper focus later. For now, imagine underpaid but over-worked bluish-collar government grunts. The baggers load gear into a vehicle.

NATHAN
How'd it go?

HEAD BAGGER
It went.

NATHAN
You take her home or is she
stumbling along the highway
wondering what the fuck?

HEAD BAGGER
Dropped her off in a soybean field
a mile or so from her house. She's
probably making crop circles.

BAGGER 2
She could flatten a field in ten
minutes.

BAGGER 3
Had to winch her into the ship.
Man, my back.

BAGGER 2
They're all deuce, deuce and a
quarter. Can't you reprogram the
computer to shed some el-bees?

NATHAN
Not unless I want to end up on
Majestic-12's kill list.
(then)
At least none of us are in
mutilations any more.

HEAD BAGGER

Truth. I went vegan for a year
after my mute tour. Hey did I hear
you put in for a transfer?

NATHAN

MJ-2, Ops. I'm gonna miss these rap
sessions. Good night, boys.

Nathan cuts off the transmission. The computer BEEPS again --
a new message from 'MJ-11(PERSONNEL)'.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Yes!

MJ-11 does not mince words: 'REF: STATUS YOUR REQUEST.
TRANSFER MJ-2(OPS). DENIED.'

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - MORNING - ESTABLISHING

A SWANK D.C. ROWHOUSE -- about 10 feet across and a couple
hundred deep. Our attention is on the BASEMENT APARTMENT,
whose tiny stairs wind beneath the main entrance.

INT. NATHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nathan mixes himself a heaping Bloody Mary. From the looks of
the celery and lemons scattered on the counter, he's far
beyond Sunday Funday.

NATHAN

Fifteen years. Fif-teen. 'Denied'.
Not even 'Regret to inform you
denied'. I lasered cow rectums and
pig urethras for two fucking years.
'Oh that sphincter isn't neat
enough. No one will believe an
alien ate that asshole'. What do I
look like, Iron Chef?

The sound of TRUMPETS announcing John's show interrupts
Nathan's pity party. He stumbles into the living room and
collapses onto his sofa just in time to watch John light into
the president about Space Station Celeste.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Why you gotta shit all over space?
(then)
Now if you really wanted to
convince the world that aliens had
landed...

He chuckles mirthlessly but trails off as the idea takes root. He snatches his LAPTOP, pops the back open, and flips a kill switch beside a C-4 EXPLOSIVE CHARGE. He stares at the TV for a long beat. Moment of truth.

He pounds code into his computer.

EXT. GEORGETOWN - DAY

John strolls along the cobblestones of Georgetown's finest block. He walks past an old man in his boxers watering his perfectly-manicured yard with a cheap hose.

JOHN
Mr. Secretary.

EXT. JOHN'S STUDIO - DAY

John glances up at a billboard for a SOLAR-POWERED ELECTRIC CHAIR, coming soon from a company named 'BonVoyage', whose logo bears a striking resemblance to Google's.

INT. JOHN'S LOBBY - DAY

John spots BILL STIMPLE (40s), the rumpled advertising exec assigned to his show. He leaps up from his chair and falls into step beside John.

BILL
My man! Loved the show. You killed it, as always.

JOHN
Thanks. Speaking of, did I see an electric chair on your billboard?

BILL
Did you ever. It's part of our new medical-equipment moonshot, BonVoyage. We call it the XT-2000. Noiseless, smokeless, the whole nine yards. The best part about is, we might even be able to sell electricity back to death row.

They enter an elevator and John pushes a button.

JOHN
That is the best part. You should include it in your next commercial.
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)
Twice the lives, half the cost. Do
your part for global warming.

BILL
That has potential. I'll run it by
creative.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY

John picks out various items from a food spread--

BILL
So I was talking to the big guy, Al
Wiley himself -- said to say hello,
by the way -- he loved the show --
anyway, I was talking to him, and I
don't think I need to tell you how
much we respect your integrity. In
fact, we worship your integrity.
But, hey, so the thing is, about
this space station.

John moves on to the coffee bar and contemplates which of
thirteen varieties of milk he's in the mood for.

BILL (CONT'D)
Now by no means are we a big
contractor for Celeste, not if you
compare us with, say, Virgin
Galactic or SpaceX. But we do have
a pinkie in the pie, so to speak. I
mean, who doesn't?

JOHN
Bill.

They head for the door--

BILL
Between you, me, and the wall, I
couldn't tell you if it's worth
twenty-one bucks or twenty-one
billion.

JOHN
Forty-three billion.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BILL

Not my department. What I do know is that this is going to be the biggest thing since Apollo 13, and Al is kinda wondering if we ought to be pissing all over it.

JOHN

I'm not pissing on it. I'm asking basic questions. Is the president using a massive amount of public money as an in-kind campaign donation? Are they manipulating the launch date to coincide with the election? Is this thing even necessary? What if it blows up on the launchpad? Would anyone give a fig?

Up ahead, they spot John's bull-dog of an assistant RENIRA (40s, British) at her desk right outside John's office.

BILL

I just wanted you to know what the big guy is thinking. I figured you'd want to know, right?

JOHN

Anything for Al.

BILL

He's always bragging on you. He loves the show!

John escapes into his office as Renira's phone rings. She glares at Bill until he turns tail.

RENIRA

John Banion's office.

(beat)

Yes, you are correct. He does not remember you.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

Renira waltzes into John's office as he gazes down at the major DC papers laid out on his desk, folded to articles covering his interview with the president.

RENIRA

Where would you like to start? Or begin, as the president might say.

JOHN

Speeches.

RENIRA

On Thursday you have the American Association of Loggers and Lumberjacks. Needless to say, they have some concerns that you took the pro-environment position that harming endangered species, even by accident, should be punishable by death.

JOHN

I did?

She hands over a facsimile of a recent column--

RENIRA

Last month, in fact. Your column has become a rallying cry of sorts on Capitol Hill. The bill may actually pass, thanks to you.

JOHN

Whatever. Brush off the Middle East peace process speech and give it a few updates based on whatever that kid in the White House says he's doing to fix it all.

RENIRA

Would you like to use that for the American Auto Consumer Association in Palm Springs next week?

JOHN

Sure but add in the tariff section.

RENIRA

Friday morning you're moderating a panel for the American Medical Association. 'Perspectives in diminished longevity'.

JOHN

Managed death. This entire week is managed death. Do I have anything to look forward to?

RENIRA

Your graduate student is coming in with additional research for the Robespierre book tomorrow.

JOHN

Ask her to look into the history of dentures as well as constitutional amendments to change the requirements for Senate membership.

RENIRA

You should ask Justice Fitch. You're golfing with him and the Speaker on Saturday. I've reserved a tee time an hour beforehand so that you can warm up.

JOHN

What would I do without you?

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

John stands at a podium. Behind him, a bucolic backdrop with pastel images of men with chainsaws and axes--

JOHN

Some will say that Israel's recent annexation of Jordan is a setback for the Middle East peace process. Perhaps. But I ask: is it also possible that this represents a unique opportunity to achieve long-term stability in the region?

INT. THINK TANK - DAY

The nerdiest of the policy nerds watch in rapt attention as John sits front and center at a table of policy wonks--

HEALTH PANELIST 1

I honestly think you would pull the plug on your own child if it would save the taxpayer a few dollars--

HEALTH PANELIST 2

If he were a vegetable, you're goddam right I would. I'd pull the plug on your child too if--

JOHN

Lady, gentleman, please. What I think we can all agree on is that the term 'death' has a connotation of finality that may not be particularly useful in a policy discussion with truly staggering fiscal implications...

EXT. CLUB HOUSE - DAY

John arrives at the Burning Bush golf course, hands his clubs to a CADDY (20s) along with a \$20 bill, and heads inside.

JOHN

Drop it on the back nine, please.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

The caddy places the bag beside the tee and exits. Moments later, a MASKED MAN dressed in all black scurries out of the woods. He replaces John's golf balls and disappears back the way he came.

EXT. CLUB HOUSE - DAY

John exits the building as he zips his fly.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

John takes a smooth backswing and crushes a perfect drive down the center of the fairway until--

Defying every known law in the physical universe, the shot takes a 90-degree turn and rockets into the woods.

JOHN

What the...

He looks around, but he's alone. He checks the head of his driver. Snags some grass. Tosses it in the air. Pulls out another ball and examines it closely. Tees it up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Easy.

He hits a nice soft drive. The ball arcs over the center of fairway but then, like its predecessor, hooks a sharp right and books it into the woods. THUNK.

John furrows his brow. Very weird. He grabs his clubs and marches toward the forest.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

John stomps through the dense woods and whacks at the underbrush with his club. FLASHING LIGHTS ahead draw his attention toward a small glade. His eyes go wide as he sees--

TWO MEN in spacesuits at the base of a UFO. The men are spraying some sort of haze from handheld jet-packs. John grins as he watches--

JOHN

(sotto)

'In breaking news this afternoon, a highly classified CIA aircraft crash-landed at Burning Bush golf course. With our exclusive report, John Banion'. Or is this NSA? I feel like they have an outpost nearby--

John's words catch in his mouth as one of the 'men' looks right at him--

Whatever is behind the mask is most definitely is not a man. John spins around to run but--

There's another suited creature right behind him. He turns back the way he came, but the other two are on top of him now. He frantically looks for an escape as the fumes engulf him. The world spins, and he collapses to the ground.

INT. SPACESHIP - DAY

John blinks his eyes a few times as he comes to.

JOHN

I'm gonna take a mulligan.

He pulls focus on his surroundings. Polished metal sparkles in the dark, along with softly flashing LEDs.

An ALIEN enters frame and looks down at him. The creature is the height of an ordinary human but has iridescent, shimmering skin. Its inky black eyes refract tiny rainbows of color in an almost hypnotic fashion.

ALIEN

Kaloo?

JOHN

Kaloo?

ANOTHER ALIEN squeezes in beside the first one--

ALIEN 2

Mooka.

JOHN

Mooka.

John tries to raise his arms but they're restrained by gossamer HANDCUFFS. He rattles the cuffs as panic signals surge through his brain.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Look here, what's going on?

ALIEN

Wooga bakak.

JOHN

Do you speak English?

ALIEN 2

Kreek maku feeto.

JOHN

Do? You? Speak? English?

John writhes against the shackles. In the process, he looks down and realizes there are a couple of complicating factors to his predicament. First, he's completely naked. Second, and somewhat more worrisome, his ankles are firmly strapped into the alien equivalent of gynecological stirrups.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Can I help you in some way?

A WHIRRING SOUND draws John's attention to the inky darkness at the edge of the room. From whence a THIRD ALIEN emerges on a collision course with John's spread-eagled legs. This alien carries a SPINNING CONTRAPTION that looks like something devised by Satan's proctologist.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Whoa, hold on there fella. Now see
I am an American citizen and I have
constitutional rights.

Nearer and nearer the alien comes--

JOHN (CONT'D)
The president of the United States
is coming to dinner at my house
next week!

EXT. FOREST - DAY

John's eyes flutter as he wakes up, fully clothed, lying atop a bed of moss. He pushes himself to his feet and runs his tongue around his mouth and lips.

JOHN
Cinnamon?

He shakes his legs to get the blood flowing -- which makes him wince as something down there does not feel quite right.

The memory of what just happened hits him like a shotgun blast. His eyes go buggy and we CUT TO:

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

A COUPLE OF GOLFERS are about to tee off when John burst from the forest and tears across their fairway.

JOHN
Clear the area! Run for your
lives!

GOLFER 1
What's the matter!?

JOHN
Aliens! They're here! RUN!

GOLFER 2
Did he say...?

GOLFER 1
Aliens. It wouldn't surprise me.
The club doesn't check Green Cards.

INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

TWO EMTs attend to John. The first tries to tap a vein, but John won't sit still.

EMT 1
Sir, please.

JOHN
They're here. Jesus. Did you call
the Pentagon?

EMT 2
Have you been drinking? Are you on
any drugs?

JOHN
What? Of course not. The Speaker.
Justice Fitch. We have to warn
them. What if it's an invasion?

INT. DIAGNOSTIC ROOM - DAY

John, clad in a hospital gown, is drawn into an MRI machine.

INT. MRI MACHINE - DAY

John looks up at BonVoyage's logo and a soothing message
encouraging him to 'RELAX!' and 'Like us on FriendConnect!'

INT. BITSEY'S CAR - DAY

John stares ahead with the doe-eyed expression of shock
coupled with a heavy dose of Xanax.

JOHN
My God, Bits, they exist. They
actually exist.

BITSEY
We'll say you had a golf-cart
accident.

JOHN
We have to revise our thinking on
the origin of life. The Universe.
Religion. Everything.

BITSEY
You ran into a tree. That's all.

JOHN
Why the medical experiments? Unless
it's an advance team. But advance
for what? Subjugation?
Colonization? My god.

BITSEY

I don't think you should do the show tomorrow.

JOHN

They could have had the Speaker of the House or a Supreme Court justice, but they chose me. I am the chosen one.

INT. JOHN'S CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

John looks over a spread of alien- and UFO-themed books and articles assembled by his RESEARCHER (20s).

RESEARCHER

You're not actually doing a show on this, are you?

JOHN

Of course not. Maybe a column. I'm toying with some ideas about millenials, social media, and the decline of rational thought.

RESEARCHER

This certainly counts as irrational. Most so-called UFO histories date the first substantiated -- maybe 'substantiated' is the wrong word. 'History' is probably wrong too. It suggests something that actually happened--

JOHN

Go on.

RESEARCHER

Most accounts date the first quote-unquote confirmed abduction to 1947. There had been strange occurrences prior to that. Crop circles, cattle mutilations--

JOHN

Excuse me?

She pulls out a picture of what appears to be an inside-out cow flayed open in a field.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Jesus.

RESEARCHER

He is another explanation, yes. Or gods of some sort, at least. Visiting us. I don't know why they'd need probes though.

JOHN

What about the abductees? What do they say?

RESEARCHER

They tend to be, ah, less than credible. The type who are prone to mass hysteria. Or people with severe medical conditions.

JOHN

Like?

RESEARCHER

Blastomas, dementia, run-of-the-mill terminal diseases.

JOHN

Oh.

RESEARCHER

Many of them report a strong odor of ammonia and cinnamon.

At this, John goes ashen--

RESEARCHER (CONT'D)

Maybe they need to replace the air freshener. Mr. Banion? Sir? Should I go on?

INT. BURT'S OFFICE - DAY

Burt greets John with a warm handshake.

BURT

Sit, sit. Please. How are you? Everything okay?

John starts to speak, but it catches in his throat. He looks to be on the verge of tears.

BURT (CONT'D)

You know this is my forte. Whatever it is that's happened -- whatever you've done -- I can help. First things first, was she underage?

John takes another deep breath.

JOHN
I wanted to discuss the
presidential debates with you.

BURT
You came to talk to me about the
debates?

JOHN
Yes. I really value your input.

BURT
John, after you called, I told a
client who wants to pay us a great
deal of money to help him build a
pipeline across a country we
recently bombed that I would have
to reschedule. I did that because
you sounded like you were about to
shit your britches. Cut the crap.

John pauses for a long beat. As he speaks, we hear the
trumpet intro to his TV show PRE-LAP--

JOHN
Burt, where do you stand on the
question of intelligent life in the
universe?

INT. NATHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nathan watches in rapt attention as John's show begins.

EMCEE (V.O.)
Welcome to 'Sunday': an exploration
of tomorrow's issues with today's
leaders.

NATHAN
Go baby go baby go baby.

JOHN (TV)
My guest today is Assistant
Secretary of State Andrew Peek.
Sir, you've been closely monitoring
the situation with Russia. What in
your opinion is the likely outcome
of discussions regarding Ukraine
and the latest incursion...

Nathan grits his teeth and pounds code into his keyboard.

NATHAN
You wanna play hardball? Fine.
Let's see how you like Palm
Springs.

EXT. AIRPORT - DUSK

John emerges from a small airport and spots a man holding a sign with his name on it -- the Head Bagger.

JOHN
John Banion.

HEAD BAGGER
Cesar, sir. Let me know if I can do
anything to make your ride more
comfortable.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

They approach a sedan, and John is clearly not happy.

JOHN
This is the car?

HEAD BAGGER
Yes, sir.

As John opens the backdoor and crawls in--

JOHN
(sotto)
Stretched limo. It's in the damn
contract.

INT. SEDAN - NIGHT

John marks up his speech, but looks up as he notices strange lights in the desert around them.

JOHN
Cesar, what are these lights?

HEAD BAGGER
I don't know, sir.

John rolls down his window and looks up at--

The BOTTOM OF A UFO lit up like a Christmas tree.

JOHN
Cesar, it's them!

HEAD BAGGER
Who, sir?

JOHN
Drive faster, man, we have to out-
run them!

Cesar slams the peddle down and the car roars--

JOHN (CONT'D)
Give it more, give it more!

CESAR
I'm trying, sir, I'm trying!

CLUNK -- something attaches to the top of the car. Both of
them look up at the ceiling and then out the windows--

The car begins rising from the pavement. John claws at the
door as they rise higher and higher, but he loses
consciousness as smoke fills the vehicle.

INT. SPACESHIP - NIGHT

John's eyes flicker open. The two aliens look down at him. He
glances to his right, where the Head Bagger is laid out.

JOHN
Cesar. Cesar. Wake up!

John turns to the aliens as he hears WHIRRING O.S.--

JOHN (CONT'D)
Listen. How you like to be on my TV
show? I guarantee it. Ratings would
be out of this world--

HEAD BAGGER (PRE-LAP)
Mr. Banion? Sir?

INT. SEDAN - NIGHT

Cesar shakes John awake--

HEAD BAGGER
We're here.

JOHN
Where?

HEAD BAGGER

The hotel. You went to sleep.

JOHN

How did we escape?

HEAD BAGGER

Escape?

JOHN

Don't you taste it?

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

John looks extremely frazzled as he takes the podium and glances down at his remarks.

JOHN

Good evening. I know you want to hear about steel tariffs and trade wars, but I need to speak with you about a matter of the utmost importance to our national security.

INT. NATHAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Nathan pops open a beer and chugs it as the Baggers on his monitor do the same. The Head Bagger slams a beer on the ground and hollers in ecstasy.

HEAD BAGGER

You should have seen his expression when he saw the car!

BAGGER 2

And then he was like, 'How you like to be on my TV show?'

BAGGER 3

'Rating's would be out of this world'.

NATHAN

Great work, boys.

HEAD BAGGER

Oh oh. And the speech. He said that they were here and it was his job to warn the American people. 'I am the chosen one'. He actually said that!

NATHAN
Bottoms up.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

The studio hums as John prepares to go to air, but his usual trumpet intro has been replaced by a more sinister classical piece. (Note: we INTERCUT John's monologue with the reactions from his friends and foes in the following scenes.)

JOHN
Aliens, extraterrestrials, little green men. Call them what you will. Most Americans believe in them, but then again, Americans believe in many things. The eminent Swiss psychologist Carl Jung called UFOs 'materialized psychisms' -- that is to say, projections of our collective unconscious. There is, of course, another explanation. That they're real. Now I am a rational man. Until recently, I hadn't given UFOs a minute's thought other than to dismiss them as products of deluded minds. However, something has happened to convince me that we are, in fact, being visited by aliens. My guests today. Dr. Caterina Fridegunde.

On a large monitor behind John, CATERINA FRIDEGUNDE (50s, German) nods and purses her lips. To say she's as serious as a heart attack would severely make light of heart attacks.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Dr. Fridegund holds a PhD in nuclear physics and has worked for the U.S. government in a number of capacities. She is currently on the board of MUFON, the Mutual UFO Network. My other guest is Colonel Roscoe Myrtle.

On another monitor: COLONEL ROSCOE MYRTLE (60s, grizzled), a lantern-jawed military specimen who looks like he hasn't once laughed his entire life (he hasn't).

JOHN (CONT'D)

Colonel Myrtle served with the U.S. Army for thirty years and was part of the top-secret military unit that investigated the UFO crash in Roswell, New Mexico. We'll talk about that in a moment. First, let me explain my own interest in UFOs. Three weeks ago, on a golf course outside Washington, D.C., I had a close encounter with extraterrestrial beings...

INT. NATHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nathan leaps to his feet and pumps his fist in the air.

NATHAN

YESYESYESYES!

INT. BURT'S HOUSE - DAY

Burt holds a phone to his ear--

BURT

I don't care what she's doing, even if it's launching nuclear missiles, tell her to turn on Banion's show right now.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Bitsey hugs the sheets tight around her as she watches her husband self-immolate.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - DAY

Bill, utterly mortified, also holds a phone to his ear--

BILL

Hey Al, it's Bill. Say, I'm sitting here with the boob tube on and I thought maybe you should have a peek at Banion's show. Yessirree Bob, it's on right this minute.

INT. VAL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Val sips a cocktail in bed alongside several King Charles cavaliers.

VAL
Oh dear.

INT. WHITE HOUSE RESIDENCE - DAY

President Tecumseh snatches the phone from an aide--

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
A remote interview, Burt? I have to come to his studio on a Sunday morning and he's doing remote interviews with UFO nuts? God-fucking-dammit.

INT. NATHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nathan does his best impression of Riverdance, but freezes mid-stride when the DOORBELL RINGS.

He approaches the door and cracks it open with the security chain still in place. There's a hulking bald REPAIRMAN (30s) in overalls who can barely fit in the miniscule stairwell.

NATHAN
Yes?

REPAIRMAN
The landlord sent me to check the pipes.

NATHAN
Everything's a-okay.

REPAIRMAN
I need to come in and check.
Landlord said so.

Nathan glances at the guy's midsection and notices he's wearing a fanny pack -- and black leather gloves.

NATHAN
Yeah. Sure. Give me a minute. I have a friend here, if you know what I mean. Let me wake her up.

He closes the door and glances around in sheer panic. He snags his laptop from the sofa and sprints to the other end of the apartment. He grabs a small bug-out bag as he hightails it through the back door.

EXT. JOHN'S STUDIO - DAY

John exits his building right into a massive press scrum. He pushes through the reporters and books it down the sidewalk as they shout questions after him--

REPORTER 1

Are you having a psychic break?

REPORTER 2

Do you have survivor's guilt?

REPORTER 3

Did they take sperm samples?

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

John ducks into a coffee shop and crouches down as the pack of wolves passes by. He breathes a sigh of relief.

ROZ (O.S.)

John Banion?

John turns around expecting to see another reporter, but instead it's ROZ MIDDLETON (30s), whose combo of trendy, hip purple highlights and bookish reading glasses instantly makes his heart skip a beat.

ROZ (CONT'D)

It is you. Wow, what a coincidence.

She holds up the book she's reading: 'SCREWING THE POOR' by John Banion. His heart skips several more beats.

JOHN

My first.

ROZ

My favorite. When I heard the title, I thought you must be a total pig. But you're right. Screwing the poor really is the only way to help them, isn't it?

A reporter spots John from outside and calls out to his colleagues. John beelines toward the rear exit.

JOHN

It was nice chatting. See you around?

ROZ

I hope so.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

John sags against the door. Bitsey stares at him from down the hall before heading upstairs without a word.

INT. JOHN'S LOBBY - DAY

John rolls his eyes as Bill falls in beside him.

JOHN

Let me guess. You and Al had some concerns about the show yesterday.

BILL

You took us by surprise. Little green men. How about that.

JOHN

There is nothing little, green, or human about them.

BILL

Whaddaya know. Everything else okay? Health-wise, stress at home? What about taking some time off to work on your short game?

JOHN

There's a presidential election and I've been abducted twice by beings not of this world. My short game is the least of my concerns.

John squeezes into the elevator so Bill can't fit--

JOHN (CONT'D)

You can tell Al I've come around on Space Station Celeste.

BILL

That's aces. What convinced you?

JOHN

With everything going on up there,
this is hardly the time to be
cutting back on our space program.

BILL

You're not going to tie Celeste to
this UFO business--

JOHN

I don't know how the appropriations
process works on their planet, but
I doubt their R&D gets slashed
every time the press reports on the
cost of a toilet seat. Assuming the
bug-eyed bastards even use toilets.

The elevator doors close.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Renira walks with John--

RENIRA

You have had more than 150 calls
this morning. One-third were from
what I would call reputable news
organizations. One-third were from
what I would call disreputable
organizations. The remaining one-
third were from what I would call
deranged individuals. One gentleman
says he remembers you from the
spaceship.

JOHN

(excitedly)
Cesar?

RENIRA

A Mr. Hooper. He is most eager to
relive the experience with you.

They reach the end of the hall and enter into:

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

RENIRA

Pat Cooke from the Post called. He
said it was urgent. Burt Gallilee
called. He said it was extremely
urgent.

JOHN

You're having some difficulty with this?

Renira glances down at several tabloids she's arranged on his desk with various photo-shopped pictures of John riding miniature spaceships with stalks sticking out of his head.

RENIRA

On the contrary, I'm thrilled to be so closely affiliated with someone who has just gone completely gaga on national television.

JOHN

You don't believe me?

RENIRA

I'll get your tea.

JOHN

Don't you want to talk about it?

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

John eats dinner while Bitsey downs wine--

JOHN

For the last time, I am not having a breakdown. In fact, I think I'm doing a pretty amazing job of keeping it together, all things considered.

BITSEY

You're obsessed.

JOHN

Was Columbus 'obsessed' by his discovery of the new world? Were the disciples 'obsessed' with their carpenter friend when he started turning water into wine and raising the dead? Don't you get it? I am working on the biggest story in the history of mankind. I could use a little support.

BITSEY

And what kind of support did you have in mind?

INT. JOHN'S CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Caterina and Roscoe -- the guests from John's show -- have taken over the conference room and turned it into UFO central with alien-inspired documents, maps, and pictures lining the walls. This is tin-foil-hat central -- like something straight out of Alex Jones's wet dream.

CATERINA

Preposteruz! Zeta Reticuli One
cannot harbor ze life.

ROSCOE

Over and over this is the map they
show their victims. Reticuli 1,
that's it and nothin' else.

CATERINA

But zis is a class one red dwarf!

ROSCOE

Could be an alien cloakin' tactic.

CATERINA

Intereztng, yez. Very intereztng.

John beams as he takes it in, whereas Renira...not so much.

JOHN

Aren't they great?

RENIRA

A veritable brain trust. Perhaps
you can task them to help with your
MUFON remarks since I suspect the
Middle East speech may fall flat.

JOHN

I'm two steps ahead of you. Guys,
how are we coming on MUFON?

ROSCOE

It'll be as killer as a
daisycutter, boss. Gotta iron out a
few kinks is all.

CATERINA

Mr. Banion, I am zafraid to zay zat
we need more room if we are to do
all zat which you have tasked.

John approaches a wall full of photos of himself with famous people and begins taking them down one by one.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

John sits in a swank restaurant at a table set for two. He glances at his watch, sighs, and stands to leave.

EXT. THEODORE ROOSEVELT PARK - NIGHT

Nathan glances around to make sure he's alone. He places his laptop, wrapped in thick plastic, in a small hole and covers it with dirt. He looks across the river at the Kennedy Center, from which orchestral music drifts.

INT. KENNEDY CENTER - NIGHT

John, Bitsey, Val, Burt, and Tyler are gathered around a table sipping champagne during an intermission.

TYLER

Can you believe that he refused to attend performances of his own compositions? A true artist. Bitsey, which of his symphonies is your favorite?

BITSEY

The second?

TYLER

Excellent choice. Mine too.

VAL

John, darling, a little birdie told me you're going to a UFO conference in Austin this weekend? It sounds absolutely fascinating.

JOHN

Yes, MUFON, the Mutual UFO Network. I'm the keynote.

VAL

Of course you are, dear.

BURT

Are you going, Bitsey?

JOHN

Bits doesn't go in for the aliens. She thinks the lower orders should be seen and not heard.

They all stare at John and Bitsey for an awkward beat.

TYLER

His sixth symphony is exquisite.
Particularly the third movement. Do
you know the one, Bitsey?

The bells chime that intermission is over -- to everyone's
relief. John spots Senator Grackelson heading to the toilet.

JOHN

Excuse me.

INT. KENNEDY CENTER - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Grackelson exits the bathroom and is none-too-pleased to see
John waiting in ambush.

JOHN

I missed you at our weekly lunch.

SENATOR GRACKELSON

We had a vote that ran late. Didn't
they tell you?

JOHN

They must have forgotten.

John hands over a sheet of paper as they walk.

SENATOR GRACKELSON

What is this?

JOHN

A recent poll taken in the great
state of Oklahoma. You'll note that
half of your constituents feel that
the government is lying to them
about UFOs.

He furrows his brow as he examines the sheet--

SENATOR GRACKELSON

These numbers...is this right?

JOHN

The silent majority, Senator. I
want hearings.

SENATOR GRACKELSON

The House is already lost, and
we're only holding onto the Senate
by a hair. The president would
crucify me.

JOHN
How about after the election then?

SENATOR GRACKELSON
I don't see a problem with that.

JOHN
I can quote you?

SENATOR GRACKELSON
You've discussed it with people familiar with the thinking of people on the committee who are willing to consider debating the pros and cons of a hearing along those lines. Sure, absolutely.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

John, Caterina, and Roscoe head toward baggage claim.

JOHN
Sorry, I have to moderate a panel on what?

CATERINA
Ze government collusion! Have zey allied zemselves vith ze Tall Nordics or ze Gray Hooded Onez.

ROSCOE
It's divisive as hell within the community. You don't wanna dick this up.

JOHN
Of course not. Maybe you can walk me through it one more time--

John cuts off as they come face to face with an ADORING CROWD of UFO nuts who burst into applause.

ROSCOE
Your people, sir.

John wades into the unwashed masses as they lay their hands on their newfound savior.

INT. MUFON EXPO ROOM - DAY

Several security guards hold back a crowd as John, Caterina, and Roscoe examine air-brushed portraits of alien archetypes: Tall Nordics (mostly humanoid, elf-like), Gray Hooded Ones (John's captors), and Short Ugly Grays (a miniature, troll-like version of Gray Hooded Ones).

ROSCOE

You could stake out the
middleground that both the Tall
Nordics and the Gray Hooded Ones
are colludin' with the U.S.
gubment. That'd be safest.

CATERINA

From ze strictly political
standpoint, zye agree.

As they talk, we spot Nathan as he walks by with a baseball hat pulled low. He eavesdrops as he passes.

JOHN

The Short Ugly Grays must be
related to the Gray Hooded Ones?

CATERINA

Perhaps a zub-species, yes. But zis
is hard to know. Ze Short Ugly
Grays haz not been seen in many
decades. No one knowz why.

NATHAN

(sotto)

You try finding little people with
security clearances. Talk about an
HR nightmare.

We follow Nathan as he walks away, but turn and head back as we see a familiar face -- Roz. She approaches John right as his taxonomy seminar breaks up.

ROZ

Mr. Banion, can I get your
autograph?

CATERINA

No more autographz!

John turns around, and his heart leaps in his chest.

JOHN

But of course.

ROSCOE
Boss, the Russians are expectin' us
stat.

JOHN
They can wait.

ROZ
If you have to run...

John takes 'Screwing the Poor' from Roz--

JOHN
Not at all, Miss...I never got your
name?

ROZ
It's Roz. With a 'z'.

JOHN
Lovely.

ROZ
Around here they usually assume
it's with an 's'.

JOHN
Oh?

ROZ
As in Roswell? New Mexico?

JOHN
Yes. Of course. And what brings you
here? Are you an abductee?

ROZ
I prefer the word experiencer.

JOHN
Right. Sorry.

ROZ
It's okay. I'm not, but I'm hoping
to be one soon.

John hands the book back to her.

JOHN
I'm not sure I recommend it.

ROZ
I guess it depends on who's doing
the abducting.

CATERINA

Mr. Banion, sir, zey are waiting!

JOHN

Any interest in a top-secret briefing?

INT. MUFON HOTEL ROOM - DAY

MUFON high command: the weirdest of the weird, the architects of this event, packed like sardines into a tiny hotel room to hear the latest and greatest conspiracy. In this case, a hagiographic portrait of a shirtless Vladimir Putin riding a bear and holding a bloody alien head for all to see.

RUSSIAN 1

Za KGB acquire za material at no small cost in human life. Magzifizent Putin himself was headed ze mission.

RUSSIAN 2

On bearback ze Great Vladimir caughtz ze alien and kill wiz hiz bare hanz.

John and Roz huddle in the back, where John appears to have just free-based whatever it is Cupid dips his arrows in. He looks at a cover of the magazine COSMOS-POLITAN, which advertises scintillating reads like: 'The Rules of Alien Dating'; 'But Will He Respect You as a Human Being?'; 'Is it You They Want or Just Your Eggs?'

ROZ

I know it's not up to your intellectual standards, but our demo is improving.

JOHN

No no, I think it's great that women who have had this experience have a magazine to call their own.

ROZ

John?

JOHN

Yes?

ROZ

Do you like sushi?

INT. LECTURE ROOM - DAY

A LARGE IMAGE OF SUSHI. The slide projector flips to another photo of sushi. Then another. Nigiri, tekka makki, all as mouth-watering as anything Jiro ever dreamt of. And then--

A MUTILATED ANIMAL CORPSE. Half the audience groans and covers their eyes -- while the other half watches transfixed as the LECTURER (50s) continues--

LECTURER

I surmise that the organs of most interest -- sphincters, urethrae, ovarian tubes -- possess high concentrations of phytochemicals necessary for the proper functioning of alien biology. Thus, they are considered not just life-sustaining -- but also a delicacy.

John and Roz watch from the VIP section. Farther back, Nathan squeezes into a packed row and drops in between a SMALL GROUPIE and a LARGE GROUPIE the size of an NFL linebacker.

LECTURER (CONT'D)

When examined under a microscope, the edges show evidence of having been heated to extreme temperatures. As if by lasers. Lasers far more advanced than current earth technology.

Nathan snorts aloud at this--

LARGE GROUPIE

Do you have problem with Dr. Rosenstein's alien-sushi hypothesis?

NATHAN

No but it's not hers.

SMALL GROUPIE

He probably believes in them chupacabras.

The large groupie laughs aloud and elbows Nathan in his side.

NATHAN

Oh come on, no one believes in chupacabras but the idea of alien sushi's been around since the sixties. She stole 90% of this garbage.

LARGE GROUPIE
Are you calling Dr. Rosenstein a
liar?

INT. RESTROOM - DAY

The large groupie finishes beating the crap out of Nathan as
the small groupie watches.

LARGE GROUPIE
Chupacabra bitch.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - NIGHT

John and Roz are alone in the elevator--

JOHN
Don't get me wrong, I appreciate
what these people have been
through. But they're not the sort I
usually deal with. How did you get
into all of this, anyway?

ROZ
My girlfriend was abducted. She
said it was the best sex she ever
had. Sounded good to me.

John looks over and sees that Roz is staring at his hands --
which are absent-mindedly fondling his wedding ring.

JOHN
Right.

The door opens and she exits.

ROZ
This is me.

JOHN
Let me know about that--

The door cuts him off--

JOHN (CONT'D)
--interview.

INT. NATHAN'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Nathan enters his room to find that it's been torn to pieces. The 'repairman' from earlier walks out of the bathroom. They stare at each other for a beat.

NATHAN

Here to clean my pipes?

The man punches Nathan right in the gut, and he collapses to the ground. He drops a BUSINESS CARD on him.

REPAIRMAN

Call home.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

John sits between two panelists who look like they're about to rip off each other's heads--

ALIEN PANELIST 1

How much did the Gray Hooded Ones
pay you to turn? A thousand
Reticuli dollars? Probably less...

ALIEN PANELIST 2

Call me a traitor to my own species
again and I'll sock you so hard
you'll wake up in Alpha Centauri--

JOHN

Lady, gentleman, please. I think we
can all agree that there's
sufficient evidence that perhaps
both the Gray Hooded Ones and the
Tall Nordics have actively colluded
with the government of the United
States or at least some component
thereof...

INT. JOHN'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

John flips through adult options on pay-per-view. He shrugs and hits play on an X-rated alien-themed parody, 'Uranus and Back: Into the Black Hole'.

LATER. John is fast asleep as the movie plays--

PORN STAR 1 (O.S.)

Houston, we have an erection!

PORN STAR 2 (O.S.)
Yes, god yes, probe me with your
rocket! I want to taste your Milky
Way!

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

John stands backstage as the murmurs of a large crowd filter through the curtains. He takes a deep breath and walks out.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Everyone in the standing-room-only auditorium cheers and applauds as John emerges. He tries to silence them as he takes the microphone. The audience eventually quiets down. He lets the silence seep in for a long beat.

JOHN
My name is John Banion, and I am an
abductee.

The crowd explodes in rapture and surges toward the stage, held back only by a phalanx of security guards. John beams as the waves of applause wash over him.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Nathan peels off a wad of cash and purchases several burner phones and SIM cards.

EXT. D.C. BRIDGE - DAY

Nathan looks at the business card, which reads only 'MJ-1' with a phone number. He dials the number--

WOMAN (O.S.)
Creative Solutions, how may I
direct your call?

NATHAN
Nathan J. Scrubbs.

WOMAN (O.S.)
One moment please.

After several clicks, a deep computer-disguised voice comes on the line.

MJ-1 (O.S.)

Two unauthorized abductions of a leading media figure, unauthorized removal of highly classified office equipment, failure to file timely reimbursement requests for official travel--

NATHAN

I thought--

MJ-1 (O.S.)

Do not use the words 'I' and 'thought' in the same sentence. They don't go together in your case.

NATHAN

Sir, I do think and you need to hear me out. Everyone has a conspiracy theory these days. If it's not pizza, it's pedophiles.

A MAN WITH TWO YOUNG CHILDREN walks by and shoots him a WTF look. He pulls his kids closer as he hurriedly moves along.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

We keep hitting the same demographic over and over again. We need to break out beyond our base. Tap into the average American's frustrations. Go mainstream.

MJ-1 (O.S.)

That has never been our goal. Quite the opposite, in fact.

(then)

Do you still have your computer?

NATHAN

It's in a safe place.

MJ-1 (O.S.)

We need to bring you in.

NATHAN

Is that normal procedure?

MJ-1 (O.S.)

You've made such a pig's breakfast of everything the only thing to do is stick you somewhere where you can't do any more damage.

NATHAN

Nevada?

MJ-1 (O.S.)

It sure as hell isn't going to be
Paris. Get the computer and for the
love of god, don't be seen.

CLICK. Nathan chucks the phone into the river.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

John looks around the coffee shop where he met Roz. He sighs.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

John walks home in the fading light--

BURT (O.S.)

Take me to your leader!

John spins around expecting reporters -- but it's Burt
calling out from his SPORTS CAR.

BURT (CONT'D)

Renira said you just left. I
figured you'd need a drink.

JOHN

Oh?

BURT

Tough break, getting booted from
the presidential debate. Hop in.

It's clear that this is news to John--

JOHN

Yes. Obviously, I'm disappointed,
but I'm sure it will open up many
other opportunities.

EXT. THEODORE ROOSEVELT PARK - DUSK

Nathan pulls his computer out of the ground, and right as he
does he notices SEVERAL MEN moving in the shadows nearby.

NATHAN

Hello?

They disappear behind a clump of trees. Nathan peers into the dark and spots a hand emerge with some sort of clicker. Suddenly A RED LIGHT blinks through the cellophane of the computer he's holding.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Shit!

He chucks the computer as hard as he can at the men--

BOOM! The C-4 blows at least one of them to smithereens. Nathan books it into the forest.

INT. BURT'S CAR - DUSK

John takes in the marble beauty of the National Mall's monuments as darkness settles on the city.

JOHN

I'd think they'd see the marketing potential. Banks. Insurance companies. Everyone stands to gain.

BURT

So, in other words, all the big players on the speech circuit have cancelled on you?

JOHN

Depends on how you define your terms. I'm speaking at the largest annual crop-circle conference next week.

BURT

I've always wondered, what exactly are crop circles?

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Nathan eases himself into the river behind a rock. He hazards a glance from his hiding place -- TWO ARMED MEN approach his position. He pushes himself off and is quickly caught in the river's current.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Nathan floats past the edge of Roosevelt Island and spots a SMALL FISHING BOAT nearby. Moments later he winces in pain as the ZZZZZZ of a fishing reel signals that he's what's for dinner.

EXT. SMALL BOAT - NIGHT

Nathan grabs the side of the boat, which wakes up its occupant, BRADLEY COMMONS (60s, African American).

NATHAN
Evening. Mind if I...

He hauls himself into the boat--

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Sorry to disturb you, but your line hooked my leg.

BRADLEY
Boy, what on earth are you doing in the water?

NATHAN
There are some men with guns on the island trying to kill me.

BRADLEY
Police?

NATHAN
Sort of. Not really.

BRADLEY
Well which is it?

NATHAN
They're with the government. They want to eliminate me because I know about flying saucers. Say, do you suppose we might pull in your anchor and drift out of their range while we talk?

As if on cue, several muffled flashes cut through the darkness and a couple shots DING off the boat.

BRADLEY
Sweet Jesus!

In a flash he pulls out a knife and cuts the anchor line. A couple more shots hit the water nearby--

BRADLEY (CONT'D)
Hot damn!

He fires up the engine and books it downstream.

NATHAN
Scrubbs, Nathan.

BRADLEY
Did I ask your name? Do I want to
know your name?

Bradley gives Nathan a good, hard look -- and softens.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)
I seen me a UFO once. In the
Chesapeake Bay. Three of them.
Criss-crossin' the sky like
fireflies. Only they wasn't
fireflies. Know what I'm saying?

NATHAN
Sir, you have no idea.

INT. BURT'S ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Burt drops his keys as they enter his regal Georgetown house
and head toward the living room.

JOHN
Another theory, and the one I'm
inclined to believe based on the
evidence, is that they're alien
semiotics of some sort. Large-scale
hieroglyphics with which they
communicate. The precision is
exquisite, no matter the crop.
Wheat, corn, soy...

INT. BURT'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

John's words catch in his mouth as he steps into the room,
where Bitsey, Tyler, Val, Bill, and DR. BLOTT (50s) await his
arrival. It's an intervention.

JOHN
...sorghum.

BURT
John, we're here because we love
you.

John looks at them for a beat before walking to the bar and
making the mother of all martinis.

BITSEY

Burt's right. We're here because we love you. Please don't be angry.

John pierces several olives with a tiny plastic sword and plops them into the drink. He turns around to face them.

JOHN

I'm grateful to be an object of such mass devotion. Does this gentleman also love me?

BITSEY

This is Dr. Blott from Well Haven.

JOHN

Ah, Rancho Risible.

BITSEY

What?

JOHN

The funny farm. How do you do, doctor? Will the men with steel nets arrive imminently, or are you the one packing a tranquilizer gun?

DR. BLOTT

Mrs. Banion asked me to come because she's concerned for you.

John takes a deep swig of his drink--

JOHN

Dad used to say you could always tell when an angel had been to visit because there would be a faint whiff of vermouth in the air.

BITSEY

This is important.

John notices that Tyler is sitting rather close to his wife.

JOHN

Comfy, Tyler?

BITSEY

Don't be hostile.

TYLER

Bitsey asked me to come. There are a million places I'd rather be.

JOHN

Cet animal est tres mechant. Quand
on l'attaque, il se defend.

Burt smirks at this, but the rest of the group is clueless.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But I speak in tongues -- basta! I
shall spare you the indignity. You
have gathered to tell me I have
gone mad and am making a spectacle
of myself. Or, more to the point,
of you.

DR. BLOTT

No one doubts that you underwent
some kind of traumatic event.

JOHN

Like being kidnapped by aliens?

DR. BLOTT

All right, let's talk about that.

JOHN

Don't try to teach a pig to sing.
It wastes your time and annoys the
pig. No comparison intended, doc.

BILL

'Sunday' is supposed to be a public-
affairs program, not a goddam
freakshow. Plasma beams? Star
cloaks? Where the hell did you even
find these people?

JOHN

Have you seen the latest Nielsens?
We're up another five points.

BILL

Great, we're doing gangbusters in
households with no teeth. You do
realize someone has to know what a
computer is before we can monetize
them, right?

JOHN

Are you saying you have no interest
in being on the cutting edge of the
biggest news story in history?

BILL

The only cutting edge right now is an ax. I'm sorry, we're taking the show away from you. I can't tell you how much I regret this.

JOHN

I bet you fought tooth and nail for me -- as well as my integrity that you worship so. Begged, pleaded, offered to resign, practically committed ritual suicide--

BILL

John--

JOHN

Not your department.

VAL

Darling, I couldn't care less what happened to you on the golf course. The point, sweet, dear, adorable John, is that you've become a dreadful bore.

JOHN

Touche. But what am I supposed to talk about? Tax cuts for the Middle Class? Supreme Court confirmations? Endangered lizards in Florida?

John withdraws the plastic sword from his olives and gives it a few swings.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Does this remind anyone of the play scene from Hamlet?

(then)

Burt, any grace notes to add? Personal messages from the president? Her press secretary stopped responding to my calls.

BURT

I'm very sad. That's all I have to say.

JOHN

An honest statement, accepted at face value.

BURT

Suppose it did happen the way you say it did. Here you are, at the fork in the road. You know your Dante. The road in the dark forest in the middle of your life. Now you have to ask yourself: am I going to let this ruin everything I have ever worked for or ever wanted?

A long beat as he actually ponders the question--

BITSEY

I'm going to leave you if you don't agree to be treated by Dr. Blott.

The two share a long, charged look--

JOHN

'The lady doth protest too much, methinks'.

(then)

I suppose I could say it was all a bad reaction to medication, right? Something allergic, toxic even, prescribed for the head injury I sustained while golfing?

Everyone looks at him hopefully, nodding, willing him along. He thrusts and parries with his miniature sword.

JOHN (CONT'D)

The cosmic irony -- pun intended -- is that I was never one for epiphanies. If it had been me, two thousand years ago, I probably would have gotten back on my horse, gone on to Damascus, and hanged a few more Christians. It's bad enough to have an epiphany in a desert when no one's looking, but on a golf course in Maryland?

(beat)

But you have to take these things as they come, even if they come in the form of little green men.

John takes a final slash and pantomimes sheathing his sword.

JOHN (CONT'D)

'Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince: and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest'.
Exeunt.

He bows and, with military precision, turns and marches out.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY - SEVERAL MONTHS LATER

John sits across from MARGARET MURCH (30s), whom we saw earlier on Nathan's computer when his team bagged her.

JOHN

Maggie, thank you so much for
sharing your story with us today.
You are a true profile in courage.

(then)

I'm John Banion, and until next
week, stay safe my fellow
earthlings.

On the monitor, the show cuts to the sleek logo for
FriendConnect, which strongly resembles Facebook's logo. John
leans into Maggie--

JOHN (CONT'D)

With all the air defenses around
D.C., you'll be safe. Enjoy your
stay and let us know if we can do
anything for you.

As he heads off stage, he's intercepted by ANDY CROCANELLI
(40s), his new corporate overlord. They head toward the door--

ANDY

Jaccckkkkkkie! Have you seen these
numbers? They're fucking
incredible. I wanna stream the show
live for two hours on either side.

JOHN

It's not that sort of program,
Andy.

ANDY

Are you kidding? Thirty million
likes? Christ, Jackie, you oughtta
be celebrating in Atlantic City in
a fucking Penthouse suite, jacuzzi
filled with Dom Perignon, gettin' a
blowjob from a \$500 hooker. Check
that. Two \$500 hookers. You want?
It's on me.

JOHN

Let me get back to you on that.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Andy and John make their way between giant bags of snail mail as they walk toward John's office--

JOHN

The important thing is we're getting the message out.

ANDY

I want us on the fucking network. Think about the possibilities. 'Saturday' but on Sunday. We'll smash those limp-dick eggheads like George Stepha-pompous-lompus asshole or whatever the fuck his name is.

JOHN

I appreciate your enthusiasm, but let's take this one step at a time.

ANDY

There you go with that WASP shit again. Pull that teabag outta your ass! We gotta a hit show!

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

Renira drops a pile of pink call memos on his desk.

RENIRA

The usual. Aliens Autopsied, Spirits of the Sub-Universe, Infowars. Tales of the Weird would like another interview.

JOHN

Great.

RENIRA

Their last, ah, scoop involved sasquatch.

JOHN

What?

RENIRA

Big foot. The abominable snowman. I do not understand your infatuation with these people. They are not serious journalists.

JOHN

'These people' were covering this story the whole time we 'serious journalists' dismissed them as quacks. Book it.

Renira holds up a pink slip--

RENIRA

On a brighter note, a legitimate outlet has requested an interview. Cosmopolitan.

JOHN

Wonderful.

(then)

Wait. Cosmopolitan or Cosmos-politan?

INT. BED AND BREAKFAST - NIGHT

John and Roz are seated at a corner table in a romantic inn. John turns off the tape recorder on the table--

ROZ

What are your thoughts on the semiotics of crop circles?

JOHN

Look, can we take a night off from aliens? I want to hear about you. Who are you, what's your story?

ROZ

I'm a government agent sent to seduce you.

JOHN

I thought so. How's it going?

ROZ

Contact established. Subject appears pliable. I've had tougher.

JOHN

I could make it harder.

ROZ

I bet you could.

JOHN

And what would the ultimate purpose of your mission be?

ROZ

To replace one obsession with another. You see, John, you are making the government very worried. You've seen things your shouldn't have. You know too much. You talk too much.

A WAITER places a decadent chocolate cake on the table, along with a bottle of champagne.

WAITER

This is from Renira. She said to tell you that she didn't want you driving all the way back after dinner, so if you want to stay, she's reserved a room upstairs. One of our nicest, with a jacuzzi.

ROZ

Smooth.

JOHN

I...honestly...

ROZ

You get the couch. I'll take the jacuzzi.

INT. BED AND BREAKFAST SUITE - DAWN

John wakes up on the sofa. He stands, stretches his crimped back, and peers through a cracked door into the bedroom where Roz is fast asleep.

LATER. John and Roz pick at room-service pastries.

JOHN

It's a terrific magazine, really. Your last cover story on whether Short Ugliers make better lovers was the best of its kind I've read. But you've done that. This is a new adventure.

ROZ

I don't know anything about lobbying.

JOHN

It's not rocket science. Anyone can do it.

ROZ

Gee thanks.

JOHN

I didn't mean it like that.

(then)

There's something else. I think I,
well, love you. I'm not very good
at this sort of thing.

ROZ

Falling in love?

JOHN

I don't have a baseline on which to
make a definitive assessment.

ROZ

I love it when you talk about me
like I'm a fiscal outlay.

(then)

You're married.

JOHN

Technically yes, but it's nothing
six months of expensive lawyers
screaming at each other can't fix.

ROZ

What would my title be?

JOHN (PRE-LAP)

I'm pleased to announce that Roz
Middleton will be the executive
director...

INT. JOHN'S CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

John and Roz stands in front of Roscoe, Caterina, and their
subordinates.

JOHN

...of our new Political Action
Committee, Americans Against Alien
Abductions -- 4-A. Our first order
of business, aside from fund-
raising, will be outreach to key
congressional committees.

Roscoe and Caterina share a suspicious look -- neither of
them trusts Roz one bit.

INT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Nathan slams a sledgehammer into a wall and pulls out chunks of drywall. He looks around and realizes he's the only one working. He walks into:

INT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

SEVERAL MANUAL LABORERS sit around a small TV intently watching 'Saturday' as John interviews Maggie.

JOHN (TV)
Then you woke up?

MAGGIE (TV)
Then I woke up.

JOHN (TV)
In a crop field?

MAGGIE (TV)
In a crop field.

JOHN (TV)
What kind of crop field?

MAGGIE (TV)
Soy. My neighbor Eunice's soy field. He got corn too. They dropped me in the corn field the second time. But this'n was soy.

NATHAN
Don't you guys feel bad for him?

LABORER 1
Who?

NATHAN
Banion.

LABORER 1
Why?

NATHAN
He used to be famous.

LABORER 1
Like more famous than now?

LABORER 2

I saw him on Tales from the Weird last week. Aliens Autopsied the week before.

NATHAN

He had dinner with the president.

LABORER 2

Of America?

NATHAN

It's sort of sad. To go from that to...this.

LABORER 1

Shut the fuck up, Nate. He's giving a voice to the people.

LABORER 2

Yeah shut the fuck up, Nate.

Bradley walks in--

BRADLEY

Why the hell isn't anyone working--

He cuts off as he sees 'Saturday' and grabs a chair.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

Shit, what'd I miss?

LABORER 1

You remember that chick from last week whose boyfriend ran off with the tramp from Alderban?

BRADLEY

She get him back?

Nathan grabs his sledgehammer and retires to the hallway.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

John and Roz march down the gilded hallways of the Capitol.

ROZ

Is he even going to talk to us?

JOHN

Probably not, but I want to be able to say that I gave him every chance before I ruin his life.

They arrive at a door: 'CLOAK ROOM. SENATORS ONLY'.

ROZ

A closet?

JOHN

It's where they hang out and devise ways of thwarting the will of the people.

ROZ

How do we get in?

JOHN

Unfortunately, we don't. He has to come out.

John looks around and spots Senator Mentallius cruising in their direction in a high-speed electric wheelchair.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Senator Mentallius!

SENATOR MENTALLIUS

JOHN MY BOY!

JOHN

Senator, how are you sir?

SENATOR MENTALLIUS

WHAT!?

JOHN

HOW ARE YOU?

The Senator slams his hand into his ear -- which has the intended effect on his hearing aid.

SENATOR MENTALLIUS

Goddam bluetooth. You been in the papers too much lately, John. Now who is this delightful creature?

JOHN

This is my executive assistant Roz Middleton.

ROZ

Executive director. Pleased to meet you, sir.

Senator Mentallius lasciviously kisses her hand.

SENATOR MENTALLIUS
Pleasure is all mine. All mine. You
need anything? I got a bottle of
Pappy in my hideaway.

ROZ
As a matter of fact, we do need
something. We need Hank Grackelson.

SENATOR MENTALLIUS
I've heard of much higher
aspirations.

The Senator grabs a passing PAGE (teens) by his security
badge and almost strangles him in the process.

SENATOR MENTALLIUS (CONT'D)
Go in there and fetch Senator
Grackelson and bring him out here.
Quick now.

PAGE
But they're voting on the
Endangered Species Capital
Punishment Act--

SENATOR MENTALLIUS
Tell him I want to see him. I'm
timing you.

The page scurries away--

SENATOR MENTALLIUS (CONT'D)
Try to stay out of the tabloids,
John. Too much exposure doesn't do
anyone any good.
(to Roz)
And you, come back and see me if
you need anything else.

Mentallius speeds off as a POLICE OFFICER approaches--

JOHN
I'll handle this.

POLICE OFFICER
You're John Banion aren't you?

JOHN
Yes, I assure you we weren't--

POLICE OFFICER

I saw your show on TV. The one with
that lady who takes pictures of
cows with the...that was nasty.

(then)

Mind if I?

JOHN

Of course not.

The three of them pose for a selfie.

POLICE OFFICER

Keep it real.

JOHN

Indeed.

He walks away right as Senator Grackelson emerges.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I want abduction hearings, Hank.

SENATOR GRACKELSON

Who the hell do you think you are
to pull me off the floor and make
demands?

JOHN

A taxpayer...

SENATOR GRACKELSON

Goodbye John.

JOHN

...with a hit TV show and 25
million viewers. And I'm going to
tell them to march on Washington if
you don't hold hearings.

Grackelson smiles a politician's Cheshire Cat grin.

SENATOR GRACKELSON

You know, as a United States
Senator I don't get many chances to
say this. Fuck off.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

John reads his notes as Andy paces behind him.

JOHN

I'm not asking them to attack with pitchforks and torches. I'm calling for a march. If you can't march on your own capital, what's the point of having one?

ANDY

I don't like this, Jackie. Not one bit. The goddam lawyers say we could get indicted for inciting violence.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Ten seconds.

JOHN

Think about all the shares and reposts and likes this will generate. Why else was social media invented if not for mass protests and anonymous slander?

ANDY

Class envy and kittens.

JOHN

Why don't you watch from the Little Green Room?

Andy retreats to the monitors.

EMCEE (O.S.)

Welcome to 'Saturday', a discussion about the universe with the world's leading UFO experts. Your host, John Banion.

JOHN

Fellow earthlings, good morning. Today's show will be a slightly different format -- for the time has finally come...

John falters as he sees technicians and others in the background frantically scrambling to and fro--

JOHN (CONT'D)

...for the time has finally come. The time for action...I mean...a call to action...

(to his staff)

What's going on?

On the monitor, we see a fuzzy image that resolves itself into two costumed performers going at it in 'Trip to Uranus'--

PORN STAR 1 (ON MONITOR)
Houston, we have an erection!

PORN STAR 2 (ON MONITOR)
Yes, god yes, probe me with your
rocket! I want to taste your Milky
Way!

Andy collapses with his hands clutching his chest.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Call an ambulance!

INT. JOHN'S CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

John addresses his team--

JOHN
We all knew this would be difficult
-- that the system would fight back
-- that the old guard would not go
quietly unto the night. But I will
tell you that, as was the case when
Caesar reached the Rubicon, there
is only one direction to go.
Forward.

The group applauds John as he and his brain trust huddle--

ROSCOE
Had to be military. Thruster 6 --
the top comms sat. I bet that's the
one that jammed us.

CATERINA
Let uz be frank, Mr. Banion. There
must be a zabateur in our mizt.
Zomeone who does not belong. A zpy.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

John slouches against the couch, deep in thought, as Roz
massages his neck.

JOHN
Roz?

ROZ
Yes dear?

JOHN

Are we ever going to...you know...

She kisses his head gently. He crawls up onto the sofa.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Every time we start, you say not yet. When are we going to get to yet?

ROZ

Have you been watching porn again?
I heard you have a thing for UFOs.

JOHN

I'm serious.

ROZ

I don't want to rush anything.
Especially with 4-A getting real traction. But I do find you very attractive.

JOHN

I assure you there's nothing awkward about me in the sack.

ROZ

And a tongue that could melt the iciest of hearts.

JOHN

What I meant was, I love you and I want to marry you.

ROZ

Oh. Wow. That's...sudden.

JOHN

Just something I needed to get off my chest--

She leans in and kisses him -- deeply, passionately.

ROZ

Dinner first. Then dessert.

JOHN

I'd like that. Life is short and, I fear, dangerous. Especially if this satellite lead pans out.

Roz stands abruptly and heads toward the kitchen--

ROZ
You have a lead?

JOHN
I'm meeting him tonight at the
National Cathedral. 11:03 on the
dot. Only the military would be
that precise. Or so says Roscoe.

ROZ (O.S.)
Are you going with anyone?

JOHN
He said to come alone.

ROZ (O.S.)
You shouldn't go by yourself, John.
(then)
Shoot.

She returns from the kitchen--

JOHN
What's the matter?

ROZ
I forgot the pecorino.

JOHN
So call it macaroni a tres
formaggi.

ROZ
No such thing.

JOHN
Want me to come with?

ROZ
It'll only take a minute. Open the
wine. You've had a day.

She pecks him on the forehead and heads out.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

John steps on the foot peddle of the trash can, pushes a
couple pieces of garbage aside, and lifts a block of PECORINO
ROMANO.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Roz finishes her dish, but John has hardly touched his.

ROZ

I had no idea how easy it'd be to raise money from billionaires. As long as you don't publicize their name. You didn't like the meal?

JOHN

How long have you been working for them?

ROZ

Who?

He drops the pecorino on the table.

ROZ (CONT'D)

I knew I'd bought some.

JOHN

Don't.

ROZ

I thought you were walking into a trap.

JOHN

Yeah you only like it when I walk into one of your traps.

ROZ

You can't possibly have this worked out.

JOHN

Let me try. Which branch of the government is it that discredits UFO believers? CIA? FBI? A more exotic acronym perhaps?

ROZ

Sweetheart--

JOHN

Oh please. I'm sure your contract doesn't call for you to sleep with me. I respect that. And then tonight. It started to get more interesting, didn't it?

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)
I guess I just want to know one
thing: what escort service did they
recruit you from?

John sees tears in her eyes, and he's glad of it. She grabs
her purse and exits. Moments later, the FRONT DOOR SLAMS O.S.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

John exits his house into the waiting arms of a press scrum--

REPORTER 1
Will you be showing the sequel
'Return to Uranus' next week?

REPORTER 2
Do you believe there's intelligent
life on Uranus?

REPORTER 3
Is this the president getting back
at you for your attacks on Space
Station Celeste?

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

President Tecumseh shakes her head as she reads a memo with a
news clipping: 'National Park Service Says It Will Not Issue
Permit to Marchers'.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
Get the District government to deny
the permit. If it's a D.C. problem,
our hands are tied.

CHIEF OF STAFF
No go. The mayor loves this idea.
He told Burt Gallilee he can't wait
for a million white people to come
to D.C. and make jackasses of
themselves.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
What, no African Americans believe
in UFOs?

CHIEF OF STAFF
I don't have exact numbers, but
Burt says the black community has a
hard enough time of it already
without worrying about aliens.

The Press Secretary clears her throat--

PRESS SECRETARY

Why not take the opposite tack?
Give them the permit, welcome them
with open arms? If there are enough
people, and I'm just spit-balling
here, maybe we could even say hidey-
ho when they land -- er, arrive?

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

How many of these fucking people
can there possibly be?

INT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE - DAY

Nathan hangs drywall with his colleagues--

LABORER 1

You going to the march?

LABORER 2

Wouldn't miss it for the world.
Power to the motherfuckin' people.

LABORER 1

Word. Nate-dawg?

NATHAN

I'm not really the protesting type.

LABORER 1

Figures.

LABORER 2

Pussy.

Bradley pokes his head in--

BRADLEY

Nate, got a sec?

EXT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE - DAY

Nathan wanders into the overgrown backyard. Bradley hands him
a beer and cracks open his own.

NATHAN

Thanks, Bradley.

BRADLEY

What's your plan, son?

NATHAN

After I finish spackling the
bedroom, I'll start in the--

BRADLEY

In life. Government still trying to
kill you?

NATHAN

Yeah.

BRADLEY

You like this job?

NATHAN

I do. I enjoy working with my
hands. An honest day of work.

BRADLEY

Boy, you drywall like shit.

Bradley fishes a wad of cash out of his pocket.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

Now look. This is what I owe you
plus a little extra.

NATHAN

You're firing me?

BRADLEY

Nah son, I'm settin' you free. You
gotta do something with what you
know.

NATHAN

What aren't you telling me?

BRADLEY

Some people's been askin' around.
'Bout my fishin' boat.

NATHAN

You say anything?

BRADLEY

Only that it belongs to Tyrell.

NATHAN

Who's Tyrell?

INT. TYRELL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tyrell and his crew relax among piles of drugs, cash, and guns. The doorbell rings. They arm themselves in a hurry. A THUG looks through a peephole and sees--

REVERSE ANGLE: the Repairman and a couple other goons.

THUG

Some creepy bald motherfucker.

REPAIRMAN (O.S.)

Mr. Scrubbs, we need a word with you.

INT. LIMO - DAY

John sits in the back of a limo with Caterina and Roscoe.

CATERINA

Ze have requested to change 'bombz
bursting in ze air' to 'flyingz
zaucers through ze air'.

JOHN

Absolutely not. We do not rewrite
the National Anthem and we do not
disrespect the flag. We are
gathering as patriotic Americans
petitioning our elected
representatives. One word I don't
recognize and I will cut them off.

INT. METRO STATION - DAY

Nathan looks around wide-eyed at the crowds: John's army, arriving en masse, carrying all sorts of bizarre pro-alien, anti-government signs. He spots a MAN IN BLACK down the platform staring at him suspiciously.

A metro car arrives, and Nathan piles in with everyone else. So does the Man in Black.

INT. METRO CAR - DAY

Nathan navigates through the packed car, glancing behind as the Man in Black follows.

UFO NUT 1

I work for Comcast. Some serious
jamming equipment for that job.

UFO NUT 2

Banion said it was a super secret satellite called Thruster 6. Like Q-level secret.

UFO NUT 3

How does that cheer go again?

CROWD (PRE-LAP)

WEE-O, WEE-O! HOW MUCH DOES THE GOVERNMENT KNOW!

EXT. METRO EXIT - DAY

Nathan emerges from the metro like a bat out of hell with the Man in Black hot on his heels--

CROWD

WEE-O, WEE-O! HOW MUCH DOES THE GOVERNMENT KNOW! WEE-O, WEE-O! HOW MUCH DOES THE GOVERNMENT KNOW!

EXT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

John, Roscoe, and Caterina exit the limo into a complete madhouse. Luckily, there are DOZENS OF SECURITY GUARDS -- Caterina's army, dressed in black fascist-chic uniforms. Caterina salutes them, and they return the gesture.

ROSCOE

This way, boss.

They lead him through the throngs toward a small trailer that's been converted into a mock UFO.

JOHN

Smaller than the real ones but very detailed. Nice work.

As they enter the UFO, we rise into the air and see that it's nestled beside the Capitol building. We pan out to:

EXT. NATIONAL MALL - DAY - AERIAL

The National Mall is packed chock-a-block with protesters.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

Senator Grackelson stares out a window at the masses. He looks like he just shat himself.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

President Tecumseh and her aides watch TV coverage in awestruck horror.

PRESS SECRETARY

The Parks Service estimates 1.4 million.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Christ, that's more than my inauguration. Can they revise that down?

PRESS SECRETARY

What'd you have in mind?

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Seven hundred, seven hundred and fifty thousand?

CHIEF OF STAFF

Low but not too low. Nice and round. Well done, madam. Well done.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Thank you.

EXT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

Nathan examines an event program as he jogs toward the security barriers. He approaches a dim-looking guard--

NATHAN

I'm with the Tall Nordic singers. I got separated at the bus station. Where are we supposed to change?

SECURITY GUARD 2

Tent F, that way.

He looks behind him and sees the Man in Black slam into the guards, who tackle him to the ground.

INT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

John sits at his desk as Roscoe and Caterina continue reviewing the schedule.

ROSCOE

Next up is Darth Brooks. Gonna do his oldie but goldie, 'Momma Don't Go with Little Green Men', then the sing-along 'Ammonia and Cinnamon'. After that, we got the Tall Nordics.

The phone rings. John checks the number and smiles.

JOHN

And Christmas comes early.

He waits a few more rings before hitting the speaker button.

JOHN (CONT'D)

John Banion.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

The Press Secretary has John on speaker as President Tecumseh and the Chief of Staff listen in the background.

PRESS SECRETARY

John, how are you my friend? Long time. Your march appears to be a smash hit!

JOHN

So it is.

PRESS SECRETARY

I'm super-stoked for you. Hey, if you like, I was thinking I might be able to talk to the president about speaking to your people.

JOHN

We'd love that.

PRESS SECRETARY

Great, I think I can sell it.

JOHN

But only if she's here in person.

PRESS SECRETARY

That's not -- the Secret Service wouldn't allow it.

JOHN

Tell them tough tamales, they work for you. Now what I would suggest is that she make a short statement apologizing for the 70-year-long cover-up and then announce that she's ordering all government files on UFOs to be published online within two weeks.

PRESS SECRETARY

We're getting ahead of ourselves--

JOHN

Then we can open it up to questions. You're always saying how much she loves talking to regular folks. What'd she call the Midwest? The beating heart of this great nation? I can promise you a lively discussion.

PRESS SECRETARY

With all respect, John, your people aren't 'regular folks'. They're--

JOHN

Careful. You called to kiss my ass, not make me mad. Let me know how you'd like to proceed. Bye now.

John hangs up and looks at his awe-struck companions--

JOHN (CONT'D)

Okay, so what will the Tall Nordics be singing?

TALL NORDICS (PRE-LAP)

(singing)

We are the world...

EXT. TALL NORDIC TENT - DAY

THREE PEOPLE dressed as Tall Nordic aliens stand outside a tent singing in harmony--

TALL NORDICS

...We are the children. We are the ones who make a brighter day, so let's start giving--

TALL NORDIC 1
Okay cut. Bob, I think you're a
half-key low. Tina, can you give us
an e-sharp?

Nathan sneaks behind the group and slinks into the tent.

INT. TALL NORDIC TENT - DAY

Nathan looks over a DOZEN PEOPLE in various states of
disrobe. He approaches a man about his size and clocks the
name on his security pass--

NATHAN
You Rob Farbert?

ROB
Yeah?

NATHAN
Phone call. Said it's urgent.
Something about a fire at your
house.

ROB
My God!

NATHAN
Comms tent, on the far side. Ask
for Jimmy. If he's not there,
Timmy.

Nathan grabs the costume bag and ducks out the back.

EXT. TALL NORDIC TENT - DAY

The Tall Nordics exit the tent behind a security MARSHAL.
Another Tall Nordic -- Nathan -- merges into the group from
the shadows. He rearranges his junk as he walks since his
costume is a bit tight in the crotch.

Rob goes from singer to singer, in a state of panic.

ROB
My bag, have you seen my bag? Have
you seen it? Please...

EXT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

The troupe of Tall Nordics follows the Marshal toward the
stage. Nathan peels off and beelines it for John's UFO.

INT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

John paces the room practicing his speech--

JOHN

*Are we not a democracy? Crowd yells
yes. Are we the people not
sovereign? Pause for effect. Will
we be lied to any more? Crowd
screams 'no' wildly--*

There's a LOUD THUMP from right outside the office.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Five minutes of peace and quiet. Is
that too much to ask?

EXT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

Two security guards slam Nathan against the side of the UFO
and tear off his mask as John emerges.

JOHN

For the love of god!

SECURITY GUARD

Sorry, sir.

NATHAN

Mr. Banion, I really really need to
speak to you.

SECURITY GUARD

We can take care of him.

JOHN

If it's a matter of life and death,
come on in.

INT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

Nathan closes the door behind them. He takes a deep breath
before turning around to face John.

JOHN

Well?

NATHAN

I'm the one who abducted you.

John inspects Nathan's two-bit costume--

JOHN

There are at least a million people out there and countless others watching on TV. Will you please get out of my face and go sing your song?

NATHAN

You've got to believe me.

JOHN

Leave now or I'll call security. They won't be so nice this time.

NATHAN

'How you like to be on my TV show'?

John stares at Nathan with wide eyes.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

'Ratings would be out of this world'.

(then)

The aliens were humans. They worked for me. We call them baggers. You got bagged. Twice. Sorry about that.

INT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY - LATER

John rocks back and forth on the sofa with his head in his hands as Nathan's story sinks in--

JOHN

We had a life. Bitsey got us season tickets to the opera.

Nathan hands him a stiff drink, which he downs in one. Nathan returns to the bar.

NATHAN

I was in a bad place, okay. My world -- it wasn't a rose garden, let me tell you. Have you ever tried to find an emu's vulva? Much less extract it with a laser?

JOHN

The president used to dine at my house.

NATHAN

I don't recommend it.

JOHN

We were thinking about getting a King Charles.

NATHAN

And the probes. Shoot me.

John looks up at this with a piercing gaze--

JOHN

Shoot you? You sick sonofabitch, you violated me.

NATHAN

Hey that was not our idea.

JOHN

That thing -- the person I mean -- took the -- and he put it -- WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT WASN'T YOUR IDEA?

NATHAN

You think that's how I get my rocks off? Blackhawks and giant magnets, hell yeah. The spinning dohickey and bulk orders of K-Y, no sir.

John looks at him incomprehensibly--

NATHAN (CONT'D)

The first abductee Majestic-12 ever took, she made it up. We flashed some lights and did our alien song and dance, then she went on her merry way and told everyone we diddled her down there.

JOHN

Why would anyone make up something like that?

NATHAN

Human nature? Everything eventually comes back to sex. We ran with it. Hashtag me-too, right?

Nathan examines the UFO as his last line sinks in, boiling John's blood to murderous temperatures--

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Nice detail, who designed this? Credit where credit's due, the probes were a good idea.

(MORE)

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Sensational but not quite
believable. That's the sweet spot.
If you think about it, there's
really no reason an advanced
intergalactic species would need to
do something like--

John leaps from the sofa and tackles Nathan from behind.
Nathan is far larger and stronger, and quickly subdues him.
John goes limp as he finally breaks down entirely.

JOHN

Why why why any of it?

NATHAN

If Joe Schmoe wakes up with a crop
circle and an inside out ox in his
cornfield, or his boink buddy down
the road gets a preggo test
courtesy of E.T., you can bet your
sweet ass he and all his friends
are gonna beg their congressmen to
bury the Defense Department and
NASA in piles of cold hard cash.

JOHN

Appropriations? All of this is
about appropriations?

NATHAN

We are talking hundreds of billions
per year. But yeah.

(then)

Look, we don't have time for 20
questions. I've already out-run one
man in black today. If you walk out
on that stage and say what you're
gonna say, I give you ten-to-one
odds against making it home alive.

JOHN

What do you want me to do?

EXT. UFO STAGE - DAY

Johns stands off to the side of the stage as the Tall Nordics
sing. He's flanked by his posse while George Stephanopoulos
interviews him.

GEORGE

Thank you for joining us, John. A
'majestic situation' -- interesting
choice of words.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You said it three times in your remarks, in fact. This must be very emotional.

JOHN

Yes, George, a lot of emotions. But here we are, over a million of us, and it is indeed the result of a majestic situation.

GEORGE

Senator Grackelson just announced he'd hold hearings about alien abductions, which was one of your main goals. What's next?

JOHN

Survival.

GEORGE

Excuse me?

JOHN

Staying alive.

GEORGE

How do you mean exactly?

JOHN

Not dying. To everyone listening, I would like to point out that I have contingency plans. Files, documents, et cetera. In the event I'm in a freak car accident tonight -- or break my neck in the bathroom tomorrow -- or contract a rare, fatal wasting disease next week -- my people will release a majestic amount of knowledge about UFOs.

GEORGE

Right. John, thank you for speaking with us and best of luck.

EXT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

John, Nathan, Caterina, and Roscoe fight through the crowds as they head toward the limo--

JOHN

This is Dr. John. He'll be helping us. He has military experience or something like that.

ROSCOE
Clearance?

NATHAN
Q-level and higher.

ROSCOE
You read-on to Thruster 6?

NATHAN
Oh I could tell you stories.

Nathan elbows John and points out THREE MEN IN BLACK staring at them from behind the security perimeter. They pile into the limo as a PROTESTER accosts the Men in Black for a photo.

PROTESTER
Hey Men in Black! I love that movie!

INT. LIMO - DAY

John glances out the back window with a terrified expression.

CATERINA
We muz decide on ze opening statement for ze hearing. My zientific credentialz make me ze best candidate to prezent.

ROSCOE
Boss, puttin' a military man like myself out front'd do wonders. Senators have a hard-on for the dress uniform with all the brass and ribbons.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

John checks his bathroom for traps. He tears open the shower curtain and peeks beneath the sink. He eyeballs the closed toilet seat, takes a deep breath, and kicks it up with his foot. All clear.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

John pours himself yet another drink as the TV quietly plays coverage of the march. It's just him and Nathan.

NATHAN
Are you going to drink all of that?

JOHN

Yes. Then another. And another. And then I am going to kill you and plead innocent because I was drunk.

NATHAN

I don't know if booze is going to help. That is sort of how all this started with me and a few Bloodies and your being a dick to the president about space.

Nathan spots Senator Grackelson on the TV--

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Here he is.

SENATOR GRACKELSON (TV)

This isn't to say I'm personally convinced that these entities, or whatever you want to call them, are engaging in the activities being alleged here. But I am enormously impressed by the energy and commitment that I've felt from the people who have come to Washington for this event. They deserve to be heard.

JOHN

I have to tell them.

NATHAN

Tell who what?

JOHN

Everyone everything.

NATHAN

And what exactly do you think your followers will do if you tell them that their entire world is a complete and total fraud? Ever seen a pack of ravenous wolves on the Nature Channel?

JOHN

How was I supposed to know?

NATHAN

I've bagged a couple hundred people but never seen someone go so full-bore chicken little. *The aliens are coming, the aliens are coming!*

(MORE)

NATHAN (CONT'D)

For Christ's sake, take some responsibility for your actions.

JOHN

I am Moses to a flock of nutjobs and, like the Supreme Court, it's a lifetime appointment. God hates me.

NATHAN

Us. He hates us. Hey does this place have a guest bedroom?

INT. JOHN'S CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

John sits at the head of a packed conference table--

ROSCOE

We gotta focus on the technology from the aliens. Plasma beams, cloakin' devices. How can we use it? What do the Russians know?

CATERINA

But ze telepathy of ze Tall Nordics could be weaponized! We muz speak about zat. Mr. Banion, please, what are your viewz on ze Congress?

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John walks into his office, where Nathan is laid out on the sofa happily reading the Washington Post.

NATHAN

How'd it go?

JOHN

I used to moderate presidential debates, now I'm refereeing hissy fits between paranoids and paranormalists.

NATHAN

I bet interviewing presidents is kinda like abducting Indiana housewives. Once you've done one, you've done them all. But this! It's all so new and exciting! I mean, Roscoe...wow. His theories on Thruster-6! That was one of mine.

(MORE)

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Kinda a joke -- what's the craziest name we could come up with that someone would actually believe. He even asked me about Thrusters one through five!

Renira pops her head in--

RENIRA

Val Dalhousie on line one.

JOHN

(answering)

Hello, Val.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. VAL'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Val feeds gourmet snacks to her King Charles cavaliers.

VAL

John, darling boy, what have you gone and done? Everyone is bouleverse. It's too delicious for words.

JOHN

Yes thank you very much.

VAL

Are you in town Saturday? I'm having a little get-together. All your favorite people. Michael and Katherine, Hynda and Tucker, the Gallilees of course, and oh, Nicholas and Svetna Romanov. One of her ancestors was in Dante's Inferno. He's supposed to have eaten one of his relatives or something macabre.

JOHN

That sounds lovely.

He hangs up.

NATHAN

What the hell was that about?

JOHN

It appears I'm back on the A-list.

NATHAN

You don't sound very happy about it.

(then)

Oh shit.

JOHN

What?

He throws the newspaper on John's desk and points to an article about a shoot-out in Southeast D.C.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's a rough neighborhood.

NATHAN

Tyrell, John. The guy Bradley pawned the boat off on.

Nathan roots around in his wallet and pulls out MJ-1's business card. He puts the phone on speaker and dials.

MJ-1 (O.S.)

Hello, Nathan. I see you're calling from a landline. Mr. Banion, are you there as well?

NATHAN

He doesn't want to speak to you. He's sort of upset.

MJ-1 (O.S.)

That makes all of us.

NATHAN

You got his message? In the speech?

MJ-1 (O.S.)

You can tell him he doesn't need to say anything else in his public remarks.

NATHAN

So we're square?

MJ-1 (O.S.)

Hardly. The present situation is untenable -- very unmajestic, some might say. There is entirely too much UFO belief occurring. A murder warrant is to be issued for you--

NATHAN

--tell me something I don't already know--

MJ-1 (O.S.)

--as well as your former employer. Bradley is the name, I believe.

NATHAN

Now wait, I was the one who sent them to Tyrell's house.

MJ-1 (O.S.)

You've become a 57-year-old African-American male? Two things need to happen. One, you come in. Two, Mr. Banion calls all of this off. He can issue a statement to the effect of -- well, he's good with words. Drugs, alcohol, bipolar disorder: delusions can result from any number of causes. But it needs to be emphatic and immediate, a total denunciation of his recent activities. You both have 24 hours.

EXT. METRO EXIT - DAY

John grabs Nathan as he heads toward the metro--

JOHN

You know damn well that they're going to terminate you with extreme prejudice if you turn yourself in.

NATHAN

Yeah and I also know that Bradley could have cut bait and run, but he didn't. I'm not letting him take the fall.

JOHN

There has to be another way.

NATHAN

Not really unless you can get us into the Oval Office this afternoon and convince the president to pull the plug on the best-kept secret in the history of this country.

John looks like he just discovered the cure to cancer--

NATHAN (CONT'D)

What?

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

John, Nathan, and Burt are escorted through the White House by a JUNIOR AIDE (20s). Nathan looks around wide-eyed.

BURT

You said a favor, not an act of god. Good thing you have me. Congrats on the march, by the way. I heard you had three-quarters of a million. Not quite an inauguration but very impressive nonetheless.

The Junior Aide points out an ANTIQUE ARTILLERY SHELL--

JUNIOR AIDE

Here we have the receptacle into which Theodore Roosevelt used to relieve himself during the night.

BURT

Am I gonna see you at Val's on Sunday?

JOHN

I hope to make it.

JUNIOR AIDE

And this is where Mrs. Lincoln spoke to her dead son. Would anyone like some presidential M&Ms?

NATHAN

Hell yeah.

The Junior Aide hands over a small box as they arrive at the curved entry door to the Oval Office--

BURT

'Abandon all hope, ye who enter here'.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

John and Nathan are drawn into the room. Nathan pays little attention as he oohs and ahs over his presidential M&Ms.

NATHAN

This is so cool--

John elbows him in the side. He looks up and his eyes go wide as he sees across the room--

The president, flanked by a couple of SECRET SERVICE AGENTS. Her press secretary and chief of staff lounge on the sofa.

JOHN

Madame President. I like what you've done with the place. Your predecessor had terrible taste in curtains--

John walks toward her with his hand extended, but the agents inch in. He stops in his tracks.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Right. Ma'am, this is Nathan Scrubbs.

NATHAN

Hello.

JOHN

He works for you. Majestic-12, to be precise. They are presently trying to assassinate him. In all likelihood, me as well.

The president looks at her aides -- WTF all around.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Majestic-12? No? Wow. It's worse than I thought. Nathan, how would you define Majestic-12's mission?

NATHAN

Crop circles, cattle mutilations, Class III alien abductions--

JOHN

What he's trying to say is: a highly effective -- and highly illegal -- government-run mass-persuasion domestic paramilitary operation to bolster belief in extra-terrestrials for the sole purpose of increasing defense-related appropriations.

John pulls out MJ-1's business card and places it on a table.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This is the number for the director.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

He presumably works for you. Call him, find out for yourself. My only request -- demand really -- is that I get the exclusive interview afterward. That should bolster my case for a Pulitzer, which is the least I deserve after what you've put me through.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

We'll certainly look into it.
Thanks for stopping by.

They turn to go but, after a couple steps, John turns back.

JOHN

'We'll look into it'? That's all you have?

NATHAN

Easy, it's the president--

JOHN

Do I look like your average knuckle-dragging congressman who'll accept that bullshit? You don't think I warrant something a little more, I don't know, original?

CHIEF OF STAFF

John, we tried to meet you halfway on this UFO business.

JOHN

You saw what a million and a half people packed on the Mall--

PRESS SECRETARY

--750,000--

JOHN

--looks like. Now imagine three million people camped out at Cape Canaveral, screaming that the president of the United States is about to bring about the end of the world, all for a photo op with her precious space station because she's getting her ass kicked in the polls.

PRESS SECRETARY

We haven't announced whether the president will attend the launch.

JOHN

Try this on for size. My fellow earthlings, I have received communications directly from the aliens. They know that the military payload module aboard the Celeste shuttle is a...um...

NATHAN

Plasma beam device.

JOHN

Plasma beam device. With only one purpose: as a first-strike weapon against their kind. The aliens have communicated through me -- their ambassador here on earth, if you will -- that they will launch an all out war on the United States if the president launches Celeste.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Three million? You're dreaming.

JOHN

My base is bigger than yours.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

That's preposterous.

JOHN

Is it? You should talk to your pollsters.

John looks at her press secretary and chief of staff, who are visibly uncomfortable.

JOHN (CONT'D)

If I don't hear from you by tonight, then I guess I'll see you in Florida. And I can assure you my people won't be nearly as well-behaved when they believe it's up to them to save humanity itself.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Always a pleasure to see you, John.

JOHN

You as well.

They exit.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
Are you fucking kidding me?

PRESS SECRETARY
UFOs poll exceptionally well,
ma'am. And the focus groups on
extraterrestrials...

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
I will not be held hostage by that
officious prick and his E.T. fuck
friends. I am going to Florida, and
I will launch that goddam space
station myself.

EXT. G-4 JET - DAY

John's G-4 cruises through azure skies.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

John and Nathan walk toward their motorcade with Roscoe and
Caterina trailing behind.

NATHAN
You do realize you're playing
chicken with the president of the
United States?

JOHN
Yes, and it'll end in tears for one
of us.

CATERINA
(to Roscoe)
If zis is what he sayz, and ze
aliens have threatened ze attack,
we must prevail at all ze cost. Ze
fate of ze world may be in our
handz. Yourz and minez.

ROSCOE
Roger that, boss.

EXT. AIR FORCE ONE - DAY

Air Force One descends towards Cape Canaveral.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE OFFICE - DAY

The Chief of Staff pops his head into the president's office.

CHIEF OF STAFF

You might wanna take a look out the window, ma'am.

She looks out at:

MONTAGE

A) Cape Canaveral and the surrounding area have been turned into a veritable parking lot. Trailers, pick-ups, and tent camps: several million red-blooded, die-hard alien enthusiasts screaming bloody murder.

B) Cars are lined up on I-95 as far as the eye can see. Some intrepid souls grill hamburgers in the median.

C) Protestors clad in all-white hold candle-light vigils.

D) Other protesters in military gear square off against Army troops along Cape Canaveral's fence-line.

E) In the tent camps, protestors clean guns and guzzle beers. George Stephanopolis is interviewing 'real people':

GEORGE

And if there is a war with the aliens?

MILITIA MAN

We's gonna blow they ugly-ass alien brains out the back of they ugly-ass alien heads.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

The president sits around a table with her aides--

CHIEF OF STAFF

Secret Service feels--

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

I'm not pulling out, dammit.

CHIEF OF STAFF

FBI feels--

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
Does anyone in this room understand
the English language?

CHIEF OF STAFF
NASA feels--

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
NASA? Those lunar pricks wouldn't
have a goddam space station if I
hadn't gotten it for them. They
damn well better be ready to go in
the morning.

PRESS SECRETARY
We've received 25,000 letters from
school children.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
Children don't vote.

PRESS SECRETARY
This one is from Caitlin Gregg, age
nine--

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
I don't want to hear it!

PRESS SECRETARY
Dear Madam President, please don't
make the aliens angry and wreck my
birthday party--

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
OUT! ALL OF YOU!

Her aides exit. President Tecumseh pulls out MJ-1's business
card, grabs a phone, and dials the number.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Creative Solutions, how may I
direct your call?

INT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - NIGHT

A briefing of the high command--

RENIRA
The FBI wished to pass along their
concerns about the possibility of
weapons among some of your more
ardent supporters.

JOHN
Roscoe, I thought we discussed
this?

ROSCOE
With all due respect sir, this
ain't a war of words anymore. It's
a war of the worlds.

John's cell phone buzzes. He glances at it.

JOHN
Everyone out except Dr. John.

The room clears as he answers--

JOHN (CONT'D)
This better be good.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
I'll deny this conversation ever
occurred, but strictly between you
and me, I spoke to your guy.

JOHN
And?

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
I instructed him to cease and
desist whatever the hell he was
doing with respect to you and
Scrubbs.

JOHN
Great.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
There's a small issue.

JOHN
How small?

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH
Well he told me I didn't have the
authority to issue that order. I
said, 'You hold on a goddam minute
this is the president of the United
States'.

(MORE)

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH (CONT'D)

Then he said that under the charter of MJ-12 -- which he wouldn't read to me because he said it was classified above my clearance level -- that the president has no authority over him. Then the son of a bitch hung up on me.

JOHN

That's it?

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

The point is I tried.

JOHN

You're the president. Try harder.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

John, I'm willing to work with you here. My pollster says a nice happy launch could buy me 10 points, and we both know I could use the bump.

JOHN

I want the truth of this grotesque situation exposed.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Dammit, I'm appealing to your sense of patriotism. I'll give you your exclusive interview. From the Oval. You and me. Live. Just how you like it.

JOHN

I think...

John closes his eyes as he ponders--

JOHN (CONT'D)

...that it would be more believable if it came directly from you without me there.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

You won't regret this.

CLICK, the line goes dead.

NATHAN

You just gave up one helluva an interview.

EXT. WETLANDS - DAY - ESTABLISHING

From afar, Celeste emits steam as it preps for launch. In the foreground, a small COLONY OF LIZARDS goes about its business. (Yes, lizards...this will become relevant in two shakes of a lizard's tail.)

INT. NASA HALLWAY - DAY

President Tecumseh takes picture after picture in a photo line for NASA employees.

PRESIDENT TECUMSEH

Thank you for your hard work. Thank
you for your hard work.

Roz, disguised as a NASA dweeb, walks by the crowd, looks around surreptitiously, and enters an unmarked door.

EXT. TENT HQ - DAY

John stands on a makeshift platform and talks to an assembled crowd in a packed command center.

JOHN

Listen up, everybody, I have
discussed the situation with the
aliens. I told them that I spoke
with the president, and she
promised that there is no longer a
military payload aboard Celeste.
They've withdrawn their threat to
destroy us.

The crowd looks around at each other, utterly perplexed.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? Everything is
alright. We can go home now.

Caterina gives Roscoe a nod, and her security guards rush on-stage and grab John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You can't! This is my movement! I
call the shots!

They frog-march him and Nathan out of the tent.

CATERINA

On ze grounds of ze treason to ze
human race, I am relieving Mr.
Banion of hiz authority. Ze launch
muz be stopped!

INT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

John and Nathan are shoved to ground by several armed
security guards. A TV plays coverage.

SECURITY GUARD

I heard he cut a deal to sell us
out and send us to the mines of
Numurian in Anthrax-14.

SECURITY GUARD 2

Turn Earth into a giant fucking
sushi bar. Sick bastard.

NATHAN

(to John)

Think they'll order an assault?

JOHN

No, they don't want to die. They
just want to be in charge. They're
probably on the phone with the
president right now.

NATHAN

What'll they do with us?

JOHN

Let us go, eventually. We're has-
beens. And without any leverage, I
suspect we'll both be having
bizarre accidents courtesy of your
former colleagues.

(then)

To think, I almost had the
interview of a lifetime.

INT. NASA COMMAND CENTER - DAY

The NASA ADMINISTRATOR escorts the president to her seat at
the command center as an army of reporters chronicle the
historic moment.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ten. Nine. Eight.

NASA ADMINISTRATOR
When they get to 'zero', it's this
button right here.

EXT. TENT CAMP - DAY

GEORGE
Sources close to the leadership
tell us that Dr. Fridegunde and
Colonel Myrtle felt that Banion's
approach was, quote unquote, too
confrontational and dangerous.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Seven. Six. Five.

INT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

John and Nathan watch George on TV--

GEORGE (TV)
Dr. Fridegunde is seen by most as a
moderating influence. She has urged
restraint on everyone's part.

JOHN
I'd say they have struck their deal
with the White House.

INT. NASA COMMAND CENTER - DAY

President Tecumseh mugs for the cameras--

NASA COMMANDER (O.S.)
Four. Three. Two. One. Ignition!

She pushes the button -- and we HEAR A GIANT EXPLOSION.

EXT. WETLANDS - DAY

The lizards freeze in their track as Celeste detonates on the
launchpad with a mighty roar. The lizard colony is vaporized
by the resulting fireball.

INT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

John and Nathan are slammed into the wall as the shock wave
crashes into the trailer.

INT. NASA COMMAND CENTER - DAY

Cameras click like machine guns as President Tecumseh sits there slack-jawed with her finger still on the button.

EXT. WETLANDS - DAY

Lizard skeletons litter the ground. Up in the sky, tiny and distant, a parachute opens.

GEORGE (PRE-LAP)
Is that? Yes! I believe it is! It appears the passenger capsule has survived! It's a miracle!

EXT. TENT CAMP - DAY

GEORGE
Wait. We're getting word that...YES, all of the astronauts are alive! They're alive!

INT. JOHN'S UFO HQ - DAY

John and Nathan breathe a sigh of relief--

NATHAN
For a second there I thought we might be on the hook for manslaughter on top of everything else--

The door to the trailer implodes as a heavily-armed SWAT TEAM piles inside and tackles Nathan and John to the ground.

SWAT MAN
John Banion, Nathan Scrubbs, you are under arrest. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.

JOHN
For what, I demand to know what are you arresting us for?

JURY FOREMAN (PRE-LAP)
On count 1,276 of violating the Endangered Species Capital Punishment Act...

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON the JURY FOREMAN--

JURY FOREMAN

...we find the defendants guilty as charged. On count 1,277 of violating the Endangered Species Capital Punishment Act, we find the defendants guilty as charged...

John and Nathan stand beside their attorneys in orange jumpsuits--

NATHAN

I still don't understand how they have an exact count on how many lizards there were.

JOHN

Environmentalists could count angels on the head of pin.

JURY FOREMAN

On count 1,278 of violating the Endangered Species Capital Punishment Act, we find the defendants guilty as charged. On count 1,279...

INT. COURTROOM - DAY - LATER

The JUDGE (60s) pounds his mallet on the dais--

JUDGE

Mr. Scrubbs, given that there is no record of any criminal activity in your past -- no record of your existence, in fact -- I hereby sentence you to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Now to you, Mr. Banion.

John smiles warmly in the hopes it might have some affect on the judge's decision.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

I find your moral flexibility to be particularly cold and callous. For weeks you have argued against the constitutionality of the law under which you have been found guilty.

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Yet it is a law whose passage is widely attributed to you and your vociferous support of it. Given your clear lack of remorse, I feel that it is my duty -- my obligation -- to sentence you to the maximum penalty allowed. And that is death. May god have mercy on your soul.

INT. DEATH ROW CELL - DAY

The door to John's cell rumbles open. He steps out.

INT. DEATH ROW PHONE BANKS - DAY

John enters the phone room and grimaces as he sees Bill Stimple waiting on the other side of the glass.

BILL

Hey buddy, how are you!?

JOHN

I'm in prison, Bill, and I'm going to be executed in short order.

BILL

Funny you mention that. Did you know this is one of our flagship prisons for the XT-2000?

JOHN

The solar-powered electric chair?

BILL

Yessiree Bob. Noiseless, smokeless, the whole nine yards. The Big Guy -- he wanted me to say hello, by the by -- he was thinking, if it comes to it, and we hope it doesn't because we're really pulling for you. But you know how it goes--

JOHN

Is there a point to this?

BILL

Let me just plant a thought. If by some wild unfortunate chance things don't pan out for you, in return for a substantial sum -- I'm talking seven figures here -- a donation to your estate, a charity of your choice, whatever you like -- would you consider making a statement at the time about how pleased -- maybe 'pleased' isn't the right word -- about how relieved, or reassured, you are that the technical aspects of your debt to society are being handled by BonVoyage?

JOHN

Goodbye, Bill.

He hangs up and is about to exit the room when he hears TAPPING on the glass behind him. He turns around expecting to see Bill but instead, at the adjacent booth--

ROZ -- disguised as the frump to end all frumps. John sits down again and lifts the phone.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Nice duds. You might wanna rethink the hair though.

ROZ

You okay?

JOHN

Given that I'm about to be legally murdered by the iPhone of electric chairs -- sure, why not.

ROZ

I wanted to help, but what were we supposed to do? You and Scrubbs told the president--

JOHN

--former president--

ROZ

--and she threatened to expose the whole thing. We expended a lot of resources to ensure no one was hurt with Celeste.

JOHN

But you didn't think about the lizards.

ROZ

But we didn't think about the lizards.

JOHN

You know, it's not everyday that one is held responsible for the extinction of an entire species. Tiny and as insignificant as they may be. When actual aliens arrive here one day -- and we're not on their endangered-species list -- I would love to hear mankind's protestations. Please, kind sirs, we're a vital part of the intergalactic ecosystem.

ROZ

I have a plan, but I need you to hold on a little longer.

JOHN

No offense, but given the Deep State's track record as it concerns me, I think I'll try my luck with the XT-2000. In fact, I owe the powers that be my last-supper request. Any suggestions?

ROZ

On the meal, no. But for dessert...

INT. DEATH ROW CELL - DAY

A GUARD (20s) places a gourmet meal on a small cloth-covered, fold-out table in John's cell.

GUARD

I never heard of macaroni a tres formaggi, but we get some weird-ass requests. One fella wanted a bag of Jolly Ranchers and nothin' else. Now I ain't s'posed to do this...

He roots around in his pocket and fishes out a couple of plastic liquor bottles -- gin and vermouth.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Read it's your favorite.

JOHN

The whiff of an angel. Thank you.

GUARD

Mr. Banion, can I ask you something? What do you think the chances are that the aliens might, you know, swoop in and save your ass?

John starts giggling, and the laugh turns into a gut-busting belly laugh. He wipes away tears as it finally subsides.

GUARD (CONT'D)

I don't get it?

JOHN

Neither do I.
(raises drink)
Cheers.

INT. DEATH ROW CORRIDOR - DAY

John walks down the hallway flanked by a couple of guards.

INT. DEATH CHAMBER - DAY

TWO TECHNICIANS strap John into the XT-2000 in what is indeed the iPhone of death chambers, right down to the BonVoyage decal urging John to 'RELAX!' and 'Like us on FriendConnect!'

John peers through the glass at the viewing gallery. Bill, front and center, flashes him a big thumb's up. The other seats are filled by a mixture of reporters and militant environmental activists. Roz sits in the very back.

One of the technicians approaches with a VR headset.

TECHNICIAN

Sir, we have a relaxing display of the cosmos cued up for your viewing entertainment. As you fly through the solar system, you'll hear a quiet, soothing hum as the generator spins up. And then, bon voyage!

The Technician places the goggles over John's eyes, steps back, and nods to his partner, who turns a dial.

INSERT - JOHN'S POV

We fly through the solar system and into deep space. As we hear a quiet, soothing hum begin to build, we CUT TO:

EXT. PRISON - DAY

A huge, towering cloud passes in front of the sun, casting a dark shadow over the prison and the solar array on its roof.

INT. DEATH CHAMBER - DAY

The light dims noticeably as the cloud passes. The humming subsides. The technician leans in and whispers to John--

TECHNICIAN

Sorry for the delay, sir. A few passing clouds. We'll be under way momentarily.

The room brightens again. Suddenly, various CELL PHONE ALERTS go off among the audience. The reporters bum-rush the exit--

JOHN

What? What is it? For the love of God!

The humming reaches a crescendo. The technician reaches for the TERMINATE button and is about to press it when--

A phone on the wall begins RINGING.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

CLOSE ON Senator Mentallius, in a coffin, dead as dead can be. He is lying in state in the Capitol Rotunda. A couple of important-looking people pay their respects.

CHIEF OF STAFF 2

Mr. President, the Speaker would like to know how you wish to honor him.

NEW PRESIDENT

For what?

CHIEF OF STAFF 2

Longevity, mostly.

NEW PRESIDENT

I don't care. Name a post office or something after him.

CHIEF OF STAFF 2

Excellent idea. More prestigious than a Senate building, but less so than an elementary school. Well done, sir. Well done.

NEW PRESIDENT

Thank you.

INT. SENATOR MENTALLIUS'S HIDEAWAY - DAY

A JANITOR mops a small hideaway office. He grabs a bottle of bourbon from the desk and takes a deep swig. In doing so, he notices a small box. He opens it -- BUSINESS CARDS that read 'MJ-1'. He tosses them in the trash.

EXT. FARM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A NEWSPAPER with a giant banner headline: 'CLASSIFIED IMAGES REVEAL UFO ATTACK ON CELESTE!' Sub-headline: 'BANION CLEARED OF ALL CHARGES'. Below that, a SATELLITE IMAGE of a UFO with a beam of light directed at Cape Canaveral -- and President Tecumseh's O-face as she presses the ignition button.

A hand clumsily knocks a glass of wine onto the newspaper--

NATHAN

Shit.

He and John sit on the porch of a small, peaceful farmhouse as cicadas hum and lightning bugs flicker around them. Nathan refills his glass to the brim.

JOHN

Do you have any idea how much a bottle of '82 Bordeaux cost?

NATHAN

We have a whole case inside.

JOHN

I guess there are a few perks that come after the government kidnaps, assaults, kidnaps and assault again, frames, convicts, and exonerates you all in the course of a single fiscal year.

NATHAN

You really gotta quit living in the past, man.

Roz emerges from the dark--

ROZ

Hello boys.

JOHN

What took you so long?

ROZ

Let me see. Black-mailing MJ-1, staging a satellite image that could pass muster with CIA's top analysts, hacking the most secure military satellite known to man--

NATHAN

Thruster-6?

ROZ

Haha. Here.

She hands Nathan a print-out of an e-mail: 'MISSION COMPLETE. ALL OPERATIONS TERMINATED IMMEDIATELY. SIGNED MJ-1'.

NATHAN

End of an era.

ROZ

I almost choked up when I read it.

JOHN

Oh please. Has it occurred to either of you that none of us have a life now?

NATHAN

Two days ago I was wondering if I was going to make it through the day without someone shanking me for my morning donut. I'm not complaining.

JOHN

What are you going to do when the wine runs out?

NATHAN

Thought I'd re-apply to CIA. That's how I ended up at MJ-12. We were all a bunch of CIA rejects.

ROZ

What are you going to do with your movement? Won't they need something new to protest now?

JOHN

Yes well I was thinking of telling them I've received another message from the aliens.

ROZ

Please don't.

JOHN

Go home, don't say another word to anyone ever about UFOs. That is, unless and until you receive further instructions from me.

Roz shakes her head and heads back to her car.

ROZ

Don't you two go starting any new religions.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Roz opens her car door as John catches up--

JOHN

Where are you headed?

ROZ

There's a bed and breakfast nearby. Thought I might get a room.

JOHN

I believe I know the one. I hear their dessert is to die for.

ROZ

Care to join?

JOHN

Usually I'd say no, but there are reports of odd things happening around here recently. Lights in the skies. Mysterious disappearances. I would hate for you to get abducted since we know what that entails.

ROZ
I guess it depends on who's doing
the abducting.

JOHN
I guess it does.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

CLOSE ON JOHN as he rips into his latest victim--

JOHN
I want to start by asking you how,
in light of your embarrassing
failure to pass any meaningful
legislation during your many
decades in the Senate, how your
colleagues even tolerate your
presence? Let me ask you about
something else. Your decision to
hold hearings on alien abductions
is widely regarded as the primary
reason for both your own re-
election and your party's historic
losses in Congress and the White
House. Would you call that
brilliant electoral tactics -- or
the most craven act of political
self-preservation in the history of
the Republic?

John peers over his glasses at Senator Grackelson--

JOHN (CONT'D)
You can take credit for both if you
like.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END