

THE REPUBLIC

Written by

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FADE IN.

We open on a TV SCREEN, well-dressed NEWS ANCHOR behind a desk, matter-of-fact voice.

In the corner of the screen flashes a carousel of images - riots and protests, imagery with charged energy.

NEWS ANCHOR

The past eight years have brought prosperity along with disparity, safety with a lack of prudence, reason without reasonability, and overall, a misrepresented majority looking for a voice. Is it enough to change the guard, or do we need to change the system entirely? With me is Miranda Lawton, reporting live from Washington.

The carousel in the corner changes to a live feed of MIRANDA LAWTON (late 20s), petite, disarming, but with laser focus.

The feed enlarges to take up the screen, Miranda in the foreground, loud mob of angry people behind her.

MIRANDA LAWTON

Thank you, Sarah. I'm here in Washington, D.C., in what feels like a civil rights rally. People are out in droves to protest the opposing political party.

The screen flashes to the news anchor, finger in her ear.

NEWS ANCHOR

I'm sorry, which political party?

MIRANDA LAWTON

Both parties. Both parties are here in protest of each other.

The news anchor looks perplexed.

NEWS ANCHOR

And...what are they protesting?

MIRANDA LAWTON

Each other, they're protesting --

JULIAN GRAHAM (O.S.)

Turn it off.

The TV screen goes black.

INT. JULIAN GRAHAM'S TEXAS HOME (OFFICE) - CONTINUOUS

MARK DAVIS (40s) points a remote at the now-silent TV, dress shirt untucked, sleeves rolled, collar open.

He stands in a cozy study, walls lined with books, busts, and portraits - couches and chairs around a crackling fireplace, desk to the side.

Staring into the fire is JULIAN GRAHAM (40s), loose tie around his neck, cuffs rolled in workmanlike fashion.

He stokes the flames with a poker.

MARK DAVIS  
We have one more, sir.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
One more of what?

MARK DAVIS  
Person to meet with.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
(sighing)  
Why don't you meet with them?

MARK DAVIS  
They're not here to see me, sir.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
They might if they knew you. You should give it a go.

Beat - Mark isn't amused.

JULIAN GRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Remind me why I'm doing this again?

MARK DAVIS  
Because you have to, sir.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Is that really it?

MARK DAVIS  
What reason is there besides duty?

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Poetic.

Julian stands, keeps the poker in hand, walks to the door.

He grabs the knob. Mark clears his throat.

MARK DAVIS  
Perhaps without the poker, sir?

JULIAN GRAHAM  
You're no fun.

He rests the poker against the wall, opens the door.

INT. SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Julian enters with a smile plastered on his face, necktie re-tightened, cuffs buttoned, his demeanor changed.

In the room sits BLAKE BENTON (50s), dressed in a suit, squirrely, trying to feign confidence.

He jumps when the door opens, half-stands, awkward - then commits, moving to shake Julian's outstretched hand.

BLAKE BENTON  
Mr. Graham, so good to see you.

Julian clasps Blake's hand in both of his, shakes.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
The pleasure's mine. Come, sit.

Julian motions to a set of couches facing each other.

They sit - Julian is casual; Blake, ridged.

Mark enters through the door, stands by it like a guard.

Blake glances at Mark, uneasy, then back to Julian.

BLAKE BENTON  
Let me start by saying, sir, that I've been an admirer of your work since the beginning.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Thank you, that's very kind.

Beat.

JULIAN GRAHAM (CONT'D)  
So, what are you here to ask of me?

BLAKE BENTON  
(embarrassed)  
No, sir, er, I don't mean to --

Julian raises his hand - silence.

JULIAN GRAHAM

It's ok, why else would you be here tonight? I don't mind, ask.

BLAKE BENTON

Well, sir, it's just that I hope you won't forget about us oilmen in West Texas after tomorrow.

JULIAN GRAHAM

I won't forget you, especially your roundabout ways - out with it, tell me what you want.

Beat - Blake collects himself.

BLAKE BENTON

The Labor Board, they're trying to block a new drilling project.

JULIAN GRAHAM

Why?

Blake fidgets.

BLAKE BENTON

They deemed working conditions unsafe, but they don't know what they're talking about. Conditions are fine. Plus, it'll be a real catch, Julian, a tidy cash out, if you're interested.

JULIAN GRAHAM

Are you bribing me?

BLAKE BENTON

No! Just telling you about an exciting business opportunity.

JULIAN GRAHAM

I see. And what does this opportunity require from me?

BLAKE BENTON

The labor boss is in our pocket, but not the Board. They need to see that the benefits here far outweigh the potential costs. We were hoping you could...convince them.

Julian considers Blake's words, glances at pictures on the walls for guidance - all relatives.

JULIAN GRAHAM

Well, if the benefits outweigh the costs...I'll consider it.

BLAKE BENTON

I was hoping to have an answer by --

MARK DAVIS

He said he'd consider it.

Blake nods, stands, shakes Julian's hand, exits.

Mark looks at Julian with a question on his face.

JULIAN GRAHAM

(shrugging)

I only said I'd consider it.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Julian sits in bed with his wife (KRISTA GRAHAM, 40s), dark-featured, Puerto Rican, and sharp, calm fire behind her eyes.

Julian wears silk pajamas; Krista, a nightgown. They both read quietly, legs under the covers.

Julian is distracted, his mind elsewhere, turning the pages of his book without noticing.

He grunts to himself, audible.

KRISTA GRAHAM

What?

JULIAN GRAHAM

Huh? Oh, nothing.

Beat - Krista waits in silence, expectant.

Julian relents, puts down his book.

JULIAN GRAHAM (CONT'D)

I'm just thinking about tomorrow.

KRISTA GRAHAM

We've done everything we can. No reason worrying about it now.

JULIAN GRAHAM

Nothing's guaranteed, you know that.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
It hasn't stopped us before.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
One of these days it's gonna catch  
up with us.

Krista smiles, kisses her husband.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
Maybe, but tomorrow won't be one of  
those days.

Julian nods, goes back to reading, still distracted - his  
wife picks up on it.

KRISTA GRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Anything else?

Julian acts nonchalant, doesn't take his eyes off the page.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
You won't believe who met with me  
today.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
Try me.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
A representative for United Oil.

Krista snaps her book shut, angry. Julian puts his down, too.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
What did they want?

JULIAN GRAHAM  
A favor.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
I don't like the sound of that.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Don't be dramatic. They want help  
with the labor board for a new  
project in West Texas.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
I'd be wary, Julian.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
I didn't promise --

**WHAM!** Their bedroom door slams open.

In rushes their son BRAYDEN (8 years old), laughing with glee, older daughter MONICA (14 years old) chasing behind.

MONICA GRAHAM  
Get back here, twerp!

Brayden hops into the arms of his parents, Julian grunting under the weight of his son.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
It's an attack!

KRISTA GRAHAM  
Alright, alright, don't get riled up, it's way past your bedtime.

BRAYDEN GRAHAM  
I can't sleep.

MONICA GRAHAM  
He won't shut up!

Hey!

KRISTA GRAHAM

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Hey!

MONICA GRAHAM  
What? I can hear him giggling in the other room.

BRAYDEN GRAHAM  
I'm too excited!

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Yeah? Me too.

MONICA GRAHAM  
So what, you're just going to let him keep me up all night?

KRISTA GRAHAM  
No one's keeping anyone up all night.

Krista stands, ushering the kids out of the room.

KRISTA GRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Time for bed, both of you, we all have a big day tomorrow. Tell your dad goodnight.

BRAYDEN GRAHAM  
(enthusiastic)  
Goodnight, dad!

MONICA GRAHAM  
(deadpan)  
Goodnight.

Brayden and Monica leave.



Krista follows them out, stopping in the doorway.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
What are you going to do about  
United Oil?

JULIAN GRAHAM  
(smiling)  
Decline, of course.

Krista smiles, leaves. Julian goes back to reading.

**Ring! Ring!** The bedside phone.

He picks it up.

JULIAN GRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Yes?

Beat - someone on the other line.

JULIAN GRAHAM (CONT'D)  
I'll be right there.

Julian gets out of bed, puts on his robe.

CUT TO:

INT. BRAYDEN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Krista tucks her son into bed, goes to turn off the light.

BRAYDEN GRAHAM  
Mom?

KRISTA GRAHAM  
Yes, sweetie?

BRAYDEN GRAHAM  
I hope we win.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
Me too.

Krista flips the switch, exits.

INT. MONICA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Krista stops by Monica's open door, leaning on the doorframe.

Inside, Monica sits on her bed, scrolling through her phone.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
I think I finally got the little  
bugger to sleep.

MONICA GRAHAM  
(distracted)  
Thanks.

Krista enters, sits next to her daughter.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
Everything ok?

Monica puts down her phone.

MONICA GRAHAM  
Would we really have to move?

KRISTA GRAHAM  
Oh, sweetie, it would be a great  
honor for our family. I know it's  
hard, but think of it as an  
adventure.

MONICA GRAHAM  
(grumbling)  
No one asked me if I wanted to go  
on an adventure.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
I know, but sometimes we have to be  
selfless for the good of others,  
even if we might not want to do it  
for ourselves.

MONICA GRAHAM  
I know.

Krista kisses her daughter on the forehead, exits.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
Try to rest, tomorrow's a new day.

CUT TO:

INT. SITTING ROOM - A SHORT WHILE LATER

The room is quiet - all we hear is the ticking of a clock.

Julian sits stoically in his robe, looking regal.

The door to the anteroom opens. In walks Mark, holding the  
door for a WELL-DRESSED MAN (CLODIUS CLAY, 50s).

The man sits across from Julian, fidgeting.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Clodius, it's late.

CLODIUS CLAY  
I know, Julian.

Mark clears his throat.

CLODIUS CLAY (CONT'D)  
Er, Mr. Graham.

Julian shoots Mark a look.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Please, Clodius, how long have we  
known each other? Julian is fine.

CLODIUS CLAY  
Thank you, and apologies, I know  
it's the night before --

JULIAN GRAHAM  
(raising his hand)  
No need. My desire for formalities  
has gone with the day. Now, tell  
me, what brings you to my home at  
this hour?

CLODIUS CLAY  
It's the Post. They've dug up  
some...potentially displeasing  
facts about my past.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
And which facts are these?

Clodius glances at Mark.

JULIAN GRAHAM (CONT'D)  
It's ok, speak freely.

CLODIUS CLAY  
The Guevaran rebels - the Post  
suspects I've had business dealings  
with them.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
(concerned)  
Suspect? What do they know,  
exactly?

CLODIUS CLAY  
Nothing that would hold up in  
court, yet. But they're getting  
closer, and if they connect me to  
the rebels...

Clodius lets his words hang.

MARK DAVIS  
Are you threatening us?

CLODIUS CLAY  
(flustered)  
No, I was just trying to explain  
how important it is for us to  
squash the news before it gets out.

MARK DAVIS  
Us, or Julian?

Beat.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
So, who dug up these facts?

CLODIUS CLAY  
An investigative reporter, Johnny  
Rodgers.

MARK DAVIS  
(shaking his head)  
If people find out we meddled with  
the story...

CLODIUS CLAY  
We have no choice. If this comes  
out, all we've worked for could be  
lost.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
And what would you have me do,  
Clodius, dispose of this reporter?

CLODIUS CLAY  
Of course not. I was only hoping  
that you'd help him...understand  
how important it is to keep this  
information quiet.

Beat - Julian smiles, sad, knowing what Clodius really wants.

JULIAN GRAHAM

Don't worry, Clodius, I'll take care of it. You have nothing to worry about.

Clodius stands, shakes Julian's hand with vigor.

CLODIUS CLAY

Thank you, thank you, Julian!

JULIAN GRAHAM

(to Mark)

Can you see our guest out?

Mark nods, leaves with the gracious Clodius.

The door closes. Julian grabs a desk phone, dials it.

Someone picks up after the first ring.

JULIAN GRAHAM (CONT'D)

We've got a problem.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - THE NEXT MORNING

An impressive personal office, plush furniture centered around a mahogany desk, American flag in the backdrop.

Sitting behind the large slab of wood is GARY YOUNGMAN (50s), round spectacles and suit, reviewing a stack of papers.

It's quiet, placid. Gary's brow furrows, deep in thought.

**WHAM!** The door to his office bursts open.

Enter CHRIS ORLAN (40s), trendier than Gary, dressed smartly in a fitted suit; red, white, and blue flower in his lapel.

He slams a newspaper down on Gary's desk, letting his emotions get the best of him.

CHRIS ORLAN

Nothing, there's nothing!

Gary glances up from his stack of papers, calm.

GARY YOUNGMAN

Nothing of what?

CHRIS ORLAN

The news, there's no mention of the news.

GARY YOUNGMAN

Then what does the paper consist of, if not the news?

CHRIS ORLAN

That's not what I meant. *Our* news, it's not there.

GARY YOUNGMAN

Patience, Chris, patience. I've been assured they're working on a scathing expose.

CHRIS ORLAN

The election's today! By the time it's published it'll be too late.

GARY YOUNGMAN

It won't be. Exposing a scandal while he's in office - if he even gets there - will be more damaging than an attack piece hours before the election. Think of it as an insurance policy.

CHRIS ORLAN

I'm not so sure. Julian is a smart man, and shrewd, with the support of the people. If he's elected he'll undermine everything we've worked for.

GARY YOUNGMAN

Sounds to me like you're buying into the lore of Julian Graham.

CHRIS ORLAN

Not lore. I'm concerned, Gary. You've heard his campaign rhetoric - he's a radical, one who can't be trusted with power.

GARY YOUNGMAN

(smiling)  
On the contrary, the very power he seeks may well end up being his undoing.

CHRIS ORLAN

You sound so sure.

Gary casually leafs through the newspaper.

GARY YOUNGMAN

Trust me, before we're done,  
Julian's reputation will be smeared  
across the front page of the Post.

(beat)

And then he'll be powerless to stop  
us.

CUT TO:

INT. JULIAN'S TEXAS HOME (KITCHEN) - CONTINUOUS

The room is modern with elements of Victorian, muted-colored  
columns and pillars of understated grandeur.

Julian reads the newspaper at the breakfast table, light  
spilling in from floor to ceiling windows.

His family is with him - kids eating cereal, wife sipping a  
steaming cup of coffee.

KRISTA GRAHAM

(to Julian)

When do you leave?

JULIAN GRAHAM

A few minutes.

KRISTA GRAHAM

You nervous?

JULIAN GRAHAM

(smiling)

Never.

Brayden looks up from the back of his cereal box.

BRAYDEN GRAHAM

Can I come with you?

JULIAN GRAHAM

I wish, but dad's got to take care  
of a few things first.

BRAYDEN GRAHAM

When do we get to see you?

JULIAN GRAHAM

Tonight, I promise.

MONICA GRAHAM  
Do we have to go?

KRISTA GRAHAM  
Monica, this is a great honor for  
your father - and our family.

MONICA GRAHAM  
I know, it's just, people at  
school...

JULIAN GRAHAM  
People at school what?

MONICA GRAHAM  
Well, Sammie Johnson's dad said you  
were a two-faced hack.

KRISTA GRAHAM  
He said that to you?!

MONICA GRAHAM  
Not me, Sammie told the whole  
school.

Brayden interjects, trying to help.

BRAYDEN GRAHAM  
Tommy's parents said dad was great!

KRISTA GRAHAM  
(ignoring her son)  
Well, Sammie Johnson's dad doesn't  
know what he's talking about. You  
tell him I said that, and if he's  
got a problem, he can speak to me  
about it.

MONICA GRAHAM  
Mom! This is why I don't want to  
go.  
(under her breath)  
So embarrassing.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Remember, Monica: first they ignore  
you, then they laugh at you --

MONICA GRAHAM  
(grumbling)  
Then they fight you, then you win.



JULIAN GRAHAM

(smiling)

Exactly. It's hard feeling like an outsider, I know. But when you're trying to change something for the better, sometimes you have to think outside the box, even if you're being laughed at. Some people just won't understand what I'm trying to do, what we're trying to do, even though it's the right thing. I couldn't do it without you...

(glancing at Monica)

...which is why I want all of us there tonight.

MONICA GRAHAM

Fine. I'll go.

JULIAN GRAHAM

Splendid!

Mark Davis enters the kitchen.

MARK DAVIS

Sir, Simon Booker on the phone.

Julian stands, wipes his mouth with a napkin.

JULIAN GRAHAM

That's my cue.

He kisses his wife and kids.

Mark hands him a cell phone as they exit together.

EXT. JULIAN GRAHAM'S TEXAS HOME (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Julian walks down a winding, cobblestone driveway, rolling green hills on either side, phone glued to his ear.

Behind him, Mark walks at a safe distance, flanked by TWO LARGE MEN in suits and sunglasses, earpieces in their ears.

JULIAN GRAHAM

Simon, good to hear from you. You calling for a favor, too?

INT. LARGE HOME-OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SIMON BOOKER (60s) sits behind a massive desk. He's rich, but looks like a workman: cowboy hat, worn jeans, and boots; dirt under his nails, feet propped up casually.

A PERSONAL ASSISTANT hands him a steaming cup of coffee.

SIMON BOOKER

Now, why would I need a favor?

INTERCUT: PHONE CONVERSATION

JULIAN GRAHAM

(smiling)

I always knew I liked you.

SIMON BOOKER

Remember that when I ask you not to shoot the messenger.

Julian raises an eyebrow.

JULIAN GRAHAM

Go on...

SIMON BOOKER

I'm calling with information. I hear the Liberty Party might contest the election if it doesn't go their way.

JULIAN GRAHAM

How do they expect to do that?

SIMON BOOKER

Their influence runs deep, even amongst those who support you.

JULIAN GRAHAM

So it seems. Well, let them try, it is technically legal.

SIMON BOOKER

If you say so, but don't say I didn't warn you.

JULIAN GRAHAM

I'd never, and thanks for the heads up. I'll see you tonight?

SIMON BOOKER

Of course. Who knows, maybe I'll need a favor after all.

JULIAN GRAHAM  
It's yours. See you then.

Julian hangs up, flanked closely by Mark.

He stops at a BLACK LIMO, door open, two large men waiting.

Julian hands his phone to Mark.

MARK DAVIS  
What was it?

JULIAN GRAHAM  
Oh, nothing.  
(smiling)  
Tonight's going to be interesting.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WASHINGTON POST - LATER THAT MORNING

TWO THUGS sit in a car outside D.C.'s staple news outlet.

They wear suits and sunglasses, hat brims pulled low.

They're waiting - silent, patient, watching the building.

Enter JOHNNY RODGERS (40s), seasoned reporter with wrinkled clothes and disheveled hair, press badge around his neck.

Following close behind is political correspondent Miranda Lawton, young and sharp, well put together.

INT. THE WASHINGTON POST (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

A state of controlled chaos, reporters talking in the bullpen, phones ringing off the hook.

In the background, live newsfeeds flash on screens around the office, images of polling places and people voting.

Miranda and Johnny walk through the bullpen towards a string of offices in the back.

MIRANDA LAWTON  
Polls are open.

JOHNNY RODGERS  
They've been open. Do we have any  
exit data?

MIRANDA LAWTON

It's coming in. Looks like it's going to be tight in Florida.

JOHNNY RODGERS

How tight?

MIRANDA LAWTON

Close enough to contest the vote.

They reach Johnny's office, door ajar. They stop.

JOHNNY RODGERS

Let me know what happens?

MIRANDA LAWTON

You aren't reporting it?

JOHNNY RODGERS

No, I'm on assignment. Working on something...something big. Maybe.

MIRANDA LAWTON

What is it?

JOHNNY RODGERS

Can't say, yet. Just let me know what happens in Florida.

Johnny closes the door in Miranda's face.

CUT TO:

INT. GARY YOUNGMAN'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Gary Youngman sits at his desk, fingers in a steeple. He's calm, but his eyes are intense, framed by round spectacles.

Across from him is a WOMAN (LAURA FEINMAN, 60s) in regal, conservative attire, looking stoic and confident.

To the right is Chris Orlan, ornate flower in his lapel.

GARY YOUNGMAN

Electing Julian Graham will do more harm than good; much more.

LAURA FEINMAN

How do you suppose?

GARY YOUNGMAN

Because his ideas are drastic at best.

(MORE)

GARY YOUNGMAN (CONT'D)

He wants to restructure the entire government, claiming he's giving power back to the people, when in reality it'll only give more power to the Executive branch and less power to us in the Legislature. He's a wolf in sheep's clothing, Laura, tricking your party into thinking he's one of you. But he isn't. He's a thug, a radical.

LAURA FEINMAN

Radical to you, perhaps, but not to those who support him.

CHRIS ORLAN

He's radical to all of us. He wants to limit our reach and oversight, mobilize the masses.

LAURA FEINMAN

Would that be so bad?

GARY YOUNGMAN

You tell us. The midterm elections are around the corner, and your constituents are one step away from swinging the axe next time your head's on the chopping block.

Beat - this gives Laura pause.

CHRIS ORLAN

Florida is close, Mrs. Feinman, too close to call. You can do it, contest the vote and save us from Julian Graham's reformation.

GARY YOUNGMAN

It appears we'll control the House and Senate, anyway - why fight it?

CHRIS ORLAN

All it takes is a bit of courage.

Laura stands.

LAURA FEINMAN

I can assure you, Mr. Orlan, that courage is one thing I don't lack. I appreciate your time, gentleman, but I have an engagement to attend.

She turns to go. Gary stops her with his voice.

GARY YOUNGMAN

There's no telling what he might do, are you sure you're comfortable with that on your conscience?

LAURA FEINMAN

I sleep very well at night, thank you.

She leaves. Chris sinks into his chair.

CHRIS ORLAN

We've lost.

Gary sits with his back straight, resolute.

GARY YOUNGMAN

A minor setback. Everything else is falling right into place.

CUT TO:

INT. THE WASHINGTON POST - NIGHT

Johnny Rodgers sits in his office - the modest space of a veteran reporter, room for a desk and not much else.

He chain-smokes cigarettes, typing away at his computer.

**Knock knock!** Miranda at his open door.

Johnny looks up.

MIRANDA LAWTON

Florida polls are closed.

JOHNNY RODGERS

Are they contesting it?

MIRANDA LAWTON

Doesn't seem like it. It's final.

Johnny smiles, goes back to typing, whistling a happy tune.

JOHNNY RODGERS

Thank you.

Miranda looks perplexed, exits.

EXT. THE WASHINGTON POST - LATER THAT EVENING

Johnny Rodgers leaves the building after a long day's work, the property deserted.

He heads for the parking lot, takes out his keys.

**SCREEEAACH!** The two thugs on stakeout zoom in, cut him off with their car.

One of the men gets out, wrestles Johnny into the vehicle.

The car speeds off in a hurry.

From a window in the Post, Miranda watches the entire scene.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABANDONED CONSTRUCTION SITE - A SHORT TIME LATER

A dilapidated commercial project on the brink of collapse.

Mark Davis waits under a flood lamp, casting his face in ominous shadows.

The thugs' car approaches, two men in front, Johnny Rodgers in back. It stops in front of the lamp.

The men exit the vehicle, wrestle Johnny over to Mark, hold him up by the arms - face basked in blinding light.

MARK DAVIS

Johnny Rodgers, age fifty-two, two children living with an ex-wife.  
(smiling)  
Thank you for meeting with me. My name's Mark.

JOHNNY RODGERS

I know who you are, and who you represent. Here to extort me?

MARK DAVIS

Johnny, relax, I'm just here to talk. I'm sorry we had to steal you away like that, but it's best if people didn't see us together.

JOHNNY RODGERS

Why?

MARK DAVIS

Come, Johnny, you know why. A little birdie told me you're working on a story that might become...problematic for my employer.

JOHNNY RODGERS

It's not about Graham.

MARK DAVIS

(smiling)  
Don't play dumb. You know that anything implicating members of my employer's inner circle becomes a problem for us. In fact, I'm sure you're banking on it.

JOHNNY RODGERS

So what, kill the story, or else?

MARK DAVIS

Please, save me the platitudes. Publish the story or don't, it's up to you. I'm just here to remind you that at the end of the day, you're ultimately responsible for your actions...and the consequences that follow.

Beat - Johnny is silent.

Mark pats him on the cheek.

MARK DAVIS (CONT'D)

Think about it, Johnny.

Mark exits, fading into the darkness, leaving Johnny between the two thugs.

MARK DAVIS (CONT'D)

(over his shoulder)  
We'll be in touch.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Julian Graham sits in a small room facing a vanity mirror, staring at himself, breathing deeply.

**Knock! Knock!** Someone at the door.



JULIAN GRAHAM

Come in.

Mark opens the door. Julian doesn't turn from the mirror.

MARK DAVIS

Sir?

JULIAN GRAHAM

Yes?

MARK DAVIS

It's done.

JULIAN GRAHAM

Thank you, anything else?

Mark smiles.

MARK DAVIS

The votes. It's official.

JULIAN GRAHAM

(emotionless)

Is that all?

MARK DAVIS

Yes, sir.

Mark closes the door.

Julian stares at the vanity, stoic face twisting into a grin.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

A huge event space with soaring ceilings, stadium seating set around a center stage, red and blue streamers and balloons.

On stage is an MC, whipping the crowd into a fervor.

MC

Without further adieu, I give you  
the next President of the United  
States, a former Senator all the  
way from Texas - Julian Graham!

The crowd goes wild.

Julian bursts onto the stage from behind black drapes, waving his hands, looking very Presidential.

Red, white, and blue confetti falls from the ceiling, fireworks going off outside.

Julian greets the adoring crowd, spots Clodius Clay in the front row, gives him a curt nod, who returns it in kind.

Then, Julian beckons for his wife and kids, who join him on stage to revel in the victory - a model American family.