

MURDER **IN THE** **WHITE HOUSE**

A Mystery by

Jonathan W. Stokes

AGAINST BLACK

A WOMAN'S BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM...

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

MIA PINE (30s) sits up in the dark, terrified. She's on a couch, her hair disheveled. Her eyes sharpen into focus.

MIA
Did you hear that?

An unseen MAN lying on the couch responds.

MAN (O.S.)
It's your guilty conscience.

His hand reaches to pull her back down on top of him.

THE SCREAM SOUNDS AGAIN. LOUDER. HORRIFYING.

MIA
How about that? Was that my
conscience?

MIA LEAPS OFF THE COUCH. She snatches her weapons belt from the end table and buckles it on. She straightens her blouse over her bulletproof vest and tugs on her blazer.

INT. MAIN CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

MIA RACES DOWN A WIDE HALLWAY. Vaulted ceilings, delicate crown moldings, marble busts on plinths. Something about this building, familiar...

MORE SCREAMS. CRIES FOR HELP. SHOUTING VOICES.

MIA SPRINTS TOWARD AN ORNATE SET OF DOUBLE DOORS INTO...

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

THIS IS THE WHITE HOUSE. Mia buttons her blazer, pulling her hair back into a ponytail. Smoothing the bumps.

FIVE PRIVATE DINNER GUESTS - in suits and dresses - surround the Resolute desk in gaping shock. The FIRST LADY, in a cocktail dress, is screaming hysterically. The VICE PRESIDENT, in formal dinner wear, holds her by the shoulders.

A sixth dinner guest, WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF **HOLLAND ATKINSON** (late 30s) races in from the corridor, buttoning his sweater vest.

HOLLAND
Dear god in heaven...

The President of the United States - HENRY WOOD - sits behind the desk. A KNIFE IN HIS NECK. His face is blue and white, red blood drenching his dress shirt.

An ALARM CLANGS somewhere in the distance.

FIRST LADY **GAIL WOOD** WAILS IN SOBBING GASPS...

FIRST LADY WOOD
(hysterical)
He got up from dinner to make a
phone call-

Mia circles behind the desk, pushing through the group.

MIA
-Ma'am-

FIRST LADY WOOD
-He was gone so long, I got up to
check on him!

MIA
-Ma'am, has anyone touched the
president?

FIRST LADY WOOD
I, I don't know.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT **THOMAS STONE** (20s), corn-fed and earnest, appears at Mia's side. Like Mia, he wears a conservative suit and his issued sidearm is the Glock 19.

MIA
Tommy, contact the White House
Medical Unit. Dr. Cheng is on duty
for the executive residence.

Agent Stone presses a finger to his earpiece and repeats Mia's rapid-fire instructions into his emergency channel.

MIA
Find Dr. Clay Silver - he's a
medical examiner from the Metro PD.
Get him any clearance he needs:
just get him here. Tell him I need
a tox screen.

UNIFORM DIVISION OFFICERS JOSTLE INTO THE OVAL OFFICE in SWAT body armor, gripping assault rifles.

THE FIRST LADY SOBS UNCONTROLLABLY.

Mia marks the time on her cell. 10:45pm. SHE SNAPS PHOTOS OF THE PRESIDENT, THE DESK, THE SURROUNDING ROOM.

VICE PRESIDENT **JAMES STEELE** is built like a linebacker. A silver crew-cut with tufted white eyebrows and one glass eye. HE SHOUTS AT MIA WITH A VOICE FOR THE BATTLEFIELD.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
What are you, paparazzi? What the hell are you doing?

MIA
Sir, I am cataloging a crime scene before it's trampled. You could help me by clearing away the dinner guests-

Agent Stone breaks in-

AGENT STONE
-I can perform CPR.

The president's face is bone white - drained of all blood. Mia gives Agent Stone a look.

AGENT STONE
We have a duty to try.

Mia snaps two last photos of the crime scene.

MIA
Do it.

AGENT STONE
Make a hole!

UNIFORM DIVISION OFFICERS PULL THE PRESIDENT OFF HIS CHAIR and lay him on the ground. AGENT STONE RIPS OPEN THE PRESIDENT'S SUIT JACKET and examines the ruptured neck. Three stab wounds.

AGENT STONE
Do we remove the knife?

MIA
Absolutely not. Just keep pressure on the wound. You touch that knife with bare hands, I will stab you myself.

Agent Stone presses his ear to the president's chest.

AGENT STONE
I got no heartbeat!

He straddles the president, doubles his hands against the president's chest, and begins compressions.

AGENT STONE
One, two, three, four, five! Breath
for him!

A UNIFORM DIVISION OFFICER pinches the president's nose shut and breathes into his lungs.

AGENT STONE
Keep it going!

DR. CHENG'S WHITE HOUSE MEDICAL TEAM BURSTS INTO THE OVAL OFFICE, PUSHING A CRASH CART.

Nurses take over for the Uniform Division. MIA SHOUTS TO THE CROWDED OVAL OFFICE.

MIA
If you are wearing a black tie or
an evening gown, I need you to back
up ten feet!

MIA PULLS AGENT STONE OFF THE PRESIDENT. She sets a hand on his shoulder, calming him down.

MIA
Tommy, look at me. I need Nancy
Garcia from Metro for the crime
scene before it gets completely
fucked. We keep that knife pristine
for fingerprinting. It's probably
clean, but this was a crime of
opportunity so you never know.

Mia takes deep, slow breaths to lower her pulse. Her eyes sweep the room, seeing through the chaos.

She scans the president's desk - everything appears undisturbed, the phone in its cradle. She drops to her knees and scans underneath the desk. Clean.

MIA
Check the security alarm logs - see
if the door to the Rose Garden or
the Secretary's office were ever
opened tonight.

THE CRASH CART HUMS. THE DEFIBRILLATOR WHINES, POWERING UP.

DR. CHENG

Clear!

The President's body arcs and convulses from the shock paddles. No result.

AGENT STONE

We gotta move these guests, right?

Mia is wide-eyed, overwhelmed. THE ROOM IS A CHORUS OF SHOUTS AND SOBS. THE DEFIBRILLATOR CHARGING AGAIN...

AGENT STONE

Ms. Pine?

Mia focuses on the dripping blood, not yet dry.

MIA

The assassin is on the grounds.

Mia rubs a hand on the back of her neck.

MIA

Open all channels for me.

Stone taps a dial on his radio and hands Mia his earpiece.

MIA (ON COM)

White House U.S.D., this is
H.A.I.C. Pine. I am invoking
Protocol 141. We are locking down
the White House. No one enters the
grounds without my authority. And
no one, no one, leaves. Repeat,
nobody leaves the White House.

ALARM KLAXONS BLARE ACROSS THE GROUNDS. THROUGH THE WINDOWS,
FLOODLIGHTS ILLUMINATE THE ROSE GARDEN.

THE DARK SHADOWS OF UNIFORMED SERVICE OFFICERS IN FULL BATTLE
RATTLE RACE ACROSS THE LAWN, SECURING COMMAND POSTS, SLAMMING
GATES, AND RAISING ARMORED BARRIERS.

THE WHITE HOUSE IS LOCKED DOWN.

SMASH TO:

MURDER IN THE WHITE HOUSE

Chapter One: The Vice President

INT. MAIN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Mia strides to the East Wing, leading all six of the president's dinner guests, whom we will soon meet. The first lady, wobbling in her high heels, struggles to keep pace.

FIRST LADY WOOD
Where are you taking us?

MIA
The Presidential Emergency
Operations Center.

FIRST LADY WOOD
Why the bunker?

MIA
It's the safest place for you. The
PEOC is where they protected Bush
on 911.

Chief of Staff Holland Atkinson catches up to Mia. His khakis and boat shoes reflect a WASP prep school pedigree. This is a guy who knows his way around Martha's Vineyard.

HOLLAND
You're locking us in? We need to
get out of here! If there's a
killer on the loose, we need to
save ourselves.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE **TERRA BROOKES** (50s) is formidable in her heels and business suit. She has a gray witch's streak in her updo and speaks with a proud southern lilt.

SPEAKER BROOKES
No, we need to stay here and keep
the country running. We do our
duty. Tonight more than ever.

FIRST LADY WOOD
I should be with my husband. Is he
going to make it?

SPEAKER BROOKES
He's getting the best medical
attention in the world.

Mia reaches the East Wing elevator and hustles the dinner guests in. A UNIFORMED DIVISION OFFICER holds the door.

RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR **PYOTR KAMENEV** (40s) wears an impeccable double-breasted suit. His eyebrows are waxed, his fingernails manicured. His only physical flaw is a scar that curls one lip into a slight sneer.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I've always wanted to see this
bunker.

The Vice President glares down at the Russian.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Should we let him in? Isn't this a
state secret?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
You have fewer secrets than you
think.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The group squeezes in to make room for the door to close. Mia struggles to control her breathing in the confined space.

The first lady cries softly. Speaker Brookes wraps an arm around her.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
We are herrings in a barrel.

Holland, the Chief of Staff, wipes his phone screen off on his cardigan and holds it up toward the ceiling.

HOLLAND
(panicking)
I can't get any signal in here.

Vice President Steele radiates the cool command of a battle-tested Marine.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
We're going five stories deep. If a
nuclear bomb can't penetrate,
neither can Verizon.

ANXIETY WARPS MIA'S VISION. THE WALLS PRESS IN ON HER. VOICES
TURN TINNY IN HER EARS.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Are you all right?

MIA
Yes. Thank you. Just enclosed
spaces.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

The group spills out of the elevator and into the low-ceilinged hallway of the fabled command center. SITUATION ROOM ANALYSTS AND DUTY OFFICERS BUSTLE PAST WITH LAPTOPS.

Mia checks over the first lady. She is wide-eyed in shock with a thousand-yard stare, blood still on her hands.

Mia turns to the sixth and final dinner guest, **ADARA LEHAVA**, world-renowned Israeli cellist. In concert blacks, she wears a sleeveless top, dark mascara, and a sultry expression.

MIA
Ms. Lehava, please take the first
lady to a restroom to freshen up.
Meet us in the War Room.

Adara tries to take the first lady's hand, but it is snatched away.

FIRST LADY WOOD
No! Anyone but her.

Adara speaks with a strong Israeli accent, unable to pronounce her "H's."

ADARA LEHAVA
Please. I can 'elp you.

The first lady regains her self-command, straightening to her full height.

FIRST LADY WOOD
(icily)
I can help myself.

The first lady marches to find a restroom. Mia leads the remaining five diners into--

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The iconic War Room. Harsh overhead lighting. A long boardroom table emblazoned with the White House seal. American flags in the corners.

Plush black chairs and flat screens outfit the room. Floor-to-ceiling windows to the hallway are covered by drawn blinds.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

Well, this is cozy. How long we are staying?

MIA

As long as it takes to complete an investigation and determine your safety.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

Madam, I am an emissary of the Russian government. I cannot be held here like prisoner. I have diplomatic immunity.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Do you have immunity from assassinating the President of the United States?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

Excuse me?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Who else would do this? I'm just surprised you didn't use plutonium.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

Do you accuse me?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

You Russians want to blow up the Syrian Peace Accord. Killing the president is the perfect way.

Chief of Staff Holland takes the Russian ambassador by the elbow, steering him away from the vice president.

HOLLAND

Think of the crisis we're in, Mr. Ambassador. How would your government react if this emergency happened in Moscow? I'm asking for your diplomatic sensitivity. Worst case, you lose a night's sleep, but gain a story for your memoirs.

The Russian slowly nods his head.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

I need to get upstairs and speak to the American people. They need to know about this tragedy, and know someone's taking the wheel.

Mia steps in front of him.

MIA
I'm sorry, sir. You cannot leave.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
I don't have time for this. Where's
the head of the Secret Service?

MIA
The Chief is in Brussels preparing
for the upcoming G7 conference.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Where's number two?

MIA
Also Brussels.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Well, I want to speak to the
ranking White House officer!

MIA
You're speaking to her.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Then you should be my nose tackle,
running interference. Not blocking.

MIA
The knife, sir-

The vice president tries to push past. Mia stands her ground.

MIA
Sir, if you do not cooperate, I
will be forced to apprehend you.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Apprehend me?

The vice president's hulking presence seems to fill the room.
Mia's voice quavers.

MIA
I am an Investigative Protection
Officer with full law enforcement
authority-

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
-Sweetheart, I make the laws!

The Speaker of the House steps into the fray...

SPEAKER BROOKES
-No, Jim. Technically,
that's my job-

MIA
-Now if you'll let me
explain about the knife-

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
-What is the point of a vice
president if not to take control
in situations like this! We must
consider ourselves at war! This is
Hannibal at Zama. This is
Churchill at the blitz. I am the
president now and my word is law!

MIA
Sir, until the president is
pronounced dead and the Chief
Justice of the Supreme Court puts
your hand on the Lincoln bible, you
are not the president.

The vice president's pulse shows in his temples.

MIA
I am the ranking officer
investigating the possible
assassination of the President of
the United States and these are the
rules of engagement under-

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
-I don't have to listen to this-

Vice President Steele pushes his way toward the door.

MIA
Sir, none of you leave this room!

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Why the hell not!

MIA
Because of the knife!

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
WHAT GODDAMN KNIFE?

MIA
The knife that killed the
president!

The room is silent. Bewildered.

MIA
That pearl-handled serrated steak
knife in the president's neck.
Didn't any of you see it?

The group listens...

MIA

It's from the Kennedy set. Each of you used one of those knives when you ate in the president's private dining room this evening. They are unique in the world. And *that* is why none of you are leaving. The assassin is in this room.

The group stands in stunned silence. The guests size each other up.

The vice president edges closer to Mia, staring her down.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

The country needs a leader. You want to keep me hog-tied down here?

MIA

All six of you. Until we determine who is guilty and who is innocent.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

You're sworn to defend me. You work for me!

MIA

I'm sworn to defend everyone in the White House. I work for all of you.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

What about your oath?

MIA

If someone takes a shot at you, sir, I will jump in front of that bullet. But until then, sit down.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

I am not in the habit of taking orders from bodyguards.

The vice president heads for the door.

MIA

Sir, there is a presidential assassin in this room. And only one person is insisting on leaving.

Vice President Steele stops. The group stares at him. He slowly turns to Mia.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
When I become president, the first
thing I am doing is firing you.

Mia swallows hard.

MIA
If you become president.

Vice President Steele backs away from the door. He paces the
room, a circling shark.

Holland sits slumped in a chair, hand rubbing his brow. He is
handsome but for coke-bottle glasses that give him a certain
effete vulnerability.

HOLLAND
She's right. We can't leave.

Vice President Steele wheels on him.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
You too, now, V-neck?

HOLLAND
Think of the optics, sir. You
announce the president has been
stabbed. National panic. Markets
plummet. The Syrian Peace Accord
blows up. The Saudis and the
Iranians take opposite sides.
Russia and the US are officially in
a proxy war. Chocolate and peanut
butter no longer taste good
together. No, Mr. Vice President.
We need to control the narrative.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
This is not a time for spin
doctors!

HOLLAND
Do you want to start a world war?
Because this is how you get world
wars. The president might survive
this! We can't have speculation the
Russians killed the president if
there's a chance it's not true.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Of course it's true! The Russians
manipulate our elections. Brexit,
Spain, Italy.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE (CONT'D)

They've been destabilizing the west
for years! It's their national
pastime!

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

I am a guest of the president! I
did not fight my way into the White
House with a weapon, I was invited
for cocktails, caviar, and a cello
concert!

EVERYONE SPEAKS AT ONCE...

SPEAKER BROOKES

If the Russian Ambassador killed
the president, then we must have proof,
not a kangaroo court-

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

-The people have a right to know
the president is dead-

ADARA

-There's still a chance 'enry's alive!

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

-I'm going on the air tonight-

SPEAKER BROOKES SMACKS HER PALM ON THE TABLE.

SPEAKER BROOKES

No! Holland's right. This is a
crisis and we have no strategy. Now
it's pushing midnight. Word of this
doesn't need to get out until -
what - 6am tomorrow, that's a fair
press-delay, right? That buys us
six hours to figure this out. In
the morning we announce the
assassination attempt, and that
we've caught the criminal. If the
president doesn't make it... The
public will mourn a president, not
panic and start World War Three.

Chapter Two: The Speaker of the House

INT. BUNKER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mia strides down the hallway. Agent Stone falls into step beside her.

AGENT STONE
Enjoying your evening?

MIA
It still beats my prom night.
Tommy, nobody leaves this floor.
Don't let them make calls out. If
they find a computer, no emails.

They pass the UNIFORM DIVISION OFFICERS by the elevator, bulky in their body armor.

MIA
Guys, don't let our VIPs escape, no
matter how much they threaten or
charm you.

The guards nod. The first lady rounds the corner.

FIRST LADY WOOD
The girl's room is out of order. I
used the gents.

Mia looks to Agent Stone who shrugs apologetically.

AGENT STONE
We didn't know there would be an
international emergency tonight.

The first lady checks her phone: no signal.

FIRST LADY WOOD
(slurring her words)
We can't leave, can't use our
phones, can't even use the
bathroom.

MIA
Just try to make do. I'll remind
the boys to leave the toilet seats
down.

The first lady takes a swig from a mug and weaves unsteadily down the hallway.

Mia eyes her, shakes her head, and proceeds with Agent Stone.

MIA

Goldie's the only server for the president's private dining room. Find her quickly. Ask her which table setting is missing its knife. And one more thing: top priority...

Agent Stone leans in.

MIA

Call the chief in Brussels: get him on a plane. Let *him* get fired by the VP. Me? I want to keep my job.

INT. BATHROOM STALL - NIGHT

Mia locks the stall and collapses down on the toilet seat. She takes slow deep breaths, trying to fight down a whirlwind of emotions: fear, anxiety, sadness, panic...

She opens the crime scene photos on her phone...

THE PRESIDENT'S UNCONSCIOUS FACE. ODDLY PRECISE PUNCTURE WOUNDS IN HIS NECK. ODD BRUISING. LITTLE DETAILS: THE PHONE IN ITS CRADLE... THE CHURCHILL BUST ON THE CREDENZA...

She zooms in on the president. Wet, dripping blood. A curious stripe of pink on his starched white collar.

THE BATHROOM STALL BECOMES FISH-EYED AND DISTORTED. MIA SQUEEZES HER EYES SHUT AND FLATTENS HER PALMS AGAINST HER TEMPLES. THE ROOM IS SPINNING, A NIGHTMARE CAROUSEL.

Mia presses her head against the cold metal stall divider.

THE BATHROOM DOOR OPENS. HIGH HEELS CLICK ACROSS THE FLOOR. A woman enters the next stall.

Speaker of the House Terra Brookes' languorous southern accent evokes sugar cane and peach orchards...

SPEAKER BROOKES (O.S.)

Don't mind the vice president. Some people were put upon this earth to be put upon. Jim has an inability to deal with logical people.

MIA

Madam Speaker. How'd you know it was me?

SPEAKER BROOKES

The shoes, no offense. And call me Terra.

Mia speaks through the stall, like a church confessional.

MIA

I respect his war record. First in his class at West Point. Master strategist. Helicopter shot down in Tikrit and he still wins the battle. He's impressive.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Yes, oppressively impressive. That glass eye of his seems to follow me around the room like a painting in a haunted house.

MIA

He's going to be the leader of the free world and he can't stand me.

(then)

What's wrong with my shoes?

SPEAKER BROOKES

They're too sensible for a first lady and too proletarian for a cellist -- I made a deduction. You know, it's not true about needing the chief justice to swear Jim in.

MIA

The constitution's a little murky on that point. I was just buying time. As long as he's out of the range of cellphones, advisors, and Wikipedia, I can hold out. Thank you for backing me up, by the way.

SPEAKER BROOKES

It was in my self-interest. I have a sentimental attachment for civilization. If the Syrian Peace Accord goes up in smoke over this, so does half the first world.

MIA

And most of the third.

SPEAKER BROOKES

You say you're stalling for time. What are you holding out for?

MIA

The president to survive long enough for my bosses to fly back from Brussels. The Chief of Secret Service should be the one jumping on this grenade.

SPEAKER BROOKES

If the president dies-

MIA

-The vice president must retaliate-

SPEAKER BROOKES

-bombs drop, the falcon cannot hear the falconer, and mere chaos is loosed upon the world.

MIA

(can't get over it)

If he takes office, can he really go over my boss's head and fire me?

SPEAKER BROOKES

I've known Jim 35 years. If you were a man, he wouldn't dream of it. But he has a real genius for misogyny. He's a misogynist.

MIA

My shoes are from JC Penney. I thought they looked nice. And here's another confession: I don't have to pee.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Me neither. I just wanted a break from all that hostility in the war room. You could cut the testosterone with a...

She realizes her poor choice of words...

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The two women step out of their stalls and move to the sink. They make eye contact through the mirror.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Since you're confiding in me, you must not think I'm the killer.

MIA

On the contrary, you're a prime suspect.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Am I? What's my motive? The president's from the other side of the political aisle?

MIA

You're the speaker of the house. If the vice president is the murderer, or if you can make it look like the he's the murderer, then you become the president.

Speaker Brookes cocks one eyebrow.

SPEAKER BROOKES

You have a subtle mind.

MIA

I'm sensible... if a bit proletarian.

SPEAKER BROOKES

You've worked hard to cover your southern accent, haven't you.

MIA

My only path out of Wheeling, West Virginia was an army recruiting office. I find people take me more seriously if I sound like I use a bathtub for showering rather than making moonshine.

(then)

What's your angle in all this? You support the Syrian Peace Accord?

SPEAKER BROOKES

I honestly don't know yet. If I were sitting in the big chair, would I choose to play politics or choose what I think is right? It's surprisingly hard to know.

MIA

Is it? Did you know that congress-people and secret service officers take the exact same oath?

SPEAKER BROOKES
Sweetheart, can you solve this
crime?

Mia shakes her head.

MIA
Not in six hours. Locked in a
bunker. There are already several
clues that make no sense to me. I'm
hoping to pass this buck.

Speaker Brookes pats Mia on her shoulders.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Then you know how I feel.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mia and Stone take a lap around the bunker.

AGENT STONE
Thunder storms in Brussels. At
least nine hours for the chief to
return.

MIA
I need the cavalry, and they're on
the other side of an ocean. Any
fingerprints on the knife?

ANALYSTS scurry past, carrying laptops to the briefing room.

AGENT STONE
Don't know yet. Nancy Garcia is on
her way from Georgetown PD. I did
check the security logs on the Oval
Office. The Rose Garden and
Secretary doors were armed and
locked.

MIA
So only two possible entrances from
the private dining room. And zero
security cameras around the Oval
Office. A pretty kettle of fish.

They round the corner to see a White House institution: Chief
Server **GOLDIE** (60s), a short woman with a black catering tie
over her white blouse, guarded at the elevator by a Uniformed
Division Officer. She speaks with an East African accent.

GOLDIE
I am so sorry, Ms. Pine.

She appears nervous to the brink of tears.

MIA

Goldie, can you tell me which place setting was missing a steak knife?

Goldie shakes her head emphatically.

GOLDIE

I already clear all the places for dessert. And those knives are already cleaned by the dishwasher.

MIA

So no fingerprints...

AGENT STONE

And no way to tell who was missing their knife.

Mia furrows her brow.

MIA

Goldie, how many steak knives are in the Kennedy set?

GOLDIE

Oh, Ms. Pine. I know you smart lady. You track every weapon in the White House. You know there are six.

MIA

But there were seven diners including the president. Who was eating without a knife?

GOLDIE

Ms. Adara was a last minute addition. Luckily, she is a vegetarian. She eat quinoa salad.

Mia spies through the blinds at the dinner guests inside the War Room. Adara sits curled in a plush chair, her face showing the calm complacency of a well-stroked cat.

AGENT STONE

So Adara had no knife. Does that eliminate one suspect?

Mia studies Adara's body language. Her leg bounces nervously. Her left hand taps frenetic patterns against her chair... Cello fingerings. Adara is a bundle of nerves.

MIA

Not exactly. Though I do have a harder time picturing a vegetarian carving up the president.

Mia turns back to Goldie.

MIA

Thank you, Goldie. Come see me if you notice anything else.

GOLDIE

Oh yes, I will Ms. Pine.

Mia dismisses her with a nod. Agent Stone presses a finger to his earpiece, listening intently.

AGENT STONE

Dr. Cheng attempted resuscitation on POTUS.

MIA

And?

Agent Stone shakes his head gravely.

AGENT STONE

I'm sure sorry.

Mia's face falls. She covers her eyes with both hands.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mia marks the time on her cell phone. She takes a deep breath and enters the War Room.

Conversation falls silent.

MIA

Tonight, at 11:25pm, President Henry Wood was pronounced dead.

The first lady's shoulders slump. Adara looks away, hiding her face. Chief of Staff Holland rubs his temples.

The Speaker of the House rises to address the room.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Abraham Lincoln. William McKinley. James Garfield. John F. Kennedy. And now Henry Douglas Wood... Before we get caught up in politics and blamestorming, we should take a moment to honor a fallen president.

The group listens.

SPEAKER BROOKES

I did not know Hank well. But I admired him. Would anyone like to offer some words of remembrance?

There are a few moments of foot-shuffling, throat-clearing awkward silence. No one speaks up. Finally, Mia jumps in to fill the hole.

MIA

"Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget, falls drop by drop upon the heart, until in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God."

Mia swallows. The room is silent.

MIA

It's from Aeschylus.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Thank you. Does anyone else have anything to add?

More silence. At last, the first lady holds up her mug.

FIRST LADY WOOD

Pain makes you stronger. Tears make you braver. Heartbreak makes you wiser. And gin makes you not remember any of that crap.

She salutes the room with her mug and drinks.

Deputy National Security Advisor **MARK BANKS** bursts into the room. He wears a rumpled dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up. He's flanked by a DUTY OFFICER, a COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT and two CIA ANALYSTS.

SECURITY ADVISOR BANKS

Mr. Vice President, I apologize for the interruption. We have satellite of the Russians advancing their ground troops in Syria.

The two analysts set up laptops and turn on the War Room's SMART screens, pulling up SATELLITE IMAGES OF RUSSIAN TANK POSITIONS IN THE SYRIAN DESERT.

SECURITY ADVISOR BANKS

In the past 20 minutes, the Russians have crossed the border to advance on Aleppo.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

Those are not Russian troops.

SECURITY ADVISOR BANKS

Fine, Syrian resistance fighters armed by Russia, trained by Russia, embedded with Russian intelligence agents, with Russian air support. Tomato, to-mah-to.

Banks turns back to the vice president.

SECURITY ADVISOR BANKS

We don't know what triggered this. Drone footage shows a missile launcher smorgasbord. They're on a war footing.

The vice president turns to the Russian ambassador.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

What are you up to?

Ambassador Kamenev holds Vice President Steele's stare.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

If you release me from this bunker, or give me a cellphone signal, maybe I can find out.

Security Advisor Banks continues.

SECURITY ADVISOR BANKS

Major General Fitz is in charge on the ground. He recommends moving all our lines north to Aleppo to be ready to counterattack with hellfire missiles.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Keep me updated. The American people just lost a president. They're gonna want a show of force.

Banks shuts his laptop and the analysts file out. Holland sidles up next to the vice president at the side table.

HOLLAND

Sir, can I get you a coffee?
They've got a Keurig with the
single pods.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Sure, why not.

HOLLAND

Let me guess: cream, sugar, and
marshmallows?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Black as the night.

Adara corners Mia.

ADARA

Can I leave? I am just the cello
player.

FIRST LADY WOOD

(vicious)

Then you've got a strong right arm.
You could have stabbed that knife
into him better than any of us.

Mia's face is ashen. Voices swirl around her as she takes
slow, deep breaths.

FIRST LADY WOOD

The speaker and I should be allowed
to leave. The murderer couldn't
have been a middle-aged woman. Hank
was a 200-pound former wrestler.
How could we overpower him?

The vice president points to his carotid artery...

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

We learned blood-chokes in the
Marines. It's amazing how fast you
lose consciousness when the carotid
artery can't pump blood to your
brain.

He shakes his head.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

That knife would have put Hank's
lights out in seconds. I believe a
woman could have done this.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
An equal opportunity investigation.

FIRST LADY WOOD
Not completely equal. Look at
Holland. What possible motive could
he have for killing him?

Eyes turn to the young chief of staff, polishing his glasses.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
V-neck? He couldn't kill a fly.

HOLLAND
Thank you, Mr. Vice President, for
that vote of confidence in my
character.

FIRST LADY WOOD
I still say it was one of the men.
Terra and I are too level-headed.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
What is that supposed to mean?

FIRST LADY WOOD
Hank was stabbed in the neck.
That's clearly a crime of passion!

Mia takes a breath and steps forward.

MIA
No. The killer needed to conceal
the knife in the dining room before
bringing it to the Oval Office.
That shows malice of forethought.

Everyone turns to Mia. The color has returned to her cheeks.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Who are you anyway? And what kind
of bodyguard quotes Cicero?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
Aeschylus.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Whoever. I'd like to see your
badge.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Jim, she clearly works here. She
didn't just sneak in to prank us.

MIA

No, it's okay. I have not properly introduced myself. And so perhaps I have not been entirely truthful. The president personally requested me to attend tonight.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Why? Who are you?

MIA

My name is Mia Pine. I am Secret Service. That much is true. Everyone knows the Secret Service protects the president, but that is only half our mandate. We have an investigative mission: drug enforcement, antiterrorism, money laundering, even missing children. I am an investigator, trained to observe.

FIRST LADY WOOD

Why did the president want you here tonight?

MIA

Because he thought someone might try to kill him.

The diners exchange shocked looks.

MIA

In the secret service, the best way to solve a crime is before it even happens. To anticipate the enemy's intent. The president's instincts were correct. Unfortunately, I was too late. And someone - who I believe is in this room - succeeded.

Mia steps forward, now commanding the room.

MIA

Was it a personal dispute? Or was someone attempting to blow up the Syrian Peace Accord? Was it the Russians? Or someone implicating the Russians? *Cui bono?*

Mia circles the room.

MIA

We have only a few hours to solve this murder before America goes to war.

She stops at the head of the boardroom table.

MIA

Since I was not there during dinner, I will be relying on all of your memories tonight, faulty though human memory may be. I will be conducting private conversations with each of you, starting clockwise. Before we begin, I think it may be wise to bear in mind two quotes from the Greek poet Aeschylus. "Memory is the mother of all wisdom." And...

The room listens intently.

MIA

"In war, truth is the first casualty."

Chapter Three: The Chief of Staff

INT. BREAK ROOM - HOLLAND ATKINSON'S INTERROGATION

A small kitchenette with a fridge and microwave. Holland shuts the door and turns to Mia.

HOLLAND

Clockwise, huh?

He wraps his arms around her. He kisses the line of her jaw and down her neck. He leans her head back.

MIA

Nice performance out there. Kissing ass and taking numbers.

He kisses his way up to her mouth and she turns away.

MIA

No, no making out. It doesn't feel right.

HOLLAND

'Cause we're at work?

MIA

No.

HOLLAND

'Cause I drank coffee?

MIA

No! Because a sitting US president
was just murdered on my watch!

HOLLAND

It's not your fault-

MIA

-Of course it is! It's my job to
protect him. Who else's fault would
it be?

HOLLAND

The murderer's?

Mia rifles through the cabinets by the sink until she finds a
stack of board games.

MIA

I found the chessboard. C'mon,
c'mon. You know it helps me think.

She sits at the table and begins setting up the pieces.

Holland ransacks the cabinets and comes up with a stash of
cereal boxes. He pours several different brands into a bowl.

HOLLAND

All right, if getting your ass
whooped makes you feel better, who
am I to stand in the way?

MIA

Is that Cap'n Crunch, Count
Chocula, and Froot Loops?

HOLLAND

You're goddamn right it is. Who do
you like for the murder?

MIA

You eat like a four year-old. Pawn
to E-4, bitch. Your move.

She hits play on her iPhone. BACH.

HOLLAND
Classical music?

MIA
I need everything going to kick my brain into gear. If they had a piano down here, I'd be playing it. Now it's past midnight and I am definitely not a night person, so just play, okay?

HOLLAND
They'll be wondering why you're interrogating me for so long.

MIA
Then play faster.

Holland plays his knight.

HOLLAND
You quoted Aeschylus out there. Twice. No, three times.

MIA
I need them to respect me. They see me as blue collar.

HOLLAND
It's not your collar they're seeing, it's your shoulder with the chip on it.

MIA
I had to stare down the vice president. Like playing chicken with a freight train. I didn't see you chivalrously rushing to my defense.

HOLLAND
My boss is dearly departed. I'm no longer chief of staff, I'm chief of unemployment unless I can prove I'm indispensable to that wildebeest.

MIA
By fetching his coffee? He's a war hero who thinks you're a ninny. While you were blowing pitch pipes in the Harvard Krokodiloes, he was dodging bullets in the Korengal Valley. Besides, the VP has his own chief of staff, you know.

HOLLAND

Point is, I'm not picking any fights with him. There's no percentage in it. I come to your defense, people suspect we're dating. Check.

MIA

"You wouldn't care about what people thought of you, if you realized how seldom they do."

HOLLAND

Is that more Aeschylus?

MIA

It's Dr. Phil. You know how Aeschylus died, right?

HOLLAND

You're always obsessed with how everyone died. You're-you're-you're like my grandmother morbidly sending me obituaries.

(then)

Nice shoes, by the way. You look like you robbed the grave of Nikita Khrushchev.

MIA

Wow. Khrushchev: very topical. Why does everyone hate my shoes?

HOLLAND

I have a visual eye that is easily offended.

(again)

Who do you like for the murder?

MIA

Well, my dear Watson. I don't want to call the race before the primaries. A detective picks a favorite too soon and they get a blind spot. They only look for evidence that supports their bias. I focus too hard on your pawns and I forget all about your fianchettoed bishop, aiming at my king like a sniper. Cheeky bastard.

Mia moves her queen.

MIA
Doreen moved out?

HOLLAND
I'm free at last. She's back with her parents in Virginia. She doesn't want the twins anywhere near Washington. Can you blame her?

MIA
We're getting rid of that awful couch in the living room, right? It's like you decorated by raiding a frat house. How do you feel about Doreen taking the kids?

HOLLAND
It's sad, but let's face it: I'm not a family man. My duty is here. And your-your-your duty is to rally around the vice president. He's the new star around which we orbit. Check. Your move.

Mia's eyes dance over the chess board, her thoughts racing.

INT. BREAK ROOM - FIRST LADY GAIL WOOD'S INTERROGATION

The first lady sits barefoot, sipping from her mug. Her high heels are nowhere to be seen.

MIA
I am so sorry for your loss, Mrs. Wood.

FIRST LADY WOOD
He was a short man with a shorter temper. You know how some people have dysphonia - the sound of someone chewing popcorn can drive them insane? I had that for his entire personality.

MIA
That can't be true.

FIRST LADY WOOD
He was completely uninterested in culture. Do you know, the first time we went to the opera, he called it Wagner's Rinse Cycle? Oh, but he charmed people with that delicate Connecticut etiquette.

MIA

Where did you find gin, Mrs. Wood?

FIRST LADY WOOD

Have you ever lost anyone close to you, hon? Or are you too young?

MIA

My father, when I was twelve.

FIRST LADY WOOD

Is there a right way to get through it?

MIA

I don't know if you ever get through it. It stays with you forever. I just asked because I thought you'd stopped drinking.

FIRST LADY WOOD

I know Hank had you people empty every wet bar on the grounds. But you don't get to be first lady without being a little resourceful.

MIA

I know all about your resourcefulness. You're famous in the Secret Service for being the only first lady to sneak off the grounds in a catering truck.

FIRST LADY WOOD

Well, Michelle Obama started the vegetable garden. I needed to be first at something.

MIA

How many drinks have you had this evening?

FIRST LADY WOOD

Less than a lot, more than a few. You've been in the White House for a while, Mia. You must know about his affair with that young staffer. Gave her an 18-karat gold bracelet inlaid with ten diamonds. Cartier.

MIA

The president was wealthy. There's a rumor he was changing his will.

The first lady takes a slow sip from her mug.

FIRST LADY WOOD

Rumor is a beast with many eyes and many tongues and it flies faster than any creature.

MIA

When I found you tonight, how did you come to have the president's blood on your hands?

FIRST LADY WOOD

I must have embraced him.

MIA

Around his neck?

FIRST LADY WOOD

I honestly don't remember.

MIA

Can you remember what was served for dessert?

The first lady frowns.

MIA

How about dinner?

FIRST LADY WOOD

Most of what I remember about dinner was that awful woman. With her olive eyes and olive skin, sucking olives from her martini glass and giggling at all Hank's tired jokes.

Something vicious flashes behind the first lady's eyes.

INT. BREAK ROOM - ADARA LEHAVI'S INTERROGATION

Adara sits cross-legged, tapping one high heel. Her silky, raven hair covers one eye. She applies lipstick, a bold shade of cherry blossom.

MIA

I just have to say, I was tremendously moved by your recital tonight. I love the Bach cello suites.

Adara speaks with a rhythmic accent.

ADARA

Bach did not write them on commission. Bach write them just for 'imself alone. So they contain Bach's soul.

Mia sees Adara's fingernails are nibbled down to the quick.

MIA

All Israeli women serve in the army. Where were you assigned?

ADARA

Caracal Battalion.

MIA

One of the few female combat divisions in the world.

ADARA

You know of it?

MIA

I've seen the photos: a bunch of badass women in body armor sporting huge assault rifles. You're a feminist icon. It's an honor to meet you.

ADARA

It was an 'onor to serve.

MIA

They give you time off to practice cello?

Adara smiles and nods.

ADARA

They made special allowance. It was good public relations for a touring cellist to come back to serve Israel.

MIA

Tell me, how did you get invited to dinner tonight? I mean... First Lady Wood... Vice President Steele... Ambassador Kamenev... Cello player. One of these things is not like the others.

ADARA

I was surprise as anyone. Maybe is normal to invite the evening's musician. 'enry was very polite.

MIA

I didn't take President Wood for a music lover. I checked the Secret Service log. You've visited him several times this year - even at Camp David. Did you two have a special relationship?

Adara begins fidgeting with her bracelet, turning it around and around on her wrist.

ADARA

'enry and I... Were good friends.

Mia looks down at Adara's fidgeting hands.

MIA

Your bracelet. Is that Cartier?

INT. BREAK ROOM - AMBASSADOR PYOTR KAMENEV'S INTERROGATION

Ambassador Kamenev lights up a slim Davidoff Gold cigarette, his legs crossed primly at the knees. His movements are graceful and elegant, like a dancer.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

I apologize for smoking. I did not know I would be locked indoors so many hours. I will smoke quickly.

He sucks hard on the cigarette and exhales up toward the ceiling vent.

Mia scans a computer printout.

MIA

A medal of commendation in The Second Chechen War?

The Russian nods.

MIA

Did you kill people?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

(frowning)

Why would you ask me that?

MIA

I was just curious how you earned your medal.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

The Secret Service men you work with - most of them served in the military, yes? You ask them if they kill people?

MIA

I served too, you know.

Ambassador Kamenev draws on his cigarette and says nothing.

MIA

You are staying in the Russian embassy, right? Isn't that the U.S. headquarters of the FSB?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

You are calling me a spy?

MIA

I'd just like to know where you're staying. In case I need to get in touch with you about this investigation.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

I killed a man at the Battle of Grozny. It turned out he was a Chechen commander. The army gave me a medal.

The ambassador crushes out his cigarette.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

The killing made me sick. For years, it was all I see when I shut my eyes at night. It was the reason I became diplomat. So that I could prevent humanitarian disasters like Chechnya from ever happening again.

Mia studies his eyes, his body language.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

Why you looking at me like that?

MIA

It's just interesting how many people we have here tonight who are trained to kill.

INT. BREAK ROOM - VICE PRESIDENT STEELE'S INTERROGATION

Vice President Jim Steele sits with marine posture. His presence fills the room. He seems better suited for battlefields than kitchenettes.

Nevertheless, he has a plain-spoken Midwestern charm that evokes potlucks and barn-raising.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

I honor your service, Ms. Pine,
like I honor the service of any
American in uniform, and I
apologize if I treated you
disrespectfully earlier this
evening.

MIA

No apology necessary, Mr. Vice
President.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Now I know what you're thinking.
It's no secret I ran a vicious
campaign against Hank in the
primaries, and the only reason he
chose me as his running mate was a
calculated bid to win the more
polarized wing of the party. It's
no secret I'm ass-deep in defense
contracts. You probably think I
have Boeing tattooed on my right
butt cheek, and Lockheed Martin on
the left. It's no secret I saw
heavy combat in Iraq and probably
have more than a few freckles of
PTSD. It's no secret I've got that
famous hair-trigger temper they
bellyache about in the press. Some
people call it being a straight
shooter and some people call it
being an asshole. Some people say
it will be the ruin of me. All of
these non-secrets are true. Except
the part about the Lockheed Martin
tattoo - my ass tattoo says
Northrop Grumman.

(then)

That was a joke, by the way.

He sips his coffee, stares at the mug, and shakes his head.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Say what you will about that
jabbering lickspittle, V-neck. He
can make the living shit out of a
cup of coffee.

He clears his throat and continues.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
It's no secret I hate the Syrian
Peace Accord. If we want the Middle
East to heel, we need to show our
might. An eye for an eye. It's the
only thing those people will
respect. Hank and I didn't agree on
everything but we saw eye to eye on
that. Now it's no secret I stand to
benefit from the president's
untimely passing, god rest his
soul. I get to step up and pinch
hit. And it's no secret that the
split second I'm sworn in, I'm
blowing up the peace deal and
that's just the first thing I'm
blowing up.

He finishes his coffee, crushes the Styrofoam cup in his
fist, and tosses it in the wastebasket.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
All that is the god's honest truth.
But here's another truth: I fucking
love this country. I honor the
office of the president. And if
anyone's crazy enough to think for
one goddamn second that I would
ever lift a finger against the
President of the United-Fucking-
States of America, they're out of
their goddamn mind.

He leans in close to Mia.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Now look me in the eyes, and tell
me if I ain't telling the truth.

Vice President Steele stares down Mia, his glass eye peering
somewhere right-of-center.

INT. BREAK ROOM - SPEAKER TERRA BROOKES' INTERROGATION

The Speaker of the House plucks an English muffin from the toaster before taking a seat. She has the confidence of a person wealthy enough to own multiple horse farms.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Clockwise, huh?

MIA
Saving the best for last.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Are we becoming best friends?

Mia waves a printout.

MIA
I've been reading about you.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Likewise, Mia.

MIA
How did you get on the internet?

SPEAKER BROOKES
Don't worry. I'm not leaking anything about the president.

MIA
It's not in your self-interest.

SPEAKER BROOKES
You've built quite a reputation for yourself.

MIA
Madam Speaker, are you planning a presidential run?

SPEAKER BROOKES
Remember, call me Terra. You're a Secret Service legend. You caught James Joseph, the white supremacist terrorist.

MIA
You know what Virgil said about rumors, Terra.

SPEAKER BROOKES
And you foiled the Thanksgiving Day Parade attack.

SPEAKER BROOKES (CONT'D)

The public never hears about the attacks that don't happen. They never learn who the true heroes are...

MIA

There are rumors you've already raised twelve million dollars for your campaign.

SPEAKER BROOKES

You're the youngest person - male or female - to be promoted to the level of Deputy Chief. I know this town: you don't get to that level without being at least a little ruthless.

MIA

I don't have much of a social life.

SPEAKER BROOKES

A classics major. A graduate degree in psych. They say you can tell when a person is lying. Can you?

MIA

Have you ever met a sociopath?

SPEAKER BROOKES

Every day in Congress.

MIA

I'm talking about a person capable of remorseless violence. I have, several times. They were always incredibly charming.

SPEAKER BROOKES

So you cannot spot liars?

MIA

I didn't say that.

SPEAKER BROOKES

What are you saying?

MIA

I do not trust myself to spot the lie. But I trust myself to spot the liar.

SPEAKER BROOKES

How?

Speaker Brookes bites into her English muffin with an audible crunch.

MIA

A lot is in the eyes. I judge character. People are constantly revealing themselves if we just pay attention. Like you, for instance.

Speaker Brookes raises one eyebrow.

MIA

I set out to interrogate you; you end up interrogating me. Classic deflection. What are you hiding?

SPEAKER BROOKES

You've had a chance to look at everyone tonight. Which of them is capable of premeditated murder?

MIA

Several.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Am I one of them?

MIA

Well, you're extremely charming. Whether or not that makes you a sociopath... Time will tell.

A WOMAN'S SCREAMS CUT THE SILENCE. MIA JUMPS TO HER FEET.

MIA

Jesus. Not again.

Chapter Four: The First Lady

INT. BUNKER - WAR ROOM - NIGHT

MIA BURSTS INTO THE WAR ROOM. THE FIRST LADY IS GRAPPLING WITH ADARA, SCRATCHING, CLAWING, AND KICKING.

MIA

For god's sakes, break it up!

MIA HOOKS THE FIRST LADY'S ELBOWS AND DRAGS HER BACKWARD. VICE PRESIDENT STEELE BEAR HUGS ADARA, LIFTING HER TO SAFETY.

ADARA IS BLEEDING FROM AN UGLY CUT BY HER RIGHT EYE.

THE FIRST LADY STRUGGLES AGAINST MIA'S GRIP.

MIA
Mrs. Wood, relax!

FIRST LADY WOOD
I'll kill her!

MIA
Calm down!

MIA TIGHTENS HER ARM-BAR.

MIA
An hour ago you were saying you're
too level-headed for a crime of
passion, that women aren't capable
of violence.

Mia wrestles a high heel out of the first lady's grip. She
looks at the nasty heel tip and then at Adara's eye.

MIA
Is that your first instinct, Mrs.
Wood? To stab?

FIRST LADY WOOD
Let go of me.

Mia releases the first lady.

Ambassador Kamenev wets some paper towels and hands them to
Adara. She dabs at her bleeding face and the fingernail
scratches on her wrist.

ADARA
She tries to take my bracelet. I
try to make 'er - um - *decrescendo*
but she is like crazy person!

FIRST LADY WOOD
This Mediterranean hussy doesn't
deserve that bracelet.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Come on, Gail. Keep your dignity.

The first lady gives the vice president a scathing look.

Mia takes the first lady's drinking mug and pours it in the
trash. She hands the empty mug to Holland.

MIA

Holland, work your Keurig magic
with one of those coffee pods. Make
it strong.

The first lady is still spitting mad.

FIRST LADY WOOD

Adara isn't just an innocent cello
player, you know.

MIA

And who is she then?

FIRST LADY WOOD

She's an Israeli asset.

The vice president throws his hands in the air.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Of course she is. You think the
president would negotiate the
Syrian Peace Accord without keeping
the Israelis informed? Adara is
here as a professional courtesy.
President Wood didn't give a shit
about cello music. No offense.

ADARA

Some taken.

FIRST LADY WOOD

I'm just saying, the presence of an
Israeli spy here should not be
discounted.

ADARA

Why would I 'urt the president?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

That's easy. To stop the peace
accord. As long as the Arab nations
keeping fighting, they stay weak
and Israel stays strong!

MIA

Everyone sit down! Now!

The dinner guests sit like scolded children.

MIA

I believe that the eyes are the
windows to the soul. They often
contain all the proof you need.

MIA (CONT'D)

When I interviewed you, each of you was lying about something. *Everyone* had a reason to want the president dead. Well, except for Holland - he wouldn't hurt a fly.

HOLLAND

Thank you?

MIA

Madam Speaker is rumored to be exploring a presidential run. And the only person who can beat her in the polling... is now dead.

Terra Brookes looks up at Mia, shocked.

Mia circles the table clockwise.

MIA

The first lady is not too thrilled about her husband's extramarital extracurriculars. He was powerless to divorce her while in the highest office in the land. However, I happen to know that the president threatened to change his will if she did not curb her drinking.

FIRST LADY WOODS

You have no right to judge me!

Mia has already moved around the table to...

MIA

Adara is a foreign asset who has spent quite a bit of time with the president. They apparently share a rather fervent love of music.

ADARA

We were just good friends!

MIA

Of course. It's just that I noticed you're wearing the same pink shade of lipstick I spotted earlier on the president's collar.

Adara's eyes widen. Mia keeps moving.

MIA

Ambassador Kamenev. If you are not Russian intelligence, you certainly work on the same hallway. You're a well-trained and well-decorated killer. And Russia benefits from a Middle East in chaos.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Here, here.

MIA

And Vice President Steele. You said it's no secret you didn't want the president to sign the Syrian Peace Accord. And you stand to benefit more than anyone from his death. You get to sit in the big chair.

The vice president clenches his jaw and says nothing.

MIA

So here we are. Who is lying, and who is telling the truth?

Mia crosses her arms.

MIA

All of you have told lies tonight.
(then)
Except maybe Holland.

HOLLAND

Thank you, Mia.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

Why you assume he is so innocent?

MIA

Because I know his whereabouts at the time of the murder.

Mia lowers her eyes and quickly continues.

MIA

Earlier tonight I told madam speaker that there were already several important clues. I'd like to share one with you now...

Mia pulls up a photo on her phone and shares it on the War Room's SMART screens.

MIA

Mrs. Wood, you may want to look away.

THE SCREENS DISPLAY A GRUESOME IMAGE OF THE DEAD PRESIDENT. He is sitting up in his chair, head tilted back. A knife protruding from his throat. Blood soaking his shirt.

The first lady moans.

Holland looks nauseous.

Agent Stone crosses the room with a first aid kit for Adara.

Mia cycles through a few photos of the president's corpse.

MIA

When I first looked at these,
something immediately struck me as
odd. Does anyone see it?

Adara gingerly holds out her scratched wrist for Agent Stone to dab with iodine.

ADARA

No defensive wounds?

Mia nods. She examines the screen more closely.

MIA

True... But it's more than that.
What's the first thing you do when
someone stabs you in the neck?

Nobody answers. Holland jumps in the hole.

HOLLAND

Call HR?

Crickets.

MIA

Holland, I need a volunteer. Would
you help me?

Mia grips a dry erase marker overhand like a knife. She steps behind Holland's chair and wraps one arm around his neck. With her knife hand - in exaggerated slow motion - she drives the marker down on Holland's carotid artery.

Instinctively, Holland lifts his hands in defense.

Mia tucks the marker under his V-neck, so that it stands straight up.

MIA

You are now the proud owner of a knife in your carotid artery. What do you do?

Holland clutches at the marker, a bit theatrically.

MIA

See? Your hand went to it instinctively. You want to staunch the bleeding. Forget defensive wounds. There's no blood on the president's hands.

Mia points to the TV screens. Sure enough, the president's hands are immaculate.

MIA

Think about it. He was stabbed in the neck and bled to death, and he never once thought to grab the knife or stem the bleeding. He just sat there with his hands at his sides.

The room is silent.

MIA

When we found his body, I saw there was no blood on the phone. Why didn't he call for help? I even checked the panic button under his desk - there's no blood there, either.

The group takes this in. Agent Stone packs up his first aid kit and bows out of the room.

MIA

But it gets stranger...

Mia crosses back to Holland.

MIA

You're stabbed in the neck, you're passing out. Act it out for us.

FIRST LADY WOOD

This is in poor taste.

MIA

Please, it's important. Holland, pretend you're bleeding out.

Holland seems to get into the acting. His eyes dim and slowly close. He collapses forward onto the table.

MIA
Oscar-winning. But why didn't you
fall backward?

Holland returns to life.

HOLLAND
Well, it felt natural. The chair
kind of sends you forward.

MIA
Let's try again to make sure.

Mia retrieves the marker and once again mimes stabbing Holland in the neck.

MIA
You've been stabbed in the neck.
Holland, can you imagine any world
in which you could pass out in the
same position as the president?

Holland eyes the SMART screen. He mimes passing out while staying sitting up, his head resting back in the posture of the president.

HOLLAND
No. It's completely unnatural. I
don't think it's possible.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
So what does this mean?

MIA
The president was already
incapacitated.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Someone stabbed him when he was
already unconscious?

MIA
Yes. Somehow, he was placed in this
position.

The group digests this.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
So someone drugged him first?

MIA

We'll soon find out from a tox screen.

FIRST LADY WOOD

He did have the white wine at dinner. I noticed because everyone else had the sense to have red wine with the steak. But if someone put something in the white wine...

ADARA

Or the coffee. He had coffee.

SPEAKER BROOKES

So, someone killed him twice? Once with poison and once with a knife?

ADARA

Or there are two killers.

MIA

Or a third possibility. One I can't quite see yet...

The first lady waves her hands at the SMART screen.

FIRST LADY WOOD

I'm sorry. Can we change the channel?

Mia sees Agent Stone appear in the doorway.

MIA

Of course. Let's all take a moment.

Mia turns off the SMART screens and moves to the door to huddle with Agent Stone.

AGENT STONE

(whispered)

Why are you open-sourcing this investigation? I mean, if the killer is really here, aren't you tipping your hand?

MIA

Maybe. But I believe the killer's behavior will change as I get hotter or colder. And I am watching for that change.

Mia eyes the diners. First Lady Wood pats tears with a wadded up Kleenex and shuffles off to the bathroom. Speaker Brookes stretches her neck and paces.

MIA

Is Dr. Silver examining the president? Where is he with my expedited toxicology report?

AGENT STONE

Nothing yet.

MIA

I'm looking for a sedative - something to knock out the president. Rohypnol in his drink, chloroform in his nasal passages - anything. Any word on knife fingerprints?

(she catches Stone's look)

What is it?

AGENT STONE

She insisted...

Agent Stone shrugs apologetically and steps to one side. Chief Server Goldie pushes her way into the war room, breathless and earnest.

CHIEF SERVER GOLDIE

Ms. Pine, there is another mystery!

Mia raises her eyebrows. The dinner guests in the room strain to listen while feigning interest in their smartphones.

CHIEF SERVER GOLDIE

You tell me to report anything else I notice. After I count all the knives, I decide to count the other silverware. Is all there. Then I think: count the plates and glasses. Is all there. Then I think: count the napkins. And...

She leans in dramatically.

CHIEF SERVER GOLDIE

...There is one napkin missing!

Mia glances at Agent Stone who shrugs again. Mia pats Goldie on the arm.

MIA
Thank you, Goldie. We shall add
this crime to our list.

Agent Stone ushers Goldie from the room.

Mia reviews her interview notes. Holland maneuvers close to her on the pretense of pouring more coffee.

HOLLAND
(whispered)
You had to pick *me* to stab to
death?

MIA
Maybe it was Freudian.

HOLLAND
How you holding up?

MIA
I have a working hypothesis. I just
need to test it.

Mia notices Vice President Steele locked in debate with Ambassador Kamenev. She focuses on their conversation...

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
You sold Syria weapons for years
and then act shocked when they use
them.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
Do you care about peace? Or Syria's
oil? How much did Exxon fund your
campaign?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Russia wants Syria in chaos so
Turkey destabilizes.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
Why do we want that?

The vice president laughs. He spreads his arms wide,
addressing the whole room.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Because Russia wants a warm water
port!

The vice president stands, towering over the seated Russian,
invading his personal space. The temperature in the room
changes.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
 It's what Russia wanted in the
 Crimean War, the Russo-Japanese
 War, World War One, the Ukrainian
 genocide, and again in the Crimean
 annexation of 2014! If Russia
 destabilizes Turkey, you win the
 Dardanelles.

SPEAKER BROOKES
 Jim, if we put self-interest aside
 and deescalate, then Russia can
 back down while saving face-

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
 -Terra, gimme a goddamn break-

SPEAKER BROOKES
 -We could both leave the region in
 peace and save our countries a
 costly proxy war-

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
 -And we'll all hold hands, pass a
 joint, go back to Berkeley, and
 play in a drum circle.

The vice president turns to Adara.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
 You're Israeli. The Syrians have
 broken every treaty they've ever
 signed. Do you believe their
 leadership can promise peace?

ADARA
 (guarded)
 I do not believe the word of a
 dictator can ever be trusted.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
 I agree!

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
 And what is a dictator, exactly?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
 Someone who leads a country without
 being properly voted in for the
 job.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
 Oh. You mean, like you, when you
 become president tomorrow?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE POURS HIS COFFEE ON AMBASSADOR KAMENEV.
THE AMBASSADOR LEAPS TO HIS FEET.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
Are you out of your mind?

MIA CROSSES THE ROOM.

MIA
That's enough!

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
They spike our elections, they
poison diplomats, and now they
assassinate presidents! And nobody
does a damn thing about it. Well, I
will!

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
By throwing coffee?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
More than that.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
What are you going to do? "Blood-
choke" me?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE CURLS HIS FISTS. MIA THROWS HERSELF
BETWEEN THE TWO MEN.

MIA
Sir, you are about to become the
president!

Mia stands chest-to-belly with the vice president, holding
him back from assaulting the ambassador.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
I don't appreciate the pass
interference.

MIA
Sir, I am asking you to stand down.

Ambassador Kamenev wipes hot coffee from his dripping jacket.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I flew 5,000 miles to be here
tonight.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
And you can fly 5,000 miles back.

The first lady returns from the bathroom and takes in the scene.

FIRST LADY WOOD
Soak it in cold water.

Ambassador Kamenev turns and strides from the room.

Agent Stone steps in, hand on his weapons belt.

AGENT STONE
I heard shouting. Everything okay?

Vice President Steele snaps his fingers at Agent Stone.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Keep an eye on that Russian. This is a top-secret facility. I don't want him wandering around, checking in the medicine cabinets.

MIA
Sir, he's just going to the bathroom. He doesn't need an escort.

Vice President Steele glares down at Mia.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
You've really picked sides, haven't you?

Holland cues Mia with a subtle nod of his head. *Meet me outside.*

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Holland strides out of earshot from the War Room. Mia catches up.

MIA
Okay. What did I do?

HOLLAND
You know how we promised that we would be each other's makeup mirror, and always let the other know when we had spinach in our teeth?

Mia nods, hustling to match Holland's pace.

HOLLAND

You've got major career spinach in your teeth. And what do you do? You-you-you keep eating more spinach.

MIA

He's being an ass, that's empirically true. But he's being deliberate. He's trying to provoke the ambassador and I don't know why. There's a strategy there...

HOLLAND

Then let him employ his strategy - he's the next president. And he has a sworn duty to protect America's interests on the world stage. Keep your eye on the ball!

Mia stops, pinches the bridge of her nose, and sighs.

MIA

I could kinda use some support right now.

Holland softens. In the empty hallway, he places a hand on her arm.

HOLLAND

Look, I can see how tonight would be triggering for you, with your dad and all. But don't let this blow up the career you've worked so hard for.

MIA

What does my dad have to do with this?

HOLLAND

Forget it.

Holland keeps walking. The bunker hallway makes right turns, leading back toward their starting point. Mia jogs after him.

MIA

No, enlighten me!

HOLLAND

Oh, c'mon Mia. You're like a-a-a character in a Greek play! Puppeted by fate! You know what everyone says about you? *Why'd she go secret service?*

HOLLAND (CONT'D)

Why not DEA, or FBI or CIA? A smart Duke grad - a soccer star - you could have gone anywhere. Who goes Secret Service besides a bunch of washed up ex-army grunts?

Mia stops and puts her hands on her hips. She can't look Holland in the eye.

HOLLAND

It's all about what happened to your dad. You want to protect people. You want to prevent the murder from ever happening in the first place.

Mia just stares at the ground, taking slow deep breaths.

HOLLAND

I liked the president. I really liked him. I'm sorry he died. But your career doesn't have to die with him. You don't have to be fate's puppet. You can hold your own strings.

Holland jerks a thumb back toward the War Room.

HOLLAND

I gotta get back to the vice president. Just think about your strategy, okay?

MIA

It was a falling tortoise.

Holland stops walking and looks back.

HOLLAND

What?

MIA

Aeschylus. He was bald. Eagles break open turtles by dropping them onto rocks. The father of Greek tragedy was killed when he was struck on the head by a falling tortoise.

Chapter Five: The Russian Ambassador

INT. WAR ROOM - NIGHT

Deputy National Security Advisor Banks strides in, looking more stressed than before. He's followed by a tall, gray-haired BRIGADIER GENERAL with medals glittering on his chest. The SECRETARY OF DEFENSE wears a wrinkled suit. ADMIRAL DIAZ, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, is flanked by CIA ANALYSTS.

Mia watches still more men file in... the DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE, the NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR TO THE VICE PRESIDENT, the ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS...

Analysts set up laptops around the table. Satellite images of the desert flash onto the SMART screens.

SECURITY ADVISOR BANKS
Mr. Vice President, the Russians
have tank battalions closing the
noose on Homs and Damascus.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Why are they escalating?

SECURITY ADVISOR BANKS
No idea. We're responding in kind.
We've got drones ready to rain hell
the second we detect any launches
from the Russians.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Do we have boots on the ground?

SECURITY ADVISOR BANKS
We're going to need a beat to get
troops into striking distance. I'll
keep you advised. You can finish
your meeting.

Security Advisor Banks turns to Mia.

SECURITY ADVISOR BANKS
FYSA, we've got four-star generals
incoming. We've outgrown the
briefing room.

MIA
(nodding)
We'll swap with you.

MIA (CONT'D)

The briefing room has two exits;
it's perfect for what I have in
mind.

Mia turns to the dinner group and beckons them to follow.

MIA

Tommy, can you run to the break
room and collect all the plates and
silverware you can find? And
napkins - don't forget napkins.

Agent Stone looks at her quizzically but does as he's told.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

Office chairs surround an ovular table. The light is somehow
harsher, the room smaller and more claustrophobic.

The Russian ambassador returns from the bathroom without his
dinner jacket - only his dress shirt and bowtie.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

(apologetically)
It's hanging to dry.

He begins to take a seat. Mia holds a hand in the air.

MIA

Please, no one sit down yet.

Mia counts seven chairs and wheels the rest out of the room.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

What is this, musical chairs?

MIA

No. It's Cicero's memory palace.

The dinner guests exchange glances.

MIA

Cicero's friend Simonides had just
left a dinner party when the roof
collapsed, killing everyone inside.
Family wanted to bury their dead,
but couldn't tell them apart.
Simonides realized he could
remember where everyone was seated
by visualizing the table. You see,
human memories are remarkably
evolved for mapping.

The group squints at her.

MIA

We're going to recreate your dinner
in every detail.

Agent Stone arrives with an armload of plastic utensils,
plates, and paper napkins. He spreads them out on the table.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

It's not difficult for us to
remember where we were sitting,
there were only seven of us.

MIA

Ah, but by sitting in your chairs,
you will better be able to remember
who left the room, when.

Mia and Agent Stone set seven place settings.

MIA

The president sat at the head of
the table. Mrs. Wood, I assume you
were at the president's left.
Ambassador Kamenev, by protocol you
would be seated to the president's
right. Mr. Vice President, were you
next to the Ambassador?

FIRST LADY WOOD

This is ridiculous. This is beneath
our dignity.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

I agree.

MIA

Humor me.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

There is a national emergency to
attend to. When Hitler invaded
Poland at Mokra, Churchill didn't
sit around playing tea party.

Ambassador Kamenev takes his seat.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

Churchill said it takes courage to
stand up and speak, and also
courage to sit down and listen.

Vice President Steele stares down the Russian, who returns
his own unblinking gaze. The Vice President slowly lowers
into his chair.

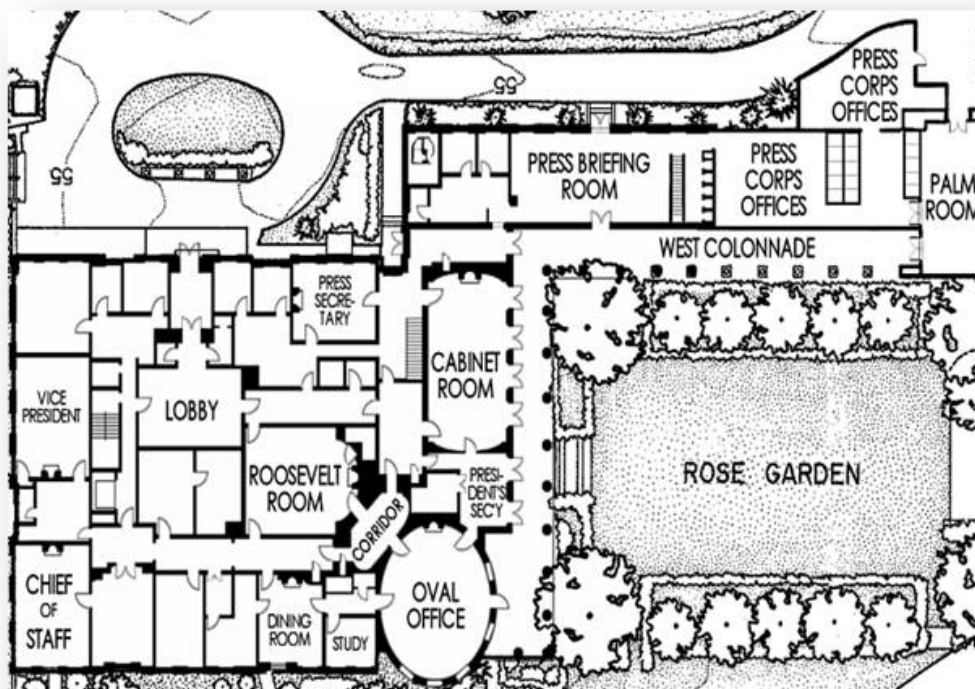
Mia squints her eyes at the mention of Churchill, her brow crinkling in thought.

Holland and Speaker Brookes find their chairs.

Mia opens a laptop, types a few keys, and reveals a YouTube video of a LOG CRACKLING IN A FIREPLACE. She sets it to full screen and places it on the floor of the east wall.

She then moves to the dimmer switch and darkens the room for mood lighting.

Mia switches on one of the hanging SMART boards and Google image searches a blueprint of the West Wing.



MIA

We're in the private dining room. The north door leads to the West Wing corridor. The east door leads through the president's study, past his bathroom, to the Oval Office. Are there any other details that will help set the scene?

Vice President Steele surprises everyone by speaking up.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Well, the fireplace should really
be a few feet to the left.

Mia shifts the laptop accordingly.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
There were two vases on either side
of the fireplace mantel. Gardenias.

Mia finds two fake potted plants on a side table and moves them to either side of the laptop.

The vice president can't help getting into it.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
There was a chandelier over the
table. A grandfather clock by the
window. The centerpiece was a
wicker basket of flowers. Red and
yellow. Marigolds, if I'm not
mistaken.

HOLLAND
Sir, that's amazing. You must have
a photographic memory.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Well, I've always had an eye for
visual details.

MIA
Excellent. Anyone else?

ADARA
There was background music. Very
soft. Jazz guitar. I think Grant
Green? Maybe George Benson?

Mia hands Adara a stray laptop. Adara searches and pulls up Grant Green. BACKGROUND JAZZ PLAYS QUIETLY.

Crime scene technician **NANCY GARCIA** (30s) pokes her head in the door. With funky hair, she looks more like a DJ than a police officer. She wheels in a cart with a bulky electronic fingerprint reader.

NANCY
I love what you've done with the
place.

MIA

Nancy, thank god. Tell me good news.

NANCY

The Cavaliers won tonight. Also, I've lifted some great prints off the knife. I'll just need everyone's prints to make comparisons.

MIA

Perfect. Tommy will set you up in the break room. I'll send everyone out to you one by one.

Nancy waves, wiggling her fingers. She backs out, pulling her cart. Mia clasps her hands behind her back.

MIA

Now. When did the president leave the room?

Note: throughout this sequence, the briefing room will seamlessly become the actual dining room as needed. The characters will not acknowledge this camera trick.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

We'd just finished the main course.

MIA

So you all had your steak knives.

ADARA

Except me. I ate the quinoa salad.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

(continuing)

The president excused himself to call the Kremlin.

Mia moves to a SMART board. She uses her finger to write on the touch screen.

MIA

Time?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

10:30pm.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

How can you know that?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

The president was supposed to call the Kremlin at 6:15am Moscow time. He was running late. I was checking my watch every minute.

FIRST LADY WOOD

He was putting it off. I know Hank. He still hadn't made a decision on the peace accord.

MIA

What happened next?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

V-neck left. Once the president's out of the room, he doesn't have to look busy.

HOLLAND

(defensive)

I had dozens of emails piling in during dinner about the G7 conference. I excused myself to go to my office.

Mia writes on the SMART board:

**10:31pm: Holland goes to Chief of Staff office (corridor exit)*

MIA

Okay. Holland, go to Nancy in the break room for fingerprinting.

Holland salutes her with a peace sign and leaves through the north door.

MIA

Next?

FIRST LADY WOOD

I had to run upstairs to get Hank's medication. He's supposed to take it with dinner, but he feels embarrassed taking pills in front of guests.

MIA

Is that when you found the gin, Mrs. Wood?

FIRST LADY WOOD

I beg your pardon?

MIA

I smelled it on you in the Oval Office, when you discovered the president.

FIRST LADY WOOD

I just never have any idea what's going to come out of your mouth.

MIA

I'm sorry, Mrs. Wood. I have to ask these questions.

FIRST LADY WOOD

(coldly)

If you must know, Hank had early symptoms of Parkinson's - it was a state secret. He took two Levodopa pills with meals - he didn't want political rivals seeing him shake.

Mia scribbles notes on the SMART board:

**10:31pm First Lady goes upstairs for meds (corridor exit)*

The first lady struts out through the north door, carrying her high heels by the straps.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

The rest of us got up all together. It was a long dinner.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

I went to use the bathroom.

Speaker Brookes frowns.

SPEAKER BROOKES

No, actually, I went to bathroom. The one by the study.

Vice President Steele turns to the Russian.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Yeah, you didn't go to the bathroom. I was heading out to my office down the corridor. G7 prep. I held the door for you, and you turned right. You ran an end-around to the Oval Office to corner the president before his phone call.

Ambassador Kamenev rubs a hand across his brow.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

My apologies. I had a red-eye flight. My body arrived in D.C. this morning; my brain will arrive in a few days.

Mia eyes the ambassador carefully.

ADARA

I left as well. Madam Speaker was in bathroom by study. So I leave through corridor to find another bathroom.

MIA

Okay, all of you to fingerprinting. Speaker Brookes, you exit by the east door. Everyone else through the corridor.

The vice president, the ambassador, the speaker, and Adara, all leave the room.

Mia studies her white board and consults the West Wing map.

**10:30pm President goes to Oval Office (study exit)*

**10:31pm Holland goes to Chief of Staff office (corridor exit)*

**10:31pm First Lady goes upstairs for meds (corridor exit)*

**10:32pm VP goes to VP's office (corridor exit)*

**10:32pm Speaker goes to bathroom (study exit)*

**10:32pm Ambassador goes to Oval Office (corridor exit)*

**10:32pm Adara goes to bathroom (corridor exit)*

Holland returns first from fingerprinting, scrubbing his hands with Purell. Mia stays him with a flat palm.

MIA

Don't set foot back in this room, Holland. I know for a fact you were still in your office at 10:33pm.

Holland raises his finger to his lips, signaling Mia to *shh!*
He backs out into the hallway, checking if anyone heard.

The first lady squeezes past, wiping her freshly
fingerprinted hands with a Kleenex.

MIA

Mrs. Wood, how long were you
upstairs getting the president's
medication?

FIRST LADY WOOD

Three or four minutes, tops. I
crossed through the empty dining
room to the president's study to
deliver the meds but got waylaid by
Terra coming out of the bathroom.

Speaker Brookes appears in the east doorway.

SPEAKER BROOKES

I heard my name?

MIA

You and the first lady spoke in the
hallway by the president's study?

SPEAKER BROOKES

Yes, she was quite agitated.

FIRST LADY WOOD

Agitated?

SPEAKER BROOKES

Shouting. Forgive me, Gail.

FIRST LADY WOOD

I don't remember this.

SPEAKER BROOKES

I believe you described wanting to
make the president '*swallow his own
balls*' or words to that effect. I
was trying to calm you down.

FIRST LADY WOOD

I wasn't the one shouting. The only
shouting I remember was coming from
the president's office.

MIA

Is that true?

SPEAKER BROOKES

Yes, I forgot about that. A man's voice. The Oval Office door was shut, so it was muffled.

Mia writes this down on the white board...

MIA

Call it 10:35pm, the president is still alive. Mrs. First Lady, Madam Speaker, please remain in the east hallway. Now, who returned to the dining room next?

The background JAZZ MUSIC rises in intensity. Adara appears in the north doorway along with the Russian.

ADARA

I think maybe it is me who return next. From the bathroom.

MIA

No. Try again.

ADARA

What do you mean?

MIA

Adara, you came from the Oval Office. That's how your lipstick ended up on the president's collar.

Adara flushes scarlet.

The first lady scowls.

ADARA

I finish using the corridor bathroom. I see the ambassador is leaving the Oval Office. He look very upset. I knew the president would be alone and need comfort.

FIRST LADY WOOD

(snorting)

Comfort...

ADARA

'enry was very concern about calling the Kremlin. It was difficult decision to make. 'e was in a den of snakes. 'enry needed support. Support 'e never got from 'is wife. We mostly just talked.

MIA
How long were you there?

ADARA
No more than three minutes.

FIRST LADY WOOD
I know my husband, sweetheart.
Three minutes is plenty of time for
him to drop his trousers and-

MIA
Call it 10:38. What happened next?

ADARA
'enry make White 'ouse switchboard
place the call to Kremlin. I left
through the corridor and return to
dining room to wait for the others.

Adara takes her seat at the table. She is now alone in the
dining room.

MIA
Now Adara. No more lying. Did you
see anyone at this point?

The Russian appears in the north doorway, waiting his turn to
enter. The vice president is at his side.

Adara slowly shakes her head. She drums cello fingerings with
her left hand...

ADARA
I did not see anything that seemed
important at the time.

Mia watches her carefully.

MIA
(quietly)
What did you see, Adara?

Adara's hand flutters to her mouth. She nibbles a cuticle.

ADARA
Nothing. After a few minutes, the
waitstaff clear dinner plates. They
set dessert forks. They bring out
little cakes - one with a candle
for the ambassador.

The vice president speaks up from the doorway.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Chocolate lava cakes. I returned to
the room with Kamenev.

The vice president enters the room with the Russian. They
sit. First Lady Wood and Speaker Brookes return as well.

SPEAKER BROOKES
We heard dessert was ready and came
running. Adara was already seated.
She started singing Happy Birthday
and we all joined in.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I blew out candle. It was very nice
gesture. The president was, I
think, a very polite man.

FIRST LADY WOOD
I love a chocolate lava cake. But
as soon as the ambassador blew out
his candle, I rushed to give the
president his pills. That's when I
found him... I suppose it's true:
you can't have your cake and eat
it, too.

Mia turns to the Russian.

MIA
Mr. Ambassador, we're closing in on
a time of death. Did anyone see you
enter or leave the bathroom?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
No.

MIA
So no one can confirm your
whereabouts during the president's
phone call?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
I see where you're going with
this... The Russians have been the
aggressors all night... The dots
are connecting themselves.

Holland takes a step into the room.

HOLLAND

There's another way to solve this. If the president was on the phone with the Kremlin, they might have heard what happened! White House communications probably recorded the-the-the entire call.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

I can tell you what happened: the president hung up halfway through the call. It was very rude.

MIA

How do you know that?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

I receive a text from the Kremlin after I blew out the candle on my cake. Suffice it to say, I did not get my birthday wish.

Ambassador Kamenev turns to the vice president.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

You want to know why the Russian Federation Army advanced on Syria? It was because your president hung up in the middle of a call about a peace agreement. We are not the aggressors. You are.

Vice President Steele frowns in square-jawed silence.

MIA

Mr. Ambassador, what time did the president hang up on the Kremlin?

Ambassador Kamenev checks the texts on his phone.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

First, they tried to call him back. He does not pick up. By the time Moscow texts me, it is 10:43pm.

MIA

So let's say the president hung up on Moscow two minutes earlier. We now know the president was alive until at least 10:41pm. I heard the first lady screaming and entered the Oval Office about 10:45pm.

THE JAZZ MUSIC INTENSIFIES...

MIA

We are almost there. We have the killer encircled. I believe it is now time we recreated the Oval Office. Tommy?

Tommy strides into the room and helps Mia swivel the table sideways to form the Resolute Desk. Mia moves the two flags from the corner: the American flag the Presidential Seal. She maneuvers them behind the president's desk.

MIA

Tommy, you get to be president.

Tommy sits behind the desk. Mia moves a telephone to his left. She shuts off the fireplace laptop and music. The room stands in stark silence.

MIA

Mr. Vice President, any visual details I'm missing?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Well, the president keeps framed photos on the credenza behind the desk. There's a chair on either side. Chests of drawers to the left and right.

Mia maneuvers a few chairs around accordingly.

MIA

Anything else?

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

On the right chest, there's the Frederic Remington bust of the bucking bronco.

MIA

Very good. Let us begin with you, Mr. Ambassador. You are in the Oval Office. When did you begin shouting at the president?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

Excuse me?

MIA

Both the speaker and the first lady heard a man's voice shouting. At this point in our timeline, only you or Adara could have been in the Oval Office.

MIA (CONT'D)

And Adara, I don't have to point out, does not have a man's voice.

The ambassador takes a step backward.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

I wanted a military de-escalation. I wanted the president to back down! My own president would be too proud to blink first. It would never happen. In Russia we say, a lobster would sooner whistle on top of a mountain.

The ambassador makes eye contact with each listener in the room, earnestly making his case...

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

I thought perhaps President Wood could see beyond his self-interest. I believed I had convinced him. All the way up until he hung up on the Kremlin.

MIA

How did you leave the Oval Office?

Note: as before, the briefing room seamlessly transitions into the Oval Office and back as needed.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

I needed a moment to calm down. I went to the bathroom.

He heads for the study door. Speaker Brookes blocks his exit...

SPEAKER BROOKES

You couldn't have gone this way. I was in the hallway speaking with the first lady - you would have had to squeeze right past us.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

(flustered)

Yes, that is quite true. I guess I must have gone out to the corridor.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

That's another pump-fake. You said you went to the bathroom, not the hallway.

The ambassador is increasingly flustered.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I, I haven't slept in quite a while. I think I found a bathroom out in the corridor. Yes, that is what happened.

The ambassador stands in the middle of the briefing room, everyone staring at him.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
My jet lag, you understand...

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
No one saw you enter the bathroom.
And no one saw you leave.

Nancy Garcia steps into the room, her expression somber.

MIA
Nancy, do you have a fingerprint match for the knife?

NANCY GARCIA
I do. Should I tell you outside?

MIA
No. Go ahead, Nancy.

Nancy takes a deep breath.

NANCY GARCIA
It's Ambassador Kamenev. His fingerprints are all over the knife.

Ambassador Kamenev looks as if he might faint.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
This is impossible. This can't be happening. I am an emissary of the Russian government.

FIRST LADY WOOD
You killed my husband?

MIA
I would read you your rights, ambassador. But in this situation, the assassination of a president, I'm not sure you have any.

AGENT STONE PULLS THE AMBASSADOR'S ARMS BEHIND HIS BACK AND LOCKS HIS WRISTS IN PLASTIC FLEX CUFFS.

MIA
Put him in the break room for
questioning.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I am entitled to a lawyer, a court,
a trial!

Mia's face is grim.

MIA
Ambassador, if your actions result
in a war, the American people will
see you hang.

Chapter Six: The Cellist

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The diners follow Mia into the hallway, gossiping excitedly.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
I was right all along.

ADARA
So what do we do now? Do we all
just go 'ome?

Mia taps a finger against her chin, thinking.

MIA
Not yet. There's something that
doesn't make any sense to me... I
need to talk to the ambassador in
private.

SPEAKER BROOKES
I'll be in the briefing room.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
I'll be in the War Room.

FIRST LADY WOOD
I'll be in the bathroom.

Goldie, the server, appears in the hallway carrying a silver
tray.

GOLDIE
I brought donuts and orange juice.
Is this a good time?

The diners descend on the donuts like a pride of lions.

INT. BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

Mia enters, wiping powdered sugar from her chin. Agent Stone stands guard over the ambassador who sits meekly, his wrists bound behind his back, staring glumly at the chessboard.

THE AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I am a nationally ranked chess player. My ELO rating is 2,200. You really think I just stabbed the President of the United States with my bare hands and didn't wipe off the fingerprints?

MIA
If you're a strong chess player, then you must have a visual memory. But you couldn't remember how you entered the Oval Office, how you left the Oval Office, or which bathroom you used.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I have been awake for 36-hours straight. I can't even remember what continent I'm on!

The ambassador stands.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
Can you please unlock my handcuffs so I can smoke a cigarette?

MIA
What were you yelling at the president about?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I was not yelling!

MIA
Like you're not yelling right now?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
It was the treaty! I passionately believe in it. It was important he do the right thing!

The ambassador struggles to control himself.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I can prove it was not me!

MIA
How?

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
The Israeli spy saw me leave the Oval Office. She went in right after me, no? If the president was dead, why didn't she notice when she was making out with him?

MIA
You could have gone back in after she left. You have no alibi for the moment of the murder. We established that no one saw you enter or leave the bathroom.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
No! We established that after the Israeli return to the dining room, everyone sing happy birthday for me. How could they sing happy birthday for me if I was killing President Wood? Did I possibly have enough time?

Mia thinks about that.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
And what about drugging him? When did I have time for that?

Mia nods slowly.

MIA
I've been wondering the same thing. If Adara's your alibi, I need to talk to her.

Mia turns to leave.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
Watch out for the bishop.

MIA
Pardon?

Ambassador Kamenev is staring at the chessboard.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
It is going to strike your queen.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Mia hustles down the hallway. Agent Stone locks the ambassador into the break room and follows. Mia sweeps into--

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She scans the room.

MIA
Where is Adara Lehava?

The first lady sits with her bare feet on a chair, her shawl covering her eyes, trying to sleep.

FIRST LADY WOOD
Why? You need a quickie?

Speaker Brookes, in her reading glasses, looks up from the Washington Post.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Adara went to the bathroom.

MIA
How long ago?

SPEAKER BROOKES
(shrugging)
Ten minutes?

Mia's face fills with foreboding...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

MIA SPEED-WALKS DOWN THE HALLWAY, BREAKING INTO A JOG. She passes Holland coming the other way.

MIA
Have you seen Adara?

HOLLAND
I thought she was in the briefing room?

Mia ducks her head into the War Room - generals everywhere - no sign of Adara.

HOLLAND
What's the matter?

Mia reaches the one working bathroom. SHE KNOCKS ON THE DOOR AND PUSHES HER WAY INSIDE--

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

ADARA LEHAVI'S BODY LIES SPRAWLED ON THE TILED FLOOR, ARMS AND LEGS AKIMBO.

MIA
Oh god, no...

MIA DROPS TO HER KNEES. SHE HOVERS OVER ADARA'S FACE, LISTENING FOR BREATH. NOTHING.

SHE PRESSES TWO FINGERS TO ADARA'S NECK, FEELING FOR A PULSE. NOTHING.

Holland peers in behind her, his face aghast.

AGENT STONE FINALLY CATCHES UP, BURSTING INTO THE RESTROOM.

AGENT STONE
What is it?

MIA
(grim)
Ambassador Kamenev's just lost his alibi.

Mia pulls open each of Adara's white, vacant eyes. They stare upward into oblivion.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE SHOVES HIS WAY INTO THE BATHROOM. A few men in uniform crowd behind him.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
God almighty.

MIA
(to Agent Stone)
Get them out of here. Set guards on the door. Tell everyone we're down to zero bathrooms. And call Dr. Silver down here stat.

Agent Stone attempts to usher everyone out. THE VICE PRESIDENT RESISTS.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
How could this happen? In the most secure bunker in the world! And with your security everywhere? This is a disgrace, Agent Pine.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE (CONT'D)

I want you off this job! I want you terminated!

Red arteries bulging in the vice president's neck, his glass eye slightly askew.

MIA

Well, you can terminate me later because no one's leaving here tonight. We need a fresh round of forensics and fresh ideas.

She looks down at Adara's body.

MIA

On the bright side, we may have one less suspect.

AGENT STONE MANAGES TO MANEUVER THE VICE PRESIDENT OUT OF THE BATHROOM AND LOCK THE DOOR.

Mia studies Adara's face. Working quickly, she feels along the neck - no bruising. She opens the mouth and sniffs for poison. She opens the eyes to check coloration below the eyelids. She peers closely...

She stands up and scans the crime scene. Looking for any sign, any clue...

Mia opens one of the stalls and finds Ambassador Kamenev's coffee-stained jacket drying on a coat peg. She searches the pockets and finds them empty. She frowns...

AGENT STONE

What were you hoping to find there?

MIA

The missing napkin. It's beginning to trouble me.

Agent Stone looks at her, perplexed. Mia puts her hands on her cheeks and shakes her head.

MIA

Another one dead on my watch. My reputation... My track record...

THERE'S A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

Agent Stone unlocks it and carefully cracks it open.

DR. CLAY SILVER edges inside. He wears a lab coat and blue plastic gloves, his Einstein hair tamed under a blue hairnet.

MIA
Clay, thank the gods.

DR. SILVER
Hi Mia. Fun night at the office?

He looks down at the body.

DR. SILVER
Jesus, is that Adara Lehava? My
husband and I saw her perform at
the Kennedy Center two nights ago.

Dr. Silver sets down a large carry case of medical equipment
and drops down to one knee to examine Adara.

DR. SILVER
Two bodies in one night. I ought to
open a permanent practice here.

MIA
How long to fingerprint everything?
Fresh tox screen? Maybe a quick
guess at cause of death? And when
do I get a report on the president?

DR. SILVER
It all takes time, Mia. I shouldn't
give you information piecemeal -
things fall through the cracks. You
lose the bigger picture.

MIA
Work with me here - what's your
first blush reaction? Did she die
from asphyxiation? Did she die of
embarrassment? Did she die
laughing? Give me a hint!

DR. SILVER
I'm already fast-tracking a
presidential autopsy for you and
that's not the sort of thing you
want to do a rush-job on! My
professional reputation is at
stake. Doctors for decades are
going to second-guess my every move
tonight. I have to do things
perfectly.

MIA
Clay, you're my friend. You know
who's not my friend? Time.

MIA (CONT'D)

Do you know what's happening in the War Room? War. We're going to war over this.

Dr. Silver nods and crouches low over Adara.

DR. SILVER

What's all this defensive bruising on the wrist? And the stab mark near the right eye?

MIA

The first lady. You can ignore that.

Dr. Silver gives her a bewildered look.

MIA

Catfight.

DR. SILVER

Wow.

Dr. Silver takes off his glasses.

DR. SILVER

Soon as the crime scene photographer clears me to move the body, I'll run a hemoglobin test for asphyxiation. Then there's cyanotic tissue and a few other snazzy tricks.

MIA

Thanks, Clay.

She turns to leave.

DR. SILVER

Oh - and Metro PD is already working on a tox report for the president. So far, he's totally clean.

MIA

That's impossible. I mean, the way he was stabbed-

DR. SILVER

No Rohypnol, no sedatives, no paralytic agents.

MIA

What about alcohol?

DR. SILVER

.04 - one drink. Hey, we'll keep looking - some of the tox tests take weeks. And the head and neck bruising is interesting.

MIA

Is it?

DR. SILVER

Sure. But make no mistake: the cause of death was the knife.

The CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHER and SEVERAL TECHNICIANS begin lugging equipment into the bathroom.

Mia looks stunned.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Mia shakes her head. Defeated.

AGENT STONE

You okay?

MIA

Why would the president just sit there, let himself get stabbed, and then bleed to death?

Mia raises her hands and collapses them at her side.

MIA

I've been wrong about everything.
I've bungled this whole investigation.

Agent Stone searches for something to say.

AGENT STONE

Do I let Ambassador Kamenev out of the break room?

Mia pouches her lips. Then exhales and nods.

MIA

He can't get far.

AGENT STONE

Is he innocent?

MIA

Well, if he killed the president,
and he didn't kill the Israeli,
then we have two killers. So yeah,
I certainly hope he's innocent.

AGENT STONE

But you don't know.

Mia shakes her head.

MIA

When I questioned him, he was
handcuffed, jet-lagged, accused of
assassination, and he still had the
wherewithal to make a complex chess
calculation. Would a man like that
stab the president and leave his
fingerprints on the knife?

Mia shakes her head again in frustration. She paces down the
hallway. Agent Stone follows.

MIA

The ambassador said something to
the vice president earlier...
Something that seemed important.
But I can't quite put it
together...

Mia studies the crime scene photos on her phone: the
president's ghastly face, the mottled bruising, the Remington
statue and the Churchill bust...

She puts her back against the wall, overcome by fatigue.

AGENT STONE

Take a break. Everyone's in the War
Room waiting for the battle.
They're not going anywhere tonight.

Mia nods. She hears the SOUND OF MUFFLED CRYING...

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mia finds the first lady seated in a corner, rocking back and
forth, sobbing. She's clutching something in her fist.

Mia sits and puts an arm around her, shushing her. She gently
opens the first lady's hand, revealing two purple pills.

FIRST LADY WOOD

I just discovered them in my
pocket.

FIRST LADY WOOD (CONT'D)

I never got to give them to him.
What do I do with them now? Do I
just throw them away? It seems
wrong somehow.

Mia holds the first lady's hand.

FIRST LADY WOOD

When Hank drove up to Westchester
to ask permission to marry me, my
father took him to the golf club.
He might as well have taken him to
planet Mars. Hank duffed his way to
a 150 by about the third hole. My
father said they'd have to re-sod
the course.

She smiles at the memory.

FIRST LADY WOOD

Then my father sat there in the
clubhouse watching Hank eat his
entire side salad with a tiny
little lobster fork.

(shaking her head)

If my parents knew how far he'd
come...

The first lady blinks away tears.

FIRST LADY WOOD

The White House... I'm going to
have to move out of here. Next
week? The week after? Then what?
What do I do the rest of my life?

Mia just holds her.

Adara's black body bag, strapped to a gurney, is trundled
down the hallway. Mia closes her eyes.

FADE OUT.

Chapter Seven: The Secret Service Agent

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

MIA SNAPS AWAKE. She checks the time on her phone. 4:30am.

Her blazer is draped over her for a blanket. She sits up in her office chair. Agent Stone offers her a cup of coffee.

MIA

I don't really drink coffee, but...

She blows on the steam and takes a cautious sip.

MIA

Wow. That *is* good.

AGENT STONE

C'mon. It's time. Our troops are in position. We're ready to attack.

INT. WAR ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mia buttons her blazer and steps into the bustling War Room, packed with military officers.

Ambassador Kamenev sits in a corner looking miserable in his wet suit jacket. She nods to him and he nods back.

Speaker Brookes stands in the center of the room locked in tense debate with the vice president.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Only congress has the power to declare war.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

The executive branch can utilize the military in moments of a national security crisis.

SPEAKER BROOKES

How is this a national security crisis? Syria's 10,000 miles away!

Vice President Steele turns to the Brigadier General.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Tell the general on the ground to open fire.

The Brigadier General hesitates.

BRIGADIER GENERAL

Sir... Are you officially the Commander in Chief? Do we have chain of command?

Vice President Steele paces the room, running a hand through his buzz cut. Holland speaks up.

HOLLAND

Sir, I'm not sure of the legalities. But it will be better optics if the American people know you were sworn in. It will help close the loop on any Monday morning quarterbacking.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

When is the chief justice getting here? Has anyone even tried getting her out of bed?

HOLLAND

She's not picking up. I'm sending a secret service car to her house. I told them to knock until the door falls down.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Tell them to fucking hurry.

Mia can't sit still any longer. She signals Holland with a nod of her head. He catches their private signal and follows her out of the room.

INT. BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

Mia shifts her coffee into her other hand so she can lock the door behind them.

HOLLAND

Now you want to make out?

MIA

What? No. I'm drinking coffee.

HOLLAND

Wow, things are serious.

MIA

Yeah, they're serious!

Holland tries to embrace her and she pushes him away.

MIA

We figured out where everyone was when the president was murdered. And you know the one thing not on that chart? Me. It doesn't say where I was.

Holland sets his hands on his hips and looks at the floor.

HOLLAND

Mia, don't.

MIA

I should have been there for the president. Maybe I could have protected him. Instead I was in your office. Making out with you.

Holland shakes his head.

MIA

So, yeah. You want to know why I don't want to kiss you? That's why.

HOLLAND

Well, at least we've solved one mystery tonight.

MIA

My career's over. I'm going to be a night-shift security guard at an Applebee's in Delafield, Wisconsin. Also the world's going to war and it's probably my fault because I can't solve this case.

HOLLAND

Wow. Some people beat themselves up. You kick the shit out of yourself.

MIA

People are dead, Holland!

Mia paces in a tight circle.

MIA

Your office is right next to the vice president's. Are you sure he went there after dinner? Did you see him coming or going?

HOLLAND

Yes, absolutely. I saw him walk by and I heard him on the phone. He was there the whole time, Mia.

Mia lets out her ponytail. She shakes her head.

MIA
 Something doesn't fit, Watson.
 Something I looked at, but didn't
 see. It's like a name that's on the
 tip of my tongue...

She paces, wringing her hands.

MIA
 When the Secret Service clears a
 street for the president, we're
 always looking for a blind spot. A
 rooftop with a line of sight, a
 sewer grate we didn't weld shut.
 But how do you find a blind spot?
 How do you see what you can't see?
 (then)
 I need the chessboard.

She sits down at their game where they left it on the table.

HOLLAND
 Now?

MIA
 Help me, Holland!

HOLLAND
 I can't, the vice president needs
 me in the War Room. I'm trying to
 wrangle the chief justice.

MIA
 What, do you work for him now?

HOLLAND
 As a matter of fact, I do.

MIA
 Jesus, how long was I asleep? What
 about the VP's chief of staff?

HOLLAND
 She'll be fired in the morning. Jim
 needs someone with more experience
 in the big show.

MIA
 He's Jim, now?

Mia plays a rook.

HOLLAND

Look, you said yourself - the Russian's alibi is dead. It's just his word against everyone else. He's guilty - it's Occam's Razor. You want to know about blind spots? You don't want the ambassador to be guilty because it'll mean war!

MIA

And you want war?

HOLLAND

I never liked the peace accord. I always thought it was a mistake!

Holland fidgets with his glasses. Polishing, fogging them with his breath, and repolishing them.

HOLLAND

I don't know why you're even still holding us. I haven't been able to check my cell in hours. Doreen probably waited up for me. I'll probably have eighty-five texts from her.

Holland moves his knight, then spots his blunder.

HOLLAND

Shit.

MIA FEELS THE WALLS CLOSING IN ON HER... HER BREATHING BECOMES LABORED...

MIA

Why would Doreen be waiting up for you? You said she took the kids to her parents' place in Virginia...

Mia's Appalachian accent begins to shine through. She rises shakily to her feet.

MIA

You lying bastard. You never separated. You're just stringing me along.

Holland stands up.

HOLLAND

Separated? Divorced? How is that going to look for my career?

HOLLAND (CONT'D)

Why can't you see it from my perspective? The vice president is a marine. *Semper Fidelis!* He values unquestioning loyalty. Breaking up a marriage? Running off with a coworker? A-a-a coworker who threatened to arrest him? That's not how Washington works. These aren't sound chess moves, Mia! You of all people should appreciate that!

MIA

(still reeling)

You promised me we were moving in together. I gave notice on my apartment. This whole time... you were never going to leave her!

HOLLAND SMASHES HIS FIST ON THE TABLE. Chess pieces topple and roll.

HOLLAND

Don't make me feel guilty! It's not my fault if you want to devote your life to chasing unavailable men. Men who will never live up to your image of your perfect father.

MIA

What does my father have to do with-

HOLLAND

Everything! It's all about him! I could never be good enough. You know what, Mia? You can solve all the murders in the world, and it won't bring him back. So move on!

Mia is shattered. Her eyes wide to the point of hysteria.

HOLLAND

You're going to be fired in the morning. And I want to be clear: it won't be because of your friction with Jim. It'll be because you were the head Secret Service agent in the White House when the president was assassinated under your nose.

Mia's mouth hangs open.

HOLLAND

I can't be associated with that.
That's a stink that will never come
off. I hope you can understand my
position.

Holland heads for the door.

MIA

Thank you, Holland. You've just
shown me my blind spot. I see the
bishop now.

He leaves, slamming the door.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mia trudges to a plastic chair in the hallway and sits down.

Speaker Brookes, looking equally shell-shocked, drags herself
from the War Room and slumps down next to her.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Well, we tried.

Mia slowly nods her head.

MIA

Another war.

SPEAKER BROOKES

You liked him, didn't you?

Mia looks up, surprised.

SPEAKER BROOKES

The president. You were fond of
him.

MIA

(nodding)

He was always good to me.

Speaker Brookes pries off her shoes. Rubs her tired feet.

SPEAKER BROOKES

I didn't often agree with Hank. But
he was principled, he tried to do
the right thing. Someone once told
him that Reagan never took his
jacket off in the Oval Office.
Which isn't true, by the way.

SPEAKER BROOKES (CONT'D)

But after that, Hank never took his jacket off in there, even in the furnace of August. You have to admire that.

MIA

My father was the same way. Wore his sheriff uniform even on his days off. Even when it made him a target.

Speaker Brookess studies Mia's face.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Something happened to him?

MIA

He was murdered walking out a diner on King Street. Middle of a Sunday.

SPEAKER BROOKES

My god, Mia. I'm so sorry. Did they catch who did it?

Mia shakes her head.

MIA

I spent years wondering how I could've seen it coming. Holland thinks I'm obsessed, that I need to get over it. But I don't know. I think it fires me.

Speaker Brookess clasps Mia's hand.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Mia, losing your father didn't make you weak. It made you strong.

She gives Mia's hand a squeeze.

SPEAKER BROOKES

He'd be proud of who you are. You should be, too.

Mia nods. Speaker Brookess grimaces as she tucks on her shoes.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Your dogs aren't barking?

Mia looks down at her JC Penney loafers. Sensible, if proletarian. She smiles.

MIA
Not even a little bit.

Speaker Brookes grins, takes a breath, and rises to her feet.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Well, Churchill said, when you're
going through hell, keep going.

Mia nods again. Her brow gradually furrows.

MIA
Churchill...

She pulls up her photos of the dead president on her phone.
She flips through them, *and sees a new detail...*

Behind the president sits the famous bust of Churchill.
Bronze, 12 inches high, hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In one photo, Churchill's facing left. In the next photo,
taken seconds later, Churchill's facing to the right.

MIA'S FACE CLEARS...

MIA
Thank you, Terra. You may have just
stopped the war.

Speaker Brookes looks at her, bewildered.

MIA IS OUT OF HER CHAIR AND RUSHING FOR--

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mia bursts in.

MIA
Tommy, I need an outside line!

Agent Stone passes a phone across the table to her.

Mia frantically dials the landline.

MIA
Clay, it's Mia. What bruises did
the president have?

DR. SILVER (FILTERED)
What are you looking for?

MIA
Was he hit on his head from behind?

DR. SILVER (FILTERED)
Yes. Big bloody bruise. I told you
it was interesting.

MIA
Was it enough to knock him
unconscious?

DR. SILVER (FILTERED)
It was enough to hobble an
elephant. It'll be in my medical
report if you would wait for it.

MIA
Clay, whatever they pay you, they
should double it.

DR. SILVER (FILTERED)
Great. Because I became a medical
examiner for the money.
(then)
I've got more for you. Adara
Lehava: hypoxia.

MIA
Beautiful! I mean, not beautiful,
but - you understand.

Mia regroups.

MIA
Clay, do you have a list of the
signs of asphyxiation - you know,
like for first responders to detect
spousal abuse? I saw one when I was
an EMT volunteer in high school,
but I need to double-check my
memory.

DR. SILVER (FILTERED)
Sure, I'll email you.

MIA
Top priority. You're the best.

MIA HANGS UP THE PHONE AND BARRELS FOR THE DOOR.

MIA
Tommy, where's the VP?

AGENT STONE
Heading to the Oval Office for
swearing in.

MIA
We let him off the floor?

AGENT STONE
He's surrounded by generals.
Besides... he's going to become the
president.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

MIA SPRINTS FOR THE ELEVATOR. TOMMY JOGS AFTER HER.

MIA
Tommy, we're going to need everyone
up there. The speaker, the
ambassador, Holland - everyone.

INT. WEST WING - MOMENTS LATER

MIA AND AGENT STONE BURST FROM THE EAST WING ELEVATOR AND
RACE UP THE MAIN CORRIDOR.

The vice president is heading for the Oval Office, surrounded
by Holland and a coterie of generals.

MIA SHOUTS DOWN THE HALLWAY.

MIA
Mr. Vice President. I am ordering
you to stop!

Vice President Steele turns and stares. The generals look at
her in shock.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
You order me?

Mia catches up to the vice president.

MIA
Search him.

Agent Stone looks at her in amazement.

MIA
You don't have to strip him. It's
his pockets I want.

Agent Stone still hesitates.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Young man, you lay one hand on me
and you can pack your bags back to
Peoria.

Impatiently, Mia steps up to the vice president and FRISKS HIM. She searches all of his pockets.

Vice President Steele lifts his hands in the air and looks down on Mia with a pitying smile.

She steps away, mystified.

MIA
You're clean...

The secretary of defense turns to the vice president.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
Who is this maniac? Do we fire her
or arrest her?

Mia's face flushes. She's on the brink of tears.

MIA
I guess fire me. That would be
preferable.

Holland speaks up.

HOLLAND
No need to make a scene. We play
politics and do this discretely.
I'll accept your written
resignation in one hour, once the
new president is sworn in.

Once again, MIA FEELS THE WALLS OF THE NARROW CORRIDOR
CLOSING IN. THE BEGINNINGS OF A PANIC ATTACK.

MIA
...Play politics...

THE WORLD SWIMS BEFORE HER VISION, HER BALANCE UNMOORING. And
then... Speaker Brookes' words bubble to the surface of her
mind...

MIA
(quietly)
"We can choose to play politics or
we can choose what's right."

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE
Excuse me?

MIA'S WORLD SNAPS INTO FOCUS.

The walls no longer push in. Mia's posture straightens and
she turns to Agent Stone.

MIA

I need all suspects in the Oval Office.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

I am relieving you of this investigation.

MIA

No, sir. I have until you are sworn in and that should be all the time I need. You will report to the Oval Office immediately or I will arrest you for refusing to cooperate with a Secret Service investigation into the assassination of a US president. I will shout it from the rooftops. I will make sure every journalist in the country is here to watch me lead you down Pennsylvania Avenue in handcuffs.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

You would do that?

MIA

"If I cannot move heaven, then I will raise hell."

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Is that another goddamn Greek?

MIA

(shaking her head)

Roman.

The vice president turns to Holland.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

I've got two combat battalions waiting on my command to pull the trigger. How long until the chief justice suffers herself to be here so I can be sworn in and fire this lunatic?

HOLLAND

Ten minutes tops, sir.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Agent Pine, I cannot stand to be leveraged. As it happens, I am heading to the Oval Office anyway.

The first lady, Speaker Brookes, and Ambassador Kamenev arrive from the East Wing elevator.

MIA

Let us return to the beginning. The Oval Office.

Mia ushers them forward, pausing to read an incoming email...

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

As in the beginning, the dinner guests surround the president's desk.

MIA

Tommy, would you do the honors?

Agent Stone approaches the president's chair. He hesitates.

MIA

Go ahead, Tommy. It's necessary.

Tommy gingerly sits in the president's chair.

MIA

When Adara left the Oval Office, the White House was connecting the president's call to the Kremlin. Our killer entered the room and listened to the call. They realized the president was going to offer peace and back out of Syria with his tail between his legs. Our killer needed to put a stop to this, but had no options.

Agent Stone picks up the phone and mimes a phone call.

INT. OVAL OFFICE // FLASHBACK

The president is on the phone...

MIA (V.O.)

In a fit of temper, our killer grabs the Churchill bust, crosses behind the president, and smashes him over the head.

THE UNSEEN KILLER ATTACKS THE PRESIDENT.

INT. OVAL OFFICE // PRESENT

Mia uses her sleeve to avoid touching the bust. She hoists it high and mimes bashing Agent Stone on the crown of his head.

FIRST LADY WOOD
It was a crime of passion!

MIA
The president didn't rudely hang up on the Kremlin. We know the president's Connecticut etiquette. He would sooner have streaked Pennsylvania Avenue as hang up on a world leader.

The group listens. **INTERCUT FLASHBACKS AS NEEDED...**

MIA
Now, it's 10:41pm. The president is unconscious but still alive. It was the killer who hangs up the phone.

Mia hangs up the phone...

MIA
The killer places the Churchill bust back on the chest of drawers.

Mia returns the bust to its place, but at an odd angle.

MIA
The killer sits the president up in his chair, perhaps to hide the ugly bruise. The killer needs to pin this on someone else. But who?

Speaker Brookes lights up.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Ambassador Kamenev.

MIA
Yes. Frame the Russian Ambassador. This will torpedo the treaty and solve every problem. The killer returns to the dining room and takes the ambassador's steak knife, careful to wrap it in a napkin to preserve the fingerprints. Then, the killer returns to the Oval Office and stabs the president.

INT. OVAL OFFICE // FLASHBACK

THE KILLER STABS THREE TIMES. The unconscious president does not resist. BLOOD GUSHES FROM THE PRESIDENT'S NECK.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - PRESENT

The group listens, enrapt.

MIA

The killer leaves the knife and returns to the dinner party. Later, when we all rushed into the Oval Office, the killer noticed the Churchill bust. Was Churchill facing to the left or to the right? The killer is a person with *an eye for visual details*. As I was snapping photos of the crime scene, the killer moved the bust, just so.

Mia moves the bust to its proper direction.

MIA

This was the detail I spent the whole night trying to see.

HOLLAND

That's a pretty wild theory.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

It's horseshit. It's a fourth quarter Hail Mary!

Mia paces the room.

MIA

Ambassador Kamenev is a chess grandmaster. That requires an excellent visual memory. Holland, too, has his moments. And Mr. Vice President, earlier tonight you astonished us with your memory. You were able to recall every visual detail of the president's desk - even the Remington statue - but you failed to mention the Churchill bust. This from a man who greatly admires Churchill.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

This is a lot of supposition peppered with speculation.

HOLLAND

And there's a second mystery. Who killed Adara?

Mia arrives at the center of the room.

MIA

Ah. But the astute among you will remember we have a third mystery tonight: the mystery of the missing napkin. Our chief server Goldie was right to be distraught. The napkin is the key. It answers everything.

Chapter Eight: The Napkin

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Mia gestures to Holland.

MIA

The chief of staff wants to know who killed Adara and why. Adara was Ambassador Kamenev's alibi, but could the killer have known that? For a while, this had me stumped. Until I remembered the napkin...

Mia nods to Agent Stone, who goes back to playing dead.

MIA

Let us return to the moment of the murder... The killer is careful to grip the knife in a napkin when they stab the president.

INT. OVAL OFFICE // FLASHBACK

The killer backs away from the dead president.

MIA (V.O.)

The killer leaves the knife as evidence, stuffs the napkin into their pocket, and returns quickly to the dinner party... In the ensuing chaos, the killer has no chance to dispose of the napkin.

INT. WAR ROOM // FLASHBACK

Goldie speaks to Mia; diners listen in the background...

MIA (V.O.)

Later, when Goldie reported that one napkin was missing, our killer realized they must get rid of the evidence as soon as possible. It's covered in the blood of a US president.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - PRESENT

The first lady shakes her head at the image.

MIA

Our killer is stuck in the bunker and needs to dispose of the napkin. But where to hide it?

FIRST LADY WOOD

The bathroom?

MIA

Perhaps. It could be flushed down the toilet on the hope it doesn't clog. But I think there's a better place to plant it. Our killer... is a strategist.

Mia turns to Ambassador Kamenev. The ambassador looks down at his damp suit. His face lights up.

THE AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

My jacket!

MIA

Exactly.

SPEAKER BROOKES

Jim got upset and threw his coffee on the ambassador!

MIA

Yes. This caused Ambassador Kamenev to remove his jacket. Now, in the middle of the night, the jacket is hanging unguarded in the bathroom stall. If the killer can secret the napkin into the jacket pocket, that completes the frame job.

Mia crosses to Agent Stone and plucks the pocket square from his suit. She carefully uses it to pick up the Churchill bust and hand it to him.

MIA
Guard this closely.

Agent Stone nods.

MIA
Now, I need you all to come to the dining room for the finale.

HOLLAND
Oh, come on. This is ridiculous. You throw enough spaghetti against the wall and hope the wall falls down.

SPEAKER BROOKES
No, I want to hear this.

Mia leads the group out into the--

INT. MAIN CORRIDOR OF THE WEST WING - CONTINUOUS

Agent Stone, one finger to his earpiece, *whispers to Mia.*

AGENT STONE
The Chief Justice is at front gate security.

MIA
Tell our guys to stall her -- I'm going as fast as I can.

Mia herds the group toward the private dining room.

MIA
Adara knew the killer wasn't Ambassador Kamenev. This is where she saw him leave the Oval Office on her way in. And when she left, she saw the next person to enter: the killer.

INT. PRESIDENT'S PRIVATE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The group steps into the ornate chamber. Mia sits in Adara's chair at the dining room table.

MIA
Now, it's 10:42pm. As we established earlier tonight, at this moment, Adara is alone in the dining room. This is very important.

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM // FLASHBACK

Adara sits alone at the table. She nods to an unseen figure.

MIA (V.O.)

Only Adara saw the killer enter the dining room. On the sly, the assassin slid Ambassador Kamenev's knife from the table and left.

A hand uses a napkin to palm the knife and tuck it into a pocket...

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM - PRESENT

HOLLAND

But why didn't Adara say anything during our reenactment?

MIA

She did. The killer was in the doorway, watching her. Adara was literally biting her nails. Her exact words were:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM // FLASHBACK

Adara, clearly nervous, answers Mia's questioning...

ADARA

I did not see anything that seemed important at the time.

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM - PRESENT

MIA

What an odd thing to say.

First Lady Wood puts a hand to her mouth.

FIRST LADY WOOD

The killer must have threatened her at some point.

MIA

All we know is this: Adara was there when the murderer grabbed the knife. She knew who stabbed the president.

HOLLAND

But if that's true, why didn't she say anything?

MIA
Leverage.

INT. WAR ROOM // FLASHBACK

Adara anxiously taps cello fingerings on her chair...

MIA (V.O.)
Adara waited her chance to get the
killer alone, chewing her nails
down to the nubs. When I was
interrogating Ambassador Kamenev in
the break room, she saw the killer
walk into the restroom alone and
saw her opportunity...

Adara follows a figure down the hallway... She takes a deep
breath, steeling her nerves.

MIA (V.O.)
Tonight, this is a coed restroom -
the woman's room is out of order.
So she walked right in to
confront...

Adara pushes open the door, revealing... VICE PRESIDENT
STEELE. HE IS REACHING INTO THE AMBASSADOR'S JACKET POCKET.

MIA (V.O.)
...the vice president. I believe
she was just in time to see him
attempt to plant the napkin. If she
had any doubts about his guilt, she
now knew for sure. Adara was a good
intelligence operative. She made
him an offer.

Adara makes a pitch to the startled vice president...

MIA (V.O.)
She will keep his secret safe. Even
help pin it on the Russian
ambassador. But in exchange, she
will leverage this information for
her government. Our killer *cannot*
stand to be leveraged. Our killer
cannot have his secret out. And our
killer is famous for his hair-
trigger temper. So...he killed her.

THE VICE PRESIDENT TURNS RED. HIS EYES MENACING. HE BEARS
DOWN ON ADARA...

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM // PRESENT

Mia stares evenly at the vice president. His face flushes.

MIA

If you had only kept your self-control, you could have walked away today. But you told me yourself, your temper would be your ruin.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

These are outrageous, defamatory allegations! Where is your proof?

MIA

As I said earlier tonight, the proof is in the eyes.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

You're saying you can see it in my eyes? That's not proof. That's New Age nonsense!

MIA

Not *your* eyes, Mr. Vice President. Adara's eyes.

The vice president's forehead wrinkles up in confusion.

MIA

Retinal bleeding... Red eyes.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

What are you talking about? I saw her when you found the body! Her eyes were white as the driven snow!

MIA

Exactly. I examined Adara and had our medical examiner send me a list of symptoms of asphyxiation. Adara had no subconjunctival hemorrhaging: no red eyes. No Petechial hemorrhages: no burst capillaries, no red dots under the eyes. No blueish tint around the lips. No crushed trachea. No fractured larynx or hyoid bone. No defensive wounds. No signs of violence.

SPEAKER BROOKES

What are you saying?

MIA

Adara didn't die by asphyxiation.
This was far too clean.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV

So what killed her?

MIA

Hypoxia... Her blood was starved of
oxygen.

Mia turns to face the group.

MIA

Adara was blood-choked.

All eyes turn to Vice President Steele. His mouth hangs wide
in shock.

MIA

Once the vice president strangled
Adara... That is when Holland
walked in and saw everything.

HOLLAND

Me?

Mia turns to him.

MIA

I was wondering how you suddenly
became Vice President Steele's new
chief of staff. He loathed you. He
called you a jabbering lickspittle.

HOLLAND

He did?

MIA

I wondered what possible piece of
political pandering you had pulled.
You must have found something
massive on him.

HOLLAND

Mia, I have nothing to do with
this...

MIA

You said earlier tonight that the
vice president requires undying
loyalty. How could you prove your
undying loyalty to him?

HOLLAND
 ...You're upset because I rejected
 you tonight...

Holland turns to the group.

HOLLAND
 ...She tried to have an affair with
 me and I turned her down...

MIA
 It's true. All night I couldn't see
 what was right in front of me: you
 were never going to leave your
 wife. You were always going to do
 what's best for you.

HOLLAND
 ...I'm a family man. I have a wife
 and two young children!

Mia crosses the room, closing in on him.

INT. BATHROOM // FLASHBACK

Holland enters the bathroom. He sees the vice president
 standing over Adara's body, holding a bloody napkin.

The two men stare at each other in shock.

MIA (V.O.)
 The moment you walked in on the
 vice president, you realized... You
 held all the leverage in the world.
 Half the army was in the bunker. A
 single shout from you, and a dozen
 generals would come running to that
 bathroom. You had the future US
 president by the balls.

Holland carefully shuts the bathroom door. He steps toward
 the vice president.

MIA (V.O.)
 But how do you guarantee this
 leverage? Forever? You needed a
 piece of evidence.

The vice president is panting, wild-eyed, a caged animal.

MIA (V.O.)
 In this moment, the VP had to do
 whatever you said.

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

Maybe he knew his plan to frame the Russian ambassador was on ice. Maybe he figured his best bet was to put as much distance as possible between himself and any evidence. Maybe you were just very convincing.

Holland steps close to the panicked vice president...

MIA (V.O.)

A good chief of staff is a fixer. You told the vice president you'd handle everything. You calmed him down. You smoothed out his jacket. And you told him you'd dispose... of this.

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM // PRESENT

Mia reaches into Holland's V-neck pocket and plucks out a dinner napkin. IT IS COVERED IN BLOOD.

MIA

The vice president knew this evidence would be safe on your person. This whole night, you were the only dinner guest that no one ever suspected of murder. You were the perfect person to secret this evidence away.

Holland's head swivels from the vice president to Mia.

MIA

When I searched Vice President Steele and didn't find the napkin, I thought my whole theory was wrong. I had a blind spot: you. But thank god for your self-interest, Holland. You were never going to throw away this napkin. Because, as you told me, *that's not how Washington works*. Washington works on self-interest. This napkin was your meal ticket.

Mia uses her sleeves to take the Churchill bust from Agent Stone. She turns it over in the light. On the base is a smudge of blood and strands of the president's hair.

MIA

I believe the vice president's fingerprints are on this bust.

MIA (CONT'D)

And I believe this blood will match
the napkin, Holland.

HOLLAND

(ashen)

What could I have done? He's the
next president. The most powerful
man in the world.

Mia turns to Vice President Steele.

MIA

You are not above the law. You
never were.

The vice president takes an involuntary step backward. His
eyes dart from person to person, a caged animal.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

None of you hypocrites has been to
war, but you get your freedoms,
your rights, and your privileges,
from men like me who know there are
sacrifices that must be made for
the greater good.

FIRST LADY WOOD

My husband was a *sacrifice*?

UNIFORMED DIVISION OFFICERS guard the door to the West Wing
corridor. Vice President Steele marches toward them.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

Let me out! I have a country to
run!

The guards stare forward, stony-faced, blocking his path.

VICE PRESIDENT STEELE

I'm one of you, damn it! I'm a
marine!

Mia nods to Agent Stone who pulls a fresh set of plastic flex
cuffs from his belt.

MIA

By the powers vested in me by the
US Code 3056, I am placing you
under arrest for the assassination
of President Henry Douglas Wood.
You have the right to remain
silent, anything you say can and
will be used against you in a court
of law.

Vice President Steele looks ready to fight. First Lady Wood steps close to him. She quotes him, acid in her voice...

FIRST LADY WOOD
Come on, Jim. Keep your dignity.

The vice president's eyes lower in shame.

Out of the corner of her eye, Mia spots Holland slinking for the door. He creeps diagonally across the checkered tiles.

MIA
Holland Atkinson, the second you took that bloody napkin, the vice president tied you to his fate. You are an accessory after the fact. That's a felony.

THE UNIFORMED DIVISION OFFICERS SEIZE HOLLAND BY THE ELBOWS.

HOLLAND
I can't go to jail... I have a life here... I have kids...

MIA
It's okay, Holland. Your wife never liked D.C. And you said yourself: you're not a family man.

Agent Stone presses a finger to his earpiece.

AGENT STONE
Ms. Pine? The chief justice has arrived. She's in the building.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAWN

Fey light streams in. Mia, the first lady, Speaker Brookes, and Ambassador Kamenev stand before the Resolute Desk.

CHIEF JUSTICE OMAR (60s) sweeps into the room majestically. She shrugs off her jacket, revealing her judicial robe.

CHIEF JUSTICE OMAR
Do I need my eyes checked, or did I just see the vice president being led away in handcuffs?

MIA
It's been a long night.

CHIEF JUSTICE OMAR
I see. Well, I believe I was called here to swear in a president.

MIA
She's over here, your honor.

Speaker of the House Terra Brookes steps forward.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Ambassador Kamenev, would you please join us for the ceremony? I know we've kept you a while, but when I speak to the American people this morning, and tell them that our president has been killed, I will need to tell them that our countries are at peace.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
Peace?

SPEAKER BROOKES
The US is standing down. I know we both have self-interest in the Middle East. But I have been thinking a lot about self-interest tonight...

Speaker Brookes eyes meet Mia's.

SPEAKER BROOKES
...And I believe it is more important to think of duty. Our duty to do whatever we can to bring peace to that region. Our duty to do what's right.

The ambassador bows.

AMBASSADOR KAMENEV
I will notify the Kremlin. I believe they will be much relieved to stand down.

Chief Justice Omar clasps her hands.

CHIEF JUSTICE OMAR
Shall we begin?

SPEAKER BROOKES
There is one final thing.

Morning sunlight floods the room.

SPEAKER BROOKES
Mia, would you care to serve as my new Chief of Secret Service?

MIA
It would be my honor. Madam
President.

Chief Justice Omar holds out the Lincoln bible...

Speaker Brookes places her right hand upon it...

Mia Pine stands at attention behind the new American
president.

THE END