

The Immaculate Deception



By

Stewart A. Fergus

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FADE IN:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- NIGHT

Ultra-modern glass-walled conference room, with all the gizmos. Dark. The camera is outside the room, observing. Two burly bodyguards stand on guard outside the door.

A very professional-looking SOMBER MAN in a dark suit stands in front, making a presentation to about half a dozen respectful participants, also in business attire. Pictures of journalists, all around 30 years of age, flash across the screen, with the name and logo of their publication above their photo.

The final picture is of SUSAN WEAVER, an attractive woman, 30ish, long hair tied back in a simple, austere ponytail. The man stops talking. He gestures to the audience. They all raise their hands, some nodding.

The presenter hands a folder to a man. We see a gun in his belt and the head of a dragon tattoo stretching from under his cuff to the back of his hand. He leaves immediately.

The presenter pulls the USB drive from his laptop and smashes it with a hammer.

INT. LOW MEMORIAL HALL, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY -- DAY

Title:

A FEW MONTHS EARLIER

Pulitzer Prize Award Ceremony. Formal lunch. Two distinguished GENTLEMEN stand by the podium.

GENTLEMAN
... and the Pulitzer Prize goes
to... Susan Weaver of the New
York Times.

Everyone stands up and APPLAUDS enthusiastically as Susan heads for the podium.

INT. LOW MEMORIAL HALL, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY -- MOMENTS
LATER

Susan is at the podium, soaking up the APPLAUSE. She is about to speak when we hear an ALARM CLOCK go off.

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM -- DAY

Susan's face peeks from under the covers.

SUSAN

Ugh!

She swings an arm to switch off the alarm. She looks disappointed.

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Susan is multi-tasking, eating a bagel and drinking coffee as she works out on an exercise bike. She flicks through the cable news channels:

- Russia building up troops on its border with Kazakhstan
- Tension in the South China Sea between China and Japan
- Suicide bombs in...

SUSAN

What a messed up world!

Wearily, she changes the channel. She addresses her cat, Jinxie, curled up peacefully on the bed.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I envy you sometimes, Jinxie.
Not a care in the world. If we weren't on the ground floor, I'd jump out the window right now.

The channel changes to one of the anodyne morning shows.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Ah, thank God! Saved by mindless trivia.

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM -- MORNING

Typical untidy, open plan newspaper office - big logo "LA Post", arrays of workstations, TV monitors lining a wall.

JACK FOSTER, mid-thirties, a handsome Australian newspaper photographer, camera around his neck, walks in. We follow him as he passes framed copies of "classic" front pages hanging on the walls - mostly celebrity-driven, exposed peccadilloes, how the mighty fall. This is clearly a tabloid, not the New York Times!

Susan doesn't notice him sidle up to her.

JACK

Anyone home?

He reads over her shoulder. He arches his eyebrows.

ANGLE ON DENSE PAGE OF SOLID TEXT ON COMPUTER SCREEN

JACK (CONT'D)

Jeez, Susie. You writing a thesis?
Or a v-e-r-y long suicide note?

SUSAN

What? Oh, hi, Jack.

JACK

You know you're wasting your time with all that tree-hugging shit, right?

SUSAN

Climate change is a serious...

JACK

Susie, Susie, Susie. Look at the walls. Tits and ass. Now, if everyone's going topless BECAUSE of global warming, *then* you got a story. I'll even take the pix myself.

She puts her hand on her heart.

SUSAN

(feigning emotion)

That's... that's so touching, Jack.

JACK

(theatrically)

It's a far, far better thing that I do...

HARRIS (O.S.)

Susan! Get in here, willya?

They turn to see MARTY HARRIS, early 50s, go back into his glass-walled cell.

JACK

(smiling broadly)

Remember: tits and ass.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Harris has a world-weary air, with his tie at half mast, and his collar button undone. Standing in front of a TV, he hits the mute button.

HARRIS

Yada, yada, yada. I dunno why we gotta have elections. Don't change shit. Only watched 5 minutes and I already wanna blow my brains out. God help us all!

He sees Susan.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Ah, Lois Lane - I got a job for you.

Harris points to the TV screen.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Bill Walsh, God's cure for insomnia, is gonna grace our glorious state with his imperial presence next month. I want you to go to Florida and follow his campaign for a few days.

SUSAN

(surprised)

But he's, like, lower than herpes in the polls. Why bother? Can't we just get what we want from the wires, TV... even the internet?

HARRIS

(shocked)

Do you WANT newspapers to die?

SUSAN

That's what we normally do.

HARRIS

That's beside the point. Look, word of warning: our beloved proprietor HATES this guy. No idea why, and frankly, I couldn't give a rat's ass. He wants you to come up with something juicy - not some sugar and spice and all things nice crap. Capiche?

INT. TAMPA COMMUNITY HALL -- EVENING

Title:

TAMPA, FLORIDA

A virtually empty hall. Around the room are banners proclaiming "VOTE WALSH FOR A SAFER AMERICA - AND A SAFER WORLD!" On stage is BILL WALSH, an impressive figure, mid-fifties, trim, expensively tailored, with distinguished flecks of grey hair. He looks every inch the patrician he is.

WALSH

... Enough with the hypocrisy. We gotta stop cosyng up to corrupt potentates, unsavory dictators, mass murderers, all in the name of expediency. Our world has become increasingly dangerous and more anarchic. It's happening in front of our very eyes - once again, Russia is threatening its neighbors, and the Middle East is spiraling into even more bloody chaos.

Susan YAWNS. She is startled by her cell phone VIBRATING. She rushes to the back of the hall.

WALSH (CONT'D)

If history has taught us one thing,
it's that we must never appease
aggressors. The ugly face of
nationalism is on the rise again.

At the back of the hall stands FRED BROWN, his Campaign
Manager, watching closely. There is an edginess to him.
He is not happy. He motions to Walsh to liven it up.

BROWN

(to himself)

... Promote democracy... drone...
drone... Democracies don't go to
war with one another... drone...
drone... drone...

He SIGHS and shakes his head. He spots an old couple
fast asleep.

BROWN (CONT'D)

Riveting!

WALSH

... America should not be in bed
with dictators, with abusers of
human rights. There will be no
more OUR sons-of-bitches. This...

He pauses and looks at the audience despondently. He
SIGHS.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Ah, to hell with it - let's just
nuke the lot of them and be done
with it!

The audience suddenly wake up. Wild APPLAUSE.

WALSH (CONT'D)

(incredulously)

I was just kidding - you know
that, right?

INT. TAMPA COMMUNITY HALL -- CONTINUOUS

Susan is standing at the back talking on her cell phone.

SUSAN

Mike, I'm sorry I'm missing your
birthday, but it's my job... I
know it's a waste of time - he's
dying on his feet here. What...?
Look, I've got what I'm gonna get
here. I'm catching the red eye
tonight, so I'll be there in the
morning. Okay?... Hey, that's
not fair. It's not my...

She stares incredulously at the cell phone for a moment.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
 Jesus, it's only a birthday!
 You're not SIX anymore.

LUCY KELLY overhears. She is mid-twenties, pretty, alert,
 with a very businesslike look.

LUCY
 Not getting much support back
 home? Sorry, I didn't mean to
 eavesdrop.

SUSAN
 Says I'm wasting my time following
 this loser around.

LUCY
 Really?

SUSAN
 Sorry... manners. Susan Weaver,
 LA Post.

They shake hands.

LUCY
 Lucy Kelly, Campaign Research
 Assistant.

SUSAN
 (horrified)
 Oh, my God! I didn't mean...

LUCY
 Hey, forget it. Off the record?

SUSAN
 Off the record. They're not really
 interested in this stuff anyway.

LUCY
 You're right. We're getting
 nowhere fast. It's frustrating
 as hell.

SUSAN
 Why do it then?

LUCY
 Masochism, I guess. You've got
 to start somewhere in this
 business, get that first notch on
 the belt.

SUSAN
 Why not find another horse to
 back?

LUCY
 Huh!

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

Not the first time I've heard that! You know... and I'm not just saying this because he's my guy, I really do believe he's the best candidate out there: honest, smart, experienced, genuine.

SUSAN

So, no chance then.

LUCY

(chuckles)

Exactly!

(frustrated)

How often do you find that package?

SUSAN

Once in a blue moon?

LUCY

Indeed. But... I don't know... he's just not...

SUSAN

... Connecting? If you want my two cents worth, he looks like he's had a charisma by-pass. He *seems* a nice guy, but it *is* a bit like watching paint dry.

LUCY

You may be right - although I never said that, okay?

SUSAN

Not exactly a secret, though, is it? He's just another rich white guy who hasn't got the faintest idea how the real world works.

LUCY

You'd be surprised. He's what this country needs, but he's not what it wants. I'm supposed to come up with some miracle to save this show.

Susan grabs her things and heads for the door.

SUSAN

You could try sacrificing a goat... nah, in your situation, you'd better go the whole hog and sacrifice a virgin... if you can find one. That would be my advice. Ciao.

INT. TAMPA COMMUNITY HALL -- LATER

Walsh and his keen young aides are grouped around a table of soft drinks and take-away food.

BROWN

So, what do you think? Tonight, we nearly had enough for a football team.

WALSH

Football or fussball?

BROWN

Glad you can see the funny side. You definitely hit a chord with your "Nuke the Bastards" policy. Maybe that should be our new slogan.

LUCY

I tweeted that one as "enthusiastic crowd".

WALSH

It's a bit soul-destroying, staring out at an empty hall every night.

BROWN

You've gotta come down to their level, Bill. I mean, "Faustian Pacts"...!?! For chrissakes. That one's...

He swishes his hand over his head and shrugs.

BROWN (CONT'D)

... way over.

LUCY

You're coming across as remote and, what's worse, "intellectual" - the kiss of death in American politics.

BROWN

No one cares about the outside world - unless Angelina's bought a new baby, or the Kardashians go shopping.

WALSH

Who?

BROWN

Exactly! You're out of touch with the great unwashed.

LUCY

You gotta stress your domestic policies more - health care, education, the econ...

BROWN

Bill, she's right.
 (to Lucy, with
 mock suspicion)
 You trying to do me out of a job?

Lucy, allowing herself the briefest of smiles, looks him intensely in the eyes. He looks back. There is heat.

BROWN (CONT'D)

(to Walsh)

It's all great stuff, Bill... all those years in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee... Good for you! You're really passionate about making the world a safer place - and that's great... we all agree with you - but it isn't firing up Middle America, let alone the party faithful.

WALSH

I'm not gonna fake who I am, Fred.

BROWN

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We get it. But you ain't got that many options. You know the game: to have a shot at this, you gotta win the primaries first - which means: Suck up, or bow out.

LUCY

You've already sewn up the Foreign Policy nuts, Bill... both of them.

WALSH

(frustrated)

Of course, you're right.
 (sighs)
 But that's my major strength, and...

BROWN

... no one gives a shit! That's why we love you, Bill. You're a hopeless case! It's time to start kissing babies and eating pizza... but, please God, with your fingers, okay?

EXT. TAMPA COMMUNITY HALL -- LATER

Walsh says good-night to his team, then gets into the back seat of his limousine. It is raining.

WALSH

The hotel, please, Jorge.

The car drives off into the dark.

INT. WALSH LIMO -- CONTINUOUS

Walsh rubs his eyes. He places a small cushion against the window of the car, rests his head and dozes off.

Jorge drives fairly slowly and carefully, checking his mirror repeatedly. A van pulls up behind them.

EXT. TAMPA ROAD -- MOMENTS LATER

Without warning, the van recklessly attempts to overtake on a bend. A truck coming in the opposite direction BLASTS its horn and flashes its lights. Beads of sweat appear on Jorge's forehead. The van brakes and falls behind again.

JORGE

Concha tu madre!

Jorge is relieved. He loosens his tie and pulls out a handkerchief and wipes his face. He checks the rear-view mirror. Walsh is asleep.

Suddenly, the van pulls out again, but again there is oncoming traffic. The van can't fall back in time, so pulls in sharply, BEEPING its horn.

Instinctively, Jorge swerves the limo away from the van, off the road, onto the sidewalk.

He struggles to control the car, but it crashes through a barrier and falls over an embankment. It rolls a couple of times before coming to rest upside down.

EXT. TAMPA ROAD -- NIGHT

An ambulance brakes with a SCREECHING sound, and the crew rush out to help the victims.

INT. TAMPA HOSPITAL - ER -- NIGHT

Two hospital gurneys are rushed into the Emergency Room. Two teams get to work on the patients.

INT. TAMPA HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM -- NIGHT

Walsh's campaign team arrive with JANE WALSH, the candidate's wife. All look grey with worry, but there is a stoical, patrician air to Jane.

INT. TAMPA HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM -- NIGHT

They all stand up as the DOCTOR comes through the swing doors. Brown supports Jane by the arm. She looks at the doctor, fearing the worst.

DOCTOR
 It looks like the driver...
 (consulting his
 clipboard)
 Jorge Perez... is going to be
 okay. Mr Walsh, I'm afraid,...

Jane GASPS.

LUCY
 Senator Walsh.

The doctor glances at her in disbelief. Such pedantry!

DOCTOR
 ... MISTER Walsh clearly wasn't
 wearing his seat belt. He got
 thrown around quite badly and has
 lost a lot of blood. He's still
 unconscious, but his vital signs
 are good.

Jane lets out a SIGH of relief.

JANE
 Thank God!

INT. LAX AIRPORT - ARRIVAL LOUNGE -- MORNING

Susan drinks a coffee. She looks up at a TV and sees a news item about Walsh's accident. Horror flashes across her face. She grabs her cell phone and switches it on.

ANGLE ON CELL PHONE SCREEN: 17 MISSED CALLS

SUSAN
 Oh, shit! Shit! Shitty shit!

She abandons her coffee and rushes out.

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM -- MORNING

As the camera pans towards the editor's office at the back, it passes a TV monitor. It shows the same doctor.

DOCTOR (On TV)
 Senator Walsh is in a stable
 condition. Fortunately, an
 ambulance happened to be passing...

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Harris paces up and down in front of a cowed Susan. A messenger opens the door to deliver some papers. He makes a hasty exit.

HARRIS
 Jesus, Susan. We were the only
 paper still following Walsh, and
 we had to get the story from the
 wires because...
 (MORE)

HARRIS (CONT'D)
 (he looks up at
 the heavens)
 ...It's your boyfriend's birthday!
 Are you fucking kidding me?!

SUSAN
 But, Marty...

CUT TO:

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM -- MORNING

Employees scuttle passed Harris' office as he berates Susan.

EXT./INT. LOS ANGELES -- VARIOUS DAYS

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Susan reports at a country fair, bored.
- Susan reports on a minor celebrity visiting a pet charity. A poodle pees on her.
- Susan feigns interest as she reports on a gardener with huge vegetables, hesitant to touch a dirty cabbage.

END MONTAGE

EXT. WALSH HOME - GARDEN -- DAY

Walsh, lying on a beach chair, looks much better, with only slight bruising, and a scar above his eyebrow. His left arm is still in plaster. Jane and his campaign committee are sitting around. The housekeeper brings out refreshments.

WALSH
 (on the phone)
 Thank you... yes, I'll tell her.
 Thank you, sir.

He hangs up. He turns to Jane.

WALSH (CONT'D)
 The President. He sends their
 best wishes.

Jane smiles appreciatively.

LUCY
 You're looking great, Senator...
 under the circumstances.

She points to her smartphone. Walsh nods. She takes a picture.

LUCY (CONT'D)

It's good for the troops to see you hale and hearty. I'll put it up now.

WALSH

I hope no one ever asks me how I do it with only one hand!

JANE

That's rich. You can't do it with two!

BROWN

Your poll numbers are through the roof - you're at 43% now. We should have driven you off the road months ago. It's done wonders for your name-recognition.

WALSH

Talk of silver linings! I suppose this may have helped.

Walsh holds up a newspaper, with a photo of him in hospital, looking like a mummy, his left arm hoist up in plaster.

BROWN

Lucky it was your left arm.

WALSH

(wistfully)

Fate's a strange mistress, that's for sure.

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT - LIVING-ROOM - EVENING

Susan enters, switches on the light, and stops dead in her tracks when she sees packing boxes piled up near the door. There is a bunch of house keys with a note on top. She picks up the note.

SUSAN

Oh, oh.

ANGLE ON NOTE

"It's for the best.

Good luck.

Mike

P.S. I'll pick up the rest tomorrow"

She looks momentarily dazed, then SIGHS and tosses the note in a bin. She picks up her cat and walks, stroking it, before turning back, picking up the bin, and putting it emphatically on top of the pile.

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT - LIVING-ROOM - EVENING

Susan is slouched on the sofa. An empty tub of Ben & Jerry's, with spoon sticking out, has fallen over on the table in front of her. A box of tissues is on one side of her on the sofa. Several scrunched up tissues lie on the other. She hugs the cat.

EXT. RALLIES -- DAY & NIGHT

BEGIN MONTAGE

A series of political rallies, now attended by much larger, cheering crowds. As Walsh addresses them, we also scan to his principle aides. Jane sits with an uncomfortable perma-smile behind him. Brown, always on edge, looks increasingly satisfied. Lucy is in awe.

- Rally 1: Walsh, his left arm still in a sling, walks onto the stage to a thunderous standing ovation. He is clearly moved.

- Rally 2: A large hall. Walsh is being cheered enthusiastically.

- Rally 3: Walsh presses the flesh, hugging and greeting.

END MONTAGE

INT. PRESSROOM, L.A. POST -- DAY

Harris comes out of his office. He sees Jack talking to a gaggle of adoring interns on the other side of the room.

HARRIS

Jack. Get your ass over here, willya?

Jack tears himself away, and comes over.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Harry and Connie are off with flu, so you gotta cover for them. Okay?

JACK

Sure, Marty. Who with?

Harris looks over at Susan. Jack follows his gaze.

HARRIS

Susan. Come here a minute.

JACK

(surprised)
Weaver? I thought you'd permanently benched EcoJane.

HARRIS

Jack, it's only a fucking press conference, not World War Three. Just do it...

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE -- AFTERNOON

Title:

Governor's Press Conference

SACRAMENTO

The room is packed. The GOVERNOR and Senator Walsh share the stage. Jack is at the back of the hall. His camera is on a tripod with a huge lens.

GOVERNOR

... so, ladies and gentlemen, I have no hesitation in endorsing my good friend, Bill Walsh - the next President of the United States!

A huge CHEER goes up. The reporters leap to their feet and start shouting out questions. Susan raises her hand and calls out, but, despite her determination, is lost in the melee.

EXT. PRESS CONFERENCE -- LATER

Senator Walsh leaves the building, and heads towards a waiting limousine. The exit is mobbed with reporters.

SUSAN

Senator Walsh, do you... ugh!

Susan is unceremoniously pushed out of the way. She recovers her poise to see Lucy standing by the exit.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Got your miracle, I see. How'd you do it?

LUCY

A goat AND a virgin. This doesn't come cheap!

SUSAN

(nodding approvingly)
Kudos.

INT. AIRPLANE -- LATER

A very pensive Susan sits next to Jack. A gorgeous flight attendant is flirting with Jack as she serves.

SUSAN

That was a waste of time. We could've got all that from CNN.

JACK

No worries, Susie. You'll patch something together.

SUSAN

This guy Walsh is the kiss of death for me. It's unbelievable.

Jack drags his gaze reluctantly away from the flight attendant. He looks at her thoughtfully for a moment.

JACK

You want my opinion?

SUSAN

Why not?

JACK

You gotta hustle more. This is the good ol' U.S. of A, the land of opportunity... for those with sharp elbows. The further the white man got from Europe, the less polished he became.

SUSAN

Aren't you Australian?!

JACK

There you go - proves my point.

SPEEDED UP FILM OF NATURE TRANSITIONING FROM SUMMER TO WINTER

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING-ROOM -- CHRISTMAS MORNING

It's a scene from a Ralph Lauren Catalogue, as American as apple pie. Christmas carols are playing in the background. The children are sitting on the floor by the Xmas tree, opening their presents. Walsh & Jane are sitting on one sofa, his parents on the other.

BROWN (O.S.)

Okay, that's great. Now one with everyone by the tree.

As the family move to the tree, we see the other side of the room is full of press photographers and TV cameramen. As she gets into position, Jane whispers to her husband.

JANE

Don't we even get one day off, Bill?

Walsh ignores the question and continues smiling. He picks up 6 year-old Mark, the youngest child. As he does so, there is a crescendo of camera CLICKS.

ANGLE ON FRED BROWN

BROWN

Perfect!

INT. SUSAN'S FATHER'S HOME - XMAS MORNING

The doorbell RINGS. The dog, Gandalf, immediately starts BARKING. Susan's FATHER, late 60s, smartly dressed, is somewhat frail but still stands very upright and proud. He speaks with a strong educated British accent. He opens the door. Susan is nearly knocked over by the dog.

FATHER

(sternly)

Gandalf!

The dog calms down immediately, and nudges Susan who bends down and pets him.

SUSAN

Merry Christmas, Dad!

Susan gives him a big hug and a kiss on the cheek, and moves into the house. She is carrying a small parcel. Her father looks outside.

FATHER

Merry Christmas, Sweetie.
Where's...?

SUSAN

Dad, I told you. We broke up.

She looks at him a little worried.

FATHER

(uncertainly)

Oh..., yes..., that's right, you did. Well, perhaps it's for the best. He was...

Father catches Susan rolling her eyes.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Never mind, my dear. It's good to see you again. Sherry?

He smiles, and leads her into the living-room. It is an academic's room - worthy tomes from floor to ceiling, and on virtually every surface. There is a small Christmas tree in the corner, with unopened presents under it.

SUSAN

How're you feeling these days,
Dad? The ticker okay?

FATHER

Still breathing, which, I am assured, is generally considered a good sign.

INT. SUSAN'S FATHER'S HOME - LATER

They are sitting around the coffee table, with Gandalf by her side. There are nibbles on the table, along with a bottle of sherry and two empty glasses. On the floor by the table is a festively decorated dog bowl.

The news is on the TV. The sound is off. It shows Walsh's family having their Christmas.

FATHER

How's your, er, career coming along, Susan?

SUSAN

(a little embarrassed)

Let's just say it's on hiatus.

(points to the TV)

Walsh, he's the front runner now. Did you know that?

FATHER

I'm afraid I really don't pay much attention to such matters.

SUSAN

If I hadn't blown it with his accident, I might still be reporting him instead of pet shows.

FATHER

Why would you want to, my dear? It's such a waste of your talents. You have a first class mind. You could be lecturing at UCLA, but...

SUSAN

Please, Dad, not again. I really couldn't face that life. Besides...

(unconvincingly)

I like my job. I know it's only a tabloid paper, but everyone's got to start somewhere. I'm not gonna stay there forever. One day, you'll be proud of me.

FATHER

(reassuringly)

I am proud, Sweetie.

He squeezes her hand. She feels like a little girl.

SPEEDED UP FILM OF NATURE TRANSITIONING FROM WINTER TO SPRING

INT. WALSH CAMPAIGN HQ, CONNECTICUT - MORNING

There are daffodils in vases and children's Easter cards pinned to the board.

The Campaign Committee, tired but confident, is sitting around a table with Walsh. There is a buzz of excitement - they can smell victory.

BROWN

Great performance last night,
Bill.

(pointing to a TV)

The CNN/YouTube Candidate Debate is playing.

BROWN (CONT'D)

You looked far and away the most
presidential. Even the internet
geeks are starting to root for
you.

LUCY

You just passed 5 million followers
on Twitter.

BROWN

And we collected over a million
dollars overnight from the web.

WALSH

Great. Thanks everybody. You
made this possible.

(to Brown)

We'd better start thinking about
VP candidates.

SPEEDED UP FILM OF NATURE TRANSITIONING FROM SPRING TO
SUMMER

INT. REPUBLICAN PARTY CONVENTION -- EVENING

Huge hall, festooned with banners, but the predominant
one is clearly "WALSH/RODRIGUEZ 2016". A giant board
shows the votes being tallied - Walsh/Rodriguez lead 2:1
against Beatty/Miller.

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Susan slouches on the sofa with a beer and popcorn,
watching the convention. She strokes her cat.

SUSAN

Who would have thought it? A
miracle, indeed.

(shaking her head)

Amazingly convenient, wasn't it,
Jinxie?

INT. REPUBLICAN PARTY CONVENTION -- MOMENTS LATER

Walsh is on stage with Jane, acknowledging the CHEERS of
the crowd. He beckons to a Hispanic couple in the wings,
LYDIA RODRIGUEZ and her husband. Walsh and Lydia link
hands and raise their arms. Huge ROAR from the crowd.

RODRIGUEZ

This is like a dream, Bill.

WALSH

You ain't seen nothing yet, Lydia.
Next January, the White House!

RODRIGUEZ

Dios mio, I believe you. It's
like a fairy tale, but I believe
you.

WALSH

Now, let's celebrate!

They leave the stage. Walsh turns to his wife. He looks
her in the eyes with a smile, then hugs and kisses her.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Thanks, Jane. Thanks for
everything.

INT. PRESSROOM, L.A. POST -- EVENING

The workstations are mostly unmanned. In the background,
a group of people are watching the TV monitors, most of
which are replaying the events at the Convention. Mock-
ups of the next day's paper are lying around. The headline
proclaims Walsh's victory: "It's Walsh versus Pullman"

Only Susan is still toiling at her computer.

HARRIS

Still at it, Ace?

SUSAN

I just gotta finish this stuff,
or I'll never sleep.

HARRIS

Now that Walsh & Rodriguez have
got the nomination, they're gonna
walk all over Pullman & Kinnear.
Gonna be the most boring election
in years.

Susan opens a file and turns her monitor towards Harris.

SUSAN

I've been digging in the archives.
Did you know about Walsh's Mafia
connection?

HARRIS

What!?!?

SUSAN

Look at this. It's from 20-odd
years ago.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

None of this has been digitized yet, so I had to trawl through the real files - which are a disgrace, by the way - and scan them myself. Walsh took campaign contributions from the mob. I just knew he was too good to be true - he's just another sleaze-ball, like you said.

HARRIS

Shocker!

Harris takes a cursory glance at the document.

SUSAN

Why's no one talking about this?

HARRIS

They're all the same - except maybe Walsh is the skinniest kid at Fat Camp. Do you really think Pullman's any better?

BEAT

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Hmm. It's not much, but if you can put some meat on those bones...

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL - VERONIKA'S ROOM -- DAY

A very tired VERONIKA MARSDEN, late 20s, is breast-feeding her baby. She is a strikingly beautiful blonde woman, with no discernable regional accent. While a NURSE attends to her, the hospital REGISTRAR is doing the paper work.

REGISTRAR

Okay... got that. And the father?

Veronika speaks softly, almost innocently.

VERONIKA

William Walsh.

REGISTRAR

(writing)

W-i-l-l-i-a-m W-a-l-s-h. Address?

VERONIKA

Washington. Washington DC.

REGISTRAR

I need more than that, dear.

VERONIKA

Hmmm. I guess the Senate, Capitol Hill. Senator William Walsh.

She points to the news broadcast on the muted TV on the wall. The registrar and nurse look at one another. They are clearly taken aback.

REGISTRAR
Are you sure?

VERONIKA
(firmly)
I know the father of my baby.

The registrar hesitates momentarily, then resumes writing.

REGISTRAR
O-k-a-y.

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM -- DAY

Susan picks up the RINGING phone.

SUSAN
Yes, this is she... What!? Senator
Walsh? Are you sure?... Who is
this?... Hello? Hello?

Disbelievingly, she looks at the phone, then puts it down.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
(to herself)
That can't be. It's a hoax.

She gets back to work. The phone RINGS again.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Yes. Who is this? How do you...?
Hello? Hello?

She checks the phone screen. No Caller ID.

BEAT

She grabs her bag and rushes for the exit. A bemused Harris watches as she nearly knocks him over.

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL - VERONIKA'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Susan KNOCKS and enters. The convention is still on the TV in the background.

SUSAN
Sorry to bother you, Miss...
(reading the charts)
Marsden. Is now a good time?

GREG(50s), a tall, pale handsome man, of indeterminate origin, stands up. He has a cool determined air about him.

GREG
I gotta go, Veronika. I'll be
back later.

With barely a glance at Veronika, he nods politely at Susan and leaves.

VERONIKA

Sorry, who are you? You're not a nurse.

SUSAN

Susan Weaver. From The Post.

VERONIKA

The Post? You're here fast.

SUSAN

You don't seem surprised to see me.

VERONIKA

There are no secrets in this world. It was bound to get out.

SUSAN

Are you okay to talk?

VERONIKA

Sure.

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Greg looks up and down the corridor outside Veronika's room. He speed-dials a number on his cellphone and holds it to his ear. We see the head of a dragon tattooed on his hand.

GREG

She's here. Go ahead.

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL - VERONIKA'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Veronika stops feeding the baby and starts to burp her.

SUSAN

What a beautiful baby!

VERONIKA

Thank you.

SUSAN

What's her name?

VERONIKA

Alexandra...

SUSAN

Beautiful name. Very... distinguished - like the Czarina.

Veronika looks momentarily surprised.

VERONIKA

I guess.

SUSAN

Was that the baby's father who left just now?

VERONIKA

Come on, Miss Weaver. We both know why you're here. He's a friend. Her father is Senator Walsh.

Susan points to the TV.

SUSAN

THAT Senator Walsh?

VERONIKA

Is there another?

Susan does her best to contain her excitement.

SUSAN

Can you prove it?

VERONIKA

Of course I can.

Susan pulls up a chair, takes out a pocket voice recorder and places it on the bed.

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

No lights are on. The cat SHRIEKS. Two masked BURGLARS come from the back into the living-room. One of them pulls out an iPad.

A cellphone RINGS. The other one answers it.

BURGLAR 1

Yea. Hang on.

He nods to the other burglar who turns the iPad screen round. There are several windows with CCTV footage of the apartment.

BURGLAR 1 (CONT'D)

It's done... Okay.

He hangs up.

BURGLAR 1 (CONT'D)

She's on her way.

They grab everything and head for the patio door, taking one last careful look before closing it behind them. Burglar 2 stops and plays with the lock. It CLICKS. They vanish into the night.

EXT. L.A. HOSPITAL CAR PARK -- LATER

Susan is sitting in her car. She thumps the steering wheel with excitement, accidentally setting off the HORN.

SUSAN
HOLY SHIT! H-O-L-Y SHIT!

She WHOOPS with joy.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Harris is on the phone as Susan paces up and down.

HARRIS
Yes, sir... Yes, sir. Publish
and be damned it is, sir.

He puts the phone down, in a semi-daze.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
He likes it. No, he LOVES it.

SUSAN
That's great. I'll try again to
get Walsh for his comments.

HARRIS
No time. He wants it in tomorrow's
paper, before anyone else gets
it.

SUSAN
But I should...

HARRIS
I know, but he's the boss. How
sure are you this story holds
water?

SUSAN
As sure as I can be in so little
time. She didn't give me much,
but I checked out what I could -
you know, dates, etc - and it all
stacks up. Most important, he
was here in L.A. for a fund raiser
at the time the baby was conceived.

HARRIS
Great. And she's locked in?

SUSAN
Of course. Ten thousand now. A
hundred thousand if it's
corroborated.

HARRIS
That's all?

SUSAN
That was my first offer and she
took it. Actually, she didn't
seem to care about the money -
she was only interested in getting
him to recognize the kid as his.

HARRIS

Ah, the jilted lover! Health
hath no fury...

He punches the air.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

We're gonna make a ton of money
from syndication. And the best
bit: we're gonna beat those
supercilious bastards at The Times.

SUSAN

Marty, I'm not really comfortable
that we publ....

HARRIS

Stop worrying. Reality check: if
we don't do it NOW, it'll be all
over the internet in a few hours.
He who hesitates is lost.

SUSAN

I'll get Legal Department to make
sure we cover our asses with all
the usual "allegedly"s.

Harris isn't listening.

HARRIS

Circulation and web hits will go
through the roof. This is manna
from Heaven, Susan.

SUSAN

Okay, I get that. But, if not
out of courtesy, at least
professionally, shouldn't we ask
him for...?

HARRIS

Do you really think he'll admit
it? Wise up, Susan. He's a
politician! Odds are he's guilty
as sin. Besides, you tried calling
his staffer - what's her name?

SUSAN

Lucy K...

HARRIS

She didn't answer. You did your
best. "Senator Walsh and his
staff did not respond to requests
for comment."

EXT. SUSAN'S FATHER'S HOME - EVENING

Susan's Father opens the door to Susan.

SUSAN
 (excitedly)
 I've got some great news, dad.
 I've got the Front Page story in
 tomorrow's paper.

FATHER
 Something uplifting, I hope - not
 the usual sordid gossip.

Susan visibly deflates as she follows him into the house.

INT. TV STUDIO -- MORNING NEXT DAY

Breakfast TV. Two presenters (WENDY and JEFF), plastic smiles on full beam, are sitting on a couch, talking to camera. A clock on the wall shows 7:15. A studio FLOOR MANAGER is fussing around offscreen.

Walsh is standing in the wings with Lucy, waiting to go on. He is very relaxed. He is in a good mood.

WALSH
 I've lost count of the interviews
 since the convention, Lucy, but I
 feel great.

FLOOR MANAGER
 (in a whisper)
 One minute, Senator.

LUCY
 Break a leg, Bill.

Walsh smiles and pats her arm. He follows the Floor Manager to the other sofa.

Lucy spots Brown hurrying towards her, waving his smartphone. He looks really haggard.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 Jesus, Fred. You look like death
 warmed up. What's up?

BROWN
 (puffing)
 Why don't any of you answer your
 goddamn cell phones?

LUCY
 (puzzled)
 Battery's dead. It never stopped
 ringing all night.

BROWN
 He can't go on.

LUCY
 (surprised)
 What!?

BROWN

No time to explain.
 (trying to regain
 his composure)
 Senator, might I have a word?

FLOOR MANAGER

I'm sorry, I'm going to have to
 ask you to keep quiet. We're on
 in five seconds.

Walsh sees Brown waving, and gives a polite wave back.
 His microphone is being attached. Last minute make-up is
 applied.

Brown is gesturing for him to leave. He notices Brown's
 appearance. What's going on? For a moment, he looks
 noticeably less comfortable, then regains his composure.

Cue presenters.

WENDY

Good morning, Senator.
 Congratulations on the nomination.

WALSH

Thank you, Wendy.

JEFF

It's good to welcome you back to
 the show, here in sunny California.

WALSH

Thank you, Jeff. It's always a
 pleasure. Came straight here
 from the airport, in fact.

INT. L.A. HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jane is in a bathrobe, breakfasting alone in her room,
 watching her husband on TV. There is a pile of newspapers
 on the bed beside her. On top is the L.A. Times, with a
 cover photo of a jubilant Walsh at the Convention. She
 looks at the picture and smiles proudly.

INT. TV STUDIO -- CONTINUOUS

WENDY

I was wondering if you have any
 comment on the story in this
 morning's L.A. Post?

Brown slumps off-screen. He hands his smartphone to Lucy.

WALSH

What story's that, Wendy? I don't
 get much chance to look at the
 papers these days, as you can
 probably imagine!

He blinks playfully.

INT. L.A. HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jane is curious - she looks for the L.A. Post in the pile.

INT. TV STUDIO -- CONTINUOUS

JEFF

This one, Senator.

He holds it up. The headline reads:

"Walsh has secret love child"

WALSH

What!?!?

In the background, we see Lucy, totally stunned, clutching a column for support.

INT. L.A. HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

At the same moment, Jane sees the same headline. She nearly chokes. She reels from the news. The interview continues on the TV.

WALSH (O.S.)

This is preposterous. It must be a mistake.

INT. TV STUDIO -- CONTINUOUS

Walsh looks for Brown in the wings. An incensed Brown is making a "cut" sign, and motioning him to leave.

WENDY

It says here, Veronika Marsden gave birth last night in an L.A. hospital to a beautiful baby girl, Alexandra...

INT. L.A. HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jane sits bolt upright, her undivided attention centered on the TV.

WALSH (O.S.)

So? I don't know anyone called Veronika Marsden.

JEFF (O.S.)

She says the baby's yours.

INT. TV STUDIO -- CONTINUOUS

Walsh looks dumbfounded.

WALSH

What!?! That's rubbish. I've never even met the woman.

(MORE)

WALSH (CONT'D)

It must be someone else with the same name. It's not such an unusual name.

INT. L.A. HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jane starts to feel and look nauseous.

WENDY (O.S.)

It says here, she's quite specific: Senator Walsh is the father. Are there any other senators called Walsh?

INT. TV STUDIO -- CONTINUOUS

WALSH

You know damn well there aren't.

Walsh is becoming angry.

WALSH (CONT'D)

This is a smear. Anyone could make up this... this... nonsense to derail my campaign. I have never met this woman in my life. I certainly never had a relationship with her - or anyone else, for that matter. I love my wife. I'm not going to stay here and take part in your public lynching. This is total crap!

He pulls off the microphone and storms out.

JEFF

(to camera)

Our apologies for the language there, viewers, but, as you know, this is a live show. I think this story's not finished yet. What do you think, Wendy?

They SNIGGER offscreen as the camera cuts to Walsh storming out of the studio.

WENDY (O.S.)

I agree, Jeff. It's certainly got legs!

INT. L.A. HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

Jane has clearly been crying, but is now composed.

WALSH

I'm telling you, Jane. I never even heard of this woman until today. You have to believe me. I would never...

JANE

(coldly)

That doesn't matter right now, Bill. Just get on top of this and make it go away.

WALSH

That doesn't exactly sound like you believe me, Jane. Listen very carefully: I... DO... NOT... KNOW... THIS... WOMAN.

He puts his arms around her, and tries to pull her towards him. She pulls away.

JANE

I'm sorry, Bill. All the stress of the last few months... and now this. It's just too much. Don't ask me to play The Good Wife. You take care of this; I'll take care of the kids.

Walsh wipes a tear from his eyes. He looks exhausted.

INT. WALSH CALIFORNIA CAMPAIGN HQ -- LATER

WALSH

Couldn't someone warn me this was in the paper?

BROWN

It was unfortunate timing, Bill. I'm sorry.

Walsh looks around at his sheepish, and very tired, crew.

WALSH

Okay. We are where we are. Let me say, absolutely categorically, today's the first time I ever heard of this woman.

The team look at one another. They are like rabbits caught in the headlights. Brown takes Walsh aside.

BROWN

Look, Bill. It's my job to handle this. I'm your political manager, I couldn't give a shit what you do in your own time. Just tell me the truth, so I know what I'm dealing with here. Did you pork her, or not?

WALSH

Jesus, Fred. I'm telling you the truth.

Brown looks him very closely in the eyes for a few moments. Walsh stares back unflinchingly.

BROWN

Okay. Okay.

He turns to the others and calls for their attention.

BROWN (CONT'D)

Listen up, people. Bill says he didn't do it, and that's good enough for me. Anyone got a problem with that?

BEAT

BROWN (CONT'D)

No. Good. Look, these Bimbo Eruptions are par for the course so nobody panic, okay? We just gotta deal with it. And that means we gotta go on the offensive. We gotta discredit this woman. And...

(turning to Walsh)

You gotta demand a DNA test.

WALSH

That'll be giving her and her absurd story credibility.

BROWN

Then in the eyes of the world you're guilty. So, what's it to be?

WALSH

This is a gross invasion of privacy. I'm gonna sue them all. The woman, the newspaper, the TV station.

BROWN

For fuck's sake, Bill. You're a politician. You don't have privacy. And suing isn't gonna save your ass. Make up your mind fast. We gotta nip this in the bud.

He turns to Lucy.

BROWN (CONT'D)

Lucy, you check this woman out. Find out everything you can. I wanna know her bra size, where she goes, who she fucks, everything. Got that?

He turns back to Walsh.

BROWN (CONT'D)

In the meantime, you gotta keep as much as possible to your schedule, but we've gotta keep you as far away from reporters as we can - it'll just give this story more oxygen.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Harris is excitedly pacing his office. Susan enters. He gives her an emphatic kiss on the forehead.

HARRIS

What a scoop! Everyone's talking about it. The Blogosphere,... the Twittersphere,... the... the stratosphere. Our fuckin' website nearly crashed. First time ever.

(proudly)

Even the Editor of the L.A. fuckin' Times called me personally this morning!

SUSAN

You know, my dad bust my balls over this story last night, but to hell with it. It IS a great story, isn't it?

HARRIS

You betcha! You know what to do - we gotta milk this while we can.

MONTAGE

- Split screen: Susan and Lucy work away feverishly trying to corroborate or demolish the story. We see them:

- On the computer and the phone

- Interviewing people

- Brown is barking orders at all and sundry in campaign headquarters.

- There is a pall of gloom over the Walsh household, with discernible frostiness between Walsh and Jane.

- Veronika lies in her hospital bed, feeding the baby.

- The front of the hospital is besieged by the world's media, held back by a contingent of police.

- Susan pays Veronika's hospital bill.

- Susan carries Veronika's bag to a limo at the back door, while Veronika carries the baby.

- They are let into a smart safe house by a NORLAND NANNY.

INT. SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

Veronika puts the sleeping baby in a cot. The Nanny heads for the door.

NANNY

You sure you're going to be okay?

VERONIKA

Of course. We're running out of stuff so...

NANNY

Okay. I'll be back as soon as I can.

Veronika, stretching and flexing, goes to the window and watches her get in the car and leave. With great agility she cartwheels around the room, with the grace of a gymnast. As she comes down elegantly onto the sofa, she is startled by:

GREG (O.S.)

What are you doing?

With lightning speed, she expertly whips a gun out from under the sofa cushion and points it at the intruder.

She lowers it when she recognizes Greg.

Veronika's body language and voice are completely different. Now she looks and sounds strong and confident.

VERONIKA

Next time I'll shoot you.

GREG

I'll shoot you first.

He sits down.

GREG (CONT'D)

Be careful. Don't do anything that attracts attention.

VERONIKA

(irritated)

I know. I needed to blow off some cobwebs. It's very confining, all this demure mother stuff.

GREG

It's going well. The story's everywhere. They're very happy with you.

VERONIKA

(pleased)

They should be. All anyone wants is the baby. And she couldn't be more adorable. Look at her.

Smiling, she points to the baby. He turns away, totally uninterested.

GREG

Stay focused, Veronika. Don't screw it up now.

INT. WALSH CAMPAIGN HQ, CONNECTICUT -- MORNING

Walsh and Lucy sit around a conference table. Brown paces back and forth. He is very agitated.

WALSH

What've you got?

BROWN

Lucy?

LUCY

English Literature major from Harvard - excellent grades - better than mine, in fact. Doing a post-grad at UCLA.

BROWN

Where does she live?

LUCY

Shares a house, mostly students. No evidence of a boyfriend.

Brown stops pacing and looks angrily at Lucy.

BROWN

I hope you're not telling me this is a virgin birth!

LUCY

No. Course not. But how am I supposed to know who she slept with nine months ago?

BROWN

A fuckin' private detective! Wake up!

WALSH

Hey, tone it down, Fred, okay?

BROWN

Tone it down? You're incredibly calm for someone whose whole career is rapidly going down the tubes. Have you seen the latest polls? In the three days since this blew up, your ratings have halved.

WALSH

The truth'll come out. It's got to. What do we know about the journalist?

Brown looks at the newspaper.

BROWN

Susan Weaver. She was that dormouse who followed us around for a while a year ago. Lucy, call her. Find out what else she knows. See if there's an agenda here. Do I have to do all the thinking around here?

An INTERN comes in, looking at his iPhone.

INTERN

Sorry. We gotta put on TMZ.

Brown grabs the remote and turns the TV over to TMZ.

TV ANNOUNCER (On TV)

...and now Celeste Moreno, a cocktail waitress in Las Vegas, is claiming she and Bill Walsh also had an affair last year...

WALSH

WHAT!?!?

INT. TV STUDIO -- AFTERNOON

Veronika is being interviewed. She speaks very calmly and deliberately, as she gently rocks the baby in her arms. The presenter, MIRIAM, is very sympathetic.

MIRIAM

Tell me, Veronika, how're you feeling, with all this publicity?

VERONIKA

I just want to be left alone to look after my baby.

MIRIAM

Well, it's a bit late for that now, isn't it, dear? Have you spoken with the father yet?

VERONIKA

No.

BEAT.

Miriam waits for her to say something more, but she doesn't.

MIRIAM

Right. I saw Bill Walsh on Fox yesterday. He is adamant he is not the father.

Veronika starts to weep. Miriam, offscreen, looks delighted. This is great television.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

He is insisting on a DNA test.

CLOSE UP on the sleeping baby.

VERONIKA (V.O.)

Why is he doing this to our baby?
It is so hurtful. I thought he
was an honorable man.

CLOSE UP on Veronika. She cries. Miriam hands her a handkerchief. She is ecstatic. This is great.

INT. WALSH CAMPAIGN HQ, CONNECTICUT -- CONTINUOUS

Brown is sitting at a large table covered with newspapers. There are several TVs to the side, all muted except the one showing Veronika's interview.

BROWN

This is getting ridiculous. There are now half a dozen bimbo eruptions around the country. You've been a busy lad, Bill.

WALSH

I never...

BROWN

Don't waste your breath. You couldn't have been dipping the wick like that without one of us noticing. No, forget them - they're just white noise, a bunch of chancers trying to make a few bucks bragging how slutty they are.

LUCY

Their mothers must be so proud.

BROWN

We gotta concentrate on the first one, on Veronika. She's fast turning you into the fucking AntiChrist. God, I hate babies - especially cute ones.

WALSH

What else can I do? We need the DNA test.

BROWN

Not enough. You've gotta fight back. We need Jane to do a Hillary. You know? Stand by her man, and all that.

WALSH

Jesus.

BROWN

She does believe you, right?

Walsh looks at Brown.

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM -- EVENING

A bored Susan sits at her terminal scrolling through photo after photo of Walsh.

SUSAN

(to herself)

God, there are millions.

The CAMERA pans past her to a TV monitor in the background showing an interview with Walsh.

CUT TO:

INTERCUT BETWEEN WALSH LIVING-ROOM AND CNN STUDIOS IN ATLANTA

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING-ROOM -- EVENING

Jane Walsh is being interviewed via satellite by CNN's WOLF BLITZER. She looks tired, but is very poised and graceful.

WOLF BLITZER

These must be tough times, Jane.

JANE

I've known better. My husband's a good man, who's dedicated his life to this country. You never expect...

WOLF BLITZER

What the people want to know is: is the story true? Is he Alexandra's father?

JANE

Bill has sworn to me there is absolutely no truth whatsoever in this...

(irritated)

... this farce. He's never even met her.

WOLF BLITZER

Do you believe him, Jane?

Slight hesitation.

JANE

Yes. Of course I believe him, Wolf. He's never lied to me. My husband is an HONORABLE man.

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Susan suddenly sits bolt upright, her face beaming.

SUSAN

Eureka!

She CLICKS the keyboard then waits impatiently for her printer to finish.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Harris is watching Wolf Blitzer. He mutes the TV as the commercials start. Susan rushes in.

SUSAN

What were you saying about a raise, Marty?

HARRIS

Was I drunk?

SUSAN

You're gonna love me for this.
Look!

She throws a photo onto his desk. It is a picture of a campaign rally. Veronika is standing next to Walsh.

HARRIS

Fuck me!

SUSAN

Exactly. We've got him now!

HARRIS

You've changed your tune!

SUSAN

We've finally got independent evidence that puts them together - at the right time! Plus all these other women coming forward...

HARRIS

You know, of course, most of them are just media whores, looking for their 15 minutes and a fistful of dollars? 10:1 says at least one of them will be posing for Playboy within a month.

SUSAN

Of course, but surely not ALL of them. No smoke without fire.

Harris looks at the photo more closely.

HARRIS

It doesn't look doctored... Get it checked anyway.

BEAT

HARRIS (CONT'D)

This looks like a campaign fundraiser. It's hardly a smoking gun, is it? He must have glad-handed thousands. Look, there are half a dozen actors in the background.

SUSAN

Come off it, Marty. Are YOU getting cold feet now?

HARRIS

No. Of course not. Oh, that's interesting. Look who's standing behind her.

He passes the picture back to Susan. She looks puzzled.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

That's Stephen Wrigley. Bigshot Democratic lobbyist in LA. Asshole of the first order. Why's he there?

SUSAN

No idea.

HARRIS

Okay, run with the story, but be careful - pass everything through legal first - especially anything that touches Wrigley. He's the Prince of Darkness, and will sue our asses for anything.

SUSAN

Yessir.

HARRIS

Better still, just crop him out of the picture. Better safe than...

She is already half way out of the door.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Oh... and get more human interest shit, willya? Is she an orphan? Did her mother die of cancer? Any of that crap will do.

EXT. JACK'S CAR -- DAY

Jack drives by the safe house when he sees Veronika being picked up by a limo. She doesn't have the baby with her.

JACK

Huh! That's odd.

He turns the car around and follows at a discrete distance. At one major junction he tries to take some photos, but another vehicle gets in between.

He calls Susan on speed dial. He gets an ENGAGED SIGNAL.

The car stops by a park and Veronika gets out. The driver waits.

Jack parks his car and shadows her discretely into the park.

EXT. PARK -- CONTINUOUS

Veronika sits down on a bench and starts reading a newspaper. Jack looks around puzzled. He tries Susan again on the phone. Again, engaged.

Everyone he sees suddenly seems suspicious. There seem to be several burly men in dark suits and sunglasses strategically positioned around the park. From his hidden vantage point, he takes a rapid succession of snapshots.

He notices another tall, blonde woman, with sunglasses, heading towards Veronika. She nods to one of the burly men. Jack feels panic in his gut.

JACK
(to himself)
What the fuck? Are they gonna
kill her?

He looks around frantically. What can he do? He picks up a stick, looks at it, then the burly men, and throws it back on the ground. He has only one weapon. He puts his camera to his face and starts taking lots of photos.

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

The woman sits on the bench behind Veronika and starts reading a newspaper. Jack lowers his camera for a second, surprised, then zooms in on them. He can tell they are talking but can't see anything. Now it is frustration written all over his face.

CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

He calls Susan again. This time she answers.

SUSAN (O.S.)
Hi, Jack. Sorry I missed....

JACK
(whispering)
Shhh. Just listen. No time to explain. Some really strange shit going down with Veronika in the park. It's like a fucking spy movie here. What's going on?

The other woman folds her paper and stands up.

JACK (CONT'D)
I... hang on, I think they're
leaving.

Veronika gets up and goes round to the other side of the bench.

SUSAN (O.S.)
Follow the other guy. See where
he goes.

The two women speak for a moment.

JACK
It's a she. Okay.

He hangs up. He takes more pictures.

The two women look around carefully, then kiss briefly but passionately.

JACK (CONT'D)
Okay. Didn't see that coming.

Veronika heads back towards the limo that brought her. Jack tries to zoom in to get a better picture of the other woman, but it is hard to get a shot of her face.

JACK (CONT'D)
She's good.

Suddenly, the flare from his lens is spotted by one of the men. He points towards where Jack is, and three of the big guys start to converge on him.

JACK (CONT'D)
Oh, shit!

He runs awkwardly through the undergrowth, tripping over a tree root. He is palpitating profusely.

He ducks out of a side entrance to the park and grabs the first taxi, pushing aside another passenger.

JACK (CONT'D)
Sorry, mate.
(to the driver)
The nearest Mall. Fast.

As the taxi speeds away, he ducks down and sees the three big men coming out onto the street. They search all around.

EXT. L.A. POST CAR PARK -- DAY

Jack and Susan are in her car. She scrolls through his pictures on the camera's small screen.

SUSAN
Huh. What do you make of it?

JACK
 Not a clue. But those gorillas
 looked like they meant business.
 I'm sure they saw me.

SUSAN
 Secret Service? FBI?

JACK
 How would I know?

SUSAN
 But why? And who's the mysterious
 blonde?

JACK
 What's Veronika up to?

SUSAN
 Let's not say anything just yet -
 we don't wanna sound all grassy
 knoll crazy.

JACK
 What about my car?

INT. SUSAN'S CAR -- DAY

Jack, now wearing sunglasses and a baseball cap, is driving the car by the park with Susan in the passenger seat. They drive past his car. A couple of the burly security men are visible in the park.

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

A block from the car, Susan gets out and walks nonchalantly back towards Jack's car. No one seems to be specifically watching the car. She calmly gets in and drives away. Jack watches the men in the park.

He heaves a SIGH of relief when they don't react to the car leaving.

INT. JACK'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Susan's phone rings.

JACK (O.S.)
 All clear.

INT. WALSH CALIFORNIA CAMPAIGN HQ -- MORNING

Walsh and Brown look despondently at the newspaper. We see the picture of Walsh and Veronika together, but it has been cropped to look even more incriminating. The bold headline reads:

"LIAR!"

Underneath, in smaller letters, it reads:

"Senator Walsh says he's never met this woman!"

The body language of the team betrays greater unease.

INT. WALSH CALIFORNIA CAMPAIGN HQ -- LATER

Walsh is giving a TV interview.

WALSH

This photo proves nothing. I am NOT the father of this child - and a simple DNA test will prove that, once and for all. Why is Ms Marsden so reluctant to allow one? This is a shakedown, and it's distracting us all from the more serious issues facing the country today.

INTERVIEWER

Are you saying this is a conspiracy?

WALSH

What other explanation is there?

INTERVIEWER

Who would do such a thing and why?

WALSH

Where to start?! It certainly isn't hurting the Democratic party right now, is it?

The Interviewer perks up.

INTERVIEWER

Are you suggesting...?

WALSH

I'm not suggesting anything...

INT. WALSH CALIFORNIA CAMPAIGN HQ -- MOMENTS LATER

The interview is finished. The TV crew are packing up their equipment. Lucy and Brown are watching in the wings.

BROWN

How many today?

LUCY

Another 4. That's 10 resignations so far.

BROWN

Okay. Here he comes. Don't mention it.

Walsh walks up to them.

WALSH

What do you think?

BROWN

It looks rather desperate - and very partisan - to blame the Democrats.

WALSH

Well, who else could it be? Payback for Monica Lewinsky?

BROWN

That's ancient history!

His cell phone RINGS.

BROWN (CONT'D)

Brown. Yeah... yeah... about fuckin' time!

(turns to Walsh)

She's agreed to a DNA test!

WALSH

Thank God. Now we can finally put this nightmare behind us.

EXT. VERONIKA'S HOUSE -- EVENING

It is already starting to get dark. Susan rings the bell, as Jack joins her on the doorstep.

JACK

Sorry. Traffic.

A 25 year old STUDENT housemate opens the door.

SUSAN

Hi, I'm Susan Weaver, from the L.A. Post. And this is my photographer, Jack.

JACK

Hi.

STUDENT

Veronika's not here.

SUSAN

Oh. We were supposed to meet her here. Do you mind if we come in and wait?

The Student hesitates. Susan heads into the house before he can answer. Jack follows.

JACK

You've been sharpening your elbows, haven't you?

INT. VERONIKA'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Susan presses speed dial on her cell phone.

SUSAN

Hi, Veronika. It's Susan. We're at your house. Did you forget our appointment? You know - the background photos? What?

(turns to Jack)

She didn't get the message from the office.

(back with Veronika)

Sorry about the confusion... what?

Oh, that's great. See you soon.

What? Okay...

(passing phone to student)

She wants to speak with you.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- CONTINUOUS

Veronika is in a coffee shop with the baby, opposite a very SOMBER MAN - the man from the first scene.

VERONIKA

I've no idea what they're doing there, but keep them happy, okay? BE NICE. I'll be there as quickly as I can.

She looks very annoyed.

INT. VERONIKA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Susan and Jack move into the living room, followed by the student. It has a weather-worn student feel about it.

STUDENT

Okay. She says wait here. She'll be back shortly. Tea?

JACK

That'd be great, mate.

SUSAN

Please.

The student leaves.

JACK

Did we have an appointment?

SUSAN

No. Just curious after your park episode. Thought we'd poke around a bit. It's probably nothing, but you never know.

JACK

Nice one.

SUSAN

Get loads of pictures of the place... and all the inmates, if you can.

JACK

You got it!

Jack, on auto-pilot, snaps a few pictures as he inspects the bookshelves and the table tops. Susan exits into the next room.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- CONTINUOUS

Veronika has packed away all her baby paraphernalia. She excuses herself and leaves.

The man looks very stern and thoughtful. He leaves some money on the table and makes a call on his cellphone.

INT. VERONIKA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

One wall is covered with photos of Walsh and press cuttings.

SUSAN

(semi-whispering)

Hey, Jack, get in here.

Jack rushes in and stops dead in his tracks.

JACK

Wow! A shrine. This must be Veronika's room.

He takes lots of pictures.

SUSAN

But where's the baby stuff? Every mother gets loads of stuff before the baby's born.

Susan goes through the contents of the desk. She picks up a California driver's licence. She shows it to Jack.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I saw this guy at the hospital with Veronika.

(reading)

Greg Carter.

She opens a closet.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Men's clothes. This is his room. Why's HE so into Walsh?

Susan takes a picture of the licence with her smartphone.

JACK

This is weird shit.

They hear the front door open. Jack changes the setting on his camera and, in a sweep from left to right, takes a quick series of photos.

SUSAN
Let's get back.

They are startled when they bump into an out-of-breath Greg.

GREG
Who are you? Why are you in my room?

JACK
Sorry, mate. L.A. Post.

Greg notices Susan.

GREG
I remember you.

SUSAN
We're waiting for Veronika. We thought this was her room.

JACK
(holding up camera)
Background color. You understand.

Greg looks at Jack's camera, pissed. They leave. Greg quickly scans the room to check everything is okay. He goes to a manila folder, partially concealed on a shelf. He pulls it out. It has a passport-size photo of Susan stapled to the cover.

He looks worried. He pulls out his cellphone angrily and makes a call.

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM -- LATER

Susan and Jack are studying the photos on a large screen. Susan scrolls through them rapidly.

SUSAN
Veronika's room. Nothing much of interest there.

She stops at the picture of Greg's wall.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Now this is intriguing, to say the least.

JACK
Looks like Greg was stalking him. Maybe he's helping Veronika shake down Walsh for a larger payout.

SUSAN

If the baby really is his, Walsh is hyper-rich - they'd have got more if they'd kept quiet and dealt with him under the radar.

JACK

Good point. Maybe they're not that bright and didn't think it through.

SUSAN

Could be. But she's never mentioned wanting any money from him.

JACK

Really? How unAmerican!

SUSAN

Especially considering her obviously modest circumstances.

JACK

Maybe Greg's just got a thing for Veronika and hates Walsh with a passion for getting her pregnant. Who knows?

SUSAN

It's real creepy.

JACK

Whatever, I can't get my head around how big this thing is.

SUSAN

(suddenly nervous)

I know. We've changed the presidential campaign, Jack. Maybe even the whole course of history.

JACK

Isn't that why you went into journalism in the first place? To fight for the truth.

SUSAN

What!? On the L.A. Post!?

They both laugh.

JACK

Good point!

SUSAN

It's all happening so fast. I feel it's running out of control. We don't have time to...

JACK

Time is dead, Susie, what with 24 hour news channels and the internet...

SUSAN

I'm just so scared I'm gonna screw up. If this DNA test is negative, I'll be...

JACK

... road kill.

SUSAN

Thanks for sugar-coating it!

JACK

No worries, Susie. From zero to hero! You're doing great.... I don't care what they say.

SUSAN

(panic-stricken)
What?!

JACK

Hey, relax! I was kidding, all right? Jesus!

EXT. VERONIKA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Susan and Jack are picking up Veronika and the baby. Susan notices a black SUV with dark windows parked a block away. There are two men in the front.

INT. SUSAN'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

As they chatter idly in the car, Susan watches the SUV pulling out to follow them.

VERONIKA

Damn. I didn't bring enough diapers.

JACK

No worries. There's a Walgreens ahead. Susie?

Susan pulls into the car park. Jack goes into the store. The black SUV also pulls in, but no one gets out.

Jack emerges a few moments later with some diapers.

JACK (CONT'D)

Right, Let's get to the hospital.

Susan pulls out, watching the SUV nervously as it follows them again.

INT. CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL -- DAY

Walsh, accompanied by wife and media, gives a DNA sample through a mouth swab. He is confident and happy.

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL -- DAY

A nurse takes a DNA sample from the baby's mouth as Veronika and the media watch on. Veronika smiles awkwardly for the cameras. Jack takes lots of pictures. Susan watches nervously from the wings. She keeps looking around for the guys from the SUV.

INT. WALSH HOME - KITCHEN -- EVENING

Jane is preparing a salad. Walsh enters, comes up behind her, and puts his arms around her.

WALSH

Thank God this nightmare will soon be over.

(kisses her neck)

Thanks, Jane... thanks for everything. I love you so much.

He kisses her again.

Jane does not react or respond. She calmly continues to prepare the salad.

EXT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT - OUTSIDE CORRIDOR -- EVENING

Susan opens the door to Jack. She is tense.

SUSAN

Thanks for coming over, Jack.

JACK

No worries.

She sees her neighbor, NEIL, late 20s, returning with groceries.

NEIL

Hi, Suze. Everything okay?

SUSAN

Sure. Why?

NEIL

Lots of banging the other day.

SUSAN

Eh? Must have been upstairs.

Neil shrugs, gives a shy wave, and goes indoors.

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

Susan bolts the door behind Jack. She takes the large envelope he hands her.

JACK
Here's the...

SUSAN
Thanks. Are you sure you weren't followed?

Jack laughs, despite himself.

JACK
Come on, Susie. They know where we live. They know where EVERYONE lives.

SUSAN
Why are you so calm? We were followed all day.

JACK
If they wanted to harm us, they had plenty of opportunity.

SUSAN
(unconvincingly)
I guess so.

JACK
Someone in the NSA's probably had his bum felt, and they're overcompensating. I mean, Veronika did fuck a Senator without anybody noticing, so...

He shrugs nonchalantly.

JACK (CONT'D)
Anyway, I'd better get going.

SUSAN
Oh! I, er, got some food together.

JACK
Really? I didn't know. I would have brought something. So, what great culinary delight are we in store for? Oh...

He sees a Domino's Pizza box on the table. Susan looks embarrassed.

JACK (CONT'D)
You should've said - I'd have worn my tux.

The camera pulls back and the picture morphs into a grainy CCTV image on a monitor.

MONTAGE OF IMAGES -- THE NEXT DAY

- There is heavy security everywhere as lab technicians put the samples through the various stages of the

scientific testing process. There are copious computer print-outs, unintelligible to the layman.

- An invisible hand puts an envelope marked "Test Results" into a large manila folder with Senator Walsh's name on it.

- Another hand puts an envelope marked "Test Results" into a large manila folder with Alexandra's name on it.

END MONTAGE

INT. CNN TV STUDIOS IN ATLANTA, L.A. & N.Y. -- AFTERNOON

The presenter, CINDY TURNER, waits for the end of the commercial break.

CINDY

Welcome back. Now we have a CNN exclusive. The result of the Walsh/Marsden baby DNA test is ready. Veronika Marsden is in our Los Angeles Studio. Hello, Veronika.

VERONIKA

Hello.

CINDSY

And Bill Walsh is in our New York Studio. Hello, Senator. Still campaigning hard?

WALSH

Hi, Cindy. Sure thing. We've got an important election coming up.

CINDY

Okay. Now, as agreed by the two parties, the samples they submitted were tested locally and the results sent electronically to a lab here in Atlanta for independent analysis. Bob Kellaway is at the lab. Hello, Bob.

INT. LABORATORY -- CONTINUOUS

Reporter, BOB KELLAWAY, is holding a microphone in front of a white-coated scientist, DR GORDON LEE.

KELLAWAY

Hello, Cindy. I'm here with Doctor Gordon Lee who has conducted the final analysis of the samples. Are the tests completed, Doctor?

LEE

Yes, they are.

He draws the envelope from the manila folder.

INT. CNN TV STUDIOS IN L.A. -- CONTINUOUS

Veronika sits calmly and confidently. Susan is just off-camera looking very nervous.

INT. CNN TV STUDIOS IN N.Y. -- CONTINUOUS

Bill Walsh is also calm and confident.

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING-ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jane Walsh is watching TV, the stress clearly visible in her face and demeanor.

INT. WALSH CAMPAIGN HQ, CONNECTICUT -- CONTINUOUS

All work has stopped in Campaign HQ. For the first time, there is no clatter from telephone calls. Everyone is in front of the TV. Brown paces up and down. A very nervous Lydia Rodriguez is pacing with him.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Harris stands nervously glued to the screen in his office. He chews right through a pencil and throws it in the bin.

INT. LABORATORY -- CONTINUOUS

Lee opens the envelope and takes out a piece of paper. He relishes the suspense.

KELLAWAY

Before you read the result, Dr
Lee, maybe you can tell us how
accurate these tests are?

INT. WALSH CAMPAIGN HQ, CONNECTICUT -- CONTINUOUS

Brown curses out of frustration...

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

... then Harris...

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING-ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

... Jane shakes her head.

INT. LABORATORY -- CONTINUOUS

LEE

Extremely accurate, Bob. These
tests can tell us if you and I
had the same ancestor five hundred
years ago, so the chances of error
are infinitesimal.

KELLAWAY

Okay. So, now we reach the moment
the nation's been waiting for.
What's the result? Is Senator
Walsh the father of baby Alexandra
or not?

BEAT

KELLAWAY (CONT'D)

Go ahead, Doctor.

The screen splits to show Veronika, Susan, Walsh, Jane, Brown, Lucy, Rodriguez and Harris in separate boxes around the good doctor as he speaks. Veronika and Walsh are relatively calm, but the tension is beginning to tell - the others are much more nervous.

LEE

Well, Bob, after careful comparison
of the baby's DNA and genetic
profile with that of Senator Walsh,
we are unanimously of the
opinion...

Rather redundantly, he looks down at the paper.

LEE (CONT'D)

... that Senator Walsh... IS the
father of Alexandra Marsden.

The screens react immediately. Walsh is totally stunned and shocked. Veronika allows herself a smile. Brown is furious and rants to himself. Lucy is crest-fallen. Rodriguez slumps, disappointment written all over her face. Harris is relieved, then punches the air in triumph.

Susan wilts with relief, then, in her excitement, gives Jack a big kiss. For a fleeting moment she looks embarrassed, then continues celebrating.

Jane is stunned. Her box expands to fill the whole screen. She breaks down and cries.

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING-ROOM -- NIGHT

Walsh is pacing nervously. Jane stands still, tearful, but controlled. Her eyes are swollen from crying.

WALSH

I'm telling you I'm not the father.
I can't be. It's impossible.

JANE

What? You used a condom? I hope
to God you did! Do I need to get
tested?

She shudders at the thought.

WALSH

No No. It can't be. I don't think I've even shaken her hand, let alone...

Jane shakes her head in despair.

JANE

You've lied to me, your family, your friends, and the millions who believed in your campaign. For what? A cheap piece of ass!

WALSH

Jane, listen to me...

JANE

Don't you "Jane" me.

Walsh throws up his hands in exasperation.

WALSH

I need you to believe in me, more than anyone else in the world.

He tries to put his arms around her. She recoils. She stares him right in the eye.

JANE

Don't you touch me, you... you...
(frustrated)
I don't know what you are anymore.

Reeling, she puts out her arm to support herself on the furniture.

JANE (CONT'D)

Get out of this house... NOW.
You hear me?

He is stunned. He considers for a moment what to do.

As he leaves, Jane's composure cracks.

INT. WALSH HOME - HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

The three children are sitting on the stairs, their heads in their hands. They have all been crying.

Walsh stops and looks at them. ELIZABETH, the 15-year old daughter, looks up at him with a mixture of anger and hatred. She breaks out into tears and runs upstairs.

ELIZABETH

How could you?

The two boys look bewildered. They look at him distrustfully.

WALSH

I'm sorry, boys. I don't know what's going on here. I love you all. I love your mommy. I wouldn't do anything to hurt any of you, I promise.

He turns to the eldest boy, NATHAN, a gangly 12-year old. They are all choking back tears.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Nathan, I want you to look after your mommy while I try to sort this out.

MARK, 6 years old, runs up and hugs his father.

MARK

Are we still gonna go in the helicopter, Daddy?

WALSH

Sure, son.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

A very bedraggled Walsh is sitting slumped on the side of the bed. His eyes are very red and have clearly been shedding tears. He rests his head in his hands.

His cell phone rings.

WALSH

Yes, Lydia... I know... we'll talk tomorrow.

The camera lingers on him for a moment. He is a broken man.

INT. SUSAN'S FATHER'S HOME - EVENING

Father opens the door and Susan rushes in exuberantly, kisses him on the cheek, and heads for the living-room. Her father looks more frail. Gandalf finds Susan's excitement infectious. She pets him wildly for a moment.

SUSAN

Did you see the news, Dad? That's MY story. I've done it.

Father is clearly unimpressed.

FATHER

At a price, though.

SUSAN

(shocked)
What?!

FATHER

Your story cost a man his family and career. And I seem to remember you had a high regard for him not so long ago.

SUSAN

That was before all this came out.

FATHER

Does it really matter, my dear, if he had an affair or not? Is the next guy going to be any better? Jimmy Carter was a virtual saint, by all accounts, but what a disastrous presidency.

SUSAN

But the public has a right to know. He...

FATHER

I'm sorry, Susan, in my humble opinion it is none of their damn business. This whole sordid spectacle is just bread and circuses for the great unwashed.

Susan is totally deflated and speechless.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Actually, I was going to call you anyway. Could you take care of Gandalf for a few days?

SUSAN

Sure. Off on another trip?

FATHER

I'm going into hospital tomorrow for some tests. That last trip to Europe really took it out of me.

SUSAN

Jesus, Dad. Why didn't you tell me? What is it? Are you okay? I'll take you in.

FATHER

Don't fuss, Susan. Nothing to worry about. It's really just routine. I can manage.

INT. WALSH CAMPAIGN HQ, CONNECTICUT -- MORNING

Walsh stands in front of his dejected volunteers in the meeting room. There are only half a dozen left. He looks tired and drawn, but unbowed. He has regained an uneasy composure.

WALSH

I know how you all must feel...
let down. But, for what it's
worth, I have to say this. I
HAVE been telling you the truth.

There is a universal look of disbelief.

WALSH (CONT'D)

I know. I know. It doesn't look
good, and I can't blame you for
not believing me, for feeling
betrayed. I don't know how this
was done. All I do know is it's
a very clever scam... brilliant,
in fact.

BROWN

You're not still on that Democrat
conspiracy kick, are you? Get
real, Bill. It's over. You
screwed up... literally!

WALSH

Fred. We've known each other for
years. Have you ever seen me
fooling around? Have I even
flirted with anyone besides Jane?

BEAT

WALSH (CONT'D)

Well, Fred?

BROWN

I guess not. Doesn't prove you
didn't.

Walsh moves up close to Brown.

WALSH

I'm telling you I did not have
sex with that woman.

LUCY

(sotto voce)

That sounds familiar!

WALSH

I heard that, Lucy. Look me in
the eye. I'm telling you I do
not know that woman. Am I lying?

BROWN

But, Bill... We all wanna believe
you, but... HOW...? What happened
here? And, why?

WALSH

I dunno.

(MORE)

WALSH (CONT'D)

I have no, excuse my French,
fucking clue. But believe me:
I've been set up. I love my wife
and family. And I love you guys.
With all we've been through the
last year, do you think I'd chuck
it away for a few minutes with
some bimbo? Give me some credit!

They look at each other uneasily.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Believe me, I can understand how
you feel. You all know me to be
a God-fearing man.

(he raises his
right hand)

Well, I swear on the life of my
children I have never been
unfaithful to my wife. Do you
hear me? NEVER! Not once.

He looks at them. They avoid eye contact.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Okay, back to business. The party's
gonna go into emergency session
in the next few days, and try to
salvage something from this fiasco.
They'll need to find a new
candidate very fast. For what
it's worth, I've recommended they
pick Lydia, and I've told them
this is the best team there is -
she's going to need all the help
she can get after this.

He looks at the lifeless crowd in front of him.

BROWN

(taken aback)

You've quit?

WALSH

Get real, Fred. With this crap
sticking to me, especially the
DNA test, it's a slam-dunk for
the other side. I suggest you
all pack up and head for
California.

Many of his team break into tears. They slowly start to
pack up their things.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Veronika and Greg sit in the corner with SOMBER MAN.

SOMBER MAN

Your Miss Weaver is getting too nose-y. Be careful.

VERONIKA

Don't worry. She knows nothing. They're just milking the story while they can.

GREG

You gotta control her better. She should never have come to the house.

Veronika looks at him angrily.

VERONIKA

I didn't ask them to come. You should be more careful what you leave lying around. I...

SOMBER MAN

Never mind that. We're nearly there now. Time to start carefully winding down. No more interviews. You should go away for a while.

VERONIKA

What do I tell them?

He looks at her disappointed.

SOMBER MAN

Really? After all the training we've invested in you, you can't come up with something.

VERONIKA

(embarrassed)

Sorry. I'll handle it.

SOMBER MAN

Now, the baby. Have you sorted out the adoption yet?

VERONIKA

But... I was thinking I might...

GREG

You're no use to us with a baby. We had a plan. Stick to it.

The somber man gets up.

SOMBER MAN

And I don't need to remind you: no loose ends!

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT - OUTSIDE CORRIDOR -- EVENING

Susan and Jack arrive. She takes the key out of her purse.

SUSAN
Strange. Why isn't Gandalf
barking?

She raises the key to the door, but it is already slightly ajar. Their expressions drop. They look at one another. Now they are scared... real scared.

Jack pushes Susan behind him. He listens hard for any noise. He pushes the door a little. It SQUEAKS. He nearly wets himself!

JACK
(quietly)
Gandalf!

Nothing.

Jack looks at Susan. What should we do?

He looks around for a weapon. The only thing to hand is a fire extinguisher. He picks it up. Jesus, it's heavy!

He signals Susan to open the door. Bracing herself, she pushes the door wide open in one swift motion.

They wait a moment.

Nothing. No movement. No sound.

Jack feels a little more confident.

JACK (CONT'D)
Call 911. I'll go in.

SUSAN
Are you crazy? Wait for the
police.

JACK
They've already gone. Call 911.

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Jack enters.

Susan follows, working the cell phone. She tries the light switch, but nothing.

SUSAN
Oh, my God! Gandalf!

The room is in darkness, but the light streaking in from outside is sufficient to show it has been ransacked. Susan rushes to the dog lying motionless in the middle of the room.

At that moment, a man suddenly emerges from the shadows, holding a crow bar. He rushes at Jack.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Jack! Watch out!

Jack spins round and lifts the fire extinguisher. Susan grabs a vase from the table and throws it at the man. It hits him in the face, causing him to misstrike with the crow bar. It bounces off the extinguisher, grazing Jack's forehead, drawing blood.

Jack throws the extinguisher at the silhouette. It hits him in the leg. The intruder CRIES with pain. He grabs a side table and hurls it at Jack, who falls to the ground, momentarily stunned.

The intruder lunges at Susan.

NEIL (O.S.)

Suze! Are you all right?

SUSAN

HELP! BURGLAR! CALL THE POLICE!

NEIL (O.S.)

Ohmigod! Ohmigod!

The intruder hesitates, then tosses another side table at Susan. It misses. He limps to the patio door and escapes.

Susan rushes to the dog, and checks it. She starts to cry.

SUSAN

(sobbing)

Why'd he kill the dog?

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT -- LATER

A couple of POLICEMEN are taking notes. Susan kneels by the dog, tears silently running down her cheeks. Jack, oblivious to the blood on his face, puts a comforting hand on her shoulder. Neil stands by, horrified.

POLICEMAN 1

(to Neil)

And you didn't hear anything?

NEIL

Not until Suze came home.

POLICEMAN 2

(to Susan)

So, that's it? Your TV and iPad are still here. Looks like you interrupted them before they could take anything.

SUSAN

Thank God, my laptop was in the car.

POLICEMAN 1

They usually come in through the terrace, out of sight. You might want to consider putting bars on these.

JACK

But they came in through the front door.

POLICEMAN 2

Yeah? Unusual, that.

He walks around the apartment. He is bored.

Jack shakes his head in disbelief.

JACK

Susie, can I use your bathroom to wash some of this blood off?

SUSAN

Sorry, Jack, I should've...
Through there.

Susan points to the bedroom. Jack heads off. She gets up to follow.

POLICEMAN 1

Typical punk break in.

SUSAN

I thought he just said it wasn't typical.

Both policemen have the weary look of men who long ago gave up on a vastly unequal struggle. They shrug.

POLICEMAN 1

We'll give you the police report for the insurance.

POLICEMAN 2

Come on, Bob. Let's check the neighbors, then get back to the station.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- MORNING

A fragile Susan is sitting in Marty Harris' office.

SUSAN

... but the police think it was just local punks. I don't buy that. Jack's place was also ransacked last night.

HARRIS

What?

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Bachelor pad, thoroughly tossed. Jack and Susan survey the damage. Jack picks up his camera bag. It is empty.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Yeah. I didn't want to stay in my apartment last night, so we went to his. He was also broken into. They took his TV, the usual stuff. Plus his cameras.

HARRIS (V.O.)

What do the police say?

SUSAN (V.O.)

(disbelievingly)
Coincidence! Can you believe that?

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Harris puts a comforting hand on Susan's shoulder.

HARRIS

Who knows? Look, if you want the rest of the day off, take it. We can cover this.

SUSAN

No, no, no. I want to know what's going on here. I'm missing something. Oh, talking of missing - the one thing they did take from my place was a load of Jack's photos.

HARRIS

Walsh's baby?

SUSAN

Yes. They also got the original memory card as well, when they took Jack's camera. Luckily, they're all backed up in the cloud.

HARRIS

There's some weird shit going on here. You be careful, Ace. Watch your back. These politicians have powerful friends...

INT. WALSH CAMPAIGN HQ, CONNECTICUT -- LATER

Everything is packed up. Brown and Lucy sit down over coffee.

LUCY

(checking her watch)
The limo should be here any minute.
(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

(hesitantly)

Look, Fred. I gotta ask. Do you...?

BROWN

Do I believe him?

LUCY

Yeah. It's so out of character.

BROWN

Exactly. I've known him for years...

(shakes his head)

But, if he's still sticking to that cockamamie story against all the odds, there's gotta be some sorta explanation for all this.

LUCY

I may be crazy, but I believe him, Fred. The DNA sunk him.

BROWN

That, plus the fact that the story fell on fertile soil - not exactly a rare occurrence in DC, is it?

LUCY

Consensus is he was a fool - he should've used a condom.

BROWN

Gotta love the wisdom - and morality - of the masses.

INT. L.A. HOTEL ROOM -- MORNING

Brown and Lucy are having breakfast in bed.

LUCY

Who would want to do this?

BROWN

This is politics, Lucy. There's no shortage of people just praying for you to fall on your face. Even those supposedly on your side. The question is who would be smart enough to... huh! We don't REALLY know yet what ACTUALLY happened here. Now that's clever!

LUCY

It's gotta be political though, hasn't it?

BROWN

(surprised)

Duh! What else is it gonna be?

LUCY

What about the Democrats? It's not so outlandish, is it? Their revenge for Bill Clinton's White House frolics?

BROWN

That's ancient history now. Much as I'd love to blame them, it's no accident their symbol is a donkey - it's far too elaborate for them. Besides -
 (conspiratorially)
 Promise never to repeat this! - even I don't think they would stoop that low.

LUCY

By the way, you wanted me to remind you to call your wife.

BROWN

Oh, yeah. Thanks.

INT. RODRIGUEZ CALIFORNIA CAMPAIGN HQ - LATER

Brown and Lucy oversee the mayhem as volunteers set up new campaign headquarters.

LUCY

What about his Republican opponents? Lydia, even?

BROWN

No. They would have wanted the story to break BEFORE the Convention. Afterwards is just too messy.

LUCY

We gotta think.

BROWN

You're really sure about this, aren't you, kid? Sweet.

LUCY

I think I am, Fred. But who hates Bill so much they'd go to all this trouble?

BROWN

Look, kid. Let it go. We got a shitload of work to do if we're gonna save this ship.
 (yelling to Intern)
 Hey. Where do you think you're going with that?

Lucy's phone RINGS.

LUCY

Kelly.

INTERCUT Lucy and Susan on the phone.

SUSAN

It's Susan Weaver, returning your call.

LUCY

That was ages ago. What do you want?

SUSAN

I think we should talk.

INT. STARBUCKS -- DAY

Susan is sitting in an armchair, sipping coffee. Lucy joins her, putting her notebook down on the table.

LUCY

What's this all about?

SUSAN

Do you really think you can intimidate us this way?

LUCY

By coming here for coffee!?

SUSAN

You know what I'm talking about - the break-ins, killing my father's dog.

LUCY

What!? You've been watching way too many movies. YOU'RE the one persecuting US, remember?

SUSAN

Well, someone's trying to shake us down. Who else would be so pissed at us?

LUCY

Wouldn't we have every right? You've ruined a perfectly decent man. It's a pack of lies, from beginning to end.

SUSAN

Don't give me that. He's no angel. You do know he took money from the mob years ago?

LUCY

What are you talking about?

SUSAN

Face it. He lied. You...

LUCY

You might think I'm irrational...
but he never did this. I know.
I know. The DNA. But it isn't
him, believe me!

SUSAN

Okay, I'll play along. Let's
assume for a moment he is innocent.
Then who, why and how?

LUCY

You don't think we've been trying
to figure that out for ourselves?
We've been over it all a thousand
times. Total blank.

SUSAN

Exactly. That's my point. The
alternatives are so far fetched.
If Walsh is innocent, how on earth
did the baby end up with his DNA?

Lucy's eyes narrow.

LUCY

You media types are all the same.
Alpha cynics. Bottom-feeders.
You're so corrosive.

She looks around distracted.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Damn! I forgot the sugar.

Susan sees Lucy's notebook lying on the table. She looks
up at Lucy going to get the sugar. She starts sweating.
She furtively opens the notebook on the bookmarked page.
She flicks the pages back and forth. She stops, surprised
at herself.

SUSAN

(to herself)

My God! What's happening to me?

She quickly closes the notebook, and turns to the TV news.
There is a graphic and video showing Russian troops massing
on the border with Kazakhstan.

Suddenly, Lucy PLONKS back down in front of her.

LUCY

You WANTED there to be a scandal.
You WANTED to take Bill down.

SUSAN

Whoa! Slow down there.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Don't shoot the messenger.
Everything Veronika has told us
has checked out...

LUCY

Well, how come no one in the
Campaign recognizes her? Walsh
is chaperoned by dozens of people
the whole time. And, since the
accident, he's had 24 hour
protection. How on Earth did he
manage to sneak in that tramp
without anyone noticing?

SUSAN

I don't want to prick your bubble,
but, you know that fundraising
event where the picture was taken?

LUCY

Obviously.

SUSAN

We got hold of all the media
footage and photos of the night.
There is clearly a half hour gap
where he is nowhere on any of the
films.

LUCY

(shocked)

I don't believe it.

SUSAN

You sure are stubborn, Lucy. If
nothing else, DNA doesn't lie.
Unless someone's perfected
pregnancy by handshake, how did
it happen? Another Immaculate
Conception?

LUCY

(with disdain)

This is ridiculous. I'm off.

Lucy starts to get up. Susan grabs her arm.

SUSAN

Lucy, for better or worse, I have
my father's voice in my head every
day, all day. If I'm wrong, I
promise you I will be the first
to make it public.

Lucy sits down again.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I have nothing against Walsh
personally - except maybe he looks
(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)
like a bit of a scumbag right
now.

Lucy is about to interject.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
I know. So, give me something.
If there is a different truth,
I'll find it, but you gotta help
me. If he's really innocent like
you say, let's go through some
possibilities.

LUCY
We went through them all.

INT. WALSH CAMPAIGN HQ, CONNECTICUT -- DAY

Camera is tight on Walsh.

LUCY (O.S.)
Sperm Bank?

WALSH
No.

LUCY (O.S.)
Evil twin?

WALSH
I think I'd know.

LUCY (O.S.)
Cloning?

WALSH
Don't be ridiculous. I'm not a
sheep.

INT. STARBUCKS -- DAY

SUSAN
You see? So, what other
explanation is there?

BEAT

LUCY
You know Bill's got a birthmark?

SUSAN
Yeah. Veronika said he's got a
blotch... here, I think.

Susan taps the inside top of her right leg.

LUCY
Shit! How...? Why is she doing
this? Blackmail? Child support?

SUSAN

She's never mentioned money.
Besides. Have you seen her?
She's gorgeous. She could have
seduced no end of men, much richer
and younger than Walsh, just by
blinking at them.

Lucy looks deflated.

LUCY

(hesitantly)

I know he's innocent... and if
you spoke with him, you would
too. You should speak with him.

SUSAN

(surprised)

He would speak with me? Even
now, after all this?

LUCY

I'll see what I can do.

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM -- DAY

Susan holds the phone on her shoulder, while furiously
jotting down notes. She has a cup of coffee on her desk.

SUSAN

Are you sure about this? How do
you know this?

She puts the receiver down thoughtfully. She writes an
email to a professor at Oxford University in Britain.

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM -- EVENING

There are now several empty cups on her desk. The printer
WHIRS into action. She grabs the page and stares at it.

SUSAN

(shaking her head
in disbelief)

Well, bugger me!

Jack comes up, as Susan puts the paper in her bag.

JACK

You called, m'lady. What's that?

SUSAN

I don't know yet. Let's go.

Susan grabs his sleeve and leads him out.

INT. PARK HYATT HOTEL, 12TH FLOOR CORRIDOR -- EVENING

A Secret AGENT opens the door. He beckons Susan to come
in. He puts his hand in front of Jack.

AGENT

You wait downstairs.

Jack looks at Susan. She reassures him it's okay.

INT. PARK HYATT HOTEL, SUITE -- MOMENTS LATER

Susan sits nervously at the dining table. Walsh comes in from the bedroom. Susan is shocked how tired and ashen he looks, but he still cuts an impressive figure.

WALSH

(calmly)

You have a nerve, I'll give you that, Miss Weaver. Who would blame me if I got George here to throw you over the balcony?

The agent stands impassively by the balcony door. Susan straightens up in an attempt to appear confident. A flood of emotions flicker across Walsh's face. He bites his lower lip, then takes a deep breath.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Against my better judgment, and only because Lucy... You've got ten minutes.

Walsh sits down opposite her.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Believe me, Miss Weaver, I consider you one of the lowest forms of life. I may have lost the presidency, thanks to you. That's one thing. But I can never forgive...

His eyes moisten. His voice falters.

INT. WALSH'S CAR - EVENING

Jane is driving, her eyes red from crying. The kids are in the back. Elizabeth, stares out the window, angry. Nathan stares blankly, numb. Mark is asleep, a teddy in his arms.

WALSH (V.O.)

... what I can never forgive is how casually you've destroyed my family.

He SNIFFS, then regains his composure.

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

But anger is so destructive and counterproductive.

INT. PARK HYATT HOTEL, SUITE -- CONTINUOUS

WALSH

Before we get to the baby, it seems I have to set you straight on something else.

SUSAN

(puzzled)

Sir?

WALSH

Lucy tells me you now think I'm linked to the mafia. Really, Miss Weaver, you should be writing soap operas.

SUSAN

Why did you take money from Harry Schenker then, and vote for his highway project?

WALSH

CHECK YOUR TIMELINE! No one knew he was connected to the mafia then. As far as we were concerned, he was just another businessman. We're all so desperate for funds, we don't have the means - or, quite frankly, the will - to check the provenance of every donation.

SUSAN

But that's...

WALSH

Don't be naive, Miss Weaver. Forget what you learned in school - all that fine "Government of the people, by the people, for the people" stuff. Huh! This is not a democracy - it's a plutocracy. Always has been, right from the very beginning. The American Revolution? All those wonderful ideals the colonists rebelled for? Bullshit! They were tacked on afterwards. What was it really about? Money. Nothing's changed. Politics is a brutal business in this country. No money, no chance. Money rules. Pure and simple.

SUSAN

That's very... cynical, isn't it?

WALSH

That's rich, coming from a journalist! We have to bare our souls, our private lives.

(MORE)

WALSH (CONT'D)

Everything is fair game. But you guys can destroy us with a casual click on the keyboard. It doesn't even have to be true - as I've learned to my cost. Once it's on the internet, it NEVER goes away... ever! The damage is permanent.

SUSAN

So, why do you do it then? If you can't stand the heat...

WALSH

(ironical chuckle)

Huh! Despite what I just said, for all its faults, this is still a great country, and I want to serve...

SUSAN

What about the baby?

WALSH

(sarcastically)

Ah, right. Much more serious issue than Mafia connections.

(deep sigh)

I want to make this VERY clear.

He holds her gaze.

WALSH (CONT'D)

As my old friend George Bush Senior famously said: Read... My... Lips. I do not know Miss Marsden. I never had sex with Miss Marsden. As far as I am aware, that crowd photo with Miss Marsden - assuming it is genuine - is the only time I ever came in contact with Miss Marsden - and it is one of thousands of such photographs, I might add. Now, unless I have unknowingly developed the ability to impregnate women through Osmosis, I am not that baby's father.

SUSAN

But the DNA, Sir... How...?

WALSH

I have no idea. You're the...

(making quotation marks in the air)

"Star investigative reporter".

You figure it out. But I guarantee you:

(MORE)

WALSH (CONT'D)

(enunciating every
word slowly and
clearly)

I have never been unfaithful to
my wife.

SUSAN

What about your son in England?

Walsh physically recoils. Susan pulls out the paper she
printed in the office, and hands it to Walsh. He doesn't
look at it.

WALSH

How did you...?

SUSAN

Is it true?

Walsh visibly shrinks. He shakes his head wearily.

WALSH

Look, no one knows about this -
except my wife. It was long before
we ever met. I was a Rhodes
scholar in Oxford. I didn't even
know she was pregnant when I left.
She wanted to keep the baby, and
I respected that.

SUSAN

Don't you think it looks bad that
it's all so hush hush?

WALSH

Maybe to you, but not to us. The
mother is a formidable woman,
fiercely independent. She's a
brilliantly successful academic,
and a fantastic, loving parent.
He's a great kid, a real credit
to her.

SUSAN

How do you...?

WALSH

We've stayed in touch all these
years, and the kid's been to visit
us many times. But she's always
been adamant about their privacy.
And why not? They're not public
figures.

(sadly)

Are you now going to wreck their
lives as well? Why should they
pay for my sins?

(MORE)

WALSH (CONT'D)

You guys are destroying the body politic with your impossible hypocritical high standards. Everyone's got some skeletons in their closet.

SUSAN

Maybe, but yours have pulses.

WALSH

Very amusing, Miss Weaver. It's amazing, though, isn't it? I've done so much for my country - nearly died fighting for it, as you no doubt recall - and now everything will be forgotten because of this... this... nonsense. That's all the media can be bothered with. That's what'll come up in Google searches until the end of time.

He shakes his head sadly.

WALSH (CONT'D)

But even if I had fathered this child, what difference does it really make? Would I really be a worse President? Tell me.

SUSAN

It's a question of credibility.

Walsh smiles sarcastically.

WALSH

Miss Weaver, you are even more naive than I thought. Believe me, even if I had come straight out and admitted the child was mine, I would still have been crucified.

Walsh gets up and starts to move away.

WALSH (CONT'D)

I knew this was a bad idea. I think I've given you enough time.

SUSAN

Senator... Are your people trying to... intimidate us?

WALSH

What are you talking about?

SUSAN

I've been followed. My house has been burgled, and my father's dog killed. All this week.

WALSH

Quite the fantasist, aren't you,
Miss Weaver? You flatter yourself.

He sits back down at the table.

WALSH (CONT'D)

My guess is you are an unwitting
pawn in all this. And from what
you've just said, you've stirred
up some hornet's nest of God knows
what. Be careful, Miss Weaver:
Miss Marsden is not what she seems.
Find out what really happened and
you will have the real story of
the year, not this crap you've
been publishing.

Walsh goes into the next room and SLAMS the door. Susan
sits alone for a moment, deep in thought. The agent
beckons her to leave.

INT. SUSAN'S CAR -- EVENING

Jack drives while Susan is deep in thought.

JACK

Well....? How'd it go? Dig up
any more bodies?

SUSAN

In a way, yes, but never mind
that. I'm getting a really bad
feeling about this story. And
what am I going to tell my dad
about Gandalf? He already despises
what I do.

JACK

When he sees the whole picture,
he'll understand. Sure he will.

SUSAN

What IS the whole picture, Jack?
I'm not so sure any more.

JACK

You saved us all from a lying,
cheating...

SUSAN

He might not be lying, Jack.

JACK

(doubtfully)

What? Okay, tell me what happened.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Susan walks into Harris' office.

HARRIS

Why the long face? You should be on top of the world.

SUSAN

Long day. Just tired, I guess. I met Walsh briefly.

HARRIS

Surprised he didn't kill you!

SUSAN

The thought crossed his mind! Er... do you think we published too quickly, Marty?

HARRIS

Jesus, Susan. Give it a rest. They've really spooked you, haven't they? It's a bit late to be worrying about that now. The genie's outta the bottle. Look, every time you start to have doubts, just chant to yourself: D... N... A... Okay?

SUSAN

Yeah, you're right. I don't get it, though. Despite all the evidence, he's still absolutely adamant he's innocent. I almost believed him.

Harris shrugs.

HARRIS

He's a politician, Susan. Say no more! That's their stock in trade.

INT. L.A. RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Jack and a more subdued Susan are in a private room at an expensive restaurant. Veronika, very elegant, enters.

SUSAN

(quietly to Jack)
Let's see if we can get anything new out of her?

JACK

Okay.
(to Veronika)
Wow, Veronika, you look great. Motherhood definitely agrees with you.

VERONIKA

This is the first time I've been out since I don't know when. It feels good.

JACK
Well, you deserve it.

The waiter fills their champagne glasses.

ALL
Cheers!

BEAT

JACK
I can't believe Walsh was such an asshole. He still denies it. Can you believe that?

SUSAN
I used to think he was a man of integrity. Just goes to show - you can't judge a book by its cover.

JACK
How did you meet the sleaze-ball, anyway?

VERONIKA
At a party.

JACK
Where?

SUSAN
She met him here in L.A. last year. Don't you read your own paper, Jack?

JACK
I just look at the pictures.
(turns to Veronika)
Sorry, Veronika. Just nosey, I guess.

VERONIKA
That's okay.

JACK
How did you get passed all the minders?

VERONIKA
He gave me a drink and asked me to his room.

SUSAN
He's got balls, I'll say that for him.

JACK
Was that the big Hollywood fundraiser?

SUSAN

Yeah. Arnold Schwarzenegger hosted it. Made quarter of a million bucks in one night.

JACK

Not so shabby!

SUSAN

Beverly Wilshire, wasn't it, Veronika?

VERONIKA

Yes, that's right.

JACK

Those tickets cost thousands. Were you invited?

VERONIKA

Why are you asking all these questions?

Susan looks surprised by Veronika's reaction.

SUSAN

Hey, it's okay, Veronika. We're all friends here.

VERONIKA

Sorry. I was, er, working at the hotel.

JACK

Nothing to be ashamed of.

SUSAN

So, what was he like?

JACK

Did you realize he was such a schmuck?

VERONIKA

Actually, he was quite charming.

SUSAN

Hang on. Wasn't Walsh still injured from his accident last year?

VERONIKA

(nervously)
Accident?

JACK

You don't know? He was nearly killed in a car crash.

SUSAN

Broke his leg, didn't he?

She looks at Jack sternly and nods forcefully. He nods.

JACK

That's right. Totally bugged,
it was.

VERONIKA

Yes. You're right. He told me
he hurt his leg in an accident.
But he still had the moves.

SUSAN

(laughing)

Well, that's what matters!

EXT. L.A. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

As Jack and Susan wait for the valet to bring their car,
Veronika leaves in a limo. A burly security guy gets
into an SUV with darkened windows across the road and
follows it.

JACK

Did you see that? It's one of
those guys from the park.

Susan looks but it's too late.

SUSAN

What? How do you know? Security
guys all look the same. I'm sure
they all come from the same mold.

Jack looks at the tail-lights of the SUV disappearing.
He is no longer so sure.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Stay focused. Don't you think she
behaved oddly?

JACK

Well, she did seem nervous, for
some reason.

SUSAN

It was more than that. She was
so cagey. Before, she talked
about Walsh a lot, but this time
she totally clammed up. And now
I think about it, she always
avoided specifics. She always
talked about how nice he was -
that sort of stuff.

INT. PRESSROOM, L.A. POST -- MORNING

Susan is at her computer. Harris walks up.

HARRIS

Still digging?

SUSAN

Veronika said she worked at the Beverly Wilshire. But the fund-raising was at the Peninsula.

HARRIS

So?

SUSAN

I called the Beverly Wilshire. They've no record of her working there. I also tried the Peninsula. Same.

HARRIS

Under that name. Maybe she used another name. Cash-in-hand, to avoid tax.

SUSAN

But why lie about the hotel?

HARRIS

Maybe the truth is too embarrassing. Maybe she was a hooker. Maybe they fucked in a John. Who knows? It doesn't matter how it happened. It happened. He got caught.

SUSAN

Yeah, but that's my point. Maybe there's an even bigger story here. Sure, it's his baby. But what if the whole thing is even more sordid? What if she was a hooker, like you said? What if there were a fleet of them? What does that say about the Mr Squeaky Clean we nearly put in the White House?

Now Harris' interest is well and truly piqued.

HARRIS

My God, Susan. You could be right. Remember all that Christmas schmaltz? Bleagh!

SUSAN

Exactly. And I still don't understand how she paid all her medical bills. She only went to the best doctors and best hospital.

HARRIS

She said her house mates helped out.

SUSAN

Come on. A bunch of students?
Gimme a break. Maybe Walsh has
been paying all this time, hoping
to keep her quiet.

Harris' face lights up at the prospect.

HARRIS

Go for it, Scoop!

SUSAN

First, I got to do something.

EXT. SUSAN'S FATHER'S HOME - DAY

Susan's father opens the door to Susan. He kisses her on
the cheeks. He looks around for the dog. Susan holds
his arm and starts to cry. He puts his arm around her.
He dabs his eyes with his handkerchief.

EXT. VERONIKA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Susan's car pulls up, with Susan and Jack.

INT. SUSAN'S CAR -- DAY

SUSAN

Thanks for your help, Jack. I've
got no idea who's telling the
truth any more. The more I dig,
the more things don't quite square.
Hmmm. Come to think of it, where
were you on the night in question?

JACK

If I tell you, I'll have to kill
you! What does Marty think? He's
not gonna be too happy if he loses
his star story.

SUSAN

I've got him thinking Veronika
might be a hooker. I'm sure he's
got the headline and ten page
spread already mapped out in his
head.

JACK

Classic! Well played!

She allows herself a small self-satisfied smile.

SUSAN

Thank you. Someone must have
been in on this, and got her to
him. He's surrounded by handlers
24/7. Someone knows something.

JACK

Why haven't they sold their story yet? Come to think of it, no one here's tried to cash in either.

SUSAN

Isn't it strange that that Democrat rottweiler Wrigley was standing next to her? We'd better check him...

JACK

Forget about that for now, sport. Greg's watching us through the window. Time for gooey Happy Families.

(sighs)

You've got the story of the decade, and I'm taking baby pictures.

INT. VERONIKA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Jack takes lots of classic mother and child pictures. Susan looks on.

SUSAN

Getting some good ones, I hope, Jack.

JACK

Huh! Do I tell you how to write?

VERONIKA

Look. I've been doing some thinking and I've decided to go away for a while.

SUSAN

What? Why?

VERONIKA

Whenever we go out, people stare. Yesterday, someone at the mall shouted at me and called me a "whore".

INT. SHOPPING MALL -- DAY

A man is haranguing Veronika and the baby.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Oh my God! They didn't...?

A couple of the security guys from the park sidle up to the heckler and skillfully whisk him away quietly.

VERONIKA (V.O.)

No. Luckily security...

SUSAN (V.O.)

Thank God!

INT. VERONIKA'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

VERONIKA

All this attention isn't good for the baby - nor me.

SUSAN

Where are you going? How long?

VERONIKA

I dunno yet. With the money you gave me, we can go somewhere really nice. It's for the best. I'll leave next week after Alexandra's next check-up.

INT. NEIL'S APARTMENT -- DAY

This is a computer buff's wet dream. Fantastic top-end equipment everywhere - banks of processor and storage racks along one wall, and a plethora of monitors.

Susan enters with a cake.

SUSAN

Just a little thank you for the other day.

NEIL

No need... is it chocolate?

Susan nods.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Nice. Thanks.

He takes the plate.

Awkward moment.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Er... I'd invite you in, but, as you can see, it isn't really set up for receiving visitors.

SUSAN

No problem.

Susan looks around.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Wow! That's some kit.

NEIL

Only the best. Need it for my job... programming.

SUSAN

Who for? NASA?

She CHUCKLES. He nervously joins in, but doesn't answer.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Impressive.

She starts to leave, then looks back at the room.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Hey. Could I ask you a favor?

NEIL

You can always ask.

SUSAN

Feel free to say no. I'm trying to figure out who killed my dad's dog, and I need to find out more about a couple of people who may know something.

Neil looks uncomfortable.

NEIL

Doesn't your paper have folk who specialize in that?

SUSAN

Yes, but I don't know who to trust any more.

Neil perks up.

NEIL

A conspiracy?

SUSAN

Could be. You're obviously a computer whiz, what with all this kit and all. And I would never tell anyone where it came from, I promise.

Neil breaks into a smile.

INT. PRESSROOM, L.A. POST -- LATER

Susan, deep in thought, sifts through pictures of Veronika and the baby.

Harris walks up.

HARRIS

How's it going?

SUSAN

We're double-checking everything. Turner's checking with Vice to see if any known hookers match Veronika's description. Lee is looking for links between her and Wrigley.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

And I've asked a well-connected friend to do background checks on both Veronika and Greg - unofficially, of course.

HARRIS

Of course. Do you think Greg's her pimp?

SUSAN

Could be. He's very protective - says they're cousins. The only thing that's clear is those guys in the house couldn't afford a pizza, let alone the medical bills. I've checked with the hospital. They won't say anything officially, but, unofficially, they told me the bills were all paid in cash. That's a lot of Benjamins to be carrying around.

HARRIS

Did she pay herself?

SUSAN

Seymore's been sweet-talking the cashier. She doesn't recognize either Walsh or Greg, but she does recognize Veronika... from the paper.

HARRIS

She recognizes Veronika from the paper, but not the Senator!? That's the Great American Public for you!

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM -- MORNING

Susan is fast asleep.

A muffled but insistent KNOCK on the front door gets louder and louder until she hears it.

She looks at the clock: 05:35

SUSAN

What the...?

INT. SUSAN WEAVER'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Susan checks the spy-hole, then opens the door to Neil.

SUSAN

(sleepily)

Jesus, Neil. Don't you ever sleep?

NEIL

What's sleep?

SUSAN

Come in.

Neil carefully stays to the side, not in front of the door.

NEIL

Better you come next door.

Shot of the room TRANSITIONS onto a monitor.

MONITOR OPERATOR (O.S.)

What's going on?

A hand picks up a phone.

INT. NEIL'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Neil looks up and down the corridor before closing the door.

NEIL

Okay. I got the info you wanted.
Just don't ask, okay?

Susan wakens up rapidly. She nods in agreement.

NEIL (CONT'D)

First, Greg Carter, aged 50. Comes from Russia.

SUSAN

Russia!?

NEIL

Yup. Real name: Gregor Karpov. Been in the US for about twenty years, mostly in the same house.

SUSAN

Russian?

NEIL

You said that. I checked his work history. Lots of short-term jobs, rarely more than 6 months or so at a time. Seems legit.

SUSAN

Any pattern?

NEIL

Not really. Convenience stores, gas stations, hospitals, department stores...

SUSAN

It all sounds a bit... menial for someone who's clearly well educated. His English is flawless. Anything about his time in Russia?

NEIL

Not yet. That wasn't easy to find. No time to look for the girl. I'll keep on them.

SUSAN

Thanks. I'm grateful, Neil, really I am, but why wake me up in the middle of the night for that? It's not as if it's a smoking gun or...

NEIL

Oh, yes. Your apartment's bugged.

SUSAN

What!?

NEIL

Yeah. I regularly check mine for bugs, and it kept coming up positive. Couldn't figure out where they were, until I managed to narrow it down to your place. No offence, but it never occurred to me they'd want to bug you.

SUSAN

Who's they?

NEIL

Who knows?

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- LATER

Susan, Jack and Harris are sitting at a conference table. There are papers strewn all over it. There is a TV to one side, tuned to cable news. It is on mute.

Susan is very tired. She rubs her eyes.

SUSAN

Moscow found dozens of Gregor Karpovs, but take a look at this one.

She hands Jack a paper.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Same birthday, so, if the Green Card's right, this must be our guy. They're trying to get a picture for us.

JACK

And?

SUSAN

It seems our Greg is a qualified doctor.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Born in Riga, Latvia, he moved to Moscow when the Soviet Union fell. Military service, then back to Moscow to complete his medical studies. Graduated top of his class. Senior doctor in a hospital. Married a nurse called Elena, and had a son, Vassily. Then, as far as Russia is concerned, he and his family just vanished about twenty years ago.

HARRIS

If it is him. That's all very interesting, but not really relevant to... well, anything really.

SUSAN

You could be right.

BEAT

SUSAN (CONT'D)

But why would he throw all that away to come here?

HARRIS

You're too young to remember when the Wall came down. The Russian economy went into free-fall. Salaries and pensions weren't paid. Maybe he had no choice. He had to feed his family somehow.

SUSAN

So, where's the family?

He shrugs.

JACK

This is getting more more and more... complicated. I still don't think you should stay in your apartment for a while.

Harris looks at him puzzled.

HARRIS

Why ever not?

Susan looks at Jack sternly and shakes her head.

JACK

Er... because of the break-in.

HARRIS

Don't be such a pussy, Jack. They were punks.

(MORE)

HARRIS (CONT'D)
 Forget about it. Lightning
 doesn't... you know.

SUSAN
 Hang on, they're interviewing Bob
 Pullman...

Harris turns the volume up on the TV.

INT. MSNBC NY STUDIO -- CONTINUOUS

BOB PULLMAN is on set with presenter, CARRIE KNIGHT.

CARRIE KNIGHT
 This morning we are honored to
 have Bob Pullman, the Democratic
 Presidential nominee, in the studio
 with us. Morning, Bob.

PULLMAN
 Morning, Carrie. A pleasure to
 be here.

CARRIE KNIGHT
 The campaign's certainly gotten a
 whole lot more interesting,
 wouldn't you say?

PULLMAN
 Sure has. We don't even know who
 we're running against. Bill Walsh
 still hasn't officially withdrawn,
 despite the allegations...

CARRIE KNIGHT
 Allegations? Surely, they're
 more than that?

PULLMAN
 Well, Carrie, I don't think it
 would be appropriate for me to
 comment any further. This must
 be real hard time for his family.

CARRIE KNIGHT
 Which one? He's got two.

Pullman feigns disapproval.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Harris presses the mute button.

HARRIS
 Smug bastard. You can see he's
 trying his damndest not to gloat.
 He's as happy as a pig in shit.

SUSAN
 Do you like any of them?

HARRIS

Nah! A pox on all their houses!
So, what's next?

SUSAN

You won't believe this, but Walsh has agreed for Lucy Kelly to give me whatever I want.

HARRIS

No shit? He's got *cajones*, I'll give him that.

SUSAN

She gave Jack a copy of his official diary from when he declared as candidate.

HARRIS

Stop right there, Susan. Where are you heading with this? I thought you were following the hooker angle. You're not buying that innocent crap, are you?

He looks at her intensely for a moment.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Okay, enough, already. Just drop it. It's over. The facts speak for themselves.

Susan tries to object. He raises his hand to stop her.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

No. You look terrible, exhausted. Take a vacation. Go to Hawaii. Get laid. Anything. Okay?

SUSAN

No, I'm fine, Marty, really I am.

HARRIS

I'm not asking you, Susan. I'm telling you. Go home! You are now officially on vacation.

EXT. SUSAN'S CAR -- EVENING

Susan is driving through the city. Her cell phone RINGS and Jack's voice comes over the loudspeakers.

JACK (O.S.)

Hi, Susie. Sorry about what happened... although you do looked shagged out, I have to say.

SUSAN

I'm fine.

JACK (O.S.)

I assume you're gonna ignore him?

SUSAN

Of course not. He told me to go to Hawaii. I've never been there.

JACK (O.S.)

Okay, let's play it your way. So you're not interested in what I've found so far?

SUSAN

I may be a little curious.

JACK (O.S.)

(chuckles)

Okay, but it really ain't much. I cross-referenced Veronika's story with Walsh's calendar, like you asked. It matches.

SUSAN

I never doubted it would, Jack.

JACK (O.S.)

You left a copy of Greg's file on your desk, so, for the hell of it, I checked that as well. Nothing. None of his jobs were anywhere near Walsh, although Walsh did come several times to L.A., as you know.

SUSAN

Okay... so what's the news?

JACK (O.S.)

Well, it might be nothing, but I did notice one thing. Greg has a complete work history since he arrived in the States. In twenty years, he's never been unemployed for more than a few days - except for last summer. He left Wal-Mart in June and didn't have a new job until the end of October.

SUSAN

Interesting. Did you call Wal-Mart and...

CUT TO:

INT. GREG'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Greg, headphones on, is listening in on their conversation.

JACK (O.S.)

Way ahead of you, Susie. He resigned, no reason given.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Hey - not bad for a camera boy!

Greg angrily slams down the headphones. He grabs his cellphone.

INT. LAX AIRPORT -- EVENING

Susan checks in, watched by two agents. When she walks away from the counter, they make a call.

INT. PLANE -- NIGHT

The plane is dark. Everyone is sleeping except Susan who is sifting through Walsh's diary, her notes, and other papers.

INT. PLANE -- DAY

Everyone is having breakfast and/or reading except Susan who is fast asleep, her mouth wide open. Her breakfast tray sits untouched in front of her.

INT. HONOLULU AIRPORT - ARRIVALS -- DAY

Two burly security guys watch the passengers from LA come through. They keep checking against the picture of Susan on their cellphones.

EXT. TAMPA AIRPORT -- LATER

The plane lands.

INT. TAMPA AIRPORT -- MOMENTS LATER

A weary Susan walks through the airport. She puts on her sunglasses. HOWARD ZIEGLER is waiting for her.

ZIEGLER

Susan. Great to see you again.

Susan is momentarily startled.

SUSAN

Hi, Howard. Sorry. Totally knackered.

They kiss each other on the cheek.

INT. HONOLULU AIRPORT -- DAY

The security guys look at each other and shake their heads. One makes a call on his cellphone.

INT. ZIEGLER'S CAR -- LATER

Susan puts her hair in a ponytail with a rubber band, and lies back on the headrest, her eyes closed.

ZIEGLER

So, what's with the strange email address, and all the secrecy?

SUSAN

Sorry about all the cloak and dagger stuff. I'm being bugged.

ZIEGLER

What? Who?

SUSAN

I don't know.

ZIEGLER

What about my family? I can't risk...

SUSAN

No one knows I'm here. Let's keep it that way. Call me...

She sees a movie poster for a new Meryl Streep movie.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

... Meryl.

ZIEGLER

(hesitantly)

Okay. Great story about Walsh, by the way. Who'd've thought it?

SUSAN

(stifling a yawn)

Actually, I'm still working on Walsh.

ZIEGLER

What? Oh, the accident? I worked on that, after you... er ...

Ziegler realizes what he's just said.

SUSAN

... Screwed up. I know!

(shrugs)

Forget it. Can we interview some of the witnesses?

ZIEGLER

Any particular reason?

SUSAN

I don't know. It's really the moment his campaign took off. Up till then, he was just a face in the crowd.

Ziegler gives a knowing, mischievous smile.

ZIEGLER

Do I smell a book here? Just
make sure you spell my name right
in the Acknowledgements, okay?
My Mom'll love that.

Susan leans back on the headrest and closes her eyes.
Ziegler drives into town.

INT. GREG'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Greg, angry, sends an email with Susan's picture to a
long list of recipients.

MONTAGE

Lots of agents around the country checking their cellphones
as they receive the photo.

END MONTAGE

INT. JORGE PEREZ' HOUSE -- AFTERNOON

Jorge Perez, Walsh's driver the previous year, is sitting
in his living room with Susan and Ziegler.

PEREZ

So that's it. Next thing I
remember is waking up in the
hospital. Not sure I can add
anything more to that.

Susan finishes her coffee and heads for the door.

SUSAN

Thank you very much for your time,
Señor Perez. Much appreciated.

They go outside the door.

PEREZ

You're welcome. There is one
thing, though, that has always
bothered me.

P.O.V. SNIPER'S SCOPE -- CONTINUOUS

The crosshairs move about.

ZIEGLER (V.O.)

What's that?

PEREZ (V.O.)

Why did that van try to overtake
a second time, after he nearly
killed himself the first time?
He was an accident waiting to
happen.

P.O.V. SNIPER -- CONTINUOUS

The sniper checks the picture of Susan on his phone, then puts it away.

P.O.V. SNIPER'S SCOPE -- CONTINUOUS

Standing by the car, they bid each other farewell. Perez turns to go back inside.

The crosshairs land on Susan's head. She lowers her head to get in the car just as the sniper fires silently. The bullet goes through the rubber band holding her ponytail and hits Perez who falls back over the low hedge into the garden.

Susan reacts to the draught from the bullet with a shake of her head. She just assumes the band broke.

They drive off.

SNIPER (O.S.)
(in Russian)
Shit!

EXT. TAMPA HOSPITAL -- LATER

Ziegler drives up to the hospital.

ZIEGLER (O.S.)
This is where they brought him
after the accident.

INT. TAMPA HOSPITAL - SURGEON'S OFFICE -- LATER

A very functional hospital office, with x-rays stuck on a white light board. The HEAD SURGEON sits behind his desk. Susan and Ziegler sit opposite him.

HEAD SURGEON
Yes, they were seriously wounded.
There were multiple cuts and
bruises all over their bodies.
The Senator's left arm was
fractured.
(impatiently)
This is all in the public domain,
you know.

SUSAN
We just want to make sure we have
everything.

HEAD SURGEON
Very well. Our job wasn't too
difficult, though. They were
lucky an ambulance was passing
by, and the paramedics had already
stabilized them by the time they
got here.

SUSAN

Lucky, indeed.

HEAD SURGEON

Definitely. Did you see the limo?
Total wreck.

INT. TAMPA HOSPITAL - RECEPTION -- MOMENTS LATER

Susan and Ziegler head for the exit. Susan notices the CCTV cameras high up on the walls. They go over to the RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST

Hi, Howie. How's Margie?

ZIEGLER

Great, thanks, Jill. How's...

SUSAN

Do you still have the tapes from when Senator Walsh was here?

RECEPTIONIST

No, dearie. That was nearly a year ago. They get wiped in rotation every few weeks.

SUSAN

Sorry, Howard. I seem to be wasting your time and everyone else's. I haven't found anything new or...

RECEPTIONIST

You could try the local TV station.

SUSAN

Pardon?

RECEPTIONIST

Yeah. They were here doin' one of those fly-on-the-wall reality shows then. I guess they still got their tapes.

Susan looks at Ziegler.

SUSAN

Is that right?

ZIEGLER

Could be. Nothing to lose. Your flight's not till tomorrow morning.

EXT. WNKR STUDIO BUILDING -- LATER

Ziegler parks his car.

INT. WNKR STUDIO BUILDING -- MOMENTS LATER

Susan and Ziegler are in a dark room with a bank of monitors against one wall, and a galaxy of studio equipment, operated by Studio Engineer, JAIME LOPEZ.

LOPEZ

What exactly are you looking for?

ZIEGLER

Probably nothing, Jaime. Meryl just wants to see what there is.

LOPEZ

Well, this is what went out on the newscast.

INT. TAMPA HOSPITAL -- EVENING

NEWSREEL. Walsh is being rushed into ER on a gurney.

LOPEZ (O.S.)

We were lucky to be there. We saw him brought in...

The gurney is pushed into a side room. A nurse stops the cameraman from following.

LOPEZ (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Huh! They wouldn't let us in the emergency room.

SUSAN (O.S.)

You're surprised?

Lopez GRUNTS. The shot cuts to a picture of the wrecked limousine.

LOPEZ (O.S.)

There's the limo. Real mess.

End Of FOOTAGE.

INT. WNKR STUDIO BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

Susan gets up to leave, then an idea hits her.

SUSAN

Do you still have the outtakes?

Lopez holds up an external disk drive.

LOPEZ

Sure. I copied it across when Howie called.

INT. TAMPA HOSPITAL -- EVENING

NEWSREEL. A busy ER department.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Fast forward to just before Walsh comes in.

The picture speeds up. When Lopez sees heightened activity on the footage, he returns to normal speed.

LOPEZ (O.S.)

This is when they were told serious accident victims were coming in.

The door bursts open.

LOPEZ (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Here they come.

A paramedic rushes through the door, pulling the gurney.

LOPEZ (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Now the staff snap into action. It's just like ER. You really start to appreciate shows like that when you've seen the real thing.

Doctors and nurses descend on the patient. It seems like chaos, but everyone is doing what they're trained for. The handheld camera pictures become jerky in the mayhem.

ZIEGLER

Great footage, Jaime.

LOPEZ (O.S.)

Thanks, man.

The gurney is followed in by a second paramedic. The hospital staff take over. The camera follows the patient - this is now the footage in the news item.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Oh, my God!

INT. WNKR STUDIO BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

Susan looks momentarily stunned.

SUSAN

Oh, my God! Rewind to when he's wheeled in through the door. Slow it down.

INT. TAMPA HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS

NEWSREEL. Slow motion. The first paramedic comes through the door.

SUSAN (O.S.)

OK. Keep going.

The gurney carrying Walsh follows. Then the second paramedic comes in.

SUSAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 OK. Slower now...

The camera is jerking all over the place as it tries to follow Walsh into the emergency room.

SUSAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 There! Stop! Back a few frames.

Lopez rewinds a few frames.

SUSAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 That's it! Stop! Oh, my God.

FREEZE FRAME of hospital scene. Susan moves in closer to the monitor and we see her silhouetted against the screen. Susan's finger points to the second paramedic whose face is only visible for a split second.

INT. WNKR STUDIO BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

Ziegler's cellphone rings.

ZIEGLER
 Ziegler.

SUSAN
 Greg! Gregor! Whatever his name is.

ZIEGLER
 Okay. Thanks, Jill.

Susan's excitement evaporates as she sees Ziegler's pale, worried expression.

ZIEGLER (CONT'D)
 That was the hospital. Jorge Perez' body was just brought in. He was shot outside his home this afternoon.

Susan's eyes widen with fear.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON, NEXT DAY

Susan looks tired, but is clearly on a high, with a coffee in one hand and a remote control in the other. She freeze frames the grainy video picture for Harris.

HARRIS
 They killed the driver?

SUSAN
 Yup! Howard was really great.

EXT. MIAMI STREETS -- EVENING

SUSAN (V.O.)
 He took me home by some incredibly circuitous route.

The car arrives in a suburban residential area. Howard stops the car and scans the street carefully.

ZIEGLER

No unusual cars. Get down.

Susan ducks down. Ziegler CLICKS the remote to open his garage.

INT. ZIEGLER'S HOUSE - GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Ever vigilant, he drives in, holding Susan's head down until the door closes behind them. He takes a gun out of the glove compartment and checks it for ammunition. He grabs a blanket from the back seat.

ZIEGLER

Cover yourself. I'll check the house. If you hear anything strange or I don't come back, hightail it out of here. Key's in the ignition. Okay?

INT. ZIEGLER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Ziegler closes all the drapes, then ushers in Susan. He opens a laptop on the table.

SUSAN (V.O.)

He immediately booked a new flight from Fort Lauderdale in his name.

INT. L.A. POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

HARRIS

Why his name?

SUSAN

He took me there himself, to check-in, and told them his secretary had made a mistake and booked the wrong name. When she saw his ID, she didn't bat an eyelid.

HARRIS

I never figured Ziegler to be that smart.

SUSAN

Good thing too. The flight was full.

Harris looks back at the screen.

HARRIS

You sure that's our guy? It's not the best...

Susan passes a large photo to Harris.

SUSAN

The TV station enhanced it. No doubt.

Harris paces up and down.

HARRIS

What the hell does all this mean?

Jack walks in. He looks at the screen.

JACK

Hey, that's Greg, isn't it?

Susan looks at Harris triumphantly.

SUSAN

You bet. I'll tell you what it can't be, Marty. It CAN'T be a coincidence. That's just too wild.

Susan turns to Jack.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I just found out what our friend Greg did after Wal-Mart. He worked as a paramedic in Tampa.

JACK

That's a sudden shift up the food chain, ain't it?

SUSAN

That's not all. Howard did some more checking around this morning. No one knows where this ambulance came from. There was no bill. Nothing. No one recognized Greg's photo. It must have been the only time he was there. He also tried other hospitals in the area. Nothing.

HARRIS

Okay. So Greg was there. Why?

Harris and Jack look at Susan. She shrugs.

SUSAN

Good question. Russia? Latvia, maybe?

JACK

Mercenary for someone else?

SUSAN

(tearfully)
Why kill the driver though?

Harris opens the wall safe and pulls out some money and three cellphones.

HARRIS

Okay. Now you do exactly what I say, you hear me?

He points a finger right into Susan's face.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

And I mean it this time. No fucking about, capiche?

He impatiently swaps Susan's and Jack's cellphones for the burners from the safe. He takes out the batteries from the old ones.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Only use these burner phones from now on. We three only communicate via these phones, okay? Do not call anyone else who might be bugged.

Susan is looking a little startled now.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Leave your cars here. We'll book you rentals in the company's name, so no credit card transactions.

JACK

A bit cloak and dagger, isn't it?

HARRIS

You want to take your chances, be my guest. But you resign first. I don't want any dead employees on my conscience, okay?

JACK

(humbled)
Got it.

HARRIS

Good. You do not go home tonight. Check into a hotel. Fake name. Pay cash. Don't tell anyone - even me - where you are.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Susan is in bed, but can't sleep. She tosses and turns. Suddenly, she sits bolt upright.

SUSAN

Eureka! That's it!

She looks pleased, then puzzled.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
But WHY, for Chrissakes?

She looks at the clock. 3:15 am.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- MORNING

The clock now has 7:10. The unmade bed is empty.

INT. SUSAN'S RENTAL CAR -- DAY

Susan is on her hands-free cell phone.

SUSAN
Right, I'll see you there in half
an hour.

She switches on the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
... and the New York Times lead
story this morning is that Senator
Walsh has called a press conference
for this evening. Sources close
to the campaign are saying he
will officially withdraw from the
Presidential race and endorse
Lydia Rodriguez as GOP candidate.

SUSAN
Shit.

Susan switches off the radio and presses speed-dial on
her cell phone. It RINGS.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Come on. Come on. Answer the
damn thing, won't...

It stops ringing. Before anyone can speak, an excited
Susan yells down the phone.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
... ah, Lucy. Listen very
carefully...

INT. RODRIGUEZ CALIFORNIA CAMPAIGN HQ -- DAY

Lucy is on the phone with Susan. Her expression changes
to one of complete surprise.

EXT. L.A. HOSPITAL -- LATER

Establishing shot of hospital.

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL - CONSULTANT'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

A CONSULTANT is deep in thought. She rubs her chin.
Susan sits nervously, tapping her pencil against her
notebook.

CONSULTANT

Ingenious... unusual... but not impossible.

INT. SUSAN'S RENTAL CAR -- LATER

Susan is on the cell phone.

SUSAN

... okay, Marty. Please be punctual. Thanks.

She hangs up and dials again.

EXT. FREEWAY - SUSAN'S RENTAL CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Susan's car is plying through rush hour traffic.

INT. SUSAN'S RENTAL CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Susan is again on the cell phone.

SUSAN

... that's right, Jack. Can you do that?

JACK (O.S.)

No worries, Susie. Get number of the... restaurant, no names, on Sunset Boulevard. Check. Book an outside table for four. Check. Invite Veronika. Check. Tell Susie she's great and should go out with me. Check.

SUSAN

(smiling)

Over and out. Ten four.

She hangs up. The traffic is crawling. Impatiently, she thumps the steering wheel.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Shift, goddamit.

INT. L.A. POST - PRESSROOM / VERONIKA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Jack calls Veronika, nursing the baby. She nods.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

This is the room we started in. A very angry Greg throws his headphones against the wall, and runs out, knocking a clerk off his feet.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING -- LATER

Greg runs out of the building, into the street. A car SCREECHES to a halt. The driver sticks his head out the window.

DRIVER

Are you fucking crazy?

Greg pulls a gun. He opens the car door and pulls the driver out. The driver cowers with fear, apologizing and begging for his life.

Greg gets in and VROOMS off, tires SQUEALING.

EXT. ANATOLIA PALACE RESTAURANT -- LATER

An upmarket Turkish restaurant. The street-side terrace has a glass wind-cheater to protect the diners. Susan sits impatiently at a table, checking her watch, then the street, then her watch again.

EXT. L.A. FREEWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Greg is driving like a maniac through the traffic. When a car doesn't get out of the way, he shoots at it. The driver cowers and pulls over.

EXT. ANATOLIA PALACE RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

A car pulls up. Veronika and Jack get out. Veronika is wearing a head scarf. A valet takes the keys.

Susan nods to Jack. He is carrying two cameras round his neck, and a video camera on a tripod in his hand. Veronika and Susan smile at each other and kiss each other on the cheek.

SUSAN

Glad you could make it, Veronika.
Whoa! What happened to your face?

Susan notices a huge bruise on her left cheek.

VERONIKA

An accident. It's not important.
What's so urgent?

Jack sets up the video camera, and the little red light on the front starts recording.

SUSAN

Nothing to worry about, Veronika.
How's Alexandra?

Susan continues to check the street as they talk. Jack lays his still cameras on the table.

VERONIKA

She's doing well, thanks.

SUSAN

Talking yet?

VERONIKA

What?

SUSAN
Sorry, just kidding.

Veronika looks around, becoming suspicious.

VERONIKA
What's this all about?

Susan sees a limousine arrive in front, but slightly to the side of, the restaurant. It is on Veronika's blind side.

SUSAN
Of course, it's always great to see you, Veronika, but I guess you're wondering why I invited you here at such short notice. Well, we have a little surprise.

Veronika smiles nervously.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
You see, I was thinking back to when we first met.

Veronika nods.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
You were clearly upset by Walsh's behavior.

VERONIKA
Yes. He...

SUSAN
... he refused to recognize Alexandra as his own child.

VERONIKA
Not a gentleman.

SUSAN
Exactly! So, I was thinking, what would make Veronika happier than anything else in this world?

Veronika looks at her confused.

Susan nods to someone offscreen. Jack stands up with his cameras ready. He checks the video camera is getting everything.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Yes, Veronika, after much effort, the L.A. Post has delivered what no one else could. Here... is... Alexandra's father!

Veronika almost faints when she sees Bill Walsh walk to the table.

Jack's cameras CLICK away furiously.

WALSH

Miss Weaver.

Walsh kisses Susan on the cheek.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Miss Marsden, I presume.

He holds out his hand. Veronika weakly responds. Jack moves around rapidly to get the best angles.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Or should I say "Miss Maskhadova"?

Veronika is stunned.

VERONIKA

What? How...?

SUSAN

I have a brilliant... er, colleague, who finally managed to crack through the layers of your identity.

They all sit. Walsh's expression is benign.

WALSH

How is my daughter, Alexandra?
Do you have a picture?

Veronika looks around.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Yes, Miss Marsden. Let's stick with Marsden for the moment, shall we? Yes, Alexandra IS my baby. I know that now. DNA cannot lie.

VERONIKA

But...

WALSH

But we've never met?

Veronika recovers her composure.

VERONIKA

Of course, we met. The photo proves it.

WALSH

These days, with photoshop, that doesn't prove anything. But you're right, of course. We did meet briefly. Please excuse my forgetfulness.

(MORE)

WALSH (CONT'D)

You see, what has been worrying me is how I managed to get a woman pregnant from a handshake.

JACK

Veronika said you had sex in your hotel room.

WALSH

Sorry, you are?

JACK

Jack Foster,... Sir... er, Susie's photographer.

Walsh shakes Jack by the hand. He turns back to Veronika. His voice is friendly and calm, but firm.

WALSH

You see, Susan has now convinced me Alexandra *is* my baby.

Veronika looks at Susan. Susan flashes her a broad smile and nods.

EXT. L.A. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

The traffic has ground to a halt. Greg is getting impatient. He drives up onto the sidewalk, scattering pedestrians and newspaper vending machines.

EXT. ANATOLIA PALACE RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

SUSAN

See, Veronika. I told you we'd take care of things.

WALSH

And I intend to do what's right by my child...

Veronika looks surprised.

WALSH (CONT'D)

... while her mother is in jail for fraud... and probably a dozen other felonies besides.

Veronika panics. She tries to get away, but her exit is blocked.

VERONIKA

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

Walsh turns to Susan.

WALSH

Actually, I would like to hear this myself, so, if you'd be so kind.

SUSAN

Certainly, Sir. We ruled out sperm banks and cloning a long time ago, so, assuming you were telling the truth, there had to be another way they got the sperm to make the baby.

EXT. TAMPA ROAD -- NIGHT

Walsh's limousine that fateful night. We see the accident again, but from a different perspective. The van deliberately forces the car off the road. An ambulance is about 100 yards behind it.

SUSAN (V.O.)

That accident in Florida was no accident. They were in the van that ran you off the road, and Greg - one of her housemates - was following in a fake ambulance.

Greg and assistants bring Walsh and Jorge on stretchers to the ambulance. Greg works to stabilize the injured, giving them injections and cleaning wounds. An assistant opens Walsh's pants.

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

We know he was a doctor in Russia. We know he administered a lot of painkillers to you and Jorge.

Greg holds a large empty syringe.

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

Presumably these also would have numbed your, er, *private* area. Anyway, there is an IVF technique used for infertile couples called...

EXT. ANATOLIA PALACE RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

Susan flips open her notebook to the relevant page.

SUSAN

... called "Percutaneous epididymal sperm aspiration". Basically, the doctor inserts a syringe into the... Caput epididymis...

Jack looks puzzled.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Your balls, Jack. Just behind your balls.

Jack and Walsh wince.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
 ...and extracts... Sorry, this
 is quite a mouthful...

She blushes when she realizes what she's said.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
 (reading)
 ... he extracts "adequate amounts
 of epididymal fluid". Seeing as
 you are clearly fertile, there
 was no difficulty in extracting
 enough to be sure of fertilization.

JACK
 Awesome! They hoovered the sperm
 out of your balls. I hope that
 doesn't catch on!

WALSH
 I'll say. My whole body was in
 such a state after the accident,
 I never noticed anything more
 than a little local discomfort.
 And why worry about that when
 you're trussed up like an Egyptian
 mummy?

EXT. L.A. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Greg jumps a red light and is struck by a van. The VAN
 DRIVER SHOUTS at him. Greg jumps out, CURSING in Russian,
 and points his gun at the other driver. His bravado
 immediately evaporates, and he WHIMPERS, his hands in the
 air.

VAN DRIVER
 Sorry, man. My fault. I'll pay.

GREG
 Shut the fuck up. Get out. Leave
 the keys.

He SHOOTS in the air to make his point. That spurs the
 van driver into action. He tumbles out of the van.

Greg kicks him aside, climbs into the van, and ROARS off.

EXT. ANATOLIA PALACE RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

Veronika looks around for a means of escape. She rubs her
 bruised cheek nervously.

SUSAN
 Am I right, Veronika?

Susan sees her slowly trying to put her hand inside her
 handbag. She jumps forward and knocks the handbag onto
 the floor.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

No sudden moves, please, Veronika.
It's all over.

VERONIKA

For all of us. When they find
me, they'll kill me. And my baby.
And all of you as well.

SUSAN

Who, Veronika? Who?

VERONIKA

You gotta promise to take care of
my baby.

WALSH

Do the right thing, and we'll
make sure you're both safe.

VERONIKA

I'm as good as dead. The baby.
You gotta promise...

WALSH

We'll do whatever we can for both
of you. Now, what's going on?

The fight seems to go out of Veronika.

VERONIKA

You Americans. You think you're
so wonderful.

(sarcastically)

"The Greatest Country in the
World". But you're fools, you
know that? You meddle everywhere,
and you've got no idea what you're
doing. Vietnam. Iraq. You name
it. It's none of your business,
but you interfere anyway. When
we go to protect our own people
in Crimea, you try to break us
with sanctions.

WALSH

It was an illegal action.

VERONIKA

They are fellow Russians. That's
legitimate. What's your excuse
for Iraq?

JACK

What's this got to do with the
senator?

VERONIKA

You are so proud of your
"democracy", but it's just as
(MORE)

VERONIKA (CONT'D)
corrupt as Russia's. The
difference is, we all know it's
corrupt. You guys are blind.

SUSAN
What are you talking about?

VERONIKA
Your government is for sale - and
for what? Chicken shit. You
name it: gun control, farm
subsidies, defense spending - all
bought for campaign contributions
of less than a Toyota Prius.
Pathetic.

JACK
Why not do that then, instead of
going through all this palaver?

VERONIKA
We do. But foreign policy belongs
to the President. We got to have
the right guy, our guy, in the
White House.

SUSAN
Pullman?

VERONIKA
Yes. We wanted Pullman to win.
He's more reasonable. He's not
that interested in international
matters. He won't interfere.
Senator Walsh is a hawk. We want
an end to confrontation.

WALSH
You want us to give you free rein
to rebuild the Soviet Empire?

VERONIKA
What's it got to do with you?
That has always been our part of
the world - a bit like your Monroe
Doctrine, but with more
justification. There are 30m
Russians living there, outside
the motherland. They are our own
people. It's our duty to protect
them.

JACK
So you wanted the Senator to lose?
But why go to all that bother...?
If you wanted him to lose, why
not just assassinate him?

WALSH
Thank you!

VERONIKA
The Law of Unintended Consequences.
After Kennedy was shot...

SUSAN
You shot Kennedy!?!

VERONIKA
I never said that. But who would
have thought a civil rights ex-
teacher would escalate the Vietnam
war?

JACK
You could just fund his opponents.

VERONIKA
Too much uncertainty. That's why
we have a team of Chess Grand
Masters in the FSB who are
brilliant at this stuff...

JACK
FSB?

WALSH
KGB to you.

JACK
Ah.

VERONIKA
The best way to make sure Pullman
won, was to build up Walsh so
high that when he fell, the party
could not recover. Everyone knows
the hypocrisy of America when it
comes to sex. Disgrace is much
more predictable and containable.

EXT. BACK OF ANATOLIA PALACE RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

Greg brings the car to a sudden halt and leaps out. He runs into the back of the restaurant. He is so quick, he catches Walsh's agent unawares and pushes him hard against a wall, knocking him out.

EXT. ANATOLIA PALACE RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

WALSH
So much effort, just to stop me.
I should be flattered, I guess.

VERONIKA
Everything was worked out. Even
you.

SUSAN
Me?

VERONIKA

Yes. We studied hundreds of profiles, of young tabloid reporters, outside of DC and New York - less sophisticated, lower resources. You were supposed to run with the story and that was it. Why did you have to interfere?

SUSAN

My job.

VERONIKA

Well, your job will cost us all our lives. They can't leave loose ends now.

SUSAN

And you did all this... getting pregnant, having a baby... for your country?

VERONIKA

Yes - and for Oksana.

SUSAN

Your lover?

VERONIKA

You know about her? We wanted to start a family, so I volunteered. Walsh has good genes, from good stock, so why not! It looked...

Her attention is drawn away. Everyone turns to see what she is looking at. Greg is running towards them from inside the restaurant. He pushes aside waiters. Plates CRASH to the floor.

(Russian dialog is subtitled)

GREG

(in Russian)

Shut up, Veronika. Say nothing. They can't prove anything.

VERONIKA

(in Russian)

Go away, Gregor. Go away. It's over. They know. Run while you can.

Susan looks anxiously around.

SUSAN

(aside to Walsh)

Where the hell is Marty? He should be here with the police by now.

Greg stops in his tracks. He is now only a few yards from them. Jack picks up a camera.

Greg pulls out his gun.

GREG

Drop it!

JACK

Whoa! Easy there.

Jack slowly lowers the camera onto the table. Making sure it's pointing towards Greg, he presses the shutter release as he does so. The CLICK is audible. Greg looks very angry. He shoots the camera off the table.

GREG

You wanna be a hero and die for a photo, be my guest. Everybody. Hands on the table. Now! I want to see them.

He waves the gun at them. They do as he says.

VERONIKA

(in Russian)

Run, Gregor. They already know everything. I didn't tell them anything, I swear.

Greg points the gun at Veronika.

GREG

(in Russian)

You couldn't keep your stupid mouth shut, could you? I told them you'd go soft. You and your precious Yankee baby are dead.

Susan dives at Veronika to push her over as Greg pulls the trigger. The glass wind cheater SHATTERS.

Greg turns and fires again. A bullet grazes Walsh. Blood appears on his arm. He grabs the wound with his other hand, his face screwed up in agony.

Susan grabs Jack's other camera and throws it at Greg.

Jack instinctively tries to stop her.

JACK

No!

Jack makes sure the video camera is still filming.

The camera hits Greg in the face with a THUD. He drops the gun. Susan leaps up and knocks him to the ground while he is stunned.

Greg pushes her off into a nearby table. All the plates, cutlery and glasses fall on top of her.

Greg gets up and looks for the gun. As he bends to grab it, Susan smashes a tray over his head.

SUSAN

You asshole!

Greg drops to his knees. He rubs his head. Susan kicks him in the stomach. He doubles up.

Susan notices she is bleeding. She grabs a napkin from a table and dabs it.

Greg sees the gun again. As he grabs for it, Susan manages to kick it away.

Greg grabs Susan by the leg and forces her to the ground.

GREG

You interfering bitch. Why
couldn't you leave well alone?

He puts his hands around her throat and starts to strangle her. Her face goes beetroot.

Jack pounces on Greg from behind. He knocks Greg off Susan.

Susan COUGHS loudly as she tries to get her breath back. She rubs her throat.

Veronika moves stealthily to reclaim her handbag, then starts to sneak towards the exit.

Meanwhile, Jack and Greg are tumbling into tables. Table settings are flying in all directions. Eventually, Greg smashes Jack hard against a pillar and he is knocked out.

SUSAN

Jack!

Greg grabs a knife and lunges for Susan. She swerves to avoid him, but slips and falls to the ground, banging her head on the ground. She is momentarily stunned. Greg stands over her and raises the knife.

GREG

You stupid cow. So much planning
and preparation...

He starts to stab downwards when a SHOT rings out. Greg stops. From his expression, he has clearly been hit. He turns as he falls. He sees...

Veronika holding her gun.

VERONIKA

(in Russian)
You son of a bitch!

Greg falls to the ground.

VERONIKA (CONT'D)

(in Russian)
No one threatens my baby!

A dazed Susan slowly gets back onto her feet.

Police cars with WAILING sirens pull up in front of the restaurant. Veronika turns the gun on the others.

VERONIKA (CONT'D)

Do not try to stop me. I am not going to prison.

SUSAN

What about your baby?

VERONIKA

(tears in her eyes)

Take care of her. I can't...

A SHOT rings out. Susan looks around startled. Greg is holding a gun pointed at Veronika. She drops her gun, and collapses, first onto her knees, then the floor. Blood pours out of her.

A sadistic, satisfied grin crosses Greg's face. In great pain, he slowly turns the gun towards Susan. Instinctively, Susan grabs a knife and throws it at him. It strikes him in the throat. He collapses, dead.

WIDE ANGLE OF SCENE

Mayhem, overturned tables and debris. Unconscious Jack on one side; injured Walsh on another; Greg and Veronika lying dead on the floor; an exhausted Susan leans for support on a table.

SWAT police swarm over the scene. Susan puts her hands in the air.

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM -- EVENING

Press Conference. Although his right arm is in a sling, Walsh has recovered his poise and confidence once again. With him are Lydia Rodriguez, Fred Brown, and a police detective. The room is packed with press and TV journalists.

RODRIGUEZ

... and I am happy to tell you the Walsh/Rodriguez ticket is back on track.

There is strong APPLAUSE.

BROWN

If I may just interject here, Lydia. I want to make sure this point is absolutely clear: Miss Marsden confirmed she and Bill Walsh NEVER had a relationship. The pregnancy was the result of an involuntary medical intervention.

Walsh LAUGHS.

WALSH

Thank you, Fred. Ever the stickler
for detail!

PHILIPPE BARR

Philippe Barr, French TV. How
did she get the sperm?

WALSH

Long story, which you can read in
tomorrow's L.A. Post. Beware,
gentlemen - it'll bring tears to
your eyes!

INT. WALSH'S LIMO - LATER

Walsh and Brown are in the car. A messenger hands Walsh
an envelope, just before the car pulls away.

CLOSE UP on envelope. Susan's business card is stapled
to the corner.

"Extremely Private & Confidential

Senator Walsh's Eyes Only"

Inside the envelope are shredded pieces of paper, and a
small note.

"Oxford was a long time ago.

Susan"

INT. TV STUDIO -- EVENING

SIMON STONE, a news anchor, is interviewing Susan.

SIMON

That's amazing, Susan.
Congratulations. Story of the
year... the decade.

Susan looks genuinely taken aback.

SIMON (CONT'D)

What I don't get is what were the
Russians after?

SUSAN

They wanted America to stay out
of their business. They were
spooked by Senator Walsh's firm
stand against aggression, and his
push for democracy. They had to
make sure their fingerprints
weren't anywhere near this.

SIMON

So they invented a baby?

SUSAN

Exactly, Simon. That's the genius. Plausible deniability. They didn't leave anything to chance. They made sure he got a boost from the accident, then pulled the rug from underneath him when it was too late to recover.

The camera pulls back to reveal the interview on a television set. We are now in...

INT. SUSAN'S FATHER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Susan watches attentively from the couch. She still has some Band-Aids on, but she looks well. Jack is sitting next to her. Her laptop is on a table nearby.

SIMON (On TV)

One thing, though. Why didn't they just kill him?

Father comes in from the kitchen with three bottles of beer, and three glasses. He puts them on coasters on the table.

SUSAN (On TV)

This was much more subtle. Who thought it was anything other than a randy politician story? If they'd killed him, there might have been an unexpected and unpredictable backlash. Like after 9/11...

Father sits down in the armchair. He watches the TV with rapt attention.

SUSAN (On TV) (CONT'D)

They understood the American psyche oh so well... as you can see from the media feeding frenzy that erupted after the baby was born. Me included, I have to admit!

Jack picks up the remote and hits mute.

JACK

She did great, wouldn't you agree, Sir? And job offers from virtually every major media outlet on the planet!

FATHER

(nodding benignly)
Not so bad.

Susan smiles.

FATHER (CONT'D)

(haltingly)

Actually... that was rather ingenious of you, Susan, to solve that puzzle.

A tear in her eye, Susan gives her father a big hug. Father is a little taken aback, but hugs her back proudly.

Jack shakes his head uncomprehendingly.

JACK

Who'd have thought those pictures we took in the house would have rattled Greg so much?

SUSAN

Potential loose end. They were all in it. That's why they had to get them back through the break-ins.

JACK

All my fault - story of my life!

SUSAN

You're such a liability!

She leans forward and picks up a bottle and her glass. She is about to pour, then stops. She looks at Jack.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

What the Hell!

She puts down the glass and takes a swig from the bottle. She is not a natural at this! Jack gives her a thumbs up.

Susan looks at her father awkwardly. He shrugs and smiles. He considers following suit, but changes his mind.

Jack checks Susan's laptop screen.

JACK

You've got an email from Moscow... subject Gregor Karpov... Shall I?

SUSAN

Sure.

Jack opens the mail.

JACK

Complete biography, yadda yadda yadda. There's a picture attachment.

He clicks on the icon for the attachment. It opens and a picture of a middle-aged Russian doctor appears.

SUSAN
But... that's not...

They look at each other quizzically.

JACK
Then, who was...?

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON DC -- MORNING

AERIAL SHOT OF THE MALL

It is the Inauguration of President Walsh. A cold January day. Snow on the ground. Everyone is dressed warm. Walsh is standing with his right arm raised, taking the oath in front of the Chief Justice. Jane is standing at his side. She looks proud. Nearby is Lydia Rodriguez.

The camera pans the stage holding the dignitaries. Susan and Jack are visible at the back of the pack. We see the Walsh boys in a more prominent position, very smart in suits, and clearly proud of their father. The camera lingers a moment. Then we see their sister, Elizabeth... holding baby Alexandra.

FADE OUT: