

THE LIE FACTORY

Written by

Joel Sinensky

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The following is a true story.

Including the lies.

OVER **BLACK:**

WE HEAR THE AMBIENT SOUNDS OF THE NEW YORK CITY STOCK EXCHANGE. AT FIRST, IT SOUNDS NORMAL. BUSINESS AS USUAL.

BUT THEN... THE ARRAY OF VOICES GROW LOUDER, MORE FRANTIC, AS **TEXT** APPEARS ON SCREEN...

*On Tuesday, October 29, 1929, the DOW Industrial Average dropped 12%, the largest single-day drop in American History. The country soon plunged into a period of extreme poverty and joblessness. This time became known as **THE GREAT DEPRESSION**.*

AND THE SOUNDS FROM THE FLOOR ARE NOW REACHING A FEVER PITCH, HUNDREDS OF VOICES, ALL SHOUTING OVER EACH OTHER, UNTIL, JUST AS SUDDENLY, THE SOUND **CUTS OUT**, AND WE SLAM TO --

INT. AMERICAN LEGION CHAPTER - SAN FRANCISCO, CA - DAY

A VERY SAD LUNCH BUFFET. LUKEWARM TRAYS OF GREY, UNAPPETIZING FOOD LINE THE WALLS. Tired-looking MEN move down the line, piling slops of food on their plates...

TEXT: SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 1932.

We are in a LARGE, MOSTLY EMPTY COMMUNAL ROOM. Along with the buffet, there are several folding tables and chairs. ACROSS ONE OF THE WALLS, a BANNER READS:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!

Near the front of the room stands a stern ADMINISTRATOR -- PATRICK -- who is checking each man's credentials before allowing him to take a plate. He checks in several vets, and then he's greeted by a man who looks very out of place:

MAN (CLEM)

Good afternoon!

This man is in his early 30's, tall, and hangdog handsome. He's carrying several heavy bags with him, and has a winning, if aggressive, smile on his face. This is CLEM WHITAKER.

PATRICK

Veterans card, please.

CLEM

I'm not a veteran. But I must thank you for your service. All of you.

PATRICK

This lunch is for veterans only.

CLEM
Of course. I'm a reporter. I'm here
to cover the event.

PATRICK
(Confused)
You're here to cover... *this*?

CLEM
I am.

PATRICK
What paper?

CLEM
Capitol News Bureau.

Patrick stares at him. No recognition.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Well, it's not *technically* a
newspaper. It's a wire service.

Patrick stares back. Still nothing.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Have you heard of the Montebello
Messenger? Yorba Linda Star? The
Redondo Beach South Valley Breeze?

PATRICK
... No.

CLEM
Well, they exist, and I write for
all of them at once.

Patrick stares at him for another beat, then SHRUGS, stepping
aside. Clem nods thanks, and moves into the room. He OPENS
his various bags, and begins to ASSEMBLE A LARGE CAMERA.

Patrick watches this, perplexed. The half-empty hall, the
drab buffet, the sad-eyed men, chewing in silence... it all
looks exceedingly, unbelievably dull. The opposite of news.

BUT THEN, just as Clem fits the final LENS onto his camera,
the DOOR SWINGS OPEN and about THIRTY MEN ENTER THE HALL...

These men are ragged, bearded, wild-eyed. They bypass the
check-in station, and move straight in for the food...

PATRICK
Excuse me! Gentlemen!

BUT THE MEN have now descended upon the buffet with ANIMAL FEROCITY, and immediately begin STUFFING their faces... several have satchels, which they PACK full of food...

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Gentlemen! This is a lunch put on
by the American Legion! Unless you
have your veterans card, please
step away from the buffet!

One of the bearded men -- JACKSON -- steps away from the food and approaches Patrick. He speaks to him under his breath. There is a desperate edge to his voice.

JACKSON
Look. We're just trying to eat.

PATRICK
(Unmoved)
You need to leave. All of you.

Jackson doesn't move. The two men stand, eye-to-eye, for a tense moment. Patrick steps aside, intimidated. Jackson calmly returns to the buffet, and resumes eating.

Patrick, fuming and embarrassed, turns and moves hurriedly towards the exit, PASSING BY --

CLEM, notebook in hand, who has been closely watching all of his unfold. He SNAPS a couple of photos of the men at the buffet. And then, from across the room...

He makes eye contact with Jackson. Who gives him a small nod.

They know each other.

And then, just as we realize this, Patrick RE-ENTERS the building, followed by several UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS...

OFFICER
HANDS IN THE AIR! This can be easy
or it can be difficult!

Several of the men immediately comply, but just as many stay planted, now desperately SHOVELING FOOD in their mouths, trying to eat as much as they can, as fast as possible...

ONE OF THE OFFICERS steps towards the buffet, removing his CLUB from its holster... he approaches one of the MEN, who is busy STUFFING HIS FACE, and doesn't notice anything, until...

The Officer NAILS him in the back of the leg!

The MAN falls to the ground, SCREAMING IN PAIN -- the other OFFICERS PULL OUT their clubs, ready for battle -- IN RESPONSE, a bunch of the men begin to RUSH TOWARDS THE COPS, throwing food, throwing punches, AND THEN, BEFORE WE KNOW IT -

A FULL-SCALE RIOT IS TAKING PLACE!!

The two sides are now GOING AT each other, food is FLYING, it's CHAOS -- men are running for the doors and climbing out of windows to escape arrest -- various ELDERLY VETERANS are now DIVING under the tables, ducking for cover, AND --

WE FIND CLEM, in the eye of the storm, WRITING in his notebook and SNAPPING PHOTOS with his camera -- his eyes are now ALIVE with focus, with excitement, with PURPOSE -- and on A BLAST OF LIGHT FROM HIS CAMERA, we CUT TO --

INT. CAPITOL NEWS BUREAU - EDITOR'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

A small, messy office, piled high with paperwork. RALPH, a perpetually aggravated newsman, sits at a desk. Clem ENTERS, and triumphantly lays a fresh pile of papers before him.

CLEM

Ready for publication, with
exclusive photos.

Ralph glares at Clem, not even bothering to look at his work.

RALPH

And this wouldn't happen to be
about the riot that took place
earlier today at the American
Legion chapter on fourth?

CLEM

... How did you know? Did someone
else get the story?

RALPH

Clem...

CLEM

That's impossible. I was the *only*
reporter there. Whatever anyone
else has, Ralph, it's *secondhand*--

RALPH

(Interrupting)

I *know*, because I've been receiving
calls all afternoon from the jail.

(MORE)

RALPH (CONT'D)
Men who claim that Capitol News
Bureau should pay their bond,
because a *reporter with us* happened
to show up early this morning at
the unemployment lines and spread
word about the veterans lunch.

CLEM
(Relieved)
So no one else got the story?

Ralph rubs his eyes. A moment.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Look. All I did was tell a group of
very hungry men about the location
of some *free food*. That's
practically a public service!

RALPH
Except you got them BEATEN and
ARRESTED!

CLEM
I didn't *know* that would happen--

RALPH
Of course you did. Why else would
you do it?

CLEM
(Beat)
This is a *good story*...

RALPH
I'm sure it is. But I won't put our
name behind this crap.

CLEM
Ralph, *c'mon*, you--

RALPH
And you're fired.

For the first time, Clem goes silent. A moment.

RALPH (CONT'D)
You should be thanking me. It's
better you get out now.
(Beat)
Or don't thank me. I don't care.

CLEM
(Quietly)
What will I do?

Ralph looks him over, showing a measured sympathy.

RALPH
I don't know. You're a talented
man. You're tenacious. But I don't
know what the hell it is you're
meant to be doing.
(Beat)
But I know you're not a journalist.

ON CLEM, shell-shocked, trying to process this, we GO TO...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Clem, later that night, in a crowded restaurant. He is SAWING
away at a big steak, letting out all of his frustration on
this innocent piece of meat.

Seated across from Clem, watching with some concern, is
SHERIDAN DOWNEY, mid-30s. Handsome in a professorial way.
Sheridan watches Clem chow down for a beat, silent, then...

SHERIDAN
... Have you told Harriet?

CLEM
I will.

SHERIDAN
When?

CLEM
When I have a new job.

SHERIDAN
You shouldn't lie to your family.

CLEM
I'm not *lying to her*. I'm--
withholding information.
Temporarily.

Sheridan has more to say about this, but he lets it go.

CLEM (CONT'D)
(Sadly)
It was a good story too...

SHERIDAN

Well, you can't blame him for not publishing, can you? It's not real.

CLEM

Of course it's real. *Everything* I wrote happened.

SHERIDAN

Because you *made it happen*.

Clem waves this off. He continues eating.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Are you going to look for a newspaper job?

CLEM

No. Maybe. I don't know.

SHERIDAN

What else would you do?

CLEM

Is your firm hiring?

SHERIDAN

Be serious.

CLEM

Who says I'm not?

SHERIDAN

I think you've been arrested a few too many times to be an attorney.

CLEM

(Grinning)

Maybe.

(Beat)

Well, maybe I need to take this as a sign. This is my chance to do something new. To do what I've always dreamt of.

SHERIDAN

And what's that?

CLEM

I don't know. But I'm quite sure it's *something*.

(Beat)

Any ideas?

Sheridan breaks into LAUGHTER. Clem joins in. And as the two friends LAUGH TOGETHER, giddily, we SLAM TO --

TITLE CARD:

THE LIE FACTORY

EXT. REDDING, CALIFORNIA - COUNTRY ROADS

RURAL CALIFORNIA. A vast, open, empty landscape. An immediate contrast with the bustling atmosphere of San Francisco.

TEXT: REDDING, CALIFORNIA

EXT. REDDING COMMUNITY CENTER - REDDING, CA - NIGHT

A worn community center. Outside the building, a SIGN READS:

TOWN MEETING TONIGHT!

With special guest Leone Baxter, Manager of the Redding Chamber of Commerce

INT. REDDING COMMUNITY CENTER - MAIN MEETING ROOM - SAME TIME

Inside, the room is OVERFLOWING with a very rural, very pissed-off crowd. They are chattering amongst themselves. The podium up front is EMPTY, everyone still waiting on...

INT. REDDING COMMUNITY CENTER - BACKSTAGE - SAME TIME

LEONE BAXTER, late 20s, is pacing, trying to modulate her breath and fight off an encroaching panic attack. She is slight and striking, with an Audrey Hepburn bob.

We can hear the CROWD in the next room, growing LOUD and RESTLESS. Leone takes one more DEEP BREATH, and then she steps out onto the stage --

INT. MAIN MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room quiets as Leone steps up to the podium. She speaks to the packed house, her raw nerves showing:

LEONE

Hello, hello. Thank you all for coming. For those who don't know me already, my name is Leone Baxter, and I manage our Chamber of Commerce.

(MORE)

LEONE (CONT'D)
 During these challenging times,
 we've decided to start holding open
 meetings, where I make myself more--
 available to everyone, so I can
 hear your concerns. Who has
 something they'd like to bring up?

Nearly EVERY SINGLE HAND IN THE ROOM GOES UP. Leone gulps.

LEONE (CONT'D)
 (Pointing)
 Yes, sir?

A MALE FARMER in the front row stands. A tough and rugged man, who has been stripped raw by these hard times.

FARMER
 I've lived in Redding all my life.
 My father came to California
 looking for a better life, and he
 passed down his dairy farm to me.
 (Growing emotional)
 Last week, the bank came and they--
 they took my farm. Just took it.
 Told me I can't even live there
 anymore. My father's farm. My
 father's house. They just took it
 away from me. Just like that!
 (Angry)
 It's these damn bankers that did
 this to all of us! Why the hell do
 they get to do this?! It's THEIR
 fault this is happening!!

Several other FARMERS APPLAUD and SHOUT OUT in anger -- Leone tries to quiet them, and respond to the question --

LEONE
 I--- I'm sorry that this happened
 to you, and I understand your
 frustration, I do, but when it
 comes to foreclosure of property--

Another ANGRY FARMER STANDS, and interrupts --

FARMER #2
 Far as I'm concerned, it's those
 Wall Street CROOKS that should be
 out on the streets, not us! I've
 got to burn my own corn crop this
 year to keep the house warm, what
 am I supposed to sell?!

Leone tries to respond, but another FARMER shouts over her --

FARMER #3

At least you've still GOT your
crops, half my field is dead! It
hasn't rained in six weeks!

FARMER #1

At least you've still GOT YOUR
FARM! Just wait til they take that!

FARMER #4

Not to mention all these damn OKIES
coming into town, trying to take
over our property, eat our food! We
need to keep them OUT!!

FARMER #2

Damn right! Keep those dirty tramps
out of California!!

And now the farmers are all SHOUTING OVER each other -- Leone
has totally lost control of the room -- she tries to talk,
but her voice barely rises over the CACOPHONY OF NOISE --

LEONE

Everyone-- if you-- please--

Amidst this, we spot someone we recognize, looking very out
of place in this room: SHERIDAN DOWNEY. He is seated in the
back row, watching the chaos unfold with great interest...

LEONE (CONT'D)

(Desperately)

Gentlemen, please... if we could,
just... if you could...

(Then)

EVERYONE SHUT UP!!

The room goes SILENT. Leone takes a moment, startled by her
own power. Then, she speaks again, taking command of the
room. As she speaks, Sheridan leans forward in his seat...

LEONE (CONT'D)

I know this is hard. I know it
feels like there's no end in sight.
And I know it feels like no one
cares. But-- I care. I care about
this town. I care about all of you.
And I promise you, I am going to do
everything I can to keep our
community afloat. Because this is
my home too. And because *I care*.

(Beat)

But I can't control the banks, and
I can't control the rain.

For a moment, the room is silent. Then...

FARMER #3
Why the hell NOT?!

And, just like that, the YELLING RESUMES. Leone stares out, helpless, as the room once more DESCENDS INTO CHAOS...

INT. MAIN MEETING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The meeting is over, and the last few citizens are trickling out. Sheridan stands over an utterly ravaged SNACK TABLE. Only some pastry crumbs and burnt coffee grounds remain.

He glances towards Leone, who is still speaking to a small group of concerned farmers. The last few disperse, and she is left alone. Sheridan approaches her.

SHERIDAN
Miss Baxter?

LEONE
Yes? How can I help you?

SHERIDAN
First, you can relax. I'm not here to register any complaints. In fact, I'm not from Redding.

LEONE
Yes, I... didn't think you were.

SHERIDAN
What gave it away?

Leone takes a look at Sheridan's clothes, his watch, his shoes that have never touched dirt.

LEONE
... Would it offend you if I say everything?

SHERIDAN
(Smiling)
My name is Sheridan Downey. I'm a lawyer. In from San Francisco.

LEONE
And what brings you to Redding?

Sheridan glances back to the snack table, then --

SHERIDAN
Have you had anything to eat
tonight?

INT. SMALL TOWN RESTAURANT - LATER

Sheridan and Leone are now seated, with burgers and coffee.

SHERIDAN
It was all the over-speculation,
that's what started it. As soon as
the banks started placing bets with
other people's money, they got
reckless. It seems so logical,
looking back now--

LEONE
Yes, I suppose--

SHERIDAN
If only they could have learned
their lesson before this damage.
(Takes a bite)
That's the reason why I've shifted
my firm's focus. I couldn't remain
in real estate law, not with all
that's happening in our country. I
needed to do something. Make a
difference. Like you.

LEONE
(Smiling)
I just needed a job.

SHERIDAN
I don't entirely believe that.

LEONE
You'll forgive me, Mr. Downey, I
still don't quite understand how
any of this relates to Redding.

SHERIDAN
Well. You said tonight that you
can't control the rain. But that
isn't entirely true.

Sheridan pulls out a PAMPHLET from his pocket and lays it on
the table. On the front, it reads:

THE CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT
A "New Deal" for California Water and Power!

Leone picks up the pamphlet and takes a look, as...

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Did you know that three-fourths of rainfall in both the Sacramento and San Joaquin basins reaches the ocean within forty-five days? That's three-fourths of *all rainfall*, not being used for irrigation, not servicing farms or factories or *families*--

LEONE

(The pamphlet)

The Central Valley Project... ?

SHERIDAN

It's a new infrastructure initiative. The largest ever proposed for California. It would fund the construction of new dams, new canals, new treatment centers... an entirely new map for the distribution of water in California. And it would be *designed* from the ground up to serve water to the people who need it the most. People like those gentlemen, who just spent their evening yelling at you.

LEONE

You're very knowledgeable.

SHERIDAN

I hope so. It's up for a referendum vote, and I've been hired by the United States Bureau of Reclamation to make sure it passes.

Leone looks up at him, surprised. She realizes, all of the sudden, that she's seated here with an "important" man.

LEONE

I... see.

SHERIDAN

That's what brings me to Redding. It's important for me to hear citizens from different areas of California voice their concerns, in their own words. Unaware they're even being observed.

LEONE
You make them sound a bit like
laboratory rats.

Sheridan is embarrassed by this. Leone smiles, calmly.

LEONE (CONT'D)
Well, you certainly have my vote.

SHERIDAN
Thank you, but I'd like a bit more
than that. I'd like you to come to
San Francisco and help us win.

LEONE
... Excuse me?

SHERIDAN
You were very impressive tonight.

LEONE
They hated me.

SHERIDAN
It was a... challenging room.

LEONE
Look, Mr Downey--

SHERIDAN
You understand the needs of
agricultural communities. You can
speak to their concerns. Not to
mention, you *don't* look at them
like lab rats.

LEONE
Well, I-- I'm flattered--

SHERIDAN
I'm glad.

LEONE
--but I *have* a job. And I'm very
grateful for it. I can't just--

SHERIDAN
Take a leave of absence. Just until
after the election.

(Beat)

(MORE)

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

If this passes, it will do more good for the people in this community than anything you can accomplish here. If you really care, this is how you help them.

Leone takes another, closer look at Sheridan. A moment.

LEONE

How long until the vote?

SHERIDAN

Three months.

LEONE

And who exactly are you up *against*?

Sheridan takes a moment. He purses his lips.

SHERIDAN

Well... that's the bad news.

CUT TO:

INT. PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC - PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

A SLEEK, HANDSOME PRESS ROOM. A large group of REPORTERS are gathered before an empty podium. Across the wall, in LARGE, BOLD LETTERS, we see exactly where we are:

PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC, LLC

A slick, smarmy PRESS REPRESENTATIVE steps up to the podium.

PGE REP

Thank you all very much for coming.

(reading from a statement)

Pacific Gas and Electric is a *California company*. We have been a steady steward of our state's resources for many years. We are proud, even during these uncertain times, to have remained one of the top employers in the state. We stand in firm support of any legislation designed to boost our economy. But The Central Valley Project would be, without question, a *massive and dangerous government overreach...*

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - SAME TIME

Sheridan stands at the front of the small, dilapidated office space. An immediate contrast with the sleek PGE press room. There are about 12 people crammed in, Leone amongst them.

TEXT: "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS. SAN FRANCISCO, CA.

The PGE REP's VOICE is now TINNY, coming from a SMALL RADIO:

PGE REP (O.S.)
It is our dear hope that President
Roosevelt and his administration
will focus their energies on
creating *new jobs*, rather than
disrupting industries that are
already providing a valued service
for our state, and well-compensated
work for our fellow citizens...

Sheridan CLICKS OFF the radio.

SHERIDAN
Pacific Gas and Electric, always
fighting for the little guy.

There is a smattering of LAUGHTER from the crowd.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
PGE has a stranglehold on water and
power in our state. And they will
devote a tremendous amount of
resources into keeping that
monopoly intact. But we have
something more powerful on our
side: the truth. And so, what we--

Sheridan is interrupted by a LOUD NOISE from the back of the room. Everyone TURNS to find Clem, arriving late. He was trying to sneak in, but the door SLAMMED SHUT behind him.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Nice of you to join us. This is
Clem Whitaker. He'll be writing
advertisements for us. He's a...
journalist. Of sorts.

Clem GRINS at this assessment, giving a little bow. As he moves to a snack table, and pours himself some coffee...

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Our first step is reaching out to
Politicians. State Senators,
Congressmen, Mayors...
(MORE)

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
if we can get *them* on our side,
even just a few, that will--

Clem COUGHS, LOUDLY, from the back of the room. Sheridan stops short.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
... Yes?

CLEM
(Playing innocent)
What?

SHERIDAN
Something to add?

CLEM
Oh, well, if you're *asking*, I don't know that seeking out endorsements from politicians is an entirely wise use of our time.

SHERIDAN
And why is that?

CLEM
Because they're scum?

There are a few scattered LAUGHS from the staff. Sheridan smiles as well, trying to keep it light --

SHERIDAN
Well, that's a bit of a generalization, don't you think?

CLEM
Is it?

SHERIDAN
There are *some* good ones.

CLEM
I disagree. There are times when their spineless, nearly psychopathic instinct for self-preservation happens to align with your own interests, and there are times when it doesn't. Anything else is a story we tell ourselves.

The room has now gone quiet. It's tense. Sheridan is uneasy being questioned like this in front of his staff.

SHERIDAN

Thank you. Your opinion is noted.
May I continue?

CLEM

(Who's stopping you?)
Of course.

Sheridan, a bit flustered now, fumbles with his notes. The rest of the staff slowly turns back to him. Everyone, that is, except Leone, who keeps her eyes on Clem...

EXT. CAMPAIGN HQ - BUILDING ENTRANCE - DAY

Later that day. Clem stands outside the building, smoking a cigarette. Leone steps out and stands next to him. They nod to one another. They stand, in silence, for awhile. Then --

CLEM

Hello, I'm--

LEONE

You shouldn't have done that.

CLEM

... Excuse me?

LEONE

I'm sorry.
(Holds out her hand)
Leone Baxter.

CLEM

Clem Whitaker.

They shake.

LEONE

I don't mean to be rude.

CLEM

Well, that's good of you.

LEONE

I just don't think it's wise for you to have arguments like that in front of the whole staff.

CLEM

Did you disagree with what I said?

LEONE

That doesn't matter.

CLEM
(Laughing)
It doesn't??

LEONE
No. You disrespected Mr. Downey.

CLEM
Mr. Downey is one of my oldest friends. He hired me because he knows I'll tell him the truth.

LEONE
That may be true. But when you challenge him like that in front of everyone, you undermine the organizational structure of the campaign. And this campaign will have enough challenges as it is.

CLEM
(Beat)
Did he... send you out here to tell me this?

LEONE
No. He didn't send me to tell you. I'm just-- telling you.

A moment. Clem offers her a cigarette. A peace offering.

LEONE (CONT'D)
No, thank you.

He lights up another for himself.

LEONE (CONT'D)
So, you're a reporter?

CLEM
Was. I've changed careers.

He produces a business card, hands it to her. It reads:

Clem Whitaker
Founder, President, & Chief Creative Officer
The Clem Whitaker Advertising Agency

LEONE
How long ago was this?

CLEM
A few weeks.

LEONE

(Bemused)

And, tell me, how does one change careers, and then immediately own and operate their own firm?

CLEM

Ah, a very good question. Would you like to know my secret?

LEONE

I would.

CLEM

The way to own your own advertising firm is... *you tell people* that you own your own advertising firm.

A moment.

LEONE

I see.

CLEM

I'm telling you. It works.

LEONE

(Softly)

For you, maybe.

(Beat)

Nice to meet you, Mr. Whitaker.

Leone starts back towards the office.

CLEM

Miss Baxter!

(She stops, turns)

But did you agree with what I was saying to him?

LEONE

Of course I did.

And with that, Leone EXITS back into the building. Clem stares after her, and takes a long drag of his cigarette.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - FRONT ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Clem arrives home, stepping into the front door of his modest, cluttered, but charming little household.

CLEM
(Calling out)
I'm home!

FEMALE VOICE (HARRIET)
We're in here!

Clem walks down the hallway, and into the kitchen --

INT. CLEM'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Where he finds his wife, HARRIET, finishing up dinner. They kiss. Their two young kids are running around on the floor.

HARRIET
How was it?

CLEM
Brutal, absolutely brutal.

He moves to a bar cart and starts fixing himself a stiff drink. Harriet watches him pour, a bit concerned.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Would you like one?

HARRIET
No, I'll-- wait until after dinner.

Clem ignores this, takes a hungry gulp.

CLEM
You can't imagine these people.
It's a room full of Sheridan's! All
drowning in their own self-
righteousness. It's *torture*--

HARRIET
Clem.
(Beat)
You need to do well at this job.

CLEM
... I know that.

HARRIET
So maybe you can try to be a bit
more agreeable? A bit less like...
yourself?

CLEM
Very nice.

HARRIET

You know what I mean. Besides, the people you're working with can't be *all bad*.

CLEM

(A moment, then)

No, I suppose not.

HARRIET

Good! I'm glad to hear that.

She lifts a dish out of the oven.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Kids! Dinner is ready!

Harriet EXITS the kitchen, the kids following her out. Clem stays back, and takes a BIG GULP of his drink.

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - SAN FRANCISCO, CA - DAY

The next day, back in the ramshackle headquarters of the "YES ON CVP" initiative. The office is tiny, messy, and crammed full of people. An underdog HQ for an underdog campaign.

At the front of the room is Sheridan, who is on a very frustrating phone call. Clem and Leone are both seated nearby. There are no walls or dividers. The two of them, as well as everyone else, can hear every word of his call...

SHERIDAN

Yes, but -- Congressman, I -- If you just *look* at the *significant* benefits this will bring to your constituents... yes, but... I understand your dilemma, *but...*

Clem exchanges a pointed look with Leone, as...

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

You know what?? Can we drop the charade? I know you're on PGE's payroll, we both know that's the *only reason* you would support this, so how about you just say it!

He SLAMS down the phone, angrily. Everyone in the office gets back to work, pretending they weren't listening in.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(To Clem)

Don't say anything.

CLEM
I wasn't! I won't.

SHERIDAN
PGE is going to outspend us twenty to one. We need to do *everything* we can to get our message out.

CLEM
(Can't help himself)
But politicians are bottom feeders. They *always* go where the money is.

SHERIDAN
So we shouldn't even *try*?

CLEM
It's a waste of time!

SHERIDAN
Ok, so... what else? Town meetings? We could travel around the state, speaking to voters *directly*, try to-

CLEM
How many people do you reach at one of those? If it's *supremely* well-attended? Fifty? At that?

Sheridan is clearly getting fed up, but Clem just keeps going... Leone watches it all unfold, growing concerned...

CLEM (CONT'D)
PGE has billboards all over the state! Ads in every paper. They can reach that many people in an hour! We can't waste our time on that--

SHERIDAN
(Angrily)
So what do you suggest we DO?!

The office goes SILENT, surprised by Sheridan's outburst.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
(Letting it out)
You know, Clem, you love to sit there and criticize, love to point out what *isn't* working. But you're not a journalist anymore!

CLEM
I *know* that--

SHERIDAN

We're trying to make something
HAPPEN here. You need to have some
actual IDEAS! You can't just sit on
your high horse and mock everyone
and assume you're doing your part!

CLEM

If you really feel this way, why
did you hire me?!

SHERIDAN

Because I felt sorry for you!

Clem goes silent, humiliated. Everyone else in the office is
now, unabashedly, listening in. A tense moment.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Clem, I hired you to write ads.
Just-- write the ads. Okay?

Clem nods, chastened, and pulls out his notebook. The HUM of
activity gradually resumes in the office.

Clem looks at his empty notebook, and then around the room.
The cluttered space. The small, anxious staff. This campaign,
days old, that already feels defeated. *What's the point?*

CLEM

(Standing)
I'm going to lunch.

SHERIDAN

It's eleven in the morning!

CLEM

I'm an overachiever!

Clem EXITS the building in a huff. Leone turns to Sheridan.

LEONE

He has a bit of a problem with
authority.

SHERIDAN

That's a nice way of putting it.
(into the phone)
Hello, is the Councilman available?
This is Sheridan Downey, from the
campaign against Proposition 1...

As Sheridan continues, Leone glances back towards the door...

INT. DINER - LUNCHTIME

Clem sits alone at the bar of a bustling diner. Leone ENTERS, crosses the room, and sits next to him. She signals for coffee. The two of them sit, side-by-side, saying nothing. Then, after a pause --

CLEM

This campaign is a loser, you know.

(She looks to him)

Don't get me wrong. I'm glad for the work. But Pacific Gas and Electric *owns* this state. As soon as they decided to fight this thing, it was over. I don't know what Sheridan is thinking, putting his name behind this.

LEONE

He believes in it.

CLEM

(Shaking his head)

Exactly.

Pause.

LEONE

What newspaper did you write for?
In your past life?

CLEM

I didn't write for any one paper. I worked for a wire service.

LEONE

What does that mean?

Clem sighs. He's sick of having to *still* explain this.

CLEM

What it *means*, is I'd write something and then I'd get it published in local papers all over the state. It's the sort of thing that someone like Sheridan looks down on, but when you add up all the different readerships in all those different places, I was getting nearly as many eyes as any piece in the LA Times. Not to mention, there were some weeks I got paid *fifteen times* for one piece. Now who's the smart one?

Clem resumes eating. He clearly still has a chip on his shoulder about this. But as Leone stares at him, a new look crosses her face... we hold on her, watching her mind work...

LEONE

How did that work, exactly?

CLEM

What do you mean?

LEONE

You just... you would write a story, and then... mail it to these papers? And they would publish it?

CLEM

Yes. More or less.

Pause.

LEONE

And do you still know most of the editors at these papers... ?

CLEM

Of course. Why?

Leone stares at him. Then, after a pause, Clem's eyes widen. And as they both BREAK INTO A BIG SMILE, we GO TO --

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - PRIVATE OFFICE - LATER

Clem and Leone are now locked in a small, back office with Sheridan, excitedly pitching him the idea --

CLEM

These papers are understaffed. The editors are *desperate*. If we send them good copy, they'll publish.

SHERIDAN

(Unsure)

Okay... but, wouldn't it--

CLEM

Not to mention, we can tailor the copy to different districts, different economic drivers... tell them *exactly* what they need to hear to get them to vote for us...

LEONE

I live in a small town. The people there don't trust the government, not anymore. They don't trust news rolling down from the big cities. But they trust what they read in their *local paper*.

SHERIDAN

Yes, this all makes sense, but-- we're not a news agency.

CLEM

So? We create one!

SHERIDAN

How do we do that?

LEONE

We say that we're a news agency.

Clem turns to her, beaming. She smiles back.

SHERIDAN

How much would this cost us?

CLEM

That's the beauty of it. It costs nothing. *We're* the ones providing a service.

(Grinning)

We could even charge *them*.

And ON SHERIDAN, now also beginning to smile, we go...

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - MAIN ROOM - LATER

TO Clem, standing before Leone and a small group of STAFFERS. They all listen to him, rapt, scribbling down notes, AS --

CLEM

For farming papers, we talk about how the Central Valley Project will lower produce prices... for factory towns, talk about how it'll help redistribute water resources... focus in on how this bill will *directly affect* the readers, nothing *else*... that needs to be the *whole story*...

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - DAY - VARIOUS

SHOTS OF: Clem, Leone, Sheridan, and the rest of the staff WRITING and PRINTING COPY, SORTING them into piles, and MAILING them out to various SMALL-TOWN NEWSPAPER OFFICES -- the work is all tagged with "CALIFORNIA FEATURES SERVICE" --

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - DAY - ANOTHER TIME

We find Clem on the phone, pacing, smoking cigarettes, as --

CLEM

Jerome! Clem Whitaker... yes, that's correct, I'm no longer with Capitol News Bureau, but what you may NOT have heard is that I've started my very own shop, The California Features Service... well, it's quite similar to what you're used to, except the copy is better, it comes in quicker, and we're offering it at a fraction of the price, how does that sound?

(Laughing)

You know, I thought you might... so what else is new? How are the kids?

INT. VARIOUS NEWSPAPER OFFICES

THE NEWS PACKETS arrive at various newspaper offices. We see the editorial staffs opening the packages, pulling out the copy, reading it over, passing it around...

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - MORNING

Clem walks in one morning, and he finds Leone with --

A HUGE MAP OF CALIFORNIA ON THE WALL. There are color-coded TAGS marking every local paper and periodical in the state, as well as surrounding lists and charts that catalogue each paper's readership numbers, the cities and towns they serve, the economic drivers of each population...

Leone is focused on her work, and she doesn't notice Clem. He just stands there, taking it all in, amazed...

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICES - VARIOUS

We now see VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS EMERGING from their PRINTERS -- articles BY CLEM WHITAKER and LEONE BAXTER have been given prominent placement on various FRONT PAGES -- the articles are formatted and placed seamlessly within each paper, indistinguishable from the regular copy...

SHOTS OF: THESE SAME NEWSPAPERS, NOW BEING LAID DOWN ON A LARGE TABLE... WE CAN'T YET TELL WHERE WE ARE, WE JUST SEE A BIG WOODEN TABLE, AND THE NEWSPAPERS, ONE AFTER ANOTHER...

EXT. NEWSSTAND - DAY

At a newsstand, we find a copy of "SAN FRANCISCO DAILY NEWS" with a front-page headline: "SUPPORT THE CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT FOR THE GOOD OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA!" The byline reads: "BY LEONE BAXTER, THE CALIFORNIA FEATURES SERVICE"

REVERSE to REVEAL: Leone, standing on the sidewalk, flush with excitement at seeing her name in print...

BACK TO: THE SAME LARGE, WOODEN TABLE... MORE SHOTS OF NEWSPAPERS, ONE AFTER ANOTHER, BEING LAID DOWN...

INT. LOCAL COMMUNITY MEETING - DAY

Sheridan arrives at a community meeting, expecting the same small, sad crowd as usual... but this time it is JAM-PACKED, overflowing into the aisles... many of the attendees are clutching copies of their LOCAL NEWSPAPER in their hands...

BACK TO: THE SAME WOODEN TABLE, NOW TOTALLY COVERED IN NEWSPAPERS... VERY LITTLE OF THE ORIGINAL SURFACE IS VISIBLE BENEATH... AND WE SLOWLY PAN UP, TO REVEAL THAT:

INT. PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC HQ - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

We are in a large, handsome CONFERENCE ROOM. The PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC NAME and LOGO is festooned across the wall...

The room is full of OLD, WHITE MEN in EXPENSIVE SUITS... they are taking in all these small-town papers, this sudden *avalanche* of negative publicity, seemingly out of nowhere... and as the men look to one other, grimacing, we CUT TO --

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - NIGHT

The assembled troops are gathered, waiting on the election results. Everyone is drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes, pacing. The room is tense. It's going to be close.

TEXT: **DECEMBER 19, 1933 ("California State Special Election")**

We find Clem, Leone, and Sheridan, all gathered around a single telephone. Waiting.

CLEM

It's odd, isn't it? Waiting on election results and actually caring which way it goes.

SHERIDAN

You've *never* cared before?

CLEM

(as though this explains it)

I was a reporter.

Sheridan is appalled by this. But before he can formulate a response, the PHONE RINGS. All of the conversation in the room comes to screeching HALT.

There's a SECOND RING. Leone grabs the phone, answers --

LEONE

Hello?

She listens. Everyone in the room is watching her, nervous, holding their breath... and then, without saying a word, a BIG SMILE spreads across her face...

AND ON THAT CUE, the room BURSTS INTO A CELEBRATION -- the desk drawers and cupboards are thrown open, revealing all sorts of HIDDEN BOTTLES OF ALCOHOL, AS --

CLEM PULLS LEONE INTO A HUG. They embrace, and then he steps away to pour himself a drink, leaving Leone slightly FLUSTERED... and on this JOYFUL, JUBILANT SCENE, we SLAM TO --

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - BACK ROOM - MORNING

The next morning. We are now in the messy aftermath of the celebration. The office is *destroyed*.

We find Clem, sprawled out on a couch, dressed in the same clothes as the night before. He rouses awake, and peels himself off the cushions. He is *brutally* hungover.

He slowly moves down the hallway and into the main room, where he finds --

INT. "YES ON CVP" CAMPAIGN HQ - MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Leone, seated, with a cup of coffee. She looks crisp and immaculate, a sharp contrast with Clem's thoroughly hungover demeanor. A packed suitcase is sitting by her side.

CLEM

Ah. Good morning.

LEONE

I thought you might have slept here. There's coffee.

Clem pours a cup, topping it off with some leftover whiskey.

CLEM

What's in the bag?

(A moment)

Wait. Are you-- ?

LEONE

Yes. I wanted to say goodbye.

CLEM

(Shocked)

You're leaving? Today?

LEONE

I need to get back home.

CLEM

I-- I'm sorry, I knew you'd leave, eventually, I just didn't realize you'd-- that it would be so soon.

(Beat)

We *just* won. Don't you want to... enjoy it? A little?

LEONE

I have a job. I need to get back.

(Gently)

For me, changing careers is not just a matter of printing new business cards.

She holds out her hand to him. He stares at it. They shake, both holding back a good deal of emotion.

LEONE (CONT'D)

It was nice working with you.

CLEM
Yes. You too.

Leone takes another beat, then picks up her luggage and starts off. Clem watches her go, helpless, until --

CLEM (CONT'D)
Baxter!

She stops, turns.

CLEM (CONT'D)
What if you-- didn't go back to
Redding? What if you stayed here?
And worked with me?

A moment.

LEONE
You're asking me to work for the
Clem Whitaker Advertising Agency?

CLEM
We can change the name.

LEONE
Is this a real offer?

CLEM
Yes. Absolutely.

LEONE
Because it sounds like you just
thought of it this moment.

CLEM
I did. But it's still real.
(Pause)
You and I... we have something
here. Don't we?

Leone stares at him, unblinking... then, they are interrupted by a SUDDEN KNOCK at the door. They turn, startled.

CLEM (CONT'D)
(Calling out)
Who is it?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Pacific Gas and Electric.

They both stare at the door. Then, they turn to each other, and speak in a clipped, urgent whisper --

CLEM

What is he doing here?!

LEONE

How should I know?

(to the door)

One minute!

CLEM

You're going to *let him in*?!

LEONE

Of course!

CLEM

... Should I get a bat?

LEONE

A BAT?!

CLEM

PGE is going to lose *millions*. They send one of their goons to the office, you don't think it might be a smart idea for me to answer the door with a bat?!

LEONE

This is a major corporation, Clem, it isn't the mob.

CLEM

Oh? You don't think it's *possible*?

LEONE

No, of course it is, but they wouldn't send someone in broad daylight, the morning after their referendum fails. That's incredibly sloppy. If PGE wants us dead, it won't happen until at least a few weeks from now.

CLEM

That's not-- entirely reassuring.

LEONE

I'm letting him in--

CLEM

Baxter, wait--

But before he can stop her, Leone OPENS THE DOOR, and --

LEONE

Hello.

A BROAD-SHOULDERED MAN steps in, clad in an impeccably tailored suit. He screams big, corporate money, and feels immediately out of place in this dinky, messy office.

PGE MAN

Are you Clem Whitaker?

CLEM

I am. This is Leone Baxter.

The PGE MAN nods to her, dismissively, and steps further into the room. He looks around. Not impressed.

PGE MAN

My name is Fred Whitman. I'm with Pacific Gas and Electric.

CLEM

Yes, I believe I've heard of them.

LEONE

What can we do for you?

PGE MAN

My employers would like to know the budget of your campaign.

LEONE

I'm sorry. We can't share that.

CLEM

Less than yours, though.

Leone shoots Clem a look -- *stop that*.

PGE MAN

We've heard forty thousand.

Clem and Leone say nothing. The PGE MAN's eyes wander over to LEONE'S MAP OF CALIFORNIA, still fully operational. He goes silent, looking it over with great interest...

CLEM

Excuse me, Mr. Whitman? Would you mind terribly telling us why you're here? Besides to steal trade secrets, of course.

The PGE MAN turns back. He places his briefcase on a table, and CRACKS it open. Clem and Leone both FLINCH, fearful, for a moment, that he's about to pull out a gun. But instead...

He pulls out a STACK OF PAPERWORK. Contracts.

PGE MAN
Pacific Gas and Electric would like
to hire your services.

LEONE
(Beat)
... Excuse me?

PGE MAN
We are prepared to offer your
company one hundred thousand
dollars per year as a retainer.

Clem and Leone gawk at him. He waits to see if they're going
to say anything else. They aren't.

PGE MAN (CONT'D)
Please give us your decision by the
end of the week.
(Then)
Congratulations on your victory.

And with that he grabs his empty briefcase, clips it shut,
and EXITS. The contracts remain, sitting on the table...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO RESTAURANT - EVENING - A FEW DAYS LATER

Clem and Leone now sit opposite Sheridan, who is reading
through the same contracts, shaking his head in amazement...

CLEM
What do you think?

SHERIDAN
Well, I think it's an attempt to
silence their critics with money,
which-- I can't say I'm *surprised*,
exactly, but I never thought it
would be so *brazen*--

CLEM
I mean the offer. Is it standard?

SHERIDAN
Are you... *considering* this?

CLEM
We are.

We?? Sheridan looks to Leone. She hesitates...

LEONE

With the capital this provides, we would be able to build out the business, invest in permanent office space...

SHERIDAN

Wait, you-- you're going to work for the Clem Whitaker Ad Agency?

LEONE

Well--

CLEM

We're changing the name. Let me know if you've got any ideas.

Clem is trying to lighten the mood, but Sheridan doesn't respond. He is clearly horrified by all of this.

SHERIDAN

But... this is *politics*. You can't just... switch sides.

A moment, then...

CLEM

Why not?

Sheridan is about to respond, but... he says nothing. There's no reason to give. At least, none that will matter to Clem.

Just then, their WAITER ARRIVES, placing plates of food in front of each of them. Clem digs in right away.

While Clem is focused on his food, Sheridan gives Leone a look across the table. He's deeply disappointed in her. She shrinks under his glare.

Sheridan begins to eat. Leone sits there for a beat, processing all of this. Then, she starts eating as well. The three of them eat, now in total silence, as we...

FADE TO **BLACK**.

EXT. CITY STREETS (VARIOUS) - SAN FRANCISCO, CA - DAY

AN UNEMPLOYMENT LINE. HUNDREDS LONG. It curves around a building and spills into the streets...

TEXT: **SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 8 MONTHS LATER.**

As we move down the line, we start to notice something... numerous men in line, men of all different types, are reading copies of A YELLOW PAMPHLET.

TEXT: **AUGUST 29, 1934.**

We move through different parts of the city, and this same YELLOW PAMPHLET continues to appear... it's being read by the destitute homeless and the recently unemployed... by restaurant workers and businessmen at their tables... by mechanics, by shopkeepers, by farmers, by housewives... it's EVERYWHERE... and then, we GO TO --

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES (VERSION 1) - DAY

Our first look at Clem and Leone's new office space. It's comfortable, but just large enough for the two of them. Across one of the walls, we see the name they landed on:

CAMPAIGNS, INC.

We PAN AROUND the space, spotting a variety of PRO-PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC POSTERS and PAMPHLETS, until we LAND ON --

Leone and Clem, who are both reading the *same yellow pamphlet*. And if we couldn't quite make out the pamphlet's title before, we can clearly read it now:

I, GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA, AND HOW I ENDED POVERTY:
A TRUE STORY OF THE FUTURE

BY
UPTON SINCLAIR

They read in silence. Both riveted. Clem looks up at her.

CLEM
It's brilliant.

LEONE
Brilliant.

CLEM
And the more that comes true...

LEONE
The more they'll believe the rest.

They continue reading. After a beat, Clem looks up again.

CLEM

But still... can you believe *he's*
their nominee?

LEONE

Yes. I can.

(Beat)

Should we call them now?

CLEM

No, not yet. Let them sweat first.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A large, ornamental conference room. And before us sits... A WHOLE BUNCH OF OLD, WHITE MEN. The men are all reading copies of the SAME SINCLAIR PAMPHLET. The room is DEAD SILENT.

TEXT: THE CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR'S MANSION. SACRAMENTO, CA.

We MOVE DOWN the table, taking in each man's face, all of them registering a different combination of confusion and disdain, until we LAND ON --

FRANK MERRIAM, 50's, THE GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA. A rotund man with a gleaming bald head, he has the bearing of, and several similar personality traits to, a big, fat baby.

He is also reading the pamphlet, a look of deep irritation grafted onto his face. After a beat, he looks up.

MERRIAM

Can someone explain to me what the
hell I'm reading?!

Everyone else at the table LOOKS UP at the same time. And then... silence. Nobody wants to be the first to speak. Several at the table look to ASA CALL, mid-40's, one of the Governor's senior campaign operatives. He hesitates.

ASA

Well, Governor, it's a... well...

(Beat)

Terrence, can you take this?

TERRENCE, a jittery young AIDE seated at the far end of the table, sits up in his chair. He gulps.

TERRENCE

Well, Governor, it's a memoir--

ASA

It's NOT a memoir--

TERRENCE

Right, no, it's not, it's-- what I mean is, Sinclair, he *claims* it's a memoir, but... as you can see, he *dates* the book as though it was written in 1938, so his, the *idea* is-- is that he's writing it *from the future*, and he's talking about all the things he's done in the past, only-- except-- the past, in this case, is actually... now.

Pause. A grumpy OLDER ADVISOR turns to Merriam, incredulous.

OLD ADVISOR

It's a scam, Governor! Doesn't make any damn sense!

Merriam waves off his old friend, looks back to the table --

MERRIAM

Ok, so... what does it say he does?

ASA

Well, sir, it says Sinclair will decide to run for Governor of California, which he did. And that he'll win the Democratic primary--

TERRENCE

Which he has.

Asa shoots Terrence a sharp look. Terrence shuts the hell up.

ASA

Yes. Which, as of today, is true.

Merriam looks down the pamphlet, now with a growing unease...

MERRIAM

... What does it say he'll do next?

ASA

Well... it says that he will defeat you in the general election in November... and then become Governor... and then he'll, uh--
(Coughs)
End all poverty in California.

MERRIAM

But... none of that has *happened*.

ASA
No, sir. Absolutely not.

MERRIAM
So how is he allowed to say that?!

Asa has no answer. No one does. Pause.

TERRENCE
He's a writer, sir. They're allowed
to say anything.

ON MERRIAM'S FACE, deeply unsatisfied with this answer...

INT. ASA CALL'S OFFICE - LATER

Asa, back in his office Several California papers are spread
across his desk, all with variations on the same headline:

"UPTON SINCLAIR IS THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR GOVERNOR"

A moment later, his SECRETARY peers into the room --

SECRETARY
Mr. Whitaker is on the line.

ASA
(Nodding)
I'll take it.
(Into phone)
You're calling later than usual.

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICE - SAME TIME

Clem stands, with the phone at his ear. Leone holds a second
receiver, silently listening in on the call.

CLEM
How's are things over there today,
Mr. Call? Nice and quiet?

Asa chuckles, darkly. Clem winks at Leone.

ASA
What can I do for you?

CLEM
Just calling to see if you've given
any further consideration to
bringing us on as consultants for
the Governor's reelection campaign.

ASA
You are persistent, Mr. Whitaker.

CLEM
And your boss, I must assume, is
looking for you to bring him some
fresh ideas. Today.

Beat. This is true. Asa considers.

ASA
The Governor is resistant to
bringing in new people.

CLEM
I understand that.

ASA
Especially people he doesn't know.

CLEM
Of course. Who wouldn't be?

Beat. Asa looks down at the newspapers again.

ASA
I hope you won't take offense to
this, but I'm still not entirely
sure what it is you do.

CLEM
We're an advertising agency.

ASA
Right. You've said that. Except I'm
not in the sales business.

A moment.

CLEM
Are you sure about that?

INT. FANCY STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

A few days later. Clem and Leone now are seated at a steak
dinner with Governor Merriam and Asa Call. Merriam, with a
wet mouthful of meat, dominates the conversation --

MERRIAM
Look, I run my own campaign. That's
how I've always done it. That's how
everyone does it.
(MORE)

MERRIAM (CONT'D)

I don't see why I should be spending funds on two people I don't know, with no associations to the Republican Party, who are claiming to do a job that I have never once needed in the past.

CLEM

We understand your trepidation, Governor. And what you describe is how *normal campaigns* have always been run. But this is not going to be a normal campaign.

LEONE

And if you haven't accepted that, it's time.

Merriam glares at Leone, not happy about being spoken to like this by a woman. He pointedly speaks only to Clem.

MERRIAM

Politics is a dirty business, Mr. Whitaker.

CLEM

Yes, I've heard that.

MERRIAM

I need to be surrounded by people I know. People I can trust. I don't know you. I don't know what you stand for. I don't know what you *believe in*. Why should I *trust you*?

The question lands with a thud. Leone has no answer. But Clem does. He leans forward, and delivers his knockout punch...

CLEM

Because I run a *business*, Governor. You're right, politics is dirty. Politics is messy. It's *personal*. But business is... pure. It's about success and failure. That is the only thing we care about. And if you hire us, I can assure you, we will spend our every waking minute from now until election day working to make sure you succeed, and that Sinclair's little lark into politics is a total, colossal, and utterly humiliating failure.

(Beat)

(MORE)

CLEM (CONT'D)

You don't need to trust us. All you
need to do is trust the market.

And there it is. Merriam tries to keep a poker-face, but he's
impressed. And as he takes another big bite of steak, WE GO --

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - OUTER AREA - EVENING

TO THE OUTER AREA of an UPTON SINCLAIR RALLY. We find Clem
and Leone, amongst the arriving crowd, taking it all in...

The atmosphere is RAUCOUS. It feels less like a political
rally and more like a carnival. There are gaudy decorations,
Sinclair lookalikes... barkers hocking food and
merchandise... and ALL OVER, EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK, you see the
SAME WORD, over and over and over again:

E P I C

("END POVERTY IN CALIFORNIA")

This is the word of the campaign, the word of the movement.
It's on signs waving in the air, displayed across food tents,
on the covers of self-published newspapers and periodicals...

Clem and Leone wander through, taking in the sheer energy and
enthusiasm all around them. One of the EPIC VOLUNTEERS leads
the surrounding crowds in a CHANT --

CROWD

VOTE THE PLAN THAT IS NOT SLOW,
VOTE SINCLAIR TO LET IT GO!

They are passed by a COSTUMED PARADE, the MARCHERS waving
signs through the air and SINGING HYMNS, AS --

CLEM

Look at this!

Clem picks up a newspaper from a stand: "THE EPIC TIMES"

CLEM (CONT'D)

They put out their own paper...
they don't even *hide* it...

They flip through the paper together, amazed, as the electric
atmosphere roars all around them, taking us TO --

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - AUDIENCE / STAGE - EVENING

An outdoor stage stands empty, as the crowd pours in. Clem
and Leone take their seats, each with a pile of materials.

LEONE

When do you think people were this
excited to see Merriam speak?

Clem SNORTS with laughter, AS --

A SPOTLIGHT BLASTS ONTO THE STAGE. THE CROWD IMMEDIATELY
STARTS CHEERING, as an ANNOUNCER'S VOICE BOOMS OUT --

ANNOUNCER

The next Governor of California,
UPTON SINCLAIR!

And the crowd is now UP ON THEIR FEET, ECSTATIC, AS --

UPTON SINCLAIR steps onto the stage.

He is clad in an ALL-WHITE SILK SUIT, cutting a striking
figure. He takes in the thunderous applause.

Then, once the crowd quiets down, he begins. He has an
intense, magnetic stage presence, falling somewhere in
between a college professor and a televangelist --

SINCLAIR

Hello, my friends. My name is Upton
Sinclair. And as of quite very
recently, I am the Democratic
nominee for Governor of California.

The CROWD CHEERS AGAIN. Sinclair waits for them to quiet.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

My wife and I came to California in
1922. And as soon as I arrived
here, I felt something I had never
felt, not in all my years. I felt
that I had come *home*.

(Beat)

I look at our state now, and it
saddens me, deeply. There is no
other way to say it: our economy is
broken. We have now more than one
million persons dependent upon
public charity for their EXISTENCE!

The audience BOOS!

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

The Federal Government is now
supporting the banks, the insurance
companies, the railroads.
Bankruptcy is not a question of
years, it is a question of *months*.

(MORE)

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Our people deserve to earn a fair wage, and they deserve to live a dignified life. We need to PUT OUR PEOPLE BACK TO WORK!

The audience CHEERS!

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Now, the problems we face in California are not for lack of resources. We have millions of acres of the most fertile land in the country. We have the best climate in the world. We have factories, equipped with machines that are the state of their art...

As the speech continues, Leone flips through the reading materials in her lap... Clem is watching Sinclair, rapt...

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

And yet, these factories stand IDLE, and this land is UNUSED, and our skilled workers are UNEMPLOYED, living off the government's wallet, because they have been told there are NO JOBS FOR THEM!

The AUDIENCE emits a THUNDEROUS BOOOOOO -- BACK IN THEIR SEATS, Leone pulls out a PEN, and UNDERLINES a passage...

LEONE

(to Clem)

Lets go.

Before Clem can ask why, Leone starts moving down the aisle. Clem follows, pushing his way through the throng, AS --

SINCLAIR

The wealth of our country, my brothers and sisters, the *real* wealth, is NOT for us. The wealth is *not* being shared... it is being *hoarded*... it is being *imprisoned* at the very top of the economic ladder. A few persons own our nation's great industries, the rest of us own the DEBT.

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - OUTER AREA - EVENING

Leone exits the stadium, Clem running to catch up with her --

CLEM

Wait! Where are you going??

LEONE

This is useless. We already know everything he's going to say.

CLEM

Alright, so... what *should* we do?

Leone shows Clem the pamphlet she was reading. It contains a BIOGRAPHY OF SINCLAIR. And right in the middle of the page, she has underlined one key sentence:

He has written over forty books.

Clem looks up at her, understanding immediately, as WE GO --

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - AS BEFORE

BACK to Sinclair, who has the crowd in the palm of his hands:

SINCLAIR

I'd like you to imagine a world...

INT. CITY LIBRARY - DAY - LATER

Clem and Leone now walk down the aisles of a library. They arrive at the "S" section, and find DOZENS of books written by Upton Sinclair. They begin STRIPPING THE SHELVES, AS --

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - AS BEFORE

SINCLAIR

Imagine a world, where people are given the opportunity to help *themselves*. A world in which we produce goods not to *sell*, not to create a profit for the tiny few at the top, but in which we produce goods for OURSELVES...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Clem and Leone ENTER a hotel room. Each lugging a big, heavy suitcase. They look like a couple going away on a trip. Except when they open their luggage... they are FULL OF BOOKS. All written by Upton Sinclair.

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - AS BEFORE

SINCLAIR

The EPIC PLAN proposes that the state of California set up land colonies, in which the unemployed workers shall live and produce the food required by the million destitute persons in our state... production not for profit, my friends, but production for USE...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

HOURS LATER. There are now room service trays spread around the room, as well as two makeshift work stations, where Clem and Leone are reading through PILES OF BOOKS... UNDERLINING passages, WRITING in the margins, MARKING pages...

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - AS BEFORE

SINCLAIR

The workers will live in what will amount to *new villages*, built around the land, centered around the resources, but with all the advantages of modern civilization: kitchens and cafeterias operated by the community, a social hall, a church, a schoolhouse, a motion picture theater...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

DAYS LATER, and the room is now even more of a MESS. The books and notes are spread out all over the place, as Clem and Leone read, write, read, write, read, write --

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - AS BEFORE

SINCLAIR

We will BUY and USE the very things they produce. What a concept! There can be *no overproduction* in such a system. When we produces a surplus, the workers will not be *out of the job*. They'll be on VACATION!

The AUDIENCE CHEERS!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

The room is now clean again. The books are back into neat piles, and their notes have been properly organized. Leone has created a filing system, filled with papers, each one labeled: "RELIGION," "MARRIAGE," "BOY SCOUTS," etc...

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - AS BEFORE

SINCLAIR

In our *California State Factories*,
the workers will set their own
hours! If they want to work three
hours a day, then they will *earn*
for those three hours! If they want
to work fifteen hours, they may do
that as well. The people will
regain control of their own lives!

CHEERS!!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Clem and Leone finish packing up their suitcases. Together, they exit the hotel room, leaving it exactly as it was...

EXT. SINCLAIR RALLY - AS BEFORE

SINCLAIR

This future is possible, my
brothers and sisters! It is within
our grasp! We have the power to
transform this world. The power to
make our dreams a reality!

And he receives the BIGGEST CHEERS OF ALL -- the audience is going absolutely WILD, and Sinclair is taking in the passionate adulation, basking in it, as we SLAM TO --

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - WAITING AREA

Clem and Leone now sit in a busy waiting area, each with a briefcase. Waiting to present to the Merriam.

CLEM

Are you nervous?

LEONE

No. Are you?

CLEM

No.

(Beat)

Well, good for us.

Leone breaks into a GRIN, as Asa Call emerges to greet them --

ASA

They're ready for you.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Clem and Leone now stand before the same assemblage of OLD, WHITE REPUBLICANS. Frank Merriam in the center, Asa Call to the side. No one is smiling. Not a friendly audience.

CLEM

Upton Sinclair is an exciting candidate. He elicits an enormous amount of passion, because he is promising to change people's lives in a meaningful way, and he's promising to do it fast.

MERRIAM

Is it just that book he wrote? From the future?

CLEM

(Carefully)

No. It isn't just that.

MERRIAM

Because *I* could do that, you know. I could write a damn book about all the things I haven't done!

LEONE

It's not just the book.

MERRIAM

I understand that he's a well-known person. And the press is lapping him up like dogs in heat. But this is *California*. This is a *Republican* state. Aren't we all getting a little worked up?

CLEM

California always *has* been Republican, that's true...

LEONE

But we can't rely on the citizens voting by party lines. Not while Sinclair is activating so many new voters. These are people who have never been involved in politics before now. Who never felt that their views were represented.

Various figures at the table exchange concerned looks.

CLEM

This election is going to be about Sinclair. He's the story. We can't change that. But we can change what people are saying about him.

ON CUE, Leone lifts up a BRIEFCASE and places it on the table. She CLICKS IT OPEN, REVEALING A PILE OF PAPERS.

Each paper has a SINGLE SENTENCE on it, written in LARGE, BOLD FONT. Clem takes a look at the top of the pile --

CLEM (CONT'D)

Upton Sinclair, on Journalism.

Leone lifts up the first piece of paper, and reads aloud --

LEONE

(Reading)

"A class institution, serving the rich and spurning the poor."

The men at the table look to one another, shocked. Leone lays the paper down, and lifts another off the top of the pile:

LEONE (CONT'D)

On religion...

CLEM

(reading)

"A mighty fortress of graft."

Clem lays down the paper, picks up another.

CLEM (CONT'D)

On the Veterans Affairs Department.

LEONE

(Reading)

"A riot department of the Plutocracy, and a conductor of drunken orgies."

CLEM

Sounds like fun.

(Another page)

Oh, this is a good one: "The sanctity of marriage: I have had such belief, I have it no longer."

ASA

(In disbelief)

Did he really... say, all of this?

CLEM

In a manner of speaking.

The men at the table exchange confused looks. A moment.

LEONE

He wrote it. Every word.

Merriam nods with approval. The energy in the room has now, clearly, shifted. Clem and Leone have won them over.

ASA

Can't he just deny?

CLEM

Yes, and he will. But the denials won't reach everyone. If we can make these quotes prevalent enough, there will be people who believe them as fact. Not to mention, persuading voters is not the only thing we'll be accomplishing here.

MERRIAM

What do you mean?

CLEM

Sinclair is used to people criticizing him. It's been happening his whole life. But what he is NOT used to, is having his *own words* turned against him...

Merriam and the other men at the table all continue to read through the pile of papers, riveted... and as Clem and Leone exchange a quick, charged look, we GO --

INT. ASA CALL'S OFFICE - DAY

To Asa Call's office. Post-meeting. Call ENTERS, followed by Clem and Leone. He closes the door behind them.

CLEM
Feels like that went rather well!

ASA
It did.

CLEM
Did you see Merriam's face, when he read the quote about the boy scouts? That will just *brutalize* Sinclair in suburban districts, I--

ASA
(Interrupting)
Excuse me.
(Clem goes silent)
I'm sorry, but we have an issue that needs to be discussed.

He gestures for them to take a seat. They do.

ASA (CONT'D)
We are all very pleased with the work you brought in today. It's terrific work.

LEONE
But?

ASA
But the Governor is a man of a... different generation. And he has certain ideas that are, at this point in life, *ingrained* in him...

Clem has no clue where Asa is going. But Leone already knows.

ASA (CONT'D)
Over the past week, the Governor has expressed some... *questions* about Miss Baxter's role. And I have come to believe the simplest path for all involved will be to simply inform him that, on this project, you are serving as Mr. Whitaker's secretary.

CLEM
But... that whole concept, that he loved, it was *hers*--

ASA

Be that as it may. And you two may conduct your work in any way you see fit. This is only the public face. But whatever it is you may know, I know the Governor. And I suggest you take my advice.

Clem, outraged, is about to refuse, but before he can --

LEONE

Of course.

(Smiling)

Whatever you think is best.

Clem turns to Leone, shocked.

CLEM

You're okay with this?

LEONE

It's not up to us to change the Governor's mind about women.

CLEM

Yes, but don't you think--

LEONE

Our job is to win the election.
That's what matters.

CLEM

So-- that's it?? You're just going to roll over and take it?

LEONE

Can we discuss this *in private*?

Clem seems, in that moment, to remember that Asa is sitting there across from them. Asa watches them, intrigued.

CLEM

Well... if it's alright with Miss Baxter, then... I suppose so?

ASA

Excellent. I was hoping you'd see it this way.

(Then)

I look forward to working with you.
With *both* of you.

He puts out his hand. Leone shakes it. Clem, still thrown, shakes as well... and ON THIS, WE GO TO --

CLOSE ON: A COPY OF THE LOS ANGELES TIMES. On the FRONT PAGE, in a LARGE, FLASHY BOX, we see:

UPTON SINCLAIR ON MARRIAGE

"The Sanctity of Marriage... I have had such belief. I have it no longer."

Standing over the paper, with a sneer, is Upton Sinclair. He snatches up the paper, and begins walking through --

INT. SINCLAIR'S MANSION - VARIOUS ROOMS - DAY

A beautiful, spacious mansion. It is filled to the brim with books, and decorated with a distinct, idiosyncratic flair... but it is also, unmistakably, the home of a very wealthy man.

TEXT: UPTON SINCLAIR'S HOME. PASADENA, CALIFORNIA.

Upton navigates through the home's various large, byzantine rooms, all of them empty, until he ARRIVES AT --

INT. SINCLAIR'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A LARGE ROOM, PACKED with people. The operational center of their campaign. Upton dramatically THROWS the newspaper onto a table, drawing everyone's attention --

SINCLAIR

Did you see today's?

RICHARD OTTO, 40s, Sinclair's Campaign manager, takes a look.

OTTO

Not a good quote for you.

SINCLAIR

This *quote* is from *Love's Pilgrimage*. Do these people not understand what a novel is??

No one responds. Upton continues sulking around the room.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

So, what, every line from every character I've ever written, they can just attribute it to me?? With no consequence?!

OTTO

This is just noise. People know what you stand for.

SINCLAIR
Have we heard from Roosevelt?

OTTO
Not yet.

SINCLAIR
His next fireside is coming up.

OTTO
It is.

SINCLAIR
So?? Is he going to endorse me?

OTTO
(Beat)
We don't know.

SINCLAIR
(Peeved)
I just don't understand what's
taking him so *long*--

OTTO
Neither do I. But he's not going to
do anything until he's ready. We
can't control that.

Sinclair's gaze returns to the newspaper...

SINCLAIR
Well, then lets at least *try* and
control *this*! I want to respond.

OTTO
You don't need to do that--

SINCLAIR
It's slander!

OTTO
If you personally respond to this,
it gives it *legitimacy*--

SINCLAIR
It's on the FRONT PAGE of the
Times! It HAS legitimacy!
(Beat)
I'm going to talk to them--

OTTO
Upton--

SINCLAIR

No. We need a response, and I may as well do it myself.

(Then, dryly)

After all, they're in *my* lawn.

EXT. SINCLAIR'S MANSION - FRONT LAWN - DAY

The picaresque front yard of Sinclair's home, overgrown with flowers and greenery. And in the middle of the yard, we find:

A GROUP OF REPORTERS. And they have made themselves *comfortable*. They are seated in lawn chairs, newspapers and periodicals stacked around them, as well as bagged lunches, thermoses of cold drinks, blankets...

Sinclair emerges from his house and approaches them. They all STAND, eager for this rare visit from the candidate.

SINCLAIR

Hello, all. I know Mary brought out some lemonade, did you all enjoy?

There are some agreeable MURMURS from the reporters.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Now. I have one comment to make, and that's all I'm going to say on this matter. As concerns the series that has recently begun running in the *Los Angeles Times*...

As Sinclair *enunciates* these words, he gives a SHARP LOOK to the LA TIMES REPORTER in the group.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

To read these and believe they tell you what is in my heart is much akin to reading a speech by Lady Macbeth, and concluding that Shakespeare is an advocate of murder. They are, I want to be clear, a *distraction*. And it falls on you all to let your readers know the truth. Thank you.

Sinclair stars back towards his house, when --

REPORTER #1

Will you take some questions?

Sinclair stops, turns back. He's already out here. *Why not?*

SINCLAIR

Just a few.

REPORTER #1

Do you have a response to Frank Merriam's claim that the EPIC program will bring Russian values to California?

SINCLAIR

I think if Governor Merriam has his own policy for how to eradicate the horrendous levels of poverty in our state, he should bring it forward. Or, rather, as Governor, perhaps he should enact it now! Next question.

REPORTER #2

Standard Oil has issued a statement condemning your campaign. Do you have a response?

SINCLAIR

With all due respect to the shareholders of Standard Oil, I am not running for them.

REPORTER #2

So who are you running for?

SINCLAIR

For the *people*! For families, struggling to get by. For honest men, out of work and losing hope.

REPORTER #3

So the EPIC plan will help the unemployed?

SINCLAIR

(Laughing, delighted)

Will it help them?? My good man, if I am elected, the unemployed all over this country will FLOCK to California!

A STUNNED SILENCE falls over the reporters. Sinclair, instantly, realizes he just made a big mistake.

REPORTER #3

... Did you just say the unemployed will *flock* to California?

SINCLAIR

That's, uh... that's all for now.

Sinclair starts walking away, as the reporters' SILENCE gives way to A RISE OF NOISE, all of them SHOUTING FOLLOW-UPS --

VARIOUS REPORTERS

How many do you expect?? Do you believe California has the space for them?! Do we have the resources to support new arrivals?!

And Sinclair is now RUSHING across his yard, not looking back, but knowing that he just seriously fucked up, AND WE --

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES (VERSION 2) - DAY

CUT to A YOUNG FEMALE AIDE, also speed-walking, with a newspaper tucked under her arm... we stay close on her, as she guides us through the BRAND NEW CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES

This is no longer a two-person operation, but now a fully staffed shop, humming with excitement and activity -- eye-catching ANTI-SINCLAIR and (significantly fewer) PRO-MERRIAM signs and pamphlets cover the tables and paper the walls --

AND WE FIND CLEM, on the phone. Despite their new size, both his and Leone's desks still sit in the bullpen, out amongst the rest of the staff. He is gulping down coffee and chain-smoking cigarettes, wound up and laser-focused, AS --

CLEM

Mr Anderson! This is Clem Whitaker, from the Clem Whitaker Advertising Agency. How are you today? Well, sir, the reason I'm calling--

As Clem continues his conversation, several staffers approach him with copy -- he reads and edits with a red pen, all the while never breaking the smooth stride of his conversation --

CLEM (CONT'D)

--is because we are interested in purchasing some advertising space in your newspaper. Yes sir... how much space do you have available in the next week? ... well, I think we might like to buy *all* of that, if that's... yes, and our policy, just so you know, is to pay IN FULL, UP FRONT...

(MORE)

CLEM (CONT'D)
 Terrific I'll have our billing
 department call you right away, but
 first, would you mind terribly if I
 passed you off to a colleague, who
 has a small piece of business?

He CUPS THE PHONE, and calls out --

CLEM (CONT'D)
 BAXTER!

Clem's voice SAILS ACROSS the vast bullpen -- at the other
 end of the room, LEONE looks up --

CLEM (CONT'D)
 Samuel Anderson, Oakland Chronicle!

Leone picks up her phone, jumping onto the same line --

LEONE
 Good Afternoon Mr. Anderson, this
 is Leone Baxter from the California
 Features Service. Congratulations
 on your sale. With your advertorial
 package from the Clem Whitaker
 Advertising Agency, we will also be
 including, *totally* free of charge,
 a small packet of daily features
 and editorials from our staff. It
 is entirely your choice as to what
 copy you choose to run, but we
 believe you will find both the
 writing and the reporting to be up
 to the absolute highest of
 journalistic standards... Yes, we
 work very closely with the Whitaker
 Agency, and we certainly hope to
 continue this relationship, for *all*
 parties... oh, that would be just
marvelous, thank you...

While LEONE is wrapping up her call, that YOUNG AIDE has
 reached CLEM with the newspaper. He takes one look at the
 front page, and immediately RISES FROM HIS SEAT --

CLEM
 ATTENTION! EVERYONE!

LEONE
 (On phone)
 We hope to continue working with
 you as well... you too... Goodbye.

Leone hangs up the call, and turns her attention to Clem, who is holding a copy of the LA TIMES high in the air.

CLEM

Yesterday afternoon, Upton Sinclair said, *on the record*, that if he is elected, the unemployed of this country will FLOCK to California!

GASPS throughout the room. Clem flashes a wicked smile.

CLEM (CONT'D)

They're hoping this story will be dead by tomorrow, so it's up to us to keep it alive all week. I want follow-up pieces, editorials, letters from concerned citizens... charts and graphs illustrating what a sudden influx of the homeless will do to the economy, to property values, to lines at the soup kitchens... be honest! After all, we ARE all citizens here, and we are *concerned*!

The room erupts in LAUGHTER, as Clem turns his attention to a two-sided design desk, which houses two IN-HOUSE CARTOONISTS:

CLEM (CONT'D)

Ed, Bill, stop whatever you're doing and focus on this. We need cartoons in the papers *tomorrow*, while it's fresh in people's minds-- something about the homeless riding the rails into California-- perhaps an unemployment line that ends at the Statehouse, or at Sinclair's Headquarters? You're both smarter than me, you'll come up with something sharp.

(Then, to the full staff)

Get copy to myself and Baxter by late afternoon. Let's go!

The staff RESUMES WORK, a SUDDEN ROAR OF MOTION and NOISE. As the office CHURNS around them, Clem and Leone silently lock eyes across the room. It worked.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES (VERSION 2) - NIGHT

The same space, now later that night. The staff has cleared out. Only Clem and Leone remain.

Clem is back on the phone, now in the midst of a quiet, tense conversation. Leone is seated nearby, working, and pretending that she isn't listening in...

CLEM

(On phone)

I *don't know* when I'll be home,
that's... well... no, *everyone* is
here, if I left *now*, it... I
will... you too. Goodnight.

He hangs up. Leone focuses on her work, and pretends like she wasn't listening in. But they both know the truth.

CLEM (CONT'D)

It seems my wife thought I'd be
working *less*, once I stopped being
a reporter.

LEONE

Why would she think that?

CLEM

Impossible to say.

(Beat)

It may be because that's what I
told her.

Leone smiles, a little. But she doesn't laugh.

LEONE

Why *did* you leave journalism?

CLEM

Well, I...

(He hesitates)

It just felt like the time.

She can tell he's hiding something, but doesn't push it.

LEONE

I see.

CLEM

I'd been at it for twenty years.

LEONE

Very funny.

CLEM
I'm serious.

LEONE
... When did you start as a reporter?

CLEM
13.

LEONE
1913??

CLEM
No, no--

LEONE
Oh, I didn't think s--

CLEM
I *started* in 1912. I was 13.

Leone stares at him, in disbelief. Clem shrugs.

LEONE
How did that work?

CLEM
Oh, beautifully. *Everyone* trusted me. People are guarded when they talk to the press, but never with a thirteen-year old. They would tell me anything. I did some of the best reporting of my life at that age.

LEONE
I mean, how did you get the job?

CLEM
My mom asked them to hire me.

Leone LAUGHS, brightly. Clem smiles. A beat.

CLEM (CONT'D)
What about you? We've been working together for nearly a year, and I feel like I know next to nothing.

LEONE
There's not much that's interesting.

CLEM
I find that hard to believe.

LEONE

It's true.

CLEM

Nonsense.

(Then)

You're unmarried.

LEONE

That's interesting?

CLEM

It is! A woman with your charm,
your wit, your looks. To be
unmarried, at your age? It's
fascinating.

LEONE

If there was a compliment in there,
I'm having some difficulty
excavating it.

Leone goes back to work. She doesn't want to talk about this.

CLEM

Divorced?

Another pause. A longer one.

LEONE

Widow.

CLEM

Oh. Oh, my. I'm sorry to hear that.

LEONE

Thank you.

Leone returns to her work. She clearly thinks this line of questioning is over. But then --

CLEM

How did he die?

LEONE

Excuse me?!

CLEM

I assume it wasn't from natural
causes? Unless he was much older,
in which case, well-- all
sympathies, of course-- but you
would have known the risks going
in. How old was he?

LEONE
That is a very personal question.

CLEM
Which one?

LEONE
All of them!

CLEM
Well, excuse me! I thought it was about time we got to know each other. I'm being entirely honest with you about *my life*--

LEONE
You were evasive about why you changed careers, and then you covered by bragging about your days as a child reporter. I'd hardly call that baring your soul.

Beat. Clem is amused. So is Leone. They're enjoying this.

CLEM
So... you're not going to tell me?

LEONE
(Laughing)
No!

CLEM
(Laughing)
Ok! Just making sure!

The two of them LAUGH, giddily. The laughter subsides. The ensuing silence, suddenly, feels a little intense.

Leone returns to her work. So does Clem.

They work in silence. After a bit of time, Clem looks over at Leone, then back down at his work. A moment later, she looks at him, then looks back down. And then...

INT. EPIC CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - LOS ANGELES - WAR ROOM

The war room of EPIC HQ. The table is covered in newspapers, all of them highly critical of Sinclair's recent comments about the unemployed. Sinclair is seated, as well as Richard Otto, and other members of the inner circle. Mid-meeting.

OTTO

Okay, so we'll announce that all unemployed workers must reside in California for at least one year before they are eligible to receive EPIC benefits. How's that?

Otto, and the rest of the table, look to Sinclair. He is reading one of the newspapers. Lost in thought.

OTTO (CONT'D)

Upton?

Sinclair looks up, shaken out of his reverie.

SINCLAIR

I don't like these *requirements*.

OTTO

Yes, well--

SINCLAIR

When you start to *define* it, saying who we are and are not permitted to help, at what point are we different from them?

OTTO

The voters, the people you need to win over, they *live in California*.

All eyes turn back to Upton. After a tense pause, he throws up his hands in surrender. Relieved, Otto nods to several of his lieutenants, who immediately EXIT to execute this plan.

SINCLAIR

I think that's enough for today.

The rest of the room stands and starts to file out. Otto is about to leave too, when --

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Stay.

Otto closes the door, returns to the table.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

What are we going to do about this?

OTTO

About... ?

Sinclair gestures to the newspapers on the table.

SINCLAIR

This. *This*.

OTTO

You shouldn't be reading this crap--

SINCLAIR

How can I not?? It's everywhere!

(Beat)

We need to *do* something. Change what they're writing about. I may be new to politics, but if there's one thing I think I still understand, it's *narrative*.

(Beat)

I need to see him.

OTTO

Upton--

SINCLAIR

I can convince him, I *know* it, I just need to be in the same room...

OTTO

You have events scheduled...

SINCLAIR

Replace me.

OTTO

With who?

SINCLAIR

Let's announce my running mate. He can do any event I miss. And it'll give these hacks something else to write about.

Otto nods in agreement. Sinclair looks once more to the mountain of negative publicity, laid out in front of him...

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Who is *doing* this? Creating all of this, out of nothing? Is it just Merriam and his party hacks?

OTTO

No. I don't think it's just them.

SINCLAIR

So *who is it*?

ON OTTO, not sure of the answer to this...

INT. LEONE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Early morning. Leone wakes up in her bed. Her apartment is nice enough, but it feels barely lived-in.

She walks over to feed a SINGLE GOLDFISH, but... the fish is dead. She stares at the floating corpse. Disappointed, but not surprised. This isn't her first dead pet.

She FLUSHES THE FISH down the toilet, unceremoniously, and then begins getting ready for her day.

INT. SHRINE AUDITORIUM - STAGE - NIGHT

Upton, on stage at the elegant SHRINE AUDITORIUM in LOS ANGELES. As we come in, APPLAUSE IS DYING DOWN...

UPTON SINCLAIR

Now, this is the point where I
would normally stop speaking. But
tonight is a special night...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - STREETS - DAY

Leone exits her apartment and begins walking down the street, the city's early morning activity swirling all around her...

INT. SHRINE AUDITORIUM - STAGE - AS BEFORE

UPTON SINCLAIR

I would like to welcome to this
stage tonight, one of the great
Democratic Leaders of our state...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - STREETS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Leone suddenly STOPS IN HER TRACKS. She approaches a NEWSPAPER STAND. We don't see what's on the cover of the paper, only her TOTALLY SHOCKED FACE...

INT. SHRINE AUDITORIUM - STAGE - AS BEFORE

UPTON SINCLAIR

A man who has long devoted his life
to the progressive cause...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - HALLWAY - DAY

LEONE, rushing down the hallway, practically sprinting in her heels, a newspaper CLUTCHED AT HER SIDE...

INT. SHRINE AUDITORIUM - STAGE - AS BEFORE

UPTON SINCLAIR

It is my great honor to announce my
running mate, the next Lieutenant
Governor of California...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - BULLPEN - MOMENTS LATER

Clem is already at his desk. He looks up to find Leone moving towards him, newspaper in hand, eyes wide with panic.

LEONE

Have you seen it??

INT. SHRINE AUDITORIUM - STAGE - AS BEFORE

UPTON SINCLAIR

SHERIDAN DOWNEY!

Sheridan steps onto the stage, to CHEERS, as we CUT BACK TO --

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM

Clem and Leone, away from the rest of the office, looking at the newspaper she just brought in. ON THE FRONT PAGE:

THE UPPIE AND DOWNEY TICKET!

Democratic Party Lawyer Sheridan Downey Announced as Sinclair's Running Mate.

They stare at the headline. Then at each other. In shock.

INT. EPIC CAMPAIGN HQ - LOS ANGELES, CA

Sinclair's CAMPAIGN HQ, now in the midst of a PARTY welcoming Sheridan to the ticket. The makeup of Sinclair's staff is markedly different from Merriam's, and looks far more modern: younger, more multi-cultural, more women...

We find Sheridan, holding court with an adoring crowd. A SECRETARY approaches, and taps him on the shoulder.

SECRETARY

Mr. Downey? There's a call for you.

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - BACK OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Clem has the phone at his ear. Leone stands by. He gestures to the second receiver in the room --

CLEM
Pick up the other line.

LEONE
(Unsure)
Oh...

CLEM
Please.

Slightly flustered, Leone picks up the receiver, just as...

INT. EPIC CAMPAIGN HQ - SAME TIME

SHERIDAN
Hello?

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. - SAME TIME

CLEM
The Uppie and Downey ticket.

Sheridan takes a moment. He knew this call was coming.

SHERIDAN
What do you think of it? The
phrasing, I mean.

CLEM
It's catchy. Sticks in the mind.

SHERIDAN
Yes. We thought so.

CLEM
(A moment, then)
I'm just hurt you didn't tell me.

SHERIDAN
I couldn't tell anyone. You know
that. *Least* of all you.

Pause.

CLEM
You know, I thought we might end up
on opposing sides, at some point.
(MORE)

CLEM (CONT'D)
But I just never imagined it would
be so soon.

SHERIDAN
I've stayed on the same side.

A moment. Both men are silent on the line.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
We shouldn't be talking like this.

CLEM
No. Probably not.

SHERIDAN
Say hello to Leone for me.

CLEM
(Staring at her)
I will.

They hang up. Clem looks to Leone. Shrugs. *What can I do?*

EXT. / INT. TOWN CAR - MORNING

Sinclair, dressed in his finest, is seated in the back seat. He gazes out the window as the car drives down a long, beautiful, tree-lined drive.

INT. HYDE PARK RESIDENCE - WAITING AREA - DAY

Sinclair is now seated, waiting. For the first time since we've met him, he looks nervous. A moment later, a short, squat man, GUS GENNERICH, steps in to greet him.

GUS
Mr. Sinclair?

Sinclair stands and follows Gus INTO --

INT. HYDE PARK - PRIVATE STUDY - CONTINUOUS

A large, book-lined study. Waiting for Sinclair, in his wheelchair, we immediately and unmistakably recognize PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT. They shake hands.

SINCLAIR
Thank you for finding the time, Mr.
President.

FDR

A drink?

SINCLAIR

Yes, please. Gin.

FDR nods to Gus, who proceeds to prepare and serve their drinks. As he does this, Sinclair takes a seat opposite FDR.

FDR

So, tell me. How are you liking life as a politician?

SINCLAIR

It's not for the faint.

FDR

No, no, certainly not.

(Beat)

Though, you've had some preparation. The fame. The crowds.

SINCLAIR

Yes, but... not like this.

(Beat)

I don't know what you've heard about our race--

FDR

(Dryly)

Just a bit.

SINCLAIR

The excitement at our rallies, among our volunteers... you can feel it. The people want us to win. They *need us* to win.

FDR

But your opposition has money.

SINCLAIR

Yes.

(Then, carefully)

I understand that you may want to stay silent on this race. But, with all respect, for the Democratic President to remain silent on the Democratic nominee for Governor, in California, in *such* a close race, is-- well-- that's *something* of a statement *itself*, and I--

FDR

(Interrupting, sharply)

Mr. Sinclair.

(Beat)

I have been a member of the Democratic Party for my entire life. I was a Democrat in the New York State Assembly, I was a Democrat in the State Senate, I was a Democrat as Governor, and I am now a Democratic President. By my last count, you have been a Democrat for less than one year. So I would appreciate it if you did not question whether or not I am adequately supporting my party.

SINCLAIR

(Chastened)

I understand.

FDR

I have people who didn't even want me to take this meeting, you know. People who say what you've done in California is a hostile takeover of the party. They tell me silence is too good for you, that I should publicly REPUDIATE your campaign. Make it clear that you have *nothing* to do with me, or with the New Deal. What would you say to them?

Sinclair takes a moment. Considering.

SINCLAIR

I know I am a divisive man. In my previous life, I made a very good living off of it.

(Beat)

These people who are advising you, they are... cautious. And that's fine. It's *wise*, in fact, for you to have those sort of people around you. But the world is never going to be changed by the cautious. You, more than anyone, know that.

FDR nods. That's true. Sinclair continues...

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

These people, for all their expertise... they are trapped.

(MORE)

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

They are trapped in what they already know, what they can already see in front of them. They are trapped in the same beliefs that have been guiding us for the past century, and that very nearly drove our national economy off a cliff.

(Beat)

Until you saved it.

FDR knows he's being flattered... but he doesn't mind. And then, as the President breaks into a small, wry smile, we...

FADE TO **BLACK**.

INT. SMALL TOWN DINER - MORNING

Dust Bowl California. A small, quaint diner with all the lights off. It's early morning, near dusk. The OWNER steps in, turning on the lights. QUICK CUTS, as we see him:

Wiping down the tables.

Brewing the first pot of coffee.

Laying out silverware and menus.

Heating the griddle.

As he pours himself a cup of coffee, he spots something out of the corner of his eye... it's on the floor, having been slipped under the front door overnight...

It's A FLIER.

He bends over and picks it up. It reads:

A RUINED BUSINESS HAS NO PAYROLL!

How Upton Sinclair and his EPIC plan will destroy small business and bankrupt California!

He turns the flier to the backside:

*Distributed by UNITED FOR CALIFORNIA,
a non-partisan citizen's group*

He opens the flier and begins reading, as we JUMP TO --

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

THE SAME FLIER, now being perused by Frank Merriam. Clem and Leone are handing out various ANTI-SINCLAIR PAMPHLETS and CIRCULARS to Merriam and his assembled goons, AS --

CLEM

United for California will be our Northern California organization, and the California League Against Sinclair will be based in Los Angeles. For all practical purposes, the organizations will be totally separate: different boards, different civic leaders. Each with their own mailing address, their own contact number...

LEONE

These will be our umbrella organizations. But they can provide funding and infrastructure for many smaller, more focused citizen's groups: Farmers for Merriam...

CLEM

Christians Against Sinclair...
Veterans for Truth...

LEONE

Teachers, small business owners, workers unions, medical associations... for every particular voting bloc that exists in the state, we can create an organization that is *specifically tailored* to their concerns...

CLEM

And the reading materials will all be coming from different locations, produced by different groups, creating the illusion of information spreading organically, of a real grassroots movement...

MERRIAM

Hold on a minute!

Clem stops speaking. Merriam is irritated. Other men at the table, previously enthralled, now put up a skeptical front.

MERRIAM (CONT'D)
 But there *is* real grassroots
 support for me. Isn't there?

Beat.

Of course. CLEM Absolutely. LEONE

MERRIAM
 Alright, so, why aren't we making
 more use of THEM?

Another pause. Clem and Leone try to figure out how to tactfully respond to this, when the meeting is mercifully interrupted by ASA CALL, who ENTERS, distraught --

ASA
 We have a situation.

He lays a NEWSPAPER on the table. Everyone gathers around to read the front page, as WE GO --

INT. EPIC CAMPAIGN HQ - DAY

TO A BUSY DAY at EPIC HQ. The CAMPAIGN EMPLOYEES are working away, lots of energy and excitement in the air, as...

A MASSIVE PRINTING PRESS is CHURNING out copies of today's EPIC TIMES... AND ON THE FRONT PAGE, WE SEE:

FDR'S NEXT FIRESIDE: SEPTEMBER 23rd!
EPIC SUPPORTERS must ALL tune in to hear our President's latest address!

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Asa Call is now in a private meeting with Clem and Leone. The same issue of EPIC TIMES lays in front of them.

ASA
 This is partisanship at its worst,
 it's absolute worst. The Democrats
 have no principles, so long as they
 win. It is vile.

CLEM
 We always knew an endorsement was
 possible--

ASA

But for the *President of the United States* to give CREDENCE to this radicalism? Sinclair was a member of the Socialist party less than a year ago! It's absurd! It's a mockery! It's-- it's--

Asa is spinning out. Leone gently takes him by the arm.

LEONE

It's unfortunate, we agree. But there are going to be things we can control, and things we can't. And we need to focus our energy on the things that we can control.

A moment. Asa nods. She's calmed him down, a little.

ASA

I'm going to speak to the Governor. I may use your exact words.

LEONE

(Smiling)

Please do.

Asa EXITS. Leone starts to gather up some of the materials on the table. Clem watches her, then looks to the door...

CLEM

What do you think of him?

LEONE

Mr. Call?

CLEM

Yes.

LEONE

(Confused)

He's... fine. What do you mean?

CLEM

I mean-- for you. Romantically.

LEONE

(Surprised)

Did he say something?

CLEM

No, nothing like that. I just can't help but notice that he is single, and eligible. Much like yourself.

LEONE
 (A moment, then:)
 No, thank you.

CLEM
 (Laughing)
 That's it?? You're not even going
 to entertain the thought?

Leone says nothing. Continues gathering up the materials.

CLEM (CONT'D)
 So-- what? You'll *never* be
 remarried? This is the modern
 world, Baxter. You don't need to be
 alone for the rest of your life!

LEONE
 Why are you doing this?

CLEM
 What do you mean? I'm just trying
 to *help you*--

LEONE
 (Sharply)
 Oh? Is *that* what you're doing??

A moment. Leone suddenly feels like she said too much.

LEONE (CONT'D)
 Let's get back to work.

She EXITS, somewhat hurriedly. Clem stares after her.

INT. MAIL CARRIER - DAY

CLOSE ON: A CARDBOARD BOX

THE BOX is sitting in the back of a MAIL CARRIER'S
 AUTOMOBILE, bouncing gently, surrounded by other parcels...

INT. AUDITORIUM - "LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS" MEETING - DAY

Sinclair, loose and confident, is taking questions from a
 RAPT AUDIENCE of women. As we come in, the audience is in a
 fit of LAUGHTER, brought on by his previous answer...

TEXT: "THE CALIFORNIA LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS"

He points to an audience member. She stands, star-struck --

WOMAN VOTER

Mr. Sinclair, how would you respond to the threat from Louie B. Mayer that if you are elected, he will move all MGM production to Florida?

SINCLAIR

Well, I do think Mr. Mayer should consult with his starlets first, as they may take some exception to the Florida mosquitos.

The audience LAUGHS once more. Sinclair looks to the side of the stage. Otto is there, gesturing to his watch.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Ladies, I must leave you now...

The women GROAN, disappointed, as Sinclair flashes a smile --

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

But, I'd just like to remind you all that our dear President will be giving his annual fireside this evening, broadcast nationwide, and if I were you, I might listen in...

TEXT: SEPTEMBER 23, 1934

As Sinclair steps off stage, and the women in the audience talk excitedly amongst themselves, we GO TO --

EXT. LARGE BUILDING - BACK ENTRANCE - DAY

THE BOX, along with A BIG PILE of MAIL PARCELS, being unloaded from the truck, placed on top of a ROLLING BASKET, and transported through the BACK ENTRANCE of a building...

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

FDR sits at his desk, going through the TEXT OF HIS RADIO ADDRESS with a red pen, making last-minute edits...

INT. OFFICE HALLWAYS

THE BOX, now in a flatbed surrounded by other pieces of mail, is being WHEELED THROUGH some kind of office hallway... we don't know where we are, but it is clearly a busy, exciting place... and as the flatbed approaches a LARGE DOOR, WE GO --

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - MAIN BULLPEN - DAY

To our offices. The day is BUZZING with activity, everyone distracting themselves from the upcoming radio address...

Everyone, that is, except CLEM, who we find at his extremely messy desk, reading through a pile of newspapers... they range from today's EPIC TIMES ("*FDR Address Tonight!*") to the LA TIMES ("*FDR Expected to Endorse Tonight*") to the CHRONICLE ("*Will the President Give Sinclair his seal of Approval?*")...

Clem reads them all, a look of concern on his face...

INT. OFFICE - TABLE

And here's that BOX, now sitting on a desk, unopened... it is surrounded on all sides by MOTION: people running around, answering phones, a bustling, busy atmosphere, AND THEN --

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

BACK TO FDR, still at his desk, studying his text. Gus knocks lightly on the door. FDR looks up.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - RECORDING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

FDR wheels up to a microphone in a pristine recording studio. He takes a drink of water, and looks to the RECORDING ENGINEER. The Engineer nods. FDR leans forward, and begins:

FDR

Good evening. Three months have passed since I last talked with you, shortly after the adjournment of Congress. Tonight I continue that report, though, with shortness of time, I must defer a number of subjects to a later date...

MUSIC RISES, as we see all different people listening in, jumping to different moments throughout FDR's speech...

INT. SINCLAIR'S HOTEL SUITE - SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Sinclair paces within a large hotel suite, surrounded by Otto, Sheridan, and various members of his staff. A radio sits by the window, broadcasting the address --

FDR (ON RADIO)

Men may differ as to the particular form of governmental activity with respect to industry and business, but nearly all are agreed that private enterprise in times such as these *cannot be left without guidance*, lest it destroy not only itself, but also our processes of civilization...

Sinclair nods, agreeing with this point...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - BULLPEN - NIGHT

The entire Campaigns, Inc. staff is at a standstill, also listening to a single RADIO, in the center of the room...

FDR (ON RADIO)

When I first took office, the banking system had collapsed. Some banks could not be saved, but the great majority of them, either through their own resources or with government aid, have been restored to the public confidence, which has given safety to the millions of depositors in these banks...

AS FDR CONTINUES, WE SEE:

All sorts of different people listening in... people gathered in bars, in living rooms, in restaurants... for this moment in time, all of American life is put on hold, and the entire country listens, together, to a leader they trust...

FDR (ON RADIO) (CONT'D)

There are those who rightly fear an all-embracing Government, but we must also avoid, on the other hand, the equally untenable theory that it is an interference with liberty to offer reasonable help to private enterprise when it is in need, and when the health and the prosperity of our country is at stake...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - RECORDING ROOM - SAME TIME

BACK TO FDR, at his microphone. Several pages turned...

FDR

The course we have followed fits the great American practice of Government, a practice of taking action step by step, a practice of regulating only to meet concrete needs, and of recognition when change becomes necessary...

FDR looks down at his notes. In the next paragraph, we can make out several recognizable words:

"CALIFORNIA", "EPIC", "PRODUCTION FOR USE", "UPTON SINCLAIR"

FDR stares down at his notes for an extended moment... dead air on the radio... and then, we see him make a decision.

He leans forward and speaks, no longer consulting his notes.

FDR (CONT'D)

As your President, I firmly believe that the crash of 1929 is behind us, and we are now moving forward to greater freedom, greater security, and greater prosperity than we have ever known. Thank you all, and goodnight.

FDR leans back, and NODS to his aides.

INT. SINCLAIR'S HOTEL SUITE - SAME TIME

CLASSICAL MUSIC now plays from the radio. Everyone in the room is silent. Sinclair stands at the window, shell-shocked.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - VARIOUS

We go back to FDR, now being wheeled down the hallway...

THE CLASSICAL MUSIC from the radio broadcast now RISES IN VOLUME, becoming our SCORE, as we FOLLOW FDR down the corridors of the White House... down a hallway that, now, begins to look *very familiar* to us...

He is WHEELED PAST A SIDE OFFICE... but we stay behind, and move WITHIN THE OFFICE... where we find a DESK, and on that desk sits that CARDBOARD BOX, now OPEN...

INSIDE THE BOX, we find a STACK of VARIOUS ANTI-SINCLAIR PAMPHLETS, from all manner of artificial organizations...

And ON TOP OF THIS PILE OF MATERIALS, we find a note, written out in very neat and meticulous handwriting...

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT.

SIX MILLION COPIES OF THESE PAMPHLETS HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO CALIFORNIA VOTERS.

SINCERELY,

THE CALIFORNIA LEAGUE AGAINST SINCLAIR

AND UP CLOSE ON THIS NOTE, written in a handwriting that we might just recognize, MUSIC SWELLS, AND --

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - SAME TIME

CHAMPAGNE POPS! CELEBRATION! Everyone GATHERS AROUND LEONE, cheering her, pouring her an overflowing glass of champagne... she is overwhelmed with the attention...

She locks eyes with Clem, across the room. He gives her a dramatic BOW. And as she finally breaks into SMILE, WE GO --

INT. SINCLAIR'S HOTEL SUITE - SAME TIME

BACK to Sinclair's room. The same CLASSICAL MUSIC is coming from his radio. What was lustrous before now sounds small and tinny. Everyone is gutted. Otto CLICKS OFF the radio.

OTTO

We knew it wasn't a sure thing.

(Pause)

This is why we were so careful with our wording. You read any of our publications, anything official, and we only encouraged people to listen to the address. At no point did we state that he would say anything he did not say. We were just showing support for the President, nothing more.

SINCLAIR

Right. Nothing more.

(Beat)

Can everyone please leave us?

The various helpers and aides all file out, happy to get the hell out of this pressure cooker. Sheridan stays behind, with Otto. Once everyone else is gone, Sinclair visibly deflated.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

If I am an undecided voter... and I see this image of myself, day after day, week after week... I would not vote for myself.

The other men have no response to this. Sheridan stares sadly at Sinclair. At this great man, reduced to this...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICE - SAME TIME

THE CELEBRATION is still in full swing. Everyone is euphoric, amazed at what they just pulled off. An AIDE approaches Clem, and speaks to him quietly --

AIDE

There's a call for you...

CLEM

Can it wait until tomorrow?

AIDE

I... don't think so.

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. - PRIVATE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Clem steps in, closing the door. He picks up the phone.

CLEM

... Sheridan?

INT. SHERIDAN'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Sheridan now sits in his small, drab hotel room. There's a bottle of alcohol on the table, with a significant amount gone. Lights are low. He is alone, angry, drunk.

SHERIDAN

Congratulations.

CLEM

It is you. I wasn't sure.

(Beat)

How are you?

SHERIDAN

How did you do it?

CLEM

Where are you calling from?

SHERIDAN

Upton was *so sure* he was going to get the endorsement. He was practically floating when he returned from Hyde Park.

(Beat)

How did you do it? How did you get to *him*?

CLEM

You know I can't tell you that.

Sheridan's glazed eyes drift over to his bed, where an array of ANTI-SINCLAIR PAMPHLETS are spread out...

SHERIDAN

(Reading)

The California Veterans Committee... Democrats for Merriam... The Non-Partisan League of California Educators...

CLEM

Sounds like quite a selection.

SHERIDAN

You know, Clem, I've been looking through some of your, uh, *materials*, and-- it's *remarkable*, actually-- but they all seem to have a different *address* on the back, different phone numbers...

CLEM

You shouldn't be calling like this.

SHERIDAN

So, what? You have all these-- these *fronts*, now? Like you're some kind of a criminal??

CLEM

Sheridan, I can hear it in your voice. You need to hang up, drink some water, sleep it off--

SHERIDAN

(Angrily)

These people deserve to understand WHAT IT IS they're reading. They deserve to know WHO is WRITING it.

CLEM

I don't see why you're surprised by any of this. We came up with these strategies together!

SHERIDAN

(Angrily)

NO. We did not. Not like this.

Clem is startled by the sudden venom in Sheridan's voice.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

We were just trying to get the truth out. We were trying to HELP PEOPLE. What you're doing now is something else. This is *deception*.

(Beat)

What do you believe in?

CLEM

Excuse me... ?

SHERIDAN

It's a simple question.

CLEM

Oh, is it?

SHERIDAN

Yes. It *is*.

(Then, sadly)

Just tell me *something*, Clem. Something you believe in. Something bigger than... winning. Bigger than yourself. Please.

A long, agonizing pause. Clem has no answer.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

Sheridan HANGS UP. Clem slowly lowers his receiver.

Clem looks out his window, into the main bullpen. The office is still in the midst of a celebration. He spots Leone, tipsy and laughing with some other staffers. He watches her.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - MORNING

Clem stands outside the Governor's mansion. He's pacing and chain-smoking. Nervous. He spots ASA CALL arriving for the day. He stubs out his cigarette, and runs over to catch him --

CLEM
Good morning!

ASA
What are you doing here?

CLEM
I drove in last night. I need to
speak to the Governor.

ASA
(Looking him over)
Have you slept?
(Then)
Where's Miss Baxter?

CLEM
I-- need to speak to him alone.

A moment. Asa shrugs, and gestures for Clem to follow him.

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Merriam is seated, flanked by Asa. Clem stands before them.

MERRIAM
You're not on the schedule today.

CLEM
I know. But I needed to speak to
you, right away. And it regards a
somewhat-- delicate matter.

Merriam nods. Clem has a moment of hesitation, then...

CLEM (CONT'D)
I'm afraid we have not been
entirely honest with you. Miss
Baxter is *not* my secretary. She
never was. She is my partner. She
is my total equal in everything we
do. And moving forward, I felt it
was important that you know that.

Merriam and Asa both stare him down. Pause.

MERRIAM
Is that all?

CLEM
Yes.

MERRIAM

Very well. Thank you for coming in.

And... that's it? It feels odd. Anti-climactic. Clem stands there for a beat, unsure of what to do. Then, awkwardly, he turns and walks out of the room.

Once he's gone, Merriam and Asa exchange a look.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

The exterior of a California movie theater. "MGM PRESENTS: TREASURE ISLAND!" is on the marquee.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

We PAN ACROSS A FULL AUDIENCE as they watch a pre-film newsreel titled "CALIFORNIA ELECTION NEWS!"

TEXT: **ONE MONTH UNTIL ELECTION DAY**

ON SCREEN, the orchestral strains of "California, Here I Come" play OVER BEAUTIFUL, SCENIC SHOTS OF CALIFORNIA, AS --

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am the Inquiring Cameraman. All day, I travel around California, the highway and the byways, the downtown districts, the residence districts, the farm districts...

IN THE AUDIENCE, we see people watching, eating popcorn, drinking soda, all very interested in what's on screen...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I stop people on the streets, I pry into offices and shops and restaurants... all for the purpose of digging out voters of California to express *their* views...

ON SCREEN, A SWEET, ELDERLY WOMAN appears --

ELDERLY WOMAN

I'm going to vote for Governor Merriam. He is the man for the job.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And do you think he would keep you and your family safe?

ELDERLY WOMAN

I do, yes. Very much so.

The screen CUTS to DARK, SHIFTY-EYED YOUNG MAN.

SHIFTY YOUNG MAN

Me, I'm voting for Upton Sinclair.
We need a completely new system of
government. The old way hasn't
worked, so it's time to tear it all
down and start new! The Russians,
they've got the right idea!

IN THE AUDIENCE, we see several people glancing at one
other... looks of concern in their eyes...

ON SCREEN, it is now a STATELY, WELL-DRESSED MAN --

WELL-DRESSED MAN

I work in the real estate business,
and I believe that voting for
Governor Merriam is the *only*
option. If Merriam is elected, my
business will grow. If Sinclair is
elected, there won't BE a real
estate business anymore!

Then, suddenly, an AUDIENCE MEMBER IN THE THEATER STANDS UP,
and begins SHOUTING OVER THE SCREEN --

EPIC ACTIVIST

This is NOT NEWS! This is
PROPAGANDA! MGM is working for the
Republican Party!

ON CUE, several other EPIC SUPPORTERS RISE from their seats.
They're spread throughout the theater, ready to cause chaos --

EPIC SUPPORTERS

Don't believe their LIES! Sinclair
is for the PEOPLE!

The regular citizens throughout audience are startled by the
sudden, loud outbursts -- and now the various EPIC SUPPORTERS
begin marching down the AISLES, CHANTING --

EPIC SUPPORTERS (CONT'D)

Support EPIC! Support Sinclair! END
POVERTY IN CALIFORNIA!

Several other audience members RISE FROM THEIR SEATS, angry,
yelling back at them --

AUDIENCE MEMBERS (VARIOUS)
Hey, shut up! This is America! Go
back to Russia! We don't want your
Communism here!!

And as the two groups shout over each other, a FULL-SCALE
RIOT BEGINS TO UNFOLD... AMIDST THE CHAOS, WE CUT TO --

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICE - VARIOUS - DAY

Frank Merriam, Asa Call, and several of the Governor's
lieutenants march through the offices. Asa clutches a
newspaper under his arm, the FRONT PAGE HEADLINE READS:

GOVERNOR'S RACE SPURS RIOTS AT MOVIE THEATERS

"California Election News" Reel Accused of Being Secretly Manufactured by MGM

Clem stands to greet him --

CLEM
Governor!

But Merriam and his men walk right past him. Clem and Leone
exchange a look, and both stand and follow them towards the
conference room. Clem ENTERS first. But then, as Leone is
about to follow him in... Asa Call blocks her entrance.

ASA
The Governor would prefer you not
attend this meeting.

LEONE
What? But--

Before she can respond, Asa CLOSES the door on her.

IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM, Clem looks to Leone through the
glass... she stares back at him, confused...

Merriam begins to speak. We are on the outside, with Leone,
and so we can't hear what he's saying. Clem looks at her for
another beat, before he turns his attention to Merriam.

Slowly, Leone walks back to her desk and takes a seat.
Several concerned staffers watch her. Once seated, she looks
back towards the conference room and watches as the meeting
unfolds, silently, behind the glass...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICE - LATER

That night. Leone is still at her desk. Clem is back at his. Leone watches as the LAST STAFFER leaves for the night. Once they're alone in the office, she walks over to Clem.

LEONE

What happened today?

CLEM

They're concerned about the riots at the movie theaters. I don't think it's such a bad thing. It makes the other side look violent.

LEONE

Why did they shut me out of the meeting?

CLEM

... I don't know.

LEONE

You didn't ask?

CLEM

(Laughing)

Would you have asked?

A moment. Clem is trying to keep it light, but Leone can see right through him...

LEONE

What's going on?

CLEM

Honestly, you should be *happy* you weren't in that meeting. Merriam was not exactly his sunniest self.

LEONE

Did you do something?

CLEM

I-- I didn't think...

LEONE

What did you do?

(Beat)

Tell me.

CLEM

I-- look, all I *did* was tell him the truth.

(MORE)

CLEM (CONT'D)

I went to see Merriam, and I-- I told him the *truth*, about you, and about the role you play here...

And there it is. Leone sinks into a chair. Clem continues, rambling on, trying to fill the silence...

CLEM (CONT'D)

I, just-- I thought-- why should we *pretend*? Act like you're some *secretary*, when we both know you're so much more than that? The whole thing, this charade we were doing for them, it was absurd!

LEONE

(Quietly)

I told you this wasn't the time to change Merriam's mind about that.

CLEM

I know. You did. And I-- I didn't know he would react this way--

LEONE

Oh, you *didn't*?!

Leone is raw, emotional. We haven't seen her like this.

CLEM

It was a mistake. I see that now. But it-- I was-- I was just *trying* to do what was *right*--

LEONE

(Interrupting, angrily)

The *right thing* would have been to ask me first. The RIGHT THING would have been to INCLUDE me in your decision-making, rather than go behind my back, to-- what? Try to impress me?!

CLEM

No, that-- that wasn't why--

LEONE

I had a *life* before I met you. I had a job. Do you have any idea how hard it was for me to get *that*? I moved to California *three weeks* after the crash. And I gave it all up to work with you.

CLEM
Oh, come on!

Leone stops short. She stares at Clem, incredulous.

CLEM (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, but if it wasn't me, it
would have been someone else.

LEONE
Excuse me?

CLEM
Do you think you would have been
satisfied doing that? Sitting in
the Chamber of Commerce in Bumfuck,
California, negotiating a county
grain tax? Being some *bureaucrat*??

LEONE
You have such contempt for anyone
you think isn't as smart as you.

CLEM
Of course I do! Don't you??

With that, Leone turns and marches out of the room --

CLEM (CONT'D)
Baxter, wait--

-- but she's gone, SLAMMING the door behind her. The sound
echoes and reverberates for a moment, and then... silence.
Clem sits, alone, in their cavernous office space.

Shit.

INT. EPIC CAMPAIGN HQ - WAR ROOM

Sinclair and his inner trust sit around the table. Sinclair's
former vitality is still absent. He seems small, weak.
Sheridan watches him across the table, concerned, AS --

OTTO
(Holding up a letter)
This is a letter from a set
decorator at MGM. They've started
pulling a percentage from every
employee's paycheck. They call it a
"Sinclair Tax." He complained, and
now he's been fired.

He passes the letter around the table. Sheridan reads it, a look of disgust on his face.

OTTO (CONT'D)

This is what we're up against. A campaign of intimidation. Of fear.

(Beat)

But what we need to do is counter that with hope. We need to counter their darkness with *light*. We need to deliver a positive message, a message of hope, of *possibility*...

There are several nods at the table, but not from Sinclair. He's not convinced. And neither is Sheridan.

SHERIDAN

That won't be enough.

The table turns to Sheridan. Sinclair perks up, interested to hear this. Sheridan speaks, to the table and to himself, growing more bitter as he goes...

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

These people, running the Merriam campaign... they're not like us. They don't think like us. They don't care about policy. They don't care about the people. They don't care about a *single thing* that happens after this election is over. They just... don't care. That isn't who they are. And there's no point in pretending otherwise.

(Beat)

We need to look at this the same way as them. We need to look at this as a war.

Sinclair stares at Sheridan, new fire entering his eyes...

SINCLAIR

And we need to attack.

Sheridan nods. And as both men turn to Otto, we GO TO --

INT. EPIC CAMPAIGN HQ - MAIN ROOM

THE EPIC CAMPAIGN PRINTING PRESS, RUNNING AT FULL SPEED, PRINTING OUT STACKS OF DOCUMENTS... the documents are being gathered, sorted, organized by STAFFERS... and then...

EXT. CITY STREETS - VARIOUS

MORE EPIC STAFFERS, each with a satchel in hand, are moving down various city streets... we CUT BACK AND FORTH, tracking three different groups, all moving quickly, with purpose...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES

SEVERAL EPIC STAFFERS walk through the CAMPAIGNS, INC. Offices... everyone stops in their tracks, surprised... it's like seeing enemy soldiers, walking right into base camp...

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - LOBBY

More staffers storm through the LOBBY of the Governor's Mansion, once again drawing curious eyes...

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - ENTRANCE

And more through the entryway of a smoke-filled restaurant...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - BULLROOM

The EPIC staffers now DELIVER THICK FOLDERS OF DOCUMENTS to a perplexed Clem and Leone...

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - MERRIAM'S FRONT OFFICE

And to Merriam's secretary...

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM

And to ASA CALL, who is seated at a table, eating lunch with several businessmen...

Once the documents have been delivered, the EPIC CREW march back out of the restaurant. The rest of the table looks to Asa, who tries unsuccessfully to hide his concern...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - SAME TIME

Clem is reading through his pile, hopelessly confused. The text is dense. He walks over to Leone's desk.

CLEM
What am I looking at?

She looks up from her own stack of documents.

LEONE
We're being sued. By EPIC.

CLEM
Sued?? For what?

She flips through several pages. Then, she shrugs.

LEONE
... All of it.

INT. CALIFORNIA STATE SUPREME COURT - DAY

A PACKED day at the SUPREME COURT. JOHN PACKER, a top lawyer for the Socialist Party (and a face we recognize from EPIC HQ), stands before the BENCH OF JUDGES, speaking forcefully --

PACKER
Voter intimidation. Threats of unemployment. Willful misinformation, designed to incite violence. These are just a few of the things that the California Republican Party has engaged in over the past several months, in a desperate and frankly disgusting attempt to combat the rise of a political movement that they rightfully believe poses a grave threat to them. And until Governor Merriam and his campaign answer for these breaches of trust, it is *impossible* to consider the election legitimate...

The CROWD MURMURS. We find SHERIDAN, seated near the back, watching all of this unfold with newly hardened eyes...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Asa sits with Clem and Leone. He is thumbing through the stacks of legal briefs, gravely concerned.

ASA
The question is... has anything you've done been *illegal*?

CLEM
Well, most of what we've been doing has never been done before.
(MORE)

CLEM (CONT'D)

(Beat)

So... I think we're good?

ASA

You need to make yourself available to our attorneys. Whatever they need, as soon as they ask for it.

CLEM

You do realize that's *exactly* what they want, don't you? What they want is to *distract us*. Draw our attention away from the campaign.

ASA

Well, then I'm afraid they've succeeded. Make the time.

Clem nods. Asa gathers his documents and EXITS.

CLEM

(to Leone, hopeful)

Perhaps you and I can... *both* make ourselves available to them?

Leone gathers up her own materials. She wasn't showing it in front of Asa, but as soon as they're alone, she is ice cold.

LEONE

I have a feeling they'll want to speak to the person in charge.

She EXITS, brusquely. Clem sighs.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Late night. Clem is seated in his living room, with a HUGE STACK OF documents in his lap. He struggles to read them, while nursing a sizable drink. He looks exhausted.

Harriet stands in the doorway, watching him, concerned. She is quiet at first, working up the nerve to say...

HARRIET

Maybe you should quit.

Clem looks up at her, surprised. She steps into the room.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

We're making a good living. We don't need more. I just don't see why one job is worth all of this.

Clem takes a gulp from his drink. Says nothing.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

You said yourself, politics isn't like other businesses. You haven't signed any contracts...

CLEM

We can win this. I *know* we can.

HARRIET

But is it worth it? Everything you're going through? How much you've been *drinking*? I don't see--

CLEM

(Interrupting, angrily)

I'm NOT going to be the in-house PR for Pacific Gas and Electric! That isn't going to be our life! This company can be MORE than that!

(Then, more softly)

Something is *happening*. Ideas, information... the way it spreads... the *speed* of it all. There are no barriers anymore. No walls. We can communicate with everyone. We can reach-- everyone, all at once. It's a new world. And it's happening *right now*.

HARRIET

(Gently)

Okay, but... does anyone *else* see it like that?

A moment. Then, sadly...

CLEM

Yes.

(Beat)

I'm beat. Can we finish this later?

Disappointed, Harriet EXITS the room. Clem drinks.

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Clem sits in the conference room with Merriam and Asa. Merriam is in a foul mood, laying pamphlets on the table...

MERRIAM

Sinclair is a Communist... Sinclair will bring the homeless to Los Angeles... Sinclair is anti-teachers, anti-military... Sinclair this, Sinclair that...

TEXT: TWO WEEKS UNTIL ELECTION DAY

Clem stares back, unsure what he's meant to say here.

CLEM

And... ?

MERRIAM

And what I'm seeing is a whole LOT about why Sinclair is a son of a bitch, damn near NOTHING about me!

CLEM

Well, Governor, the *strategy*, as we've outlined--

MERRIAM

I don't care about your goddamn strategy!!

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - BULLPEN - SAME TIME

Outside the conference room, Leone is seated at her desk. She is watching this heated argument as it unfolds behind the glass. She grows concerned, as Merriam rages at Clem...

IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM,

MERRIAM

I don't like this hold-your-nose and vote for Merriam crap! With these damn lawsuits in the papers everyday, we need to do something, we need to *change what people are talking about*. That's what you always say, isn't it?!

CLEM

Well-- yes, *that's-- technically--* but this isn't *exactly* what I--

MERRIAM

(Interrupting)

It's a hell of a lot of money being spent, you know that??

(MORE)

MERRIAM (CONT'D)
A HELL of a lot of money. And I
want people to be voting FOR me,
not just against that windbag
Sinclair!

CLEM
(Fed up)
Well, I'm sorry, but you're not
exactly an EASY SELL!

Oh *shit*. Clem immediately knows he fucked up.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Uh-- what I mean, is--

Before he can finish, Merriam STORMS OUT OF THE ROOM. Asa
gives Clem a withering look, and follows Merriam out...

OUT IN THE BULLPEN,

A furious Merriam stalks through the office. Leone stares
down at her work as he walks by, avoiding his eyes...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME

Clem sits, staring into space, pondering just how badly he
just fucked up. Leone peers into the room --

LEONE
What was that about?

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - HALLWAY

Merriam and Asa wait by the elevators. The elevator DINGS
open. The men step inside. The door is about close, when --

LEONE
Hold that please!

Leone steps in, smiling at both of them. Asa nods to her.
Merriam does nothing, his face now locked in a scowl.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The elevator door CLOSES and the elevator begins to go down.

LEONE
(Sunny)
Only a few weeks to go!

Merriam doesn't respond. Still glowering.

LEONE (CONT'D)

I hope you gentlemen are satisfied
with all the work we've been doing.

(Beat)

Though, I have to say... if I'm
being entirely honest...

(Beat)

No, no. Forget it.

A moment. Merriam turns to her.

MERRIAM

What is it?

LEONE

Well, it's just-- oh, I don't know.
Sometimes I wish this could be a
different sort of campaign. One
that more befits you, Governor, and
the sort of man you are. But that's
impossible. Obviously. I don't need
to tell you that.

Another pause. Merriam and Asa exchange a look.

MERRIAM

Well... what do you-- ?

LEONE

Because of Sinclair, of course.
He's forcing your hand.

The elevator door DINGS open. Asa steps halfway out, but
Merriam stays behind, curious now...

MERRIAM

How do you mean?

LEONE

Sinclair creates too much noise. He
creates news just by *existing*. It's
unfair. And the only way to counter
that is to create an equal amount
of noise on our side.

(Beat)

I'm sure the sort of things we're
doing don't feel right to you
either. How could they? You're a
far more *serious man* than Sinclair.
You're a man of *substance*. These
sort of theatrics, they're all so
beneath you. And I wish we didn't
have to do this... but it's our
only choice.

(MORE)

LEONE (CONT'D)
It's the only way for your ideas to
be heard.
(Beat)
And your ideas, sir, they *deserve*
to be heard.

ON MERRIAM, the scowl now lifting from his face, we go...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Back to Clem, still despondent in the conference room. Leone
steps in. She closes the door behind her, and sits down.

LEONE
Merriam is okay. He won't complain
anymore about the strategy.

CLEM
(Amazed)
What... but, how did-- ?

LEONE
You need to be more careful. We
work for him. Stop forgetting that.

Clem nods, humbled. A moment.

CLEM
What did you say to him?

LEONE
(Shrugging)
What he wanted to hear.

CLEM
(Smirking)
You know, you *never* talked this
quality of bullshit when we met.

LEONE
Well, I learned from the best.

Clem breaks into a grin. So does she. A sweet moment.

LEONE (CONT'D)
You should go home. Get some rest.

Clem nods. Leone stands, and starts towards the door, when --

CLEM
I didn't quit my last job. I lied
to you about that. I was fired.

A moment. Leone returns to the table, sits. Says nothing.

CLEM (CONT'D)

I was mad at them, at first. But I deserved it. Even then, deep down, I knew I deserved it. I was a lousy reporter. I never put in the work. I didn't care enough. All I wanted... all I've ever wanted, in my life, really, was... success. That's it. And I wanted it quickly. I never cared how I got there.

(Beat)

But this is different. I want to be here late. I want to put in the work. I want us to win, not by chance, not through a stroke of luck, but because we fought harder, and we worked harder, and because we are better and smarter and we deserve it. That's what I want.

Clem is growing emotional. Leone watches him, closely.

CLEM (CONT'D)

I believe in *this*. I believe in this company. I believe in us.

(Searching)

Is that... enough?

LEONE

(Emotional)

I believe in this company too.

Clem puts out his hand. She takes it. Squeezes. A moment. And now they're holding hands, looking into each other's eyes...

CLEM

How did your husband die?

And then, suddenly, it all feels a bit too intimate for Leone... she pulls her hand away, gently.

LEONE

I'll see you tomorrow.

She stands and EXITS. Once she's gone, Clem EXHALES.

INT. CLEM'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Clem wakes up, and sits up in bed. He looks to his side. Harriet lies next to him. He watches her sleep. He looks guilty. Then, he gets out of bed, careful not to wake her...

EXT. VARIOUS - BILLBOARDS

SHOTS OF: BILLBOARDS, ALL THROUGHOUT THE STATE, all with
"FRANK MERRIAM FOR GOVERNOR" IN LARGE, BOLD LETTERS...

As we see these BILLBOARDS, we begin to hear APPLAUSE...

INT. LEONE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Leone wakes up, rolls out of bed, and finds yet another dead goldfish floating in her bowl. She sighs and walks into the bathroom, not even bothering to flush this one.

The APPLAUSE continues under the scene, but it still sounds distant, coming from elsewhere...

EXT. CITY STREET - SACRAMENTO - DAY

A BUSY CITY STREET. A WOMAN is stationed at a table, with a sign reading "*New Citizen's Cooperative Relief Committee*" -- she is handing out pamphlets to everyone who passes by --

WOMAN

(To a passersby)

Hello, make a donation for the unemployed and homeless that will be arriving in our city when Upton Sinclair is elected?

(To another)

Hello, donation to support the destitute street people that will be invading our streets under Governor Sinclair?

(To another)

Hello, help fund new housing for the indigent unemployed that will be filling our city very soon?

UNDER this, THE APPLAUSE continues...

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

A GOP FUNDRAISER. Frank Merriam works the room of well-heeled Republicans, everyone chatting, smoking, eating canapés...

The APPLAUSE grows LOUDER NOW, taking us to...

INT. CIVIC AUDITORIUM, PASADENA - NIGHT

THE SOURCE: AN AUDITORIUM, JAM- PACKED WITH SINCLAIR SUPPORTERS. It is a nine-thousand seat arena, filled to capacity with the true believers. And they are RILED UP.

INT. CIVIC AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE

Sinclair stands backstage, listening to the audience CHEER and CHANT HIS NAME.

He closes his eyes, savoring the sound...

TEXT: **ONE WEEK UNTIL ELECTION DAY**

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - BULLPEN - DAY

The ENTIRE STAFF is now gathered for the final all-staff meeting. Clem and Leone stand before them. They are, once again, totally in sync. Speaking as one. A unit.

CLEM

This is NOT a race for Governor. As people step into the voting booth, they should not feel like they are voting for Frank Merriam, or against Upton Sinclair. They are voting for the *continued existence* of their lives *as they know them* --

LEONE

Sinclair is not just a politician. Not just a Socialist. He is an *existential threat*. That is what we need people believing. Anything less and we have failed.

INTERCUT WITH --

VARIOUS CHURCHES AND SYNAGOGUES, SIGNS ADVERTISING THEIR WEEKEND SERMONS: "SINCLAIR VERSUS CHRIST", "SOCIALISM IS THE DEVIL'S HAND", "ARMAGEDDON IS AT OUR DOORS"...

LEONE (CONT'D)

Those who pay attention, they've made up their minds long ago. We are not trying to convince them.

CLEM

We are going after people's hearts now. Going after their guts. Going after their fears...

A HUGE, IMPASSIONED ANTI-SINCLAIR MARCH ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS... BUT THEN, WE SPOT SEVERAL STAFFERS FROM CAMPAIGNS, INC. PASSING OUT SIGNS, LIGHTING TORCHES, ORGANIZING AND DIRECTING THE CROWD...

LEONE

We want women to think that if Sinclair wins, they will be afraid to leave their homes, afraid for their children to leave their homes... life will not go on, things will not continue as usual, we will not survive this...

A SMALL PROPELLER PLANE CIRCLES LOS ANGELES, RAINING ANTI-SINCLAIR ONE-SIDES ON THE CITY... PEOPLE ON THE SIDEWALK LOOK UP IN WONDER, AT THIS SWIRLING STORM OF PAPER...

LEONE (CONT'D)

Okay, let's get the work!

The STAFF all begin to disperse, when Clem calls out --

CLEM

Actually, can everyone stay, for one more minute?

Everyone returns to their seats. Leone looks to Clem, unsure. This part wasn't planned.

With all eyes on him, Clem takes a moment. He looks around the room... at the staff, at their office space, at the piles of work all around them... and then...

CLEM (CONT'D)

I just wanted to say... for a long time, I worked alone. I set my own hours, I made my own decisions. I answered to no one except myself. I *trusted* no one, except myself. And for a time, I thought that was... good. I thought that was the sort of life that suited me.

He finds Leone in the crowd. Locks eyes with her.

CLEM (CONT'D)

But I was wrong.

(Beat)

(MORE)

CLEM (CONT'D)

And no matter *what* happens tomorrow, I want to thank all of you for your work, and I want to thank you for your brilliance, and I want to thank you for-- putting up with me. Because I know I'm not easy. But I also know that it has been the honor of my life working with all of you. Thank you.

The now very emotional staff bursts into APPLAUSE... Clem, once more, finds Leone in the crowd. She is also applauding, holding back tears, and on that, we...

GO TO **BLACK**.

INT. SINCLAIR'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Morning. Sinclair steps into his living room. The raucous energy that defined this house throughout the campaign is gone. It is now deeply, almost eerily quiet.

TEXT: **NOVEMBER 6, 1934 ("ELECTION DAY")**

Sinclair wanders through his home, taking in the strange, extraordinary quiet...

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - DAY

Our offices, equally quiet. People are still working, but the breakneck pace has given way to a gentle, steady hum.

The battle is over. Nothing to do now except wait.

We find Leone, who is slowly walking along the perimeter of the office, taking in the enormity of what they've done.

She catches Clem, at his desk, already watching her.

INT. VEGAS BOOK - SAME TIME

AND HERE'S where the action has moved: a bunch of GAMBLERS placing newly legalized bets on the election outcomes. The energy is LOUD, RAUCOUS, CONTENTIOUS -- everyone is TALKING over each other, PILES OF CASH on the tables, and then --

INT. SINCLAIR'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Back to Sinclair's home. Still silent. He peels back his curtain, and peers outside. The reporters are still gathered in his yard, seated in their well-worn lawn chairs.

EXT. SINCLAIR'S MANSION - FRONT LAWN - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sinclair steps out to greet the reporters.

SINCLAIR
I never thought I'd say this, but I
think I may miss you all.

The reporters all LAUGH. Sinclair smiles, relaxed.

REPORTER #1
How are you feeling?

SINCLAIR
Hopeful.

REPORTER #2
Any regrets?

SINCLAIR
No.

REPORTER #1
Can you give us a victory speech?

SINCLAIR
... Excuse me?

REPORTER #1
For when the results come in. We
can publish faster if we've already
got your speech on record.

Makes sense. Sinclair takes a moment, composing his thoughts.
The Reporters all pull out their notebooks and pens.

SINCLAIR
First, I'd like to thank the voters
of California for giving me their
trust. I'd like to thank those who
have supported our campaign from
the very beginning, when none of
this seemed possible...

The REPORTERS all listen closely, transcribing his words...

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

For those who did not vote for me,
I will still spend every day
working to make your lives better.
Being elected Governor of
California is the honor of my life,
and I will strive to live up to the
hope that the people of this great
state have placed in me.

(Beat)

Now our real work begins, to end
poverty in California. Thank you.

The Reporters all continue scribbling down notes. Sinclair
takes a deep breath, unexpectedly moved.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

FDR sits in the OVAL, surrounded by STAFFERS. One of them,
RAYMOND MOLEY, is giving a breakdown of election results --

RAYMOND

This has been a *spectacular* day for
the Democratic Party. We are on
track to gain nine seats in the
House, and nine MORE in the Senate.

ON FDR, listening, his expression revealing very little...

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

The American people support you,
Mr. President, wholeheartedly, and
they have demonstrated that support
today. We should all be very proud.

Raymond hands the briefing book to FDR, who glances it over.
Then, after a beat, FDR looks back up at him.

FDR

What's happening in California... ?

Raymond purses his lips. And we go TO --

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - PRIVATE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

MERRIAM HQ. Everyone is talking, but the atmosphere is tense.
All waiting for the official word. Everyone has at least one
eye on the telephone. Including Clem and Leone. A moment.

CLEM

Does this remind you of anything?

LEONE
(Smiling)
Some things don't change.

Just then, the PHONE RINGS. Asa answers on its first ring --

ASA
Hello?
(Beat)
Yes, one moment.
(to Merriam)
Governor?

The room QUIETS. Merriam takes the phone.

MERRIAM
Hello, this is Governor Merriam.
(Beat)
Thank you. You as well. Thanks.

He hangs up the phone, and RAISES HIS FIST IN TRIUMPH, AND --

THE ROOM GOES CRAZY -- about ten different bottles of
CHAMPAGNE ARE POPPED at the same time, EVERYONE CHEERING,
LAUGHING, HUGGING ONE ANOTHER --

AND THEN, SUDDENLY --

INT. LOUIS B. MAYER'S MANSION - LATER

WE ARE AT THE SENSATIONAL, ECSTATIC, UTTERLY LAVISH after-
party in Louis B Mayer's HOLLYWOOD HILLS MANSION...

We now see Clem in FULL THRALL of the celebration, an
overflowing drink in hand, laughing and smiling as he speaks
with Mayer, Merriam, and several other VIP'S...

Every Republican luminary in California is in attendance
here, not to mention several prominent MOVIE STARS...

IN ANOTHER PART OF THE ROOM, Leone stands over a luxurious
APPETIZER TABLE. She takes it in. Crab legs, caviar, lobster
tails... this is a far cry from that paltry snack table at
that long-ago community meeting in Redding.

She picks up an oyster and slurps it. Then she turns, and --

She spots Clem. Watches him as he moves joyfully through the
party. He doesn't know she's watching.

And as she stares at him, we see a look cross her face.

A decision.

She puts down the oyster shell. We follow close behind her as she walks through the main room of the party --

INT. LOUIS B. MAYER'S MANSION - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Down a long, crowded hallway, and into --

INT. LOUIE B. MAYER'S MANSION - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

An huge, ornate bathroom. Leone closes the door behind her, locks it, and walks over to the mirror.

She reaches into her purse, pulls out some lipstick, and begins to reapply. She applies makeup the same way she does everything else that matters: very, very carefully.

INT. LOUIE B. MAYER'S MANSION - MAIN ROOM - LATER

Leone STEPS BACK into the main room of the party. She looks stunning. But it's not just the makeup. There's a new look in her eyes. She's pumped up. She's *alive*.

She looks around the room, searching, until...

She spots Clem.

And her face falls.

Harriet has arrived to the party. Clem has his arm around her. He is now plainly *drunk*, a big, goofy smile plastered on his face as he holds court with a worshipful group.

Leone stares at them for a beat, and then she snaps herself out of it. She turns, and is about to walk away, when --

HARRIET

LEONE!

Harriet breaks away from the group, rushes over, and gives Leone a BIG, DRUNKEN HUG -- Leone forces a smile, as --

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Congratulations!

LEONE

Thank you.

HARRIET

You must be so proud.

LEONE

Yes, I... we all are.

HARRIET

Clem talks about you *all the time*.
About how *brilliant* you are. You
should know that.

LEONE

Thank you.

HARRIET

I can't *imagine* how this has been
for you. He's been under *so much*
pressure. You know that, of course.
Between us, it hasn't been easy.
He's had *so much* on his mind...

They both instinctively look to Clem. They observe him,
together, as Harriet continues speaking in Leone's ear...

HARRIET (CONT'D)

I just hope things will calm down
now, a little. For both of you. I
hope you can just *relax*, and
appreciate what you've done. I
mean, the *accomplishment*...

LEONE

(Just barely keeping it
together)
If you'll excuse me...

HARRIET

Oh, of course--

Leone extricates herself from Harriet's grasp and moves back
across the party, back to where she came from...

INT. MAYER'S MANSION - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Leone hurriedly steps back into the bathroom, closing and
locking the door behind her. Once she is safely alone, she
sits on the edge of the toilet. She takes a few deep
breathes. Then, she allows herself to cry.

And then, she can't stop crying.

We still hear the FAINT SOUNDS of the party raging down the
hall, as Leone sits here, alone, SOBBING, letting out what
she's been holding in for months, her freshly-applied makeup
running in streaks down her cheeks...

INT. SINCLAIR'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - SAME TIME

And here's Sinclair HQ. People are eating and drinking, but the atmosphere of this "party" is absolutely *brutal*. We find Sheridan and Otto, commiserating in a corner.

OTTO

We did all we could.

SHERIDAN

I've never lost a campaign before.
I don't care for it.

OTTO

(Smiling)

You'll get used to it.

Otto steps away from Sheridan, who is not at all satisfied with that answer. He approaches Sinclair, who is standing alone at a window, staring out.

OTTO (CONT'D)

There are still several hundred
supporters gathered at the gates.

SINCLAIR

Well, I certainly hope they brought
heavy coats.

OTTO

Perhaps you should... go out there?
Thank them for their support?

Sinclair looks out the window for a beat, then turns back to Otto. He speaks decisively, and coldly.

SINCLAIR

Now that sounds like something a
politician would do.

Before Otto can respond, Sinclair steps away. He navigates through this utterly depressing party, careful not to look at or talk to anyone. Sheridan crosses towards him --

SHERIDAN

Well, we did all--

But Sinclair walks right past him. Says nothing. Cold.

Sheridan stands there for a beat, deeply insulted. Then, decisively, he turns and brusquely EXITS the party, AS --

INT. SINCLAIR'S MANSION - PRIVATE STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Sinclair steps into his private study, away from the rest of his house and from everyone in it. He closes the door, locks it, and breathes in the pure, blissful *quiet*.

There is a desk against one wall, with a typewriter sitting on it. Sinclair takes a seat, and begins typing:

HOW I, THE CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR, GOT LICKED

He goes down several spaces, then writes:

CHAPTER 1

THE LIE FACTORY BEGINS

Sinclair continues typing, but we now hear HIS VOICE, narrating the words as he writes them...

SINCLAIR (V.O.)
This is a true story...

INT. LOUIE B. MAYER'S MANSION - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

BACK TO the other after-party, now with NO SOUND. We hear SINCLAIR'S VOICE, as we PAN ACROSS the jubilant celebration.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)
*It is the story of the EPIC
movement, and the campaign to end
poverty in California...*

IN THE MIDST OF THE CROWD, Sheridan steps into the party. Carrying a bottle of scotch. He wanders through the bacchanalia, looking around the room, searching...

SINCLAIR (V.O.)
*An inside story of events about
which there has been much
guessing...*

Then, at the same moment, Sheridan and Clem spot each other. Clem is shocked to see him here. Sheridan hoists the bottle of scotch in the air. A peace offering.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)
*It is a revelation of what money
can do in American politics...*

Clem steps away from his circle and walks to Sheridan. Deeply moved. Without any words, they embrace. The campaign is behind them. Their friendship remains.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)
*And of what money will do, of the
 drastic steps it will take, when
 its privileges are threatened...*

On Clem and Sheridan, hugging, we GO TO --

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - NIGHT - LATER THAT NIGHT

The after-after party, back at the offices. It is now VERY late at night. Only Clem, Leone, and Sheridan remain. The bottle of scotch Sheridan brought is near-empty, and their conversation is loose, rambling, and *drunk*.

CLEM
 But I'm telling you-- you *could've*
 won, but the mistake you all made--

LEONE
 (Take it easy)
 Clem...

CLEM
 No, no, he should hear this-- the
biggest mistake your campaign made
 was that you treated the whole
 thing like it was a speaking tour.
 Sinclair is good in a room, sure,
 but how many people can actually
 fit in those rooms to watch him?
 You never utilized what you *had*.

SHERIDAN
 Which was?

CLEM
 You had people marching in the
 streets, rioting in movie theaters.
 You didn't just have voters, you
 had people willing to *fight* for
 you, to *get arrested* for you. You
 had an army. But they were never
 organized. So in the end, the only
 votes you had were *theirs*.

SHERIDAN
 Very smart.

CLEM

Thank you!

(Rising)

When I return, I want this bottle
split up between three glasses.

Clem EXITS to the bathroom. Leone smiles, apologetically.

LEONE

I'm sorry. He shouldn't be rubbing
it in like this.

SHERIDAN

Oh, I'm quite used to it.

Leone smiles, and begins pouring the remaining scotch. As she
does, Sheridan looks around their space, taking it all in...

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

You two really did something here.
You created something new.

Leone sits back down next to him.

LEONE

(Smiling)

Well, we had to. We were up against
a very worthy adversary.

Sheridan smiles. Then, before he can change his mind, he
reaches out and puts his hand on Leone's leg.

A few seconds pass, but they feel much longer.

SHERIDAN

Leone...

Then, before he can say anything more, Leone takes his hand
and removes it. She is gentle, but matter-of-fact. Sheridan
is deeply embarrassed. She reaches out and touches his arm.

LEONE

Listen to me. Your political career
is *not* over. This was Sinclair's
loss. He owns it. The only thing
that has changed for you, the *only*
thing, is now you're in the game.

Sheridan nods, swallowing a whole lot of emotion, just as
Clem RE-ENTERS the room, still in high spirits.

CLEM

Now, I gave you both a running start, and you haven't made a *dent* in your glasses!

SHERIDAN

Actually, I think it's about time for me to leave.

(Standing)

The vanquished shall now leave the realm of the victors.

They all hug, say their goodbyes, and then Sheridan's gone.

CLEM

Well, you're *certainly* having one more with me.

Leone smiles, taking a sip. The way she moves is a little loose. Less controlled than normal. Clem notices.

CLEM (CONT'D)

My word. Baxter, are you *drunk*?

LEONE

Be quiet.

CLEM

Extraordinary! It feels-- wrong, somehow. Like seeing a wildebeest in Central Park.

Leone LAUGHS, louder and less gracefully than we're used to. She looks away, embarrassed. Clem grins.

LEONE

After this one, you should go home to your family.

CLEM

Yes. Perhaps I should.

(Beat)

But the problem, of course, is if I go *home*, I'll go to sleep.

LEONE

And... ?

CLEM

And if I go to sleep, then I'll wake up tomorrow...

LEONE
(Laughing)
And? What's the problem?

CLEM
And then it won't be tonight.

Beat.

LEONE
You're too sentimental.

He doesn't argue. They each take another drink.

CLEM
Alright. Shall we go?

LEONE
No, I-- I think I'll stay for a few minutes. I should start composing our press release for tomorrow, while it's fresh in my mind.

CLEM
You know my problem with you?
You're very lazy. You should try working sometime.

Leone smiles at this, but it feels a bit forced. As Clem gathers his things, she sits down at her typewriter.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Well... I'll see you tomorrow.

LEONE
Yes. Goodnight.

Clem starts towards the door. Leone stares at the blank page. But then, halfway to the door, Clem turns back --

CLEM
Oh, before I forget, when we put out our earnings statements for this year, I think we should list you as President of the company, and me as Vice President.

Leone is shocked. Clem continues, as if he's saying the most obvious, natural thing in the world --

CLEM (CONT'D)
Then next year, we'll list myself as President, and you as Vice.
(MORE)

CLEM (CONT'D)

I thought we might do it like that,
switching off each year? That way,
no one can claim to be confused
about the role you play here.

Leone stares at him for another moment, then looks away. No longer able to hide her rising wells of emotion. Clem, sensing this, starts back towards the door...

CLEM (CONT'D)

Goodnight, Baxter.

And now he's almost out the door, almost gone for good, the magic of the night almost over, when --

LEONE

Clem.

There is something different in her voice. He turns back.

LEONE (CONT'D)

My husband died in an automobile
crash. He had the first Ford on our
street. He was so proud.

Clem stares at her. Says nothing. She takes a long pause.

LEONE (CONT'D)

I had known him since I was fifteen
years old. We married on my
eighteenth birthday. He was my
whole life.

(Pause)

And he was a nice man. He was. I
was lucky, in that way. I had
friends whose husbands were not
kind to them, but mine was kind. He
was good. And I tried to be a good
wife to him. I really tried. But
when I was married to him, I could
feel myself being... *less*. Being
less than I could be. Being less
than-- *I am*. And I was supposed to
be happy about it.

(Growing emotional)

I told myself that I loved him.
That I was happily married. I told
this to myself so much that I... I
believed it. I really did. But
there was not one day, in all of my
marriage, not *once*, when I felt as
happy as I have felt every single
day, doing this work. With you.

A moment, dense with the unknown.

Then, Clem steps forward, takes Leone in his arms...

And they kiss.

It starts off as an old-fashioned, movie-star kiss, the kind you'd see in a classic romance, in any movie from the 30's...

But then, the kiss evolves, going beyond the point where those movies would cut to black... Clem lifts her up onto the table, TEARS open her blouse, Leone SHRIEKING with excitement, and then, before we see TOO much, WE --

SLAM TO **BLACK.**

TEN YEARS LATER

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - 1942 (VERSION 3)

VARIOUS SHOTS OF... A HUGE, MULTI-STORY OFFICE BUILDING. Over ONE HUNDRED EMPLOYEES on staff. Campaigns, Inc. has grown by leaps and bounds. It is now an entire universe unto itself.

We MOVE THROUGH THE OFFICE, taking it all in... there are numerous FRAMED POSTERS and DOCUMENTS lining the walls, including a copy of "*How I, The Candidate for Governor, Got Licked*" and a BALLOT from the Central Valley Project vote in 1933 -- and we glide through the vast, glorious, beautifully designed space, until we ARRIVE AT --

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - STAFF MEETING

Leone is seated at a large table with a group of STAFFERS. She is reading through some materials. Everyone else at the table is silent, waiting on her response.

Leone's style is immaculate. She looks pretty much the same... only much, much richer. She finishes reading.

LEONE

It's getting there. But here's the problem. When I read this, I feel like I'm reading about healthcare.

STAFFER

But... that *is* what it's about.

LEONE

No. That's what Governor Warren *wants* this to be about. But for us, a government-run healthcare program is NOT about healthcare. It needs to be something more fundamental.

Leone STANDS, begins pacing the room, as --

LEONE (CONT'D)

It's about a lack of *choice*. It's about a loss of *freedom*. It's about a government seizing control of the one thing that we still have left, the one thing that still belongs just to *us*, our *bodies*...

The STAFFERS scribble down notes, hanging on her every word --

LEONE (CONT'D)

Half of the work is done for us. People are *already skeptical* of bureaucracy.

(MORE)

LEONE (CONT'D)
Think of all the ways that
government tape might come into
conflict for what you would
naturally expect from a healthcare
system... paperwork, long lines,
dozens of unnecessary steps...

CLEM (O.S.)
Just think of your last visit to
the Post Office.

They all TURN to find Clem, in the doorway. Leone smiles.

LEONE
Yes. Or the Motor Vehicle Bureau.

CLEM
Oh, yes. Even worse.

Several staffers LAUGH. Clem steps further into the room.

LEONE
We'd like to see new work by the
end of the day. Thanks everyone.

The room CLEARS OUT. Once everyone is gone, Leone walks over
to Clem, and adjusts his tie.

LEONE (CONT'D)
I thought you'd be gone by now.

CLEM
Just about to leave.

LEONE
And you're *certain* you don't want
me to come... ?

CLEM
No, no. It's more important for you
to stay here. Too much to do.
(Beat)
Besides, he did ask *only for me*.

LEONE
Lucky you.

Clem GRINS. He gives her a quick kiss, and EXITS the room --

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - MAIN BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

But then, as we see Clem moving through the office, away from Leone's line of sight, his smile fades... wherever it is he's going right now, he is feeling very *uneasy* about it...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

Clem, chain-smoking and pacing, outside of a restaurant. He stubs out a final cigarette, and ENTERS the building.

INT. DOWNTOWN RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

It is dark and smoke-filled inside, with no natural light. Clem moves through, scanning the room, until he spots:

UPTON SINCLAIR, already seated, sipping from a drink.

Sinclair sees Clem. The two men nod to one another. Clem approaches the table, and takes a seat.

For a moment, they are silent. A WAITER approaches.

SINCLAIR
(to the Waiter)
I'll take another gimlet. And... ?

CLEM
Coffee, thank you.

The Waiter steps away. Pause.

SINCLAIR
Not one for drinking in the
daytime, I take it?

CLEM
Not unless I'm celebrating.

Sinclair downs the rest of his drink and places the glass, gingerly, on the table. Another pause.

SINCLAIR
So. Would you like to know why I've
asked you here?

CLEM
You know, the thought never crossed
my mind.

Sinclair LAUGHS, amused. While chuckling, he reaches into his suit-pocket, and pulls out a PAMPHLET.

SINCLAIR

I received a mailer the other day.

Sinclair lays the PAMPHLET on the table. There is a goofy
CARTOON OF A DOCTOR AND PATIENT on the front, with the title:

GOVERNMENT DOCTORS:
DO THEY PRACTICE REAL MEDICINE?

Sinclair flips through the pages. The pamphlet is dog-eared.
Clem watches him, betraying no emotion.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

I took a look, and I thought, well--
this is you. This is vintage you.
And sure enough, here on the
backside-- you have to search for
it, of course, but there it is--
produced by *Campaigns,*
Incorporated. Printed so small you
need a magnifier to read it.

Sinclair looks up at him. Clem shrugs. *Yes, what about it?*

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

I must say, the work is impressive.
Your toolbox has grown. We fought a
hard campaign and all, but I will
be the first to admit I am a rather
obvious target. But to convince
people they don't want *free*
healthcare, now *that*-- that takes a
truly *exemplary* set of skills--

CLEM

That isn't what this is.

SINCLAIR

Oh, it isn't? Did I misread?

CLEM

What the Governor is proposing is a
mandate. It's a radical intrusion
into people's private lives, and
the first step towards--

SINCLAIR

(Interrupting)

Stop, stop, please. I surrender. I
can't listen to this.

(Beat)

Tell me, do you actually *believe*
anything you say?

CLEM

I don't like that question.

SINCLAIR

And why is that? Because you've heard it before? Now, what does *that* tell you?

Clem is growing irritated. *This* is why Sinclair asked him here? Just to insult him?

CLEM

You want to know what I *believe*?

SINCLAIR

Oh, I am desperate for it.

CLEM

I believe that YOU would have made a truly, *memorably* bad Governor. I believe your entire movement was an edifice built to honor your own massive ego. I believe you would have happily bankrupted the state before you ever admitted your ideas were flawed, I believe that what we did to stop you was a public service, and I believe that I will be proud of that campaign for the rest of my life.

Sinclair stares back at Clem for a long pause, drawing it out, and then... he *shrugs*.

SINCLAIR

Well... *sure*. That's fine. But this is all much bigger than *me*. You must realize that.

Clem is thrown by this... Sinclair continues, speaking calmly, but with surgical precision...

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

I do not know your wife. She must see it too. How could she not? But perhaps she simply... *does not care*. Perhaps she doesn't let it bother her. And the ability to do *that* would be, I am ready to admit, a truly profound skill to possess, and one I have no doubt has served her well throughout her life.

(Beat)

But you...

(MORE)

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
 you were a *journalist* once. Like
 me. You must-- even now, you *must*
 still carry some small scrap of
 reverence for the truth.

CLEM
 Uh... look, I--

SINCLAIR
 (Forcefully)
 Men and women are not BARS OF SOAP.
 Our lives are not ADVERTISEMENTS.
 This isn't all just some GAME, to
 win or lose. It MATTERS.

(Beat)
 If we are allowed, now, to state
 publicly that things are true when
 they are *not true*... if that sort
 of thing is accepted... rewarded...
 then you know as well as I that it
 is not going to end here. It is
 going to grow, and spread, and seep
 into every corner of our lives, and
 then, before we know it, *the truth*
itself will no longer be the truth.
 It will no longer be... *anything*.

(Beat)
 And that seems, to me, to be a very
 dire proposition. For all of us.

Sinclair finishes his second drink in a gulp, then stands.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
 But what do I know? I'm just a
 writer.
 (Then)
 You'll pay for the drinks?

Clem manages a small nod. Sinclair EXITS the restaurant. Clem
 looks down the pamphlet. The cartoon doctor looks back at him

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS - VARIOUS - DAY

Clem steps out into the bright, harsh sunlight. He is very
 shaken. He begins walking the city streets.

He looks up at the flashing billboards, at the signs on shop
 windows, on benches, alongside buses... at the non-stop
 barrage of advertising that now totally papers the city...

And as Clem walks we CUT, seamlessly, TO --

INT. CAMPAIGNS, INC. OFFICES - MAIN BULLPEN - LATER

Clem, now wandering through the Campaigns, Inc. offices. He is still moving slowly, but the office BUZZES all around him, a smooth and elegant machine... and as he looks around, disoriented, drifting, his eyes land on...

Leone.

She is gliding through the office. Confident. Stylish. Totally in her element. Totally at peace.

She spots him, and, from across the room, she smiles at him. He smiles back, giving her a little wave.

Then, we see a SECRETARY approach Leone, and speak to her.

Leone nods, then starts moving towards their joint office. She gestures for Clem to follow her in.

Clem hesitates for a moment. He watches her enter the office.

INSIDE their office, Leone picks up the phone. She looks to Clem again, sees that he hasn't moved. She gestures, once more, for him to come into the office and join the call.

He starts walking towards the office, still moving slowly...

Leone, on the phone, looks to him again. She shakes her head and rolls her eyes, laughing through whatever dumb shit the client is saying on the other end of the call.

And as Clem watches her... he smiles. We see him relax.

He's here, with her, in the world they've created.

He's home.

And as he joins her in their office, and lifts the second phone receiver to his ears, we go...

TO **BLACK**

Earl Warren's healthcare legislation was rejected by the voters of California. A few years later, President Harry Truman attempted a similar proposal on the national level, and Campaigns, Inc. once again ran the opposition. Truman's initiative was similarly defeated.

The next successful attempt at federal healthcare reform wouldn't come until 2009.

Sheridan Downey served as a United States Senator from 1939 to 1951. After leaving the Senate, he became a lobbyist for a Petroleum concern. This jump from the public to private sector was so commonplace in D.C., a term had been coined around town to describe it:

"Cashing Out."

Upton Sinclair published over 40 additional books before his death, winning the Pulitzer Prize for literature in 1943. He remains one of the most celebrated authors of the twentieth century.

He never ran for political office again.

Clem Whitaker died of respiratory ailment at the age of 62. Leone Baxter continued to run the company for most of her adult life, in later years sharing ownership and working alongside their son, Clem Whitaker Jr.

Whitaker & Baxter are widely credited with inventing the field of political consulting.

*Today, it is a **\$6 Billion Dollar** industry.*

CREDITS