

REAGAN

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EXT. MOUNT VERNON, BALTIMORE - SEPTEMBER 17, 1984 - DAY

Framed in a blue sky, a marble effigy of GEORGE WASHINGTON is perched atop a stone-white column above red-brick row-houses.

Beneath, FRANK CORDEN (mid 20s, curly hair cut into a preppier 'do) does his door-to-door civic duty.

COURTNEY (30s, box-blond mother of three, B'more accent) answers his knock with a KENT ULTRA pinched in her fingers.

FRANK

Good morning, Miss. Can I trouble you for a moment of your time?

COURTNEY

Oh Jesus, not another one. I bought an electric cheese grater from you people. Thing broke a'soon as I stuck in the Muenster.

FRANK

You sound pretty 'ungrateful.'

He likes his joke much more than she does.

COURTNEY

Whadderya sellin'? You got a minute; *Card Sharks* is in commercial.

FRANK

I'm actually not a salesman, Miss. I was wondering if you're currently registered to vote.

COURTNEY

Not interested.

She tries to close the door. Frank gives it a stiff-arm.

FRANK

You really should be.

COURTNEY

Eh, politicians are all the same.

FRANK

That's not true. Perhaps if you knew more about the candidates--

COURTNEY

I know about the candidates. Reagan did that movie where he was talkin' to a monkey.

(MORE)

COURTNEY (CONT'D)

That's weird: a president talkin' to a monkey? It's unnatural. And the Mondale guy, you can't say it, but I will: pussy.

FRANK

Well, he's certainly a little skittish on foreign policy.

COURTNEY

Big fat pussy. Betcha growin' up he got his ass kicked like...every day. By like girls and stuff. Those are my choices, why should I vote?

Frank was waiting for that question. He's so good at this speech, it sounds new even for the hundredth time.

FRANK

Because voting is sacred. Because everything this country is about started with the right to be heard. Our parents and grandparents and great-great-grandparents fought and died for that right. Where do your ancestors come from?

COURTNEY

(big nicotine exhale)  
Down'a street.

FRANK

Well, I'm sure I'll talk to them in a minute then. Miss, there are people just like you in Russia, China, East Germany and around the world who would give everything for the control that you have over how your country is run. I'm not here to say you have to vote, Miss. I'm here to celebrate that you get to.

Courtney takes a pensive drag from the cigarette.

COURTNEY

I can sign up with you?

FRANK

Absolutely.

He hands her a clipboard and a pen.

FRANK (CONT'D)

And if I may...

(reading her name)

Courtney: I'd like to encourage you  
to reelect President Ronald Reagan.

COURTNEY

Nah, I'm votin' for the pussy. That  
monkey shit really creeps me out.

She hands back the clipboard and shuts the door. Frank  
chooses to still count it as a victory.

Cue Johnny Cash's cover of 'PERSONAL JESUS' as Frank  
continues down the long street of identical row-houses. He  
knocks on doors. Same smile, same speech. Some sign up, some  
don't. Neither fazes Frank. He believes in his mission.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - LATER

A shitbox '81 HYUNDAI PONY. The passenger seat is covered in  
stacked registration CLIPBOARDS, Styrofoam BURGER BOXES, and  
a MOUTHWASH BOTTLE. Frank takes a sip of mouthwash, spits it  
back into a McDonald's cup. No time for real hygiene.

Frank pilots this deathtrap down I-95 toward WASHINGTON, DC.

INT. REAGAN CAMPAIGN OFFICE, GEORGETOWN - DAY

Frank carefully prints names on COFFEE CUPS with a sharpie.  
Pours each to order with the right cream and sugar levels.

Campaign posters adorn the walls as busy VOLUNTEERS hum with  
the lines read verbatim from cold-calling scripts. 'Have you  
considered?' 'Are you better off now?' 'Continuing progress.'

Frank glides through the phone banks, handing out  
personalized pick-me-ups to each volunteer.

The last is his least favorite to give, labeled 'KARL.'

INT. CAMPAIGN OFFICE - PRIVATE OFFICE

The eponymous KARL (30s, suspenders, punchable face) squeezes  
a HAND GRIP while sticking BLUE PINS in a map of the state of  
Maryland. Frank sets his coffee on his desk.

KARL

Look at this, Frankie. It's an ass-  
kicking in progress. Whole country's  
gonna be one big sea of blue.

FRANK

We're red now. Democrats are blue.

KARL

Bullshit they're blue. Red's the  
Commie color. They're our...Commies.

FRANK

Well, they're in disguise then. You  
see my numbers? I had a big day.

KARL

Could be better.

FRANK

Could be better? I registered over  
two hundred new voters.

KARL

And forty of them are voting for  
Mondale. Signing up Bad Guys  
doesn't count. I knocked 'em off  
your gross, subtracted them from  
your Good Guys to give you a grand  
total of...

(checking a sheet)

...Could Be Better.

FRANK

Karl, you can't do that. I need to  
get credit for my work.

KARL

You want credit, Frankie, you're on  
the wrong Hill.

Frank scowls at Karl in what seems like a daily occurrence.  
He storms out of the office. Karl calls after him.

KARL (CONT'D)

Gonna need to get those stats up,  
Frankie. The Good Guys are blue!

INT. CAMPAIGN OFFICE - NOVEMBER 6, 1984

The office buzzes again, this time with jubilant celebration  
as the television announces good news. And DAN RATHER.

DAN RATHER

And I'm getting word that CBS News  
can confirm the projection of a  
victory for the incumbent,  
President Ronald Wilson Reagan.

The primitive graphics color states in for Reagan...in RED.

DAN RATHER (CONT'D)

And it's looking like a landslide.  
A venerable sea of red...

Karl locks eyes with a celebrating Frank, who mouths the word 'Red!' to his adversary. Karl responds with a finger.

INT. CAPITOL HILL OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DECEMBER 1, 1984

A stark waiting room, egg-white other than the dark wood chairs and massive American flag. Frank sits nervously, wiping his hands on the pants of his rarely-worn suit. He pulls evidence of the last time he donned it from his inner pocket: a PROGRAM from his brother's wedding in October '82.

INT. CAPITOL HILL OFFICE - PAYNE'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Frank sits across from KEN PAYNE (50s, a doughy frog-man), Coms Director for the Capitol Hill Internship Program.

PAYNE

Excellent numbers, Mr. Corden.

FRANK

Thank you sir. They're actually even better, I had a few deleted. We don't have to go into it.

PAYNE

Frank-- May I call you Frank?  
(before he can answer)  
I'm going to. Frank, politics is a noble profession.

FRANK

The best.

PAYNE

With your resume, you can do just about anything. Why you picking us?

FRANK

The whole 'By the People' thing. It's what makes our country different. When someone votes for you, you're making them a promise. I want to help keep it.

PAYNE

Ah. One of those!

Frank can't tell if that's a good thing.

FRANK  
Yup. Definitely.

PAYNE  
I've got an old friend over in the Treasury. We go way back. At Yale, we double-teamed this Chinese prostitute. Two for one deal, if you know what I mean!

He laughs as only old white dudes can. Frank tries to match his 'Hahs!' and 'Ho ho whoas!'

PAYNE (CONT'D)  
Yessir! Married that woman. Gave me three wonderful kids.

FRANK  
Oh, well that's...that's beautiful.

PAYNE  
I'll make a call. I'm sure we can get something for a Princeton Man.

FRANK  
I really appreciate it, Mr. Payne. I spent so long knocking on doors and getting people coffee, I started to think that's all I could do!

PAYNE  
Haha! Good!

INT. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY - THE NEXT WEEK

Frank carefully writes names on COFFEE CUPS with a sharpie.

Exactly mirroring the campaign office, Frank walks through the hallways of the Treasury, handing out coffees to the busy workers. He doesn't do as much smiling this time.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY - DON'S OFFICE

Frank sets a cup on the desk of DON REGAN, Secretary of the Treasury (57, long-faced, fatherly) who chats on the phone.

DON  
It's the hand we're dealt, Caspar,  
we gotta power through.  
(MORE)

DON (CONT'D)  
 (to Frank)  
 Sugar?

FRANK  
 In there. I just wanted to say, Mr.  
 Regan, it's a real honor--

Don gives him the 'yeah-yeah' hand. Returns to his call.

DON  
 Then write it down for him. Write  
 everything down. Even his name!

Frank plods out of the office. Not exactly a dream job.

EXT. CORDEN RESIDENCE - DECEMBER 24, 1984 - NIGHT

A nice house in Bethesda, MD. American flag hanging off the porch, the railing of which is wrapped in Christmas lights.

HENRY (O.S.)  
 So we're on set, right?

INT. CORDEN RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM

GLADYS (60s, excited for herself and others) and MARCY (30, composed even with spit-up on her sweatshirt) make goo-goo sounds at the latter's new BABY.

HENRY (O.S.)  
 And our lead actor's a talented  
 guy. Super-talent. Cast him myself.

Rotating through the rest of the room, we see BRANDON (4, Marcy's eldest) fighting invisible ninjas in the hallway.

HENRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 But he will not hit his mark.

HENRY (30, a relentless success) sits in matching armchairs next to his father, JACK (60s, same haircut since The Corps). Jack is loving this story. On a nearby couch, Frank loves it far less, opting to focus on televised basketball.

JACK  
 His 'mark'?

HENRY  
 The place where the actor's supposed  
 to stand. Piece of tape on the  
 ground; acting's not rocket science.  
 (MORE)



HENRY (CONT'D)

And we lose takes for all sorts of reasons; plane noise, boom, waste of a day. I'm trying to be nice, but this guy's not letting me. Goes all movie star and forgets who the director is. So I tell him, 'Time is money and you're costing us both. Hit your mark or you're fucking fired.'

GLADYS

Henry! Language!

HENRY

It's integral to the story, Ma. Long and short, we get the shot and everyone's makin' money!

FRANK

So this is like a 'Where's The Beef' kinda thing?

HENRY

No, Frank. That was Wendy's. This is the answer to Where's The Beef.  
(waving pretentiously)  
'There's The Beef.'

FRANK

Wow. You're really pushing the artistic threshold.

HENRY

Hey, it paid for the shore house. Dad, you should come down to the set. I'll get you a pass.

JACK

A movie-set? No kidding!

Jack notices he's leaving out his youngest.

JACK (CONT'D)

So, Frank. What's new with you?

FRANK

I'm working for the Secretary of the Treasury. Tough job. A lot of administrative stuff. I can get you a tour of the office if you want.

JACK

The Treasury. Down on Pennsylvania? By that grill...what's it called?

FRANK  
 (deflating)  
 Old Ebbit.

JACK  
 Sure. They do a good crab cake.

A long pause as both Jack and Frank wish the news was more exciting. Jack turns to Marcy.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 Kids are big, Marcy!

MARCY  
 Right? You see the four year old  
 and know that's where the baby's  
 gonna be in like no time.

Frank's had enough of losing and stands up.

FRANK  
 Anyone want anything while I'm up?

The room shakes their heads no. Frank drifts out.

GLADYS  
 Time. It just goes so fast.

INT. CORDEN RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

The table is set for Christmas Eve. Frank exits the bathroom to find Brandon frozen on the ground in a ball.

FRANK  
 Hey, Brandon. You okay? Brandon?

MARCY (O.S.)  
 That's not his name today.

Marcy has joined her brother-in-law.

MARCY (CONT'D)  
 He thinks he's a Transformer.  
 But instead of turning into a  
 truck, he turns into a table. Or a  
 ball on the ground.

BRANDON  
 Mom! I'm a table!

MARCY  
 The boy thinks he's a table; who am  
 I to argue with him?

Frank almost admires the kid's commitment.

FRANK

All the time he's doing this?

MARCY

Until he forgets and wants to be He-Man instead. That's how kids work: you need to operate in the realm of their reality.

FRANK

Works on adults, too.

MARCY

(checking her watch)

Okay, we're good.

(to Brandon)

Dinner time, Optimus!

Making the 'Transformer sound,' Brandon stands and scurries for the bathroom to wash up.

MARCY (CONT'D)

Life, huh?

They both laugh, but for different reasons.

LATER. The family is gathered around the dinner table.

GLADYS

Frank, I have a job for you:

FRANK

Mom, I have a job.

GLADYS

A coffee table...made out of coffee table books! That's a million dollar idea; you should do something with it.

JACK

Gladys, he's got a job. He works for the...the department...

The pause grows. Frank knows he shouldn't help. But...

FRANK

Treasury.

JACK

Right, the Treasury.

HENRY

He told you ten minutes ago, Dad.

JACK

I know, I remember.

GLADYS

Your father's getting to that age.

JACK

Oh, enough with the age! I knew it was the Treasury, I just took a second! I remembered it just fine.

GLADYS

It's not a problem, Hon.

JACK

You're right, it's not a problem!

The room gets quiet outside of the sounds of utensils. Frank sees the covered concern on his father's face.

FRANK

So, Dad, I read this thing on the '66 O's. That was some team.

Jack's eyes light up.

JACK

Terrific, Frank. All-time great. I remember early in the season, we're playing Cleveland at home. Frank Robinson comes to the plate against Luis Tiant. Cuban guy; fled Castro.

Frank notices his mother silently thank him with a grin.

JACK (CONT'D)

Robinson just hammers one and-- you know that flag? The one in the ballpark that says 'HERE'? That's where Robinson put the ball onto 33rd Street. Can you believe it? Out of the stadium onto the street!

FRANK

And that's why you named me after Frank Robinson?

JACK

Only because your Mom wouldn't let me name you Brooks.

GLADYS  
 (laughing)  
 That's not a man's name! It's not!

The mood lightens. Frank has saved another family dinner.

INT. NBC NEWS BROADCAST - JANUARY 20, 1985

Tom Brokaw announces the top story of the day.

TOM BROKAW  
 Due to the frigid conditions in the Northeast, President Reagan was sworn in today to a second term in a private ceremony at the White House. There will be a public administration of the Oath of Office tomorrow in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol, at which point the President will deliver his second inaugural address.

EXT. US CAPITOL - JANUARY 21, 1985

The MALL is packed with press and hopeful audience members.

INT. US CAPITOL - SECURITY AREA

Frank hands his ID to a cheery VOLUNTEER, who writes a nametag for him: 'FRANK C.'.

VOLUNTEER  
 'Frank Corden.' There we go. Now everyone will know who you are!

FRANK  
 You don't spell out the last name?

VOLUNTEER  
 Honey, I doubt anybody's gonna call you 'Mister.'

Frank knows she has a point.

INT. US CAPITOL - ROTUNDA

Bruce Springsteen's 'BORN IN THE USA' blasts over the P.A. system. The CROWD and PRESS are set. CONGRESSMEN are in bleachers behind a PODIUM bearing the seal of the President. CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN BURGER waits onstage. Checks his watch.

In the wings, Frank stands next to MATT G (so says his nametag), who rocks out to the song.

MATT G

Oh yeah! It's great rock stars are writing love songs to America. That's Reagan, man. Doesn't happen without Ronald Reagan.

FRANK

This song's about Vietnam.

MATT G

No it's not. It's about being an American, man.

FRANK

Listen to the lyrics. Not just the chorus.

MATT G

The chorus is all I need.

Burger walks up to them.

BURGER

Are we gonna swear somebody in here or what?

FRANK

The President must still be getting ready, sir.

BURGER

Can you find out what the hold up is? Otherwise, I'm making my balls president. Which is something I really could do.

Frank looks at Matt, who's stuck in a sing-a-long.

FRANK

Sure, I'll check.

He leaves. Matt keeps singing.

MATT G

*'Sent me off to a foreign land / To go and kill...the...yellow...'*

(realizing)

Huh.

(snapping back to rockin')

*'Bornnnnn in the U.S.A! / I was...'*

INT. US CAPITOL - HALLWAY

Frank weaves through the marble halls. He turns a corner and spots Karl waiting outside a door.

FRANK

Shit...

KARL

Hey, Frankie! Still gophing, I see.

FRANK

I don't have time for this, Karl.  
Any idea where the President is?

KARL

Right behind this door.

FRANK

...What? Really?

KARL

Yep. I'm on James Baker's team;  
White House Chief of Staff. Top of  
the heap. The view from up here,  
Frankie, I can see your Mom's house.

Karl's casual pride snaps to attentive subservience as CASPAR WEINBERGER (60s, intense, all Brylcreme and forehead veins), opens the door.

CASPAR

Hey Dipshit.

KARL

Yes sir, Mr. Weinberger?

CASPAR

Comb the building. We're looking  
for a guy named Mark.

KARL

Mark...Mark... I know a Marcus,  
couple of Mikes--

CASPAR

Those aren't 'just as good'. The  
President's looking for someone  
named fucking 'Mark.'

(to Frank)

You're from the stage?

Frank nods nervously.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Delay them. Like an hour. Have 'em play another Lee Greenwood song.

FRANK

I think he just has that one song.

CASPAR

Then have him write a-fucking-nother one! Something with 'America' and 'God' in the title; it's not motherfucking Mozart!

Frank peeks in the room behind Caspar. He sees Security Adviser BUD MCFARLANE (46, narrow-shouldered and harried) pleading with President RONALD REAGAN (73, he's Reagan).

BUD

Mr. President, we have to do the Oath again. For the public.

REAGAN

Mark was fine. Don't tell me the mark wasn't fine.

The word echoes in Frank's mind. He suddenly recalls his brother's speech about the commercial.

FRANK

Oh, Mr. Weinberger. He doesn't mean--

CASPAR

Find me a fucking Mark!

He slams the door. Karl trips over himself down the hall.

KARL

Goddamn it, we gotta find Mark!

FRANK

It's not a person! It's...

Karl is gone. Frank stares at the door. He could walk away. Or he could fix this. He nervously knocks on the door. It opens again. Caspar slides his head out incredulously slowly.

CASPAR

(quietly)

I cannot for the life of me understand why I'm looking at your fucking face right now. Did I die? Am I in hell?

From inside the room, Don spots Frank.



FRANK  
I'm sorry, sir. I...

DON  
Frank? You need something?

FRANK  
Mr. Regan, can I talk to you?

DON  
Let him in, Caspar.

Caspar reluctantly makes way for Frank to enter the room.

INT. US CAPITOL - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Frank walks into a room full of the most powerful people in the country: Weinberger holds the door for him. Don is next to Deputy Security Adviser JOHN POINDEXTER (50, stern, Naval) and Chief of Staff JAMES BAKER (55, hairplugs and nervous eyes). Reagan and McFarlane are still arguing.

REAGAN  
Don't tell me I can't find a mark!

Frank approaches the safety of his boss.

FRANK  
Mr. Regan, sir, I think I know what the President is talking about.

DON  
You know Mark? Where is he?

FRANK  
It's not a guy. A 'mark' is an acting thing.

POINDEXTER  
He should not be in here, Don.

DON  
Hold on. An acting thing?

FRANK  
It's where he's supposed to stand.

BUD  
Mr. President, we have to go now!

REAGAN  
Why, Bud? Give me one good reason why.

The words leave Frank before he realizes it:

FRANK

There was a plane in the shot!

The room turns toward Frank. Reagan glares at this new face.

REAGAN

What was that?

FRANK

We had a plane fly by. The noise ruined the whole day. We have to do the...scene again.

Reagan eyes Frank, who has no idea if that was a mistake.

REAGAN

(beat)

Bullshit.

FRANK

I'm sorry, sir, I shouldn't have--

REAGAN

The scene was perfect. There was no plane. There were no problems. What's this picture about anyway?

BUD

You're the President, for Christ's sake!

REAGAN

Eh, another one of those. Send the script to my trailer. Along with a pack a' Lucky Strikes and maybe a bottom-heavy stewardess.

BUD

Oh my god...This isn't happening.

Frank flashes suddenly on his father. And the 'Transformer.'

FRANK

You're right. There wasn't a plane. You missed your mark.

REAGAN

This again? I told you--

FRANK

I saw the tape. We lost an entire day of shooting as a result.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

I was trying to be nice, but you're not letting me. Time is money, Mr. Pr...Reagan, and you're costing us both. Do it again!

REAGAN

I don't know who you think you are--

Frank gets in Reagan's face.

FRANK

Do it again! And hit your mark, Ronnie, or you're fucking fired!

The room is stunned silent. Caspar leans to a SECRET SERVICE.

CASPAR

Do we shoot him?

Reagan's eyes go to the 'FRANK C' nametag. He stares at Frank. Then suddenly buttons his jacket.

REAGAN

You're the boss, Mr. Capra.

FRANK

You're right. I am the boss.  
(to the room)  
Can we replace Ronnie's mark on the stage, please?

No one moves. Frank feigns frustration.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Oh, what, do I need to do everything myself? Who has tape? Someone give me some tape!

Bud jumps and hands him a roll of MASKING TAPE from a desk.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Thank you. I'll be out on the set. Bring him in five minutes. I'm not waiting one second longer!

He storms out of the office. Takes a quick right turn...

INT. US CAPITOL - BATHROOM

Frank vomits violently into the sink.

FRANK

Oh fuck...oh Jesus...

INT. US CAPITOL - HALLWAY

...and goes back to walking like nothing had happened.

INT. US CAPITOL - ROTUNDA - MINUTES LATER

Frank sticks pieces of tape to the ground as a confused Burger watches. Frank shakes his head, 'Don't ask.'

He returns to the wing. Reagan waits alongside his staff.

REAGAN

Lot of extras here today. That can't be cheap.

FRANK

(re: Burger)

Okay, that guy's gonna swear you in. Your...script is on the podium. You gonna be okay?

REAGAN

It's not my first picture.

He waits. Everyone waits. Burger holds his arms out: 'Are we doing this?' After a few moments, Reagan looks at Frank.

REAGAN (CONT'D)

You gonna say 'action'?

FRANK

Oh right. Um...Action!

REAGAN

I guess you're not having a banner day, either.

He marches onstage to thundering applause. He waves to his adoring fans; a natural movie star. He stops on the tape, turning to give Frank a shitty look.

The inauguration begins. Frank suddenly feels the eyes of Caspar, Bud, Poindexter, and Don burning him.

FRANK

You know--

CASPAR

Get the fuck out of here.

FRANK

Kay.

He quickly escapes through the crowd.

EXT. WASHINGTON, DC - MORNING

The sun rises over the east end of the White House.

INT. DC METRO - TRAIN CAR - THE NEXT MORNING

A packed morning commuter rail. The train slows to a halt. Frank aimlessly stares out the window.

FRANK  
(oh shit)  
Okay.

EXT. DC METRO - METRO CENTER STATION - MINUTES LATER

PEDESTRIANS rush to get to work on time. The escalator slowly lifts an immobile Frank to street level.

FRANK  
(here we go)  
Okay...

LATER. Frank walks down the street, trying to relax himself.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
(I can do this)  
Okay. Okay...okay.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY - MINUTES LATER

Frank enters the government building and flashes his badge to the SECURITY GUARD. He feels like the whole building is watching his entrance.

FRANK  
(it's gonna be...)  
Okay. Okay.

He approaches the elevator. As he reaches for the up-button:

SECRET SERVICE #1  
Mr. Corden.

Two SECRET SERVICE AGENTS have joined him.

SECRET SERVICE #1 (CONT'D)  
Would you come with us, please?

What else can Frank say, other than:

FRANK

Okay.

The Agent presses the down button. Frank swallows hard.

INT. ELEVATOR - SECONDS LATER

The stoic Agents flank a flop-sweating Frank, who tries to remain calm. He nervously starts whistling the sax opening to CARELESS WHISPER.

FRANK

You guys know that song?

(no response)

It's Wham. Really good.

INT. CAPITOL TUNNELS - SECONDS LATER

Beneath the seat of government are a series of concrete tunnels which connect the major buildings. This is where the elevator has stopped.

The Agents direct Frank down the long, bleak corridor.

FRANK

They've got a great sound, Wham does. Kind of like a throwback to the R&B hits of the seventies.

George Michael's a real talent.

(beat)

That's what I think.

The walk leads to a side door, which the Agents open...

INT. CAPITOL TUNNELS - SIDE ROOM

Three other SECRET SERVICE AGENTS are inside, along with Caspar, Bud, Don, and Poindexter. Nerves do strange things to people; in Frank's case, it does this:

FRANK

(awkwardly cheery)

Hi everybody!

DON

Sit down, Frank.

He does. The whole room seems to tower over him.

DON (CONT'D)

I'm switching positions with James Baker. White House Chief of Staff. You'll be coming with me.

Frank exhales so hard it moves paper across the room.

FRANK

That's great. Wow, that's what this is about. Thank god.

POINDEXTER

That's not what this is about.

FRANK

Yeah, I didn't think so.

BUD

Why--why did you talk to the president like that?

FRANK

It was a mistake, Mr. McFarlane. I'm sorry.

CASPAR

Answer the question, Numbnuts. You knocked up the cheerleader, you're having the shitty little kid.

FRANK

I don't know, it just...reminded me of my Dad. He forgets stuff sometimes, so I...'operate in the realm of his reality.' Just bring up baseball and he's back on track. The President was talking like an actor. I know he used to do that, so...I gave it a shot.

No one responds. Frank would love it if someone would.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I know you can't say the word 'fuck' to the President! It was an idea! A bad one! I just wanted to help! I'm really sorry I did it!  
(still no response)  
Oh god, are you going to kill me?!

CASPAR

...I mean, it's on the table.

Don looms over Frank. His voice is like a gavel.

DON

What you're about to hear can never  
leave this room.

Frank nods for his life.

BUD

The President...is demented.

CASPAR

*Dementia*, he has dementia.  
'Demented.' He's not criminally  
insane! Like The fucking Penguin!

POINDEXTER

Settle down, Caspar.

CASPAR

Settle down? Look what we did, John!  
We got this fucking guy elected and  
he's forgetting every other  
Wednesday! We've got four more years  
of this shit!

FRANK

Dementia... The President...?

BUD

It started during the debates. He'd  
lose a word here or there. Imagine  
that; the 'Great Communicator'  
forgetting his verbs.

POINDEXTER

It's getting worse. His clarity is  
becoming less reliable. Last night  
was the best he's done in months.

DON

You see what we're getting at?

Frank shakes his head no.

DON (CONT'D)

The President used to be an actor.  
As much as he forgets, he can't  
forget that. And yesterday, he  
listened to you because he thought  
you were his director.

CASPAR

Frank Capra, as a matter of fact.  
Rent 'It's A Wonderful Life'; you  
apparently made it.



POINDEXTER

He thought he was playing the President in a movie. Our mission is to convince him that's true.

FRANK

Oh no. Sir...Sirs...

BUD

This is extremely classified. If anyone finds out, we're all dead.

DON

We can handle policy. We need you to translate it into movie-talk. Put the president in the right 'scenes'.

FRANK

This is impossible. I don't know how to do this. Really, I can't.

WYOMING (O.S.)

Why did you get into politics, kid?

Frank didn't see a man we'll call WYOMING (40s, balding, trust me) sitting in the corner.

FRANK

Who are you?

WYOMING

I'm from Wyoming's At-Large district. I advise.

FRANK

Um...I love my country.

WYOMING

We do too. So does the President. But his mind is failing him at a time when we need him most. This is the greatest challenge this nation has ever endured. You want keep the Free World ticking, its leader is looking to you for his next move. Your President needs you. Your country needs you.

FRANK

I don't know...

WYOMING

This is an opportunity, kid. We can make a lot of things happen.

(MORE)

WYOMING (CONT'D)

You want to be fetching coffee for the rest of your life? Or you want cream and sugar?

The room awaits Frank's answer. He has one choice: everything he's ever wanted.

FRANK

I don't know much about movies.

WYOMING

Well, Mr. Capra: you'd better learn.

INT. FILM SET - FEBRUARY 3, 1985 - DAY

A soundstage in Silver Spring. Henry and Frank walk through the giant doors toward where a CREW prepares the set.

HENRY

So glad you could come down to visit the set, Frank. It's always fun to bring family to work.

FRANK

Well, I've been interested in commercials. I just saw this one the other day for detergent and thought, 'Man, how did they do that?'

HENRY

'Calgon, take me away?' Yeah, it's a masterpiece.

(then)

You'll learn today, boy-o! By the way, I owe you a thanks as well.

They reach the heavily-lit set, where ACTORS practice their lines next to gigantic CANS with the label: SCHWEINSTEIGER'S ALL-AMERICAN DOG FOOD. A few DOGS wander around.

HENRY (CONT'D)

If it wasn't for your gig in government, I never would have gotten this idea. We're rebranding the product. Schweinsteiger's All-American Dog Food: for people who love dogs and their country.

FRANK

...Wow.

HENRY

You're tellin' me.

They study the giant cans of dog food.

FRANK

What kind of a name is  
Schweinsteiger?

HENRY

Believe it or not: Argentinian.

*WE JUMP BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THIS DAY ON SET AND THE  
FOLLOWING SPEECHES:*

INT. OVAL OFFICE - APRIL 24, 1985

MAKE-UP ARTISTS primp the President to make him TV-ready.  
They nod to Don. Don nods to Frank, who nervously checks a  
notepad.

FRANK

Okay um, camera's good and...Action!

A few people look at Frank like he's crazy. But not Reagan.

REAGAN

(into camera)

*My fellow Americans. I speak to you  
tonight about a problem that  
demands your immediate attention.*

INT. FILM SET - FEBRUARY 3, 1985

Frank watches the SCRIPT SUPERVISOR of the dog food  
commercial flip through her pages.

INT. BITBURG AIR FORCE BASE, HQ - MAY 5, 1985

Frank scans a book: PERFORMANCE NOTES FOR ACTORS. He holds a  
pen idly over a copy of Reagan's speech. What does he write?

EXT. BITBURG AIR FORCE BASE - LATER

Centered in a huge American flag, Reagan is now onstage in  
front of an audience of German and American SOLDIERS.

REAGAN

*With the lessons of the past firmly  
in our minds, we've turned to a  
new, brighter page in history.*

The crowd goes wild. Reagan eyes his pages, his 'lines' marked in hi-lighter with Frank's performance notes in the margins: 'LOUDER, CLEAR THROAT, REALLY QUIET.'

REAGAN (CONT'D)  
 (barely audible)  
*One of the many who wrote me about  
 this visit was a young woman who  
 had recently been Bat Mitzvahed.*

The audience exchanges looks, wondering if anyone heard him.

In the back, Poindexter and McFarlane glare at Frank, who tries to hide his dread. He starts cheering. The crowd, afraid of missing a moment, goes wild again.

INT. FILM SET - FEBRUARY 3, 1985

Henry coaches the actors. Frank looks up from his FILMMAKING BOOK to spot an ACTRESS practicing her one line off-stage.

ACTRESS  
 'My dog is Bred Right and Blue!'  
 'My dog is Bred Right...and BLUE!'

INT. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, FRANCE - OFFICE - MAY 8, 1985

A small office with the chief members of the cabinet. Bud trembles as he gestures for Frank to talk to the President. Frank leans over to Reagan, who is studying his script.

FRANK  
 We think...I mean, I think you  
 should stay in character, even when  
 we're not rolling.

REAGAN  
 I like it. Makes me more believable  
 as the President.

FRANK  
 That's the idea.

REAGAN  
 (laughing)  
 I'm the President.  
 (to the room)  
 Hey fellas, let's bomb Russia!

The room is shocked. Frank goes into a silent panic. A very serious GENERAL's eyes get wide.

GENERAL

Is that an order, sir?

FRANK

No! He's just kidding! He's just kidding! It's a joke! Ha!

Reagan starts laughing. The room exhales. Frank steadies himself against a table. And that could have been war.

INT. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT - ASSEMBLY FLOOR - LATER

Reagan addresses the delegates of Europe.

REAGAN

*We see similar Soviet efforts to profit from and stimulate regional conflicts in Central America.*

INT. FILM SET - FEBRUARY 3, 1985

An ACTOR shakes Frank's hand, thinking he's a big-wig producer. Frank realizes the handshake contains a TINY BAG OF COCAINE! He anxiously tries to reject the peace offering, but the actor is insistent. He quickly pursues him to give it back...and runs right into Henry. Frank impulsively stuffs the bag into his jacket pocket. Henry eyes Frank suspiciously... because Frank is acting suspiciously.

INT. OUTSIDE THE OVAL OFFICE - JUNE 30, 1985

Frank hectically goes over his notes from the film set. Caspar approaches him.

CASPAR

I know you're nervous. I just wanted to tell you: if you fuck this up, I'm gonna squeeze your head as hard as I can until your eyeballs pop out of your asshole.

He gives Frank an ironically friendly pat on the back.

FRANK

Thank...thank you.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - LATER

Another speech, already in progress.

REAGAN

*The United States gives terrorists no rewards and no guarantees.*

Don leans to Frank and drops his infamous line:

DON

Speed him up.

FRANK

How do I do that?

DON

You're the director. Figure it out.

Taking a stab, Frank does 'spinning wheel fingers.'

REAGAN

(spinning his fingers)

*We make no concessions; we make no deals.*

Don looks at Frank, who intentionally doesn't look back.

INT. FILM SET - FEBRUARY 3, 1985

Henry turns to his cameraman.

HENRY

You happy?  
(off his nod, to everyone)  
Alright people, we're wrapped!

Everyone applauds. Including Frank.

INT. DAR CONSTITUTION HALL - JULY 8, 1985

Reagan walks off the stage to thunderous applause. He winks at Frank, who turns to a nearby CAMERAMAN.

FRANK

You happy?

CAMERAMAN

...What?

FRANK

Are you, you know...happy?

CAMERAMAN

In general? I guess.

FRANK

Great. We're wrapped everyone!

Reagan smiles at his director. Don and Poindexter seem cautiously relieved. Bud nervously wipes his mouth with a handkerchief. Caspar mimes the head-squeeze/ass-eyes threat. Frank half-grins. Welcome to the White House.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTSIDE DON'S OFFICE - SEPTEMBER 3, 1985

Poindexter meets Frank in the doorway with a stack of papers.

POINDEXTER

Here are the talking points we need covered in the speech. Go over it with Peggy. Any questions...don't have questions.

FRANK

Yes, Mr. Poindexter.

Poindexter turns to leave, but Frank stops him.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Sir, you know, I was thinking: maybe I should, like, sit in on a meeting with you guys.

Poindexter answers his request with a stone-cold frown.

FRANK (CONT'D)

That's...that's a 'no', right?

POINDEXTER

Son, we don't say 'no' in the Navy.

FRANK

...But you mean 'no.'

POINDEXTER

Yes.

FRANK

Okay then.

Frank skitters away.

INT. PEGGY'S OFFICE - SEPTEMBER 3, 1985

The office is carefully decorated with framed first-pages of speeches. PEGGY NOONAN (34, academic, oozing confidence) sits across from Frank, who holds the list from Poindexter.

PEGGY

This is the United Nations, so I'd like to keep the President's language firm but respectful. They probably told you to tell me to kick Russia in the ass a little, right?

Frank sees a small opportunity to quietly make a difference.

FRANK

Actually, they suggested we soften the rhetoric on Russia a bit. The President always talks about 'Peace Through Strength.' The whole first term was mostly just the latter. To quote the prophet John Lennon, let's give peace a chance.

PEGGY

They want to *soften* the rhetoric?  
(off his nod)  
What's your position again?

FRANK

I'm a media consultant. I help the President...be Presidential.

Peggy studies Frank for a second. Then:

PEGGY

Okay. But we can't say 'Lennon'; he'll think we mean 'Vladimir.'

FRANK

I have a suspicion that he won't, but better safe than sorry.  
(then)  
Hey, can I ask you a question?

She looks at him, which causes Frank to change his inquiry.

FRANK (CONT'D)

How is 'Peggy' short for 'Margaret'?  
There's no P in Margaret.

Peggy holds steely eye contact. She knows what he's asking.

PEGGY

There's no B in 'William' but I know plenty of 'Bills'.

Frank smiles. He might have met the only sane person in DC. His attention turns to his list. Wedged between FOREIGN POLICY and ECONOMY is the phrase, 'THE ENTERPRISE.'



FRANK  
'The Enterprise.' What's the  
Enterprise?

PEGGY  
No idea. Ask Don.

INT. HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Don is conferring with multiple STAFFERS as Frank approaches.

FRANK  
Mr. Regan, do you have a moment?

DON  
Is the speech ready?

FRANK  
It's actually about the speech.

DON  
Just get it done.

Frank has to look elsewhere for an answer.

INT. POINDEXTER'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER - DAY

Frank catches Poindexter talking with colleagues outside.

FRANK  
Mr. Poindexter. I have a quick--

POINDEXTER  
It had better not be a question.

FRANK  
No it's...I'm gonna go.

He crawls away.

INT. OUTSIDE CASPAR'S OFFICE - LATER

Frank goes to knock on Caspar's door. He pauses. Reconsiders.

INT. NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Bud is carefully working on something. Frank pops in.

FRANK

Mr. McFarlane? Can I ask you a question?

BUD

Make it fast. I'm translating this thank you note I got from the Sultan of Brunei. I'd have my secretary do it, but it's classified.

FRANK

Understood. So I was going over the meeting notes with the speechwriter. There was an item we didn't understand: the Enterprise?

Bud freezes. Catatonically stares at Frank for a long...beat.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Sir? Are you okay?

BUD

(suddenly)

Fine! I'm fine. Um...The Enterprise...that's nothing.

FRANK

It was on the list of talking points.

BUD

Typo. Shouldn't have even been on there. Old project. Pork barrels. Barrels...of pork.

(calling out)

Wilma!

Bud's assistant, WILMA HALL (50s, stocky and kindly) enters.

WILMA

Yes, Mr. McFarlane?

BUD

What did I tell you about the agendas? Please send them back to me so I can double-check them.

WILMA

Oh, I thought you did check them.

BUD

Well then let me check them after I check them! Is that so complicated?

Bud looks at Frank as if Wilma is the weird one.

WILMA  
Yes sir. Sorry sir.

BUD  
Don't let it happen again.  
(to Frank)  
So that's fixed. Anything else?

INT. HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

Frank exits the office to spot Wilma's desk.

FRANK  
Hey, I'm sorry he yelled at you. It wasn't a big deal.

WILMA  
I'm used to it.

He turns to leave. But Wilma stops him.

WILMA (CONT'D)  
Oh, Mr. Corden? I know this is a little awkward to ask, but my daughter is looking for an internship. Do you have anyone working for you at the moment?

The thought had never occurred to Frank. Until now.

FRANK  
Working for me? No, I don't.

WILMA  
Would you mind reading her resume? She's very...nice.

FRANK  
Sure, have it sent to my office.  
(catching himself)  
Don's office. I'm outside his office. My desk is. My own desk.

WILMA  
Oh, thank you, Mr. Corden!

FRANK  
My pleasure, Wilma.

He strides down the hall, standing a little taller than usual. He likes the sound of 'Mister'.

INT. UNITED NATIONS - GENERAL ASSEMBLY - OCTOBER 24, 1985

Reagan finishes addressing the delegation.

REAGAN

*Everything we work to achieve must seek that end so that some day our preservation of prime ministers, our premiers, our presidents, and general secretaries will not talk of war and peace, but only of peace. Let us not waste one more moment to give back to the world all that we can in return for this miracle of life. Thank you. God bless you all.*

The place erupts in applause.

In the wings, Frank claps ferociously. Peggy does not.

FRANK

Nailed it. He nailed it!

PEGGY

Not yet he didn't.

She watches the SOVIET AMBASSADOR, who sits with his arms folded. We lose sight of him as the applause turns into a standing ovation.

Frank and Peggy hold their breaths...

...Until the Soviet Ambassador stands and joins in the applause. Peggy starts clapping too.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Now he nailed it.

INT. UNITED NATIONS - HALLWAY - LATER

Frank leans outside an office as his assistant FAWN HALL (26, gorgeous, all blonde hair and shoulder-pads) scurries to him.

FAWN

Mr. Corden! Mr. Corden!

FRANK

What's up, Fawn?

FAWN

I got a note from the assistant to the assistant to the Soviet Ambassador. Russian guy.

She hands him the note, written on a napkin.

FAWN (CONT'D)  
Why are you in the hallway?

FRANK  
Oh, they don't need me for this meeting. They'll brief me. Later. In the briefing.

FAWN  
Thank you so much for the job, Mr. Corden. This is by far the nicest United Nations I've ever been in.

Frank reads the napkin. His jaw drops open.

MOMENTS LATER. Ambassadors and staffers hustle from the room. Frank catches Bud as he exits.

FRANK  
Mr. McFarlane! The Soviet Ambassador gave me this note. The Russians want to schedule a summit! A meeting between Reagan and the Premier! Face to face!

Bud snatches the napkin from Frank.

BUD  
Why did they bring this to you? This napkin is classified.

FRANK  
Well, I have an intern now. Although technically she's Mr. Regan's intern, but she thinks--

Bud reads the note. His jaw drops as well.

BUD  
My god. The Russians want to schedule a summit!

FRANK  
Yes! Yes, that's what I...nevermind. Maybe you could tell Don that I brought this to you--

Before he can finish, Bud skips away from him. We hear:

BUD (O.S.)  
Don! The Soviet Ambassador gave me this note!

Frank nods to himself: the wrong Hill for credit indeed.

EXT. GENEVA, SWITZERLAND - NOVEMBER 19, 1985

AIR FORCE ONE touches down at Cointrin Airport.

EXT. GENEVA, SWITZERLAND - DAY

The SWISS GUARD escort a series of STRETCH LIMOS bearing American flags.

EXT. MAISON DE SAUSURRE - DAY

The cars pull to a stop in front of a palatial CHATEAU, elegantly framed between two peaks of the SWISS ALPS.

INT. MAISON DE SAUSURRE - FOYER - MINUTES LATER

The foyer of the estate has been converted into a security area. Americans and Russians are subject to screening.

Frank, wearing a PUFFY WINTER COAT instead of his suitjacket, holds his arms out as a SWISS GUARD checks him for weapons. He sees to his right an incredibly fierce KGB OPERATIVE getting the same treatment.

INT. MAISON DE SAUSURRE - MEETING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

The SECRET SERVICE trade fearsome looks with the KGB detail. Frank and Poindexter are right in between them.

FRANK

(re: the KGB)

Would it kill these guys to smile?

POINDEXTER

It's not in their blood. They're godless beasts. And one day we're gonna have to kill them all.

FRANK

I certainly hope not.

POINDEXTER

You're not here to hope. You're not here to think. You're here to translate the message into a language the President understands. Is that clear?

FRANK  
Absolutely, Mr. Poindexter.

POINDEXTER  
And he better be ready. This isn't a speech. It's a meeting with the other most powerful man in the world.

FRANK  
I went over the talking points with him, sir. Peggy even scripted his first line.

POINDEXTER  
What about after the first line?

Frank is saved from coming up with an answer by Reagan.

REAGAN  
Love the opener, Frank. It's one of those goosebump moments.  
(to Poindexter)  
You know why they call it that?

POINDEXTER  
(no hint of a smile)  
Because it gives you goosebumps.

REAGAN  
You got it, Charlie.  
(to Frank)  
Where are the cameras?

FRANK  
Ron, we're doing this scene in...  
(remembering the lingo)  
*Cinema Verite*. Hidden cameras, like we're not even filming at all. Just you and your scene partner.

REAGAN  
Great. Who's my scene partner?

Frank sees MIKHAIL GORBACHEV (53, he's Gorbachev), General Secretary of the USSR. Frank pauses, then:

FRANK  
Its...Ernest Borginine.

Poindexter makes a 'what the hell?' face. Reagan beams.

REAGAN  
Ernest Borginine! *McHale's Navy!*  
*Airwolf!* Talented man.

POINDEXTER  
(dumbfounded)  
Extremely.

FRANK  
Once we're rolling, just keep going  
no matter what. Act like you're  
really the President and you're  
really trying to make a deal.

REAGAN  
I can do that.

FRANK  
I certainly hope so.

Frank silently apologizes to Poindexter for 'hoping' again.

Reagan strides into the room, meeting Gorbachev in the  
middle. Gorbachev extends a hand.

GORBACHEV  
Mr. President...

REAGAN  
Ernie!

He gives him a way-too-friendly handshake and hug.

FRANK (O.S.)  
We're rolling!

REAGAN  
Oh right, um...

The Soviet detail looks incredibly confused. Reagan recovers.

REAGAN (CONT'D)  
The United States and the Soviet  
Union are the two greatest  
countries on Earth. The  
superpowers. They are the only ones  
who can start World War Three, but  
also the only two countries that  
could bring peace to the world.

GORBACHEV  
And it is our solemn duty to  
achieve that peace in our time.

They sit down on a couch. The summit is on.



GORBACHEV (CONT'D)

Mr. President, the Soviet Union is very concerned about the presence of Pershing II missiles in Germany.

REAGAN

We're just protecting ourselves, Mr. Gorbashiv.

(breaking character)

Ah, it's GorbaCHEV. Let me take that again.

He leaves the couch. Frank and Poindexter's hearts stop.

POINDEXTER

What's he doing? What's in god's name is he doing?

Reagan walks back into the scene.

REAGAN

(to himself)

Two, three, and...

(then)

Mr. Gorbachev. The missiles are there merely for defense.

GORBACHEV

The same was true of our arsenal in Cuba and yet you refer to that time as a 'Crisis.'

REAGAN

Well, Cuba's a lot closer to Miami than Berlin is to your doorstep. It's dimple sistance.

(breaking character)

Dimple sistance! You listen to me? I'm a mess today.

(quickly, to Gorbachev)

Marty was brilliant, by the way.

He gets up again. Gorbachev is baffled.

GORBACHEV

Marty?

Behind him, one KGB Operative leans to another.

KGB OPERATIVE

Find this Marty.

Poindexter is in full blown panic mode.

POINDEXTER  
I'm pulling him out.

FRANK  
Wait, sir, I have an idea...

POINDEXTER  
I don't give a damn. We're done.

Reagan approaches them. Cheerily.

REAGAN  
Sorry, I hope we're good on time.

POINDEXTER  
Mr. President, I'm afraid we're--

FRANK  
(to Reagan)  
Look, don't worry if you stutter or flub something. Just improvise. Talk to him like he's just a guy, not like...the actual leader of Soviet Russia. Okay? Just another guy from a small town.

REAGAN  
Ah. *Verite*.

FRANK  
Very *verite*. Extremely *verite*.

He heads back into the room. Poindexter fumes.

POINDEXTER  
You little shit! We should never have brought you into this.

FRANK  
Come on, Ronnie. *Verite*.

Reagan returns to an equally steamed Gorbachev.

GORBACHEV  
Mr. President, your cheap negotiation ploys are wearing thin.

REAGAN  
I don't mean any offense. Where are you from in Russia?

GORBACHEV  
You've never heard of it.

REAGAN

I was born in Tampico, Illinois.  
Grew up in plenty of little hamlets  
that no one's ever heard of either.  
And now here we are; a couple of  
guys from Nowhere talking about the  
fate of the world.

Poindexter and Frank both exhale. That was great.

GORBACHEV

Privolnoye. 3,350 people.  
(with a smile)  
Roads aren't even paved.  
(then)  
The Soviet Union does not want war.

REAGAN

Well then, Mr. Gorbachev; that's a  
good place to start.

LATER. Reagan and Gorbachev discuss in the background. Frank is on the sideline next to one of the KGB OPERATIVES.

FRANK

I mean, I know my parents are proud  
of me. But I want to *impress them*.  
That's different. You know?

KGB OPERATIVE

(expressionless)  
My parents were sent to Gulag for  
cutting in a breadline.

FRANK

(beat)  
That's different, too.

LATER. The summit is coming to a close. Reagan and Gorbachev are on their feet.

GORBACHEV

I didn't expect we would agree on  
everything. But I do believe we  
have made progress.

REAGAN

You should come to the United  
States for the next one. Consider  
it an official company invite.

GORBACHEV

Accepted. A few more of these, Mr. President, and perhaps we won't have a Cold War any longer.

REAGAN

But you'll still be cold.

For a split second, no one knows how to react to that. Until Gorbachev starts to laugh.

GORBACHEV

Nine degrees in Moscow today. Brutal.  
(then)  
Pleasure to meet you.

They shake hands. Reagan immediately breaks character.

REAGAN

Great to work with you. Let's do lunch.

He walks off. Gorbachev, thinking it's slang, says:

GORBACHEV

Let's do lunch, Mr. President.

Reagan walks over to Frank. Once they're out of earshot:

REAGAN

How was that?

FRANK

Brilliant. Fantastic.  
(beat)  
Didn't love the very end, but I can live with it.

Reagan continues to his quarters. Poindexter stops Frank, who awaits a dressing down. Instead, Poindexter smiles, possibly for the first time ever. It's actually a little disturbing.

EXT. DON REGAN'S HOUSE - DECEMBER 1, 1985

The Potomac mansion hosts a party that can be heard outside.

INT. DON REGAN'S HOUSE - SAME

A Washington Schmoozefest: a CHAMBER ORCHESTRA playing near the fireplace, MEN and WOMEN in thousand dollar suits, bow-tied WAITERS carrying trays of HORS D'OEUVRES.

Amongst the insiders, Frank is in a corner, sipping his first sip of CHAMPAGNE. Don approaches him as a host, not a boss.

DON  
Enjoying the party?

FRANK  
Yes sir, Mr. Regan.

DON  
As a guest in my home; 'Don's' just fine. You've been doing excellent work recently. I've taken notice.

FRANK  
Thank you...Don. Sir, I was wondering if we could talk a minute. I have ideas--

DON  
Can it wait til Monday?

FRANK  
Well...yes.

DON  
Monday it is, then. Have fun.

He leaves to shake a more important hand. Frank is alone...

PEGGY (O.S.)  
You're not here for your ideas.

...Until Peggy joins him.

PEGGY (CONT'D)  
You're here so you feel like part of a team. Politicians love 'teams.'

FRANK  
Well, you know, we work for them.

PEGGY  
I work for the President. He's the last good man in this town. Although there's hope for you.

FRANK  
I just want to help make a difference. That's all.

PEGGY  
Make sure it stays that way.

She eyes the crowd as schmoozers do their thing.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

These people gave up on that a long time ago. They're just cravenly clinging to their jobs. How much difference can you make doing that?

(then)

You know what's hilarious? No one knows who you are.

FRANK

(beat, then forced)

Haha! I know, right?

PEGGY

Do you actually know why that's funny or are you just fake laughing?

FRANK

The...the second one.

PEGGY

Every one of these people here are terrified of not knowing someone they should. If you introduce yourself, they'll act like they voted for you. Go on, try it.

FRANK

No, I can't do that.

PEGGY

Come on, entertain me.

After a moment, Frank stands up. Walks to a RANDOM MAN.

FRANK

Hi. Frank Corden.

WILLIAM CASEY

Bill Casey, CIA. I've heard a lot about you, Frank!

FRANK

Yeah, me...me too!

He makes a face to Peggy, who grins. Frank targets another man in a MARINE'S UNIFORM (43). With even more panache:

FRANK (CONT'D)

Frank Corden.

OLIVER NORTH  
Ollie North. It's a real honor.

Frank is loving this game. Before he can try a third time:

WYOMING (O.S.)  
You're not going to say hello?

Wyoming greets Frank with a squeeze on his shoulder.

FRANK  
Mr. Cheney, hi.

DICK (WYOMING)  
Ah, you looked me up.

Seeing her entertainment is over, Peggy exits through the back. Frank doesn't even notice.

FRANK  
Yeah. I wasn't sure about any of this when it started. But I've really learned a lot.

DICK  
You've taught us a lot, too, Frank. More than you'll ever know. By the way, I hired your old friend Karl as my new assistant.

FRANK  
'Friend,' right. He's here?

DICK  
No. Assistants don't attend parties like these.

Frank smiles, the first time he's felt included.

FRANK  
Here's to being invited.

Frank clinks his glass against Dick's.

DICK  
You got plans for after your current 'assignment'?

FRANK  
Oh, I don't know. Wherever they'll have me. Maybe I'll join the veep's campaign when the next race starts.

DICK

I'll let you in on a secret, kid:  
there's always a race. People don't  
know that. And even though they'll  
tell you otherwise, last time I  
checked, they only call one guy the  
winner. You know what they call the  
rest of the guys, don't you?

Frank absorbs this for a moment. Then, hoping for an A+:

FRANK

So the lesson is to run faster than  
everyone else.

Dick shakes his head with a crooked grin.

DICK

The lesson, kid, is to always start  
running first.

This time, Dick clinks his glass against Frank's. The lecture  
is broken by Don, who spots something disconcerting.

DON

Oh no...

That something is Bud, who is soaked in sweat and gin.

BUD

Everyone n'joying the party?

Don and Caspar approach him cautiously.

DON

Hey, Bud, how are you feeling?

BUD

How'm I feeling? Mmmmm...Not great.

CASPAR

Well, how about we go in the other  
room and talk about it?

BUD

They're gonna find out, Caspar.  
They're all gonna find out.

CASPAR

You're shit-faced, Bud. Let's get  
you a lie-down before you puke up  
some very expensive shrimp.



BUD  
We're not gonna get away with it.

Always eager to help, Frank walks over, too.

FRANK  
Mr. McFarlane, it's going to be okay.

BUD  
You don't fucking know, Frank! You don't know about the helicopter!

CASPAR  
Okay, Bedtime for Budzo!

Caspar and Don restrain Bud, who starts to thrash violently.

BUD  
They're gonna find out! They will!

In his writhing, Bud bumps his head on a doorjamb and knocks himself woozier.

CASPAR  
God, thank you, door!

DON  
Let's get him in a bed.  
(to Frank)  
His feet.

Frank picks up his legs. They carry Bud into the next room.

INT. DON REGAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

They plop Bud down on the bed. Frank is still fixated.

FRANK  
What's this helicopter he's talking about? Is this the Enterprise?

CASPAR  
Stop asking questions you don't want answers for.

FRANK  
If it's important, I should know--

DON  
Here, take his reading glasses.

Frank absentmindedly goes to stuff the glasses in his jacket pocket, but something is already there.

He pulls out...the actor's BAG OF COCAINE! He immediately stuffs it back in. But someone saw him from through the door: OLIVER! After brief eye contact with him, Frank quickly shuts the door.

LATER. Frank tries to slip to the exit. He turns a corner and walks right into Oliver. They stare in a standoff. Then:

OLIVER  
I have to go to the bathroom.

FRANK  
...Great.

OLIVER  
Do you have to go to the bathroom?

FRANK  
No.

OLIVER  
Yes. You do.

FRANK  
...I mean, I *could* go.

INT. DON REGAN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM

Oliver does a massive line of cocaine off the toilet seat. Frank nervously leans on the towel-rack.

OLIVER  
Whoo doggy! That's nice. You're up, Skipper.

FRANK  
I'm good. Not really a drugs guy.

OLIVER  
What are you, a cop? I can't party by myself. That's not a party. Come on, try it.

FRANK  
I'm gonna Just Say No, here.

OLIVER  
Just Say Yes, it's fun.

FRANK  
Sir, I could lose my job.

OLIVER  
Oh, what's a job?

FRANK  
It's everything. Come on, the guys  
I work with are finally starting  
to...not openly despise me.

OLIVER  
If you don't try this, I'm going to  
tell everyone you did.

FRANK  
Then I would have actually done it.

OLIVER  
And I won't tell anybody.

FRANK  
Really?  
(off his nod)  
This is some position you put me in.

OLIVER  
I know. Worked on Lebanon once.

Oliver holds out a finger with a bump of blow on it. Frank slowly snorts it. Oliver jams his finger into his nostril.

OLIVER (CONT'D)  
There we go! Good boy!

FRANK  
Whew, that's cocaine all right!

OLIVER  
...I wanna dance.

Frank looks around the tiny bathroom. It's maybe 5x5.

FRANK  
In here?

INT. DREAM NIGHT CLUB - LATER

The 80's discotheque is going off. Neon lights cut through the darkness as the DJ blasts 'SUSSUDIO' by Phil Collins.

Oliver shakes hands with the BOUNCER and gestures that the incredibly nervous Frank is with him.

INT. DREAM NIGHT CLUB - BATHROOM

Everyone is doing some sort of drug in here. Frank watches Oliver take another huge rail off the sink.

OLIVER

You know, a lot of guys like big tits. I like a big ass. Not a fat ass; there's a difference. Like Arnold Schwarzenegger is big, he's not fat. I'm not saying I wanna fuck Arnold Schwarzenegger, although, hey, if I'm the one fuckin' him, that's a hell of a story.

Uncomfortably high, Frank holds up the empty baggie.

FRANK

Oh shoot, we're all out. In that case, I might hit the road and pray to god I can go to sleep.

Oliver pulls out a BRICK OF COCAINE. Frank stares at it.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Okay, I don't know much about drugs, but that's a lot, right?

OLIVER

Nicaraguan Gold. I know a guy.

FRANK

I don't want to do this anymore.

OLIVER

Yeah you do.

FRANK

I know I do. But I also know that I'm not a reliable judge at this point.

OLIVER

You made a great career decision. This is networking, right here.

(then)

Give it a toot. Watch it, though; this shit kicks like Bruce Lee.

Frank reluctantly snorts it. Oliver does the same.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Holy Managua, that's nice. Like it?

Oliver's eyes are frozen wide.

FRANK  
I'm afraid, but of nothing in particular.

OLIVER  
I know. But it's like...good fear.

Frank looks at Oliver like he's insane. He might be.

INT. DREAM NIGHT CLUB - LATER

Frank aggressively dances to Debarge's 'RHYTHM OF THE NIGHT'.  
Sitting with friends across the club, Fawn spots her 'boss'.

FAWN  
Mr. Corden! Mr. Corden!

She fights through the crowd, trying to get his attention.

FAWN (CONT'D)  
Hey Mr. Corden!

Frank turns to her and almost jumps out of his skin.

FRANK  
Fawn! Hey! What are you doing here?

FAWN  
Dancing with some friends. It's so weird seeing your boss out of the office because it's like he's not your boss everywhere! Like do I call you Mr. Corden? Or Frank?

Frank's paranoia creeps over him as she keeps going.

FAWN (CONT'D)  
But it's not a big town and of course I'd run into you--

FRANK  
This is my friend!

Frank grabs Oliver by his shirt. Yanks him toward Fawn.

FAWN  
Hi, Fawn Hall!

OLIVER  
I have a ton of cocaine.

FAWN

Nice to meet you!

LATER. Oliver makes out with Fawn on the dance floor. Frank dances with IRIS (20s, attractive, permanent scowl).

FRANK

I know drugs make you paranoid, but I'm really concerned about whether you're having a good time.

Iris chomps her gum for a long beat.

IRIS

What does your friend do again?

EXT. WASHINGTON MALL - NIGHT

The tourist center of the nation's capitol. Iris and Fawn are swimming in the REFLECTING POOL.

A coked-up Frank stares at the WASHINGTON MONUMENT. He's joined by Oliver.

OLIVER

This Fawn chick is alright. She's gonna switch over to my office if that's cool. See? Networking. I can probably write tonight off.

FRANK

You know what that is?

OLIVER

The Washington Monument.

FRANK

No. The Washington Monument's in Baltimore. Statue of the guy. Predates this by fifty years. This...is America's dick.

(beat)

We gave our country a dick.

Oliver bursts into hysterical laughter.

OLIVER

God bless it, huh?

He briefly watches the girls dancing in the water.

OLIVER (CONT'D)  
I'm thinkin' about porkin' these  
two on Lincoln's lap. So...see ya.

Oliver goes to leave. Frank is suddenly overcome by guilt.

FRANK  
Oliver, I gotta tell you something  
about the President.

The confession is interrupted by POLICE LIGHTS.

OLIVER  
Oh, shit! Let's hit it!

He sprints toward the pool and grabs Fawn by the arm. Iris  
stays splashing in the pool. Frank bolts into the night.

INT. ABC NEWS BROADCAST - DECEMBER 5, 1985

PETER JENNINGS delivers the latest in politics.

PETER JENNINGS  
In a bit of a surprise, National  
Security Adviser Robert McFarlane  
will resign from his post, citing a  
desire to spend more time with his  
family. He'll be replaced by Deputy  
Adviser, Admiral John Poindexter.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Frank, Don, Poindexter, and Caspar sit quietly. Until:

CASPAR  
And then there were fuckin' four.  
Sooner or later, we're all gonna  
resign and that lamp is going to be  
running the country.  
(to a nearby lamp)  
So lamp: what do you think of  
Libya? Pricks, huh?

FRANK  
Why did he quit?

POINDEXTER  
He's a quitter. Always has been.

DON  
The important thing is that  
everything continues as planned.

FRANK  
'Everything?'

DON  
What's that supposed to mean?

FRANK  
Nothing. Sorry.

POINDEXTER  
Shall we get down to business?

Frank feels the room urging him to take the cue.

FRANK  
Right, I'll be outside.

He heads for the door. A wheel turns in Don's mind.

DON  
Hang on, Frank. Why don't you sit  
in on the meeting?

Caspar and Poindexter share a look: 'What?' Don assures them.

FRANK  
Really? Are you sure?

DON  
Yes, you've been doing well so far.  
Figured it might be time to bump  
you up to the Majors.

Frank lights up, drowning out his questions.

FRANK  
Yes sir. That would be great!

He sits down. No one says anything for a beat.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
So do I get to talk or--?

CASPAR  
Fuck no.

Frank gets it. Beggars can't be choosers.

INT. OUTSIDE DON'S OFFICE - DECEMBER 14, 1985

Frank reads over a speech, stopwatch in hand. A note from Don reads: 'SPEED IT UP.' Frank draws a line through a paragraph.



INT. PEGGY'S OFFICE - LATER

Eating lunch at her desk, Peggy reads over the same speech. She suddenly spots something alarming. She gets up so fast, she knocks her sandwich on the ground.

INT. OUTSIDE DON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy runs to Frank, who's also Dining In.

PEGGY

Where's the Fort Campbell speech?

FRANK

I gave it to Don. He took it with him to lunch. Why?

PEGGY

A typo. In the sixth para. 'Tense agreement.' Shit. I haven't made that mistake since junior high.

Frank looks at her sheet. It was in the paragraph he cut.

FRANK

Oh, don't worry. I fixed it.

PEGGY

What do you mean, 'you fixed it'?

FRANK

I mean...I took it out. The typo.

Peggy eyes him suspiciously.

PEGGY

What did you tell Don?

FRANK

I didn't tell him anything. As far as he knows, it was never there.

PEGGY

Wow. Thank you. Sorry, in this building, I'm used to people using each other's corpses as a ladder.

FRANK

We're all on the same side, aren't we?

PEGGY

Apparently so.

She smiles before leaving. Frank smiles back.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DECEMBER 16, 1986

Cue 'EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD' by Tears for Fears.

Reagan is prepped for his Holiday Address. Assistants apply his makeup. Others move lights.

Frank runs the set confidently. He's finally in control.

Poindexter approaches Reagan with a sheet labeled 'CLASSIFIED.' The President signs his 'autograph'.

Frank carefully adjusts a TABLE-TOP MANGER SCENE: a goat was blocking Jesus. Everything must be perfect.

Dick visits the set. Squeezes Frank's shoulder. His assistant Karl reluctantly shakes Frank's hand. Quite a turnaround.

Don watches from a longer distance than before. Ominously.

Frank holds everyone in position: Lights, Camera, Action.

INT. CORDEN RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - DECEMBER 24, 1985

CHRISTMAS CARDS are displayed on the mantle. Among them, a photo: Frank and Reagan sitting on a sofa in the Oval Office.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OFFICE - JANUARY 19, 1986

Frank takes notes as the Poindexter, Caspar and Don discuss.

DON

The President will speak at  
Arlington on the eighth.

POINDEXTER

Let's get the first lady there too.  
It's a strong photo op.

CASPAR

Not worth the trouble.

POINDEXTER

It's worth the trouble to get that  
photo in the paper. A family united  
in prayer: you can't buy that.

DON

I agree with John. The President's numbers could use a boost.

CASPAR

Do you want to talk to Her? 'Cause I'm not fuckin' talking to Her.

POINDEXTER

Why are we talking to Her at all?

DON

You know why. Nothing happens without her go-ahead.

POINDEXTER

Well, I'm not talking to Her either.

DON

Gentlemen, we know someone has to.

FRANK

I'll do it.

The room zeroes in on Frank, almost forgetting he was there.

CASPAR

Look at that. You made it two weeks without breaking the no-fucking talking rule. I owe Don a Sprite.

DON

You'd really talk to Her for us?

FRANK

Sure. I'm glad to help. That's what I'm here for!

Don proudly nods.

DON

Okay. I'll give her a call.

FRANK

I'm looking forward to meeting her. I didn't know the First Lady was so hard to pin down.

DON

You're not talking to the first lady. You're talking to Joan.

FRANK

Joan? Who's Joan?

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

'Joan' is JOAN QUIGLEY (48, crazy eyes and gigantic turquoise earrings), Nancy Reagan's personal astrologist (REALLY). She squints at a baffled Frank.

JOAN QUIGLEY

(beat)

You were born at night.

FRANK

I don't know.

JOAN QUIGLEY

You were. Either at night or on a really cloudy day.

FRANK

You're Nancy Reagan's psychic?

JOAN QUIGLEY

Psychics are frauds, Mr. Corden. I simply scan the astrological plane to foresee the near and distant future. I've been with the first lady since the assassination attempt on her husband.

FRANK

Which...you saw coming?

JOAN QUIGLEY

Mile away. She doesn't do anything until I say it's safe. I'm not miserly with my gift; it could save your life, too.

FRANK

Meaning you could scan my astronomical plane--

JOAN QUIGLEY

Astro-LOGICAL...as in 'practical'.

He stares at her. She's fucking serious. Frank pauses...

FRANK

So you know what The Enterprise is.

JOAN QUIGLEY

Yeah. Mhmm.

FRANK

It's a top secret government project. No one knows about it. What do the stars say?

Joan looks to the heavens. Frank looks up, too.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(sarcastic)

Oh shoot, is the ceiling in the way?

JOAN QUIGLEY

It is not.

(beat)

The Enterprise...involves the Middle East...Or Central America. It's fuzzy. Maybe the ceiling is a problem. Look at the Little Dipper tonight; you'll find your answer.

FRANK

Okay, Ms. Quigley. All we want is the first lady next to her husband at Arlington National Cemetery. Will you tell her it's okay?

JOAN QUIGLEY

Oh sure, no problem.

FRANK

Thank you.

Frank stands to leave.

JOAN QUIGLEY

You're going to live a long life. Then you're going to die in a fire.

Frank doesn't need to believe for that to stop him a beat.

JOAN QUIGLEY (CONT'D)

Or maybe in just a very warm room.

Okay. He's out.

INT. PEGGY'S OFFICE - APRIL 14, 1986

Frank and Peggy each have a copy of a CROSSWORD PUZZLE. They mull silently in quiet competition, until Peggy scores.

PEGGY

Sixteen Down.

FRANK  
 Are you kidding me? Five letter  
 word meaning 'golden touch'. Can't  
 be 'MIDAS'. It starts with an F.

PEGGY  
 (with a grin)  
 It's not 'MIDAS.'

They're having fun. Interrupted by an intern, LUCAS (20s).

LUCAS  
 Can you help me? The president is  
 looking for a 'Mr. Capra'?

Frank's grip tightens on his pencil. Peggy cannot find out.

PEGGY  
 Don't know him. Do you?

FRANK  
 Nope. No clue.

Lucas leaves. Peggy goes back to the puzzle. Frank doesn't.

PEGGY  
 Gert 'Frobe.' He played *Goldfinger*.

FRANK  
 Oh yeah. Um...Sorry, I forgot I had  
 to...pee.

PEGGY  
 You don't need a hall pass.

He laughs way too hard at her joke. Hurries out the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lucas is just about to give up when Frank catches him.

FRANK  
 Hey. Who-who were you looking for?

LUCAS  
 The President asked for 'Mr. Capra'.

FRANK  
 Oh, I thought you said  
 'Kram...dart'. He means me.

LUCAS  
 Your name is 'Capra'?

FRANK

Sometimes.

He checks Peggy's door before heading for the Oval Office.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Clearly agitated, Reagan looks in the mirror as Frank enters.

REAGAN

There you are! See this?

He holds the end of his tie out.

FRANK

It's your tie.

REAGAN

It's a smudge. Underneath the knot.

FRANK

Okay, that's way less of a problem than I thought it was going to be. I can barely notice it.

REAGAN

Look, I'm not one of those prima donnas. I'll leave the fussing to your Spencer Tracys and your Martin Balsams. But I'm still a leading man.

FRANK

That's literally true.

REAGAN

I need the names of the wardrobe department.

FRANK

The...what?

REAGAN

Someone's head has to roll for this. I appreciate the costume folks have families, but I have an image to uphold. Their names!

FRANK

(way too fast)  
Bobby Sally Willy Libby and Ted.

REAGAN

Let me talk to them.

Frank holds for a moment, then gets 'angry' himself.

FRANK

You know what? Libby's been slacking off this whole production. This is it. The second I see her, she's fired!

REAGAN

How about I do it. I don't mind.

FRANK

No, I'll talk to her. Libby's done.

He slips out of the door. Reagan looks at the tie again. Then picks up the RED PHONE on his desk.

INT. THE PENTAGON - INTERCUT AS NEEDED

The center of the American military. A multiply-decorated GENERAL SIDWELL (50s, crew cut and stogie) answers.

GENERAL SIDWELL

Mr. President.

REAGAN

(laughing)

Right, Mr. President. My mother told me: you never have someone else take your trash out for you. I want Libby gone.

GENERAL SIDWELL

Libya, sir?

REAGAN

Fired. Gone. No more Libby.

GENERAL SIDWELL

Yes sir.

He hangs up. Turns to another OFFICER.

GENERAL SIDWELL (CONT'D)

Initiate bombing run Plan R. The target is Libya.

The room springs to action; TARGETS picked on a COMPUTER SCREEN. Coded messages are delivered. Attacks are green-lit.

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

F-111s take off in formation, en route to Tripoli.



INT. CBS NEWS BROADCAST - LATER

The news of the bombing of Libya is reported over images of destroyed buildings.

DAN RATHER

The International community is in outrage today, this time at the United States for an unprovoked attack on the nation of Libya. The UN has passed a resolution condemning the actions of the White House...

The screen switches to show COLONEL MUAMMAR GADDAFFI (44, dressed like wartime Liberace), giving a statement.

COLONEL GADDAFFI

*The president is mad! He is foolish! He is an Israeli dog!*

INT. OVAL OFFICE - SAME

Poindexter, Caspar, Don, and Frank are all mortified watching the broadcast. Reagan is fixated on Gaddafi's clothes.

REAGAN

Now, THAT's a helluva jacket.  
(to Frank)  
Talk to Sally and Ted; maybe we can get this wardrobe guy.

No one has a response.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Caspar, Poindexter and Frank are outside the Oval Office.

CASPAR

What the fuck does he think he did?!

FRANK

It was an accident.

CASPAR

Accident?! We just blew the fuck out of country who didn't attack us! We bust Russia's balls every day about shit like this!

POINDEXTER

If you can't handle him, you need to tell us right now!

CASPAR

Of course he can't handle him. This is all fucked up!

FRANK

I can handle him! I can. Maybe he's getting a little worse, but I can keep him on track. Trust me.

Caspar and Poindexter share different colors of skepticism.

INT. HOFOI, REYKJAVIK - CONFERENCE ROOM - OCTOBER 12, 1986

The site of the second summit between the US and Soviet Union. Reagan and Gorbachev sit in matching chairs in front of a crackling fireplace.

GORBACHEV

We cannot consider any solution regarding nuclear weaponry other than total abolition. My proposal is, by 1996, a complete elimination of our nuclear arsenals.

In the corner, Frank grabs Poindexter's arm.

FRANK

Did he just offer what I think he did?

POINDEXTER

Disarmament. End of hostilities.

FRANK

Oh my god. We did it. I can't believe we did it! Should we take a picture? No, that's weird...

Reagan thinks for a moment.

REAGAN

What about defensive measures?

GORBACHEV

Total abolition.

Reagan thinks for another moment.

FRANK

What's he thinking about? What's he doing? Did he forget the word 'yes?'

INT. HOFOI - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Reagan strides out of the conference room surrounded by SECRET SERVICE and an apoplectic Frank.

FRANK

How do you turn down that deal?!  
The script says you take that deal!

REAGAN

Didn't feel right.

FRANK

What the hell are you talking  
about?! That was peace with the  
Russians right there!

REAGAN

Felt out of character. I'm playing  
this combative, headstrong leader.  
He'd never agree to disarm. Too  
stubborn. It's like his tragic flaw.

FRANK

Tragic flaw?

Frank braces against the wall.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Oh my god. I'm gonna pass out.

REAGAN

That used to happen to me. My advice:  
stretch every morning. Make it a  
ritual.

Reagan and his posse stride off. Poindexter rushes to Frank.

POINDEXTER

Talk him out of it. You need to  
talk him out of it!

FRANK

I think I talked him *into* it.

The President walks away from the biggest offer of his life.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - OCTOBER 14, 1986

Don sits in the President's chair as Frank paces up a storm.

FRANK

The strategy has to change.

DON

Nothing changes. We press on.

FRANK

He's starting to slip. He's arguing with me, questioning the writing. Actors. They all want to be producers. Just read the goddamn lines and smile at the camera!

DON

Calm down. These are small bumps in a very long road. You can handle it.

Frank fights with asking a question he's been meaning to.

FRANK

Mr. Regan, can you do me a favor? This is going to sound...I need you guys to tell me the truth.

DON

The truth? When have we not?

FRANK

No I mean, you've been very good to me. But I'm out there on the front line doing something that's not exactly...ethical. If there's anything going on, anything that I need to know about, I want you to tell me. Can you do that? Please?

Don leans back in the most powerful chair in the world.

DON

Frank, I used to work on Wall Street. High pressure environment. Wait five minutes too many to dump a stock, you go from a corner office to a corner on the street.

He stands up. He's MUCH taller than Frank.

DON (CONT'D)

The way to survive in finance is the same as it is in politics: you need to have faith. You need to trust people. Do you trust me?

Frank looks up at Don. Gives the right answer.

FRANK

Yes sir. I do.

DON

Then you have nothing to worry about. We're all in this together.

Don returns to the desk. Frank leaves empty handed.

INT. OUTSIDE DON'S OFFICE - LATER

Frank drags the stress of the day back to his desk, where he's startled to find Peggy cheerfully waiting for him.

PEGGY

Hey, my husband and I were going to get a drink in Columbia Heights. That's your neighborhood, I figured you could join if you're not buried.

FRANK

Thanks, but I'm pretty buried. Up to my earlobes, really.

PEGGY

What's going on?

FRANK

Nothing. Just administrative stuff.

PEGGY

You'd tell me if it was something, right?

Frank's eyes go to his desk: PERFORMANCE NOTES FOR ACTORS is barely visible in the drawer. He can't tell her. Ever.

FRANK

Of course.

PEGGY

Okay. Another time maybe.

She gets up and exits.

FRANK

Yeah. Maybe.

EXT. CORDEN RESIDENCE - BACK PORCH - OCTOBER 31, 1986 - NIGHT

The house is decorated for HALLOWEEN. Gladys holds the baby next to Brandon, who wears a GHOSTBUSTERS costume and a few dozen candy wrappers. They're pointing at the night sky.

GLADYS

You can see all the stars tonight.  
But that's not a star; that's Mars.

Nearby, Frank and Jack sit in Adirondack chairs with beers and candy of their own.

JACK

Your mother's got me on this diet.  
Supposed to help with the memory.  
The hell with it; it's Halloween.

He pops a handful of M&Ms into his mouth.

FRANK

It was always my favorite holiday.  
You get to be who you want instead  
of who you are.

JACK

You didn't have to stay here with the  
grandparents club. You could have  
gone to that party with Henry  
and...his, um...

FRANK

Marcy.

JACK

You're not supposed to help me. The  
doctor said, 'don't help me.'

FRANK

Just a reflex I guess.

Frank takes a sip.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Dad, I have a question: do you  
think it's possible to do a bad  
thing for a good reason?

JACK

We talking or are we just talking?

FRANK

This thing, this work thing: it  
started off fine. But it's like  
it's falling apart from the inside.

JACK

Well, part of being a man is  
knowing what's right, not just  
because someone is telling you.

FRANK

It's harder when the people who are telling you what's right aren't telling you everything.

JACK

I gave you a last name and a shitty hairline. If I also gave you my guts, you should listen to 'em.

Pondering, Frank's attention wanders to his mom and nephew.

GLADYS

And do you know that one?

BRANDON

That's the Little Dipper.

GLADYS

Right. And all the way at the end of it: that's the North Star.

Frank freezes on her words. They start to ring in his head. He slides over to his mother.

FRANK

What did you just say? What about the Little Dipper?

GLADYS

Oh now you're interested in constellations. You used to not be bothered; you'd run inside and complain about the bugs...

FRANK

Just tell me what you said about the Little Dipper.

BRANDON

It's how you find the North Star.

FRANK

The North Star...

Frank sifts through memories:

FLASHBACK: THE MEETING WITH JOAN

JOAN QUIGLEY

The Enterprise...is about the Middle East. Or Central America.

FLASHBACK: DON REGAN'S PARTY.

Frank shakes hands with Oliver North.

FRANK  
Frank Corden.

OLIVER  
Ollie North. It's an honor.

FLASHBACK: DON REGAN'S BATHROOM WITH OLIVER.

FRANK  
This is a hell of a position you  
put me in.

OLIVER  
Worked on Lebanon Once.

FLASHBACK: THE NIGHT CLUB. OLIVER HOLDS THE HUGE BAG OF COKE.

OLIVER (CONT'D)  
Nicaraguan Gold...

FLASHBACK: JOAN AGAIN.

JOAN QUIGLEY  
Look to the Little Dipper.

FLASHBACK: ONE MORE TIME.

OLIVER  
Ollie...North.

BACK TO PRESENT. Frank is agape.

FRANK  
Holy shit. That lunatic was right.  
I gotta go.

GLADYS  
That's a surprise. You should put  
on bug spray.

BRANDON  
Bye, Uncle Frank!

His father stops him just before the door.

JACK  
Hey. Don't take any wooden nickels.

FRANK  
I won't, Dad.

He leaves on a mission.



EXT. WASHINGTON POST PRINTING PRESS - NIGHT

A massive industrial building in Anacostia, VA.

INT. WASHINGTON POST PRINTING PRESS - SAME

The WHIRR of today's edition being printed forces everyone to yell. Frank does so with LOUIS (40s, tubby chain-smoker).

LOUIS

You seriously want every Post from the last year?

FRANK

And '85 if you can do it. Just the world news and politics.

LOUIS

I can get you a microfiche. It's not going to be cheap.

FRANK

Bill me.

He hands him a WHITE HOUSE BUSINESS CARD. Louis nods.

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cue up 'A QUESTION OF TIME' by Depeche Mode.

Frank removes the framed contents of a wall: his PRINCETON DIPLOMA, a photo of him at the CAMPAIGN OFFICE, a poster of MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON. He replaces them with MAPS of Central America and the Middle East.

Frank scans through the pages on his MICROFICHE machine. A headline:, 'SANDANISTAS LOSE CRITICAL BRIDGE.' Writes it down in a log underneath another headline which reads, 'HOSTAGE RELEASED FROM IRAN.'

He punches a RED push-pin into the country where the story took place. Goes back to searching. More headlines:

- 'FATHER JENCO RELEASED'; 'BOMBS EXPLODE IN CORINTO HARBOR'

Ten RED pushpins are replaced by one BLUE.

- 'TOURIST TAKEN HOSTAGE IN LEBANON'; 'CONTRAS TAKE AIRFIELD.'

Ten BLUE pushpins are replaced by one GREEN.

Frank puts another pot of coffee on. The night continues.

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Finishing off a bowl of CEREAL, a bloodshot Frank grabs his coffee to go. He passes the maps, which are crammed with pushpins, mostly in Nicaragua and Iran.

INT. OUTSIDE POINDEXTER'S OFFICE - NOVEMBER 1, 1986

Wilma tries to answer Frank's questions.

WILMA

It was a shock when Bud resigned.  
But, something was going on.  
There'd be a hostage and then  
they'd get released for no reason.

FRANK

When was the last one?

Wilma checks her calendar. She points to a date.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Oliver North came to see him the  
day before.

(scans the calendar)

Oliver's here every day before a  
hostage is released. What are they  
talking about?

Wilma shrugs. She's told all she knows.

INT. OLIVER NORTH'S OFFICE - LATER

Frank is interrogating Matt G, now an assistant to North.

MATT G

Lt. Colonel North is out of town.

FRANK

Where?

MATT G

I can't tell you.

FRANK

How about his assistant? Fawn Hall?

MATT G

She's out of town.

FRANK

Where?

MATT G  
I can't tell you.

FRANK  
But she's with Oliver. Are you  
allowed to tell me that?

MATT G  
I actually don't know.  
(beat)  
I *probably* can't tell you.

FRANK  
This is ridiculous.

MATT G  
I'm sorry, man. Is there someone  
else who can help you?

Frank thinks for a moment. Actually, there is somebody.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NOVEMBER 2, 1986

Frank is in a chair...

FRANK  
Thanks for taking the time.

...across from Reagan.

REAGAN  
Not a problem. What can I do ya for?

FRANK  
John Ford brought me a script. A  
western. I'm thinking about making  
it my next picture; you'd be  
perfect for it. But the story could  
use a little workshopping.

REAGAN  
Well, I'm not a writer, but I do  
know what works and what doesn't.

Frank breathes deeply. Here we go.

FRANK  
You play the sheriff of Rockland,  
Texas. Their enemy is a rival town  
called...Tehranville.

REAGAN  
What's their problem?

FRANK

They think Rockland had their old mayor in their pocket. So they keep on kidnapping people from Rockland. Ransoming them for money. Meanwhile, a group of...Indians keep raiding this other town, Santa...Managua, which is good for Rockland because we--they don't like them either.

REAGAN

So Rockland is arming the Indians?

FRANK

They're not supposed to. But every time the Indians win a battle, Tehranville releases a hostage.

REAGAN

Ah, the plot with the kidnapppers is connected! I like it!

FRANK

And the Mayor of Rockland is somehow at the middle of both, but... he's not all there upstairs.

Reagan "knowingly" nods.

FRANK (CONT'D)

We just need to tighten up the connection a little bit.

REAGAN

Hmm. What if in exchange for the hostages, the sheriff has the kidnapppers arm the Indians?

FRANK

I thought about that. But the kidnapppers need weapons too. They've got their own war going on.

REAGAN

What a world this is.

FRANK

You're tellin' me.

Reagan looks at the AMERICAN FLAG, as if the answers lie within the stripes. They apparently do.

REAGAN

How about this: what if Rockland knew they were going to kidnap people. What if the sheriff sells the kidnapers the weapons in exchange for hostages to make it look like a deal? And then they give the profit to the Indians? They could even take a taste for themselves.

The wheels turn in Frank's mind. Oh my god...

REAGAN (CONT'D)

*Now that's a story.*

Yes. Yes it is. Holy shit.

INT. DON REGAN'S OFFICE - LATER

All the conspirators are present: Don, Caspar, Poindexter and Oliver when Frank bursts into the room.

FRANK

WHAT THE FUCKING FUCK?!

CASPAR

Well, I'm guessing you're now pretty much up to speed.

FRANK

Iran. The Contras. You lied to me!

DON

I kept you from knowing something you didn't want to know.

FRANK

You've been dealing with countries who hate us! Why do they even have to take the hostages?

POINDEXTER

We can't just give weapons to our enemies.

FRANK

Right, we trade them.

CASPAR

Business 101, isn't it?

OLIVER

I'd like to point out real fast;  
the drugs have only been part of  
this for a little bit.

Everyone looks at Oliver: 'Why?!' After a beat:

FRANK

I have to tell the President.

POINDEXTER

Reagan is at the center of it.

Frank flashes on Reagan signing an 'autograph' for  
Poindexter.

FRANK

He has no idea what's going on!  
Goddamn it, and that's my fault. I'm  
the distraction. That's why I'm doing  
this; to keep him in the dark.

CASPAR

You wanted to be in politics.

FRANK

This isn't politics!

DON

Have a drink, Frank. Sit with us.  
There's only so much time left on  
this presidency. You should start  
thinking about what's next.

He starts pouring scotch. A GLASS is handed to Frank. The  
room waits to see what he's going to do.

FRANK

I can't be a part of this.

DON

You're as much a part of this as  
anyone else. Sometimes necessity  
extends beyond the law. We have a  
foreign policy and we have a  
business to run. It was determined  
that the less the president knows,  
the better. We have to protect his  
legacy. We have to protect him.

Frank looks at his drink; a symbol of complicity. He slowly  
pours it on the table. Don shakes his head. Oliver starts  
grabbing PAPERS that are now soaked in alcohol.

OLIVER  
Asshole! These are important!

Frank calmly sets the empty glass on the table and walks out.

POINDEXTER  
(to Don)  
Is he going to be a problem?

DON  
He knows I'm right.

INT. OUTSIDE DON'S OFFICE - LATER

Frank looks over a script of a speech. He reads Reagan's acting notes in the margins: 'SELL IT,' 'LOOK UP', 'COUGH TWICE.' Frank sets down the pages. What has he done?

INT. OLIVER NORTH'S OFFICE - LATER

At her desk, Fawn sorts through a stack of papers, including those soaked by scotch. One of them is a list of ACCOUNT NUMBERS. The lines are smudged.

FAWN  
Oh what the crap...?

She studies the illegible final digits. Is that 368 or 386? She writes the former. Scratches it out. Writes the latter.

INT. CREDIT SUISSE BANC - THE NEXT MORNING

THIERRY BLOSSER (43, well dressed, angular) steps to the next available TELLER with an ILLY in his right hand and a SWISS NEWSPAPER tucked under his left arm. In subtitled German:

TELLER  
*Good morning. How can I help you?*

THIERRY BLOSSER  
*I need to write a cashier's check, but am not sure if I have the available funds.*

TELLER  
*Let me get your balance for you.*

She prints out Mr. Blosser's balance and hands it to him. He looks at it and his coffee falls out of his hands.

ANGLE ON: 'BALANCE - \$17,757,023 CHF.'

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

White House Press Secretary LARRY SPEAKES (48, professionally evasive) deftly fields questions from REPORTERS.

REPORTER #1

How did the money reach the Swiss Account?

LARRY SPEAKES

I couldn't tell you, because no one in the administration sent it.

Frank nauseously leans against the wall, waiting for the question that Speakes can't dodge.

REPORTER #2

There was a deposit made in the amount of ten million dollars from the US Treasury.

LARRY SPEAKES

Is that a question?

REPORTER #2

The federal government clearly made the deposit.

LARRY SPEAKES

And the federal government is a massive bureaucracy that the President has shrunk and aims to continue to shrink.

(calling on someone)

Yes?

REPORTER #3

Do you have any comments on the President's mental health?

It's like the wind is knocked out of Frank. He fixates on the Reporter: SALLY CAHILL (late 20s, brunette pony-tailed hair).

LARRY SPEAKES

His mental health? Who are you?

SALLY CAHILL

Sally Cahill, Dover Post. We have a source that says the President has been experiencing memory loss due to advanced age.

Frank flashes on his conversation with Dick at the party.



FRANK

'Always start running first.' Son  
of a bitch...

Only one person hears him: ADAL RIFAI (30s, Lebanese,  
premature widow's peak). Frank doesn't notice.

LARRY SPEAKES

With sources like that, Miss  
Cahill, I have a feeling you'll be  
staying at the Dover Post.

SALLY CAHILL

So you have no comment?

LARRY SPEAKES

Not on nonsense.

Enraged, Frank storms out the back door. Adal leans to the  
Lucas, the intern.

ADAL

Who was that who just walked out?

LUCAS

Oh, that's Mr. Capra.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Don is signing documents as Frank bursts in, seething.

FRANK

I know what you did.

DON

I've done a lot of things. Don't know  
if any of them justify that tone.

FRANK

You're trying to get rid of me.  
You, sir, have bragged about your  
timing. But I'm not a stock you can  
dump when the price goes down.

DON

You sure about that?

FRANK

Yeah, I am. Read it in the Dover  
Post. I hear they have great sources.

Don eyes his threatening protege.

DON

Frank, maybe it's time we discussed a transfer of your duties.

FRANK

I don't think so. You talk to me about faith and trust? I have the faith and trust of the President of the United States! You don't say when I'm done; he does! He needs me!

DON

If you believe that, you haven't learned a thing.

FRANK

I've learned plenty, Don!

He rumbles out. Don's confidence trembles slightly.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Frank exits the building, doing his best to breathe. Adal was lying in wait for him.

ADAL

Mr. Capra! Mr. Capra!

Frank stops. His day is getting even worse.

FRANK

It's Corden. What do you want?

ADAL

Oh, I'm sorry. I was told--

FRANK

Who are you?

ADAL

Adal Rifai. Al-Shiraa. Beirut. May I ask you a question?

FRANK

I can't answer anything.

Frank tries to walk away. Adal walks with him.

ADAL

Sir, I couldn't help but notice your reaction to the claim--

FRANK

A ridiculous claim. I was reacting to hearing something ridiculous.

ADAL

We received the same information. A gentleman claiming to be from the White House told our bureau that President Reagan was unwell.

Frank shakes his head at Don's thoroughness.

FRANK

Mr. Rifai, this *gentleman* to whom you spoke is full of shit. He's feeding you a fake story to cover up the real one.

ADAL

Why don't you tell me the real one?

FRANK

...What's Al-Shirra?

ADAL

A small newspaper in Lebanon. Your country thinks we are in the pocket of our government. There's an English saying about 'pots' and 'kettles'. If there is truth to be told, Mr. Corden, I can tell it.

Frank holds. He can almost hear Dick: *Start. Running. First.*

FRANK

Listen closely, Mr. Rifai: you did not hear this from me.

INT. ABC NEWS BROADCAST - NOVEMBER 3, 1986

PETER JENNINGS

A Lebanese newspaper, Al-Shiraa, has reported that the United States government has been involved...

INT. NBC NEWS BROADCAST - SAME

TOM BROKAW

...Selling weapons to Iran at a substantial profit and using the proceeds to fund anti-communist fighters in Nicaragua...

INT. CBS NEWS BROADCAST - SAME

DAN RATHER

Iran has confirmed the story, as has the Sultan of Brunei, whose ten million dollars were supposed to go to the Contras and ended up in a Swiss Businessman's bank account...

INT. OLIVER NORTH'S OFFICE - SAME

It's pandemonium. PAPERS are flying everywhere and SHREDDERS are grinding down evidence as Fawn and Oliver desperately try to destroy everything in the office.

INT. NBC NEWS BROADCAST - SAME

TOM BROKAW

Sources are naming names at an alarming rate..

INT. CBS NEWS BROADCAST - SAME

DAN RATHER

Some of the biggest names on Capitol Hill...

INT. OLIVER NORTH'S OFFICE - SAME

Oliver yanks jammed paper out of the shredder as Fawn inefficiently cuts up documents with scissors.

INT. ABC NEWS BROADCAST - SAME

PETER JENNINGS

The question is not whether impropriety occurred, but rather how far it all goes up.

INT. OLIVER NORTH'S OFFICE - SAME

FBI AGENTS kick in the door to find Fawn and Oliver, surrounded by shredded and intact papers, trying to look as casual as possible.

OLIVER

Hey guys.



FRANK

Oh, I know. The truth is toxic  
around here.

DON

Office. Now.

PEGGY

Mr. Regan...!

DON

Later, Peggy. Later.

They pull Frank into the office, slamming the door on Peggy.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Its as tense a meeting as Frank's had since the basement.  
He's beyond caring. Everyone tries to remain calm.

POINDEXTER

So. You leaked the Enterprise.

FRANK

I chose the lesser of two evils.  
(pointedly to Don)  
Learned from the best.

Don glares at Frank, almost proud. Caspar sips a drink.

CASPAR

What the fuck do we do?

DON

Deny. We deny and deny and deny.

POINDEXTER

And what about the President?

DON

(beat)  
He knew all along.

FRANK

Bullshit! He didn't know anything!

CASPAR

You lost your vote in this room!

FRANK

You can't implicate the President.

POINDEXTER

If Reagan doesn't know about this,  
then we all committed treason.

CASPAR

Yeah, I wouldn't categorize treason  
as one of the better crimes.

FRANK

The president doesn't know his  
phone number, let alone--

DON

Frank, you're excused.

FRANK

You can't get rid of me! I'm--

DON

Oh I know, you're the only one  
Reagan thinks he can trust. First  
rule of politics: be indispensable.  
Brilliantly played.

Poindexter and Caspar's faces echo that sentiment.

FRANK

It was you or me. You did this.

DON

If you're going to lecture us on  
the Greater Good, you'd better  
understand what it means.

Frank lingers before leaving the office for the last time.

INT. SENATE MEETING ROOM 206 - DECEMBER 2, 1986

SENATOR JOHN TOWER (60, slicked side-part, diligent) sits  
next to a STENOGRAPHER who records every word.

JOHN TOWER

The date is December 2, 1986. This  
is Senator John Tower. Will you  
state your name for the record?

*We intercut between each of the interviewees.*

DON

Don Regan. Chief of Staff.

CASPAR

Caspar Weinberger. Secretary of  
Defense.

POINDEXTER

John Poindexter. National Security.

BUD

Robert McFarlane, retired.

OLIVER

Oliver North. Marine Corps.

FAWN

Fawn Hall. Executive Assistant.

FRANK

Frank Corden. Director...of Media.

JOHN TOWER

Were you aware of the sale of  
military equipment to Iran?

DON

No.

JOHN TOWER

Did you authorize transactions on  
behalf of other parties?

POINDEXTER

We don't say 'no' in the Navy.

JOHN TOWER

Did you know about the hostages?

BUD

(beat)

I quit! This is why I quit! I swear!

JOHN TOWER

Were you aware these transactions  
violated the Boland Amendment?

CASPAR

The fuck do you think?

JOHN TOWER

Answer the question please.

POINDEXTER

...Yes.



JOHN TOWER

Was the plan to turn a profit on the sale of military equipment?

OLIVER

And the drugs. What?

JOHN TOWER

The drugs?

OLIVER

What drugs?

FAWN

Oh yeah, the drugs went to Texas. They're really expensive.

JOHN TOWER

Were you arming the Contras since the Boland Amendment?

DON

It became necessary to go beyond the law.

JOHN TOWER

Are you aware of your previous statements to the contrary?

CASPAR

Lawyer.

JOHN TOWER

Are you aware of the president's statements to the contrary?

The rotation freezes on Frank. He breaks from his daze.

FRANK

His what?

John Tower presses PLAY on a TV/VCR COMBO. A video flicks on:

THE VIDEO: President Reagan gives a speech in the wake of the breaking scandal. A speech Frank coached him to make.

REAGAN

*We did not, repeat did not, trade weapons or anything else for hostages nor will we.*

The video pauses on the President, who appears to be looking right at Frank.

JOHN TOWER  
Did the President know?

DON  
Yes.

CASPAR  
Yes.

POINDEXTER  
Yes.

BUD  
Yes.

Frank doesn't say anything. But he knows he has to.

JOHN TOWER  
Mr. Corden? Did Reagan know?

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OFFICE - MARCH 4, 1986

Frank sits alone in the empty office. His eyes turn to the LAMP that Caspar correctly said would be the only one left.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - LATER

The President speaks to a camera and the American people.

REAGAN  
*Your trust is what gives a  
President his powers of leadership  
and personal strength.*

Faces are sullen around the room. No one is more disappointed than Peggy, who is closer to Frank than she wants to be.

REAGAN (CONT'D)  
*As angry as I may be about activities  
undertaken without my knowledge, I am  
accountable for those activities.*

PEGGY  
The Selective Memory Bug is going around. He finally caught it.

FRANK  
People make mistakes.

PEGGY  
Yeah. But presidents are supposed to be better than people.

REAGAN

*This led to my failure to recollect whether I approved an arms shipment before or after the fact. I did approve it; I just can't say specifically when.*

Peggy can't take any more and marches out. Frank follows.

INT. OUTSIDE THE OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Peggy tries to breathe the cleaner air. Frank just breathes.

PEGGY

He was it. The last one. They're all the same.

FRANK

Peggy, Reagan didn't really know...

PEGGY

But you fucking did. My whole career I've been kept in the dark by men who were as respectful as I could see them. You could have been different. There was hope for you.

FRANK

There's more to it...

PEGGY

No. There isn't. You've got a dick and an Ivy League diploma. It's a license to lie to the rest of us.

FRANK

You don't understand. I work for them!

PEGGY

Yeah. You sure do.

Before Frank can consider honesty, Reagan opens the door.

REAGAN

I want to talk to you, Frank.

Peggy rolls her eyes. Frank silently joins the President.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Frank and Reagan return to the room as it slowly empties. The door finally shuts. They're alone.

REAGAN  
What the hell was that?

FRANK  
Campbell's Ordeal. Emotional low-point. It's over now.

REAGAN  
I heard what I said. Am I the bad guy in this picture?

FRANK  
No you just...have a tragic flaw.

REAGAN  
Stubbornness is a tragic flaw. Heroes don't lie. I always play the hero. I want a rewrite. Now. Let's do it again.

FRANK  
We can't.

REAGAN  
I don't play bad guys. And if that's what this part is...then I'm done.

He takes off his coat and tosses it on the floor.

FRANK  
Done? What do you mean done?

REAGAN  
I mean, I quit. You want an actor to play a villain, I bet Lee Marvin's available.

FRANK  
Sir, you can't just quit.

REAGAN  
I was the President of the Guild, Frank. I think I know my rights.

He heads for the door. Frank waited as long as he could.

FRANK  
Sir, it's not a movie!

Reagan stops.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
You're actually the President of the United States. You were elected;  
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

twice. We made up all this movie stuff because we were worried you couldn't run the country anymore. You can't quit, sir. You're the most powerful man in the world. Tell me you remember!

Clouded confusion washes over Reagan's face. Beneath the visage, a tiny glimmer of recollection.

REAGAN

Frank, were you ever an actor?

FRANK

I was Chorus in a high school production of Grease.

REAGAN

Then you've had the Actor's Nightmare. We all do. You sort of come to and find yourself onstage in front of a thousand people. You don't know your part. Don't know your lines. Everyone's waiting for a performance that you can't do.

FRANK

Sir.

(beat)

Do you know you're the President?

REAGAN

I'm looking at two doors: one with what I think I am and another where I don't know any of my lines. The only upside of getting old is that you can choose your door.

(beat)

Goodbye, Mr. Capra.

He exits. Frank is alone.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY

The lamp is on top of a box of Frank's personal effects. He walks toward the exit, dodging the looks of those around him.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - PARKING LOT

Frank sets the box in his car. The bottle of MOUTHWASH is in his trunk; he never took it out. Now's as good a time as any to pitch it in the bin.

EXT. CORDEN RESIDENCE - BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Frank balances his head in his hands. Sipping a bottled lager, Jack does his fatherly best with the situation.

JACK  
So you get another job.

FRANK  
It's not just a job, Dad.

JACK  
'Course it is. You put up drywall, you argue in court, you pull little race cars out of baby noses. It's all just punching a clock.

FRANK  
All I ever wanted to be was in politics.

JACK  
You're a good kid. And if he doesn't know that, then Kennedy's a bigger idiot than I thought he was.

Circumstances prevent Frank from curbing his frustration.

FRANK  
Reagan! The President is Ronald Reagan!

JACK  
...What did I say?

FRANK  
You said 'Kennedy'.

Jack covers his embarrassment with a sip.

JACK  
What's the difference. You don't need to prove anything to anybody.

FRANK  
Yes I do. I need to prove it to you.

JACK  
Since when?

FRANK  
Since always! Every step I've taken has been in the pursuit of your approval!

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Henry has his money and his family and his shore house. I could have had those things! Instead I was slapping together a life that you'd want to hear about. And with all that's going on now, Dad...

(beat)

I wanted you to *remember* me.

They've never talked like this. Jack fumbles to set down his beer. Leans to his son.

JACK

Francis. I can see the writing on the wall, here. I'm doing the diet, I'm taking the pills. But I'm going to outlive myself. Know what I mean? You need to know right now that I've always been proud of you. And no matter what happens, I'll never forget that.

Long overdue tears start in Frank's eyes.

FRANK

I wanted to be something great.

JACK

That's on me. Kids get screwed up when you ask 'em, 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' 'I wanna be this, I wanna be that'. They spend their whole lives worrying about Being Something. You know how you be something? You do something. You say 'the hell with what happens to me. I did something.'

Jack can only pat his boy on the shoulder.

JACK (CONT'D)

The whole lot of em in Washington: they could all give that a try.

INT. BUDWEISER BOARD ROOM, ST. LOUIS - MAY 9, 1986

Bright FLUORESCENTS illuminate a long room. Henry is at the head of the table, hands in their Pitch Stance.

HENRY

Rambo.

The BUDWEISER EXECs listen with notepads around the length of the table. Next to Henry sits Frank, who's bored shitless.

HENRY (CONT'D)

He's walking through the jungle.  
Hacking it away with a machete.  
There are snakes, there's a weird  
eye sticking out of the swamp. He  
reaches a clearing. A village,  
surrounded by walls. Guys with  
spears on them...menacing.  
Starving, tattered villagers wait  
to see what he's going to do. And  
he holds up...ice cold Budweiser.  
And then everyone's in bikinis.  
Song. Logo. Slogan.

The Executives exchange looks.

BUDWEISER EXEC #1

I'm not saying I don't like it,  
because bikinis are very much our  
thing. I just don't know...

BUDWEISER EXEC #2

Why is Rambo bringing beer to the  
starving villagers?

HENRY

He's the hero. He's coming to their  
town, he helps 'em party down.  
(lightbulb!)  
He's an AMERICAN BUD!  
(to Frank)  
See if we can get the rights to  
that song.

Even if he knew what that meant, Frank would roll his eyes.

BUDWEISER EXEC #2

Shouldn't he bring them food?  
Medicine?

HENRY

You're a strange industry to  
suddenly take a moral high ground.  
He's a hero! Heroes drink Bud!

FRANK

That doesn't make him a hero.

The room shifts to stare at Frank.



BUDWEISER EXEC #1  
I'm sorry. Who are you?

HENRY  
My brother. He's new.  
(quietly to Frank)  
This is a pitch, Frank! Same team!

BUDWEISER EXEC #2  
What do you mean, 'that doesn't  
make him a hero'?

Henry tries to stop Frank with a look. It doesn't work.

FRANK  
I mean, heroes don't come out of  
nowhere to save the day. They're  
with you, they've always been with  
you, and when they leave, they  
always return. This guy isn't  
arriving at the village; he's  
coming back to the village.

The execs all light up.

BUDWEISER EXEC #1  
So he was sent out on a beer run?

BUDWEISER EXEC #2  
Everyone loves the beer run guy.

BUDWEISER EXEC #1  
This is a metaphor for that guy?

FRANK  
Sure, they're out of beer and for  
some reason it's a priority above  
their dangerous level of hunger.

BUDWEISER EXEC #1  
Ah. He also brings chips!

Everyone nods approvingly. The Exec is pleased with himself.

BUDWEISER EXEC #2  
We love it! What if he, like, kicks  
the door to the hut down?

HENRY  
Better yet, what if he kicks the  
whole village wall down?!

The room orgasmically clucks over that one. Frank has a  
different reaction. One of sudden realization.

FRANK

Wait, Henry, what did you say?

HENRY

We have our guy go to the walls  
around the village and BOOM! karate-  
kicks it down.

BUDWEISER EXEC #1

The walls...of thirst!

BUDWEISER EXEC #2

Slogan!!!

The room goes batshit. Frank is lost in thought. He gets a  
lightbulb of his own. He knows what he has to do.

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE, WASHINGTON, DC - DAY

An elegant brownstone in Columbia Heights, NW. As he did as a  
canvasser, Frank knocks on the door, figurative hat in hand.  
Peggy answers sternly. He stops her from closing the door.

PEGGY

I'm not interested.

FRANK

I'm going to tell you the truth,  
Peggy. All of it.

INT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Frank has just finished the explanation Peggy was due. Her  
eyes are wide open and water-logged.

PEGGY

How long?

FRANK

The whole second term.

PEGGY

And he didn't know anything?

FRANK

It comes and goes. And when it  
comes, it's too scary to hold onto.

PEGGY

That's why he's been skipping his  
appearances. That's why Bush has  
been doing all the talking.

(MORE)

PEGGY (CONT'D)

I thought it was a campaign strategy. That poor man.

(beat)

How could you do that to him?

FRANK

I thought it was the right thing. I also think I know how to fix it.

PEGGY

Are you kidding? Everyone's been indicted. They've resigned. This Presidency is just drifting to the finish line. What could possibly fix it?

Frank pauses; he was waiting for that question.

FRANK

We could end the Cold War.

PEGGY

You're insane.

FRANK

I'm not insane, I'm ignorant. All I've ever wanted was to make a difference. To help this country be what everyone wants it so badly to be. And yeah, maybe I wanted people to tell me what a good job I was doing at it. I lost sight of the point. But we can do this.

Peggy's eyes narrow.

PEGGY

Why did you just say 'we' to me?

FRANK

Because I'm going to need your help.

She doesn't say yes. But she doesn't say 'no' either.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - THE NEXT DAY

Peggy leads Frank through the White House with a Secret Service escort. Frank wears a GUEST PASS.

PEGGY

This is never going to work.

FRANK  
Just stay in character.

INT. THE RESIDENCE - MINUTES LATER

The Residence is like any other luxury condo, except it's in the White House. Reagan leans back in a leather chair across from Frank and Peggy, who looks at him as if for the first time. Reagan does the same to her.

REAGAN  
I know you.

PEGGY  
I'm a writer, sir.

REAGAN  
A fine profession. Often the only good people on a set.

She gives Frank a look, which he knows he deserves.

FRANK  
I know we didn't leave our last project on the best of terms.

REAGAN  
Picture took a turn that just wasn't me. That's show business sometimes.

FRANK  
I hope you'll give me another chance. I thought you were great as the President. How would you like to play another one?

Reagan gestures, "I'm listening."

FRANK (CONT'D)  
John F. Kennedy. One of the greatest presidents of all time. A national hero.

PEGGY  
...I mean, he was a Democrat...

FRANK  
(snapping)  
Let's just agree in this case that they're pretty much all the same.  
(back to Reagan)  
He stared down Castro, he inspired us to put a man on the moon...

Frank leans forward. He's been practicing this part.

FRANK (CONT'D)

...and he stood on the Berlin Wall and told the world he was with them all the way. Peggy has a great spin on a biopic. Universal is interested.

PEGGY

It needs a leading man like you. You'd be perfect for it.

Frank watches Reagan's wheels turn. He almost has him...

FRANK

Although, the studio wants Lee Marvin. Who's very good...

REAGAN

No, he's all wrong. This picture needs a hero. Someone with credibility. I'll run it by my agent.

Oh shit. That wasn't a scenario they considered. Peggy and Frank try not to look terrified...

REAGAN (CONT'D)

Ah the hell with it. I'm in.

FRANK

Great. That's great. We'll start production right away.

REAGAN

I don't have to do the accent, do I?

FRANK

Nah, we were hoping you'd make it 'More You.'

INT. AMERICAN EMBASSY, BERLIN - SUITE - JUNE 11, 1986 - NIGHT

Through the window, half the city emits vibrant light, while the other looks almost pale.

Peggy sets up her typewriter. Frank brings her a coffee.

PEGGY

Thanks.

FRANK

It's kinda what I do best. You okay?

PEGGY

I've written a ton of speeches.  
This is the first one where I'm  
actually nervous.

FRANK

There's no one better to write it.  
I'm sure the President would agree.

Peggy takes a deep breath. And starts typing.

EXT. BERLIN - THE NEXT MORNING

The sun comes up over the divided city. The Berlin Wall  
carves through the center.

INT. AMERICAN EMBASSY, BERLIN - SUITE - SAME

Peggy awakes from a brief sleep on the sofa to find Frank  
typing changes to her speech.

PEGGY

They always say 'there's no one  
better to write a speech' right  
before they start making edits.

FRANK

Just a couple little ideas I had.

PEGGY

Are you a writer?

FRANK

No, I'm a director.

She laughs. Looks over his shoulder.

PEGGY

That's not bad.  
(sees something else)  
Cut that.

FRANK

That's the whole speech.

PEGGY

The president can't say that. The  
language is too strong.

FRANK

Reagan is waiting for a heroic  
moment. This is that moment.

PEGGY

Believe me, I get it. I'm just telling you what the new Chief of Staff is going to say.

FRANK

Well, maybe he won't say anything.

INT. AMERICAN EMBASSY, BERLIN - MAIN OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

White House Chief of Staff HOWARD BAKER (62, like an angry raisin) looks up from Frank and Peggy's draft.

HOWARD

No fucking way.

FRANK

Hear me out for one second...

HOWARD

I'm not having the president provoke the Russians thirty feet from their border.

Peggy gives Frank a 'told you' face.

FRANK

Sir, it's not really a provocation.

HOWARD

Don't bullshit me. I'm not Don Regan or any of the other bozos who are now pumping gas somewhere. I was hired to clean up their mess, not to ruffle Russian feathers.

FRANK

It's not a challenge, it's an invitation to meet us in the middle. Reopen the dialogue from Geneva, make history--

HOWARD

The next president can worry about peace with the Russians. We're running out the clock. Let's get him out there, wave some flags, and get back on a plane. You want history? Check out a museum.

He clomps out. Frank punches the desk.

PEGGY  
It's still a good speech.

FRANK  
He's saying that line.

PEGGY  
Howard won't let that happen.

FRANK  
He's saying that line.

Frank is vigilant. Now he just needs a plan.

EXT. BERLIN - DAY

West German POLIZEI escort the Presidential Motorcade.

INT. LIMO - SAME

Reagan looks out the window. Frank sits next to him with Peggy, across from Howard and a few Secret Service.

REAGAN  
Who has pages for me?

PEGGY  
Here they are, sir.

Before she can hand them over, Howard gives Reagan a packet.

HOWARD  
These have been proofed, Mr.  
President.  
(pointedly to Frank)  
Don't want any typos in there.

Frank forces a smile. One-nothing Howard.

EXT. BRANDENBURG GATE - DAY

The stage is in front of the passage between the two Germanies. SPECTATORS flood the area with West German and American FLAGS. Military leaders surround a podium.

Offstage, Howard keeps an eye on Frank, who picks lint off Reagan's wardrobe. Frank has to mask his 'direction.'

FRANK  
So just be John Kennedy. Strong.  
Heroic. 'Ich bin ein Berliner.'



REAGAN

That apparently means 'I am a cheese danish.'

FRANK

Yeah well, we took some creative liberties with the dialogue. Keep going no matter what.

Frank watches a STAFFER set the SCRIPT on the podium. He suddenly cracks a wry grin. What does he see...?

His patience up, Howard leans in to Reagan.

HOWARD

It's time, Mr. President.

As soon as he's out of earshot, Frank whispers:

FRANK

Line producer.

REAGAN

Ah. That explains a lot.

The crowd grows in excitement, as Reagan prepares to walk out on stage. But doesn't. He waits. And waits.

HOWARD

What are you waiting for, sir?

REAGAN

Is this some sort of joke? I don't see a mark on the stage.

HOWARD

A mark? Just go to the podium.

FRANK

(feigned outrage)

Oh Jesus Christ, did no one set the President's mark? Do I have to do everything myself?

He walks out on stage, removing BLUE TAPE from his pocket. Puts an X in tape behind the podium. And then he takes a pen to the speech. Peggy's jaw drops. Howard is furious.

HOWARD

What's he doing? Someone stop him!

Secret Service agents briskly walk to Frank and pull him away from the podium. Right as they carry him offstage:

FRANK  
 (to Reagan)  
 Action, sir.

HOWARD  
 No, Mr. President. Wait!

But he's not the director. The President glides onstage to applause. Howard fumes at Frank.

FRANK  
 He likes to know where to stand.

HOWARD  
 Get off my stage. You'll never work  
 in politics again.

Frank looks right at Peggy when he says:

FRANK  
 I don't need to.

He exits through the back. It's show time.

Onstage, Reagan delivers a 'Kennedy-esque' performance.

REAGAN  
*We come to Berlin, we American  
 Presidents, because it's our duty to  
 speak, in this place, of freedom.*

Frank finds a spot at the end of the crowd to watch. He sees Peggy nervously watching the speech of her life.

REAGAN (CONT'D)  
*There is one sign the Soviets can  
 make that would be unmistakable,  
 that would advance dramamically--*

Peggy winces at the stutter. The world does too.

FRANK  
 Don't stop. Do not stop...

For a moment, it looks like Reagan wants a new take. But...

REAGAN  
*Er...dramatically, the cause of  
 freedom and peace. General  
 Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek  
 peace and prosperity for the Soviet  
 Union and Eastern Europe, if you  
 seek liberalization, come to this  
 gate. Mr. Gorbachev...*

Reagan turns the page on his speech. In handwritten ink, he sees Frank's note: 'OPEN THIS GATE, TEAR DOWN THIS WALL!'

Reagan pauses. This is his hero moment.

REAGAN (CONT'D)  
*Open this gate.*

Shock and scattered applause rips through the crowd.

Howard glares at Peggy, who tries to hold her celebration.

Reagan makes a quick performance adjustment: SELL IT!

REAGAN (CONT'D)  
*Mr. Gorbachev: tear down this wall!*

The place erupts in jubilant applause. The military leaders on stage join in. Peggy practically jumps with cheers. She tries to find Frank in the audience. Unsuccessfully.

Anonymously blended into the ecstatic crowd, Frank watches as Howard slowly starts to clap as well.

FRANK  
Now he nailed it...

INT. DON REGAN'S HOUSE - SAME

Don watches his TV, speechless.

INT. CASPAR'S HOUSE - SAME

Caspar is in shock. Never speechless.

CASPAR  
Motherfucker...

INT. THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW - PREMIER'S OFFICE - SAME

Gorbachev watches as well. Absorbs the moment.

EXT. BRANDENBURG GATE - SAME

Reagan embraces the applause of an adoring audience, milking the shot for all its worth, back in the role of a hero.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DECEMBER 8, 1987

Surrounded by PRESS and SECURITY, Gorbachev and Reagan ratify the INF Treaty, ending long range nuclear missiles on planet earth. They shake hands, warmly.

REAGAN

Call me 'Ron'.

GORBACHEV

Call me 'Mikhail'.

REAGAN

...Why?

Gorbachev laughs and slaps Reagan on the back. Both the KGB and Secret Service put one hand on their guns, until they realize it was friendly. This will take some getting used to.

EXT. MEMORIAL STADIUM, BALTIMORE - APRIL 4, 1988

A clear sky for Opening Day of the Baltimore Orioles.

The Corden Family sits in a LUXURY BOX. Gladys chats with the MAN next to her.

GLADYS

So, my son got us these seats. He has friends in Congress...

Marcy sits next to an enthralled Brandon, who talks to his now TWO YEAR OLD SISTER.

BRANDON

That's Eddie Murray. I'm going to be him one day.

MARCY

You want us to start calling you Eddie Murray?

BRANDON

No. I just want to be like him.

Henry and Frank flank their father, who's in heaven.

JACK

Thirty years I've been coming here. Never been in a luxury box.

HENRY

First for me too.

FRANK

You're a little higher up, but you can see the whole field better.

JACK

It's gotta be neat for Cal Senior to have both his kids on the team. Gotta be proud...

Henry and Frank know what he means. Before it gets TOO real:

JACK (CONT'D)

How do you get a hot dog in the luxury-whatever?

FRANK

I'll be right back.

He heads for the Suite.

INT. MEMORIAL STADIUM - LUXURY SUITE - SAME

The Skybox is full of people who have little interest in the game. Washington schmoozers, including Payne and Karl.

PAYNE

You're looking for advancement?

KARL

We all are, aren't we?

Dick watches the game through the window. Next to him, a familiar face scans the field with binoculars. We'll call him 'W' (42, Texan, like you don't know).

W

I love baseball, man. I should buy a team or some shit.

DICK

It's a wonderful idea.

Frank's entrance is greeted by a smile from Dick.

FRANK

Down in the cheap seats you just raise your hand for a hotdog.

DICK

Tray's over there.

FRANK

Great. Thank you.

As he collects food, Frank spots Karl talking to someone familiar...It's SALLY CAHILL! She drags her hand on his arm.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
That's Sally Cahill. Dick, that's Sally Cahill. From the Dover Post.

DICK  
She's actually moved over to Time magazine.

He sees the wheels turning in Frank's head. Calls to W:

DICK (CONT'D)  
Hey Junior, you can get a way better look from outside.

W  
Cool, I'll try to spot some boobies!

He romps out. Dick and Frank are alone in the crowded box.

FRANK  
Why is Sally Cahill in this suite?

DICK  
She's a great writer. Did a little piece for us a couple years back.

FRANK  
(beat, then)  
You leaked the dementia story.

DICK  
Karl leaked the dementia story. I leaked it to Karl. Sort of like a Russian Nesting Doll situation.

Across the room, Karl feverishly shakes PAYNE'S hand. Sally kisses him on the cheek.

DICK (CONT'D)  
He's a natural. A real talent.

FRANK  
Why did you do that?

DICK  
Stack the deck. You can't have two Chiefs of Staff, two Defense Secretaries. Someone needs a job, someone already has that job, someone doesn't have that job anymore. Simple thermodynamics.  
(MORE)

DICK (CONT'D)

Don't worry about the indictments.  
They're correctable.

FRANK

You knew I'd leak the Enterprise.

DICK

I knew you'd do what was necessary  
for your career.

FRANK

You used me. You used the  
President.

DICK

Oh Jesus, kid, you can't even see the  
house that you built. Presidents have  
term limits, they lose elections. But  
the people behind the scenes do not.  
I worked for Nixon; that guy invented  
politics. Do you think a goddamn  
thing changed when he was gone? Then  
we were stuck with Ford; he memorized  
speeches to the tune of the Michigan  
Fight Song. We needed a face, we  
needed a voice. We elected an actor  
and didn't even think about it. You  
showed us that it's all we ever  
needed. It's the 21st century: we  
don't really need a president.

FRANK

We need a leader.

DICK

That's not the president's job. Their  
job is to kiss babies, shake hands  
and ask ever so humbly for your vote.  
Make people feel involved. An  
election is a beauty pageant; who  
looks the part. A friend once said  
that democracy is too important to be  
left in the hands of the public.

A CHEER resonates from the field, intoxicating Dick.

DICK (CONT'D)

Listen to them, Frank. These are  
voters. They've all cast their  
ballot. They wear the jersey, they  
wear the hat, and they root root root  
for the home team.

(MORE)

DICK (CONT'D)

Anyone can be on the field and they'll cheer all the same because it's their side and they're a part of something. Imagine that world: no candidates, just teams. That's the dream right there. And you made me believe in it again.

(beat)

I'll be forever grateful to you.

Frank is speechless. W reenters the suite.

W

Hey, Dick. If my Daddy's the President, does that make me the First Son?

DICK

We can aim our sights a little higher than that, Junior. There's someone I'd like you to meet.

He squeezes Frank on the shoulder.

DICK (CONT'D)

Enjoy the game.

Frank watches as he parades W to the crowd like his entry in the state fair. Karl is quick to shake his hand.

W

George Bush.

KARL

Karl Rove, a pleasure.

W

And what do you, Mr. Rove?

KARL

I get things done.

Frank floats out, just as the crowd explodes in celebration.

W

Quite a barnburner out there! Who are we rootin' for?

Dick cracks his crooked grin again.

DICK

Whoever wins.

We fade to black.



INT. NEWS BROADCAST - NOVEMBER 11, 1989

Without a voiceover, we see images of the FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL: STUDENTS celebrating atop the barrier, SLEDGEHAMMERS wrecking concrete, long lost LOVED ONES embracing.

INT. REAGAN RESIDENCE, BEL AIR, LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

Reagan sits in jeans and a t-shirt, watching history unfold on television when a SECRET SERVICE AGENT (JEFFERSON) enters.

JEFFERSON

You have a visitor, sir. Mr. Capra.

REAGAN

Thanks, Jefferson.

Frank walks in, reunited for the first time since the Gate.

FRANK

Hello again, sir.

REAGAN

Frank! You just missed Nancy. She's off buying ceramics at the Farmer's Market. Grab a seat.

FRANK

I can't stay long.

REAGAN

You know, our picture? Best work I ever did.

FRANK

Yeah, me too.

REAGAN

What are you working on these days? Something new in the pipeline?

FRANK

I'm directing commercials. My brother and I, we're doing one for Chevy. Cowboys, American flags.

REAGAN

Commercials? That's kind of a step down, isn't it?

FRANK

It's honest work. Everyone knows we're selling something.

REAGAN

Like I can talk. I hosted three seasons of General Electric Theater.

Frank takes a breath for the purpose of his visit.

FRANK

Sir, I want to say I'm sorry.

REAGAN

Sorry? For that little spat we had on set? That's show business. I once called Gale Page an 'evil whore' and we had coffee the very next week.

FRANK

I don't think you're ever going to understand exactly what I mean. I projected something on you. Something that I wanted to be. When someone's...*playing* a president, you put all your hopes and dreams on them. You see them as a more perfect version of you. Politics trick us into believing that's out there and it's what we want. And it's not fair. To anybody.

For a moment, it almost looks like Reagan understands.

REAGAN

You know, my wife has some pretty strong opinions about politics.

FRANK

I bet she does.

(beat)

Anyway, with the news of the day, I don't know if I would have been able to live the rest of my life without telling you that.

(beat)

It was an honor, sir.

He turns to leave. But...

REAGAN

Hey Frank. Get a beer. Stay awhile.

After a pause, Frank sits down next to Reagan, mirroring their Christmas Card. They watch the coverage of The Fall.

REAGAN (CONT'D)

You see this? Berlin Wall came down today. This is history right here. I've always said: it's not politicians or armies that change things. It's ordinary people.

(beat)

Can you believe it?

Frank watches the televised events. Does he believe it?

REAGAN (CONT'D)

Maybe this is going too far - the self-importance of the actor - but I can't help but think our picture had something to do with this.

FRANK

It certainly made a difference.

ON TV: PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH is informed of the news.

PETER JENNINGS

President Bush is getting word that an enduring symbol of tyranny has been toppled. The world, truly, has changed today.

REAGAN

I'll tell ya one thing working with you made me wonder:

FRANK

What's that, Ronnie?

REAGAN

Why in the hell would anyone want to be in politics? It's gotta be the shittiest job in the world.

Frank spots Karl in the background, holding a book:  
PERFORMANCE NOTES FOR ACTORS.

FRANK

The worst.

Cue up 'FAITH' by George Michael as we hold briefly on the two men on the couch and slowly fade like a distant memory.

THE END