

THE 28TH AMENDMENT

Screenplay By

Alex Kurtzman & Roberto Orci

6/3/08

FADE IN:

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

CREDITS BEGIN OVER SUNRISE: January 20th. A cold but sunny Inauguration day. We FEEL the energy in the crowded streets --

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - SOUTH EXIT - DAY

The sound of a woman singing "AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL" plays over:

12 MOVING TRUCKS, parked at the South Exit. Six completely empty. Six filled with furniture. All of them unmoving and wide open. And in CLOSE UP -- FACES. As stock-still as the trucks. Waiting for something, like runners at the starting line. They're WHITE HOUSE USHERS. What's happening here?

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL, WEST STEPS - THE INAUGURAL - DAY

We realize the singing woman is CORRINE BAILEY RAE, at the Presidential Inaugural -- where we meet PRESIDENT-ELECT BEN CAHILL: early 40's, boyish, purposeful, warm but commanding face -- and just a hint of "political animal" under the surface. His wife, SAMANTHA CAHILL: self-reliant, kind, brave; and after 15 years, they're still very much in love. Hands clasped across the LAP of an 8 year-old girl sitting between them: MARISA CAHILL, their daughter. Checks her SWATCH, whispers:

MARISA

Daddy, when do they make you President?

BEN

(grins; shows his watch)

When the big hand gets to twelve, Baby.

TUCKER CARLSON (V.O. PRELAP)

The guy's a fluke, his own mother probably bet against him to win--

EXT. ACROSS AMERICA - SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY

AMERICAN FACES watching MSNBC in BARS, in OFFICES, LIVING ROOMS:

BILL MAHER

-- why, cause he ran as an Independent?
Isn't gonna suck up to the same crusty
old party hacks?

TUCKER CARLSON

'Cause he's young, he's brash, he's
Kennedy from the hairline up. Guy's a
triumph of genetics over substance.
Welcome to the first tabloid President,
America!

INT. CAPITOL - CEREMONIAL ROOM - DAY

A CLERK arranges the first executive orders Ben will sign, laying out many PENS, to be given away commemoratively --

BEN (V.O.)

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

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL, WEST STEPS - DAY

Ben's at a podium before the CHIEF JUSTICE. Repeats: "And will to the best of my ability... preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States... so help me God." Sam's welling up with tears. A military band plays "Hail to the Chief." Behind Ben's back, he opens his palm; Marisa HIGH-FIVES IT, smiling a giddy, toothy smile like she won the lottery --

EXT. WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - THE SAME TIME

The HEAD USHER, by the moving vans, hears something over an earpiece -- suddenly ACTIVATES:

HEAD USHER

Traveler's official!

All the Ushers jump to work, removing furniture from the vans:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - VARIOUS

The USHERS replace stuffy antiques with homier, modest middle-class items: a couch you could nap on and not just sell at auction; a coffee table that's actually had coffee cups on it. The Cahills' White House will also be their daughter's home...

INT. ANONYMOUS HOUSE - DAY

Stark contrast: white and barren. A pair of HANDS clean SIX STEEL GUN PIECES with oil, a wire brush, Q-tips. The hands click a STOPWATCH, start ASSEMBLING the pieces with incredible speed until they form a KIMBER SEMI-AUTO PISTOL. Click the stopwatch again. DRIFT UP to reveal... the man's eyes are closed. He checks the assembly time: 12 seconds.

This is how we meet MADIGAN GRAY.

JUMPCUT: Gray's closet opens. Pushes clothes aside, revealing a KEYPAD. Types in a code, a WALK-IN SAFE opens: MP-5 RIFLE, M110 SEMI-AUTOMATIC SNIPER RIFLE. Handguns, knives.

Is Gray an assassin? He stores the gun he's assembled and --

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE - DAY

Ben walks the post-inaugural walk from Capitol Hill to The White house: he's taken to the streets with his family, shaking hands with men, woman, children, veterans in wheelchairs --

ALAN COLMES (V.O.)

People like the guy, Karl, he's Main Street personified, a military hero -- ran cause he was sick of politicians with zero combat experience ordering troops around the world --

-- TV CLIP, FOX NEWS: ALAN COLMES V.S. KARL ROVE --

KARL ROVE

He tripped into the presidency, admits he didn't start out seeking the job -- 'till the Republican front-runner had a massive stroke, almost died -- turned out the Democrat nominee hadn't paid taxes in two years. I just hope Ben Cahill picks inoffensive drapes and doesn't scuff the Oval with those Marine boots!

INT. GRAY'S HOUSE - DAY

Gray, in SILHOUETTE, slips on a suit. Checks his reflection in the mirror. We feel a seclusion about Gray, psychic damage -- like the pin's already halfway out of the grenade. He exits, punches a code into a CAMERA MONITOR -- thirty little screens cover every inch of his house, outside and in. MATCH TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE ROOM - DAWN

CCTV cameras cover every inch of the White House, outside and in. And right now they track Ben, Sam, Marisa, and the SECRET SERVICE BRIGADE as they WALK THROUGH the White House gates --

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - SOUTH LAWN - CONTINUOUS

FLASHBULBS go mad outside the gates as the first family walks up the lawn, awed -- led by SECRET SERVICE SPECIAL-AGENT-IN-CHARGE MARK TURNER, head of Ben's detail:

AGENT TURNER

Traveler's moving, South Portico --

BEN

Thought we were at first-names, Mark --

AGENT TURNER

Really appreciate you requesting me, Mr. President.

BEN

Lost so much to you at the poker table in the campaign, it's my only chance to get even.

MARISA

Is this our front yard?

INT. WHITE HOUSE - MARISA'S ROOM - DAY

DOORS OPEN TO MARISA'S NEW BEDROOM as she enters with her parents. More stuffed animals and toys than any sane parent could dream of, all GIFTS from Washington insiders and foreign dignitaries, with bows and cards attached. Ben stifles a smirk:

BEN

So much for the Congressional gift ban.

SAM

Yeah, well I just passed one: she can keep three things.

Marisa runs into the room, touching everything, a kid in a candy store isn't this happy as she picks up a toy, reads the card:

MARISA

No way! This one's from Bono!

Ben glances at Sam: you really gonna rain on her parade?

SAM

... four.

INT. WHITE HOUSE SALON - DAY

HAIRDRESSERS, MAKE-UP ARTISTS, STAFFERS primp and prime Sam and Marisa -- a LEAD STYLIST indicates designer dresses and shoes --

LEAD STYLIST

-- and for next week's Congressional gala, Marc Jacobs agreed to design you an original.

SAM

It's-- it's fine. You don't have to go to all this trouble, really, I can just wear that dress again. It's beautiful.

LEAD STYLIST

No, Ma'am, I wasn't clear... this is Marc Jacobs.

The stylist gestures to the man beside him, holding up design sketches: MARC JACOBS in the flesh.

MARC JACOBS
Madame First Lady.

SAM
(I'm on Mars)
... hi.

EXT. FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA - FRONT ENTRANCE - DUSK

Gray pulls up to the Ft. Bragg gate in a Dodge Ram, offers ID to a soldier. It says: "CIVILIAN CONTRACTOR." He's let through --

TV CLIP, "MEET THE PRESS": TIM RUSSERT interviews SENATE MAJORITY LEADER JAMES HAWTHORNE, an ego and attitude to match:

TIM RUSSERT
Mr. Majority Leader, with his agenda resting in your hands, almost literally; young, untested, product of a perfect political storm: can Ben Cahill claim the Presidency as his own?

HAWTHORNE
Not his to claim, Tim. That's the thing about "outsiders." If he wanted to get along in Washington, he should've spent less time attacking it.

INT. WEST WING CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ben ROUNDS a hallway corner with a full-head of steam, skimming a SPEECH, now in a tux. Secret Service Agents and STAFFERS follow; Chief of Staff and former campaign manager JOHN VINCENT, two old friends used to the trenches -- OVERLAPPING, RAPID-FIRE:

BEN
-- not only isn't this the speech I wrote--

--how 'bout the deputy undersecretary of punctuation?

-- water down everything I'm trying to say? My first foreign policy address, this speech could have been given by the last five Presidents--

-- we campaigned on embarrassing them --

VINCENT
-- it went through the staffing process, Cabinet, Subcabinet--

-- so we tempered some of the language, there'll be time to--

-- you wanna embarrass the establishment into--

-- but he's cut off as they round another corridor to find a PROCESSION OF WAITING STAFFERS;

Ben's EXEC ASSISTANT, JOANNA, leads him along; Ben nods, smiles as he talks -- he's good at barely standing still:

JOANNA Mr. President, you remember Steve Rubinoff, ran New Jersey for you, new Deputy Director of Cabinet Affairs-- -- Paul Cusack, judicial appointments-- -- Richard Rovner, judicial appointments--	BEN Hey -- yes -- loved those Springsteen songs on the ropeline-- -- Paul, great to see you -- -- <u>Rich</u>: I want a hundred in a hundred days, don't forget--
--	---

-- Ben SHAKES everyone's hand, a PHOTOGRAPHER snaps photos:

VINCENT

All I'm saying is "Campaign in poetry,
govern in prose," grease the skids, toss
Establishment a few bones: one for them,
two for us--

-- a BARK gets their attention down the hall: VICE PRESIDENT JOSHUA DENNET is teaching his LHASA APSO to stand on hind legs. Clearly, Dennet isn't the brightest star in the galaxy.

BEN

(rolls eyes; gestures to
Dennet)

-- don't gimme that, Vince, we went status-quo on our VP, that was like giving 'em the umpire --

VINCENT

Hey, guess what: both parties hate you--

BEN

-- they hate me but we're here now.
We're good at surprises, remember?

And suddenly Ben STOPS -- because he realizes they're virtually in front of the OVAL OFFICE. Quietly:

BEN (CONT'D)

I need a minute...

Everyone backs away respectfully, as Ben enters...

INT. WEST WING - THE OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

CREDITS END ON THIS ICONIC IMAGE: Ben enters the Oval. Alone. Overwhelmed by the contours of the room... the history... the moment... traces a path along the immaculate polish of his desk... finds himself eyeball to eyeball with a bust of Teddy Roosevelt's face. CHUCKLES with the private awe of it all...

SAM (O.S.)
... oh, yeah. This'll do.

He turns: Sam, in the doorway, nearly as awed as Ben. In her stunning designer gown, looking more radiant than ever...

BEN
Federal government for ya; I ask for a desk and four walls, they couldn't even get that right.

... she smiles, her eyes light up like candles... he takes one of her hands, pulls her close... and they start to SWAY...

SAM
Thank God nobody's watching, you're making us look ridiculous...

BEN
Oh, you have no idea.

... she outright LAUGHS as he DIPS her, Fred Astaire to her Ginger Rogers, and we're BACK TO:

INT. FORT BRAGG - BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

Gray sits alone at a table surrounded by flat screens playing news channels. All images of BEN. A door opens, in walks GENERAL LLOYD BABBIT, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Gray snaps to his feet. They've never met, but Babbit's presence tells Gray he's been called in for something significant:

GENERAL BABBIT
Colonel, pleasure to meet you.

-- and now we realize, Gray's military.

GRAY
Thank you, Sir.

GENERAL BABBIT
I know you've been on a hold status last six months, full mental review and evaluation... that was unfortunate business in Fallujah. No way to know they'd use civilians for cover.

A flicker in Gray's eyes: trauma contained.

GRAY
Yessir.

GENERAL BABBIT

You can't blame yourself. Wasn't your fault. Your record's exemplary -- that's why I'm here personally. I'd like to deal you back in.

Babbit slides a FOLDER across the table.

GENERAL BABBIT (CONT'D)

An assignment. For you and your team.

Gray opens the folder. Scans details. His face SHIFTS. We don't see what he sees, but the look tells us it's a kill op.

GENERAL BABBIT (CONT'D)

Given the nature of the mission, no one'll hold it against you if you say no. We can take you off active status -- get you a job at MacKall working the SERE school. You'd do a lot of good there with your background.

This draws at Gray. Babbit knows it.

GRAY

Not ready to be mothballed yet, Sir. What's the time frame?

GENERAL BABBIT

Three months prep. Then you'll receive the rendezvous point and target location once the intel's confirmed... but I need a hundred percent. If you can't give me that, say it now.

Gray's jaw sets. He's in. FLASHBULBS effect a cut to:

INT. NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

APPLAUSE/FLASHBULBS: Ben and Sam have entered the inaugural ball. Separate to work the crowd... Agent Turner tailing Ben:

AGENT TURNER

(into collar mic)

Pool spray for POTUS remarks, they say seven to ten minutes and out --

SECRET SERVICE AGENT MELISSA BLAKE discreetly tails Sam, one of the JUNIOR AGENTS on her detail -- stoic, deadpan, but sincere:

AGENT BLAKE

Copy: Blackbird's in motion --

SAMANTHA

Call me Sam. You won't lose my respect.

AGENT BLAKE

No, Madame First Lady. Just my job.

CUTS around the room -- improvised party chatter among FAMOUS
FACES -- VINCENT dances with MARISA on the ballroom floor --
Ben laughs and jokes with a group of MILITARY OFFICERS. FAVOR
ONE on the periphery: LT. COL. WILLIAM SADOWSKI. Marines. Ben
sees him and brightens -- crisp salutes, then a warm hug:

BEN

Will. Glad you made it.

LT. COL. SADOWSKI

Mr. President. Thank you for inviting
our Annapolis class. Can't tell you what
it means to have one of us in the
building.

BEN

Wish I had fifty more... really good to
see you again.

LT. COL. SADOWSKI

Likewise, Sir.

As Sadowski demurs and retreats, Ben zeroes in on a WOMAN:
Chinese Ambassador MADAME SOONG LI. An elegant, icy beauty.

MADAME SOONG LI

Mr. President.

BEN

Madame Ambassador. Your dress is very
beautiful.

MADAME SOONG LI

As is your wife's. I am guessing the
fabric was made in China.

Ah, this is round one. Ben smiles, the consummate diplomat:

BEN

We buy American.

MADAME SOONG LI

Fortunately, my country owns so much that
is American.

BEN

Good investment.

MADAME SOONG LI
Not according to the Wall Street Journal.

BEN
Well... we're all waiting for those
Chinese prison camps to go public.

Ben's clearly capable of holding his own. As is she:

MADAME SOONG LI
So, the free-thinking independent is like
every other American President -- you
want our cheap products, and the license
to push us around.

(dead-straight)
Now more than ever, we are capable of
pushing back.

BEN
... I like to think we can both start
pushing in the same direction.

MADAME SOONG LI
Many in my country question whether your
thoughts will lead to action.

BEN
Good, we disagree on that too -- means we
have plenty to talk about.

They TRADE BOWS; Ben moves off to shake more hands. AT THE BAR:
two men watch. JIM HAWTHORNE, the Senate Majority Leader we saw
Russert interviewing. And CIA DIRECTOR SHERMAN DINSMORE:

CIA DIRECTOR DINSMORE
Looks like he's made a new friend.

Hawthorne finishes a scotch, swishes the ice, dismissive...

HAWTHORNE
Let him have his playdates. He'll need
some way to fill his time.

And we're not sure what that means, but it's sure odd... as:

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAWN

Sunrise over the Capitol... our THEME promises new beginnings:

INT. PRESIDENT'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Ben and Sam in bed, Marisa sleeping between them on her first
night in this strange new home. An ALARM CLOCK sounds.

As Ben turns it off, two USHERS and a NATIONAL SECURITY BRIEFER enter with armfuls of briefing papers, newspapers. Ben's taken aback, as are Sam and the mostly-still-sleeping Marisa:

NATIONAL SECURITY BRIEFER
Good Morning, Mr. Presid--

BEN
("shh" -- whispers)
-- let's do this downstairs.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER - EARLY MORNING

BEN RUNS alongside the beautiful Potomac; the not-quite-as-athletic Vincent chugging to keep up, trying to brief him on the day. Five SECRET SERVICE AGENTS follow close behind. Ben mischievously speeds up, giving Vincent the workout of his life--

VINCENT
-- will you slow the hell down?

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE ROOM - DAWN

SS AGENTS monitor readouts that identify the location of our principles 24-7: "0:800: POTUS: W.H.O. Residence/ 0:800: FLOTUS: W.H.O. Rsvlt. Rm/ 0:800 BABY BEAR: W.H.O. Rsvlt. Rm" -- CCTV CAMERAS track Ben, Turner, and Vincent as they enter the:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CABINET ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where GENERAL BABBIT rises; the same man we saw give Gray his mission. Beside him is a MARINE OFFICER with a TITANIUM BRIEFCASE cuffed to his wrist. Babbit offers a hand:

GENERAL BABBIT
Mr. President: General Lloyd Babbit, Vice
Chairman J.C.S.

BEN
Senator Hawthorne says he wouldn't lay
down foreign policy without you, General.

GENERAL BABBIT
Thank you, sir.

BEN
I won't hold it against you.

Babbit blanches, until Cahill WINKS and smiles, indicating it was a joke. But a point's been made. Now Babbit makes his own:

GENERAL BABBIT
Good deal's changed since you were
operational in the Gulf, Sir. I look
forward to seeing it anew through your
eyes.

BEN
Well that makes two of us.
(SAM enters with BLAKE)
My wife, Sam --

GENERAL BABBIT
Madame First Lady, welcome to the White House. We have several matters of code-word clearance to discuss.

INT. HALLWAY/ EAST WING ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Babbit leads them into an ELEVATOR. As they RIDE DOWN:

GENERAL BABBIT
During World War Two Roosevelt had the East Wing built, to hide construction of an underground bunker, should the White House be attacked by air.

Elevator OPENS, they come to a steel door; Babbit enters a CODE:

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - DAY

Long tunnel, WW2-era. Ben and Sam are lead along, brisk pace:

AGENT TURNER
If, during a crisis, any part of the command structure's taken out -- or you can't communicate with them -- all the armed services recognize the Secret Service's authority to take supreme command.

GENERAL BABBIT
They countermand me, the Army, Air Force, Marines. Should they ever need to take charge, believe me, you'll be glad.

INT. BUNKER - CENTRAL ENTRANCE - DAY

A MASSIVE STEEL DOOR swings open. Fluorescents pop on:

GENERAL BABBIT
The bunker's central operating system branches to the command posts under Camp David, Raven Rock, Mount Weather, and any number of Federal relocation sites --

INT. BUNKER - WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A console of satellite displays blinks to life:

BABBIT

The Tac-Sat command console -- world's best communications system, widest reach. Your link to every branch of government, every alphabet agency -- even our commanders in the field. You can run a three-front war from this chair, Sir.

Ben and Sam share a look -- this is all a little chilling.

BEN

Then I hope I never have to see it again.

INT. GRAPHICS IMAGING LAB - MINUTES LATER

Ben is seated as RED LASER LIGHT tracks across his face:

TECHNICIAN

New security protocol: scanner's mapping 140,000 points on your face -- from that we'll build a latex mold that'll make near-perfect contact with your shadow's features.

Technician gestures: "behind you." Ben turns, face-to-face with A NEAR DEAD-RINGER OF HIMSELF. CHUCKLES in stunned surprise.

DEAD-RINGER AGENT (THE DOUBLE)

Stand-in for high-risk situations, Sir.

BEN

(grins, still reeling)

Really could've used you in the campaign.

HARD CUT TO THE MARINE OFFICER, unlocking the titanium briefcase from his wrist -- it's a MILITARIZED LAPTOP:

GENERAL BABBIT

The famous 'Football.' A remote trigger for our nuclear arsenal. Your command codes have been downloaded into this chip, allowing you exclusive access.

From the case, Babbit produces a vial. Inside is a MICROCHIP. He waves the vial/chip over the screen: "SELECT TARGET PACKAGE."

BEN

I assume you've got a safer place for it than in that vial.

GENERAL BABBIT

Yessir. 'Fraid we do.

INT. BUNKER - INFIRMARY AREA - CONTINUOUS

Ben's shirtsleeve is pulled up to reveal a PURPLE SHRAPNEL SCAR.
The microchip's loaded into a SUBDERMAL INJECTION GUN:

LEAD TECH

We'll inject the chip into the lower
metacarpal, you won't even know it's
there... try to relax.

He presses the injector barrel to Ben's left hand... PULLS the
trigger. A small POP as the injector FIRES and we CUT TO BLACK:

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

It's been an impressive hundred days...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ROOSEVELT ROOM - DAY

It's 100 days later, and Ben's mid-interview with CNN
correspondent SUZANNE MALVEAUX at the White House:

MALVEAUX

You've gone from a narrow victory to
strong approval of the job you're doing;
cut wasteful spending at the Pentagon,
steered that money into troops on the
ground -- yet for all your commitment to
rank-and-file soldiers, you never talk
about your own war experiences.

BEN

Anyone who can find language to talk
lyrically about combat... I don't believe
they've seen it.

MALVEAUX

Even though you've got... well, the scars
to prove it.

BEN

Let me explain it this way... when our
plane was shot down, I was sitting on a
\$600 seat cover cause some government
regulation said it had to be flame
resistant -- never mind that if your
plane's on fire, you're not too worried
about re-using the seat cover. If that
money had gone into body armor, better
mapping systems, better intelligence... I
might not have the scars to prove
anything...

INT. BAR - NEAR FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA - CONTINUOUS

Local bar near Fort Bragg, blue-collar. A TV mounted in the corner plays Ben's interview -- watched by GRAY. Playing pool behind him, his unit: GONZALES, HETTRICK, HICKS. Tight-knit:

GONZALES

(teasing Hicks)

-- hey, why don't you go find another wife--

-- give the man a break, he just came back from a brown-nosing tour with the reg'lar folks in the Green Zone --

HETTRICK

-- I personally think number #5's gonna be the one, Bro --

HICKS

Hey: least I don't go after everything with a hole and a heartbeat, Gonzo --

-- but mostly we're FOCUSED on Gray, as he's focused on the TV --

BEN ON CNN

I have a responsibility to help out the military, Suzanne. I came up through those ranks, I took that oath first... I owe them my whole career.

-- now Gray's look diverts from the TV to a WOMAN working the bar. ANNA: a local, her family owns and works the place. Meets his eyes as he approaches. Chemistry. Familiar. Already setting up a whiskey shot for him, gestures to Ben on TV:

ANNA

(South Carolina drawl)

What d'ya think of him?

GRAY

(quietly)

Promises, promises.

ANNA

He had my vote.

GRAY

Now he has my ass.

ANNA

Damn. Thought it was mine.

That smile. So charming. Reaches Gray. Just at the moment when Gonzales reaches the bar -- gestures to Gray:

GONZALES

Thought you had orders to cut this guy
off at one, Anna.

Anna grins and gives Gonzales two beers: they're familiars.
Gray gestures to Anna's FATHER cooking in the kitchen...

GRAY

How's the fam?

ANNA

Wondering why I haven't found a nice man
and settled down yet.

GRAY

What'd you tell 'em?

ANNA

(playfully)

Like to punish myself, I guess.

The look holds. This woman is Gray's anchor to emotionality he
keeps locked down. Which is why he's not thrilled to say...

GRAY

I'm going away again. Temp Duty
Assignment, HQ in Asia.

That drops her, hard. Worry spikes to the surface now. And by
the look on his face, she knows he's already decided.

ANNA

Why?

GRAY

355 a day plus per diem. Can't beat the
perks.

ANNA

(knows he's dodging)

Hey. We have it pretty good, right?
You're sleeping again, hands don't shake
anymore... took you a lot of work to get
to that...

GRAY

I need this, Anna.

ANNA

... I know you can't tell me details...
but can't you tell me why?

She's trying to control fear. Gray says, controlled:

GRAY

I just need my last one... to be a win.
Can't explain it better than that.

(beat)

One more. Then maybe I can walk away.

And it's quiet. Her eyes moist. But she's a strong woman, and
toughs it out. Forces a little grin...

ANNA

Dad says it's hard to have everything,
y'know? Rare to get it, hard to keep it.

(beat)

So what're you lookin' for, mister. A
mercy pop 'fore you go?

GRAY

(beat; a smirk)

Have mercy. Please.

She leans across the bar, kisses him... and we RACK BACK TO:

MALVEAUX ON CNN

-- and you've angered more than a few
Congressional leaders along the way.
Majority Leader Hawthorne, Speaker
Carrick...

BEN ON CNN

Next time they sleep in a trench, they'll
thank me.

INT. OUTER OFFICE/OVAL OFFICE - DAY

JIM HAWTHORNE waits impassively in the outer office, face a mask
of neutrality... as Ben enters; they proceed into the Oval:

BEN

Mr. Majority Leader. Thanks for coming.

HAWTHORNE

My pleasure. Been meaning to bend your
ear an inch or two myself.

BEN

Can I offer you something?

Hawthorne gestures at a WAGON WHEEL PATTERN in the wood floor:

HAWTHORNE

Like to offer you something, Mr.
President. Tips, from an old Washington
hand...

BEN

Old and wise.

HAWTHORNE

Old enough to know the history of these wagon wheels... Reagan had them put in by one of his ranch hands, Clinton took 'em out, Bush the younger put 'em back.

BEN

Doesn't require Congressional approval, I see the appeal.

HAWTHORNE

Everything else does. There's that temptation, in this office -- change the world overnight. Even when you're just passing through.

(still smiling)

And here's where I'll take "wise." Due respect, you've been moving too fast, breaking too many traditions that require a certain... familiarity to appreciate.

BEN

(still smiling too)

That's why I asked you here, for your help. We have the chance to do a great service together.

HAWTHORNE

Well, I'm flattered in advance.

BEN

In my one term in the House, I never got near your classified budget. Black ops, counter-intelligence --

HAWTHORNE

As a freshman, you were never entitled to know about it.

Ben drops a BUDGET REPORT on the coffee table: THUD.

BEN

I am now. And I was in there on September 10th, 2001, when Rumsfeld reported to Congress, I quote: "The Pentagon cannot track two-point-three trillion dollars in transactions." Now, I know we got a little sidetracked since then, but as the overseer of every Senate Committee, you're most qualified to finish what he started.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
 (then, the kicker)
 I'd like you to help me audit the DoD. I
 want to know where that money went.

Hawthorne: for the first time now, sees Ben as a genuine threat.

HAWTHORNE
 No need to audit, I'll tell you:
 Strategic Defense Initiative. SDI.

BEN
 Missile Defense...
 (Hawthorne nods)
 Who authorized it?

HAWTHORNE
 Executive Order 15-39, issued and upheld
 by three of your predecessors, grants us
 the right to shield a percentage of our
 budget from political meddling. All of
 'em felt, as I do, that a domestic shield
 protecting us from nuclear missiles is
 worth the price tag... especially with
 China buying 'em in bulk these days.

BEN
 It's a trillion-dollar slingshot that
 doesn't hit its targets --

HAWTHORNE
 Exactly why we need to perfect it.

Time-out between rounds. Hawthorne's pure Teflon. Ben ups his
 game:

BEN
 Tell you what: show me where every dollar
 went, we'll make sure it all adds up.
 (beat)
 You remember the dollar? It's the one
 with the President's face on it.

HAWTHORNE
 If you're endeavoring to catch me with my
 pants down, Sir, I should warn you... I
 sleep with two pairs. The folks on the
 Hill got there by being realists, not by
 raping the Golden Goose where she lays
 her eggs. Take my advice, don't monkey
 with our weapons systems, spare yourself
 four years of humiliation on Capitol
 Hill.

BEN

Senator... I don't care what my predecessors approved. You wanna fight me on missile defense, do it from the Senate floor, don't lecture me in my own office. We are not gonna be an administration that funds secret programs. And if it takes more than three weeks to find every single DoD receipt, the criminal division of the U.S. Justice Department'll be happy to move things along.

(gestures: the door)

That's all. Sorry to have kept you waiting.

Ben keeps his gaze on a fuming Hawthorne, as Turner leads him out. For the briefest moment, Turner and Hawthorne MEET EYES as something passes between them -- unclear what, but it's unsettling.

INT. ANONYMOUS HOTEL ROOM - DAY

MACAU, CHINA. Skyscrapers and casinos. We're in an anonymous hotel room; a LAPTOP's open showing a FILE PHOTO -- a CHINESE MAN. Gray "backbriefs" his team, as they prep weapons:

GRAY

Gonz, run down the target profile --

GONZALES

(gestures: the computer)

Feng Wu: Chinese Triad with money ties to Iran. Number 3 target on our terror watch-list --

GRAY

(to Hettrick)

What's our purpose?

HETTRICK

Reduce his ops against US and Coalition forces in the Eastern hemisphere --

GRAY

(to Hicks)

Target convoy formation?

And we INTERCUT the backbrief with the mission in-progress:

EXT. MACAU, CHINA - DAY

A trio of CARS speeds along. The middle one's a BLACK MERCEDES:

HICKS (V.O.)

Three vehicles; target'll be in number two car. Two bodyguards in the "one" and "three" vehicles; four in the primary target vehicle --

INT. ANONYMOUS HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Gray RACKS the slide on a gun, satisfied his team knows the op:

GRAY

Convoy'll be driving through the Yakiazi tunnel, 18:06 hrs. When they exit, we'll have a 15 second window to engage.

(beat)

Tonight we sleep with a clear conscience and 800 pages of Constitutional Law on our side.

INT. ELEVATOR - HIGH RISE OFFICE BUILDING - MACAU - DAY

Upward travelling glass elevator: GONZALES and HETTRICK in coveralls with logo: "ChinAm Importing." Look like workmen carrying WORK CASES. DING: at the 42nd floor, they get out --

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Unfinished floor, empty CONSTRUCTION AREA. No walls, windy, vertigo-inducing. Gonzales clicks open his case revealing A TWO-FT. JAVELIN MISSILE LAUNCHER. Into headset:

GONZALES

One to Ghost: Amber.

EXT. MACAU ROAD - DAY

HICKS guns into frame in a BEAT-UP CAR, tailing the 3-CAR CARAVAN -- expertly keeps his distance:

HICKS

Two to Ghost: on the move. Passing "Yo-Yo"... passing "Cricket." ETA: one Mike.

EXT. MACAU SKYSCRAPER ROOFTOP - DAY

On a rooftop, GRAY puppeteers from a makeshift command post. POV THROUGH HIS BINOCS: THE YAKIAZI TUNNEL:

GRAY

Ghost to One: status?

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Gonzales flips open a TARGETING DEVICE on the Javelin launcher:

GONZALES

Nest is "hot."

INT. YAKIAZI TUNNEL - DAY

The 3 CARS ACCELERATE into the tunnel, disappearing -- Hicks GUNS his car after them --

HICKS

Target entering tunnel, standby.

IN THE TUNNEL -- TRAFFIC HEAVIER -- our Mercedes PICKS UP SPEED as two trucks CROSS FRAME, Hicks LOSES SIGHT of the cars --

And when the trucks clear, TWO SUBURBANS have joined the caravan. Flanking the cars from the front and rear, oddly precise -- Hicks gets CLOSER, and what he sees throws him: THE SUBURBANS HAVE CHINESE SECURITY PLATES. OFFICIAL GOVT.

HICKS (CONT'D)

Whoa, two new Suburbans, government plates, just came out of nowhere executing an overwatch maneuver, looks like Chinese Secret Service -- little sophisticated for terrorists --

INT. BLACK MERCEDES - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

And for the first time, we SEE the passenger of the black Mercedes. CHINESE. Business suit. Talking on a cell. This is NOT the same face we saw on Gray's laptop.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER ROOFTOP - "THE NEST" - CONTINUOUS

GRAY

Roger, Two: stay with target. One: standby.

Gray knows something's wrong, snaps open his titanium case to reveal an IRIDIUM SAT-PHONE -- instant link to the Pentagon:

GRAY (CONT'D)

Condor, this is Ghost: target convoy's executing an overwatch maneuver, we have Chinese government plates... recommending abort mission, Over.

VOICE

Negative. Continue to execute mission.

GRAY

Condor: believe intel compromised. Say again: recommending abort mission, Over.

There's a strange PAUSE. Seconds tick away. Finally:

VOICE

Intel's verified. Mission holds.
Proceed with primary objective.

GRAY

Requesting positive ID of target.

VOICE

Ghost, you have order to proceed with
mission. Out.

INT. YAKIAZI TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

The caravan SPEEDS toward the end of the tunnel, Hicks follows:

HICKS

Target exiting tunnel, black Mercedes,
second car in, standby --

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

THROUGH LAUNCHER SCOPE: the caravan EMERGES from the tunnel.
CROSSHAIRS lock on the black Mercedes --

GONZALES

Locked on primary target, ready to fire.
Losing my window in 15 seconds -- 13
seconds--

EXT. SKYSCRAPER ROOFTOP - "THE NEST" - CONTINUOUS

VOICE

Engage target. That's a direct order.

GRAY, in CLOSE-UP, makes a command decision:

GRAY

One and Two: abort mission.

-- but mysteriously, his COMMS go to STATIC. It's being jammed.

GRAY (CONT'D)

Radio check: One, Two, this is Ghost, do
you copy?! ABORT ABORT!

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The CARAVAN nears the corner -- Gonzales is sweating it:

GONZALES

8 seconds -- 6 seconds --

EXT. SKYSCRAPER ROOFTOP - "THE NEST" - CONTINUOUS

GRAY

One and Two this is Ghost: ABORT MISSION,
RESPOND, OVER!

-- all he gets is that same JAMMING STATIC as he THROWS the
handmike to the ground: SHIT!

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Over Gonzales' earpiece comes that same strange VOICE:

VOICE

Two, Condor: communications failure with
Ghost, you are cleared to engage target.

Torn but dutiful, Gonzales FIRES: WHOOSH! The missile ROCKETS
off -- in SECONDS, the soldiers break the launcher down, rip off
their coveralls to reveal BUSINESS SUITS underneath --

EXT. MACAU CITY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The missile WHOOSHES over buildings, homing in on the caravan --
KABOOOOOOOM! The missile HITS and the black Mercedes EXPLODES --
Suburbans in front and rear FLIP off their axis, terrified
motorists COLLIDE, an out-of-control SMASH-'EM-UP --

EXT. SKYSCRAPER ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

GRAY -- quick exfil: activates a THERMITE GRENADE, tosses it
inside the case and he's out the door, GONE: BOOM! The grenade
blows a SMALL, TIDY EXPLOSION -- spitting white-hot phosphorous
that melts the comms equipment.

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Gonzales and Hettrick DISAPPEAR in a closing elevator as we SNAP
TO their cases, WIRED TOGETHER with primer cord: KABOOM!

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - STREET LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

PEDESTRIANS look up as the 42nd floor BLOWS OUT -- people run
and SCREAM as debris rains down --

EXT. MACAU STREETS - CONTINUOUS

GRAY BLENDS with the fleeing people on the street. Suddenly,
around the corner, two CHINESE POLICE OFFICERS -- thinking fast,
GRAY SHOUTS IN MANDARIN, pointing in the wrong direction:

GRAY

(subtitled Mandarin)

That way! I saw someone!

Officers RUSH OFF as Gray MEETS UP with Gonzales and Hettrick, they MOVE wordlessly to a corner where HICKS SKIDS TO A STOP; everyone hops in -- the car PEELS OUT --

INT. CAR - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

SIRENS, MILITARY VEHICLES blast by in the opposite direction --

GONZALES -- the hell <u>happened</u>? -- What?!	GRAY -- "Higher" jammed my comms-- -- "<u>Higher</u>" jammed my comms --
--	---

HETTRICK
-- we got burned?!

GRAY
Assume the nest is busted, head to Pacman's house -- we lay low, drop our shit and go. Take the bridge.

Up ahead, Macau's "FRIENDSHIP BRIDGE." As the rental starts over it, traffic suddenly STOPS. SOLDIERS in RIOT GEAR move toward us from the far side of the bridge --

HETTRICK
I'm feeling real white all of a sudden--

GONZALES -- they're not checking every car, Boss, <u>they're coming straight at us</u> --	GRAY -- REVERSE REVERSE!
--	-------------------------------------

Too late as the LEAD OFFICER points at the rental car, SHOUTING -- Hettrick hands a pair of P-90 SUB-MACHINE GUNS up front:

GRAY
Staggered retreat: Hettrick, take the left -- rendezvous at the warehouse, go --

They jump from the car -- Hettrick FIRES at the advancing soldiers who return fire -- PASSENGERS in cars SCREAM and DUCK -- ANOTHER TROOP OF SOLDIERS IN BODY ARMOR LEAP OFF A TRANSPORT, rush toward in from the rear-end of the bridge, FIRING -- Gonzales takes a HIT in the gut, wounded but not dead --

Hettrick makes a break for the side rail, but his body's RIDDLED WITH BULLETS -- dead -- Gray half-carries Gonzales with one hand, FIRES MADLY with the other -- CRAWLS under the car next to him still dragging a near-dead Gonzales -- they roll over the rail, CRASHING into the river -- DOZENS OF SOLDIERS FIRE DOWN.

When they finally stop... NO BODIES EMERGE. HOLD on the churning water and...

INT. WHITE HOUSE WEST WING - SITUATION ROOM - NIGHT

Ben sits gravely. In the SIT ROOM with Vincent, CIA DIRECTOR SHERMAN DINSMORE, NSA ADVISORS, QUENTIN KNOWLES, and GENERAL BABBIT. ON MONITORS: satellite footage of CHINESE MOB SCENES:

CIA DIRECTOR DINSMORE

The man in the car was perhaps the strongest anti-U.S. hardliner in China's Politburo; killed instantly. Mobs are gathering around our embassy in Beijing, around U.S. businesses -- clearly orchestrated by Chinese authorities; more Americans could be in jeopardy.

BEN

Who's responsible?

CIA DIRECTOR DINSMORE

Best guess, one of a dozen dissident groups, hard to say right now. However, there's a larger issue... China wants us to admit we made the hit.

BEN

(this better be true)

But we didn't...

GENERAL BABBIT

We have no wet operations planned for the region, much less in play, but Chinese police claim U.S. Special Forces were near the explosion. They say they have two bodies.

Ben's instincts are alert, mistrustful -- what's more, he's deeply shaken by the news of dead soldiers...

BEN

The hell were they doing there?

QUENTIN KNOWLES

Hundreds of our personnel are on leave in the region -- Bali, Hong Kong. Easy to grab a couple guys out of a bar, say they were on-scene.

Odd pause. Ben eyes faces. Really sensing he isn't being told the truth. Smart enough to know he can't announce that:

BEN

Define "easy."

GENERAL BABBIT

This could go "hot" any second, Sir. China's saying we killed a member of their government. If we don't admit something we didn't do, they're saying they'll militarize the Taiwan Strait, take an international waterway and tell us we can't go near it.

CIA DIRECTOR DINSMORE

Intel shows cancellation of leave for Chinese pilots; coupling of solid-fuel missiles with warheads, they're picking a very big fight.

BEN

But you have no hard facts for me, no intel, no idea what really went down --

GENERAL BABBIT

Our idea, Sir? China deliberately killed two of our men. They have two-dozen nukes pointed our way. They're looking for a chance to corner us, see us back down with the whole world watching.

BEN

What're you proposing, General?

GENERAL BABBIT

We move our ships right into the Taiwan Strait, call their bright red bluff.

BEN

We're talking about a country four times our size and almost as well-armed --

GENERAL BABBIT

-- and the biggest propaganda machine in history. If they want to believe America killed an anti-western leader, they will. They're already whupping us economically, if we don't head this off now -- meet fire with hellfire -- they'll be strong enough to crush us. That's why we need to act decisively, so--

BEN

-- so we start a world war with the People's Republic of China? You really believe they'd risk that without a shred of proof? Those dead men; I'm their commander. Means I'm still responsible for them.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

And until I get answers about what they were doing and why they died, we're gonna try and work all this out, "whupping" free. Second, I want proof those Special Forces operatives weren't hit men.

Everyone stares, totally unprepared for this response.

QUENTIN KNOWLES

We have their leave papers, radio intercepts -- but they're scratchy at best, it'd take days to transcribe them --

BEN

Don't bother, China's gonna do it. Labor's cheaper there anyway.

(again, STUNNED SILENCE)

We give them the raw intel, offer a joint investigation -- that way, they save face. If not, I'll rally the mother of all multilateral forces and we'll have hard data behind us.

GENERAL BABBIT

(barely contained contempt)

Sir... my concern's for your Presidency. The perception would be... one of weakness. Rewarding the militarization of open waters with valuable intel to our greatest enemy --

BEN

That'd be true, if I considered China our greatest enemy, and if you were giving the orders around here. Next person who tries to slice my steak for me is relieved of duty, I'm not kidding -- you don't like how I got here, that's your prerogative. But since I am here: pull-aside with the Chinese President, and get me the numbers of the soldiers' families... if they're not too hard to transcribe.

He's out the door. Everyone moves quickly, except a humiliated Babbit, who meets eyes with Knowles and Dinsmore, livid.

INT. WHITE HOUSE RESIDENCE - MARISA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ben passes Marisa's half-open door. Sees her sleeping form in bed. He watches her, troubled. Thinking. Starts to go...

... Dad?
MARISA

BEN
Yeah, Honey. Go back to sleep.

MARISA
Can't sleep. Still miss my own bed.

BEN
This one too big? We can get you a
smaller one.

He kneels down and starts tucking in the sheets around Marisa...

MARISA
It's just... not mine. Nothing is.

BEN
(beat; feeling that too)
It will be.

She isn't buying. He pushes a strand of hair off her forehead:

BEN (CONT'D)
Scoot over.

She does, making room for him. He gets in bed beside her, puts his arm under her neck so that he's become her pillow. She's just happy he's here... and he's just happy to be here...

BEN (CONT'D)
So... what do you think you love more.
Spaghetti or PB&J?

She grins. We sense, this is their ritual...

MARISA
Spaghetti.

BEN
Me too. Pancakes or hamburgers?

MARISA
Pancakes.

BEN
Okay, it's getting tough now: pizza or
chocolate.

MARISA
Chocolate.

BEN
Chocolate or your father?

MARISA
Mmmmm... chocolate's still pretty good.

He FAKE-GASPS. She giggles and he kisses her, starts to go...

MARISA (CONT'D)
Can you stay? A little longer?

... he nods, sure. HOLD ON THEM a long moment until Marisa's eyes begin to close. And Ben looks down at the daughter he loves so dearly, his face a storm of mixed emotions... over which we hear the sound of CHILDREN SINGING "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" --

EXT. RAMBLING ESTATE - CHEVY CHASE SUBURB - DAY

On the lawn of an upscale estate, a LITTLE GIRL blows out birthday cake candles. APPLAUSE, as the girl's MOTHER points toward a STUDY WINDOW. The little girl waves at...

INT. ESTATE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

"Grandpa." Who is, in fact, Hawthorne. He waves back to his granddaughter as behind him, GENERAL BABBIT paces, pissed:

GENERAL BABBIT
Wish there were a way around this, but I don't see it. Our timetable's non-negotiable.

He carries us to CIA DIRECTOR DINSMORE, others we recognize from the WAR ROOM, like QUENTIN KNOWLES. What are they doing here?

CIA DIRECTOR DINSMORE
He's his own advisor, made that real clear last night. Won't be persuaded through channels.

QUENTIN KNOWLES
Blacks ops are one thing... we can't move carriers without him rubber-stamping for the public.

HAWTHORNE
If we fix this... we do it now.

Grave faces: a decision they'd hoped to avoid. And we're not sure what's being plotted here... but we're about to find out...

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - EAST WING DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

The presidential motorcade pulls in. As Cahill emerges:

AGENT TURNER
Sir, the First Lady asked for you in the
Family Theater. Says it's urgent.

The way Turner says that ALARMS Ben --

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Ben enters quickly with Turner. A FIGURE in the front row:

HAWTHORNE
Just in time to see the show.

Ben STOPS -- double-takes in confusion:

BEN
What're you-- doing here? Where's my
wife?

HAWTHORNE
You wanted receipts. Thought I'd come by
and tell you 'bout some things we've
approved.

Ben just stares, bowled over by this guy's audacity, angry:

BEN
Mark, escort the Senator out now, and get
me the Duty Officer at the gate --

AGENT TURNER
You really should sit down.

And everything. Stops. Turner's gaze is ice-fucking-cold.

BEN
I'm giving you an order.

But Turner doesn't MOVE. Ben's gutstruck -- what the fuck is happening? Makes a MOVE to go around Turner, out the door -- BUT TURNER'S FIST SLEDGEHAMMERS INTO BEN'S GUT, KNOCKING THE WIND OUT OF HIM: he doubles over as Turner CATCHES him, eases him down into one of the chairs... Ben's more stunned by what's happening than the force of the blow --

HAWTHORNE (cont'd)
Hell of an organization, the Secret
Service. All that training, just to
overcome the instinct to duck.
(beat)
Never easy to ignore your instincts, is
it, Ben?
(then; to Turner)
'Scuze us, now.

On command, Turner EXITS. Ben's still catching his breath when PROJECTOR LIGHT BLINDS HIM -- ACADEMY LEADER counts down, a SYNCH BEEP, then degraded 16mm film. LONG LENS, a MAN lies on a GRASSY KNOLL, adjusting the sight on a SNIPER RIFLE. We TILT to reveal we're in DOWNTOWN DALLAS, 1963. The PRESIDENTIAL MOTORCADE approaches -- KENNEDY WAVING FROM THE BACK SEAT --

THE SNIPER -- a slight PUFF OF SMOKE as he FIRES TWICE --

BEN

... Jesus...

HAWTHORNE

'Course, it's been digitized for safe-keeping, but the original still packs a whallop you don't get on HD.

Camera JERKS UP to see the familiar scene from a new angle -- Secret Servicemen running, the First Lady crawling on the back of the open car, the President and John Connally both hit -- a FLASH of WHITE -- the FATAL HEAD SHOT ON KENNEDY --

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

He wanted to pull out of Vietnam, Cuban Missile Crisis scared him half to death. He didn't have what it took -- what the country needed -- to go the distance.

The LOOP of the assassination keeps churning. For a long beat Ben's truly unable to speak -- unable to think. Finally:

BEN

You... have my attention.

HAWTHORNE

Little bit of history. The best parts, they don't print in textbooks. Take FDR -- longest running President, sixteen years. Got us through the depression, put a stake in Hitler's heart. Closest we ever had to a king...

BEN

(get to the point)

... that's in the textbooks...

HAWTHORNE

Here's something that's not: near the end, when it 'came clear Congress was gonna put term limits on the Presidency, people 'round here started realizing how dangerous it was to pin our foreign policy -- the global economy it sustains -- our whole way of doing... business...

(MORE)

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

on the shoulders of one man alone.
'Specially in the atomic age, where FDR's successor'd have the power to end the world with the push of a button. So he was encouraged to assemble a few key players, quietly entrench them along the chain of command, and empower them. With full... national... command... authority. Effective the day he died. Most of our faces have changed, but our rules stay the same:

(then)

You don't work for the people, Mr. President... you work for us.

Ben just stares, his brain capsizing:

BEN

You're out of your mind...

HAWTHORNE

It's real, Ben. For 11 Presidents and 57 years, orders have been passed down along the chain of command, authenticated and unquestioned -- even those who don't work for us directly, who don't follow the agenda knowingly... do.

(beat)

To your credit, you're the first we've ever told. Carter was easy to pick off without having this conversation -- all he cared about was rationing gas and overseeing the schedule for the goddamned White House tennis courts. Reagan: already an actor, long as someone got him his cue cards on time, we never had a problem. Dubya? Well... I suppose even cue cards have their limits.

BEN

Just... like that? To hell with the Constitution...

HAWTHORNE

We're the spirit, if not the letter: 'Continuity of Governance,' a true republic, most powerful since Rome... think of us as the 28th amendment.

Hawthorne watches Ben's face as he struggles to accept it...

BEN

... what do you expect me to do... just sit back and watch?

HAWTHORNE

'Course not: democracy's real enough here at home, hell, we don't care who sets the minimum wage or if abortion's legal. In every other way that matters, you're still the most powerful man in the world. But outside our borders, the Big Picture -- we're embedded you might say.

BEN. Holy shit, it lands on him...

BEN

Macau... was you...

HAWTHORNE

Acting on your orders. It's in writing.

BEN

(realizing)

You want us to invade... you sent those men in to die...

HAWTHORNE

A conversation for another time. Maybe after you drop your sense of entitlement and leave our operations alone.

BEN

What if I tell you to fuck yourself? You're gonna kill me too?

HAWTHORNE

Hopefully nothing so drastic -- we'll just have you impeached.

BEN

... on what grounds?

HAWTHORNE

Either you've got the best poker face I've ever seen, or your Chief of Staff doesn't tell you everything he should --

BEN

The hell're you talki--

HAWTHORNE

-- ask him about Illinois. Colorado. Pennsylvania. All those independent ad campaigns he corralled for you, to spatter your opponents with mud while you stayed "squeaky clean"...

Ben goes WHITE. Doesn't know what this is --

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

None of that matters now, you're here -- we wanna work with you. Give you eight good years, you can even have a say in all this. But test us, you'll find a great, many-faceted machine bearing down on you -- you know 'em as the Secret Service. Standing outside your bedroom at night. Following you on every chopper ride, into every anonymous crowd. Listening to your conversations, your phone calls, monitoring your bodily functions, the air you suck into your lungs. We trained enough of them -- own enough of them -- that you'll never know who's ours and who isn't. Who's watching over you, reporting back your every shudder... or who's just staring 'cause someday your face'll be on a coin. And if you think about trying to sneak away to some quiet corner, chat with a Woodward and Bernstein? That chip in your hand tells us where you are, down to the square inch; you'd have to chop off an arm to get it out of there.

(rises; a grin)

Congratulations, you're about to be a President at war. Some Presidents dream of this. I know you'll rise to your moment in history.

And he's GONE. Ben's left alone, as Kennedy's head SNAPS BACK, blood spraying... WHITE PROJECTOR LIGHT SWALLOWS FRAME.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - VARIOUS SHOTS - NIGHT

Ben -- mind tumbling, in shock -- walks through the White House, every instinct a contradiction: go/sit/stay/run/talk/shut up. TURNER'S right on his heels. Ben walks a little faster; so does Turner -- they pass a row of BRONZE BUSTS lined up on the hallway mantelpiece -- the first eight U.S. Heads of State. Staring at Ben through hollow eyes -- and suddenly Ben's noticing the LITTLE BLACK CCTV BUBBLES EVERYWHERE, watching him:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The WATCH OFFICER's dead-on stare tracks Ben -- waiting for sudden movement, anything unpredictable -- we bounce from MONITOR to MONITOR as Ben passes White House rooms:

WATCH OFFICER

We have him passing Blue Room -- China -- Diplomatic. All exits covered, standby --

INT. WHITE HOUSE - VARIOUS SHOTS - CONTINUOUS

TRACK PAST posted AGENTS by doors, all eyes on Ben. PARANOIA CRASHES: maybe that one's in on it, maybe that one isn't. A Marine steward opens the door to the Residence -- Ben LOCKS EYES with Turner as the door SHUTS between them and --

Ben falls back against the frame. Alone. Breathing harder. Looks down at his hand... the fucking chip... he's a prisoner.

EXT. CHINA STREETS - NIGHT

SCREAMING SIREN, GRINDING OF TREADS ON CEMENT -- CHINESE APC's roll through the streets. Lockdown. Road blocks set up; SOLDIERS go door-to-door, hunting the assassins --

INT. WAREHOUSE - CHINESE GHETTO NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Safe house. A back door SWINGS OPEN FAST as Gray fireman-carries a very bloody and in-pain Gonzales --

QUICK CUTS: Gonzales' shirt is torn open, a BRUTAL GUT-SHOT -- a FLOORBOARD is pried open by Gray, revealing an EMERGENCY MED-KIT -- Gray wraps it with an ace bandage, opens a saline IV -- all the while talking to keep Gonzales distracted from the brutal fact that he's bleeding to death:

GRAY

Gonzo, run this through with me, Man, you're the comms expert -- who'd have access and tech to jam my bay station and bypass to yours?

Gonzales tries to breathe... toughing it out...

GRAY (CONT'D)

Talk to me, G -- think it through --

GONZALES

Have to be someone... from the top for access... only know two systems, could do that...

GRAY

-- two systems, which ones --?

GONZALES

One's still a prototype... other's used by the deep cover guys at NSA...

They lock eyes: understanding the terrible truth here.

GONZALES (CONT'D)

They knew... we were coming. Came right for us. Saw what to look for.

Gray's furious, betrayed -- but keeps it locked down. No time.

GRAY

Alright, Gonzo, here it is: the round missed all your vitals, but your guts are torn up pretty bad. We can't risk a surgeon here, gotta assume our original way out's compromised...

GONZALES

What'd we expect, right? How dumb we gotta be... to keep following orders?

GRAY

Gonna try and arrange some kind of passage to Malaysia... Philippines, maybe Thailand. Find you a nice Thai lady to nurse you back to shape? Huh? Put a happy ending on this mess, if you know what I mean.

GONZALES

(smiles, through agony)

Sounds good, Boss --

-- as Gray grabs a NEW SUIT from under the floorboards, and a HIDDEN CASE. Clicks it open: stacks of CHINESE YUAN. Doctored ID's, passports. Starts a QUICK CHANGE into the suit --

GRAY

I'll keep you on saline, but I can't give you morphine -- need you frosty. Sit tight, there's water right here, and don't fuck with that gauze.

(hands him a GUN)

Your piece, extra mags. If you gotta relocate, there's a sewer in the alley behind the building -- get to it and hide inside.

Gonzales knows he'd never make it to the sewer, they both do. He GRIPS Gray's arm. Scared.

GONZALES

... you're comin' back, right?

And Gray looks his dying partner right in the eyes, nods...

GRAY

I promise.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE - MORNING

Sam's eyes flutter open. She turns, looks over at Ben's side of the bed: untouched. LATER: She emerges, dressed, into the living room where she FINDS HIM by the window. Drawn, jaded.

SAMANTHA

Honey? What's wrong?

Slowly, he looks over at her...

BEN

... long night.

She knows something's happened.

SAMANTHA

Did you sleep?

He doesn't react. Just stares. Deeply stirred. Very quietly:

BEN

Only time I ever saw my father cry.

(beat)

When Kennedy was shot.

And that scares her. At her core. She sees he's struggling with something... moves to him, trying to understand...

SAMANTHA

Is someone making threats?

BEN

Someone's always making threats.

SAMANTHA

Real threats.

(he just looks at her;
what to say?)

Don't sugarcoat it. It'll be easier on
both of us... please.

He just looks at her, wanting so desperately to tell her the truth. And for a minute we think he might... suddenly Marisa enters, breaking the spell, Agent Crisafi following behind:

MARISA

Mom, we gotta go, we're gonna miss the
plane --

The tone shifts: neither of them want to scare their daughter.

SAMANTHA

We don't have to worry about missing planes anymore, Honey.

BEN

(suddenly alert)

Where're you going?

SAMANTHA

Tennessee -- the Family Policy conference, remember? Vincent thought one of us should be there...

Ben meets eyes with Crisafi in the doorway; the agent's stoic look reveals nothing. Is he in on it? Ben's eyes go to his family, everything he loves most in the world. Fear meter rising by the minute, he tries to hide it by forcing a smile:

BEN

... right. Better listen to Vince. Eat junk food, cause I won't be there to stop you. But brush your teeth.

MARISA

Sweeeet.

He meets eyes with Sam; still unresolved. Tries for "light":

BEN

I'm fine, everything's fine. You don't need to worry. Love you.

SAMANTHA

I love you too...

He walks out first; past Crisafi, who says:

AGENT CRISAFI

Have a good day, Sir.

Sounded like a threat. Ben hard-eyes him; not sure what to think... and finally goes. STAY on Sam. Deeply unnerved.

INT. FIRST LADY'S SUBURBAN - DAY

Sam's caravan pulls into ANDREWS AIR BASE. Marisa in back, reading "American Girl" magazine with IPOD on. Sam finishes skimming a Wall Street Journal editorial, angrily reads aloud:

SAMANTHA

"... absent from the national discussion was the First Lady, squandering another chance to carve out a distinctive policy voice. Tammy Wynette would be proud..."

(MORE)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
 (tosses paper, furious)
 And if I run the goddamn task force I'm
 Evita Peron, with my own pair of
 testicles and an in-box under the
 President's pillow. Jackass.

In Blake's eyes, a flash of sympathy...

AGENT BLAKE
 One way or another, they get their pound
 of flesh... you just do what you're
 doing, Ma'am.

These simple words touch Sam, right when she needs them most.

SAMANTHA
 You protect my peace of mind, too?

AGENT BLAKE
 ... mind's part of the body.

She says that so stoically Sam has to grin. Blake OPENS the
 door onto the tarmac, where an AIR FORCE 707 JET waits --

EXT. CHINESE DOCKS - NIGHT

Skiffs, pontoon boats, cigarette fast-boats. Smuggler's haven.
 Moving among the boats is GRAY in his suit, remarkably crisp and
 clean, deep matte black shades: effortless confidence despite
 the distant sirens. An operator in his natural habitat.

JUMPCUTS -- In a PRIVATE ALCOVE, Gray and a SMUGGLER deal in
 SUBTITLED CHINESE (*italics*) as Gray pulls out a wad of bills:

GRAY
 You get the other half when you get me to
 Philippines -- cargo, me, my friend, no
 questions.

CHINESE SMUGGLER
 We leave in an hour.

EXT. CHINESE STREETS - 20 MINUTES LATER

Gray moves through streets, heading back to the safehouse --
 SUDDENLY: POLICE CARS, HOWLING, whipping past they alley where --

GRAY is against the wall, hidden. Slips out the other side.
 There's the safehouse -- go, hurry -- but as he approaches, WILD
 NOISE -- AN ANGRY CHINESE MOB has taken to the streets -- Gray
 sees a ladder on a building -- climbs fast as military vehicles
 and the mob swarm around the corner...

WITH GONZALES. Shot in the head.

Clothes stripped off, body tied to the bumper of a car as he's dragged through the streets by the furious anti-American mob...

GRAY. Anguished. All he can do is watch and hide. Devastated, at the corpse of the soldier he promised to get home.

CNN REPORTER (V.O.)
-- anti-American sentiment burst into
horrific mob violence on the streets of
Macau this morning --

INT. ANNA'S APARTMENT, NORTH CAROLINA - MORNING

ANNA moves about her apartment, getting dressed for work, feeding her cat... as CNN plays in the background:

CNN REPORTER
CNN has obtained footage of Sgt. First
Class Roberto Gonzales --
(Anna's look SNAPS UP)
-- apparently killed and being dragged
through the streets by an angry group of
Chinese citizens. Army spokesmen say he
was on leave, traveling through the
region; the President is expected to
address the nation in approximately ten
minutes --

-- ANNA, in shock, tears start welling. Panic. Gonzales and
Gray are partners. She races to a phone -- pleasepleaseplease --
frantically dials a number -- gets VOICEMAIL -- BEEP:

ANNA
It's me -- I--I just saw the news, oh my
God-- are you okay? What's happening?!
Please call me, Baby, please call me now--

INT. WHITE HOUSE - PRESS ROOM/OUTSIDE EAST ROOM - CONT'D

The wall of MONITORS in the White House press room all show the
same image: Gonzales being dragged through the streets. BEN
TAKES FRAME, moving past the Press Room, toward the East Room,
with Quentin Knowles. Turner on his heels.

QUENTIN KNOWLES
Same file footage, but it's everywhere --
CNN, Fox News -- whole country's watching
this kid being dragged all over Macau,
and China just announced they're closing
off the Taiwan Strait, making it hot.

Ben's trying to find his focus -- the crash of last night's
brutal reality, now the brink of war:

BEN
International reaction?

QUENTIN KNOWLES
Three of our closest allies have already called NSC to echo the indignation we haven't expressed yet.

BEN
We don't know all the facts about those men--

QUENTIN KNOWLES
Your statement's been negotiated among all five national security agencies. Situation this sensitive, you'll want to stick to every comma on the prompter.

And Ben looks at him, then back at Turner, realizing... Knowles is in on it too. All he wants to do is fight back, but there are 50 million live TV viewers waiting... so he says:

BEN
Why don't you send a cardboard cut-out.

He turns, walks down the red carpet into the FLASHING BULBS:

INT. EAST ROOM - MINUTES LATER

The press corps scribbles furiously as Ben speaks from the "Blue Goose" podium. We see his SPEECH roll up the President Glass:

BEN
... finally, our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the servicemen who died in Macau, and with the Chinese people, who are mourning the loss of one of their leaders. We will demand answers. And we will get them.

The room erupts. Ben points to one of the press pool --

REPORTER #1
Mr. President, as everyone's painfully aware, the body of a U.S. soldier is being dragged through the streets of Macau -- and yet China's the one militarizing off the Taiwan Strait. Can you deny once and for all that our own military personnel were responsible for the assassination of Chou Luyen?

ON THE TELEPROMPTER, words race up the President Glass: "The United States had no role in the assassination and..."

They're feeding Ben his answers too. His every instinct won't let him say the,. Knowles shoots a steely glare: "read it."

BEN
(too-long pause; trying
to stay cool)
There have never been any soldiers from
our armed forces acting under my
direction in Macau or mainland China.

REPORTER #1
How will you respond to the
militarization of the Taiwan Strait?

NEW WORDS on the President glass: "I have ordered Carrier Strike Group 3 and Destroyer Squadron 31 into the Taiwan Strait..."

Holy shit. Ben struggles, reporters MURMUR -- but he refuses to repeat the words:

BEN
Look... we don't know who's responsible
for... any of this, not yet... we're
going to cooperate with the Chinese
government to find out who is.

Knowles subtly shakes his head: "bad move." Babbit starts
TYPING something on a Blackberry and --

IN THE PRESS POOL, one of the REPORTERS gets a TEXT MESSAGE on his cell, we read: "Carrier Strike Group 3/Destroyer Squadron 31 to South China Sea." And even though Cahill points toward a different part of the room, the reporter SHOUTS:

REPORTER #2
Sir, the Pentagon's announcing that
you've ordered Carrier Strike Group 3 and
Destroyer Squadron 31 into the Taiwan
Strait. Is this a signal to China that
you're willing to use force to defend
American interests?

On the sidelines, Vincent's look says WHAT THE FUCK?!

We realize with a chill that this reporter's a plant. Ben looks at the glass: "You want your wife's plane to land safely." Ben's heart's in his throat, he's starting to falter --

INT. AIR FORCE 707 JET - MID-AIR - CONTINUOUS

From their plane seats, Sam and Marisa watch coverage on CNN --

MARISA
What's wrong with dad?

Ben's eyes flick to Turner, on his heels, as they head OUT to:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

ROSES in spring bloom; a Technicolor backdrop, against which Ben emerges with Vincent -- BLOCKS Turner from following:

BEN

No.

Turner glares: "careful." Stays behind as Ben disappears around a hedge, searching for a hidden place to talk, Vincent following -- Turner switches to a SECURE CHANNEL, murmurs into his mic:

AGENT TURNER

202 to 208, we need Eagle Eye --

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CONT'D

What happens next happens FAST and with military readiness:

WATCH OFFICER

NSA protocols, Image Intelligence, pull up the keyhole feeds --

Second Agent pulls up a SATELLITE FEED -- it POPS from WIDE over the Washington city grid, to MEDIUM, to CLOSE: suddenly we're watching a real-time feed of BEN AND VINCENT IN THE ROSE GARDEN:

SECURITY AGENT (HEADSET)

206 to 209, we need infrared audio sensors now, targets in the rose garden --

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

TRACK FAST with a pair of shoes as they RACE across the rooftop -- it's a SECRET SERVICE AGENT quickly activating a "SPIKE MIC", AIMS it at the figures of Ben and Vincent in the garden below --

ROOFTOP AGENT (HEADSET)

209 to 206, audio's coming up now--

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CONT'D

STATICKY SOUND POPS IN AS WE HEAR THE CONVERSATION:

VINCENT (V.O.)

"The realities of this office can't always be anticipated?!"

BEN (V.O.)

Don't you lecture me --

VINCENT (V.O.)
When the hell'd you order strike groups
into the South China Sea -- ?!

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ROSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Pinned, Ben can't tell Vincent the truth, he has to go with it --

BEN
I changed my mind --

-- look, we have to send a
message -- I make the
decisions, remember?
-- like you did in Illinois?

Vincent stops cold.

BEN
And apparently Colorado -- Pennsylvania --

VINCENT
Okay... you really don't want to be
having this conversation with me --

BEN
Fuck plausible deniability --

VINCENT
You don't win elections by planting lawn
signs, you know that --

BEN
Short answer, right now --

VINCENT
(long beat, finally)
... I said we'd make a few key
appointments in exchange for a big enough
media buy.

BEN
Tell me you did not promise away our
cabinet!

VINCENT
-- no paper trail, no one broke any laws--

BEN
-- you're talking like a criminal defense
attorney! Our only standard's avoiding
prosecution?!

VINCENT

-- did you think you were gonna glide through the Inaugural Parade flipping off the whole Beltway elite? How the hell d'you think we got all those electeds to endorse us, all those business groups--

BEN

By cutting illegal deals with the fucking Beltway elders? You sold us out!

VINCENT

I got us here! And don't act like you had no idea -- the second you knew you had a chance you started dialing down the rhetoric, doing warm and fuzzy photo ops, bringing Sam out on the trail -- you played the game, that's why I did, so don't pretend you were Caesar refusing the crowd -- you wanted to win.

BEN

Not like this --

VINCENT

We had to make peace: a bone for them, two for us, then we get to do all the--

BEN

-- they don't want a bone, Vince, they want the whole body! They own the paper on my life! On the country!

VINCENT

(odd look)

The hell're you saying?

Ben CLAMPS UP. He's said too much and the deeper this goes, the more Vincent's at risk -- a GLINT catches his eye from the rooftop: it's the AGENT with the mic, and as SUNLIGHT FLARES LENS, Ben tries to get a clearer view... but no one's there.

In his gut he knows: they're watching.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Someone's... blackmailing you?

Ben starts to walk away, tense-as-hell, back toward the White House -- Vincent follows doggedly:

BEN

This conversation's over --

VINCENT

Hey: I'll get us out of it, talk to me,
it won't get back to you, I told y--

BEN ON MONITOR

And I told you this conversation's over.
No more questions.

They STARE at each other... Ben wanting desperately to rewind
this conversation... Vincent's very fucking weirded out... tries
to shake it off, find focus:

BEN

Get me the Pentagon's code-word files on
those dead soldiers, everything they've
got.

VINCENT

Public Liaison's flying their families to
Washington so you can meet them in the
Dip Room...

BEN

No press. I don't want it on my public
schedule.

VINCENT

(nods, quietly; a guilt-
~~stricken~~ beat)

... no matter what you're thinking right
now... you deserve to be here, Ben.

Ben can't help BLURT an incredulous chuckle at the terrible
irony. Turns and leaves Vincent there, standing in the roses.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Watch Officer's seen and heard the whole thing. A look of
concern, he picks up a phone, dials...

SURVEILLANCE OFFICER

This is Post. We have a 'Loose Thread.'

INT. QANTAS 747 - NIGHT

TRACK DOWN THE AISLE to find GRAY sitting on the plane. Nursing
a drink. A Flight Attendant offers him another. We MOVE IN on
Gray, and SOUND FADES OUT. Dead silence. So that we can study
him, seated in the half-light, staring out the window on his way
home. Years of emotional suppression, killer training, of
fragile stability... are starting to unravel. As we PRELAP:

BABBIT (V.O.)

Colonel Madigan Gray...

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - ROOFTOP - DUSK

Hawthorne and Babbit. Deserted parking rooftop. Pink sunset over the Capitol behind them. Hawthorne has a folder open: a file photo of GRAY, military stats:

BABBIT

... was in charge of a First Special Forces Detachment. Kill squad. "Unacknowledged." Gray's had a ten-year focus on Asia doing reconnaissance and wetwork. Taiwan, Philippines, Abu Sayef. Official psych profile says he's a wounded bird. That's why we picked him.

HAWTHORNE

Sounds more like a doberman... and you're telling me he can blend in anywhere, be anyone... eluded the Chinese, may've slipped out of the country, and is probably coming home, if he's not already here?

(off Babbit's look)

See, that's a problem for me, Lloyd.

INT. CUSTOMS AREA - REAGAN AIRPORT - DUSK

GRAY emerging from the plane -- HEIGHTENED PARANOIA, every face a potential enemy -- NATIONAL GUARDSMEN -- Gray's eyes scoping: CCTV CAMERAS EVERYWHERE -- smart enough to keep his head low --

AT CUSTOMS: Gray stands in front of a CUSTOMS AGENT studying his passport -- the doctored ID Gray pulled from his safehouse:

CUSTOM AGENT

What were you doing in Australia?

GRAY

(smiles)

Lying on the beach. Summer over there now.

The agent stares Gray down... then STAMPS his passport --

CUSTOM AGENT

Welcome back.

BABBIT (V.O.)

We put the names of all the soldiers in his Spec-Ops Detachment on the ECHELON watchlist, ran them against known associates...

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - ROOFTOP - RESUME

BABBIT

... something turned up. He has a girlfriend.

(beat)

May be a liability.

Babbit hits a DICTAPHONE, plays a VOICEMAIL RECORDING -- it's Anna, the panicked message she left for Gray:

ANNA (V.O.)

It's me -- I--I just saw the news, oh my God-- are you okay? What's happening?! Please call me, please call me now--

Hawthorne listens, face dark... as HAUNTING MUSIC takes us to...

INT. CABINET ROOM - DAY

SLOW MOTION, DREAMLIKE... the FAMILIES of the dead soldiers have been assembled... Ben's clasping arms, solemn, offering comfort... and clearly in as much torment as those he's consoling. An AIDE leads him toward a grieving MOTHER, sotto:

AIDE

Yvette Gonzales, mother of Ray Gonzales, the young Army Sergeant who was--

BEN

I know.

(as he reaches her)

Ma'am. My deepest condolences.

She stares at him, hard. Quiet, dignified, but unforgiving:

YVETTE GONZALES

I voted for you, Mr. President.

(her lip quivers)

But having us here today... this is for you, not us. My boy was dragged by his limbs... you're a military man... and not doing a damn thing about it.

(beat)

Shame on you.

And that nails him. She moves off, leaving Ben standing there. Pole-axed. Just fucking numb...

EXT. ANNA'S APARTMENT - NORTH CAROLINA - DAY

A lower-middle class complex in North Carolina. Anna's. From an alley, GRAY scopes the perimeter. Assesses parked cars. Notices a suspicious-looking SEDAN. Avis Rental plate frame.

Maybe something, maybe nothing. Gray circumvents the main entrance --

INT. ANNA'S APARTMENT - DAY

We hear the lock jimmy, the door opens and Gray enters. Quiet.

A CAT on the counter, eager to be fed. Empty bowl. Bad sign.

Gray's gut alarm already red-lining. The door to Anna's bathroom is open a little. Gray pauses. Already knows what he's gonna find... steels himself before pushing through...

ANNA. DEAD. On the bathroom floor. Wrists slit, blood seeped over white tile...

GRAY'S SOUL SHATTERS. MIND TUMBLING OVER THE EDGE. HIS TETHER TO LIFE SNAPS:

SUDDENLY -- INSTINCT -- GRAY LEAPS JUST AS TWO SILENCED BULLETS TEAR PAST HIM, ONE INTO THE WALL, THE OTHER SHATTERING A WINDOW.

THERE'S ANOTHER MAN IN THE APARTMENT. PHFT!-PHFT!-PHFT!-PHFT!-
PHFT!-PHFT! -- silenced gunfire rakes the furniture and --

GRAY rolling away, into the KITCHEN -- BUTCHER BLOCK KNIVES --
THROWS ONE -- the knife CATCHES the man in the arm -- Gray KICKS
the man's gun away -- PHFT!-PHFT!-PHFT!-PHFT!-PHFT! -- bullets
tear wildly around the room and --

GRAY -- MOVING -- FIST slamming into the guy's JAW -- unleashing
all his fury on the man who killed Anna --

And even with the knife in his arm, the man FIGHTS BRUTALLY --
matching Gray's moves blow for blow, relentless --

Until Gray manages to get his hand on the knife and PLUNGE IT
FURTHER into the man's arm -- WRAPS his arm around the guy's
neck in a chokehold... PULLS HARD... the man FLAILS, FLAILS, but
Gray has him... until he SLUMPS.

It's over. GRAY -- face still shivering with fury -- hands --
moving -- searching the man's clothes -- a track suit -- pockets
-- something there -- a set of CAR KEYS and --

EXT. ANNA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gray exits fast, blends into foot traffic, walks down the
street, past cars, pressing the car alarm keys until BLIP-BLIP:
it deactivates an alarm on the AVIS RENTAL CAR he spotted
earlier -- uses the keys to OPEN the door -- climbs in --

INT. AVIS RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sparse, empty in back. Gray checks side pockets; a stick of gum, gas receipts. Several. They tell us the car came from Washington. Gray searches beneath seats, under the visors -- the glove compartment -- IT'S LOCKED. He snaps open a device, BREAKS THE LOCK. Pops it open -- finds a LEATHER WALLET. Bigger than usual. Opens it --

One one side is a SECRET SERVICE SHIELD. The other, a SS ID: the man who killed Anna was Secret Service.

GRAY. FURY. THE GOVERNMENT'S TRYING TO CLEAN UP ITS OWN MESS.

INT. WHITE HOUSE SOLARIUM - DAY

FILE PHOTOS, IN CLOSE UP: GONZALES, HICKS, HETTRICK. IN UNIFORM. As the sun streams in on the darkening Ben, he looks over the Pentagon FILES of the DEAD SOLDIERS, studying their faces, burning their C.V.'s and family details into his brain. He's responsible; wants to know; won't ever forget.

Joanna steps in; she's clearly been summoned.

JOANNA

Yes, Mr. President.

BEN

There are three soldiers accounted for.
But not this one.

Ben holds up a picture of MADIGAN GRAY.

BEN (CONT'D)

What happened to him?

JOANNA

It's unclear, sir.

BEN

Presumed dead?

JOANNA

Pentagon doesn't have anything.

(checks her watch)

Marine One's waiting, Mr. President.

Ben's eyes lock on the photo of GRAY. Deeply stirred.

INT. DINGY BAR - DAY

GRAY sits at the bar, drinking a double, waiting for someone. Looks down at his hand, notices... IT'S SHAKING.

Old signs of PTSD resurfacing. SNAPS his hand closed. On TV, a
REPLAY of Ben's disastrous blue room address:

BEN ON TV

-- there have never been any soldiers
from our armed forces acting under my
direction in Macau or mainland China.

Gray watches, unhinged. Suddenly, A MAN is sitting beside him.
Anonymous. 100% pure CIA spook. One of Gray's contacts. They
never meet eyes. The man drops a folded NEWSPAPER on the bar.

CIA SPOOK

You're very popular with a lot of
intelligence agencies.

GRAY

Who sent us in.
(beat)
I need to know.

CIA SPOOK

Came from the top.
(gestures: the paper)
Check out the 'Classifieds.'

The man EXITS. Gray opens the paper to the "classified"
section, finds an ENVELOPE. Opens that: inside is a COPY of a
PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDER -- we read the phrase: "Assets
deemed expendable per executive order 009986..." Signature at
the bottom: "BENJAMIN PATRICK CAHILL."

Gray's killer eyes track to BEN on TV... a dead man.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE CONFERENCE ROOM - MID-AIR - DAY

Ben, his stare a thousand miles away, half-listens as Knowles
and two NATIONAL SECURITY BRIEFERS talk. Ben's executive
assistant, Joanna, steps in. Shaken, but stands respectfully:

JOANNA

Signal operator has a call holding with
the First Lady... you'll want to take it
now.

Hands him a phone. He sees: something's worse than wrong.

BEN

Honey? What's wrong?

SAMANTHA (V.O.)

I didn't want you to hear it from anyone
else, Ben...

And we PUSH IN ON HIM... as the blood drains from his face...

REPORTER VOICE (V.O.)
Jonathan Vincent, White House Chief of Staff, architect of the President's election campaign and many say his closest friend -- dead at 41 years old, an apparent overdose of painkillers...

TIMECUT: A CNN BROADCAST, file footage shows PARAMEDICS carrying a BODY BAG down the steps of a Georgetown brownstone...

REVERSE ON BEN, watching from the President's cabin. Knows it wasn't an accident. Knows Vincent was killed because of their fight. His eyes CLOSE, the moment just too horrible to bear...

REPORTER (V.O.)
No official reaction yet from the President, who's on his way to Milwaukee to address the Fraternal Order of Police for their annual--

Turner appears at the door; he's been summoned.

TURNER
Yes, Mr. Presid--

BEN
Tell advance we're not landing in Wisconsin, tell Airlift Ops to turn the plane around.

TURNER
(what is this?)
Sir, you have an audience of three thousand waiting for--

BEN
Turn the damn plane around before I take the wheel. And have Hawthorne meet me on the tarmac... now.

INT. "U-STORE" SELF STORAGE FACILITY - NIGHT

Rows of STORAGE SHEDS. Gray pulls up in a sedan. A black, grated door SLIDES UP, Gray flips on the LIGHTS... revealing his BACKUP ARSENAL. Self-storage room filled with WEAPONS.

Gray connects a military-grade RUGGEDIZED LAPTOP. Accesses a govt web page for an INTERAGENCY DATABASE. In the password prompt, enters a NUMBER/LETTER CODE. It grants him access to:

THE CLASSIFIED SECRET SERVICE DATABASE.

Gray searches, finding the agency's "P.O.T.U.S. ITINERARY." The President's up-to-the-minute schedule:

"DESTINATION CHANGED -- RETURN ANDREWS A.F.B. @ 22:44."

A bottle of SCOTCH is opened. Watch the brown liquid fill a glass. Gray sits alone... just drinking, hands shaking... staring, devastated... a tear rolls down his cheek... the demon-product of dark lies, betrayal... it's a suicidal look. One purpose driving him now. Revenge.

EXT. ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE - SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY

TRACK PAST an ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE SIGN as Gray's car pulls up to a security checkpoint. He flashes an ID. Drives in.

Climbs a stairway on the side of a building. As he reaches the ROOF, we RISE UP to reveal a view of the TARMAC. Gray gets into position on the roof, flips open his case to position the SNIPER RIFLE on a small tripod. Lays down like a hunter, waiting...

EXT. ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE - RUNWAY - DUSK

Air Force One touches down. The stairway ramp lowers and MARINES SNAP A SALUTE as Ben descends and we GO TO:

POV THROUGH GRAY'S SNIPER SCOPE: Ben in the crosshairs --

Gray makes pinpoint adjustments to the targeting ring --

His FINGER tenses on the trigger -- wipes sweat from his brow, fighting himself -- but anger prevails -- puts his eye back to the scope, and he's about to pull the trigger when...

The door to a TOWN CAR opens on the tarmac and HAWTHORNE steps out. Ben CHARGES at him, his expression FURIOUS. Gray pauses, seeing the strange look on the president's face -- FLIPS the magnification to 1000mm, Ben and Hawthorne's faces FILL FRAME:

ON THE TARMAC:

BEN

You killed him. Didn't you.

HAWTHORNE

No, Ben. You did. You let him get curious.

POV THROUGH GRAY'S SNIPER SCOPE: Ben and Hawthorne ARGUE. Their mouths MOVE in C.U. And our ANGLES start to reveal, GRAY'S READING THEIR LIPS. Ben's look goes to the press gate. Sees the cameras waiting. A moment of decision...

BEN

Impeachment was starting to look like a noble way to go. Least I'd get to grow old with my family.

(beat)

But I wouldn't have anything to give them except regret... and that's not worth my silence.

GRAY, IN SHOCK -- realizing what the President's just said. Ben gestures to the press corps:

BEN (CONT'D)

If you're going to kill me, you'll have to do it in front of them.

HAWTHORNE

... and what, you'll just tell 'em the truth? You really think you'll be doing the country a favor? Collapse the global economy in a breath, dissolve every treaty we've made the last sixty years... line up our enemies against us... for what? So you can be a boy scout? You want that to be your legacy? Still your country to protect too, Ben.

BEN

Right now... a little more yours than mine, you sonofabitch.

And charges toward the reporters. Turner murmurs in his collar:

AGENT TURNER

Gun!

In seconds, nearly EVERY AGENT is on top of the President. His limo SCREECHES IN and he's PUSHED inside before the press knows what's happening -- the limo ROCKETS off...

INT. PRESIDENTIAL LIMO - CONTINUOUS

Ben FLAILS against Turner, who JAMS A NEEDLE into Ben's leg... quickly, he weakens... losing... consciousness...

EXT. TARMAC - ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

GRAY. Can't believe what he's just seen. And we CRANE UP as the limo disappears down the tarmac:

REPORTER'S VOICE

The President had quite a scare today when his security detail mistook a nearby plane's engine trouble for gunfire --

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

POV BLURRY... IN AND OUT OF FOCUS... as Ben blinks to consciousness. STRAPPED to a chair. GAGGED. Eyes adjust, focus, to see... a door open. An AGENT enters -- call him AGENT JEREMIAH. Pay attention to his face, because he'll matter later. Sets a snub-nose .38 on the table. A box of BULLETS.

Ben's heart races. But he holds the look. Trying to stay strong. Anything could happen next. HAWTHORNE enters. Dark and steely. Takes a seat across from Ben:

HAWTHORNE

You like talking. To me, to the press...
good politicians learn to listen.

He opens the box of bullets. Picks ONE. SNAPS open the .38 barrel, slips the bullet inside. Measured, simply:

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

You don't think we're ready to bury you
the second it suits us? Only hard part's
which story to choose...

(SNAPS barrel closed)

President has unknown allergy, dies of
anaphylactic shock. Sniper got through
the secure perimeter? "Protective
detail" -- contradiction in terms, isn't
it? So many choices, so little time for
you to come around.

He SPINS the barrel, AIMS coldly at Ben -- AND PULLS THE TRIGGER. CLICK. BEN FLINCHES. JESUS!

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

Have your attention now?

(SPINS the barrel)

See, takes a while for any President to
realize... you're not a regular guy any
more. Not really a guy at all, that's
all over for you.

And points: CLICK -- again Ben FLINCHES, heart racing even
faster, eyes hateful, terrified, but focused:

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

You're a figure of history. And your
obligations aren't to your family, to
that friend they're putting in the ground
tomorrow; Presidents don't have friends,
they can't afford them.... you're all
alone, Ben. That was a choice you made
the minute you started kissing babies and
flashing that million-dollar grin.

(MORE)

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

And right now, that means living up to your responsibilities. Keeping this country strong. You think the people care how that's done? They wanna be shielded from it, kept far from the messiness of it... they're right to want that. So no more speeches and handshakes and town hall meetings -- that's the outside game, that's over.

(leans in; quietly)

Welcome to the inside game. Where we take the power we have... and use it. Only so much influence in the world to go 'round -- any of it we don't have, someone else does. That's why we crushed Russia, why we need to crush China before they swallow us whole. Today they just make our sneakers; if we don't stop them, cripple 'em militarily, humiliate them in their own waters -- we won't need the damn sneakers, we'll be crawling on our knees.

(beat)

Now... you don't wanna discharge your duties as I've just defined them? You wanna speak from the heart, shoot from the lip? We'll end this for you, one way or another. But you wanna stay in the job? Then you're gonna have to do the job... or it'll be your wife, your daughter in that chair. Someone else you consider a 'friend'... and you'll know what loneliness really means.

He presses the gun to Ben's temple... holds it there... holds it... and the final CLICK ECHOES INTO:

BLACKNESS.

BEN (V.O.)

China has increased its own military presence in the South China Sea...

EXT. AROUND THE WORLD - DAY

In SLOW MOTION... AMERICAN SERVICE TECHNICIANS scramble on the deck of an AIRCRAFT CARRIER as FIGHTER PLANES are readied...

BEN (V.O.)

Its government refuses to crack down on anti-American protests and gang violence...

The Army's 82nd AIRBORNE is loaded into TRANSPORTS... ARMORED VEHICLES roll up the ramp into a C-130 CARGO PLANE....

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It insists on aiming its missiles at our own ships in the region.

EXT. TAIWAN/CHINA - VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

SAME KINDS OF IMAGES FOR THE CHINESE ARMY -- soldiers preparing for war against the U.S. -- FIGHTER PLANES on a tarmac --

BEN (V.O.)
... and so we will respond in kind.
Carrier Strike Group 3 and Destroyer Squadron 31 will be conducting training exercises in international waters...

In China streets, mobs are BURNING AMERICAN FLAGS --

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
All assets in the region will remain on high alert. And we will meet fire, if necessary... with even greater fire.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Finally, we reveal that Ben's been reading off teleprompter glass, WIRES and CAMERAS and STAFFERS everywhere -- hating every spoon-fed word of it, but unlike last time, towing the line:

BEN
Tonight, I am placing America's strategic missile defense system on-line -- as a firewall, to keep our families safe, and our children secure, in this time of global crisis.
(beat)
May God bless and keep these United States of America.

CLOSE on the glass, the word: "AMERICA." HOLD, then RACK FOCUS to reveal... MARISA, in the doorway. Watching her father. Nervous little kid's smile. Ben meets his daughter's eyes. In this moment, knows he's betraying even her...

MADAME SOONG LI (V.O.)
I see it took you no time to succumb to the pressures of your office...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - VERMEIL ROOM - SAME DAY

Ben's face-to-face with a very pissed AMBASSADOR SOONG LI and a cluster of U.S. and Chinese DIPLOMATS:

MADAME SOONG LI
-- you think steaming into the Taiwan Strait, guns blazing, is the way to make amends?

And she has him. And he agrees with her. He looks around the room a beat, deciding:

BEN
Everybody out, I need a moment with the Ambassador.

U.S. DIPLOMATIC OFFICIAL
Mr. President, the manifest for this--

BEN
Fuck the manifest, out.

As everyone hurries out, Ben's eyes go to the BLACK BUBBLE on the ceiling... the camera watching them:

BEN (CONT'D)
Madame Li: I don't want war with the Republic of China.

MADAME SOONG LI
Then admit what you've done and turn your ships around.

Ben wants so desperately to do that...

BEN
What I'm... asking of you. Begging of you... is to get me in a room with your President. I'll go to Beijing--

MADAME SOONG LI
That won't be necessary, he'll be coming here. But you won't be his audience. Forty-eight hours from now, he'll address the United Nations General Assembly, and lay out, one by one, the offenses you've committed. He'll call for a vote condemning your leadership. You'll be isolated from the world. And I hope that pleases you, Mr. President... because then you'll have your war.

She heads for the door. Stops there. Genuine regret:

MADAME SOONG LI (CONT'D)
For a brief moment, I expected more from you. And I am sorry.

The weight of that sits between them.

BEN

... not half as sorry as I am.

A THUNDERCRACK takes us to:

EXT. OAK HILL CEMETERY - DAY

AN AMERICAN FLAG is draped over VINCENT'S COFFIN as it lowers into the earth. Sam sees Ben fighting back enormous emotion. GUILT crushing him.

LATER: Ben moves down a line of mourners, offering sympathy. Comes to a black-suited man. Looks up into his face...

IT'S GRAY. The missing soldier from the photo.

For the first time, the two men meet eyes. The moment we've been waiting for, and it's freighted with everything.

Their voices stay VERY LOW -- almost a mumble:

GRAY

Times like this, even a President must feel... powerless.

And Ben understands what he's being asked: do you need help? His eyes say a thousand things he can't say. Keeps the smile:

BEN

I can use all the friends I can get.

And with that, Gray has confirmation: the president's a hostage. Offers a hand. Ben shakes it... Gray squeezes tight. Too tight. Then lets go. Ben moves on, as Gray recedes...

INT. LIMOUSINE - MOVING - DAY

CLOSE ON BEN, staring out the window, deeply stirred by what just happened. He and Sam sit at a distance from each other. We feel the gulf between them. It's quiet, just the sound of the window wipers.

SAMANTHA

It's true, isn't it. What they're saying about John.

His face is set in stone. In his silence, she has her answer.

SAMANTHA (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Did you know?

BEN

... deep down... maybe.

(beat, quietly)

I'm responsible, that's all that matters.

Sam: calm and decorum. Against her heartache.

SAMANTHA

Anything else you know... "deep down"?

Ben's eyes meet the DRIVER'S in the rear-view, a surge of paranoia -- all he wants is to protect her, so all he says is:

BEN

... no.

And she stares at him, knowing it's a lie:

SAMANTHA

I'm your wife. You've said more on TV than you've said to me in the last week--

BEN

-- Sam --

SAMANTHA

-- and suddenly you're invading a country of a billion people, a country that didn't even attack us--

BEN

There are... things about my job you don't know about. Can't know about --

SAMANTHA

You think I followed you into this... this prison of a profession so you could destroy half the world? I wanted to love you as a President too.

Words that simply break his heart. Softly, sadly:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

... but I can't say I do.

BEN

I'm trying... to do my job.

SAM

But you're not. It's doing you.

(beat)

And isn't it my job to tell you that?

He looks down, struggling, dying to tell her. Everything in his belief system is corrupted. He doesn't see a way out. They turn to separate windows, staring into nowhere...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - DAY

Cahill SPLASHES water on his face, sleeves up. Coming apart. Stares at the SHRAPNEL SCAR on his arm -- all that it signifies.

And suddenly. Starts to notice his HAND under the spigot. The strangest thing... something's MATERIALIZING on his palm...

"LOC.NN6.1P" In iridescent ink. Triggered by the amino acids from his skin under the hot water. What the hell?

MEMORY FLASHCUT: THE FUNERAL -- GRAY SQUEEZING HIS HAND:

BACK TO BEN -- staring at the number, mind tumbling. Adding it up. Realizing what this might be.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Ben emerges from the Oval, trying for casual:

BEN

Marisa, does the Library of Congress still use the Dewey-Decimal system?

JOANNA

Yessir. It's computerized, but I think it's still their base reference.

BEN

I need you to pull a book for me, please.
Soon as you can --

LATER: IN CLOSE UP, "PROFILES IN COURAGE" BY JOHN F. KENNEDY is placed on a coffee table in the Oval. Hard-bound in linen, the title EMBOSSSED IN GOLD. Ben stares, trying to make sense of it.

JOANNA

Anything else, Sir?

BEN

No, thank you. That's all.

As she leaves, Ben sits on a couch. Skims the book, not sure what he's looking for... no underlined passages... nothing stuck between the pages... he feels around the binding... no... no--

Wait. At the bottom of the hard cover, a LOOSE THREAD. He starts to PULL IT, revealing a STITCHED INNER LINING. Stops. Remembers -- they're watching --

INTERCUT: THE SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The Watch Agent hits a button, ZOOMING in on Ben and the book --
BEN IN THE OVAL OFFICE

Gets up casually and walks into the bathroom, closes the door --
IN THE SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The Agent tracks Ben from one monitor to ANOTHER as he's SEEN entering the bathroom --

OVAL OFFICE BATHROOM

Ben discreetly scans for a hidden camera... sees his own REFLECTION... and realizes... it's hidden behind the mirror.

He turns on the sink. HOT water. STEAM --

SURVEILLANCE ROOM, ON MONITOR: view from behind the bathroom mirror as it STEAMS UP and Ben DISAPPEARS from view. Surveillance Agent REACTS -- switches to a SECURE CHANNEL:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

TURNER touches his earpiece as the Surveillance Agent gives him a head's up. MOVES FAST down the hallway to the Oval Office --

INT. OVAL OFFICE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Urgently, Ben peels back the rest of the jacket lining to reveal THE WORLD'S SMALLEST, MILITARY-GRADE EARPIECE AND -- ODDLY -- A PAIR OF CONTACT LENSES. His heart RACES -- on the earpiece is a TINY RED BUTTON -- he slips it in, hits "play":

GRAY (V.O.)

Mr. President, if you're listening to this, then what I saw at Andrews was real, and I'm not crazy. It also means you're looking for a way out. I can give it to you...

INT. OVAL OFFICE - OUTSIDE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Turner approaches the door, doesn't hear anything -- KNOCKS --

AGENT TURNER (O.S.)

Mr. President, everything alright?

INT. OVAL OFFICE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben whirls -- SHIT -- covering as the earpiece keeps playing:

BEN

Fine -- be right out --

GRAY (V.O.)

... at the end of this recording, instructions will guide you to the extraction point. As for your wife and daughter, you'll have to arrange for their safety yourself -- you'd never make it out together. I'm sorry I can't offer a better option, Sir.

AGENT TURNER

(another KNOCK)

Mr. President, I'd really like to make sure you're alright --

Ben's rocked by what he's just heard but has no time to react --
rips out the earpiece, slips it in his pocket with the contacts,
seals the book's sticky lining back up --

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A FLUSH from inside, Ben exits with the book in-hand. Passes Turner with a 'fuck you' grin:

BEN

And you did.

Turner scans the bathroom, his suspicions raised...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE - DAY

Samantha exits into the hallway, nearly BUMPS into a 300 pound gorilla: SECRET SERVICE AGENT DONALD MORGAN.

AGENT MORGAN

Didn't mean to startle you, Ma'am, my name's Don Morgan, I'll be your new S.A.C.

SAMANTHA

(crestfallen)

What happened to Agent Blake?

AGENT MORGAN

Standard rotation for junior agents. Field assignment came through.

His smile's distinctly plastic. Sam just lost the only friend she seems to have left.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Ben's flipping through an old ANNAPOLIS YEARBOOK, remembering faces. But more than that, searching for something...

Finds the NAVY MIDSHIPMEN FOOTBALL TEAM: his team photo at 19 years old. Ben as QUARTERBACK, one of the cadets has an arm slung over his shoulder in friendship. It's a face we find familiar: WILLIAM SADOWSKI, younger here, but we saw him during the inauguration, watching CNN coverage in the Marine Barracks.

CLOSE ON BEN'S EYES. An idea forming...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SIT ROOM - DAY

The National Security council's gathered, Knowles and Babbit are among them:

NSA ANALYST

-- and latest estimates show China has 800-900 intermediate-range missiles with--

BEN

Okay, I get it... we need to man up if this thing goes hot.

He takes a heavy beat, playing "resigned." Knowles and Babbit trade a look: have they finally broken him?

BEN (CONT'D)

Take yes for an answer. I need classified reports: Pentagon, Defense Working Group, Naval War College -- every study we've commissioned on war games with China--

NSA ANALYST

All of it? There must be dozens of--

BEN

Pull everything on controlled escalation, how we manage a conflict once we're in it. And we need to rally the troops -- good time to buck up morale before I ask 'em for the ultimate sacrifice.

STATE DEPARTMENT SUIT

Yessir, we thought you'd address a convention of Korean Conflict veterans--

BEN

-- No, get me soldiers to review. Say The Marines. I want the guys down the river, Quantico. Soon as possible.

He exits. Knowles and Babbit share a look. Is this too good to be true?

EXT. MARINE CORPS BASE, QUANTICO, VIRGINIA - DAY

MARINE ONE ROARS OVER THE IWO JIMA MONUMENT, lands at the Marine training base. The MARINE BAND plays *Hail to the Chief*. Ben steps from the chopper, followed by Knowles and Agent Turner...

EXT. PARADE GROUND - QUANTICO - DAY

Ben walks along a REGIMENT of MARINES in combat gear, at attention, rifles shouldered. He has a MARINE GENERAL on one side, Knowles and Turner a few paces back... as he passes stoic faces... stops at the one he was looking for: LT. COL. SADOWSKI.

BEN

(surveying unit)

Guess I'm not the only one who knows how to throw a party.

LT. COL. SADOWSKI

Mr. President, it's an honor.

BEN

Let's drop the formalities, Will; you've been to my house, now I've been to yours.

Ben glances back; Knowles and Turner are a few paces behind, out of earshot. So Ben edges closer, takes a leap of faith:

BEN (CONT'D)

As your Commander in Chief, would you agree my orders supersede your immediate superiors'?

LT. COL. SADOWSKI

(confused beat)

I-- yes, sir; I suppose I would.

BEN

If I asked you to single out four men you trust. Men who do what they're told, no questions asked, could you do that?

Sadowski just stares, even more thrown -- what's he being asked to do? Before he can respond, Turner and Knowles are RIGHT BESIDE THEM with the Marine General:

BEN (CONT'D)

Just reminding the Colonel of the beating he took in the Navy-Notre Dame game. Glutton for punishment, this guy.

LT. COL. SADOWSKI
 (beat: goes with it)
 ... pouring rain, sprained my ankle on
 the third down.

BEN
 (the soldiers)
 Good thing he's got a stronger bench
 today... we're gonna need 'em.

Ben moves on. Agent Turner eyeballs Sadowski up close, but the Marine displays no glimmer of reaction. Finally, Turner follows Ben... HOLD on Sadowski: what just happened?

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

A grave-looking Sam watches CNN as she undresses for bed:

CNN BROADCASTER
 ... more bad news for President Cahill in
 the latest Time-CNN poll -- with 62% now
 saying they disapprove of the job he's
 doing as President, and his wavering
 response to the crisis in the South China
 Sea driving an even more troubling--

Ben appears in the doorway; their eyes meet. She moves past him without a word, chilly. His eyes go to the bubble cameras --

BEN
 I'm going to Camp David in the morning.
 Need to clear my head before the U.N.

SAM
 Hey, guess what? I'm not your scheduler.

As she starts to move away from him, he very gently reaches out and takes her hand. Anyone would think it's a shot at foreplay.

SAM (CONT'D)
 (nowhere near in the
 mood)
 -- are you kidding?

BEN
 (softly, imploringly)
 Trust me.

Something about the way he says that. There's an edge of warning behind it. As they head out, Ben turns on the STEREO -- Brahms "Violin Concerto in D major" PLAYS over:

INT. RESIDENCE - MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben turns on the SHOWER, begins undressing. She looks at him strangely, not quite getting the game.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eerily, they're being WATCHED as Ben leads her into the shower. The LOUD MUSIC plays, covering all sound. One of the Surveillance Officers turns to another:

SURVEILLANCE OFFICER #1
Sh'we get the lip-reader up here?

SURVEILLANCE OFFICER #2
(after a beat)
Let em fuck.

INT. RESIDENCE - SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

And still the VIOLIN CONCERTO PLAYS, making this a purely emotional, not sexual, moment. Ben pulls her close, holding her as the water sprays them... finally, he whispers:

BEN
Don't react. We're being watched...

A moment as Sam takes this in. Smiles -- then laughs. But his face remains firm, and she's never seen this expression before. And her smile vanishes as she realizes he isn't kidding.

Outside the shower, PULLING BACK... we can't hear what he's saying, but he's telling her everything. And she's stunned. Horrified. Finally understands the truth. SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - LAWN - MORNING

Marine One waits on the White House lawn, rotors spinning. Sam and Marisa say goodbye to Ben... he kneels down to his daughter:

BEN
I can't tuck you in tonight, Baby, so I need to ask you a very important question.

(beat)
What do you love more, french fries or bacon?

MARISA
(big smile)
... french fries.

BEN
Bananas or milkshakes?

MARISA

Milkshakes.

BEN

Milkshakes or your father?

MARISA

Milkshakes, of course.

He grabs and HUGS her. Holding on or dear life.

BEN

(choked)

Love you so much.

MARISA

Love you too, Dad.

BEN

You listen to your mom, okay? Whatever she tells you to do, you do it.

She nods. Finally, heartsick, he brings himself to let go. Stands. Facing Sam. She's keeping it together, nevertheless, on the verge of tears. For her, Ben stays strong -- runs down the inventory of things to happen -- speaking in CODE:

CAHILL

You'll get that prescription filled?

SAMANTHA

(nods, nervous)

Yeah, I'll call in the number once we settle in...

CAHILL

Dinner plans?

SAMANTHA

Having a friend drop by.

We don't understand what they're saying, but we will. Whatever it is, it doesn't reassure him enough. He hates himself for putting her here; searches his soul for the courage to leave them, but in the moment, can't seem to find it...

BEN

I'm staying. I'm... your husband first.

Sam shakes her head, touches his face...

SAM

That's not true. As much as we want it to be.

Their eyes hold. Knowing this may be their last goodbye. He's needed to say this for so long now...

BEN
You deserve... better.

SAMANTHA
(tears in her eyes)
... so do you.

She puts her arms around him. Trying not to show her terror.
Whispers:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Promise me. No matter what happens to
us. You'll see this through.

He holds her so tight. The worst moment of his life.

BEN
(finally, whispers)
... promise.

And pulling away, he says LOUD ENOUGH for the agents to hear:

BEN (CONT'D)
I'll call you at ten.

SAMANTHA
(pulls it together,
nods)
Ten o'clock.

He squeezes her hand. Turns and walks across the lawn, Turner following. Sam puts a protective arm around Marisa and pulls her closer as they watch Ben get on the chopper. The little girl waves, thinking she'll see her father again soon. Sam -- her heart breaking -- knows otherwise...

EXT. CAMP DAVID - TACTICAL OPERATIONS TOWER - DUSK

Waning sunlight GLINTS off a razor-wire fenceline. RACK FOCUS TO THE TACTICAL OPERATIONS TOWER, where the TOWER CHIEF watches Marine One land. Cahill exits, meets a saluting MARINE CAPTAIN:

MARINE CAPTAIN
Welcome to Camp David, Mr. President!

EXT. CATOCTIN MOUNTAIN PARK, OUTSIDE CAMP DAVID - NIGHT

A Dodge Ram pulls up in a shadowed area. GRAY gets out in BLACK FATIGUES, grabs his bag and RUNS into the woods --

INT. WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE DINNING ROOM - NIGHT

Sam and Marisa are eating dinner. Marisa, oblivious, rambles about her day as Sam tries to focus: distracted, nervous, aware that AGENTS MORGAN and CRISAFI are down the hall, watching them:

MARISA

-- and this girl, Britney Blue, got assigned the report with me and she's got these awesome old illustrated books, so now we're friends, me and Britney.

SAMANTHA

'Britney and I.'

MARISA

Everybody started saying we were twins but we don't look a thing alike even in our uniforms. But she's really cool.

SAMANTHA

(distracted)

Glad you made a new friend, Honey.

A THROAT CLEARS in the doorway:

AGENT BLAKE

You called for me, Ma'am?

SAMANTHA

(a smile; salvation)

Yes, please, come in.

Blake passes by Agents Morgan and Crisafi, who look stoically unhappy about her presence here. Sam reads it:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Agent Morgan, I'd like some privacy, please. Would you close the door?

And he grudgingly does, but they're still not alone because --

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- one of the Surveillance Agents is watching them:

SAMANTHA ON MONITOR

I just wanted you to know I tried to get you back, but apparently it's one of the few things my husband and I don't have a say over.

INT. RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

AGENT BLAKE

I know that, Ma'am, and I appreciate it.

SAMANTHA

Now you can call me 'Sam' -- you don't work for me anymore.

Blake just stands there awkwardly, not comfortable with that.

SAMANTHA (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Can I talk you into staying for dinner?
Least I can do for my guardian angel.Something in Sam's voice. A need. Blake nods, okay...

INT. CAHILL'S CABIN - NIGHT

Firelight flickers. We TRACK THROUGH the empty cabin, toward the bathroom where we find -- BEN, tearing off his clothes, changing into sweats. Opens a pocket knife... lights a MATCH... runs it under the blade... what's he doing?

INT. FOREST - 2 MILES OUTSIDE CAMP DAVID - NIGHT

A SEWER DRAIN. Welded shut with a pressure switch to let Camp David security know if it's been tampered with. Gray uses a piece of metal and clamp to run a bypass on the pressure switch.

Quickly sets up a makeshift TENT to cover the light as he IGNITES A WELDING TORCH to cut open the drain --

INT. CAHILL'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE, BEN'S KNIFE -- AS HE CUTS INTO HIS PALM. We play most of this on his FACE, bearing the pain, AS HE DIGS OUT THE IMPLANTED CHIP. Cutting through tissue to EXTRACT IT... finally:

Drops it into the sink, blood pooling down the drain. Exhales, bearing back pain -- starts WRAPPING his hand with bandage and --

INT. CAMP DAVID TACTICAL OPERATIONS TOWER - CONTINUOUS

A BLINKING DOT on a monitor, the tracking chip -- unmoving.

SECRET SERVICE MONITOR AGENT

(into headset)

203 to 201: Traveller's in his crib.

EXT. CAMP DAVID - CAHILL'S CABIN - NIGHT

Turner makes rounds. THUNDER RUMBLES, a flash of LIGHTNING brightens Ben's CABIN in the distance --

EXT. FOREST/ INT. WATER RUNOFF PIPE - CONTINUOUS

Gray slips on NIGHT VISION GOGGLES to navigate the pipe system. MOVES QUICKLY down the pipe, TURNING CORNERS, he MARKS THE WALLS with infrared paint to remember his way out --

INT. CAHILL'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Ben pops open VASELINE. Oddly, starts spreading it through his hair, over his face Checks his watch: "9:42." MATCH TO:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

"9:42" on a CLOCK as Sam eyes it nervously, mid-conversation with Blake, Marisa now doing homework on the couch in B.G.:

SAMANTHA
-- and your social life?

Blake looks down at her plate, uncomfortable...

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Sorry, I'm prying...

A beat. Against her instincts, Blake admits:

AGENT BLAKE
I've been told I'm not the warmest person. Doesn't help that I can't talk openly about most of my day.

SAMANTHA
Must be hard.

AGENT BLAKE
I'd imagine it goes both ways. Can't be easy having a husband with so many secrets.

Samantha's eyes narrow just a little.

SAMANTHA
I like to think I'm not totally in the dark.

Straight at Blake, probing for some kind of response. A hint of reaction. Nothing. They stare at each other.

EXT. CAHILL'S CABIN - PORCH - NIGHT

RAIN is starting to fall heavily. Turner walks up to Ben's cabin door and KNOCKS. No answer. KNOCKS again. Enters --

INT. CAHILL'S CABIN - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ben opens the contact lens case Gray gave him -- slides them in his eyes. Hits a switch and the room goes DARK --

BEN'S POV -- the contacts are INFRARED. In the MIRROR, sees RED BLOTCHES on his face. Exposed flesh radiating HEAT. Dabs more Vaseline and the blotches DISAPPEAR. A KNOCK at the door --

AGENT TURNER
Mr. President?

BEN
(shit)
-- yeah, what is it?

INTERCUTTING -- OUTSIDE THE DOOR --

AGENT TURNER
Is everything alright?

BEN
I'm fine. Goodnight.

Turner's eyes go down to the base of the door. No light's coming through, something's not right...

BEN -- listening -- finally hears Turner's FOOTFALLS as the cabin door CLOSES. Quiet. He slips on GRAY'S EARPIECE, steps out cautiously. Moves to the back door, reaches for the handle

TURNER STEPS OUT OF SHADOW BEHIND HIM, sees he's covered in Vaseline and wearing the earpiece -- BEN'S MARINE INSTINCTS KICK IN -- SLAMS Turner into the wall -- Turner goes for his gun but Ben KNEES him in the stomach -- THE GUN FLIES FROM TURNER'S HAND -- a balls-out, messy, violent, close-quarter death match --

THE GUN on the floor -- struggling for it -- Turner there first -- BEN on him -- BLAMM!!! -- wild shot -- into the wall --

EXT. CAHILL'S CABIN - NIGHT

The HARD RAIN covers the sound of the shot -- a PATROLLING MARINE SENTRY is oblivious --

INT. CAHILL'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Ben takes a PUNCH in the face, staggers but sees a WALL-MOUNTED AED DEFIBRILLATOR -- tears it off the wall and hits ON as Turner LUNGES -- KNOCKS it out of Ben's hand -- the box CLATTERS to the floor as it starts its high-pitched CHARGE:

vvvvvrrrrrrrrreeeEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

Ben goes for it, Turner grabs his arm but Ben's on pure ADRENALINE -- his foot -- down into TURNER'S KNEE, shattering it and -- Turner is on the floor -- stunned --

Ben goes for the defibrillator -- Turner grabs the gun at the same time -- swivels to fire but -- ZZZAAAAP!!! An ELECTRICAL CHARGE FROM THE PADDLES SHOOTs TURNER BACK ACROSS THE ROOM -- HIS BODY CONVULSING -- SPASMING -- AND NOW --

DYING AS HIS HEART STOPS. A last GASP and... it's over. Ben stumbles back. Recovering. Breathing. Checks his watch --

10:00!! Shit -- MOVE -- OUT the door, into the rain --

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Blake's getting ready to go --

AGENT BLAKE
Thank you for dinner.

Sam checks her watch: 10:00. Heart SKIPS, she says to Marisa:

SAMANTHA
Honey, let's walk Agent Blake out.

MARISA
I'm doing homework--

SAMANTHA
Marisa. Now.

Marisa rolls her eyes and follows Sam and Blake out, past Agents Morgan and Crisafi, into the ELEVATOR --

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Blake hits "Level One." The elevator starts to move. Blake senses something weird, looks over and sees Sam's HAND SHAKING --

AGENT BLAKE
Ma'am? You alright?

There's a pause. And Sam turns to Blake -- dead straight:

SAMANTHA
Just shoot us now.

AGENT BLAKE
-- what--?

SAMANTHA
If you're one of them, just shoot us now, cause I'm not playing ball anymore.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Tell me the truth, we don't have time --
Are. You. IN ON IT.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SURVEILLANCE AGENT
(frantic)
-- RED! -- RED! CODE RED! ELEVATOR SIX
OUTSIDE CHINA ROOM!

Morgan and Crisafi RACE DOWN a stairwell with two OTHER AGENTS:

SAMANTHA
They're gonna try and separate us -- if
you let them, you'll be killed, so will
we --

MARISA	SAMANTHA
(starting to cry, terrified)	-- if we have <u>any</u> chance of surviving we have to get to the emergency bunker NOW!
-- Mom, what's happening?!	

Sam and Blake LOCK EYES -- and for a crazy tense beat we don't know WHAT Blake's gonna do... until she STOPS THE ELEVATOR on the State Floor. Draws her gun and PRESSES IT TO SAMANTHA'S HEAD -- Marisa SCREAMS -- Sam GASPS --

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Oh God -- not you --

AGENT BLAKE
Be quiet. Both of you, shut up!

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - STATE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

As the elevator door opens, MORGAN, CRISAFI and the TWO OTHER AGENTS rush in, guns drawn -- STOP when they see Blake holding her gun to the First Lady's neck -- Marisa CROUCHED in terror --

AGENT MORGAN

AGENT BLAKE

Agent Blake, step out of the
elevator and drop the gun --

-- I DON'T NEED TO DEFINE YOUR
PRIORITIES FOR YOU, DROP IT --

-- NO: YOU DROP IT --

-- RADIO IN A POTUS-TRIPLE-
ONE, THEN I PUT DOWN THE GUN --

Eternity passes -- Blake EXPLODES:

AGENT BLAKE (cont'd)

I AM DEADLY FUCKING SERIOUS!

AGENT #2

Alright! Look -- I'm calling it in --

He drops his gun on the floor -- and in a split-second Morgan
and Crisafi trade a LOOK; MORGAN COLDLY FIRES POINT-BLANK AT THE
AGENT'S CHEST TO STOP HIM FROM CALLING -- BEFORE THE FOURTH
AGENT KNOWS WHAT'S HAPPENING, CRISAFI SHOOTS HIM TOO --

Blake HEAVES Sam and Marisa to one side of the elevator,
COVERING THEM BOTH WITH HER BODY WHILE RETURNING FIRE AT MORGAN
AND CRISAFI -- GUNSHOTS PEPPER THE ELEVATOR WALLS --

AGENT BLAKE

Down button!

Sam STABS out a finger hitting the elevator pad -- doors CLOSE --

AGENT MORGAN (INTO MIC)

Blackbird and Baby Bear are exposed --
they're on their way to Deep Six --

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - NIGHT

Sam, Blake and a HYSTERICAL Marisa exit the elevator into the
underground tunnel -- Blake pulls a TELESCOPING BATON from her
side, wedges it into elevator so doors can't close -- she's
reeling in shock, the enormity of all this still sinking in:

AGENT BLAKE

Damnit! This is real, isn't it?

The women start RUNNING down the tunnel --

SAMANTHA

What happened? What's a Potus-Triple-
One?

AGENT BLAKE

Standard operating procedure to call the
FBI in a First Family hostage crisis.

SAMANTHA

... and they didn't...

The Watch Officer stares at the screen, odd... but there doesn't seem to be anything there...

EXT. CAMP DAVID - GOLF COURSE - NIGHT

Wind SCREECHES as Ben keeps tearing across the golf course --

GRAY ON EARPIECE

-- bear right 30 degrees for 45 meters --
target's on the other side of the fence --

Ben sees the fence in the distance -- pulls off his JACKET and wraps it around his hands like a border jumper -- fifty yards away, a DOBERMAN starts BARKING on a leash with a Marine Sentry.

THE SENTRY -- stares off into the darkness... the Doberman's BARKING gets more feral, adamant...

MARINE SENTRY

Tactical, something's definitely out here
-- recommend ambient sweep, over --

INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS TOWER - CONTINUOUS

The Watch Officer turns to the Surveillance Officer:

WATCH OFFICER

Go ambient, let's turn on some lights --

EXT. CAMP DAVID - FOREST PERIPHERY - NIGHT

Xenon spotlights POP ON, blinding Ben --

INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS TOWER - CONTINUOUS

UNDER THE AMBIENT LIGHT, BEN'S NOW VISIBLE ON THE MONITOR --

WATCH OFFICER

Breach, sector four, heading east along
the course at two hundred meters -- all
units, lock it down --

EXT. CAMP DAVID - VARIOUS - NIGHT

ALARMS -- the Doberman's UNLEASHED as Ben LEAPS UP the fence, using the jacket to PULL HIMSELF OVER THE RAZOR WIRE -- still he SLICES his hands, legs -- suddenly the dog's JUMPING up, TEETH CLAMP into Ben's leg -- he manages to pull himself OVER and drops with a THUD -- slashed to hell -- fights shock and pain --

A GRILLE GRATE POPS UP AS GRAY EMERGES! MOVING FAST -- GRABS BEN, YANKING HIM DOWN TO SAFETY --

GRAY

I gotcha, Sir -- I gotcha --

He pulls him through the grate opening into:

INT. UNDERGROUND PIPELINE - NIGHT

They LAND in a water runoff pipe.

BEN

(catching his breath,
through the pain)
... what took you... so long?

GRAY

Thought you Marines were swift and
deadly.

Gray throws and arm around Ben's shoulder and starts hurrying
him off down the pipe --

INT. HAWTHORNE'S ESTATE - STUDY - MIDNIGHT

CRISIS MEETING in the galley -- Babbit, Knowles, Dinsmore, the
usual suspects.

CIA DIRECTOR DINSMORE

I'm hearing it, I just don't believe
it...

HAWTHORNE

What about White House containment?

GROUP MEMBER #1

Shoot-out was limited to the private
quarters. With the exception of the
wife, the daughter, and the agent, we're
looking at zero leakage -- and they're
not going anywhere --

EXT. CATOCTIN MOUNTAIN PARK, OUTSIDE CAMP DAVID - NIGHT

FEMA WORKERS set up road-blocks for random stop-and-frisks -- a
line of ANGRY DRIVERS:

GROUP MEMBER #2

-- we've initiated FEMA quarantine
protocols for a hundred mile radius
around the camp. Anywhere Cahill pops
up, we'll be there in thirty minutes --

GROUP MEMBER #3 (V.O.)

What do they think they're looking for?

GROUP MEMBER #4 (V.O.)
Chemical weapons --

-- and we DROP DOWN into the RUN-OFF PIPE below the road, where we see BEN and GRAY, hurrying along, unseen --

HAWTHORNE (V.O.)
What about an ECHELON package--?

INT. NSA MONITORING HUB - CONTINUOUS

NSA WATCH AGENTS recon a blizzard of intel on hundreds of PLASMAS: cell phone calls, internet data, CCTV city grid feeds:

GENERAL BABBIT (V.O.)
Our people in NSA added Cahill's voiceprint to the watch list, they're on standby to run a blackout drill if he picks up a phone or makes it to a news station --

INT. HAWTHORNE'S ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

CIA DIRECTOR DINSMORE
Chinese President's still coming to the United Nations. News services are already reporting if our carriers don't turn back, he'll respond in kind. This could be over faster than we thought.

HAWTHORNE
When's the President's plane scheduled for wheels-down?

GROUP MEMBER #5
6 hrs, 48 minutes --

GENERAL BABBIT
We post only our Secret Service assets around the Chinese plane when it touches down. We're not taking anymore chances.

GROUP MEMBER #6
(beat, resolute)
If we're all agreed on our next course of action, we don't have to.

Grave. Silent understanding of what this means. Hawthorne turns out to the window, thinking this through carefully:

HAWTHORNE
Put Cahill's shadow in play, stand-ins for the wife and kid too... walk them onto Marine One and make it public.

CNN BROADCAST: What we see CHILLS US. From a distance, "Ben" waves as he boards Marine One at Camp David; DOUBLES OF SAM AND MARISA TOO, their backs to the press, equally distant from camera and therefore unidentifiable as fakes:

CNN REPORTER

-- as the president boards Marine One with his family, many are wondering if there's any hope of avoiding the grave prospect of war with the People's Republic of China, as China's President demands our withdrawal from what America terms, I quote: "free international waters"--

HAWTHORNE (V.O.)

Flight'll go down somewhere over Pennsylvania on the way to the U.N...

BACK TO HAWTHORNE IN THE STUDY:

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

Wake up the VP, paint him as the good soldier who has to be pulled aside and administered the oath...

That sits in chilling silence. He turns back, to face the room:

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

This has to be unanimous.

A pause... as one by one, each member raises a hand in assent.

They've just resolved to kill the President and his family.

INT. WATER RUN-OFF PIPE - CONTINUOUS

Gray and Ben hustle down the pipe, through a thin layer of water. Following the INFRARED PAINT Gray left behind to mark the exit path. BLOOD has started seeping through Ben's bandage where the chip's been cut out:

GRAY

Sure you don't want something? For the pain.

BEN

Need a clear head.

GRAY

You take it well... you were with the 1st Marine Division in the Gulf?

BEN
Al Wafrah. Kuwait.

GRAY
Hear it was some fire fight.

BEN
(a beat)
We did our job.
(then)
Thank you. For getting me out.

GRAY
Don't thank me yet. It was the easy part.

EXT. FOREST - SHORELINE - NIGHT

From shadows, Ben and Gray drag a ZODIAC RAFT toward water...

GRAY
Truck's across the river. Ft. Detrick's the closest secure post. We get you bunkered in, nobody can touch you there. Then we bring the hammer down, hard as hell.

BEN
That's plan B. We've got bigger problems.

Gray looks at him as they hop in the raft: did he hear right? Lifts a small 35hp OUTBOARD ENGINE, puts it on the raft transom:

GRAY
We're behind enemy lines on our own soil. You must be talking about the King Kong dick of all clusterfucks. Sir.

And they ZOOM OFF into the darkness --

INT. ZODIAC RAFT - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

The near-silent Zodiac cuts swiftly through water. Gray staring at Ben. Needs to hear...

GRAY
You didn't know. About Macau.

BEN
Not when I needed to.
(then, simply)
That was my responsibility. 'Sorry' doesn't cut it.

Gray's silent. Surprised by a President's acceptance of blame.

BEN (CONT'D)

You were live bait: left to be dragged through the streets for an unprovable crime. We deny involvement, sail into Chinese waters... you've seen the war games?

GRAY

(beat, gets it)

We take out their assets in Southeast China; they take out our men in Japan, Korea...

BEN

Dominoes fall --

Gray's mind turns, putting the puzzle together, wanting answers:

GRAY

I wasn't trained to ask why --

BEN

Me neither, that's why I'm not a soldier anymore.

(and here's why:)

Missile defense. They pushed me into it, so we can take out China's satellites, blind their targeting systems, hit their silos --

GRAY

Pre-emptive strike --

BEN

They can't retaliate, we still have the edge. 21st Century's ours, they're back to the stone age. Even if they manage to get one off before they go down? We've got AEGIS missile batteries on every island from here to Taiwan. DoD says 95 percent intercept probability. Course, there's always that five percent chance we lose a city -- Chicago, LA...

And the insanity of that lands. Quiet. Gray cuts it with:

GRAY

Thank God I'm a Knicks man.

BEN

(checks his watch)
Chinese President's coming to New York in
six hours. He thinks I'm leading the
cavalry --

GRAY

You wanna... talk to him?

BEN

He's my only shot --

GRAY

It's a suicide mission, Sir. He's got
his own security, Secret Service has a
perimeter around him too--

BEN

-- I know --

GRAY

Gotta be an easier way -- secure line,
email --

BEN

There is no secure line. It's face-to-
face, or my call doesn't go through.

Ben pulls out a map, driven -- but emotion bleeds through now,
terror for his family; he's trying not to let it own him.
Points to a spot on the map:

BEN (CONT'D)

Harrison Island, Potomac River... if she
can, my wife's gonna try and get word to
a Marine buddy at Quantico, flew gunships
in Desert Storm. He'll take us where we
need to go.

GRAY

When's the cut-off point?

A question that scares Ben to his core. Quietly:

BEN

If he's not there by 4:30... means she
didn't make it.

(beat)

And neither do we.

INT. FALLOUT SHELTER - CENTRAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Overhead lights POP POP POP TO LIFE --

As an increasingly bloody Blake hits initialization switches -- the women enter the shelter, the massive BLAST DOOR SHUTS behind them, its impenetrable steel lock cycling home with a CLANG --

INT. SHELTER INFIRMARY - CONTINUOUS

They thunder in, Sam half-carrying Blake, who struggles to pull off her jacket, checks her shoulder wound:

SAMANTHA

I know you're hurt; I need you to help me
get on the tac-sat console --

INT. TAC-SAT COMMAND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Tac-Sat console is off. Blake, struggling against enormous pain, flips a switch. A monitor activates: "ENTER POTUS COMMAND CODE." Sam types it in: "HELLO, MR. PRESIDENT." As the console starts POWERING UP, a series of additional monitors and TV's pre-set to news channels turn on. And what Sam sees shocks her.
Live footage of Marine One, having just crashed:

CNN BROADCASTER

-- as a security measure, Marine One always flies in a group with as many as five identical Sea King Helicopters, so we have no confirmation of whether or not the crashed helicopter was indeed the one carrying the First Family -- again, no indication of whether the First Family is alive, or injured, or God forbid, something much worse, and we await any sign of an official response --

Sam's just stunned, reality crashes: their deaths have been staged. They're never gonna make it out of here alive.

MARISA

(confused, scared)

Mom... did-- was dad in that helicopter?

SAMANTHA

No, Honey, he's fine --

-- but even Sam knows her daughter doesn't trust the tone in her voice; Marisa notices another monitor, points:

MARISA

-- what's that?

CCTV view from outside the blast door. A COMMANDO UNIT OF SECRET SERVICE AGENTS, along with AGENTS MORGAN AND CRISAFI. Kevlar, MP-5's. Sam and Blake lock eyes: not good.

EXT. FALLOUT SHELTER - BLAST DOOR - CONTINUOUS

The commandos are setting up a "BURNING BAR." Rods of magnesium connected to tanks of oxygen. One of the commandos IGNITES the burning bar with an acetylene torch, adjusts the flame.

A second commando turns on the oxygen tanks and BOOM -- THE FLAME'S SO WHITE HOT IT'S GREEN. The heat hits the central lock mechanism and starts BURNING THROUGH --

Another commando starts working on the FIBER OPTIC HOUSING. Trying to remove the deadbolt to the bunker power/phone lines:

INT. COMMAND BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

Marisa backs away from the monitor, looks to her mom, terrified:

SAM

(her best smile)

Honey, there's a kitchen, see if you can get Agent Blake some water --

Blake nods, half smiles: that'd be nice. As Marisa exits, Sam races to the console, pulls out a small piece of paper, starts frantically typing what's hand-written there -- the message given to her by Ben: "Darkhorse: need five marines uncompromised full tactical load out and a bird..."

SAMANTHA

They can't intercept a call down here, right?

AGENT BLAKE

Not remotely, but they'll follow the fiber optic line outside the bunker -- first thing they'll cut.

Trying to stay focused, but losing blood fast, Blake opens up a WEAPONS ARMORY. The broadcast continues: VICE PRESIDENT DENNET being quickly hurried into a car by Secret Service Agents:

CNN BROADCASTER

The wires are exploding with rumors right now... Vice President Dennet has been moved to an undisclosed location, again no indication of whether this is for an update on the President's whereabouts, or an emergency invocation of the 22nd Amendment, placing the Vice President in charge of--

The SCREENS start to flicker. LIGHTS too.

Sam stares, hurry, keeps typing: "Rendezvous Point MB 6754 8769, 2000 -- the Quarterback." Hits SEND -- But again, the screen FLICKERS and we can't tell if the message is getting out --

EXT. HARRISON ISLAND - FOREST - CLEARING - PRE-DAWN

In a small forest clear, Gray sets up 5 IR CHEM-LIGHTS taped together. Beacons to vector a chopper in... if it ever arrives.

Ben looks to the skies, waiting. Just fucking waiting. Willing that chopper to come, and prove his family's still alive. A look that doesn't need interpreting...

GRAY
They're alright, Sir.

BEN
(beat)
Bunker doors're double-titanium. Figure if they made it... even with the best equipment... eight hours before anyone can cut through.

GRAY
(beat; nods)
Try and have you home at a reasonable hour.

Ben grins. Grateful for trying to keep his spirits up...

BEN
You have a family?

Gray's gaze falters as he keeps seeing up the chem-lights. Wounds so raw, but the training keeps it on lockdown...

GRAY
One-hour recall doesn't play well on a family. Never seemed fair.
(beat)
Get to a certain age, look back and think... too late now. Joined up so early, op-tempo was non-stop. Sucks you in. Suddenly years are gone. Years. Do things. See things. Deep down you know you're losing parts you can't ever get back.

Emotion coming to the surface now... an idyll lost...

GRAY (CONT'D)
Had a woman, got me out of the badlands. Reminded me there are good people left in the world.

(MORE)

GRAY (CONT'D)

(beat)

She left me a message after Macau. Saw the news.

(beat)

All the excuse they needed.

Quiet. Ben realizes they killed her... it still comes as a shock... his heart breaking for this man... now Gray turns to him, face-to-face. What he says next is critical for him, his whole life's purpose reduced to now:

GRAY (CONT'D)

I don't care if I make it out of this...
I just need to know... I'm working for the good guys.

And Ben's look is so indebted, so profoundly respectful... he knows if they survive, he must make it right for Gray. And the QUIET holds... until... a SOUND in the distance: THUMP-THUMP-THUMP. CHOPPER BLADES. The men lock eyes; for the first time, hope: they're alive!

EXT. SKIES ABOVE FOREST - MORNING

A a BLACKHAWK UH-60Q MEDEVAC CHOPPER soars over thick forest just beyond Quantico. Sadowski's at the stick.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

As the chopper circles the clearing, Gray grabs his gunnysack, slings it over his shoulder. Ben turns to him...

BEN

You never told me what you were doing at Andrews.

A beat. Gray held in reserve.

GRAY

Watching from the roof.

BEN

What were you doing on the roof?

GRAY

(beat)

I was gonna blow your brains out.

Ben sees he isn't kidding. It hangs there. And all he can say:

BEN

Not sure I need 'em for this job anyway.

Grins a little, to put Gray at ease...

As the Helo comes in on a hard flare tactical landing, Gray leads Ben from the shadows to the side of the bird. Both of their heads duck low as the rotors wind down to idle. Gray slides back the crew door, revealing...

FOUR YOUNG MARINES. Unsure what they're doing here, but still Marine tough -- when they see their President, their eyes POP:

CORPORAL SOROS

Jesus, God...

LT. COL. SADOWSKI

Ten-hut!

As Ben and Gray hop in, the boys SNAP SALUTES:

BEN

As you were --

(to Sadowski)

Thanks for coming --

Sadowski's still pretty stunned by all this:

LT. COL. SADOWSKI

Goddamn, Sir, I thought this was a drill.

BEN

Wish it were.

LT. COL. SADOWSKI

These kids are just finishing up their training at Infantry. Private First Class Dispartro, Rifleman; Lance Corporal Soros, Comm; Private Katsnelson, Machine Gunner; Private Johnson, Assaultman.

BEN

(to Comms officer)

"Soros" -- that greek?

CORPORAL SOROS

Yessir, very Greek, Sir.

BEN

You know code?

CORPORAL SOROS

Sensor, Morse, Tapal -- the French version -- and a little Cherokee, Sir.

GRAY

And you're only a Corporal?

CORPORAL SOROS
It's an injustice.

GRAY
No injustices in the Marines, Corporal,
we leave that to the Army.

Soros tries not to grin --

BEN
Can you patch me through to the executive
command bunker if I give you the number
and access codes?

CORPORAL SOROS
(holds up a STU phone)
Right here, Sir.

BEN
Fellas, I know you've heard conflicting
rumors about me; you're gonna hear more.
I'm still your Commander 'til I tell you
otherwise. I won't lie to you -- what
I'm asking you to do will probably get us
all killed. But you have to believe me
when I say: if we don't, the country
you're wearing uniforms for won't exist.
Understood?

THE MARINES
Sir, yes, Sir!

BEN
(to Sadowski)
Let's roll -- head toward New York.

The boys are reeling. Tense faces, none of them sure how to
react, what to even think -- but nonetheless stoic and ready.
Ben and Gray strap in and slip on helmet headsets, Sadowski
works the controls -- the chopper RISES, ROARS OVER CAMERA --

INT. SHELTER INFIRMARY - CONTINUOUS

Sam, Blake, Marisa thunder in -- Blake's getting worse, tries to
stay conscious as Sam helps her onto the infirmary table:

AGENT BLAKE
Okay, listen: the bullet passed right
through my upper arm close to the artery
-- I need you to clean and dress it, then
make a tourniquet. I'll talk you through
it.

SAM

Yeah, okay --

AGENT BLAKE

-- find a clean cloth, gauze,
adhesive tape, alcohol --

SAMANTHA

-- Marisa, help me --

Marisa stumbles back, her face pale, ghostly -- eyes wet:

MARISA

-- Mom--

SAM

-- please, Baby, just do it --

The force of her mother's voice somehow steadies her --
terrified but going with it, Marisa nods and they ransack the
place in about ten seconds, grabbing everything they need --

AGENT BLAKE

The alcohol's for your hands -- both of
you --

Sam unscrews an alcohol bottle, pours it on her hands, then
Marisa's --

AGENT BLAKE (CONT'D)

Gimme the bottle --

Without hesitating BLAKE POURS ALCOHOL RIGHT INTO HER OPEN
WOUND, wincing but staying strong -- Sam's eyes just CLOSE --

AGENT BLAKE (CONT'D)

Good, okay, Marisa: I want you to use
your thumb and just apply pressure right
here-- right between the muscles -- feel
that?

With trembling hands, Marisa presses on Blake's arm as shown --

MARISA

-- yeah--?

-- like this?

AGENT BLAKE

-- just press real hard --

-- that's excellent --

And despite the insanity, Blake's steady kindness manages to
draw out a little smile from Marisa, a moment not lost on Sam:

AGENT BLAKE (CONT'D)

Put gauze over the wound, tie it up with
tape -- just tight enough to control the
bleeding --

Sam works quickly, trying to stay cool --

SAMANTHA

Talk about something --

AGENT BLAKE

What?

SAMANTHA

(fighting for focus)

Just talk. Tell me anything.

Blake keeps trying to breathe steadily, keep her composure:

AGENT BLAKE

His name's Victor. My husband. Vic.

SAMANTHA

(just wants to lose it)

Yeah? What's Vic do?

AGENT BLAKE

... he's a botanist. Johns Hopkins...
crop studies... boring... evens us out...
he does plant genetics, I take bullets...

Tries to smile. So does Sam. A RINGING PHONE on the Tac-Sat
makes everyone jump. What if it's them? What if it's Ben? Sam
MOVES to the console, picks up, tentatively --

SAM

Hello...

INT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER - MID-AIR - INTERCUTTING

Ben's MID-AIR with the Marines, in the cargo hold -- hearing her
voice, his eyes SHUT, overcome with relief and longing:

BEN

Honey, it's me --

SAM

-- Ben, thank God --

BEN

You're safe? Marisa?

SAMANTHA

Fine, we're fi --

(STATIC)

-- we're locked in! Are you okay?

BEN

Am now --

SAM

She wants to talk to you --

Marisa grabs the phone, already starting to cry --

MARISA
Hi, Daddy --

BEN
Hi, Baby --

MARISA
(breaks down)
Please come get us, okay? Please.

Ben's heart's ripped from his chest; tries to sound strong:

BEN
I will, honey. I promise -- and I'll
never leave you again. I swear.

Sam gently moves the phone away from Marisa, trying to be a strong mother, and a strong, supportive wife:

SAM
(holding back tears; to
Ben)
Pushover...

BEN
(shaking his head, so
regretful)
I'm sorry...

SAM
We'll find each other, Ben... we always
do.
(beat)
Tell me what you need.

And that reaches him, through his desperation. Galvanizes him.

BEN
Access the State Department secure site,
find President Deng's itinerary --
where's his plane's landing?

EXT. FALLOUT SHELTER - OUTSIDE BLAST DOOR - CONTINUOUS

A WHITE-HOT FLASH: the BURNING BAR has cut several inches into the blast door's lock mechanism -- a LOUD CLANGING as the steel shifts, revealing a FIBER OPTIC CHAMBER in the wall ---

INT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER/ INT. BUNKER - INTERCUTTING:

The VIOLENT SOUND resonates over the comm line as the commandos BATTER the door to the bunker -- STATIC --

BEN
Sam? What's going on?

Sam turns to see Marisa shaking, crying, as Agent Blake sits up on the gurney, arm in a tourniquet, grabs her weapon --

SAMANTHA
(voice shaky)
They're trying to cut the phone lines--
(reading FASTER)
Chinese plane's diverted from JFK,
there's a storm watch, says he's been re-
routed to secure Air Force Base at--

-- TCCCHHHT! The phone cuts out. They've severed the fiber optic line outside. Instantly the room goes DARK, all lights OFF but the glowing monitors -- scary --

IN THE CHOPPER:

BEN
-- Sam? Sam?
(slams down phone)
SHIT!

GRAY
-- what happened--?

Ben stares into space, heart sinking... they could be dead...

BEN
... I don't know... which vow I'm
breaking...

Gray feels the man's pain... but looks at him very directly:

GRAY
You haven't broken one yet.
(beat)
Mr. President.

Ben looks up to meet Gray's stare: we have to do this. Ben nods, emotions in check -- together, they work the problem:

BEN
She said the plane was diverted to an air
base...

GRAY
Closest ones to the UN are Stewart or
McGuire--

BEN

State wouldn't risk the high profile at McGuire --

GRAY

Landing strip's restricted to US military aircraft --

BEN

(snaps around)

Stewart Air Force Base!

Sadowski shouts "Roger!" and the chopper BANKS HARD --

EXT. FOGGY BOTTOM (STATE DEPT. BUILDING) - DAWN

SUNRISE OVER THE CAPITOL...

A stream of men in SUITS and MILITARY UNIFORMS exit the State Department building. We TRACK THROUGH JOURNALISTS doing stand-ups, AIDES buttonholing OFFICERS, till we arrive at HAWTHORNE, somber but resolute, talking to a CNN JOURNALIST:

HAWTHORNE

The administration's just briefed the joint Congressional leadership on the building crisis in the Taiwan Strait, and -- I'm sorry, Ted, my heart's heavy right now and it's not for me to say what might've happened to the Pres--

He pauses, an "emotional" beat...

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

I'm proud to say I've come to know Ben Cahill. He wanted... wants us to stand strong when innocent Americans are killed by vicious forces across the world.

CNN REPORTER

Last week the President agreed to support your call to renew our strategic missile defense program --

HAWTHORNE

We share a commitment to the kind of weapons systems we need to keep our country safe... on that we won't be divided, we won't be bowed; the name Ben Cahill will stand for something very powerful in our history.

EXT. NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY, FORT MEADE - DAWN

FORT MEADE, home to the NSA. Buildings dwarfed by MASSIVE ANTENNAS, DISHES, DOMES --

INT. NSA CONFERENCE ROOM - DAWN

GENERAL BABBIT is stepping out of an intelligence briefing to take a call -- moves into a CORRIDOR, cell to his ear:

GENERAL BABBIT

Go --

QUENTIN KNOWLES (V.O.)

Four Marines at Quantico didn't show up for role call under the command of a Lt. Col. William Sadowski --

INT. PENTAGON - QUENTIN KNOWLES' OFFICE - INTERCUTTING:

QUENTIN KNOWLES closes the door to his office, talking urgently:

QUENTIN KNOWLES

Flight Office says he commandeered a medevac chopper thirty minutes ago. Turns out he and Cahill went to Annapolis together.

It hits: that's why Ben wanted to visit the base.

GENERAL BABBIT

Sonofabitch --

EXT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER - FOREST - DAY

The Medevac ROARS east, keeping low to stay out of sight --

INT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER - CARGO HOLD - CONTINUOUS

Sadowski, at the stick, shouts to everyone in the cargo hold over his headset:

LT. COL. SADOWSKI

Five minutes from base, load up!

Ben gets his game face on, strapping on body armor. The Marines do too. Gray notices that PRIVATE JOHNSON'S HANDS TREMBLE as he loads his weapon; he's trying to hide it, but he's failing --

GRAY

Hey.

(Johnson looks up)

Set your weapon on the deck.

(Johnson does)

(MORE)

GRAY (CONT'D)

Hold your hands up to your mouth. Blow on the tips of your thumbs, slows your heart rate down.

Johnson looks at Gray like he's nuts, trades looks with the other Marines. They're all tense.

GRAY (CONT'D)

Stop thinking about what you look like. I can hear your chest thumping over the engine.

A beat... and Johnson does it. We see a noticeable change in him. Already looks less tense. Surprised.

GRAY (CONT'D)

(kindly)

We good?

JOHNSON

Yessir, thank you.

And this seems to put them all at ease -- a fact that doesn't go unnoticed by Ben. Just as quickly, Gray's back to business:

GRAY

Eight mags a piece, lay your hands on 'em!

Each Marines feels his kit; counts eight mags:

MARINES

CHECK!

GRAY

Frag, lay your hands on 'em!

MARINES

CHECK!

GRAY

Aid kit, smoke, knife!

MARINES

CHECK!

BEN

They won't leave anything to chance. We have to assume the Secret Service ring around the President's plane is totally compromised.

(beat)

Shoot to kill.

INT. UNDERGROUND BUNKER - DAY

Still dark from the blackout; the only light a blue-glow from one of the monitors -- Blake, ghost-white, losing way too much blood but trying not to pass out, hands Sam a Barretta:

AGENT BLAKE

You need to take this --

SAMANTHA

-- no way --

AGENT BLAKE

Sooner or later, they will get through the door. We make a stand, or we die.

(beat; tries to smile)

I'll be with you the whole way.

Through terror, eye-lock: a look that galvanizes them both --

INT. NSA COMPLEX - SIGINT INTERCEPT STATION - CONTINUOUS

A dark place glowing with monitors and tech -- BABBIT BURSTS IN, rushes to a TECHIE running a TRACE on Ben's chopper:

GENERAL BABBIT

What's their flight path?

NSA SECURE OPS TECH

New York Center is radar contact, tracking towards Stewart AFB --

GENERAL BABBIT

(realizing: shit)

He's trying to get to the Chinese President. Get me a secure Comm Link to Jeremiah --

EXT. STEWART AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

A CHINESE MILITARY PLANE touches down on the tarmac. HEAVY SECRET SERVICE PRESENCE; Suburbans; snipers on rooftops.

Waiting with a DIPLOMATIC CARAVAN is MADAME SOONG LI, surrounded by Chinese agents as well as US Secret Service. As the plane taxis, we favor the AIC (Agent In Charge), AGENT JEREMIAH. Recognize him as the agent who brought Hawthorne the .38 when he played Russian Roulette with Ben.

As the plane slows to a STOP, STAIRS are rolled up to the door.

SUDDENLY, at a command post, Jeremiah hears the NSA SECURE OPS TECH'S VOICE over his earpiece:

NSA SECURE OPS TECH (V.O.)
01 this is 12, I have Babbit for you --

AGENT JEREMIAH
Go for Jeremiah --

GENERAL BABBIT (V.O.)
You have incoming UH-60 with Marines,
carrying "Traveller", ETA one-zero
minutes. Zero liabilities, confirm.

AGENT JEREMIAH
Confirmed.

Agent Jeremiah activates, barks orders into his wrist mic -- we
CUT AROUND THE TARMAC as his voice echoes over agent earpieces:

AGENT JEREMIAH (CONT'D)
All units this is 201, Priority One
Alert, standby to execute contingency
plan "PICKET." Inbound stolen UH-60,
occupants are heavily armed.

Instant lockdown: agents draw submachine guns, P-90s, MP5s --
slamming charging handles and bolts to the "closed" position,
extending the sling from under suit coats. SNIPERS take
position on rooftops. It's undeniably clear: "Contingency plan
PICKET" means "get ready for a big fucking shootout."

Jeremiah whips out "SPECIAL AUTHORITY" memo: the Secret Service
is taking "Supreme Command." To a BASE COLONEL:

AGENT JEREMIAH (CONT'D)
We're exercising national command
authority -- effective immediately, I'm
the highest authority on this
installation! Keep all non-essential
personnel away from the area, under no
circumstances are your people to engage!

INT. CHINESE MILITARY PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Same "lockdown" on the Chinese plane; CHINESE SECURITY AGENTS
REACT to blunt "lockdown" orders over radios:

SECRET SERVICE VOICE
We have a hostile situation developing --
all personnel are to remain in-aircraft.
Under no circumstances are you to take
aggressive action; this is a domestic
situation that'll be handled by the US
Secret Service --

EXT. TARMAC - CHINESE DIPLOMATIC LIMO MOTORCADE - CONTINUOUS

A frightened MADAME LI and DIPLOMATS are ushered into their bullet-proof limos as part of the emergency procedure --

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

We need you to get inside your vehicles --

MADAME SOONG LI

-- what's happening--?

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

Domestic situation. Get inside.

INT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER - MID-AIR OVER STEWART AFB - CONTINUOUS

As the chopper CIRCLES Stewart airfield, some of the Marines CROSS THEMSELVES. Sadowski quickly scans the field --

LT. COL. SADOWSKI

I'm gonna touch down 40 yards off the nose of the Chinese plane! It'll give you the best cover!

Gray SLAMS a mag into his M-4, pulls back the charging hammer, hands Ben a SIG 229 .40 Cal handgun:

GRAY

Just in case. Stay behind me, keep your head low -- no matter what happens, don't break ranks. If you don't make it to that plane, none of this means a goddamn thing.

BEN

That's not what worries me.

(beat)

You Army guys can't shoot for shit.

Ben grins. Gray grins. Two soldiers, in it together. Gray scans the Marines' faces, assessing confidence and attitude:

GRAY

Listen up! The President is asking us to put your asses on the line! You've never been tested under fire, but you're Marines -- and when challenged, a Marine meets that challenge knowing he's the baddest motherfucker in the fight! In 233 years the Corps has never let a Commander-in-Chief down, I know you won't today! Ooh-Rah!!

MARINES

OOH-RAH!

GRAY

We exit left side of the helo, pop smoke, hit the ground running! Rotors'll spread the smoke for concealment -- we're gonna bound toward the plane in fire teams: me, Soros, and Johnson are "A" Team! Katsnelson, Dispaltro, and Sadowski are Bravo! The President will travel with "A" Team. Keep a high rate of fire, stay spread out and make every shot count! No different than a Paris Island live fire... stick to the basics and you guys'll do fine!

(to Ben)

We're all with you, Sir!

Ben locks eyes with every man in the chopper. Seeing courage, fear, dedication. Men ready to die for him. Overwhelmed, he says simply, beyond grateful:

BEN

... thank you.

EXT. STEWART AFB - TARMAC - DAY

ANGLES AROUND THE TARMAC -- Secret Service Agents, weapons poised and ready:

AGENT JEREMIAH

Light em up --

-- and the agents OPEN FIRE, spraying bullets at the descending chopper: it's the starting gun for violence:

INT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER - CONTINUOUS

WORLD WAR FOUR ERUPTS: BULLETS POCKMARK THE CHOPPER, the hydraulic fluid line SPRAYS -- the transmission housing and engine take HITS, the chopper starts to ROCK WILDLY --

Sadowski FIGHTS the stick, lowering the helo toward the ground as the Marines fire back HIGH EXPLOSIVE ROUNDS from their M203 grenade launchers at vehicles + agents --

The rounds THUD THUD off tarmac, DETONATE -- UPENDING CARS -- Gray identifies a TARGET: a FUEL TANKER near where SS agents are taking cover -- aims his launcher:

GRAY

TANKER, 10 O'CLOCK, RANGE 300: USE THIRD
TICK DOWN ON YOUR SITES!

Gray, Dispaltro and Katsnelson swing their launchers out as Soros and Johnson grab them by their H-Harnesses to keep from falling -- they adjust sites and FIRE ROUNDS at the tanker --

EXT. STEWART AFB - TARMAC - CONTINUOUS

A round EXPLODES twenty feet left-of-target, but the other rounds HIT THEIR MARK AND THE TANKER DETONATES -- THAT'S WHEN THE MEN POP RED SMOKE GRENADES -- it mixes with the black smoke from the tanker, chopper rotors whipping it around the tarmac and visibility's reduced to near-zero:

GRAY
DISMOUNT! GO GO GO!

Katsnelson and Dispaltro LEAP from the chopper, position themselves behind a BAGGAGE CARRIER to lay down COVER FIRE --

THE REST OF THE TEAM LEAPS OUT, GRAY ACTING AS A HUMAN SHIELD FOR BEN -- SOUND OF MARINE RIFLES and MACHINE GUNS overshadows the Secret Service sub-machine guns and Sigs --

INT. MADAME LI'S LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Madame Li SCREAMS as BULLETS pepper the limo, but it's BULLETPROOF -- SECURITY AGENTS push her to the floor --

INT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER - CONTINUOUS

Sadowski TOUCHES DOWN -- tears off his headset and RACES to the Crew Chief window mount, gets behind a SWIVELLING 240 G. MACHINE GUN. Belt-fed, high rate of fire, a war zone weapon. ARMOR PIERCING ROUNDS SHRED SECRET SERVICE VEHICLES AND AGENTS, a serious piece of hardware that gives our team an advantage --

EXT. TARMAC - CONTINUOUS

Agents are getting HIT with frag/shrapnel, some take cover behind autos/helos but TIRES POP -- others REACT to the intense smoke grenades, coughing and hacking --

AT THE BAGGAGE CONTAINER:

DISPALTRO
TWO AGENTS, THREE O'CLOCK, ONE HUNDRED METERS, INSIDE HANGAR!

GRAY
ROGER! A-TEAM PREPARE TO BOUND FORWARD!

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

SNIPER -- SCOPE POV TRACKING OUR MARINES HIDING BEHIND THE BAGGAGE CONTAINER, TRYING TO GET LINE-OF-SIGHT:

SNIPER

I got six behind the baggage carrier,
combo M-4 and M203's with body armor!

EXT. TARMAC - CONTINUOUS

AGENT JEREMIAH at his post:

AGENT JEREMIAH

Soon as they move, turn the lights out!

BEHIND THE BAGGAGE CARRIER:

Gray spots TWO AGENTS at the base of the ladder leading to the Chinese plane, crouching behind the stairway rail and returning fire toward the chopper. Gray raises his weapon, aims, DROPS THEM BOTH in 3-round bursts!

GRAY

LADDER'S CLEAR! DISPALTRO! KATSNELSON!
SET HERE AND LAY DOWN SUPPRESSING FIRE!

They do; Ben readies his weapon -- Gray locks in on him:

GRAY (CONT'D)

DO NOT ENGAGE! STAY BEHIND ME!

Every instinct in Ben hates being sidelined as a non-combatant,
but it's the only choice:

GRAY (CONT'D)

ALPHA READY?!

MARINES

READY!

GRAY

MOVE!

Dispaltro and Katsnelson stay behind, LAY DOWN A WITHERING FIELD OF FIRE with their M203's -- THUMP THUMP BOOM BANG, giving A TEAM cover as they MOVE OUT, Johnson covering the left flank, Soros right; Gray up front, Ben just behind him, moving in a ZIG ZAG to make themselves tougher targets -- shooting from the shoulder, sweeping across their respective fields of fire:

GRAY (CONT'D)

MOVE MOVE, DON'T STOP!

SOROS

TWO AGENTS, ELEVEN O'CLO--

-- PFING! Soros is ROCKETED BACKWARD as the sniper gets a CLEAR SHOT through his skull -- FAST AND SHOCKING:

KATSNELSON

SOROS IS DOWN!

GRAY
KEEP MOVING!

INT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER - CONTINUOUS

SADOWSKI swivels the machine gun, SHREDDING THE ROOFTOP AND SNIPER ALONG WITH IT, until the gun's bullet belt RUNS DRY --

Sadowski tears an M-4 off the weapons rack, bravely LEAPS from the chopper, a daring sprint to catch up to our ground team --

EXT. TARMAC - CONTINUOUS

BEN, GRAY, THE MARINES RACE TO THEIR NEXT COVER POINT --

PFING! JOHNSON TAKES A ROUND IN THE SHOULDER AND GOES DOWN!
WOUNDED, NOT DEAD -- THIS IS HAPPENING TOO FAST! And suddenly
SADOWSKI's there, catching up, helping Johnson to his feet --

JOHNSON
AAAH, SHIT!!

SADOWSKI
KEEP MOVING MARINE!

Johnson grits his teeth as the group makes it behind a:

ROW OF LARGE CRATES

-- that start getting SHREDDED as bullets rip through them --
Ben rips open a first aid kit, helps tie and "Israeli" bandage
around Johnson's arm --

BEN
Went clean through! Hold this here --
(with good hand, Johnson
holds bandage as Ben
wraps)
Still got some fight in you?!!

JOHNSON
Get me back in this shit, Sir!!

Johnson does a one-arm mag change as the other Marines switch
mags on their rifles and reload 203's --

GRAY
CHANGING!

They shoot in rotation, working as a machine:

BEN -- peers through crates, gauges distance to the PLANE and
its LADDER -- SHOUTS TO GRAY:

BEN
2 AGENTS AT 2 O'CLOCK! 150 METERS OUT!
TAKE OUT 11 AND 9 O'CLOCK!

GRAY
(nods; into radio)
BRAVO TEAM: TARGET 2 O'CLOCK, 150 METERS--

KATSNELSON AND DISPALTRO:

Gray's VOICE over their earpieces:

GRAY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
-- 2 PERSONNEL BY LUGGAGE CART! PICK UP
YOUR RATE OF FIRE!!

KATSNELSON
ROGER THAT!

BEN AND GRAY:

UNDER LOUD PINGING GUNFIRE:

GRAY
WE GO IN A WEDGE, I'M ON POINT,
PRESIDENT'S IN THE CENTER! SMOKES!

They throw more SMOKE GRENADES into the "no man's land" between
them and the plane's ladder -- it BILLOWS RED --

KATSNELSON AND DISPALTRO provide cover fire, shooting at the
enemy positions Ben pinpointed as --

The unit MOVES OUT AGAIN, inching closer to the plane, using the
smoke for concealment -- they make it ten yards when suddenly --

CRACK! GRAY takes a bullet in the shoulder and GOES DOWN --

KATSNELSON takes one in the THROAT and drops like a rag doll --

BEN, SADOWSKI, and the wounded JOHNSON drop to their stomachs,
taking cover behind another vehicle but:

Gray lays there, exposed, out in the open, grimacing --

BEN ACTIVATES -- RUNS BACK AND GRABS GRAY, DRAGS HIM TO SAFETY
BEHIND A VEHICLE AS BULLETS SHRED PAVEMENT ALL AROUND THEM --

GRAY (CONT'D)
I TOLD YOU TO STAY PUT!

BEN
GIMME YOUR GODDAMN GUN!

Gray's wounded, but alive -- no choice, he hands Ben his M-4 and
two SMOKE GRENADES -- Ben readies the weapon, taking command, a
soldier again:

BEN (CONT'D)
 (to Johnson too:)
 I NEED YOU BOTH TO LAY DOWN A BASE OF
 FIRE FOR US, ME AND SADOWSKI'LL MAKE A
 RUN FOR THE BASE OF THE PLANE --

GRAY
NEGATIVE, I'M STICKING WITH YOU!

BEN
I'M NOT ASKING! JOHNSON ONLY HAS ONE
 GOOD ARM AND WE NEED COVER FIRE!

BULLETS SCREAM around them -- Gray knows he's right, shit!
 Moves himself into a good firing position -- so does Johnson, in
 incredible pain, still bleeding out:

GRAY
 SET!

JOHNSON
 SET!

BEN
 (to Sadowski)
 WE MOVE ON THREE! WHEN WE HIT THE BASE
 OF THE LADDER, POP OUR LAST SMOKE AND
 POUR IT ONTO THAT GROUP OF AGENTS AT 2
 O'CLOCK -- THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES WITH A
 DECENT SHOT AT THE TOP OF THE LADDER!

Ben THROWS his grenade into no man's land, it POPS and BILLOWS --

BEN (CONT'D)
 BOUNDING IN THREE! TWO! ONE! GO GO GO!

Ben and Sadowski RUN TO THE PLANE, Gray and Johnson cover them --
 AGENT JEREMIAH: POV THROUGH SNIPER SCOPE

Trying to track Ben through the smoke -- CROSSHAIRS align on the
 president and that's it, Ben's a dead man -- a millisecond
 before he pulls the trigger --

A ROUND STRIKES JEREMIAH'S LEFT TEMPLE, DROPPING HIM INSTANTLY.

GRAY!

Is back up, firing, RACING toward Ben and Sadowski as --

BEN GETS SHOT BY ANOTHER AGENT! Clear hit in the chest!

Gray SHOUTS "NO!" and he and Sadowski pull Ben to safety behind
 the TOW TRUCK in front of the Chinese Plane --

Ben's eyes WIDE, GASPING -- staring up at Gray who sees a FLESH WOUND on Ben's clavicle --

GRAY
KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN, STICK WITH ME, STAY
WITH ME! IT'S JUST A FLESH WOUND!

BEN
... think my rib's broken...
(grimacing against
intense pain)
I'm okay...

They're all underneath the plane now, just behind the stairwell.

Rate of fire starts to diminish, so many people are being
wounded and killed --

Remaining Secret Service agents move in, closing ranks.
Shooting is slowing down --

GRAY
(to Sadowski)
How many more smokes?!

SADOWSKI
(changing his rifle mag)
-- one --

INT. MADAME LI'S LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

MADAME LI -- POPS HER HEAD UP -- SEES THE BASE OF THE STAIRS --
IS THAT THE PRESIDENT?!

EXT. BASE OF CHINESE PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Sadowski POPS the last grenade and the stairs are ENGULFED --
Ben, Gray, and Sadowski SCRAMBLE UP, Ben stumbling forward, Gray
and Sadowski flanking him, walking up backward, providing cover
fire --

Rifles finally SPENT, they switch to secondary weapons as Ben
BANGS on the door, calling desperately to open it --

INT. MADAME LI'S LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Madame Li sees what's happening; a surreal, impossible moment,
but there Ben fucking is --

A crazy moment of CHOICE --

She grabs a WALKIE from a security agent, fumbles with it,
SHOUTS a "Safe Word" in SUBTITLED CHINESE:

MADAME LI
TU'ZI! TU'ZI! ("RABBIT") THE AMERICAN
PRESIDENT IS OUTSIDE THE DOOR!

INT. CHINESE PLANE - CONTINUOUS

The CHINESE SECURITY CHIEF reacts -- what the fuck is happening?! The Security Chief BARKS into the radio:

CHINESE SECURITY CHIEF
You must confirm his identity!

MADAME SOONG LI
I SEE HIM! I AM CERTAIN!

The Security Chief SHOUTS to agents at the back of the plane to get confirmation from their PRESIDENT, a man we don't yet see --

EXT. TOP OF STARWELL TO CHINESE PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Gray and Sadowski cover Ben, who keeps BANGING on the door --

And finally, IT OPENS! CHINESE SECURITY SHOUTING AT BEN, WEAPONS AIMED -- IT'S MADNESS -- GRAY AND SADOWSKI HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DROP THEIR WEAPONS AND PUT HIS HANDS UP AS THEY RUSH INTO THE PLANE --

THE DOOR SLAMS CLOSED BEHIND THEM AND --

INT. CHINESE PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Ben, Sadowski, and Gray are THROWN TO THE WALL and frisked -- it's painful for men with bullet wounds and broken ribs, hyperventilating, adrenaline off-the-charts, but they allow it without complaint. Then, for the first time in 10 straight minutes... it's SILENT.

The FACES of the Chinese Security detail register nothing less than shock... weapons still aimed... Gray speaks in CHINESE:

GRAY
*"Wushi Dao": we are soldiers who believe
honor exists. My president must speak
with yours for the benefit of both
countries. We are unarmed.*

Ben looks at Gray, stunned/thrilled he speaks the language. They SPEAK BACK to Gray in Chinese; Gray interprets:

GRAY (CONT'D)
They say you go to the cabin alone.

BEN
Tell them I need you to translate.

Gray repeats that. The agents radio to the back of the plane, to agents posted with the Chinese President. A beat, and they get approval. Gesture for Ben and Gray to follow...

And we're TRACKING with BEN and GRAY... limping down the aisle, Ben holding his broken rib, head high... Gray behind him...

INT. CHINESE PRESIDENT'S CABIN - DAY

They're lead into a modest stateroom. There stands CHINESE PRESIDENT DENG: a round-faced Man in his 60's, large-framed glasses; stoic, proper, and right now... in the Twilight Zone. As angry and frightened as he is confused.

A Gunman cradling an AK-47 stands in a corner. Another Gunman by a window.

Anything-happens-next pause... the two Presidents staring eye-to-eye for the first time... until Ben clears his throat. Trying not to let his painfully broken rib break momentum:

BEN

Mr. President. I know this must seem... impossible. It isn't how I imagined our first meeting either.

Gray translates, but no response from Deng. Just those hard, cold eyes, looking out his glasses at Ben.

BEN (CONT'D)

If I were standing where you are now, before an American President with torn clothes, a broken rib, bleeding on your rug...

(beat; understatement of all time)

I'd know something was very wrong.

Gray translates. Deng listens. Long, long wait. Finally -- as Gray RE-TRANSLATES:

GRAY FOR DENG

I await your explanation.

BEN

I can't give you one. Except to say that what you've just seen is enough to end my administration, and the way we run this country. Forever.

Gray translates, Deng replies:

GRAY FOR DENG

Why do I deserve such powerful ammunition?

BEN

Take it as a branch of the olive tree... for killing a member of your politburo. For lying about it. For bringing you to the brink of war.

Gray translates, Deng pauses at Ben's open admission... but instead of conciliation, it brings a curt reply:

GRAY FOR DENG

Telling me these things, to my face... takes great arrogance. When at this moment, I am the one with the guns.

BEN

And I'm the one who ordered five young men to their deaths, just to stand before you.

The emotion in his voice compels the room to silence. There's a direct line from the deepest part of him to what comes next -- Gray quietly translates:

BEN (CONT'D)

Sir... I came into this job thinking people like you and me, we make the rules. We don't. There are a lot of people, with a lot of power, who speak for us, who act for our countries... I even started thinking it barely mattered who sat behind my desk.

(beat)

It does matter. Because it has to. And if we just allow our countries to drift to war... if we keep letting other people pull our strings... if we can't sit down as men, as human beings, and bring a little bit of judgement and compassion to this... then we are just puppets.

(beat)

As your own proverb says, "crisis too is opportunity."

Deng consider a long beat. Speaks; Gray translates:

GRAY FOR DENG

If you are a puppet, then your intentions are irrelevant. And war may be inevitable.

BEN

... you're right. And if it's inevitable, with twenty times the operational nuclear arsenal, we'll crush you.

(beat)

Neither of us want that.

Gray translates; and it's quiet. Deng weighs his options, assessing Ben...

GRAY FOR DENG

How can I trust you to follow through with your intentions? A President who must dodge his own country's bullets? How will you unload them?

Finally, all he can say right now:

BEN

As best I can. With your help.

Gray translates; President Deng hard-eyes Ben... and we don't know WHAT he's gonna do...

INT. COMMAND BUNKER - DAY

On one of the MONITORS -- a CNN reporter standing in a field, STEWART AIR FORCE BASE in the far distance:

CNN REPORTER (ON TV)

... Stewart Air Force Base has been completely sealed off, we can't bring our choppers within five miles of the place. We do know the Chinese plane has been idling on the tarmac for nearly two hours now... and there are rumors -- no confirmation of this -- but there are rumors that President Cahill is alive and has somehow arrived on the base and commandeered a number of soldiers --

-- CLANG! CLANG! Other monitors show the agents outside are NEARLY THROUGH the blast door --

And we SNAP TO Sam, Blake, and Marisa as they SCRAMBLE BACK toward the:

CREMATORIUM

Blake pulls the STEEL DOOR closed and locks it -- UPENDS a table and PUSHES IT against the door to block it as:

INT. FALLOUT SHELTER - DAY

BANG! The white hot BURNING BAR SHATTERS the bunker lock --

The Secret Service commandos streak through in a skirmish line, advance cautiously from the corridor, submachine guns ready --

INT. CREMATORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Sam, Blake, and Marisa scurry to the back of the crematorium, taking position behind a counter. Sam sees's Blake's lids getting heavy, she's an inch from losing consciousness --

SAMANTHA

Hey, hey! Don't you pass out on us --

Blake, woozy, demonstrates the Barretta:

AGENT BLAKE

It holds 15 rounds... when the mag's empty... slide goes back like this... stay low, point and shoot...

SAMANTHA

NONO, STAY AWAKE! I CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!

EXT. FALLOUT SHELTER - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CREMATORIUM - CONTINUOUS

The commando unit presses on, gun muzzles ready to unload. Rounding the corner. Team leader holds up a clenched fist, signalling the squad to stop. Sees the CLOSED CREMATORIUM DOOR. Points: in there.

As they INCH toward the door --

INT. CREMATORIUM - CONTINUOUS

BLAKE PASSES OUT! Marisa's sobbing. Sam puts an arm around her, scared to death herself but trying to seem strong...

SAMANTHA

It's okay... shhh, we're gonna be oka--

CLANG! A HORRIFIC THUD as the commandos try to SLAM THROUGH THE DOOR! Marisa SCREAMS! Sam readies the gun, tears streaming down her own face, this is it --

They're hidden behind the counter and can't see the door --

Sam pulls Marisa closer --

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Close your eyes, Baby...

CLANG! As we PUSH IN on Sam and Marisa, until it's just their TERRIFIED FACES IN MAXIMUM CLOSE UP...

One more hit and the door CRASHES OFF ITS HINGES --

And then --

A BARRAGE OF GUNFIRE! DEAFENING, A FIREFIGHT -- WHAT'S HAPPENING?! -- WE DON'T KNOW, CAN'T SEE, BECAUSE IT'S ALL PLAYED THROUGH SOUND ON SAM AND MARISA'S FACES...

Until it finally STOPS... and it's SILENT... and through the smoke, Sam and Marisa realize they're still alive... MALE VOICES shouting "Clear!" And then --

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Make room for the President!!

Samantha's eyes open in confusion --

BEN (O.S.)
Sam?!

The sharpest gasp and the gun is already out of her hands clanking to the floor. She and Marisa are up and moving to...

... BEN, just outside the doorway, into his arms, sweeping them up, hugging them with primitive, desperate force, we can see the terror sag from their shoulders and they're sobbing, as he kisses their faces...

And now we reveal ALL THE SECRET SERVICE AGENTS are strewn across the corridor, shot dead by Ben's men: STEWART AFB MILITARY PERSONNEL, lead by GRAY and SADOWSKI.

THEY push past the bodies, over to Blake...

GRAY
We've got a heavy bleeder, she's still alive, get E.M.T.s in here!

Rapid-fire movement. Blake's lifted onto a gurney. And Ben and his family are frozen there, holding each other.

Over Sam's shoulder, Ben meets eyes with Gray -- and with it, a smile of brotherhood. Deepest gratitude. And for Gray, it's the "win" his soul needed.

A CHOIR HYMN begins...

INT. UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

President Deng stands before the General Assembly, addressing greatly relieved dignitaries. Deng speaks in Chinese, though we also hear, at much greater volume, the voice of a TRANSLATOR:

PRESIDENT DENG

... I do not seek war. I seek stability, prosperity, peace among the family of nations. And I am gratified to say, so does my American counterpart, President Benjamin Cahill.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

The First Family, huddled together, re-enters the White House... surrounded by Gray, Sadowski, Dispaltro, and the Stewart AFB MILITARY MEN... their protection...

PRESIDENT DENG (V.O.)

I have agreed to demilitarize the Taiwan Strait; decouple Chinese nuclear missiles from their warheads. In return for these offerings, President Cahill has agreed to withdraw American carriers and...

INT. SEDAN - MOVING - DAY

Hawthorne in CLOSE UP. Staring out from the backseat, the emotional currents raging within him, intensely suppressed...

MSNBC REPORTER (V.O.)

President Cahill is alive and well and very much in command, having brokered a landmark peace and burdensharing agreement with the People's Republic of China...

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - PRE DAWN

HYMN CONTINUES as Agent Blake lies in a hospital bed, eyes closed. Sam sits in a chair bedside, asleep. Slowly, Blake's eyes flutter open. She moves a little. It stirs Sam, who sits up abruptly. They meet eyes. Blake manages to clear her throat... a very hoarse:

AGENT BLAKE

Not bad... Sam.

The use of Sam's first name takes her by surprise. Then Blake does something we've never seen: she SMILES.

Sam puts a hand over Blake's. They stay there like that...

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAY

THREE CASKETS, ADORNED IN AMERICAN FLAGS.

An Honor Guard funeral for GONZALES, HETTRICK, HICKS. Large photos on prominent display by open graves. As HYMN CONTINUES, we witness a FLAG FOLDING CEREMONY. Posthumous medals conferred by Ben. Purple Hearts in repose in velvet boxes on caskets.

RIFLES CRACK SKYWARD: a 21-Gun Salute. F-22's RIP THROUGH THE SKIES --

GRAY -- watching, apart from the mourners. Down the hill. Eyes full of emotion, but the face still stoic. Closure.

BEN -- SNAPS A SALUTE as the coffins lower. Finally, turns to find Gray... but he's GONE. A ghost.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAWN

Ben, cleaned up, sharp suit, moves confidently down the corridor toward the Oval. It's a confidence we haven't quite seen before... a sense he finally owns this place.

TECHNICIANS are in the process of REMOVING ALL SECURITY CAMERAS from the walls.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ben closes the door behind him. Finally, alone. A PHONE RINGS on the desk across the room. He moves toward it. Red light BLINKING. Doesn't sit, but lifts the phone from its cradle...

PHONE VOICE

Mr. President, asset is in place and awaiting your orders.

BEN

You have a 'go.'

PHONE VOICE

Please hold the line, Sir --

INT. HAWTHORNE'S ESTATE - DAY

In the study, the clan debates. Hawthorne's mind is elsewhere. His cell RINGS. LCD says: "BLOCKED." Hawthorne answers:

HAWTHORNE

Yeah...

BEN (V.O.)

You were right, Jim.

Hawthorne PERKS UP and --

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - INTERCUTTING:

We're slowly TRACKING AROUND BEN to reveal his face in CLOSE UP, on the other end of the phone:

BEN

... the country can't know the truth.
Not now. It'd unravel us.

HAWTHORNE

(smile + contempt)
Finally found some common ground, have
we, Ben?

On that name, everyone in the study stops talking. Very quiet.

BEN

Make you a deal. And I guarantee it's
the best one you're gonna get.

HAWTHORNE

All ears...

BEN

You resign your Senate seat, effectively
immediately. Spend more time with your
family, work on your shuffleboard serve,
however you wanna spin it to the press.
Quietly and with dignity.

HAWTHORNE

Lemme stop you there--

BEN

-- you get your friends to do the same.
Resign all judgeships, Congressional
seats, all private contracts, and we're
back to 27 amendments.

(beat)

But I want depositions. Every detail of
everything you've done, stretching back
60 years. And they'll stay sealed...
'til long after you're dead, and I'm just
another face on a stamp.

HAWTHORNE

(contained)

This your spin on an ethics seminar?

BEN

History has to find out. One day.

(beat)

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Only way to make sure it never happens again.

Hawthorne stews on the offer, darkens. At the end of his rope:

HAWTHORNE

How 'bout we stay right where we are -- where we can protect this country, in ways you're too young and green and League-of-Women-Voters to understand.

(beat)

But you get to keep your Presidency -- three and a half years, seven and a half if you're lucky. And that's the best deal you're gonna get.

Quiet. Ben's face runs the gamut, weighing conscience and duty. Finally, speaks with resolve:

BEN

Sorry to hear that... because treason's punishable by death.

HAWTHORNE -- IN THIS INSTANT -- REALIZES HOW FATALLY HE'S UNDERESTIMATED BEN CAHILL. LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW, SCANNING THE FOREST LINE IN A PANIC -- MATCH TO:

EXT. HAWTHORNE'S ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

HAWTHORNE'S SCARED FACE THROUGH BINOCES. Reveal: GRAY, in the forest. He arms a DETONATOR and --

INT. HAWTHORNE'S ESTATE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Losing control, Hawthorne starts to tremble under the force of imminent justice:

HAWTHORNE

You think you can touch us? You're a pissant nobody! There isn't a contingency we haven't thought of!

BEN

... except one.

(beat)

You have a gas leak.

(the kicker)

Welcome to the inside game.

CLICK. Hawthorne stares at the dead line --

EXT. HAWTHORNE'S ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

Gray hits the detonator --

KA-BOOM!!! THE HOUSE EXPLODES! A SHOCK WAVE AND SHRAPNEL
BLAST, BLACK SMOKE ROILING INTO THE SKY. WE FOLLOW IT UP...
UP... UP...

GRAY. Watching. Payback. Picks up a phone:

GRAY
It's done, Sir.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ben takes that in. No regrets.

BEN
Thank you, Colonel.

And with deep feeling...

GRAY
Thank you. Mr. President.

Ben hangs up. Looks to the chair behind the desk.

Takes the seat.

The leather upholstery creaks quiet welcome as Ben settles back.

Turns, sitting with his back to us now. Beyond him, the sun
burns out everything except the silhouetted image of the
President. And as MUSIC SWELLS we:

FADE OUT.

T H E E N D

