

**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*.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

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 \*

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.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

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 babysitter.

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 WOBLES 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)

YEEEEEES!

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 dinner. 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)  
*Goddamnit 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 is 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 primped 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

AAAAAGGGGGHHHHH!!!

\*  
\*

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 childlike 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)  
Jùtà! Jùtà!

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 pleasured 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.)

Shiiiiiiit.

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 Mardis 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](http://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