

FLARSKY

by

Dan Sterling

Contact:
Julien Thuan, Matt Rice
United Talent Agency
(310) 273 6700

OVER BLACK:

DOCUMENTARIAN (V.O.)
What are your feelings about
Secretary Field?

We open on INTERVIEW SUBJECT #1, direct to camera:

MIDWESTERN MOM
Well, normally I find women with
that much power to be a little,
you know...
(whispering)
Bitchy. But she's so graceful,
and smart, and kind. She's been
such an inspiration to my
daughters.
(welling up)
... She gives me *hope*.

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INTERVIEW SUBJECT #2:

FRAT GUY
To be honest, I'd like to fuck her
until her eyeballs pop out.
(then)
But that's based on looks *and*
personality.

*

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE: OSAMA BIN LADEN speaks from a cave:

OSAMA BIN LADEN
(with SUBTITLES)
*In forty years, we have not
witnessed an American figure with
genuine understanding of Middle
Eastern and Arab issues.*
(then)
*With the possible exception of
Charlotte Field.*

OPENING CREDITS:

Quick cuts to illustrate the staggeringly complex
operation of moving our Secretary of State from her
office in Washington to mid-town Manhattan: Snipers on
rooftops. Men in suits, earpieces and sunglasses.
Armored vehicles, ambulances, counter assault SUV's.
Motorcycle cops. Helicopters, decoy helicopters.

EXT. CBS NEWS BUILDING - DAY

A MOTORCADE pulls up to the building. Behind barricades,
a crowd of ONLOOKERS spasms with excitement.

*

CHARLOTTE FIELD steps out of the limo. Late 30's, gorgeous, elegant. The crowd ERUPTS with cheers. She smiles and waves, but one can look closer and see discomfort. SECURITY whisks her into the building.

*
*
*

VIDEO: ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE of Charlotte.

KATIE COURIC (V.O.)

Not yet forty, Charlotte Field has been a Rhodes scholar, a Pulitzer winner, and as Secretary of State, stands fourth in the presidential chain of succession. She and her husband Kent Field, the rakish junior senator from Rhode Island, reign as the world's ultimate glamour-power couple.

INT. NEWS STUDIO - DAY

Couric sits with Charlotte.

KATIE COURIC

Madame Secretary, how does it feel to be the most popular government official in the world?

CHARLOTTE

(laughs)

Like you're engaging in hyperbole.

KATIE COURIC

I'm quoting a study by the Gallup organization released today.

*

CHARLOTTE

Seriously?

Katie shows her the document.

*

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Oh.

(flummoxed)

Well... I - of course it's nice. But I'm concerned that some of this current, you know, frenzy about me, might be more about our culture's passion for *celebrity*, rather than for the specific work of the State Department.

KATIE COURIC

But your popularity *is* a political consideration.

(MORE)

KATIE COURIC (CONT'D)

With President Chambers so widely viewed at home and abroad as tone-deaf, he seems to rely on the respect you command. He's been sending you in his place to the highest level meetings around the world. Are you carrying too much of his burden?

CHARLOTTE

Not all. I think...

(signals a time out)

I'm sorry, can we pause for just a minute?

(then)

Katie, I'm feeling... what's the opposite of "attacked"?

"Fellated", I suppose? Yes, it feels like you're fellating me.

KATIE COURIC

Oh god, Madame Secretary, I am so--

CHARLOTTE

It's okay, it's just - are you planning to *challenge* me at all?

*

KATIE COURIC

Absolutely. If you're pressed for time we can get right to it.

*

*

CHARLOTTE

Let's.

*

*

Both women resume formal interview posture.

KATIE COURIC

In the past week, you've met with military leaders in China, Israel, and South Korea.

CHARLOTTE

Yes, that's correct.

*

KATIE COURIC

But despite that inhuman travel schedule, your hair looks consistently gorgeous. Be candid: are you flying with a personal stylist?

Off Charlotte's sadness, we go to

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INT. TIKI TORCH LOUNGE - DAY

A grimy dive bar somewhere in the south-eastern-ish no man's land of Los Angeles.

FRED FLARKSY, mid 30's, slovenly, bearded, drinks alone at the bar. He's DRUNK.

At the other end of the bar, are several MEATHEADS. They're huge, tattooed, drinking beer, eating lunches procured at 7-11, and TALKING ANNOYINGLY LOUD.

MEATHEAD #1

Can you believe that shit?
Fucking guy was coming *onto* me.
There's faggots everywhere now.

*
*

Fred tries to ignore these irritating guys.

FRED

(to bartender, re:
shot glass)
Let's go again.

BARTENDER

That's number *five*. It's not even one pm.

MEATHEAD #1

They run the fucking media.
Forget the Jews, it's the fucking *queers*.

*

FRED

I lost my job today.

BARTENDER

You mind if I go ahead and express no surprise at all?

FRED

You run a bar that opens at nine AM. What kind of people were you hoping to meet?

*

MEATHEAD #1

If our own military doesn't have the balls to keep faggots off the battlefield, we got no chance. The sand niggers are crazy fucks, but they don't put up with that gay shit for a minute.

Fred's heard enough. He walks over to the meatheads.

*

FRED

Hi, guys.

The meatheads look at Fred incredulously.

FRED (CONT'D)

I couldn't help overhearing your trenchant commentary on America's geopolitical conundrums. I thought I'd lend a counterpoint, and say that maybe your objection to gays in the military stems from the fear that if homosexuality were fully legitimized in America, you'd launch into such a ferocious cock-sucking binge it would knock your spinal cord out of alignment.

*

MEATHEAD #1

Holy shit, dude. Are you suicidal?

*

FRED

I don't know. Why don't you suck my balls and find out?

MEATHEAD #1

Wait... What??

*

FRED

(shrugs)
I don't know.

MEATHEAD #2

Come on, fuck this guy!

The meatheads start POUNDING Fred. He tries to fight back, but meathead #2 pours WING SAUCE in Fred's eyes, blinding him. Meathead #1 jams a taquito into Fred's throat, causing him to GASP for air. Meathead #2 stuffs his Asian dragon wings into Fred's open gullet, causing him to GAG AND CHOKE. A final frenzy of body kicks to Fred, and it's over. As Fred lies in a heap, the meatheads exit the bar. Fred pulls out a bottle of prescription VICODIN.

*
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*
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*
*

FRED

Joke's on you fuckers! I can't even feel anything!

Fred POURS THE PILLS into his mouth, crunches them, then rests his head back on the filthy bar floor.

*

INT. THE LOS ANGELES ADVOCATE BUILDING - DAY

The shabby offices of an alternative newspaper in
LIQUIDATION. Employees pack their cubicles.

Fred, sporting a GRUESOME BLACK EYE, carries his box of
personal effects, about to leave. *

FRED
(to CO-WORKER)
We had a good run, eh?

MAX
We didn't have any readers.

FRED
No, I know, it's... just something
to say when you walk out a door
for the last time.

MAX
As a journalist, why not bid
farewell by saying something *true*?

Fred considers this, then offers:

FRED
When I was 16 I hired a
prostitute, but the
antidepressants I was taking to
cope with my mother's death made
it impossible to get an erection. *

SHELLY, the receptionist, joins them. *

SHELLY
Alistair Wembley's office called -
he'd like to meet with you.

FRED
I don't follow.

SHELLY
Mr. Wembley would like to see you.

FRED
Alistair Wembley.
(off her nod)
He knows who I am?

SHELLY
Evidently.

FRED

Well... I guess he can't hurt me
at this point - he's already
liquidated the paper. And the
rest of the print journalism
industry. We're all as fucked as
we can be.

Shelly starts to SOB. Fred instantly regrets this.

MAX

Dude, why? She's got three kids.

EXT. WEMBLEY MEDIA BUILDING - DAY

A menacing tower of glass slices the LA skyline.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Fred watches the Wembley Media News network on the MINI
VIDEO DISPLAY. *

ON SCREEN: the gleaming WMN LOGO *

STENTORIAN ANNOUNCER *

*Wembley Media News: this is your
world.* *

A NEWS-ORIENTED TALK SHOW: *

WMN ANCHOR

*Joining me is author Maryann
Johannsen. Her new book
highlights the astounding
childhood similarities between
President Chambers and Adolf
Hitler.*

(to his guest)

*Maryann, how was young Clark
Chambers like young Hitler?*

MARYANN JOHANNSEN

*As teenagers, they both seemed to
be in search of a place to belong.*

Fred watches this in quiet amazement.

INT. ALISTAIR WEMBLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

The imposing, sleek office of the world's ultimate
international media mogul. Fred sits across the desk
from ALISTAIR WEMBLEY, 70, a generally glowering Brit,
who at the moment takes a congenial affect. *

WEMBLEY *
Fred Flarksy. How are things? *

FRED *
They're a bit confusing - you seem *
to know who I *am*. *

WEMBLEY *
What's confusing in that? *

FRED *
You own about 30 percent of the *
world's media outlets, and I wrote *
for a paper financed by the used *
futon market. *

WEMBLEY *
There's no writer who's devoted *
more inches to attacking me.

FRED *
Oh. That. Well, it's true - I do *
believe you're completely evil. *
But right now all I can think is *
how nice it is to meet someone who
actually read my column.

WEMBLEY
Sadly, I'm one of the few who
still loves newspapers.

FRED
You... love newspapers?

WEMBLEY
Does that surprise you?

FRED
Kinda. Since you keep, you know,
buying them up and then destroying
them. *

Wembley laughs. *

WEMBLEY *
Another day, we'll review the P&L *
sheets and see if that's true. In *
the mean time, how would you like *
to stay on the payroll here a bit *
longer? *
(off Fred's *
incredulity) *
I'd like your consultation on my *
speech to the National Association *
of Broadcast Journalists.
(MORE)

WEMBLEY (CONT'D)

It's an audience of my harshest critics, and I intend to answer them.

FRED

Of what exactly do you want to persuade them?

WEMBLEY

That Wembley Media News is legitimate and unbiased.

FRED

Is this by any chance an audience of blind and deaf journalists?

WEMBLEY

Come on, Flarsky. You're an opinion columnist. You guys switch sides all the time. And you're an excellent writer. Your attacks have almost made me hate myself, and that takes talent. To have your abilities working *for me*—
(with meaning)
—that would be worth quite a bit.

*
*
*

Fred starts to see this guy is serious.

EXT. MALIBU RANCH - DAY

Fred and his best friend, LANCE BELL, 30's, handsome, intense, hike in the unspoiled mountains of Malibu.

*

LANCE

I never had a passion for software. But when you get listed in the Fortune 400, you don't just walk away.

FRED

It's a certain kind of predicament.

LANCE

I mean *look* at all this.

*

Lance gestures to the hundreds of acres of nature.

LANCE (CONT'D)

It's all mine, and I'm not even 35. Where's the *challenge*? It's sure as hell not in my personal life. Franci and I are so in love, we're disgusting.

*

FRED
Maybe you'll develop a
neurological disease?

*
*

Lance ponders, then stops and turns to Fred:

*

LANCE
Listen, buddy, I love you. And I
know you're in a rough time. When
we get back to the house, I'm
going to write you a check for 100
thousand dollars. As a gift.

*
*
*
*
*

Fred opens his mouth to yell at Lance, but then takes a
moment really review this offer in his head. Finally:

FRED
Yeah, we can't do that. But
thanks for the offer.

*

LANCE
Why not?

FRED
Because that's... that's not *life*.
I didn't do anything to earn it.

LANCE
Do you think I earned my fortune?

FRED
No, but that's the universe's
crime, not yours.

INT. LANCE'S PICKUP TRUCK - LATER

*

Lance and Fred ride across the ranch.

*

FRED
I'm gonna take Wembley's offer.
It won't have my name on it, and
it'll keep a roof over my head for
another couple of months.

*
*
*
*
*

LANCE
Fine. But if you won't let me
help you change your life, then
you owe it to me - and yourself-
to change it on your own.

*

*

FRED
And how might I accomplish that?

LANCE

Simple: see something you want and go get it. Girl, job, whatever.

FRED

Just "go get it."

LANCE

That's the awesome thing about life. Anyone can have anything they want.

Fred takes a moment to process this astounding idiocy.

FRED

I don't think that's really true, Lance. I think for most people on the planet, life is a struggle.

LANCE

Maybe some make it that way, but I think people mostly get what they want. I always have.

*

FRED

Do you understand the difference between you and everybody else?

LANCE

No.

FRED

You're tall and athletic. You have perfect teeth. Your body is ridiculous. As a result, you've been having sex with beautiful women since age thirteen. As a result of *that*, you are wildly confident, which has led to even more sex. All of which has a cumulative effect on your health, which causes you to become even better-looking with age. You exist in an a perpetual feedback loop of being profoundly attractive and enjoying life's greatest pleasures. And somehow, on top of all of that, you were blessed with a freakish genius for writing code.

*

Lance considers this, then:

*

LANCE

No. That's all bullshit.

*

*

Off Fred's exasperation, we go to

*

INT. LANCE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A spectacular modern home with genuine warmth. FRANCI,
Lance's INSANELY HOT WIFE, serves them iced tea.

*

*

FRED

Thanks, Franci.

FRANCI

No problem - I made a pitcher for
myself after tennis this morning.

(kisses Lance)

I'm gonna go get some work done on
the Botwin case.

Franci exits. Fred gives Lance a "Really?" look.

*

LANCE

What I've got isn't because of my
looks. I have a winning attitude.

FRED

I know. And it's putting a strain
on our friendship. As we get
older, you're becoming more
positive. I don't feel free to
hate things in front of you. I
don't know if we're gonna make it.

*

Lance is distracted by what's on TV: the KATIE COURIC
INTERVIEW WITH CHARLOTTE FIELD.

*

LANCE

There you go. How about that?

*

Fred looks at Lance.

FRED

What are you talking about?

LANCE

Do you want her?

FRED

That's Charlotte Field.

LANCE

Do. You. Want. Her?

FRED

Everybody wants her.

LANCE

But not everybody deserves her.

FRED

Lance, come on--

LANCE

You kissed her didn't you?

FRED

Yes. *I* kissed *her*. Not the other way around. She was my baby-sitter.

LANCE

There's a decent chance she went home and touched herself while thinking about you.

FRED

She was 15 and I was 11!

*

LANCE

Show me how it happened.

FRED

It was over 20 years ago. I don't remember exactly how it went.

*

LANCE

Yeah, right. Come on, I'll be Charlotte.

Fred sighs, and reluctantly indulges.

FRED

There was really nothing to it.
(scooches next to
Lance)

We were watching TV on the couch.
I spent 45 minutes screwing up my
courage, and then I finally just
turned...

(turns)
leaned in...

(leans in)
And I kissed her on the mouth.

LANCE

And then?

FRED

And then... she said my name.

LANCE

With what inflection?

FRED
A mixture of kindness, pity, and
scolding.

*

Lance thinks hard for several moments.

LANCE
Are you sure you're telling me
everything?

Fred looks away, his conscience clearly bothering him.

LANCE (CONT'D)
I don't want secrets in this
relationship.

FRED
I... I think my hand might've
grazed across her breast.

LANCE
You were gonna leave that out?!
Christ, Fred. Did you squeeze
the breast?

FRED
Stop it! It was nothing.

LANCE
No! I need to see. Show me.

Fred, in disbelief that he's actually indulging this,
GENTLY SWEEPS HIS HAND across Lance's left breast.

LANCE (CONT'D)
Okay. Do you know what I'm going
to ask you next?

FRED
Yes, Lance. I do.

LANCE
And?

FRED
It's possible there was a
slight... protrusion.

LANCE
Her nipple was erect. Jesus
Christ.

FRED
It was 20 years ago! I could
easily have embellished the
memory.

*

LANCE

No. Memories like that are engraved. Her nipple was erect. The physiological response *proves* beyond a doubt that to Charlotte Field, the touch of Fred Flarsky is a legitimate sexual stimulus.

FRED

Fine. I'll make that buy. I'll even buy that an ordinary woman might still remember me. But she's not ordinary. She's got a Pulitzer. She speaks fluent Urdu. She practically runs the earth. Which is arguably the most important planet in the solar system.

LANCE

You're a nice guy, you're really smart, and you're interesting.

FRED

She's *married*.

LANCE

That guy seems like an asshole.

Fred looks around this amazing house, and then:

FRED

It's hard to believe someone so out of touch with reality made a hundred million dollars.

LANCE

But I did. Call her.

INT. WEMBLEY MEDIA BUILDING - DAY

Fred, now ensconced in a sleek private corporate office, bangs away at Wembley's speech. He becomes distracted by a FRENZIED TALK SHOW HOST on the WMN studio feed monitor:

WMN HOST

At long last, is there any difference between America in 2012... and The Third Reich?

Exasperated, Fred shuts off the TV. He becomes forlorn. After moments of hesitation, he resolves: he Googles "State Department," then dials a number on SPEAKERPHONE.

*

D.O.S. OPERATOR (V.O.)
 Department of State, operator 13,
 how may I help you?

FRED
 Yes, I'm just wondering, if I
 wanted to get a personal message
 to the Secretary of State holy
 shit I'm hearing how that sounds
 good-bye.

*

Fred hangs up and drops his head onto his desk.

INT. GEORGETOWN MANSION - NIGHT

A formal dinner honoring SENATOR LEONARD FINCH, 95,
 incredibly frail. Finch sits on the DAIS, as a
 WASHINGTON INSIDER makes good-natured jabs at a podium.

WASHINGTON INSIDER #1
 Leonard Finch stands among the
 great senators in American
 history. But it takes an act of
 congress to get him to pick up a
 check.

As the audience laughs and the speech drags on, we join
 CHARLOTTE and her husband, SENATOR KENT FIELD at their
 table, in a hushed conversation:

*

KENT
 (re: Finch)
 Look at him. You can see his
 Alzheimer's from space.

CHARLOTTE
 Honey, can you not say that while
 we're at a dinner honoring him?

KENT
 He's got Senate Finance paralyzed.
 I can't chair a subcommittee until
 he dies.

CHARLOTTE
 You're young. You'll be fine.
 Have you read the draft of my
 Riyadh talk yet?

*

KENT
 I haven't had a chance.

*

CHARLOTTE
 I always find time to read your
 legislation.

*

KENT

Charlotte, I've been busy - I've got an important job.

She stares at Kent.

CHARLOTTE

Don't you think my job's kind of important? The counterassault team on our roof doesn't impress you?

KENT

It's a ceremonial position. You run errands for the President. In a sense, you're *literally* a secretary.

CHARLOTTE

Fuck you.

KENT

Come on. You're doing great. Keep your nose clean for the next two years and the White House is a lock. *Then* you'll have a big job.

*

CHARLOTTE

I don't know if I'm built for electoral politics.

*

KENT

Speaking of what you're built for, do you think we'll be having sex at any point this year? It's getting ridiculous.

*

WASHINGTON INSIDER #1

And now it's my distinct honor to introduce Senator Leonard Finch!

Finch rises with agonizing slowness, and swatting away THOSE WHO TRY TO HELP, begins a seemingly eternal voyage to the podium. Tiny steps, long pauses. He WOBBLES and nearly falls, eliciting audience GASPS.

*

KENT is losing his mind with impatience watching this.

KENT

(under his breath)
Come on!

At last, the Senator reaches the stand. He opens his mouth, and after a long moment, expels the word:

SENATOR FINCH

... I...

The audience waits for more.

SENATOR FINCH (CONT'D)

... would... like... to thank...

KENT

(a little too loud)

Jesus Christ, you've gotta be kidding me.

Charlotte gives Kent a light SMACK.

Finch's mouth remains open, everyone holds their breath in anticipation of the next word... He CRUMPLES to the floor in a manner that is unmistakably DEATH. *

Kent reflexively springs out of his seat:

KENT (CONT'D)

YEEEEESS!

Others look to Kent in shock. Kent is shocked himself. And suddenly aware of C-SPAN CAMERAS pointed at him.

INT. LANCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Franci's preparing diner. Lance and Fred watch CNN:

ANCHOR (V.O.)

*Here it is now in slow-motion:
Senator Field rises from his
chair... and the fist-pump.*

Fred and Lance hop up and join Franci in the kitchen.

LANCE

I told you that guy was an asshole. There's no way she could be happy in that situation.

FRED

I grant you that.

LANCE

She's in town next week. She's speaking at USC.

FRANCI

Honey, you know I love your optimism, but she might actually be out of Fred's league. *

FRED
 (missing the insult)
 Exactly! Thank you, Franci.

LANCE
 What "league" are you talking
 about? We're all human beings in
 need of love.

FRANCI
 Well, you know - looks, money,
 prestige, power...

LANCE
 Are you with me for my looks,
 money, prestige and power?

FRANCI
 No. I guess you're right.
 (to Fred)
 Fred, there's no reason for you
 not to pursue courting the married
 United States Secretary of State.

LANCE
 (points to the TV)
 Hey!

LIVE PRESS CONFERENCE with Charlotte.

REPORTER (O.S.)
*Madame Secretary, can you comment
 on your husband's outburst at the
 Leonard Finch banquet?*

CHARLOTTE
*I can tell you that he's deeply
 regretful, and that the Finch
 family has accepted his personal
 apology. Leonard Finch was a
 great public servant, and his
 death is a profound loss for
 America.*
 (pointing)
 Go ahead.

REPORTER #2 (O.S.)
*Given Mr. Field's disgraceful
 behavior, and how strongly
 Americans associate the two of
 you, does integrity dictate that
 you both resign?*

Charlotte's gaze turns icy.

CHARLOTTE
You're from WMN, right?

REPORTER #2 (O.S.)
Yes, ma'am.

CHARLOTTE
Well, I appreciate the irony in being asked by you folks about integrity, so I'll offer this deal: I'll agree to resign if Alistair Wembley does. I'd make that sacrifice for America.

LAUGHTER from the press corps.

LANCE
Man, she really is awesome.

Ashamed and lovesick, Fred sags.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER, AUDITORIUM - DAY

The National Association of Broadcast Journalists convention. Attendees file into the auditorium.

INT. GREEN ROOM - SAME

Fred and several WEMBLEY AIDES flank the media titan as he makes a final skim through his speech.

WEMBLEY
Good job on this, Flarsky. It's a solid start on addressing my public perception issues.
 (then)
Should we add something to address that jibe from Charlotte Field?

*
 *
 *
 *

Fred is startled by the mention.

FRED
I wouldn't advise it. There's no percentage in hitting back at her. She's too well-liked.

WEMBLEY
Mmm. For the moment, anyway.
 (then, to his aides)
We'll sink that bitch this year, though. That's company policy.

The aides quickly JOT that down in their NOTEBOOKS.

WEMBLEY (CONT'D)

She calls me an enemy of free speech, then bullies all of central Europe into dropping my signals. The hypocrisy is staggering.

*

The aides MURMUR in agreement.

WEMBLEY (CONT'D)

Flarksy, if you can reconcile it with your deranged sense of morality, there's more work for you at WMN.

FRED

(getting up)

I'm going to find the men's room.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER, BACKSTAGE - DAY

Fred wanders in search of the men's room.

VOICE (O.C.)

Any final changes, Mr. Flarsky?

Fred turns to see the TELEPROMPTER OPERATOR.

FRED

Oh, I'm just looking for the men's room.

TELEPROMPTER OPERATOR

Down the hall to the right. Any changes on Mr. Wembley's speech?

Fred stares blankly. He's doing mental computation.

TELEPROMPTER OPERATOR (CONT'D)

Sir?

FRED

Actually, yeah, just a few small things...

INT. CONVENTION CENTER, AUDITORIUM - DAY

HOST

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Alistair Wembley!

Wembley takes the podium as the crowd politely APPLAUDS.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER, GREEN ROOM - DAY

Fred and Wembley's aides watch the speech on the monitor.

WEMBLEY

Good afternoon, and thanks to the
NABJ board for the invitation.
You know me as a man involved in
many enterprises. But the
business closest to my heart is
the news. I began my career at
age 10, delivering the paper to my
neighborhood on a black, chainless
Pierce bicycle. After 40 years of
working in news, I've come to own
a company that manufactures it.

*
*
*

*
*
*

Wembley stops, a bit confused. A few UNCOMFORTABLE
MURMURS in the audience.

*

Wembley's aides look to each other with concern.

WEMBLEY (CONT'D)

I beg your pardon. We don't
"manufacture" news. I intended to
say "reports." We report news.

Fred quickly stifles a smile.

WEMBLEY (CONT'D)

We're in the noble business of
conveying truth. Of course,
philosophers have long debated the
meaning of "truth." But
ultimately, truth is simple.
Truth is whatever we can make
people believe.

*

Upon the audience LAUGHTER, Wembley realizes what he's
just said.

WEMBLEY AIDE #1

What the FUCK is going on?

*

Fred doesn't move. He's got a good poker face on, and
the slightest shift could break it.

WEMBLEY

My friends, I'm compelled to
reveal my use of a machine known
as a Teleprompter. The operator
of which apparently holds stock in
my competitors.

*

*

The audience LAUGHS, rewarding his poise under pressure.

WEMBLEY (CONT'D)

Now then. When reporting a story,
our producers are bound by company
policy to ensure that it advances
the agenda of the Republican
Party.

The audience ERUPTS with a mix of horror and laughter.

The aides SCREAM in outrage. Fred quietly slips out. *

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - CORRIDOR - LATER

Fred scrambles to find his way out of the building when
he runs SMACK into Wembley and his coterie. *

FRED *

Oh. Hey. So... How did it go? *

WEMBLEY

What were you thinking, Flarksy?

FRED

Well... For one thing, I didn't
care for your ungentlemanly tone
about Charlotte Field. *

Wembley and his AIDE, CONNOR, exchange confused looks.

CONNOR *

What's she to you?

FRED *

I just think it was uncalled for. *

WEMBLEY *

I know you're aware of my
vindictive streak - you've written
about it. Of course, to be as
destructive to you as you are to
yourself will be a challenge. But
we'll find something that
satisfies. Best of luck. *

As Wembley and his retinue march off, Fred calls out: *

FRED *

Okay, but I think my severance
package should be off limits! *

INT. POLO LOUNGE - NIGHT

Fred and Lance are smartly dressed for this upscale
establishment. *

LANCE

You know I admire the shit out of you?

*
*

FRED

For my great looks or my legendary accomplishments?

LANCE

For your soul. You are so goddamned principled, it makes me wanna cry.

*

FRED

You're an adorable drunk.

LANCE

You're a hero. I mean, I don't regret what I've done with my life, but I want to know what it feels like to be *righteous*.

*

Fred LAUGHS hard.

FRED

I know you're feeling rudderless, but please god do not hitch your wagon to my star.

LANCE

I'm not rudderless anymore. I know what I want.

FRED

Really. And what is that?

*

Lance looks him the eye with profound earnestness:

*

LANCE

I want to be governor of California.

*

Fred laughs so hard he starts CHOKING on his beer.

*

LANCE (CONT'D)

You know I could do it.

FRED

State politics? What if you actually win? Is your life *too* good now? Too free of existential despair?

*

LANCE

I dream big. And so should you.

FRED

Oh no. You're not still on this--

LANCE

She's attending a fund raiser
after the U.S.C. talk. She'll be
there in about an hour. *

FRED

No. *

LANCE

Just say hello, you never know
what'll happen. I spent ten grand
on the tickets. *

FRED

Lance, you're *hurting* me with
this. I saw her on TV today and
actually got depressed. I can't
provide a comfortable life for
moth larva, and I'm *pained* that
Charlotte Field's not my wife.
I'm done with this game. *

Fred ups and leaves.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Lance runs out after Fred.

LANCE

What are you gonna do instead? Go
home, pop a Vicodin and jack off?

Fred ignores him. A BLACK SEDAN pulls up.

LANCE (CONT'D) *

You don't regret the things you do
in life, you regret the things you
don't. *

FRED

Mr. Miyagi, please go fuck
yourself. Vigorously.

Lance lunges at Fred, and yanks his arms behind his back,
PUTTING HIM IN A HOLD.

FRED (CONT'D)

Let go!

LANCE

No!

While keeping Fred in the hold, Lance uses his other hand to UNZIP HIS OWN FLY.

FRED

Oh my god what are you doing?

*

Lance, reaches into Fred's sport coat, pulls out the VICODIN BOTTLE, pops it open and dumps the pills.

*

FRED (CONT'D)

Oh come on!

Lance, still keeping Fred in the hold, pivots to the side, pulls out his dick and starts PISSING on the pile of Vicodin pills.

FRED (CONT'D)

You motherfucker!!!

Lance then UNBUCKLES FRED'S PANTS, and pulls them down.

FRED (CONT'D)

What the fuck?!

Lance lets go of Fred. Fred STOOPS to pull up his own pants, giving Lance the opportunity to SHOVE HIM INTO THE BACK SEAT OF THE OPEN SEDAN and shut the door.

INT. CAR - LATER

Fred and Lance sit quietly, and stare ahead. They just need to collect themselves... Finally:

FRED

What was that? Did you study with some... Israeli buzz-killing unit?

*

*

Lance shrugs.

FRED (CONT'D)

Look, I'll do it, but I'm scared, okay? I'm aware of your concerns about my self-medicating, but I just cannot walk into that place without something. It won't go well.

*

LANCE

I agree.

(then)

Shit. I probably shouldn't have doused your whole stash.

FRED
 (pulls out a bottle)
 It's alright, I've got Xanax.

LANCE
 You're quite the Boy Scout. Just
 keep it to a quarter pill, okay?

FRED
 Sure. Wouldn't wanna lose control
 and wind up urinating in public or
 anything.

Fred breaks a pill and eats it.

INT. BEVERLY HILLS MANSION - NIGHT

Hundreds of gorgeous people in elegant attire. MEN IN
 SUITS AND EARPIECES lurk. Fred and Lance, drinks in
 hand, observe the spectacle from a corner.

LANCE
 She hasn't arrived yet.

FRED
 How can you tell?

LANCE
 Energy's too relaxed.

FRED
 Maybe this crowd isn't easily star
 struck.

LANCE
 Everyone's star struck by her.

The energy in the room starts to change. An ENTOURAGE
 makes its way through the room. Inside it, we can see
 enough slivers of a woman to positively identify as
 CHARLOTTE.

LANCE (CONT'D)
 (giddy)
 That's her.

FRED
 Great.

A good view of Charlotte opens up, and Fred gets a look.
 STUNNING. Fred struggles to keep his balance.

LANCE
 Jesus. She's gorgeous. Look at
 that smile. I can't even deal--

Fred pulls out the Xanax and POPS THREE MORE. *

LANCE (CONT'D)
What the fuck are you doing?

FRED
What the fuck are you doing?

Lance considers, and realizes.

LANCE
Right. Sorry. That wasn't helpful. *
(then)
But we gotta get you in front of her now.
(re: the pills)
You just lit your own fuse.

Lance forges toward Charlotte. Fred follows. As they approach, they contend with dozens of others moving into Charlotte's gravitational pull. At last, Fred decisively STOPS FOLLOWING. He just can't be another suckup in this pathetic sea of ass-kissers. Fred stares at Charlotte from a safe distance, studying this creature who's reached mythological status in his life. But as she turns to greet an admirer, *

CHARLOTTE AND FRED LOCK EYES.

Charlotte takes a strange expression - somewhere between recognition and confusion, tinged with *alarm* - Fred *does* have a gruesome black eye. In a flash, the moment is gone, and she's engaged in a new conversation. *

Fred's got his answer. *

He heads toward GRAND STAIRCASE leading to the BALCONY. *

BACK TO CHARLOTTE

She excuses herself from conversation, turns to an AIDE, and whispers in her ear. The aide nods and steps away. *

ON THE BALCONY

Lance and Fred have their postmortem. *

FRED
Can we be done with this now? *

LANCE
If that's what you want, I respect it. *

FRED

Thanks.

LANCE

At least she saw you.

(sighs)

I'm sorry if I pushed too hard on this. I've just always had this intuition there was something special with you two. But you're right - it was a long time ago, and... maybe she has become a bit... unobtainable.

*

Fred's knees suddenly BUCKLE.

*

LANCE (CONT'D)

And that would be the four Xanax.
Let's get you home.

Lance notices a MAN WITH AN EARPIECE headed swiftly toward them. Another comes from the opposite direction.

*

*

LANCE (CONT'D)

Hey, you gotta keep it together.

*

AGENT FORESTER

(to Fred)

Sir?

*

FRED

Me?

AGENT FORESTER

Secretary Field would like to speak with you.

FRED

Huh?

*

AGENT FORESTER

If you can stay with us for just a moment...

(into his wrist mic)

With him now, delta sector.

*

Lance spots Charlotte and company HEADING UP THE STAIRCASE.

LANCE

Here we go, buddy.

Fred sees Charlotte coming toward him. He subtly STEADIES HIMSELF ON LANCE to keep from tipping.

*

CHARLOTTE

Hi! I'm Charlotte. I'm so sorry - I hope I'm not holding you up. I saw you downstairs, and I thought, "That man looks so familiar!" But then I thought, well I *am* standing in a room packed with celebrities. I mean, have you seen who's down there? It's ridiculous. I asked if anyone knew who you were and no one did, and I thought, *but why does he seem...* Oh for god's sake. Do we know each other?

FRED

I'm a point guard for the Washington Wizards, have I seen you in the stands?

CHARLOTTE

(laughs)
That would explain their record this season. But they're in Michigan tonight, so I'm disinclined to believe you.

FRED

Okay. Imagine me without the beard, 30 pounds thinner, and with a regular left eye.

CHARLOTTE

You do understand I'm a busy person, right?

Lance beams. This almost looks like flirting!

FRED

(shows a picture from his wallet)
Do you recognize him?

It's FRED WHEN HE WAS ABOUT 10.

CHARLOTTE

Oh my god... Oh my god, that's you... Of course! You're...
(conjuring the name)
Freddie Flarsky!

FRED

Hi.

Charlotte WRAPS HER ARMS AROUND FRED. Lance spasms.

CHARLOTTE

I should have recognized you from that self-deprecating humor.

(to her aides)

He lived next door until my father was posted in Moscow. I *babysat* him!

(back to Fred)

This is such a treat!

(then)

I was so fond of you. You were such a brilliant, funny little boy. I'm sure you've done amazing things with your life.

*
*

Fred is moved.

FRED

Thanks, I was fond of you too.

CHARLOTTE

And I don't know what to do now, since to properly catch up would take more time than I have.

*

FRED

Too bad. I'm dying to know how things turned out for you.

Charlotte laughs heartily, then notices:

*

CHARLOTTE

Fred, are you okay? You're starting to look a bit wan.

*

Lance looks at Fred. He's GHOST WHITE, with sweat beads forming on his head, and soaked pits.

*
*

LANCE

He's just getting over a flu.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, that's awful. Well, take care of yourself, Fred. Maybe someday we'll get a chance to catch up!

FRED

(woozy)

Mmph.

Charlotte and company move on. Fred heads for the stairs, slightly staggering.

*

LANCE

Fred, wait. Let me help you--

FRED

Nah, I'm good, bro. 'S'all good.

Fred STUMBLES hard. The momentum sends him RUNNING OVER
THE EDGE OF THE STAIRCASE which must be 200 steps long.
He TUMBLES ass over teakettle down, down, down.

*
*
*

CHARLOTTE

Oh my god, Fred!

Fred continues to tumble.

LANCE

(shouting, desperate)

Fred!! Stop!!

He tumbles and tumbles before HUNDREDS OF ONLOOKERS.
Finally, Fred reaches the landing. He lies still, face
down. After a moment, one of his hands searches for
signs of more steps.

*
*
*

FRED

(muffled groan)

I'm done.

INT. USC MEDICAL CENTER, TREATMENT ROOM - LATER

Several NURSES finish treating Fred. He's got some
facial contusions, a couple of fingers in a splint.

*

LANCE

Two broken ribs, three broken
fingers and a fractured ankle.
Don't ever say God doesn't love
you.

FRED

I know.

(sighs)

I'm strangely okay with the whole
thing. I got the satisfaction of
knowing she remembered me, and the
disaster just forces me accept
what I already knew: there's no
chance.

*

*

LANCE

You were doing great with her. If
you'd been less intoxicated...

FRED

Then I would have shit my pants.
Nature always finds a way.
There's a reason you don't see
women like her with men like me.

*
*

INT. CHARLOTTE'S LIMO - NIGHT

The motorcade is en route to the hotel. Charlotte's with her core entourage: AGENTS CHARLES AND FOSTER, her personal assistant AMANDA, and TOM, her chief policy advisor.

CHARLOTTE

I'm starving. Amanda, I love you, but why is it when I ask for someone to bring me an hors d'oeuvre, it never gets done?

Amanda and Tom share a quick look.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

What? What is going on?

AMANDA

You don't look good eating food off a stick.

CHARLOTTE

Oh.

(then)

Who does?

AMANDA

Some negotiate it more gracefully than others.

CHARLOTTE

Well how about we schedule me a tutorial? Sadly I skipped finishing school in favor of a PhD in Russian military history.

TOM

She's not attacking you.

Charlotte takes a moment, then:

CHARLOTTE

I know. I'm sorry. I'm just feeling so sad about that poor man. What a mess. He was such a sweet boy, but things just don't seem to have worked out for him.

(then)

Do you think he fell because... I mean, did I overwhelm him?

TOM

You overwhelm everyone.

CHARLOTTE

And I cut him off so abruptly. I
 didn't know what to do - I was
 afraid he was about to puke on me.

*

TOM

He's not your responsibility.

CHARLOTTE

I know, Tom. But he actually *was*,
 once. It's just depressing.
 (light bulb)
 I'll pay for his medical bill.

*

TOM

You know you can't do that.

Charlotte folds her arms in frustration...

EXT. USC MEDICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Fred and Lance exit the trauma center and start toward
 the parking lot, but are stopped in their tracks as a
 phalanx of MOTORCYCLE COPS rolls through.

*

POLICE OFFICER

Need you guys to step back.

*

LANCE

We're just trying to get to...

Lance and Fred see a MOTORCADE headed right for them.

*

LANCE (CONT'D)

Holy shit.

FRED

Holy shit.

100 feet away, the motorcade slows but NEVER STOPS.
 Amanda jumps out and charges toward Fred and Lance.

*

*

AMANDA

Mr. Flarksy!

Amanda reaches Fred and Lance.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I'm Amanda - we met earlier.
 Secretary Field was hoping you
 could join us for dinner?

*

*

FRED

Are you shitting me?

AMANDA

No, and this isn't a planned stop -
the vehicles need to keep moving -
so I'll need your answer.

*

LANCE

His answer is yes! Have fun!

*

*

FRED

Um... Okay, I'll--

Amanda signals to the DS agents. The motorcade pulls up
WITHOUT STOPPING, Agents Forester and Charles leap out
and spirit Amanda and Fred into the moving limo. Lance
watches the motorcade take off, deliriously happy.

*

*

*

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

Fred climbs in, joining Charlotte and company.

CHARLOTTE

Fred! Thanks so much for joining.
I know it's last minute and my
god, how are you not paralyzed?!

*

*

FRED

Apparently it helped that I was
drunk. They say it made my fall
more fluid or something.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, that makes sense. And what a
terrific lesson for the kids.

*

Fred laughs - Charlotte makes it easy to be at ease.

INT. FOUR SEASONS, PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - NIGHT

Charlotte and Fred are deep into their meal in the dining
room of Charlotte's suite. They drink wine and LAUGH.

FRED

You lectured Mr. Koons on the
outrages of the Iran-Contra
scandal.

*

CHARLOTTE

It was outrageous.

FRED

Yes, but you were nine.

CHARLOTTE

Fred, you lectured my *father* on nuclear strategy.

*

FRED

I was 11, that's different.

*

CHARLOTTE

My father was a nuclear strategist.

FRED

We were obnoxious little children.

CHARLOTTE

I suppose we were just parroting our fathers' politics like all good Beltway kids. I still do 24 hours a day.

*

*

*

*

*

FRED

He must be proud of you.

CHARLOTTE

(shrugs)

Some say my job isn't much different from being an actual secretary.

*

FRED

Those people sound like assholes.

CHARLOTTE

Mm. Well, Dad would still love it if I had a bigger job.

*

*

FRED

Right. You applying for that one in 2016? I bet I'm the first to ask since we got off the elevator.

*

*

Charlotte LAUGHS, then mindlessly grabs some FRENCH FRIES from Fred's plate, dips them in his mini ketchup bottle and stuffs them in her mouth. Fred watches this breach of etiquette, most intrigued.

CHARLOTTE

(mouth still full)

The perfect moment to leave the subject of me. Who are you now, exactly? What's with the broken face and suicidal antics?

*

*

*

FRED

I was a columnist at The Los Angeles Advocate.

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

It was fringe enough that I enjoyed almost complete journalistic freedom. Which I used mostly to attack Alistair Wembley.

CHARLOTTE

Good for you. He's the most destructive global cancer since actual cancer.

*
*
*

FRED

I took a job with him.

*

CHARLOTTE

Oh. Well, work is work. So... how's that going?

*

FRED

Depends on your view. I wrote a speech for him, then sabotaged it when the Teleprompter operator presented an opportunity.

Charlotte is amazed.

*

CHARLOTTE

That was you?

FRED

You know about it?

CHARLOTTE

Fred...

Charlotte pulls out her BLACKBERRY, and punches a key. It launches a HUFFINGTON POST VIDEO CLIP:

WEMBLEY

... Truth is whatever we can make people believe.

Audience LAUGHTER.

CHARLOTTE

I can't tell you how much joy this has brought me.

(to Agent Forester)

Bill, how many times did I play the Wembley video today?

AGENT FORESTER

About ten, Ma'am.

CHARLOTTE

Fred, you're my hero.

Fred is overwhelmed by the compliment.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

The writing was pitch perfect. It was a devastating attack, but just subtle enough that he didn't notice it coming from his own mouth. That's talent.

FRED

I come by it honestly.

CHARLOTTE

Wait a minute - you *do*. Wasn't your dad someone really big?

FRED

Bernard Flarksy. Columnist for The Washington Post.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, of course! He was the best.

(then)

And... he drank a bit?

*
*
*

FRED

"A bit"? You are a diplomat. No, he drank himself to death.

An uncomfortable silence.

FRED (CONT'D)

That was unnecessarily morbid.

CHARLOTTE

No, no, I shouldn't have--

FRED

No, you were just--

CHARLOTTE

Well anyway, I should probably--

FRED

(hopping up)

Oh, of course. I've taken up your whole night.

CHARLOTTE

It's been fun, Fred.

FRED

Yes.

CHARLOTTE
 (with concern)
 Please try to take care of
 yourself, okay?

FRED
 Okay.

Fred exits. Once on the other side of door, he reaches
 for the Xanax. Just before swallowing half whole bottle,
 he reconsiders, and puts it back in his pocket.

*
 *
 *

INT. DELICATESSEN - DAY

Fred and Lance occupy a booth.

LANCE
 Do you realize how awesome I am?

FRED
 You?

LANCE
 I told you you could get this
 woman. I pushed you through the
 door, and you got her!

FRED
 She felt sorry for me. Especially
 when I capped the night with tales
 of my father's alcoholic demise.

LANCE
 Did you get her number?

FRED
 She's not some chick I met in a
 bar. I'm telling you, our re-
 acquaintance began and ended last
 night.

*

Fred's CELL rings. He doesn't recognize the number.

FRED (CONT'D)
 Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LIMO - DAY

CHARLOTTE
 Hi, Fred. Charlotte Field.

Fred looks to Lance and mouths, "It's Charlotte."

LANCE

Holy FUCK!!

Fred throws a GLASS OF WATER in Lance's face. *

CHARLOTTE

Fred? Hello?

FRED

Good morning. Thanks again for dinner. *

CHARLOTTE

It was great reliving the Fairfax days. And to meet a genuine hero.

FRED

Didn't you recently meet Nelson Mandela?

CHARLOTTE

I'm wondering if you can join us on a quick trip to Kashmir. *

FRED

The Indian place downtown?

CHARLOTTE

The Indian place in India -
Himalayan mountains? Disputed
territory most likely to spark a
nuclear exchange with Pakistan *

FRED

With a chain reaction that could
incinerate a third of the world's
population, yes, I'm familiar. *

CHARLOTTE

I'd like your help on a speech I'm
giving next month. We can work on
it during the flight.

FRED

Don't you have a staff for that?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, and they're excellent. But
this could use the Fred Flarksy
touch.

FRED

I haven't really done this sort of
thing before.

CHARLOTTE

At worst, you'll see the Himalayas
on the State Department's dime.

FRED

Can I give it some thought and get
back to you?

CHARLOTTE

Of course. We'll be in town for a
few more hours.

Fred hangs up and turns to Lance.

LANCE

What'd she say?

FRED

She invited me to Kashmir. I'm
not sure what her agenda is, so I
told her I'd think about it and
call her back.

Lance SLAPS THE DAYLIGHTS out of Fred. Fred SCREAMS in
pain. The entire restaurant is startled.

FRED (CONT'D)

What the fuck?!

LANCE

What's the matter with you?! You
just got invited to an exotic
destination by the woman of your
dreams, and you're gonna sit and
eat corned beef with some asshole?
How long do you think life is?!

Two POLICEMEN get up from the counter and approach.

OFFICER #1

Everything alright here?

LANCE

No. Officer, I love this man, but
you can't even comprehend how self-
defeating he is.

OFFICER #1

Okay, but you can't physically
assault him in here. Can I count
on you to restrain yourself while
you're in the restaurant?

LANCE

Honestly, I don't know.

Fred gives the "it's okay" wave. The officers exchange a look of relative indifference, and return to the counter.

FRED

She just wants my help with a speech.

LANCE

Will you wake up? She wants *you*. She has seen your beautiful, sexy soul, and she needs a piece of that hot action. You think she can't find a better writer than some unemployed hack from The LA Advocate? No offense.

*

FRED

No, it's a fair point.

EXT. LAX TARMAC - LATE AFTERNOON

Fred, with an outdated sport jacket, RATTY BACKPACK and collage of bruises, gets searched at the magnetometer.

*

*

INT. SECRETARY'S PLANE, STATE ROOM - DAY

Charlotte and Tom are in mid-argument.

*

CHARLOTTE

Yes, I know he's a mess. He's also an outstanding writer.

TOM

That doesn't mean he can channel your rhetorical style.

CHARLOTTE

He can *augment* it. Fred's got an audacity most people in this department get beaten out of them when they walk through the door.

*

TOM

Can he make it up the boarding stairs?

INT. SECRETARY'S PLANE, PASSENGER AISLE - DAY

Fred's wretched appearance draws STARES as Amanda leads him down the aisle. He looks as uncomfortable with himself as the other passengers do with him.

*

*

*

INT. SECRETARY'S PLANE, STATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amanda leads Fred into the room.

CHARLOTTE

Hi, Fred! You remember Tom.

TOM

Fred. How's your... entire body?

FRED

Sore, but in a good way. Last night was really just my own version of a triathlon.

Tom, to his own surprise, laughs.

TOM

Madame Secretary, I'll catch up with you later.

Tom exits. Fred's staring at a large BANK OF MONITORS glowing with grid maps, multicolored nodes and numbers.

CHARLOTTE

Maps of the neighborhood. Earth and outer space, and the position coordinates for key instruments of American power.

FRED

(points to a monitor)
What's this one tell us?

*

CHARLOTTE

Steady dots denote acknowledged U.S. military bases, surface warships, and satellite positions.

*

*

*

Fred marvels with boyish excitement - this is so cool.

FRED

How about this one with the pulsing yellow dots?

CHARLOTTE

You're four levels of security clearance shy of privilege. Don't take it personally.

*

FRED

I don't. In fact I find that to be awesome.

*

*

Charlotte's enjoying this.

CHARLOTTE

See those tracking red squares?

Fred finds them.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

They won't tell me what those are.

FRED

Don't tell anyone I said this,
but America kicks ass.

*
*

CHARLOTTE

Excellent. You're in just the
right frame of mind...

(on to business)

*
*

I've been invited to speak at the
Islamic University of Medina in
Saudi Arabia. And as I'm sure you
know, Saudi women exist in a state
of gender apartheid. They're
forbidden to drive, hold jobs,
show their skin in public, choose
their own husbands and simply
leave the house without the
permission of a male guardian.
Last year we supported this system
with over 40 billion dollars in
oil revenue. We're hypocrites,
and while I can't change that, I
can at least *acknowledge* it. If
there's any truth in all the media
hype about me and my beautiful
hair commanding so much
international respect, then I'd
like to exploit it. I want it on
record that I confronted one of
the most powerful woman-hating
countries on earth and called for
them to change. The advancement
of women's rights in the 21st
Century will be the core of my
legacy.

*
*
*
*

Charlotte grabs an APPLE from the basket on the end
table, and takes a bite.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

(mouth way too full)

Oh my god, that's good!

(giggles)

Sorry, I just wasn't expecting it
to be so good.

(offering an apple)

Would you like one?

Fred silently waves no. He is overwhelmed by attraction.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

But I'm fenced in. The White House wants me to avoid anything that might damage the U.S.-Saudi strategic partnership. I need a speech that doesn't get me in trouble with The President, but still sends a strong message.

*

FRED

I... I don't know if I can do that. It sounds impossible.

CHARLOTTE

Where's the intrepid spirit that ruined Alistair Wembley's day?

FRED

This is high level stuff. I don't know anything about statecraft. This is way over my--

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

This is Lieutenant Colonel Rogers with the Special Air Mission. We'll be getting off the ground in just a few moments, so please fasten your seat belts.

FRED

Oh Christ.

The jet TURBINES start whirring.

CHARLOTTE

Is everything alright?

FRED

Sure, everything's great. I haven't seen you in 20 years, we have dinner, and the next morning we're taking off for Kashmir. It's all very routine.

*

CHARLOTTE

What are you saying?

FRED

It's just... this is all moving pretty fast.

CHARLOTTE

What's all moving pretty fast?

Fred gathers some courage, and then:

FRED
This affair. You're putting me on
this pedestal, and I'm concerned
you might discover I'm not as
brilliant as you think.

*

She searches Fred's face for any sign he's kidding.

CHARLOTTE
Affair?

FRED
Well... I just assumed you could
find a better speech writer than
some unemployed hack from the LA
Advocate.

*

Charlotte hits an INTERCOM BUTTON.

CHARLOTTE
Can you bring the binder on Fred?

*

AMANDA (O.S.)
I'll be right in.

*

Amanda enters, hands Charlotte a LOOSELEAF BINDER, and
exits. Charlotte flips through the binder, showing Fred
the collection of his photocopied opinion columns.

CHARLOTTE
After we met, I read your work.
I'm a fan of your *writing*. It's
eloquent, it's funny, it's
scholarly, it's bold.

*

FRED
Thank you.

CHARLOTTE
I think your *writing* would mesh
well with my message. This
happens all the time - government
officials find speech writing
talent in the journalism field.

FRED
Right, I suppose that's true.
(to himself)
Goddamn it Lance.

CHARLOTTE
And while I know my husband has
certain public relations problems,
I actually love him.

FRED

Ah. Good, good. That's...

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry if you misinterpreted this.

*

Fred collects himself from the gut punch, then gets up.

FRED

Well, now that I've made this toxically awkward--

CHARLOTTE

Fred, it's fine.

FRED

Is it possible they can still let me off before--

EXT. LAX TARMAC - SAME

The plane takes off...

*

INT. SECRETARY'S PLANE, PASSENGER AISLE - NIGHT

*

Most passengers are asleep.

INT. SECRETARY'S PLANE, EXECUTIVE OFFICE - NIGHT

*

Charlotte and Fred burn the midnight oil. A FLIGHT ATTENDANT clears away their dinner dishes.

*

FRED

... In this section, we can disarm them. Preface every critique of the Saudis with an acknowledgement of America's own failings on women's rights.

*

*

CHARLOTTE

Right, so it's a call for *both* sides to aim higher. Fred, that's a great way in!

FRED

I've spent my life attacking myself before the other guy gets the drop on me.

Amanda pops in.

AMANDA

It's 11:30.

*

FRED

I'll let you get some sleep.

*

CHARLOTTE

No, I'm prepping for tomorrow's
meeting with the Prime Minister.

Charlotte opens the door to REVEAL her coterie of aides
standing by.

FRED

Ah.

(then)

Um, but can we just... for a
second...

Fred motions to the door. Charlotte shuts it.

*

FRED (CONT'D)

I want to apologize for my remarks
earlier.

*

*

CHARLOTTE

(enjoying this)

No, listen, *I'm* just glad to know
if I ever weaken and attempt to
seduce you, your superior self-
control would save us both.

*

*

*

FRED

No no, I wouldn't say--

Fred stops.

*

FRED (CONT'D)

Quitting while I'm ahead.

*

Fred leaves on the high note.

*

INT. SECRETARY'S PLANE, PASSENGER AISLE - NIGHT

Fred reclines at the end of this long day. The OVERHEAD
LIGHT of the passenger next to him suddenly clicks on.
It's MINDY, a second-tier aide. 30's, nerdy cute, hyper.

*

MINDY

So who are you, exactly?

FRED

I'm an old friend of the
Secretary.

MINDY

Oh, *that* makes sense. I thought
maybe you were some ousted eastern
bloc official, or like an autistic
Cal Tech professor.

*

Fred has no viable response to this obnoxiousness.

*

MINDY (CONT'D)

So on a scale of one to ten, how
in love with her are you?

*

FRED

She and I are old friends.

*

MINDY

Your point being?

FRED

I don't love her. I'm helping her
with the Riyadh talk.

*

MINDY

Every man loves Charlotte Field.

*

Fred quickly evaluates Mindy, then replies:

FRED

Yeah, I get why guys are into her.
The classic good looks, the
illusion of approachability, the
intimidating resume. That's all
nice in an obvious way, but I
prefer women with more distinctive
character contours.

Mindy evaluates Fred, then:

MINDY

No. You're full of shit. But a
genuinely nice try. I see why she
brought you in on her speech.

*

*

Mindy turns off her overhead light.

*

INT. FRED'S KASHMIR HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Fred enters, drops his bag and COLLAPSES onto the bed,
utterly exhausted from the 8,000 mile flight.

Amanda enters.

AMANDA

Secretary's ready for you.

*

FRED

What?

AMANDA

She'd wants to keep going on the
speech until her meeting starts.

*

FRED

We just flew one third the
circumference of the earth. She
doesn't need to freshen up?

*

*

*

AMANDA

She looks the same with or without
sleep and makeup.

FRED

(realizing)
So do I.

*

*

*

Amanda gives Fred a hand, pulling him up off the bed.

EXT. KASHMIR VALLEY - DAY

Fred and Charlotte stroll the BREATHTAKINGLY LUSH AND
UNSPOILED LANDSCAPE as they hash out the speech.

*

FRED

How can *this* be a global flash
point? It's the most beautiful,
peaceful place I've ever seen.

CHARLOTTE

Look behind you.

*

Fred sees that their stroll is protected by a TANK and a
phalanx of INDIAN SPECIAL FORCES.

*

*

FRED

Yeah, that makes more sense.

*

CHARLOTTE

How does paragraph 2 read now?

FRED

(reading aloud)
"We acknowledge that the United
States has in recent times failed
to live up to its own high
standards for human rights. The
torture and abuse witnessed at Abu
Ghraib endures as a shameful--"

CHARLOTTE

No, no - you can't use that word.

FRED

What word?

CHARLOTTE

"Torture."

FRED

But that's the whole point. This is an acknowledgement of our own--

CHARLOTTE

If we call the U.S. a torturing nation, the speech won't get past the White House.

FRED

Okay, instead of "torture", how about "inverse tickling"?

CHARLOTTE

Come on, Fred. It's just a little too bold. I warned you this would be a balancing act.

FRED

I understand.

CHARLOTTE

Good.

FRED

I mean, you've done well in life, and it hasn't been because of your renegade nature.

CHARLOTTE

What's that supposed to mean?

FRED

You were a straight A student, you married your high school sweetheart, and you went into the family business. You're the most powerful woman on earth, and you're still afraid to rock the boat.

CHARLOTTE

So I ask you to change a *word*, and you vivisect my entire psyche? That's quite an ego lurking behind all the charming self-deprecation.

*

FRED

I'm just saying get some balls.
If you learn to be confrontational
and rebellious, you can become
master of the universe - like me.

Charlotte laughs.

*

FRED (CONT'D)

(makes a note)

Alright, I'll strike the word.
"Abuse" is broad enough to--

CHARLOTTE

Fred.

FRED

Yes?

Charlotte points. They have reached a VISTA at the banks
of a stream rushing down from the snow-covered HIMALAYAS,
which are suddenly before them. The most spectacular
natural formations on earth. Fred's in awe.

*

CHARLOTTE

Your first time?

Fred nods. It's been an intense 24 hours. He sits down.

*

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Fred?

Members of the security team move toward them, but
Charlotte signals to stay back. A few TEARS escape from
Fred's eyes. Charlotte, moved, sits with Fred.

*

*

*

FRED

The closest I've come to seeing
something like that... was when I
took DMT.

(off her confusion)

A high-potency hallucinogen.

(then)

I saw these beautiful, snow-
covered mountains towering over
the planet. They spoke to me.

*

CHARLOTTE

What did they say?

Fred takes a moment to remember.

FRED

They said I should get my teeth
bleached.

Charlotte FALLS BACKWARDS, laughing.

FRED (CONT'D)
That's actually what they said.

Charlotte' still laughing...

INT. BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte sits at the main table, directly between HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS from the Pakistani and Indian armies. *

Fred's at an overflow table next to Mindy, who is tipsy. *

FRED
Did they actually make progress?

MINDY
They're pulling back on each side
by 250 miles.

FRED
You've gotta be fucking kidding
me. *

MINDY
It has no bearing on what
terrorists and paramilitary groups
choose to do.

FRED
But that's an incredible start. *
The dominoes could fall right up *
to our doorstep! *

Mindy shrugs.

FRED (CONT'D)
She made your planet safer. That
kinda transcends jadedness, no?

MINDY
Yes. She's God's gift to mankind.

FRED
How do you live at this level of
bitter jealousy? Eventually won't
your colon perforate? *

MINDY
I can handle it most of the time.
But ever since her husband made an
epic jackass of himself, men think
they have a chance; they're even
more fawning than usual. *

Mindy nods to the scene at Charlotte's table: Various
MALE DIGNITARIES muscle for Charlotte's attention.

*

MINDY (CONT'D)

She's siphoning the male energy
from those who actually need it.

*

Fred's jaw drops as he witnesses Charlotte break off a
piece of nan, habitually reach across the table and mop
up sauce from the Pakistani GENERAL'S PLATE (hers being
clean), then eat it. A moment later, Charlotte's eyes
bulge when she realizes what she's just done. She scans
to see if anyone noticed. She spots Fred looking at her.
She smiles and gives a little WAVE. Fred waves back.
Mindy observes the interaction and seethes with jealousy.

*

*

*

*

MINDY (CONT'D)

(inching closer)

What are you up to later? You
wanna come check out my room?

FRED

Your room?

*

ON CHARLOTTE AND TOM

They have a private moment.

*

CHARLOTTE

At the risk of shallowness, the
clothing here is so gorgeous. Why
can't Westerners dress like this?

TOM

Eh, everything just looks
different at 8,000 feet.
(then laughs, points)
Except Mindy.

Charlotte observes Mindy's and Fred's blatant flirtation,
and is momentarily shocked. Then, recovering:

*

*

CHARLOTTE

Well... she's a gifted negotiator.
If she put that energy into her
work, she'd be running State.

BACK TO FRED AND MINDY

MINDY

So what do you think?

FRED

Listen, I don't know if...

Fred looks back at Charlotte who has reengaged with the male world leaders surrounding her. He turns to Mindy:

FRED (CONT'D)

You know what? Why not?

(then)

But just for expectations management, I'll be pretty honest and tell you it's been a year since I've had sex.

MINDY

How long's it been if you were *really* honest?

*

FRED

Two years.

MINDY

So... three, then?

FRED

As the crow flies. So the first time's gonna be quick, but the second should be fine.

*

(then)

Though there'll be about two hours in between.

MINDY

You're quite the stallion.

FRED

I'm not especially virile, but my pillow talk is devastating.

MINDY

(leans in
seductively)

I like you. Come by in an hour.

*

Mindy gets up and quietly exits.

INT. FRED'S KASHMIR HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Fred primps for the impending rendezvous. There's a KNOCK at his door. He answers to find Charlotte.

*

CHARLOTTE

Hi, Fred.

FRED

Oh, hi... Are we working?

*

CHARLOTTE

I'd hoped to, but it looks like
you've got somewhere else to be.
Where you off to?

*

FRED

I sense you know where. And also
that you're displeased.

*

CHARLOTTE

Pretty serious lack of
professionalism, don't you think?

FRED

I'm not a professional.

CHARLOTTE

You're here in a professional
capacity. My staff is already
irritated by your presence, and
now you're about to create more
awkwardness?

FRED

I'm pretty sure none of this is
your business.

CHARLOTTE

Excuse me?

FRED

I can exist happily in the second-
tier of your royal court, but
during off-duty hours, I'm my own
man. No one controls me.

*

*

CHARLOTTE

I see. And Mindy is worth it?

FRED

For the next two hours, I suspect
she'll do quite nicely, so--

(snapping out of it)

Wait... Okay, I swear this all
feels like flirting.

*

CHARLOTTE

What?

FRED

You're in my room in the middle of
the night having a 16 year old's
argument.

*

*

CHARLOTTE

That's completely...

(flustered)

That is just completely...

Charlotte notices a distant FLASH OF LIGHT though Fred's window. Lightning? Fred turns to look. Out in the MOONLIT FIELD a PEASANT walks beside his YAK. A sudden SCREECHING SOUND and the yak EXPLODES.

FRED

AAAAAGGGGGGHHHHH!!!

CHARLOTTE

That's a rocket.

The valley LIGHTS UP with ROCKETS. ALARMS blare.

FRED

Holy shit! Holy shit!!

DS agents rush in.

AGENT FORESTER

Ma'am, we're evacuating. The hotel is under attack.

CHARLOTTE

Yep, I can see that.

We TRACK WITH Charlotte, Fred and the Agents as they move swiftly through the corridors and out of the building.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Fred, but I don't see what's childish in my effort to maintain order on my staff.

FRED

(completely freaked)

Good point. Are we going to die?

CHARLOTTE

Unlikely. The fire looked random. Probably teenage bandits with 1970's RPG launchers. I wasn't flirting, I was observing your unprofessional behavior. You have to admit it's a pattern with you.

FRED

It doesn't matter. I've gained a new clarity due to my impending death, and I realize that I have no attraction to Mindy.

Fred is RIGHT IN MINDY'S FACE. She's SHATTERED.

CHARLOTTE

Oh dear.

FRED

Oh god! Mindy, I--

MINDY

Fred, it's fine, it's fine.

KA-BOOM!!! The whole building SHAKES!

FRED

FUCK!! FUCK!! That hit!!

CHARLOTTE

No, that's outgoing tank fire.

At this point they are OUTSIDE, and LOADING INTO LARGE HELICOPTERS. The musical chairs game puts Fred in a seat between Mindy and Charlotte. The doors shut, the helo lifts off, and suddenly, despite the noise, it feels very quiet...

INT. SECRETARY'S PLANE, EXECUTIVE LOUNGE - DAY

Charlotte and Tom review the morning briefing.

TOM

Did I see tears on Mindy's face?

CHARLOTTE

Let's just say there was melodrama and leave it alone.

TOM

What has her so bewitched? He's not exactly James Bond.

CHARLOTTE

Don't discount Fred. He's got something.

TOM

(intrigued)
Really.

CHARLOTTE

Well, you know... He's independent, he's funny, and he's frighteningly smart.

(laughs)
And sometimes he's so brave it almost looks like stupidity.

(MORE)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

He's very in touch with himself.
He knows exactly what his issues
are, and he can laugh at them -
which is so rare. And he's even
handsome in his slovenly way. I
know he can take a dark and
cynical tone, but it's the kind of
cynicism I think really just
protects a romantic interior.
He's sort of part H.L. Mencken,
part Lord Byron.

Charlotte suddenly realizes how long she's been talking.
Tom is SPEECHLESS.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

What?

Tom gets up.

TOM

I'm gonna get my organization
charts together. I'll give you an
hour to, uh, collect yourself.

Tom exits. Charlotte, a basket case, lies down on her
couch, and pulls a blanket completely over her head.

INT. SECRETARY'S PLANE, PASSENGER AISLE - DAY

Fred waves to Amanda as she makes her way down the aisle.

FRED

Hi. Do you know when The
Secretary and I are meeting today?

AMANDA

(quickly glances at
her folio)
You're not on her schedule.

FRED

For the entire 15 hour flight?

AMANDA

Right.

Fred nods. Got it. It's over.

INT. LAX AIRPORT - DAY

Fred, depressed and travel weary, lumbers off the ramp
into the terminal. He gets a CALL on his cell. We TRACK
with Fred as he walks through the concourse.

FRED
Hello?

INT. CHARLOTTE'S WASHINGTON OFFICE - SAME

CHARLOTTE
It's Charlotte.

FRED
Oh. Hi. Wasn't sure I'd hear
from you again.

CHARLOTTE
I couldn't face you on the plane.
I was so embarrassed by my
behavior in your room the other
night. I was childish and
inappropriate. I humiliated
myself.

FRED
If you say so. I don't personally
know what humiliation looks like,
but I can imagine it's unpleasant.

Charlotte laughs.

CHARLOTTE
So listen. My staff is growing.
We've created a special management
post for Tom, so he no longer has
time for writing supervision.
Ellen Attie takes over that role,
which leaves an opening for a new
full-time speech-writer.

Fred waits for more.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Fred? That means you. What do
you think?

FRED
I... I'd love that.
(then)
I get the sense Tom dislikes me.

CHARLOTTE
You make him nervous, but you can
help that. Trim the beard, buy a
suit made in the post-Cold War
era, don't make anyone else on the
staff cry. We leave Wednesday.

FRED *

Where to? *

CHARLOTTE *

On this non-secure connection, *

we'll say it's a wine tour of the *

Loire Valley. *

FRED *

Sound glamorous. I'll see you *

soon. *

They hang up. Fred finds himself now ON THE SIDEWALK *

outside the terminal. He was heading for the taxis, *

but... is there a point in going home? He shrugs to *

himself, turns around, and heads BACK INTO THE AIRPORT. *

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY, THE SUDAN - DAY *

An ARMORED CONVOY traverses a lonely, rugged road. *

TITLE: NORTHERN DARFUR, THE SUDAN *

INT. VAN - SAME *

Fred is with Charlotte and entourage. SMOKE rises from a *

village in the distance. Charlotte sees Fred's anxiety. *

CHARLOTTE *

On the plus side, we're staying at *

a gorgeous hotel in Dubai tonight. *

FRED *

The wine tour would've been nicer. *

CHARLOTTE *

This *is* going to suck. The *

attacks are only five days old. *

(pointedly to Fred) *

But what we see today becomes the *

basis of my address to President *

Bashir at the U.N. summit. I'm *

determined for this to be the year *

we get a coherent policy on Sudan. *

FRED *

Why the rush? It's only been 10 *

years. *

EXT. VILLAGE, DARFUR - DAY

Charlotte and company are on a walking tour of a DESTROYED DESERT VILLAGE, led by the MAYOR, a striking man in flowing robes, who speaks English well. *

MAYOR

This house belonged to the Mashar family, close friends of mine.

It's pile of CHARRED STICKS. Fred is beset by the visions of horror in all directions. *

CHARLOTTE

(re: depressions in the ground)

These craters can't be from mortar shells. They look like 500 pound bombs. *

MAYOR

Yes, this time, no men with jeeps or camels. Just A-5. *

AMANDA

(to Fred)
Chinese war planes. *

Fred spots a TEDDY BEAR, slightly charred but in okay condition, beneath a twisted bed frame. He grabs it.

FRED

It's still intact - can someone get it to the Mashar family?

The Mayor looks at Fred.

MAYOR

The Mashar family no longer exists. Please take it. Show it to President Chambers.

Fred is shattered. The group moves on, as Fred stands and stares at this ghastly mausoleum. Finally he pulls himself away and rejoins the group. *

They come upon a DEAD HORSE. It's mostly intact, though its EYEBALLS are in advanced state of decay. Fred's STAGGERS, then doubles over and PUKES. Charlotte notices, but stays on track and lets Amanda tend to Fred. *

They come upon a sea of small, charred SCHOOL DESKS in the middle of nothingness. Some have charred books atop them. *

MAYOR (CONT'D)

This was the elementary school.

The spookiest image yet. Fred's on the verge of LOSING IT. He's mildly HYPERVENTILATING. Amanda and Tom exchange looks of concern.

CHARLOTTE

Did any children survive the attacks?

MAYOR

Several. They were collecting water from a well two kilometers north, outside the blast radius.

CHARLOTTE

Can we meet them?

MAYOR

If you'd like. They're in school now.

The Mayor points to a DISTANT, LONE ACACIA TREE. Several CHILDREN sit beneath it, as a TEACHER lectures.

By now, Fred is quietly SOBBING, Charlotte notices, but again, stays on track and lets Amanda tend to Fred.

AMANDA

(offering a bottle)

Fred, drink.

FRED

I'm okay. I'm okay.

AMANDA

It's 100 degrees, you need to stay hydrated.

Fred drinks, and clings to his teddy bear. The group reaches the "school" - FIVE CHILDREN and a TEACHER.

WITH SUBTITLES:

MAYOR

(in tribal Fur)

These are our friends from the United States. Say hello to them in English.

CHILDREN

(in unison)

Good morning!

The children's cheer in the midst of unspeakable tragedy is moving - even Charlotte looks strained.

A BEAUTIFUL LITTLE GIRL points to Fred:

BEAUTIFUL LITTLE GIRL
(laughing)
Jùtâ! Jùtâ!

MAYOR
(to Fred)
You have a thick beard like her father's. She calls it "forest."

FRED
What a sweet little girl. Did we meet her father? *

MAYOR
No, her parents were vaporized in last week's attack.

Fred FALLS to the ground, HOWLING, clinging to his Teddy Bear. The children - and the adults - behold Fred's explosive grief in quiet sympathy. It's undignified, but at some level maybe a little refreshing, too. *

EXT. DUBAI - NIGHT *

Beauty shot of this sparkling new mecca of capitalism. *

TITLE: DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES *

INT. FRED'S HOTEL ROOM - LATE NIGHT *

Fred's having a drink, writing his draft of the address to Bashir. He's fried - by sun and life. A KNOCK at the door. Fred opens the door to find Charlotte. *

CHARLOTTE
I just wanted to make sure you were alright.

FRED
I don't know if I was helpful to the children. *

CHARLOTTE
I'm sure it was the first time they've seen a member of the U.S. government shed a tear for them. Listen, I just finished work, I need a drink and some company. *

FRED

Really?

CHARLOTTE

Everyone else seems to be in their rooms weeping and vomiting. You managed to get it out of your system earlier, so I figured you might actually be in the mood.

FRED

Always. Let me just put my shoe--

CHARLOTTE

Let's just have one here. It's easier.

*
*

INT. FRED'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Charlotte and Fred have drinks in the living room area.

*

CHARLOTTE

So.

FRED

So.

CHARLOTTE

How's your drink?

FRED

It's good.

CHARLOTTE

Good.

Silence.

FRED

(re: having drinks)
You suggested this, right?

*

CHARLOTTE

(laughs)
What, are you not having fun?

FRED

No. It's too loud and relaxing. Maybe we could make it quieter and more stressful?

CHARLOTTE

Fred, why haven't you ever been married?

*

FRED
I... uh, I'm not sure I unders--

*

CHARLOTTE
Just answer the question.

Fred takes a moment to conjure the answer.

*

FRED
Because I only want to do it once.

Charlotte considers this, then suddenly starts to CRY.

CHARLOTTE
(wiping her tears)
I'm sorry.

*

FRED
It's okay. What's going on?

CHARLOTTE
I don't think I love my husband
anymore.
(sobbing)
I don't think I ever did.

FRED
Oh dear. That's intense. I...
um... Do you have anyone you can
talk to about these things?

CHARLOTTE
Yes, but... Lately I keep feeling
like the person I want to talk to
is you. And then I think, *that's*
the problem.

FRED
I don't understand.

CHARLOTTE
I don't know.
(sobbing more)
I think I have a crush on you?

Fred hangs in SUSPENDED ANIMATION.

*

FRED
What?

CHARLOTTE
I have a crush on you.

Fred tries to keep from falling over as his head REELS.

FRED

Oh... Oh.
 (then)
 Wait, when you say you have a--

CHARLOTTE

Fred. Yes.

FRED

Okay... Well... that's not a bad
 thing.

CHARLOTTE

I can't ever do anything about it. *

FRED

That's not necessarily true.

CHARLOTTE

Fred, believe me, I can't.

FRED

Madame Sec... Uh, look, can I call
 you Charlotte at this point?

CHARLOTTE

Definitely not.

FRED

Okay, then. Madame Secretary,
 have you ever done anything
 morally questionable, or even just
 ill-advised, in your life?

CHARLOTTE

No. Have you? *

FRED

Of course. I'm a human being.

CHARLOTTE

I'm a human being. *

FRED

No. Actual human beings *fail*.
 They have flaws, and yield to
 impulses. You not only haven't
 ever done that, you've created a
 life in which you couldn't even if
 you *wanted* to. There's a man with
 gun on the other side of that
 door. You're surrounded at all
 times by people impossible to let
 down or be human in front of. *

CHARLOTTE

I see.

Charlotte thinks for several moments, then RIPS OPEN HER BLOUSE. Fred considers it, then:

FRED

That was a bit studied, but for you, it's progress.

CHARLOTTE

Thank you.

Fred grabs Charlotte and KISSES her. After several passionate moments, they take a breather. They both seem a million miles away. Finally:

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

What are you thinking?

FRED

I'm just picturing myself at age 11, picturing myself in the future, kissing you. I didn't picture it happening like this, and I wish that I had, because there's something amazing about when things end up happening exactly the way you always pictured it. Does that make sense?

*

CHARLOTTE

I think so.

FRED

What were you thinking?

CHARLOTTE

That this is the first time I've kissed someone other than my husband in 22 years.

*

FRED

Wow.

CHARLOTTE

Do you think there's any chance we can do this, and not be too inside our own heads?

FRED

Based on my observation of us, no.

Charlotte LEAPS ONTO FRED, knocking him onto the bed, and they are off and running. After a few moments, Charlotte, breathless, suddenly stops the kissing:

CHARLOTTE
I need to warn you...

FRED
Yes?

CHARLOTTE
I just... it's been a while. The
first time might go a little fast.

Something wild is going on in Fred's eyes. *

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Fred? Fred are you...

A little TEAR OF JOY escapes from Fred's eye.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Fred?

FRED
Sorry, got overwhelmed for a
second. I'm good.

Fred grabs Charlotte like an animal, and this time
they're *really* off and running...

INT. FRED'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER *

Charlotte and Fred are in bed, sweaty and breathless.

CHARLOTTE
I can't believe I got laid! *

FRED
You can't believe? How do you
think I feel? I just had sex with
you. Can you imagine such a thing?

CHARLOTTE
I can't. It's too implausible. *

FRED
We both lasted about ninety
seconds - does that count?

CHARLOTTE
No. I need to go again.

FRED
Seriously?

CHARLOTTE

Do you have any idea how long it's been since I've had sex? Since I've had *good* sex?

FRED

You think I'm good?

CHARLOTTE

Fred. Oh my god. I want you to make love to me right now.

(grabbing him)

I want you to *fuck* me.

FRED

Holy shit! You're out of control!

CHARLOTTE

(giddy)

I'm out of control!

(grabs his face)

Do you know how long I've wanted to fuck you?

FRED

No! How long?

CHARLOTTE

Since that night in LA.

FRED

Are you serious?? I was going--

CHARLOTTE

FRED! Just please fuck me!

FRED

(getting on top)

I'm on it!

(then)

Can I call you "Madame Secretary"?

CHARLOTTE

(wincing)

No, don't. My husband does that. It's cheesy. I'm sorry!

FRED

No, totally, you're right. Christ, I forgot you were marr--

CHARLOTTE

I want you to take me from behind.

FRED

What??

CHARLOTTE

I want it from behind. Be rough
this time. Please, Fred--

FRED

Whoa! No no no. I can't do that.

CHARLOTTE

You don't like it that way?

FRED

No, I do. I just... I can't do
that with you. I mean, you're...

CHARLOTTE

Oh god, is it because I'm older
than you?

Fred LAUGHS HIS HEAD OFF.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

What??

FRED

I have too much *respect*. I mean
you're *you*! Come on!

CHARLOTTE

If you respect me, you'll do what
I ask.

Fred falls onto his back and shouts at the ceiling:

FRED

I'm so fucking happy!

INT. BURJ AL ARAB LOBBY - LATER

Fred, joyfully trots off the elevator and heads for the
exit where the American delegation is gathering to leave.

VOICE (O.S.)

Flarksy?

Fred turns around to see Connor (Wembley's aide).

FRED

Connor!

Connor stares at Fred, perplexed - what could this wretch
possibly be doing in the Burj Al Arab?

FRED (CONT'D)

What a wonderful surprise! How've
you been? How's your boss?

CONNOR

Wembley's quite well. I'm here closing a sizeable deal for him. Despite your crusade, somehow the company's heart still beats.

FRED

(shrugs)

Yeah, I've got no follow-through.

CONNOR

What are you doing here?

FRED

I work with Charlotte Field. She and Wembley have similar taste in speech writers. Go figger.

CONNOR

Well congratulations on getting to work with your girlfriend.

FRED

What??

CONNOR

She's your girlfriend, isn't she? I recall you disliking Wembley's "ungentlemanly tone" about her.

FRED

Right. Yes. She's my girlfriend. We just had sex an hour ago.

CONNOR

You're a sad little guy, Flarksy.

FRED

First to admit it. Well, please tell the root of all human suffering I said hello.

Fred cheerfully turns on his heel and leaves.

INT. DELICATESSEN - DAY

Fred and Lance have breakfast.

LANCE

You beautiful SONOFABITCH!

Lance POUNDS the table, startling everyone in the place.

FRED

Calm down.

LANCE

No! I will NOT calm down!

FRED

Please. If anyone finds out, it would be literally the biggest shit-storm in history.

LANCE

This is amazing. You're Charlotte Field's... Wait, what's the male version of "mistress"? "Mister"?

FRED

Don't look for more words to say about this.

LANCE

I'm so proud of you, man.

FRED

What exactly for? Adultery? Threatening the most promising female political career in history? Compromising global security?

LANCE

For believing in yourself, and believing in love.

FRED

Can you try not to be quite so vile?

LANCE

Wait a minute... You're not enjoying this, are you?

Lance VIOLENTLY GRABS FRED by the shirt collar.

LANCE (CONT'D)

You MOTHERFUCKER! If you don't enjoy this, I SWEAR TO GOD--

The entire restaurant stares. The COPS at the counter give them a "really, again?" look. Lance stands down.

FRED

I'm enjoying this. It just comes with baggage.

LANCE

All relationships do.

FRED

Not like this. She's got a husband, a 24 hour security team, journalists and paparazzi from every corner of the earth following her.

(then, very hushed)

And she's *loud*.

*

LANCE

Ohhhh, dude. Keep talking.

*

FRED

She's a monster. I mean, I don't know how else to say it: I fucked *the shit* out of her.

LANCE

God, I wish I could've seen it.

FRED

Somebody must've *heard* it. The whole thing is insanely dangerous.

LANCE

If she's taking this kind of risk, you must be outrageous in the sack.

FRED

If graded solely on enthusiasm.

LANCE

I don't blame you. She's gorgeous.

FRED

It's more than that. She's *real*. She *is* human. In fact, she's an emotionally tortured mess. And her table manners are aboriginal. You know we barely even talk politics? We mostly just complain to each other about our inner turmoil.

LANCE

This is your soul mate, Fred.

FRED

I know. I've always known.

LANCE

So what's the plan? Is she gonna leave Kent?

FRED
I highly doubt that.

*

LANCE
Well she can't just see this as a
"fling." Like you say, she's
risking the whole world you.

FRED
It's just a bit soon to be talking
about her leaving her marriage.

Lance eats quietly.

FRED (CONT'D)
What? What are you thinking?

LANCE
Nothing.

FRED
Stop lying.

LANCE
No, it's just... you can't be
human contraband forever. At some
point, she'll have to make a
decision.

FRED
Who said "forever"? I thought you
wanted me to enjoy this.

LANCE
I do. I just wanna make sure
you're looking out for yourself.

FRED
Lance. I just engaged in--
(more hushed)
--sexual congress with Charlotte
Field, and I'm going back for more
on Thursday. On *her* dime. Why is
that not enough for you? Your
standards for my happiness have
become totally preposterous.
Enough good things can't happen in
my life to satisfy you.

Lance considers this, then:

LANCE
Shit, I'm sorry, buddy.

FRED
It's okay.

LANCE

You get back there and fuck the
daylights out of her.

*

FRED

If that's what you need me to do.

EXT. SUNAN AIRPORT, PYONGYANG, NORTH KOREA - DAY

CNN FOOTAGE of Charlotte descending the boarding stairs
as she is greeted by NORTH KOREAN DIGNITARIES.

CNN NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Secretary Field touched down in
the North Korean capitol, where
American journalist, Harold Park,
has been detained on charges of
spying. The meeting is expected
to be a formality, and Mr. Park's
release a foregone conclusion.
White House and State Department
spokesmen stress that the visit
will *not* address other ongoing
disputes with North Korea, such as
weapons programs and shots fired
across the DMZ.

*

*

*

FOOTAGE OF EARLIER PRESS CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT CHAMBERS

This marks the highest level
meeting of our two governments in
more than 20 years. Our intention
is to move slowly. We want to get
it *right* in North Korea, not get
it fast. I'm told President Kim
is an admirer of Secretary Field,
so that's at least one thing he
shares with the western
hemisphere.

*

*

*

*

LAUGHTER from the press corps.

EXT. PYONGYANG - DAY

The American delegation gets a formal tour of North
Korea's freaky showcase capitol. They are flanked by
GOVERNMENT MINDERS - creepy men with nervous expressions.
The TOUR LEADER, like most visible residents of
Pyongyang, is a groveling, brainwashed automaton.

*

Charlotte is flanked by Fred, who, THROUGHOUT THE SCENE,
COMMENTS TO HER IN SUBTLE WHISPERS.

*

*

TOUR LEADER

This is the Pyongyang Ice rink.
It is one of the most beautiful
buildings on earth. I will tell
you who made this glorious
creation possible:

FRED

(to Charlotte,
guessing)

The construction workers?

*
*
*

TOUR LEADER

The Dear Leader, Kim Jong Il, the
greatest general in the history of
mankind!

*

FRED

My second guess.

*

Charlotte, despite the URGE TO LAUGH, maintains poise.

*

The group reaches a new landmark:

TOUR LEADER

This is a statue of the beloved
father, Kim Il Sung. As you can
see, it is extremely beautiful. I
will tell you who blessed the
world with the world this great
treasure:

*
*
*
*
*
*

FRED

The little gay kid from "Who's The
Boss?"

*

TOUR LEADER

The Dear Leader, Kim Jong Il. We
praise him!

FRED

Right but he got the *idea* from the
gay kid.

*

Charlotte involuntarily lets loose an ENORMOUS LAUGHTER
SNORT. Everyone turns to look. She is in shock. Tom,
understanding what's just happened, steps in:

*
*

TOM

(hands her a tissue)
Bless you, Madame Secretary.

*
*

Tom gives Fred a quick GLARE. The Tour continues...

INT. NORTH KOREAN PRESIDENTIAL PALACE - NIGHT

A post-dinner RECEPTION for the State Department delegation is underway. DIGNITARIES abound.

PALACE STAFFERS present the CHEF to Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

It's wonderful to meet you! The meal was fabulous. The best incentive yet for improved U.S.-DPRK relations.

*
*
*

PALACE CHEF

(laughs)

You are very welcome, Madame Secretary.

CHARLOTTE

Where did you learn to cook like that?

PALACE CHEF

The people of our republic have only one teacher, one man to thank for all wisdom and fortune--

CHARLOTTE

Oh dear. Yes, well he's quite something.

*
*
*

(ends the encounter)

So nice to meet you.

Once the staffers and the chef depart, Tom and Charlotte have a relatively private moment.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

How is it possible to brainwash an entire country in which no one has a television?

*
*
*

TOM

What's with you and Flarksy?

CHARLOTTE

Nothing.

TOM

If you say so.

CHARLOTTE

I do.

TOM

And you remember that you have to
be in control not just of yourself
but the public *perception* of
yourself, right?

*
*
*

CHARLOTTE

Tom. I'm deeply in love with my
husband, and what you're
insinuating is offensive.

*
*
*

Tom smiles - well played. He ambles off.

Charlotte catches up with Fred. Their strict restraint
from smiling, combined with the HIGH NOISE LEVEL OF THE
ROOM, allows them to say what they want, right in the
midst of HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I think I might have to have tell
Tom about us.

FRED

About the fact that we're having
sexual intercourse?

CHARLOTTE

Yes. Don't know if you glanced at
the itinerary, but you'll be
fucking me on the rug in my suite
tonight.

FRED

Yes, I pleased myself to that
thought about 20 times this week.

*

Charlotte allows the tiniest SMILE.

FRED (CONT'D)

By the way, I didn't think it was
possible to hate this country
more, but it is. This whole thing
is a goat-rape.

CHARLOTTE

How do you mean?

*

FRED

I mean the taxpayers spent three
million dollars to send us here so
that asshole

*

(re: the NORTH KOREAN
PRESIDENT across the
room)

*
*
*

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)
 can get his picture taken with
 you, and he doesn't have to yield
 an inch on nuclear weapons? What
 did we get for our money?

CHARLOTTE
 The repatriation of an American
 citizen.

FRED
 So we're a glorified FedEx.

CHARLOTTE
 Believe me, I would have preferred
 actual engagement, but Chambers
 wanted something he knew couldn't
 fail. He personally gave me the
 marching orders: a simple, pro
 forma hostage resolution.

FRED
 I sometimes worry that your
 respect for marching orders might
 keep you from the extent of
 greatness you were destined for.

This stings. Charlotte goes deep into her brain for
 several moments. Finally she emerges.

CHARLOTTE
 You're completely right.

FRED
 Maybe that was a little harsh, I--

CHARLOTTE
 Excuse me.

Charlotte turns and marches toward the President. Fred
 watches with mixture of pride and "what did I just do?"

INT. AMANDA'S PYONGYANG HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Amanda is awoken by her cell phone.

AMANDA
 Hello?

WOMAN (V.O.)
 It's Dorothy from The President's
 office.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S PYONGYANG SUITE - SAME

Charlotte and Fred lie quietly, half-naked on a rug in front of a roaring fireplace. Fred looks contemplative.

CHARLOTTE
(re: his mind)
What's going on in there?

FRED
Well... there's something we haven't discussed yet.

CHARLOTTE
By any chance, would it be...
about the last night I babysat
you? *

FRED
Yes!

CHARLOTTE
That was a bold move, kid. I was
15. Your testes hadn't even
descended. *

FRED
It was totally inappropriate. If
it's not too late, I offer my
apologies.

CHARLOTTE
Well, to be completely honest...
it turned me on a little.

FRED
Seriously? Okay, do you happen to
remember if... if when I put my--

Charlotte silences him, and puts his HAND ON HER LEFT
BREAST:

CHARLOTTE
Feel familiar?

Fred falls back and DIES with delight. *

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Tom and Amanda, approach Agent Charles in a panic.

TOM
We need to speak with the
Secretary.

AGENT CHARLES
She's indisposed at the moment.

TOM
The White House is trying to reach
her.

AGENT CHARLES
I'm sorry, Mr. Stimson.

TOM
Agent Charles, I'm saying that the
President wants to talk to her.

We hear CHARLOTTE'S MOANS AND GROANS.

TOM (CONT'D) AMANDA
Oh my god. No way.

TOM (CONT'D)
Okay, we've gotta stop this.
Please, just knock on the door.

More MOANS. LOUDER.

AGENT CHARLES
My job is to protect her from
physical harm. This is not within
my purview.

Hard SHAKING, more MOANS and YELPS.

TOM
I respect that. But I'm asking
you as a human being to consider--

HARDER SHAKING, SCREAMS AND HOWLS.

TOM (CONT'D)
--that this situation is
extraordinary.

The shaking gets FASTER, the screams get LOUDER.

AGENT CHARLES
Mr. Stimson, I don't like being in
this position. It's extremely
uncomfortable. Unfortunately, I
have a sworn obligation.

The shaking gets VIOLENT. The screams PRIMAL.

AMANDA
Are we sure that's sex?

TOM

Agent Charles, they're completely out of control. What if they have an accident? This constitutes a bodily threat to The Secretary. You're looking at potential dereliction.

*

Furniture is KNOCKED OVER, GLASSES CRASH!! That crossed the line. With profound regret, Agent Charles approaches the door and POUNDS on it. The sex goes INSTANTLY SILENT.

*

*

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Um... Hello?

Agent Charles doesn't know what to say. Tom steps up:

*

TOM

(shouts at the door)

It's Tom!

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Tom, I'm not feeling well, can this wait?

TOM

The President's rather upset - you approached the General on ICBM's.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Shiiiiiiiit.

TOM

Why don't you and Fred get dressed and we can talk?

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Fred? Fred's not with me. I have no idea what you're...

*

*

(sighs)

Right. Okay...

INT. CHARLOTTE'S PYONGYANG SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Fred, Amanda, Charlotte and Tom are all gathered. Charlotte waits for Tom to kick things off. Tom is so UPSET that he's taking extra time to collect himself.

TOM

Okay... I... Okay... Charlotte, why did you corner the General on prohibited issues?

*

CHARLOTTE

It's completely ridiculous that we're having this historic meeting, and all we're getting is a tour of their fucking ice rink.

*
*

TOM

Lots of things are ridiculous. Why did you act on it?

CHARLOTTE

Well, Fred pointed out that if I--

TOM

"Fred pointed out"? I see. So basically, you rattled the nuclear saber to show off for your boyfriend.

*

CHARLOTTE

I didn't rattle any saber. I suggested setting a date for a preliminary talks. That's all.

TOM

You told The General we haven't taken first strike off the table!

*

FRED

You did that?

CHARLOTTE

I only implied it.

FRED

Oh boy.

TOM

Don't blame yourself, Fred. Global security's nice, but a man's gotta have romance!

CHARLOTTE

Okay, Tom. We get it.

TOM

If you got it, you wouldn't be in this situation. India-Pakistan-Afghanistan, Israel-Gaza-Syria-Lebanon, Iran, North Korea. They don't listen to the President, they listen to you. For all intents and purposes, you are the president.

CHARLOTTE

Oh god, please, Tom, don't do--

*

TOM

And if you're undermined by a tawdry hotel room romp, Jesus Christ we are fucked.

CHARLOTTE

It's not tawdry.

FRED

She's right about that. If you're looking for cheap sex, you don't choose a guy like me, no offense.

(then)

I mean, to me.

TOM

Oh good, so it's not "tawdry." We should be fine then!

CHARLOTTE

Tom, until this, I hadn't had sex in three years.

TOM

I understand the unique burden of your job, but--

CHARLOTTE

No, not the job. My marriage. It's dead.

TOM

I know. And unfortunately you can't get a divorce right now. It destroys the brand.

(before she can speak)

And don't play innocent on that. You are a brand. We depend on it.

CHARLOTTE

Okay. But I'm also 38 years old. I've got two years left in office, and I can't go a cumulative five years in my sexual prime without sex. At the risk of being immodest, it would be a tragedy to let this body go to waste.

(to Fred)

Wouldn't you say?

*

FRED

She's right. It's astonishing.

AMANDA

Mrs. Field, just looking ahead, divorce won't actually be an option when your tenure as secretary ends. The operating assumption is you'll be running for president.

CHARLOTTE

According to Tom I already won.

TOM

Madame Secr--

CHARLOTTE

So with a campaign and two terms, I'd have to wait until... 2024 to experience satisfaction in my personal life?

AMANDA

That's a worst case scenario.

*

TOM

Can we deal with the present? Right now four people know about this, not including the DS agents. Already that's too many. We need to get Fred out of here. This ends now.

CHARLOTTE

Okay. Just give us five minutes.

*

TOM

Two minutes.

Tom and Amanda exit. Charlotte and Fred are alone. Fred looks shaken.

CHARLOTTE

You okay?

FRED

It's never a nice feeling when you escalate the risk of a nuclear attack.

CHARLOTTE

Fred, no - my mistakes are *mine*.

FRED

And.. I guess I was surprised by the way you characterized our relationship just now. It sounded very... sexual.

CHARLOTTE

How would you describe our relationship? "Avuncular"?

FRED

I couldn't tell if there was also, you know, any emotion involved.

CHARLOTTE

You and I barely know each other. For all we know, there's nothing real here. Maybe it is just "tawdry."

Fred's stung.

*

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Ugh. I'm sorry. Fred, of course that's not true, I... I...

(then)

Can you just go easy on me? I mean, I just wanted to pay your medical bills, the next thing I know, the mid-life crisis I never thought I'd have is in full blossom.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - NIGHT

Fred's being driven somewhere. He's on the cell with Lance.

*

LANCE

It's good you got caught. The sooner this all gets out there, the better. She can get out of that sham marriage, and the public can get past it before 2016.

FRED

It's not getting "out there." It stays quiet. Going forward, I don't travel with them. We're not to be seen in public together.

*

LANCE

Oh...

*

(changing course)

*

Hey, I guess you won't be around for the petition drive next week. We're just 50,000 signatures shy.

*

*

*

*

FRED

*

Let's face it: I'm not the type a stranger opens his door for.

*

*

*

LANCE

Well shit. Look what's happened.
You're in a relationship, and now
I don't have you anymore. I put
you in this thing, and what am I
left with? A few crummy minutes
on a cell phone.

FRED

You deserve better.

LANCE

Maybe when you and Charlotte get
out this way next, the four of us
get dinner?

FRED

You know I'd love that, but...

LANCE

Yeah.

(sighs)

Probably not feasible.

(then)

I'm needy. Tell me you love me.

FRED

Lance, you know if it wasn't for
Charlotte, I'd come right over
there, strip you naked and have
you watch me make love to your
wife.

LANCE

You better.

EXT. FIELD COUNTRY ESTATE, DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Bucolic rural Virginia. Fred's sedan stops at a stately
colonial-era house.

INT. FIELD GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

An agent leads Fred into a room with a roaring fireplace.

AGENT

We need to restrict you to this
room until the Secretary arrives.

The agent shuts the door, and Fred's alone...

He gives himself a tour - it's the first time he's been
in Charlotte's personal space.

He arrives at a grouping of framed PHOTOS: Charlotte with family and friends: GORBACHEV, BONO, she and KENT holding hands in a meadow. Fred stares hard at Kent, as if trying to understand him. *

FRED

(to Kent, sincerely)

I hope you know it's not personal.
I just really love fucking your
wife. Even you deserve better
than that. But what you're going
to get is me fucking her more, and
this time, in your own bed.

(thinks, then)

If this helps at all:

Fred turns the photo away from the bed.

INT. GUEST ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Fred is asleep on the bed, still in his clothes. We hear distant POLICE SIREN YELPS. Through the window, we see the motorcade approaching. Fred sleeps through it. *

INT. GUEST ROOM - LATER

Charlotte has climbed into bed with Fred, who still sleeps. She's in a sexy nightgown, blissfully eating cherries, taking a moment of quiet for herself.

Deciding it's time to rouse him, she takes a CHERRY STEM and playfully strokes Fred's face. He does not stir. She slowly inches the cherry stem UP HIS LEFT NOSTRIL. No response. A little deeper. Nothing. A little deeper, a little deeper... *

The stem is gone and she can't retrieve it. Charlotte panics. She gently shakes Fred. He awakens peacefully and starts to kiss her. *

CHARLOTTE

Sweetie, hold on--

Fred just keeps kissing her.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Fred, wait--

Fred pulls away.

FRED

You can't do this, can you?

CHARLOTTE

No, no - I can. It's just...
 (hands him a tissue)
 Blow your nose.

Confused, Fred blows his nose and finds the cherry stem.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I was being... coquettish?

Fred and Charlotte fall into each others arms...

EXT. FIELD COUNTRY ESTATE - DAY

Fred and Charlotte stroll through the verdant estate. *

CHARLOTTE

My father bought this place for me
 without asking. *

FRED

That's pretty presumptuous.

CHARLOTTE

I took his choice for my husband
 without much inquisitiveness, why
 not real estate? *

FRED

That's why you married Kent?

CHARLOTTE

You know me. I do as I'm told.
 The crazy thing is, in two decades
 of unhappiness, I never gave any
 thought to leaving him. *

FRED

So... how about these days?

CHARLOTTE

Well, I dream about it, but in
 practical terms, it's impossible.

FRED

You know, if we keep this up,
 someone will find out.

CHARLOTTE

Not if we're careful. Affairs
 happen in Washington all the time. *

FRED

Not with people as fascinating as
 you.

CHARLOTTE
Can we not talk about this and
just enjoy this weekend?

*

They walk for a bit in silence.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I didn't mean to be petulant, it's
just - I don't know how to say
this without sounding grandiose:
there are five continents I'm
worried about. I know that's what
I signed up for, I just expected
more help. I didn't expect so
much to be expected of me. If I
attempt a major restructuring of
my personal life, I'd have no room
left in my brain for much else.

FRED
I'm not asking for anything.

CHARLOTTE
I know. I'm sorry.
(then)
But Fred?

FRED
Yes?

Charlotte hooks her arm in Fred's.

CHARLOTTE
You're my boyfriend.

Fred beams.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Fred and Charlotte enjoy a romantic, candle-lit meal.

*

FRED
Can I ask you something?

CHARLOTTE
Anything.

FRED
Why me? There's probably, like, a
dozen other guys you could have if
you really turned on the charm.

Charlotte ponders for a moment.

CHARLOTTE

Because I pity you.

FRED

Come on, I'm serious.

CHARLOTTE

What do you think I'd want in a man?

*

FRED

Money, power, prestige, abdominal taughtness?

CHARLOTTE

Oh. You mean like Kent?

FRED

Well...

CHARLOTTE

Those qualities didn't make me happy in the first half of my life, you think they will in the last?

Fred considers that.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Fred, if you want me to explain why I want you, as if I could ever do that as elegantly as it deserves, I'll tell you what I told you on the first night we re-met: you're my hero.

Fred smiles. Then:

FRED

Did you just speak of the "last half" of your life?

CHARLOTTE

I'm 38. It's about half over. There's a Latin expression: "Dum vivimus, vivamus."

*

FRED

While we live, let us live.

CHARLOTTE

There it is: my brilliant middle-aged revelation. And pursuant to that, would you remove your pants?

FRED
In here? Really?

CHARLOTTE
Should I say it in Latin, smart-ass?

Fred's game. He stoops to take off his shoes, and--
CRACK!!! The dining room door SWINGS hard into his head.
Fred HOWLS in pain. The Agents burst in.

AGENT FORESTER
Madam Secretary, you need to come with us.

CHARLOTTE
What's going on?

AGENT CHARLES
There's been an attack; we're transferring to a secure location.

The room floods with the sounds and lights of an
APPROACHING MARINE HELICOPTER.

FRED
(from the floor)
I think my head is open. *

CHARLOTTE
Wait - Fred's hurt!

AGENT FORESTER
We'll have an agent transport him to the Loudoun ER.

CHARLOTTE
No, let me just--

The agents LIFT CHARLOTTE off her feet and whisk her out. *

VARIOUS TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE:

ANCHOR #1
... More details on the narrowly averted suicide car bomb attack outside the White House last week... *

ANCHOR #2
... The driver is believed to be a Yemeni national who fought U.S. forces as an insurgent in Iraq... *

ANCHOR #3

Officials have confirmed that additional car bombers were en route to the Capitol, but were taken out before reaching their target...

*

ANCHOR #4

...a definitive coordinated attempt to decapitate the United States government. Due to the seriousness of the threat, the President, Vice president and top cabinet officials remain in secure undisclosed locations...

*

*

*

INT. LANCE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fred watches this coverage as he recuperates on Lance's couch. A large BANDAGE covers his forehead. He's depressed. Franci brings Fred some lunch on a tray.

*

*

FRED

Franci, you're amazing. You guys have been so good to me.

FRANCI

How about you take a break from the news for a while?

FRED

I can't. They're talking about downgrading the threat level. She could come out of the bunker at any moment.

Franci crosses to the kitchen, and joins Lance. They speak in HUSHED TONES.

FRANCI

He's been watching the news for two weeks straight.

*

LANCE

What's he supposed to do? He hasn't heard from her once. She's cooped up in some hole with her husband.

*

*

*

*

*

(very hushed)

*

Who she probably has to have sex with just to maintain credibility. It's torture.

*

*

*

FRANCI

You encouraged this.

*

LANCE

Fran, it's the most amazing thing
that's ever happened in his life.

*
*

FRANCI

Really? I've never seen him more
dependent, desperate and insecure.

LANCE

(sighs)
Yeah. I know.

*
*
*

Fred's cell RINGS. He scrambles maniacally to grab it.

FRED

Hello!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CHARLOTTE'S LIMO - SAME

*

CHARLOTTE

How's your head?

FRED

There's brain damage - but that's
from watching CNN for two weeks
straight.

CHARLOTTE

I'm going to an emergency meeting
in Cairo on Tuesday. I can
probably get away to see you for
about two hours. I know it's
crazy but will you come? I really
need to see you.

FRED

I'll be there.

CHARLOTTE

Okay, I've gotta run.

FRED

Wait... Can you send me a picture
of yourself?

CHARLOTTE

There's a million of them online.

FRED

I'd like a more exclusive one.

CHARLOTTE

It's probably a bad idea.

FRED
Add it to our growing list.

*

INT. WEMBLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

*

Wembley and a half dozen EXECUTIVES conclude a meeting.

*

WEMBLEY
Okay, gents. That'll do it for
now.

*

*

*

The executives up and exit, but Connor hangs back.

*

CONNOR
Have you got a moment?

*

*

Wembley shuts the door, giving them privacy.

*

CONNOR (CONT'D)
It's regarding my "research and
development" project.

*

*

*

WEMBLEY
(gleeful)
Oh yes, how's that going?

*

*

*

CONNOR
Possibly extraordinary.
(hands him a flash
drive)
Our friend picked up something
interesting on Flarsky's cell
frequency.

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

WEMBLEY
(beholds Connor)
You're looking very smug.

*

*

*

CONNOR
If you don't mind, can I sit and
watch you as you listen to this?

*

*

*

INT. CAIRO HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Fred and Charlotte are in post-coital bliss.

CHARLOTTE
I managed nearly three years
without this. Now I go crazy
after two weeks. It was really
weird to be in a bunker trying to
keep the tent poles of government
up, and feeling outrageously
horny.

Fred smiles at the compliment, but looks pensive.

FRED

Charlotte...

Charlotte tenses up - something serious is coming.

CHARLOTTE

Oh no.

FRED

We can't do this forever.

*

CHARLOTTE

But we're getting so good at it.

*

FRED

I know. I'm not sure how I feel about that.

CHARLOTTE

Do you want to stop?

FRED

Just the opposite. I want to keep moving forward.

CHARLOTTE

Me, too. I just don't know how.

FRED

Is it possible it's less complicated than you think?

*

CHARLOTTE

Fred--

FRED

Just as an exercise, what if you did exactly what you wanted to with your life? Would the world really judge you for that?

CHARLOTTE

Are you serious? If Americans had any idea what I've been doing for the past month, they'd probably try to kill me. And you know who'd be fueling that angry mob.

FRED

Wembley.

CHARLOTTE

A Charlotte Field divorce would be like Mardi Gras for them.

*

Fred ponders.

FRED

When Henry the Eighth wanted out of his marriage, he appointed himself head of The Church of England.

CHARLOTTE

I'd try something similar, but I can't take on more work right now.

Charlotte climbs on top of Fred. For now they let it go.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Charlotte's motorcade arrives.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - DAY

*

Charlotte meets with President Chambers, several HIGH LEVEL AIDES, and the CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS.

With virtually every sentence the Chairman speaks, a new corresponding POWERPOINT SLIDE WITH MAPS, FLOW-CHARTS AND BULLET POINTS with user-friendly language appears.

CHAIRMAN

The Yemeni government is failing. They're incapable of quashing their insurgency, nor the Al Qaeda training camps producing terrorists like the ones that nearly knocked our government off line last month. There could be as many as 90 similar groups, plotting attacks on American targets as we speak.

*

*

Charlotte looks around - she notices people seem to expect a response from *her*.

CHARLOTTE

That sounds so far like common knowledge. Middle East 101.

CHAIRMAN

(new slide)

Now that we have stakes firmly planted in Iraq, if Yemen could transform to a regime more sympathetic to the United States, it would mean a nearly contiguous belt of U.S.

(MORE)

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)
influence on the inside loop from
the Mediterranean to the Red Sea
to the Arabian Sea.

CHARLOTTE
Transform? You mean invasion?

CHAIRMAN
Intervention. By a multi-national
force.

PRESIDENT CHAMBERS
We're looking at the big picture
right now, Charlotte.

*

CHARLOTTE
I'm confused - Mr. President, is
this meeting for your benefit, or
mine?

*

*

PRESIDENT CHAMBERS
We need you on board.

CHARLOTTE
You want me to *sell* this?

PRESIDENT CHAMBERS
It won't be an immediately popular
idea, even less so coming from me.
But it's key to our survival.
This is where history's been
headed. We've got to lean into it
and stop endangering ourselves by
clinging to an outdated moral
scheme.

*

CHAIRMAN
The Middle East needs to be fully
controlled and pacified, and last
month's attack is a strong pretext
for intervention. Much stronger
than what 9/11 gave us for Iraq.

CHARLOTTE
Are we still capable of a large
scale adventure at this point?

*

CHAIRMAN
We believe we'd have massive
logistical and financial support
from the Saudis.

CHARLOTTE
The Saudis?

CHAIRMAN

Yemen's civil war has been
spilling over the border into
Saudi territory. With coaxing, we
think the Saudis would be open to
seeing Yemeni's government
reconstituted.

*
*
*

PRESIDENT CHAMBERS

I know you've got a visit planned
there - shoring up their support
will top your agenda.

CHARLOTTE

But Mr. President,
(re: slide)
what if this is more complex than
the Powerpoint presentation
suggests?

CHAIRMAN

Madame Secretary, a staff of more
than 20 officers put these slides
together.

*

CHARLOTTE

And they look great. But there's
not that many actual *words* in
those bullet points. I mean, how
much text do they actually add up
to? Maybe a page?

*

SENIOR AIDE

If I can suggest it, put this in
the context of a presidential bid.
As a woman, you're more vulnerable
to accusations of weakness on
defense. It's sad, but there's
still so much backward thinking
out there.

*
*
*
*
*

INT. ADAM'S MORGAN PUB - NIGHT

*

Fred drinks alone. He gets a call on the CELL.

*

FRED

Hey!

*
*

LANCE

I'm on the ballot.

*
*

FRED

Congratulations! You're making a
terrible mistake, and I'm also
proud of you!

*
*
*

LANCE

Thanks, buddy. How's the terrible
mistake that's given you so much
joy?

*
*
*

FRED

It's destroying my life, and I'm
on cloud nine.

*
*

LANCE

Good for you, man. I'm sorry to
hear it.

*
*
*

FRED

I leave for Tajikistan Friday.
They'll sneak me into her room,
and I'll see her for three hours.
I slip out before sunrise, and
straight back to D.C. - since, you
know, I've got a job.

*
*
*
*
*
*

LANCE

That sounds... unsustainable.

*

FRED

We'll find a way to make it work -
I mean, *ultimately*. You know,
every time we see each other,
we're more in love than the last.

*
*
*

LANCE

You've become quite the romantic
bastard.

*

FRED

I don't recognize myself.

*

LANCE

Miss you, buddy.

*
*

FRED

You too.

*
*

They hang up. Fred heads for the rest rooms. A
NONDESCRIPT MAN discreetly follows him...

*
*

INT. MEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Fred relieves himself at the urinal. The nondescript man
takes the stall next to him. He deftly reaches into
FRED'S JACKET POCKET, and lifts out Fred's BLACKBERRY.

*
*
*

CUT TO:

LOW RES VIDEO:

CHARLOTTE, in her bed, in a nightgown, recording herself with her BLACKBERRY.

CHARLOTTE

Okay, Fred. You wanted a picture, I'll do you one better. Lest you ever doubt how in love with you I am, I'm going beyond my comfort level here, not to mention common sense.

(then, bashfully)

I know you like the way my ass looks in the black thong - real original by the way - so here it is. Happy Flag Day.

Charlotte turns herself over, and as she begins to reveal her backside, we REVEAL that this is being watched in

INT. WEMBLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Wembley and Connor have just watched this on a monitor. *

WEMBLEY

This has got to be a fucking joke.

CONNOR

It does strain credulity. *

WEMBLEY

That nauseous little troglodyte - is banging *that woman*? *

CONNOR

It's worse than that. She appears to be his... "sugar mamma."

WEMBLEY

It's easily the scandal of the century. It would destroy her, and send our ratings into the stratosphere. *

CONNOR

Win-win.

WEMBLEY

But it makes Flarsky look rather good, doesn't it?

CONNOR

Sure as fuck changes my view of him. *

WEMBLEY

To make Fred Flarsky a sex
symbol... Fuck me. I just don't
think I can stomach it.

*
*
*

Wembley ruminates for a moment.

WEMBLEY (CONT'D)

Speaking of our ratings, what's
the conventional wisdom on Yemen?
Have we got a war?

*

CONNOR

The idea of an invasion isn't
polling.

*

WEMBLEY

Christ, Americans are such
hopeless little pussies.

(realizing)

No offense. We should have done
this 40 years ago, and we should
have kept going 'til we reached
Tehran. All this idealistic self-
delusion is a fucking waste of
time. Let's get on with it.

*

CONNOR

The administration's been trying
to get Charlotte Field on board
for credibility. She's supposedly
resisting, but they haven't given
up on her.

*

WEMBLEY

Mm.

*
*

INT. CHARLOTTE'S OFFICE STATE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Charlotte's at her desk. Tom enters looking HAUNTED.

CHARLOTTE

What?

TOM

I just spoke with the chief of
WMN. He said they've compiled a
case that shows you've been
cheating on your husband with Fred
Flarsky.

Charlotte digests this for a moment.

CHARLOTTE

(meekly)
Shit.
(sighs)
Well... do we comment?

TOM

They're not asking for one.

CHARLOTTE

So it was just a courtesy warning.
I guess for them, that's classy.

TOM

It was an offer.

CHARLOTTE

Excuse me?

TOM

They'll kill the story if you'll
toe the President's line on the
invasion.

CHARLOTTE

Oh come on! That's insane!
(realizing)
Right. Wembley's insane.

*
*
*

Charlotte takes a moment to process.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

What do they have? Photos?

*

TOM

Some kind of cell phone video.

*

Charlotte racks her brain, then... oh yeah.

CHARLOTTE

(cringing)
Oh god. I'm that person - the one
I'm always reading about and
saying, "How could they get this
far in life, and be this stupid?"

INT. HOTEL ROOM IN SOME FOREIGN COUNTRY - NIGHT

Fred and Charlotte talk in the suite's living room area.

*

FRED

It's my fault. My Blackberry's
been missing.

*

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

I go through five or six of them a year, so I didn't think much of it. I forgot this one had something sensitive.

CHARLOTTE

It doesn't matter. Like you said, it was inevitable.

*
*

FRED

(thinking out loud)
Okay. So you'll get ahead of Wembley and tell your story, the media will have a grand mal seizure, you'll resign a little early, and your shot at the presidency is probably over. You were ambivalent about it anyway.

*

CHARLOTTE

No.

FRED

"No" what?

CHARLOTTE

I'll work with Wembley.

*

FRED

Are you serious?

CHARLOTTE

I can support the invasion without showing *conviction*. I can follow the McCain model from the 2000 election. He "endorsed" Bush, but projected nausea.

*

FRED

This is your response? To betray your beliefs but not look very convincing while you do it?

CHARLOTTE

It's the lesser of two evils.

Fred is struck by a realization.

*

FRED

You *want* to be president.

*
*

CHARLOTTE

Is that wrong?

FRED

I just didn't realize, is all.

CHARLOTTE

I didn't either until I faced
losing the option. I want a lot
of things, Fred. I want you too.
I want us to keep going.

FRED

How do we continue this
clandestinely with Wembley
knowing?

*
*
*

CHARLOTTE

I might have to do another
unpleasant favor for him somewhere
down the road.

*

FRED

Maybe next time he'll ask you for
a blowjob? Or just to walk his
dogs when he's on vacation?

*
*
*

CHARLOTTE

It's not ideal. But it's like Tom
said: global stability depends in
part on the widely held perception
that Charlotte Field has sound
judgment.

FRED

But--

CHARLOTTE

Yes. I get the cosmic irony.

FRED

So you'll never leave Kent, and
you and I will never go public.

CHARLOTTE

No, of course all of that will
happen at some point. I just
can't say when right now.

FRED

Until then, I can just pass my
time in hotel rooms.

CHARLOTTE

What about that is so inconvenient
for you? What else do you have
going on?

Fred is stung. He stands up.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. That was horrible.
You know I don't feel that way.

FRED

I don't want to do this anymore.

*

CHARLOTTE

Fred, don't torch the whole thing
just because you're momentarily
frustrated. You've done enough of
that in your life.

FRED

"Momentarily frustrated?"

CHARLOTTE

We're in love, and it's been a
rough couple of weeks. Have some
perspective.

FRED

This is bad for you, bad for me,
and bad for the world. The only
one it seems to be good for is
Alistair Wembley. You might be
okay working for him, but I tried
it once, and didn't like it.

*
*
*

CHARLOTTE

We can figure this out.

FRED

No, it was never going to work.
I'm the worst at being servile. I
wish I wasn't. Life would be so
much easier.

Fred exits.

INT. LANCE'S BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Lance and Franci are MAKING LOVE in bed.

The DOORBELL RINGS. They both look bewildered.

INT. LANCE'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lance opens the door: it's Fred. He looks like a zombie.

LANCE

Dude?

FRED

Sorry, I couldn't seem to reach you on the phone.

LANCE

It's midnight. We were making love.

FRED

Oh. Wow. I'm sorry...

(then)

Can I sleep in the bed with you guys?

Lance beholds Fred who is clearly in horrendous pain. *

LANCE

Yeah. Just stay here for a few minutes, okay?

FRED

Of course.

Lance runs off. Fred waits respectfully in the doorway while Lance and Franci finish their business. *

INT. CHARLOTTE AND KENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kent's in bed reading documents. Charlotte enters, having just returned from her trip. She's a wreck.

CHARLOTTE

Hi.

KENT

(gets up, kisses her)

Hey, honey! How was Uzbekistan?

CHARLOTTE

Hopeless. It's a failed state.

KENT

I'm sorry. *

CHARLOTTE

It's what I signed up for. That's my life. An endless tour of failed states.

KENT

Well, here's some good news: I just read your Riyadh talk. It's outstanding.

Too pained to speak, Charlotte nods.

KENT (CONT'D)

The language feels different. And that part where you come *this close* to calling their whole monarchical system into question - You take it up to the line. Ballsy. I like how you're growing up.

*

TEARS begin to STREAM down Charlotte's face.

CHARLOTTE

Why didn't you read it two months ago when I asked you to?!

KENT

Whoa. I think you're tired. How about we go to bed?

CHARLOTTE

I don't want to be in a bed with you anymore.

*

Charlotte grabs a bathrobe and exits, leaving Kent stunned.

EXT. LANCE'S RANCH - DAY

Lance and Fred hike in Lance's mountains.

*

FRED

And, obviously, I resigned from the job with Charlotte's office.

*

*

*

LANCE

Fuck.

*

(then)

*

I'm proud of you, buddy. Charlotte's not an easy girl to get, and she sure as shit can't be easy to let go.

FRED

Who exactly did I let go? Who *is* Charlotte? Who does she love? Me? Her job? Or just herself? I mean, when her back's to the wall, she's ruthless and egocentric and amoral and... really insensitive. Is this just what all extremely successful people are like?

*

LANCE

I've done pretty well. I don't think I'm any of those things.

Fred looks at Lance and smiles.

FRED

That's true.

LANCE

Anyway, she sure loved the shit out of you. Maybe she's not the only woman who could.

Fred looks genuinely peaceful.

FRED

I think you might be right.

(then)

Hey, I've been meaning to ask you for the last month: how's your life?

*
*
*

LANCE

I retained James Phimister. He says I'm a flawless candidate. A Democrat with huge pro-business credentials, and...

*

*

(bashful, admitting)
exceptionally good looks.

FRED

Jesus, he's the top democratic strategist in the country.

LANCE

And hopefully I'll have a killer speech writer.

FRED

(coy)
Oh really?

LANCE

Just consider it, will you?

FRED

You know my history, Lance. This could wind up with me making love to you.

*
*
*

LANCE

You mean I'd get to see the penis that's been inside Charlotte Field? Oh, I'd *hate* that.

*
*
*
*
*

VARIOUS TV NEWS COVERAGE:

*

ANCHOR #1

... Though Americans are angered by the attempted attack, they are war-weary, and reluctant to start another major conflict in the Middle East...

ANCHOR #2

... The Secretary's speech before the United Nations Security Council will serve as the centerpiece of the administration's effort to persuade Americans and allies that regime change in Yemen is just.

*

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Lance gives a stump speech. Fred watches from the wings.

*

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Fred, Lance, and campaign staffers with loosened ties kick back with drinks. Fred looks happy and, maybe for the first time, in his element.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S OFFICE, STATE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Charlotte, looking haggard (for her), marks up a draft. Tom enters.

TOM

You read the revised Riyadh speech?

CHARLOTTE

Reading it now.

TOM

How's it look?

CHARLOTTE

There's not one word in here about women.

TOM

You know we can't lecture the Saudis on that - or anything - now. Which reminds me: we'll also have to put your address to the Sudanese leadership in cold storage, so no need to put a new writer on that for now.

*
*
*
*
*

Charlotte lowers her head onto her desk.

*

TOM (CONT'D)

You feeling okay?

*

CHARLOTTE

I'm just - I'm very disoriented.
I haven't slept in three weeks,
and I can't seem to remember why
I'm doing anything... that I do.

*

*

TOM

You're doing the things you do
because you were born with many
gifts and advantages, and you want
to use them to help people.

*

*

*

*

Charlotte suddenly BREAKS DOWN and SOBS, startling Tom.

CHARLOTTE

I'm a complete fucking failure!

*

TOM

Charlotte, if you're a failure, I
don't know what success means.

CHARLOTTE

I'm doing things that I... that I
don't agree with. I'm a liar.
And a coward. And a bad wife.
I've completely fucked things up,
and you know it's true.

*

*

*

*

Tom searches for something positive - and genuine - to
say...

*

TOM

You're supporting your president.
You're a team player, and a lot of
people would call that noble.

(then)

And you're being a bit dramatic
because you're 38, and this is
your first experience with a
broken heart.

*

Charlotte looks at Tom as if he had just shot her.

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm sorry - did you really not
know that's what this is?

*

*

INT. DELICATESSEN - DAY

Fred and Lance review speech drafts over lunch.

LANCE

The revised stump speech is amazing, Fred. My fund raising chair should stop bitching about your fees.

FRED

No argument there.
(noticing TV)
Hey. Here she goes.

On the big screen TV: The chyron reads: "LIVE: CHARLOTTE FIELD TO ADDRESS SECURITY COUNCIL."

ANCHOR

Moments from now, Secretary Field will address the U.N. Security Council regarding the administration's plans for military intervention in Yemen.

Charlotte rises from her seat and approaches the lectern.

CO-ANCHOR

Bob, notice that her hair is actually *down*. Given the seriousness of the moment, we expected a more conservative look today. Interesting choice.

ANCHOR

For more on Mrs. Field's fashion, please go to cnn.com/fieldstyle

CHARLOTTE

Good afternoon, esteemed members of the Security Council. One month ago, a terrorist cell of Yemeni nationals attempted to decapitate the United States government. The administration is steadfastly determined never to let such an attack succeed. Among the actions being considered is military intervention in Yemen. Of course, a new conflict in the Middle East will affect every nation on earth. So while we must act swiftly, we must act wisely. I urge us - the United States government - to reflect seriously on our own actions. I urge those who put us in power - the American people - to reflect as well. And since I'm the one standing before you, I urge you to reflect on me.

(MORE)

*

*

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Look past the simplistic media narratives and ask, "Who is Charlotte Field? Can she be trusted on a matter of such enormous consequence?"

(continuing)

I'll provide some relevant information to factor into your evaluation: I'm 38 years old, I've never served in the military, and for most of my life I've been an academic. On a personal note, this morning I informed my husband that earlier this year I had an affair.

*

*

Lance is astonished. Fred smiles triumphantly.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Our marriage had been irreparably broken, but rather than make the politically dangerous choice to end it, I took the cowardly path of pursuing happiness outside it.

(continuing)

And this is who I am. I'm educated and accomplished, yet there are certain aspects of life I've only just begun to understand. I'm capable of making enormous mistakes, and sometimes yielding to ambition over good sense.

(continuing)

Unfortunately, *most* people are like me. This is the problem with wars of choice. They're devised and sold by just a few individuals who may or may not be thinking rationally at the moment. At this time, my view is that the invasion would be a blunt, unimaginative response to a nimble and creative enemy. And it would deepen our partnership with a country where, if I admitted to them what I just admitted to you about my private life, they'd *execute* me. It's just another bad relationship I long to be free of. Of course, my views might be ill-conceived since I'm a bit of a mess right now. But the war *I* can live with is the one that doesn't need me to get up here and sell it to you.

(MORE)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

The right war will sell itself,
and when it does, it will be
America's war, not Charlotte
Field's or Clark Chambers's war.
It'll be a war we can all be *proud*
of. Thank you.

Charlotte leaves the podium to HUGE APPLAUSE.

BACK TO FRED AND LANCE

LANCE

That was... a wild speech. It was
inspiring and bold as hell. But
also... surprisingly self-
deprecating. And neurotic.
(dawning realization)
And maybe even a little sarcastic?

FRED

Yeah. How about that?

Lance looks to Fred - did he?... Fred smiles, devilishly.

BACK ON TV

ANCHOR

We've confirmed that the man
involved with Mrs. Field is Fred
Flarsky-

PHOTO OF FRED in the OVER-THE-SHOULDER BOX

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

-a political journalist. Once
again, Secretary of State
Charlotte Field has been engaged
in an affair- a romantic affair-
(thrown by the
unflattering photo)
-with this man. This is real.

Several bar patrons look from the TV... over to Fred.
Fred's first taste of the fame. It creeps him out.

*

VARIOUS NEWS FOOTAGE:

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

At President Chambers's request,
this morning Secretary of State
Charlotte Field tendered her
resignation.

ANCHOR #2

*

The resolution authorizing military intervention in Yemen was defeated today in a Security Council vote. Many members expressed admiration for former Secretary Field's remarks before the Council earlier this month.

EXT. STATE FAIRGROUNDS - DAY

*

Lance, shirt sleeves rolled up, gives a stump speech to a big, enthusiastic crowd. Fred, clean-shaven and looking like quite the politico now, watches from the wings...

EXT. SOMEWHERE - DAY

*

We're TIGHT on gold and red leaves being raked. WIDEN to reveal CHARLOTTE raking them - outside her front door at the Virginia estate. She's in a down vest and sneakers. The driveway's empty. No snipers on the roof, no bodyguards anywhere. Fred steps outside.

*

FRED

You enjoying that?

CHARLOTTE

You have no idea.

(then noticing)

Where's your backpack?

Fred shrugs.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Am I not driving you to the airport?

FRED

I just got off the phone with Lance. New Gallup's got him 20 points ahead.

CHARLOTTE

Good god. It's October 26th. It's over.

FRED

He told me not come back.

CHARLOTTE

What?

FRED

Well, he's very controlling. He said he wouldn't allow me to spend another minute this year, sitting in an airport instead of being with you.

Charlotte beams.

CHARLOTTE

I'm hungry.

*

INT. COUNTRY DINER - DAY

Charlotte and Fred enjoy a meal - together, IN PUBLIC - in this cozy, rural Virginia establishment. CUSTOMERS stare, look over their shoulders, but they're generally leaving them alone.

FRED

Any meetings next week?

CHARLOTTE

A few.

FRED

Anything interesting?

CHARLOTTE

Well, there's one I was hoping you could join me for. My father.

FRED

Ruh-roh.

A frail OLD WOMAN approaches their table, nervously.

OLD WOMAN

Ms. Field, I'm so sorry to bother you.

CHARLOTTE

That's okay.

OLD WOMAN

I just wanted to say...

She looks to Charlotte, trembling, eyes moistening.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

I miss you.

Charlotte smiles.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

We all miss you.

We see that the ENTIRE RESTAURANT has quieted to watch this exchange. Charlotte notices that everyone is staring at her, with expressions not unlike the old woman's. Charlotte is clearly moved, but contains herself.

CHARLOTTE

(to all)

Everyone, this is Fred!

Fred waves, awkwardly. Charlotte grabs his face and KISSES HIM passionately.

The restaurant BURSTS IN TO APPLAUSE and CHEERS. The applause seems to last an eternity as we

MATCH DISSOLVE

EXT. SOMEWHERE - DAY

APPLAUSE AND CHEERS from THOUSANDS of people of all ages and races. WIDEN to reveal we are outside the humble TOWN HALL of FAIRFAX, VA.

CHARLOTTE steps out onto the landing and approaches the lectern, waving to her admirers. Nearby are Tom, Amanda and Fred.

CHARLOTTE

Thank you all for coming!
Especially since it's ten degrees
out here...

The crowd CHEERS.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

... Now, unlike my last major
public appearance, what I have to
announce this morning contains no
surprises...

As Charlotte continues, we PULL BACK AND UP, slowly revealing that the crowd gathered is not just thousands, but TENS OF THOUSANDS, filling the streets of Fairfax.

THE END