

**DESIGNATED SURVIVOR**

"Pilot"

Written by  
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**TITLE CARD:**

On the night of the State of the Union, a cabinet member is chosen to sit out the speech at an undisclosed location.

This is to insure that continuity of government is maintained in the event of a catastrophic attack that kills everyone above the cabinet member in the presidential line of succession.

They are what's known as "THE DESIGNATED SURVIVOR."

And if tragedy does strike, they are our nation's new president.

**CHARACTERS:**

**TOM KIRKMAN** (Kiefer Sutherland). The Designated Survivor. A husband and a father, he suddenly finds himself our country's newest President after a catastrophic attack on the Capitol Building during the State of the Union.

**JESSICA KIRKMAN**. Forties. Latina. Kirkman's wife. A controversial EEOC attorney.

**HANNAH WATTS**. Thirties. The FBI agent in charge of the Capitol bombing investigation.

**AARON SHORE**. Thirties. The former White House Deputy Chief of Staff who Kirkman inherits as his own senior advisor.

**HARRIS COCHRANE**. Sixties. A five star general. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

**EMILY RHODES**. Forties. Kirkman's Chief of Staff and longtime friend.

**SETH WHEELER**. Twenties. A White House speechwriter.

**LEO KIRKMAN**. Kirkman's 15 year-old son.

**PENNY KIRKMAN**. Kirkman's 9 year-old daughter.

**TEASER**

BLACK. APPLAUSE. Then a VOICE. Mighty. Inspiring. In COMMAND:

PRESIDENT RICHMOND (V.O.)  
There are times when we make  
history and there are times when  
history makes us.

**FADE IN:**

**INT. A CONFERENCE ROOM SOMEWHERE - NIGHT**

SUPER: TUESDAY, JANUARY 20. 10:15 PM

THE WASHINGTON DC SKYLINE is aglow outside the window, the cast iron dome of the CAPITOL BUILDING in the faraway distance.

PRESIDENT RICHMOND (V.O.)  
This is a crucial moment for our  
nation and America's colors burn  
brightest when we rise to meet and  
exceed the challenges thrust upon  
us.

PULL BACK and PAN ACROSS a nondescript office conference room to find -- TOM KIRKMAN eating popcorn while watching PRESIDENT RICHMOND deliver his third State of the Union address on a wall-mounted flat-screen.

Kirkman is 41. A handsome man, dressed in jeans and sneakers, completely unaware of his own charisma.

PRESIDENT RICHMOND (ON TV)  
We need to gaze into the future and  
decide what we want to make of it.  
That's why tonight I'm proposing a  
\$500 million bipartisan bill that  
will champion those who help  
encourage forward-thinking  
initiatives for job creation,  
health care, defense.

KIRKMAN  
The question is, "how do we pay for  
it"?

PRESIDENT RICHMOND (ON TV)  
But the question is "how do we pay  
for it?" How about we start with  
closing the tax loopholes that reap  
billions in benefits for  
corporations...?

Behind Kirkman, his wife JESSICA is on the phone with their daughter, PENNY, 9, precocious. Jessica is in her forties, but you can't tell. Latina. An EEOC attorney. Smart and strong.

JESSICA

No Penny, I'm not doing this again.  
It's already --

(checks her watch)

Oh my God, it's *beyond* bedtime. You were supposed to be asleep over an hour ago.

(in SPANISH; SUBTITLED)

*No you can't wait up. Here talk to your dad.*

Jessica hands the phone to Tom.

KIRKMAN

Hello.

PENNY (V.O.)

Hi daddy.

KIRKMAN

Who is this?

PENNY (V.O.)

It's Penny.

KIRKMAN

Penny who?

PENNY (V.O.)

Penny Kirkman. Your daughter.

KIRKMAN

No that can't be. My daughter's asleep. I should know. I kissed her good night over two hours ago.

PENNY (V.O.)

When are you and mommy coming home?

KIRKMAN

As soon as the speech is over.

PENNY (V.O.)

When is that gonna be?

KIRKMAN

Doesn't matter. You'll already be asleep when we get there, right?

(MORE)

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

(beat)  
Right?

PENNY (V.O.)  
... I'm hungry.

JESSICA  
She can't keep pulling this.

KIRKMAN  
Look, how 'bout... you go to sleep  
right now and tomorrow you can stay  
up an extra hour. Deal?

PENNY (V.O.)  
Deal.

KIRKMAN  
That's my girl.

PENNY (V.O.)  
Good night daddy.

KIRKMAN  
(hangs up; off Jessica,  
annoyed:)  
What?

She throws some popcorn in his face.

JESSICA  
You shouldn't make promises you  
won't be able to keep.

KIRKMAN  
This is Washington, Jess. Those are  
the only promises you're allowed to  
make.

JESSICA  
You couldn't negotiate with a 9  
year old? For the life of me, I  
can't understand why the press  
thinks you're a pushover.

KIRKMAN  
I know. It's a mystery.

JESSICA  
You have to learn how to set limits  
with her, Tom.

KIRKMAN

You catch more flies with honey  
than vinegar. That's what my aunt  
used to say.

JESSICA

You don't have an aunt.

KIRKMAN

Doesn't make it less true. Besides  
setting limits is your job.

JESSICA

(re: SOTU)

What I miss?

KIRKMAN

Speaker Ellis refused to stand up  
for equal pay.

JESSICA

What year is this again?

PRESIDENT RICHMOND (ON TV)

I believe as strongly as ever we  
need to instill our moral authority  
in those regions of the world where  
our most cherished values are  
threatened --

Beat. Jessica watches the speech, then looks to her husband.

JESSICA

Look, Tom... I'm sorry about what I  
said earlier.

KIRKMAN

Don't worry about it.

JESSICA

No. If this is something you feel  
you have to do --

KIRKMAN

Jess. Don't worry about it.

JESSICA

I love you. I just want to make  
sure this is what you want.

Kirkman nods. Me too. A beat, then he turns back to the TV.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

He's doing well... regardless.

KIRKMAN

Yeah, speechwriting staff is earning their money tonight. Here come his greatest hits.

PRESIDENT RICHMOND (ON TV)

...to ensure that the same American dream shared by our fathers, our mothers, their fathers, their mothers, is forever secure --

The network feed on the TV suddenly DIES. Screen goes DARK.

Kirkman's eyes narrow. Huh. He picks up the remote. Tries another channel. Their feed is GONE too. He tries another channel. Same. No station is carrying the speech anymore.

KIRKMAN

This is weird.

Kirkman's phone buzzes.

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

Hey Em.

(beat)

Yeah ours just went dark too.

Jessica gets a notification on her phone. Looking it over, she turns her head back up, bone-white.

JESSICA

Tom...

An ANCHOR appears back on the TV.

ANCHOR

Ladies and gentlemen, we're starting to get reports --

THE DOOR EXPLODES OPEN. A SECRET SERVICE DETAIL BOMBS INSIDE. JAMES RITTER (30's, African American, military buzz haircut) is the first to speak:

RITTER

Mr. Secretary, you need to put down the phone.

KIRKMAN

Why, what's the matter?

RITTER

We've lost contact with the Capitol. We're sheltering in place until we know more.

Kirkman -- Jesus -- as IN A FLASH -- there are FOUR SECRET SERVICE AGENTS guarding the conference room door. Two inside. Two outside.

Kirkman's phone is SNATCHED out of his hand. An agent pulls the battery so it can't be tracked. Another agent does the same with Jessica's phone.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT (to Kirkman)	ANOTHER SECRET SERVICE AGENT (to Jessica)
Gonna need your government-issued blackberry.	Do you have any other electronics with you?

KIRKMAN	JESSICA
Here.	No. What's happening?

Kirkman gives the agent his government-issued blackberry. The agent quickly disables it.

Meanwhile, Ritter and the other agents are on their own radios and phones, trying to get information/barking orders, everything RUSHED and CLIPPED:

SECRET SERVICE AGENT	RITTER
Put me through to the "Bee Hive" immediately.	I want a level four armored motorcade to our position right away.

In the middle of this insanity -- KIRKMAN AND JESSICA taking everything in.

KIRKMAN  
Would someone tell me what the hell  
is going on?

That's when Kirkman sees on the TV -- a SHAKY IMAGE of the CAPITOL BUILDING.

OR WHAT'S LEFT OF IT. DESTROYED. BURNING. A TOMB.

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)  
Oh my God...

Kirkman whips around to the window -- stepping over to the glass and gazing out at --

THE WASHINGTON DC SKYLINE -- and the distant Capitol Building COMPLETELY ABLAZE, black smoke billowing into the sky.

OFF KIRKMAN -- taking in this horrific and terrifying image --

**END OF TEASER**

**ACT ONE****FADE IN:****EXT. KIRKMAN HOME - EARLY MORNING**

Establish: a modest suburban house in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

SUPER: 15 HOURS EARLIER

**INT. KIRKMAN HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING**

Jessica is asleep in bed. Alone. Kirkman is at a desk by the window, reading a briefing book.

The alarm on the bedside table BUZZES. Jessica stirs. Kirkman drops the report on the desk. Rises.

CU: BRIEFING BOOK -- adorned with the official seal of the US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT and marked "2016 HOUSING VOUCHER PROGRAM."

Kirkman goes to the bed. Shuts off the alarm. Kisses his wife on the forehead. She smiles.

JESSICA  
Mmm... morning.

KIRKMAN  
Morning bed head.

JESSICA  
When did you get up?

KIRKMAN  
I don't know. Early. Only thing on the TV were informercials.

JESSICA  
Did you buy anything?

KIRKMAN  
Well your birthday is around the corner.

JESSICA  
Please be a Smart Mop, please be a Smart Mop.

They kiss.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Hope you got work done at least.

KIRKMAN

Some. The appropriations committee wants to gut the housing voucher program.

JESSICA

I'm sorry.

KIRKMAN

Not as sorry as they're gonna be after my op-ed for the *Post*. Let the committee explain to single moms and their kids why they're getting evicted.

JESSICA

You sure that's a good idea? Don't you need some of them on your side?

KIRKMAN

Hey, who do I work for? Them or me?

Jessica smiles. This is why she loves him. A ritual:

JESSICA

Keep fighting the good fight.

KIRKMAN

To the bitter end.

Another kiss. Then through the door:

PENNY (V.O.)

Mom? Dad?

KIRKMAN

(playful; at the door)  
Leave us alone!  
(back to Jessica; moving away)  
I'll make breakfast.

Jessica sits up in bed.

JESSICA

Oh God, please don't.

**INT. KIRKMAN HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING**

Kirkman makes eggs for Penny, sitting at the table.

KIRKMAN

How do you like your eggs, P?  
Scrambled or scrambled?

PENNY  
Ummm... scrambled please.

KIRKMAN  
Scrambled for the young lady in the  
blue dress.

Kirkman makes her a plate and sets it down in front of her as  
LEO KIRKMAN, 15, comes down the stairs, into the kitchen.

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)  
Hey Leo, perfect timing. What can I  
get you?

LEO  
(to Penny)  
He's making breakfast?

PENNY  
Unfortunately.

KIRKMAN  
Hey, I'm slaving here.

LEO  
I'll just grab some toast.

KIRKMAN  
Sure. You make that out of bread,  
right?

Leo rolls his eyes. As he helps himself to some bread from  
the pantry:

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)  
You used to laugh at my jokes.

LEO  
I used to be nine.

KIRKMAN  
Ahh, the good old days. Look I need  
you to watch your sister tonight.

LEO  
Can't do it. I'm busy.

KIRKMAN  
Yeah. I know. Watching your sister.  
It's a big night.

LEO  
It is for me too. I promised Caleb  
I'd help him out with something.

KIRKMAN

With what?

LEO

Doesn't matter.

KIRKMAN

Doesn't matter I won't like it?  
Doesn't matter I wouldn't  
understand?

LEO

Both.

KIRKMAN

Then I really wanna know.

LEO

He's laying down a new dubstep  
track and he needs me to write some  
code for him.

KIRKMAN

Okay I understood "him".

Leo shakes his head. As he leaves:

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

Scale of one to ten: how much do I  
embarrass you?

LEO

(exiting)

11.

Kirkman looks to a nearby TV, tuned to coverage of Richmond's  
upcoming SOTU. A PUNDIT comments:

PUNDIT ON TV

... please, Richmond's speech is  
gonna be just more of the same. The  
fact is: he can promise all he  
wants, but this Congress isn't  
gonna lift a finger.

PENNY

Daddy?

KIRKMAN

Yeah, honey?

PENNY

Why doesn't the President like you?

KIRKMAN  
 (turning to her)  
 What do you mean, "why doesn't he  
 like me?"

PENNY  
 Scott Orloff's dad says the  
 President thinks it'll be a mistake  
 keeping you on as a secretary.

KIRKMAN  
 Umm, okay, wow. Wasn't expecting  
 that. Well, Scott Orloff's dad  
 doesn't know what he's talking  
 about.

PENNY  
 He works at the White House.

Kirkman has no comeback.

KIRKMAN  
 Eat your eggs.

She digs in. Kirkman looks at his daughter cross-eyed for a  
 moment. Does she really know something he doesn't?

Jessica comes in, dressed for work, already on her phone.

JESSICA  
 No that's not the reality. That's  
 their spin. Truth is these  
 companies have been screwing over  
 their employees for decades and  
 it's high time they answer for  
 their sins.  
 (beat)  
 No. Thank you, Evan. Let me know if  
 you need any more quotes... I  
 appreciate that.

She hangs up. Then sees the mess that Kirkman has left in the  
 kitchen, included an aborted and sloppy attempt at making  
 pancakes.

PENNY  
 Daddy doesn't know how to make  
 pancakes.

JESSICA  
 You have two PHDs.

KIRKMAN  
 Even Superman has a weakness.

Jessica shakes her head. Kirkman's phone buzzes.

JESSICA  
 (to Penny)  
 Hurry up, honey. We gotta get  
 going.

Stepping back into the hallway, Kirkman answers his phone:

KIRKMAN  
 Yeah, Emily. Give me good news.

EMILY (V.O.)  
 How about a category 4 shit storm?

INTERCUT:

**INT. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT - SAME**

EMILY RHODES walks with purpose down a hallway. 33. Smart, sexy and sophisticated in a no-nonsense but well-fitted business suit.

EMILY  
 I just got off the phone with Gillings at Cabinet Affairs. He slipped me a final copy of Richmond's address and none, not a single one of our talking points are included.

KIRKMAN  
 You gotta be kidding me. FHA reform?

EMILY  
 FHA reform. Premium reform. Mortgage recovery. None of it.

KIRKMAN  
 Send me the speech and get me a meeting with Reynolds as soon as possible.

EMILY  
 Already done. White House. One hour.

They hang up. END INTERCUT. Off Kirkman, troubled --

**EXT. KIRKMAN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

A Suburban waits in front, engines running. Ritter, the Secret Service agent from the teaser, stands at the door.

Kirkman exits his house. Waves to a NEIGHBOR.

KIRKMAN  
Morning, Max.

NEIGHBOR  
Morning, Tom. Good luck tonight!

Kirkman gets to his ride.

KIRKMAN  
James.

RITTER  
Sir.

Kirkman steps into his car. It drives off.

**INT. STARBUCKS - MORNING**

Kirkman has already ordered and is waiting for his morning cup. A CUSTOMER in a GW t-shirt eyes him.

CUSTOMER  
Hey, sorry, don't want to bother  
you, but aren't you --

Kirkman turns around. The customer looks surprised.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)  
Whoa, sorry, my bad. Thought you  
were someone else.

Kirkman nods. He's not someone who gets recognized -- even in Washington. A BARISTA hands him his order. He exits.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY**

A law firm on K-Street.

**INT. JESSICA'S OFFICE - DAY**

Jessica is at her desk, meeting with TWO LAWYERS at her firm.

JESSICA  
Scratch Pitt from this list. Turns  
out he moved to Florida after the  
storm, not before. And lose Lively  
too. Something shady about her  
deposition. Other than that... good  
work.

(MORE)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Five years ago, over two hundred Americans were discriminated against by their own government when they were issued sub-standard trailers after Hurricane Leni. And today we're one step closer to getting them justice. You should be proud when you call your parents tonight.

LAWYER #2

I never call my parents.

JESSICA

Why the hell not?

LAWYER #2

(I don't know)

'Cause I'm a terrible person.

JESSICA

Get me those new names.

As they rise --

LAWYER #1

There's gonna be some serious push back from people on the hill.

JESSICA

That just means we're doing our job.

LAWYER #2

You're not worried about what this class action suit is gonna mean for your husband? When it's filed, it's gonna be embarrassing as hell for his department.

JESSICA

Tell you what. You worry about this case. I'll worry about my husband.

They leave. Jessica returns to work. There's a knock at the door. She looks up at PAUL COSTIGAN, a handsome co-worker.

COSTIGAN

Hey, got a sec?

JESSICA

Not really.

Costigan enters anyway. Sits down. Jessica continues to work away, ignoring him.

COSTIGAN

I hear you're almost ready to file.

JESSICA

This time next week.

COSTIGAN

You know the chances are slim to none.

JESSICA

If you came here to talk me out of it, you're wasting your time.

COSTIGAN

Please. I've known you long enough to know there's no talking you out of anything.

JESSICA

Then why are you here?

COSTIGAN

It's about your husband.

JESSICA

Look, you don't have to worry about it. There's no conflict. He knows about the case and he's not gonna get in my way.

COSTIGAN

Glad to hear it, although I reserve the right to throw that quote back in your face at a later time, but I'm talking about something else. I'm hearing rumors.

JESSICA

About what?

COSTIGAN

His job.

OFF JESSICA, confused:

**EXT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST PORTICO GATE - DAY**

Kirkman's Suburban gets waved inside the main gate.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST PORTICO WAITING ROOM - DAY**

A dingy waiting area badly in need of updating. Weathered furniture. Rug has a few miles on it.

Kirkman, wearing a visitors pass, sits in chairs with Emily and another staffer, MIKE ARNOLD, a recent college grad, going over Kirkman's rather dull daily schedule.

MIKE ARNOLD

11:30 you have a speech celebrating Asian Pacific Heritage Month. 1:15 is senior staff. Your 2:00 was pushed to tomorrow. Then you have a meeting with Fleming at the Census Bureau. Then a hard out at 4.

KIRKMAN

Secret Service?

MIKE ARNOLD

Picking you up at the house promptly at 5.

Kirkman nods. Good.

MIKE ARNOLD (CONT'D)

You also owe the National Association of Home Builders a response. They've invited you to their annual convention in Vegas next month. Are you interested?

KIRKMAN

Why? So they can tell me how they wanna pave over the wetlands? Besides, they have one of these things six a times a year. Pass.

Mike makes a note on his tablet.

Emily turns to him, whispering so no passersby can hear.

EMILY

Look just in case this doesn't go our way... What if we leak your FHS plan to *Politico*? Before the speech.

KIRKMAN

It'll backfire.

EMILY

Maybe. But it'll be out there.

KIRKMAN

For an hour. Tonight's all about what's *in* the State of the Union. Not what's not. And besides, it's less about the message and more about who carries it.

EMILY

We can't just let the White House take an eraser to our entire domestic agenda.

KIRKMAN

It's the President's domestic agenda, Emily.

EMILY

It's your domestic agenda, Mr. Secretary.

KIRKMAN

And I'm gonna make a case for it. Don't get me wrong, I'm mad as hell Emily, but at the end of the day, I'm not the President.

A young WHITE HOUSE STAFFER arrives.

STAFFER

Secretary Kirkman. Mr. Reynolds will see you now.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST WING HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Kirkman and Emily are escorted up to the office of the White House CHIEF OF STAFF.

As they approach it, the door opens and a pack of WHITE HOUSE SPEECHWRITERS flood out.

Among them of note, a young man we'll meet in more detail later: SETH WHEELER, who can't help but get one last word in at CHARLIE REYNOLDS, the prickly White House Chief of Staff.

SETH

I'm telling you: we still need to take a look at the AB-33 section.

To his assistant:

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS

Chris, can you please hand me something heavy to hit Mr. Wheeler with please?

SETH

The message is muddled. I wrote it  
and I don't even know what it says.

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS

Ahh, the mark of any successful  
political speech.

Seth walks off, frustrated. Reynolds invites Kirkman inside.

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Mr. Secretary, welcome. Please.

Kirkman lets Emily disappear inside the office first. Then as  
he follows, his phone buzzes. He checks the display. It's  
Jessica. He can't answer now. He shuts the phone off.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - CHIEF OF STAFF'S OFFICE - LATER**

Reynolds, backed by pitbull deputy AARON SHORE, 40s, square  
off against "good cop" Kirkman and "bad cop" Emily.

AARON

You're wrong. This has nothing to  
do with the program's importance --

EMILY

Of course it does.

AARON

No one's debating it's value,  
Emily.

EMILY

Please. That's exactly what you're  
doing, Aaron. If you valued the  
Secretary's initiative at all, the  
President wouldn't be ignoring it  
tonight. He'd be celebrating it.

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS

Unfortunately we have a lot to  
cover in the speech and yes, we had  
to kill some darlings.

EMILY

Overkill is more like it.

KIRKMAN

Emily.

(to Charlie; diplomatic)  
Charlie, there's not a single  
mention of any of my programs in  
the speech tonight.

(MORE)

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

Nothing about affordable housing or first time home ownership. Issues that actually build communities.

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS

I'm sorry, Mr. Secretary, but this is the way it's gonna be. The speech is locked. Now I invited you over as a courtesy --

EMILY

Does the President value the Secretary's opinion or not, Charlie? Cause right now it's hard to tell.

Reynolds shuts Emily up with a look. Then turns back to Kirkman, softer but still firm, which only makes it more condescending.

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS

Don't take this personally, Tom.

KIRKMAN

It's kind of hard not to, Charlie.

Reynolds looks to Aaron and Emily.

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS

Give us a moment.

Aaron walks out. Emily looks to Kirkman for the approval to go. He nods. She leaves.

KIRKMAN

Look Charlie, I don't want to sound paranoid, but first I get benched tonight --

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS

Being appointed the "Designated Survivor" is hardly being "benched", Tom. You were chosen to sit out in case, God forbid, anything happens.

KIRKMAN

Yeah. That's the exact definition of "benched" -- and then you draw a line through all my talking points. You tell me: what am I supposed to think about all of this?

Reynolds rises. Sits at the edge of the desk.

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS  
Tom... we were going to wait until  
after the State of the Union to  
tell you, but the President's  
looking to make a change.

(beat)

He'd like to offer you an  
ambassadorship to the international  
civil aviation organization.

Kirkman can't believe his ears.

KIRKMAN  
You can't be serious, Charlie.

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS  
I'm afraid I am.

KIRKMAN  
Was Chairman of the International  
House of Pancakes unavailable?

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS  
Mr. Secretary --

KIRKMAN  
Is the Civil Aviation Committee --

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS  
Organization.

KIRKMAN  
-- even a thing?

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS  
Of course. It's in Montreal. It's  
under the UN. It affords you the  
rank of Ambassador and all the  
trimmings that go with it.

KIRKMAN  
So that's it? Montreal? I've served  
the President above and beyond his  
entire term. I still have a lot to  
say --

CHIEF OF STAFF REYNOLDS  
I know. But now it's about the  
second term. And I serve at the  
pleasure of the President.

(beat)

And so do you.

Off Kirkman, shut down:

**EXT. KIRKMAN HOME - NIGHT**

JESSICA (V.O.)  
Ese hijo de puta de suficiencia.

**INT. KIRKMAN HOME - BEDROOM - SAME**

Kirkman is getting dressed/gathering papers with Jessica.

KIRKMAN  
English please.

JESSICA  
I said I can't believe that turd  
was right. He wants to get rid of  
you. Just like that.

KIRKMAN  
Reynolds actually tried to sell it  
as a promotion.

JESSICA  
What did you tell him?

KIRKMAN  
What could I tell him?

JESSICA  
Go to hell comes to mind.

KIRKMAN  
Jess --

JESSICA  
You can't just take this lying  
down.

KIRKMAN  
There's no other way to take it.  
Richmond's made up his mind.

JESSICA  
The White House never respected  
you. That's the problem.

KIRKMAN  
No. The problem is I didn't want to  
play Richmond's game all the time.

JESSICA  
It's called politics and maybe if  
you did --

KIRKMAN

What? I wouldn't be out of a job?  
Yeah... but I wouldn't be me, Jess.

JESSICA

It took three years, but it finally  
feels like we've settled into  
Washington. I love my job. Penny  
loves her school. Even Leo's making  
friends. We can't uproot that.

KIRKMAN

What choice do we have?

JESSICA

So your mind's made up? You're  
gonna step down?

Kirkman pauses. He doesn't want to, but he's stuck.

KIRKMAN

I told him I'd give him an answer  
tomorrow.

(beat)

I promise I'll make it work.

Jessica says nothing. From downstairs, the doorbell rings.

JESSICA

It's the sitter.

She walks out, disappointed. Off Kirkman, alone, we PRELAP:

RITTER (V.O.)

Mr. Secretary, you need to put down  
the phone.

**INT. A CONFERENCE ROOM SOMEWHERE - LATER THAT NIGHT**

We're back at the moment where Ritter and the Secret Service  
have just rushed inside the room immediately after the attack  
on the Capitol Building.

KIRKMAN

Why, what's the matter?

RITTER

We've lost contact with the  
Capitol. We're sheltering in place  
until we know more.

As agents take the batteries out of the Kirkmans' phones --  
we FAVOR RITTER -- picking up on a conversation he's having  
over his comm -- one that we didn't take notice of earlier:

RITTER (CONT'D)  
 Control, I need an update. Do you  
 have eyes on the President?  
 (beat; reacting; dropping  
 his guard for the first  
 time)  
 Jesus Christ. Are you sure?

KIRKMAN (O.S.)  
 Would someone tell me what the hell  
 is going on?

RITTER  
 Is the White House secure?  
 (beat)  
Well make certain.

JESSICA (O.S.)  
 (re: the TV)  
 Tom.

Kirkman looks to the TV and is instantly GUTSTRUCK by the  
 terrifying image of the decimated Capitol Building.

KIRKMAN  
 Oh my God...

He whip over to the window -- as Ritter gets additional intel  
 over his mic. Turns to the detail.

RITTER  
 We're moving now. Let's go.

Kirkman and Jessica are instantly ushered out of the room.  
 The SCREAM OF ZIPPING CARS AND HOWLING SIRENS as we SMASH TO:

**EXT. WASHINGTON DC STREET - NIGHT**

Motorcycles THUNDER up gravel and SCREECH to a stop at every  
 intersection, blocking traffic for two miles.

DC POLICE SCREAM at bystanders to get out of the way of a  
 MOTORCADE ROARING INTO VIEW, flashing red and blue lights.  
 Kirkman and Jessica ride with Ritter in a middle car.

**INT. SUBURBAN - SAME**

Kirkman holds Jessica's hand. Ritter and two more agents  
 inside are getting the latest intel on the Capitol explosion.

RITTER  
 Yes, sir. I understand. Anything  
 else from our men inside?

KIRKMAN

James. Talk to me. What do you know?

RITTER

(to Kirkman)

The Capitol has been attacked. There's still no word from the President or his detail --

ANOTHER SECRET SERVICE AGENT

(getting information over his phone)

Oh my God. Please don't tell me that.

JESSICA

What?

The agent turns to Ritter, somber.

ANOTHER SECRET SERVICE AGENT

It's confirmed... Eagle is gone.

The whole car reacts to this with total dread and sorrow.

Ritter is the first to snap out of it -- getting new orders over his earpiece.

RITTER

Yes, sir. I'll let him know.

(to Kirkman)

Mr. Secretary, we're enacting continuity of government. A DC appellate judge will meet us at the White House.

A beat as Ritter contemplates what he's about to say:

RITTER (CONT'D)

You're now the President of the United States.

Kirkman is speechless.

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. GEORGETOWN BAR/RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A TV PLAYS ABOVE THE BAR. Tuned to the State of the Union.

NOTE: this opening scene takes place moments before the Capitol attack:

PRESIDENT RICHMOND

That's why tonight I'm proposing a \$500 million bipartisan bill that will champion those who help encourage forward-thinking initiatives for job creation, health care, defense.

At a table: HANNAH WATTS, 30s, is on a first date and it couldn't be going worse, having just spilled her date's entire glass of Merlot over his lap.

HANNAH

Oh my God, I'm so sorry.

Her handsome DATE assures her:

DATE

It's fine. Don't worry about it.

HANNAH

No, it's not. It's all sorts of terrible. I'm really sorry. Take my word for it. I'm usually very impressive.

DATE

I have no doubt.

HANNAH

See, I'm just starting to put myself out there again and --  
 (beat; realizing)  
 Know what? You don't wanna hear this. No one wants to hear this. I don't want to hear this. You probably just want me to shut up now so you can watch the State of the Union.

DATE

If I wanted to watch the State of the Union, would I have asked you out on the night of the State of the Union?

Hannah smiles. Likes this one.

DATE (CONT'D)

Look, why don't I run to the bathroom, clean myself off, and when I come back, we can start fresh. Deal?

HANNAH

Sounds good.

The date gets up. Goes to the bathroom. Waiting, Hannah picks up her phone. Places a call.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Hey, just checking in...Fine, I guess. No, it's not him. It's me. I just think it's too soon...well, that will never happen because I'm allergic to cats -- so there... Okay, I'll call you after.

Hannah hangs up, eyes going to the TV screen above the bar where the SOTU has been replaced by an ANCHORMAN starting to report rumors of an attack. People are gathering around the bar now. There's a BUZZ. Hannah knows something's up.

Which is just when her phone rings. The display reads: DIRECTOR JACOBS. She answers.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

This is Agent Watts.

Her tone: it's almost like she's a different person. Whereas her personal life is a mess, when she's working, she's fully in COMMAND.

ANGLE: HANNAH'S DATE -- MOMENTS LATER

Returning from the bathroom -- only to find that Hannah is now GONE -- the table EMPTY.

**EXT. WASHINGTON DC STREET - PRESENT**

The motorcade zooms past, approaching the White House.

**INT. SUBURBAN - SAME**

Into his comm:

RITTER  
Liberty's approaching now.

Kirkman, in the back, still in a fog over everything that's going on:

KIRKMAN  
Who's "Liberty"?

RITTER  
You are sir.

Kirkman nods. Yeah. Right.

**EXT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST PORTICO GATE - PRESENT**

Kirkman's motorcade thunders through the gate and up to the White House. Kirkman and Jessica are quickly RUSHED inside.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST WING HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

And as soon as Kirkman steps inside --

EVERYTHING SLOWS: we stay completely with Kirkman -- in his POV -- as we move inside the White House. This morning he was just a visitor, on his way out, and now...

Following the Secret Service agents through the halls, there's NO SOUND -- as Kirkman takes in the scene:

HORRIFIED WHITE HOUSE STAFFERS all peering up at TVs, taking in fresh footage of the Capitol Building BURNING.

Some are sobbing. Some are still too stunned to do much of anything. Others embrace each other. Trying to find comfort in this moment. A nation has been attacked and everyone is going to be looking for strength. Looking to --

Kirkman, gripping Jessica's hand, being led into:

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - ROOSEVELT ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Where a handful of WHITE HOUSE STAFFERS are waiting, including Deputy Chief of Staff Aaron Shore.

Kirkman is walked up to an awaiting DC APPELLATE JUDGE  
Jessica is handed a bible.

DC APPELLATE JUDGE  
Please place your hand on the  
bible, sir.

Kirkman peers down at the bible. Holy shit, is this really happening...!?!

It takes him a moment to realize, yes, it is. He's about to be sworn in as President of the United States in jeans and Nike's.

DC APPELLATE JUDGE (CONT'D)  
Repeat after me. I Thomas Adam  
Kirkman do solemnly swear --

KIRKMAN  
I Thomas Adam Kirkman do solemnly  
swear --

DC APPELLATE JUDGE  
That I will faithfully execute the  
Office of President of the United  
States --

KIRKMAN  
That I will faithfully execute the  
Office of President of the United  
States --

And off Kirkman becoming our country's newest President --

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER**

Now-President Kirkman moves swiftly up to the SITUATION ROOM, backed by various White House staffers including Aaron Shore.

However, when they reach the sit room's secure door it quickly dawns on them that none of them has the security access to open it. After trading looks:

AARON  
Dammit.

With no other option, Aaron knocks. A MARINE GUARD opens the door up from the inside. Kirkman steels himself and enters:

CHAOS. Inside: DEPUTY SECRETARIES (DEFENSE, TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY, INTERIOR, ETC) are now Acting Secretaries and along with the ACTING FBI DIRECTOR, ACTING HOMELAND SECURITY DIRECTOR, NSA OFFICIALS and various GENERALS, including the DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS, HARRIS COCHRANE, 60's, Full-Bird, decorated, intractable in his beliefs --

They're all SCRAMBLING, on phones, at computers. Lots of cross-talk. Everyone is FRAYED. Everyone is SCARED. Everyone wants to do the right thing but they need a LEADER.

ACTING TRANSPORTATION  
SECRETARY

(on a phone)

No, I'm the one telling you that we have to ground all aircrafts immediately --

ACTING TREASURY SECRETARY

(on a phone)

Don't give me crap about authorization. The market cannot open tomorrow, do you understand?!?

ACTING FBI DIRECTOR  
(to a NSA OFFICIAL)

I want any and all intercepts right now: Social media, e-mail, phone calls, any connection to the bombing I need to know --

ACTING HEALTH AND HUMAN  
RESOURCES SECRETARY

(on a phone)

All hospitals need to be on full alert in case there's another attack.

ACTING HOMELAND SECURITY  
DIRECTOR

(to a staffer)

We're shutting down both the Mexican and Canadian boarders. I also want intel on any and all people trying to leave the United States illegally --

WHITE HOUSE STAFFER

(on a phone)

Look, if you're on this call, your boss is dead and you are Acting Secretary.

And under all of this: Kirkman, in the back, like the substitute who can't get an unruly class to quiet down.

KIRKMAN

Excuse me, excuse me --

But no one is listening -- not respecting Kirkman yet. Turning to Shore, standing beside him:

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

This is out of control.

Agreeing, Shore slams his hand on the desk.

AARON

Hey!

All heads turn to Kirkman.

AARON (CONT'D)

I need everyone quiet right now.

The room settles. Kirkman gives Aaron a nod. Thanks. Then addresses the room -- now his to command.

But with all the faces staring back at him, it takes him a second to settle *himself*.

KIRKMAN

Let's all, umm, take a moment. To fallen friends, heroes all.

A beat as everyone takes a moment to reflect on the night's tremendous losses. As he finally takes a seat:

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

Why don't we, uhh, go around the room?

Everyone looks at each other. He serious? Taking over:

AARON

Where's the CIA director?

NSA OFFICIAL

We're still working to set up a secure comm.

AARON

The hell with secure comms. We gotta get him patched in now. Cell phone, land line, Skype, whatever we got. Who has the networks?

A WHITE HOUSE STAFFER raises a hand.

AARON (CONT'D)

Tell them we'll be live from the Oval in sixty minutes and no one talks to any press from any office or agency under threat of me skull-fucking them. No rumors, no leaks, no panic. There will be no "Pet Goat" moments tonight, understand?

WHITE HOUSE STAFFER

Yessir.

KIRKMAN

Do we have any idea what happened?

ACTING FBI DIRECTOR

It's still too early to determine --

AARON

Well we're gonna need something, Chris. Whole world's watching us right now.

COCHRANE

Exactly. We need to alert every one of our embassies to convey to every host country that the U.S. is on a war footing and now is not the time to test us.

Suddenly, everyone is back on phones, rapid-fire, overlapping conversations overwhelming the room, Cochrane soon over-stepping his authority

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

I want all U.S. forces worldwide on Defcon 3.

The ACTING DEFENSE SECRETARY takes issue:

ACTING DEFENSE SECRETARY

You can't make that call.

COCHRANE

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is gone --

A NAVY ADMIRAL joins in:

NAVY ADMIRAL

Which doesn't give you any authority --

COCHRANE

We're under attack -- what other authority do you need, Peter!?!

Tempers FLARING, tensions SPIKING, Kirkman tries to gain control --

KIRKMAN

General Cochrane -- Admiral --  
Gentlemen --

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

I want the Air Force flying  
in 15 minutes --

An AIR FORCE MAJOR retorts:

AIR FORCE MAJOR

Who are you to give me orders?

COCHRANE

Who are you to question them?

KIRKMAN

We got too much confusion  
here!

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna sit on my hands  
and hope for the best.

As the room descends back into chaos, we stay on Kirkman, taking in the disorder -- with all the power, yet at the same time, powerless.

Under this, the in-over-his-head ACTING TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY, looks up from a call, alarmed.

ACTING TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

Jesus -- we got an oil tanker coming into the Port of Baltimore. I ordered a stop on all boats, but it's not responding to hold its position and stay away from the dock.

Everyone in the room immediately goes to worst case scenario.

MARINE GENERAL

Oh my Lord.

AARON

What's the ship?

ACTING TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

(reading off a tablet)

It's the *Tarcoon* out of Georgia.

Almost instantly a photograph and corresponding intel on the *Tarcoon* oil tanker appears on one of the monitors.

ACTING TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

(CONT'D)

It's carrying roughly 550,000 gallons of liquefied natural gas.

ACTING DEFENSE SECRETARY

If it's detonated on the perimeter of the city --

KIRKMAN

It's like a nuclear bomb.

(beat)

Where's the tanker now?

ACTING TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

Mid-way through the Chesapeake Bay.

COCHRANE

Which puts it far enough from land that the collateral damage is minimal.

AARON

If we did what? Blow it up?

COCHRANE

Absolutely. You heard Brady.  
They're ignoring direct orders to  
hold their position.

AARON

We don't know what they're doing.  
Their comms could be  
malfunctioning.

KIRKMAN

Do we have any eyes on the crew?

ACTING TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

No, not yet.

NAVY ADMIRAL

It's almost 11. It's dark. They  
could be asleep.

COCHRANE

How far away is the Coast Guard?

ANOTHER MILITARY STAFFER

(on phone)  
8 minutes out.

KIRKMAN

How close to land is the tanker?

ACTING TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

It'll pass Deale, Maryland in about  
two minutes.

COCHRANE

We need to put Apaches on their bow  
right now.

ACTING DEFENSE SECRETARY

And if you're wrong --

COCHRANE

Look at the ship's registry. Three  
stops back it was in the Sudan. We  
need to act on what we know. Not  
what we don't.

ACTING DEFENSE SECRETARY

Mr. President --

COCHRANE

(cutting him off)  
Mr. President.

(MORE)

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

You need to authorize the Apaches  
to fire on that vessel before it's  
too late.

Kirkman pauses. Everything's on him now. And there's no time  
to think. He has to act.

KIRKMAN

Where's the ship now?

ACTING TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

Will pass Deale in fifty seconds.

KIRKMAN

Apaches?

AIR FORCE MAJOR

En route. Thirty seconds.

Kirkman looks to Aaron, whose face betrays nothing. This  
one's gonna be on him. His first decision as Commander in  
Chief. And if he's wrong...

KIRKMAN

How big's the crew?

NAVY ADMIRAL

200. 250.

KIRKMAN

Do I just give the order or...?

AARON

Yes, sir. It'll be on your command.

ACTING TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

The Tarcoon's about to pass Deale.

AIR FORCE MAJOR

Apaches are locked on.

PUSH IN on Kirkman and his first act as President --

KIRKMAN

Fire.

The Air Force Major is about to relay that order to the  
Apaches when --

A RADIO COMMUNICATION CRACKLES over speakers. The Captain of  
the *Tarcoon* talking:

TARCOON CAPTAIN (V.O.)  
 Port of Baltimore Dock Master, this  
 is the Tarcoon, apologies for the  
 silence. Looks like a radio  
 malfunction. We're holding  
 position. Over.

DOCK MASTER (V.O.)  
 Confirm hold position Tarcoon.  
 Over.

The transmission ends. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.  
 Kirkman is GREEN. He just almost killed 250 innocent people.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Kirkman is making his way down the corridor, away from the  
 situation room, when he's suddenly overwhelmed with nausea.  
 Quickly ducks into:

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Where he swings open a stall, flings up the toilet seat and  
 hurls in the bowl.

A beat as he gathers himself. Spits. Then as he's staring  
 down the bottom of the bowl, a VOICE from the next stall, a  
 little tipsy:

VOICE (O.S.)  
 It's all right. Let it all out.  
 We're all feeling the same way  
 tonight.

KIRKMAN  
 Sorry. Thought I was alone.

**IN THE NEXT STALL:**

The young man we recognize from outside Reynolds's office  
 earlier that day -- SETH WHEELER. Up until the attack, the  
 speechwriter was in a celebratory mood, off the clock,  
 throwing back drinks with his colleagues. And now...

SETH  
 Yeah well, nothing is what it seems  
 anymore. I swear to God, I don't  
 know how the hell we're gonna get  
 through this.

KIRKMAN  
 Same way we always do.

SETH

Ha. Right. Do you know who's in charge now? I mean, I'm asking. 'Cause I can't even remember his name.

KIRKMAN

(beat)

Kirkman.

SETH

Yeah. Kirkman. The lowest rung on the ladder. The guy whose biggest domestic policy so far has been where to order take-out.

Kirkman sits back. Continues to let Seth mouth off.

SETH (CONT'D)

You know that President Richmond fired him this morning? And now he's the President. He's the guy the country is gonna be looking to in our darkest hour.

KIRKMAN

Maybe he'll surprise you.

SETH

You mean, maybe he'll realize that he's in his over his head? That he has no business running the country? That he should step aside and maybe let one of the generals take over? Or the CIA Director? Someone who knows what the hell they're doing. Who has some experience. Fat chance that'll happen. No one ever gives up power here. And know what? I don't even want surprises. I want *stability*. I want *strength*. I want to wake up tomorrow with the knowledge that there's going to be a tomorrow. Kirkman's a follower. We need a leader. Cause I tell you man, I got a half a mind to make a run to Canada, know what I'm sayin'?

With that, Seth flushes the toilet, rises and steps out of the stall --

-- finding himself face-to-face with Kirkman.

Oh.                   SETH (CONT'D)

Canada.               KIRKMAN

Mr. President --     SETH

Kirkman holds up a hand.

Save it.               KIRKMAN

Seth couldn't feel more embarrassed.

You really believe everything you just said?           KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

Mr. President, let me explain --     SETH

(cutting him off)  
What's your name?     KIRKMAN

Seth Wheeler.         SETH

Kirkman stares at Seth's face, placing him.

I saw you this morning coming out of Charlie's office. You're a speechwriter. You were arguing with him about the President's address.     KIRKMAN

The AB-33 section.     SETH

Housing reform.       KIRKMAN

Seth nods. That was Kirkman's section.

And you think I should step aside?   KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

Seth looks at Kirkman. He wants an honest answer.

I do.                   SETH

Kirkman considers Seth -- then:

KIRKMAN

Maybe I should.

(beat)

But right now I'm what you got. And you have --

(checks his watch)

Fifty three minutes to write me a speech telling the country why that's a good thing.

Kirkman goes to the door. Once he leaves -- Seth makes a quick dash into the same stall he was just in -- door shutting behind him. A disgusting retching sound is audible, as we GO TO:

**EXT. CAPITOL HILL - NIGHT**

Total panic and confusion. Where the historic United States Capitol building once stood proudly is now a pile of still-burning rubble and ash. EMERGENCY SERVICE CREWS work to dig through the wreckage looking for survivors. NEWS CREWS jockey for position. DISTRAUGHT FAMILY MEMBERS implore DC POLICE keeping a perimeter for any info:

CRYING WOMAN

Please, my husband was inside --

TERRIFIED MAN

Just tell me if he's all right --

DC COP

-- we still don't know -- yes, we're doing everything we can --

ANGLE: A CAR

Parked on the perimeter.

**INT. CAR - SAME**

Hannah sits inside. She stares out the window. At the rubble. Her eyes tell us that she's overwhelmed. But this isn't the time and she knows it.

She looks into the visor. Locks eyes with her reflection. Steels herself. And when she steps out --

**EXT. CAPITOL HILL - CONTINUOUS**

-- she's in total fucking charge -- crossing up to the crime scene, flashing her badge, overlooking the chaos, taking in the entire scene, mind at work.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hannah!

Hannah turns. She's being waved over to a makeshift command station lorded over by FBI TECHS and AGENTS, hard at work gathering forensic evidence. There she joins up with two more agents, JOHN LAWRENCE and MARK NOLAN.

LAWRENCE

It's a Goddamn mess. We can't even secure the scene.

HANNAH

Any survivors?

LAWRENCE

Not yet, but EMS is still digging through the rubble.

HANNAH

Anyone claiming responsibility?

Nolan shakes his head.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Alright... John, first thing: we need to make sure there isn't a second device. I want thermo UAVs and air sniffers looking for anything biological or radiological in the area. I want the license plates of every car parked in the next three blocks scanned. If any of them are stolen or owned by anyone on a watch list, tear that car apart. Mark: bomb disposal techs, CSI, we got debris everywhere and every piece matters. We need to treat this like a plane exploded in mid-air. We catalog what we find and where we found it.

NOLAN

(nodding)

Who do we report to?

HANNAH

Me.

The agents nod. Go to work. Off Hannah, in charge:

**EXT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST PORTICO GATE - NIGHT**

A Secret Service Suburban pulls inside, stopping at the portico entrance where Jessica is waiting. The Suburban doors open up. A FEMALE AGENT takes Penny out by the hand. Brings her to her mom's warm embrace.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - LATER**

Jessica tucks Penny into bed.

JESSICA

Here you go, sweetie. Snug as a bug  
in a rug.

PENNY

Mommy... why are we here?

Jessica doesn't know how to answer. Kisses her forehead.

JESSICA

Just get some rest. Everything's  
going to be okay. We'll talk in the  
morning.

Penny nods. Turns over. Jessica steps away from the bed.

**EXT. WHITE HOUSE - ROSE GARDEN - NIGHT**

Kirkman paces alone, cigarette in hand, exhaling smoke into the crisp January air. Jessica soon joins him, concerned.

JESSICA

It's freezing out here.

KIRKMAN

I don't mind it.

JESSICA

(re: the cigarette)  
Haven't had one of those in awhile.

KIRKMAN

Figured tonight was as good a time  
as any to start back up. How's  
Penny?

JESSICA

Scared. Confused.

Kirkman nods.

KIRKMAN

How are you?

JESSICA  
Scared. Confused.  
(beat)  
Is this really happening?

KIRKMAN  
If it isn't can one of us wake up  
already?

Kirkman takes another drag.

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)  
I almost blew up a ship today,  
Jess. 250 people on board. They  
would've been gone in an instant if  
they hadn't...

He turns to her.

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)  
What the hell am I doing here? I'm  
so not the person for this.

He sits down on a bench. Jessica joins him.

JESSICA  
You wanna quit?

KIRKMAN  
More than anything.  
(beat)  
I'm sorry. I know that's not what  
I'm supposed to say, but I just  
can't help feel --

JESSICA  
I think you should quit.

He turns to her, surprised.

KIRKMAN  
What?

JESSICA  
Look what happened tonight, Tom.  
How many people -- we haven't even  
processed. And now everyone in the  
world is looking to us -- to you --  
to get us through this. It's not  
that I don't think you can do  
it...I just don't want that  
responsibility.

Kirkman knows exactly where she's coming from. Just then, Ritter comes rushing out with two Secret Service agents.

RITTER  
Mr. President.

Kirkman rises.

KIRKMAN  
What is it?

RITTER  
You said Leo was over at a friend's house tonight.

KIRKMAN  
That's right. Caleb West.

RITTER  
I just spoke to our agents at his residence. Leo's not there. Never was. Neither is the other boy.

JESSICA  
(worried)  
What?

KIRKMAN  
Where is he then?

RITTER  
We don't know.

Off Kirkman and Jessica, imagining the worst --

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE****FADE IN:****EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT**

PAN ACROSS a line of NEWS REPORTERS doing stand-ups in front of the wrought iron fence that guards the perimeter:

NEWS REPORTER #1

-- everyone is at a complete loss  
for words --

NEWS REPORTER #2

-- the most devastating attack on  
our country since 9/11 --

NEWS REPORTER #3

-- staffers at the White House are  
asking the same questions as the  
rest of the country: Who did this  
and will it happen again?

ANGLE -- EMILY RHODES

Kirkman's COS -- arguing with a WHITE HOUSE SECURITY GUARD at  
a booth at the northwest corner of the White House complex.

EMILY

Look, check again. My name is Emily  
Rhodes. I'm Secretary Kirkman's  
Chief of Staff. He was the  
Designated Survivor tonight.

SECURITY GUARD

I already told you. You're not on  
the cleared list. Nothing can be  
done.

EMILY

I was just in there this morning.

SECURITY GUARD

Yeah well, a lot's happened since  
then if you haven't noticed. Now  
back away from the gate.

Emily, no choice, backs up, finding Mike Arnold and some  
other members of Kirkman's cabinet staff, waiting nearby.

EMILY

They won't let me in.

MIKE ARNOLD  
(phone out)  
I still can't reach anyone inside.

EMILY  
Keep trying. Someone's gotta pick  
up.

Mike dials again. Off Emily, frustrated:

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - ROOSEVELT ROOM - NIGHT**

A black leather briefcase with a small antenna protruding out of it is set down onto a table in front of Kirkman by the head of the WHITE HOUSE MILITARY TEAM: MAJOR SCOTT CAMERON.

Cochrane and a few Acting Secretaries (from the sit room) are also present, on phones, giving/receiving orders and updates.

MAJOR CAMERON  
Mr. President, this is the nuclear  
football. It will be with you  
whenever you leave the White House.

From out of the leather "jacket", Cameron pulls out a titanium shelled inner case. Kirkman looks on as Cameron opens up the package containing our nation's retaliatory options: a book listing classified site locations, a manila folder containing procedures for the Emergency Alert System, and a three-by-five inch card with authentication codes.

MAJOR CAMERON (CONT'D)  
Here are the launch codes, the  
verification codes, a listing of  
every classified location where  
nuclear weapons can be launched  
from. If a strike is imminent, you  
can give the green light from this  
phone. There are no dead zones. It  
works anywhere on earth as well as  
beneath it. You will never be  
unable to give a launch order.

Kirkman is overwhelmed by the briefing. A beat, then he takes off his jacket and prepares to roll up his sleeve. Cameron and the rest of the Military Team look on, confused.

MAJOR CAMERON (CONT'D)  
Sir?

KIRKMAN  
Don't you need my thumbprints now?  
Or eye scan...?

The Military Team members stifle laughs.

MAJOR CAMERON

No, sir. It's not like the movies.  
It doesn't work that way.

Kirkman, sheepish, puts back on his jacket.

KIRKMAN

Of course.

MAJOR CAMERON

Anything else, sir?

KIRKMAN

No. Thank you.

Cameron and the Military Team file out. Kirkman turns to the rest of the room.

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

Okay. Updates. Jill?

ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE

(into a phone)

Yes, thank you.

(hanging up)

The UN is in emergency session. I have a three page phone list with every one our enemies calling to deny responsibility for the attack. Russia, Iran, even North Korea.

COCHRANE

In the meantime, we've fueled the 1st Air Support Operations Group, the 5th Combat Communications Group and the 54th Fighter Group. Every US military base, home and aboard, are on full alert, and the USS Eisenhower and its strike group is currently hard charging towards the Fifth Fleet stationed in the Persian Gulf.

KIRKMAN

Wait, wait, I understand putting our bases on alert, but why are we "hard charging" a US aircraft carrier anywhere?

COCHRANE

Mr. President, in the event of an attack --

KIRKMAN

Against who? You heard Jill.  
Everyone's denying involvement.

COCHRANE

Of course they are. All warfare is  
based on deception and there are  
still plenty we haven't heard from.

Kirkman pauses.

KIRKMAN

I just don't think I feel  
comfortable yet showing this much  
force.

COCHRANE

Well, with all due respect sir, do  
you mind telling me when you do  
plan on being comfortable?

Cochrane's eyes penetrate Kirkman as he says this. He doesn't  
answer. But thankfully the arrival of one of the Secret  
Service agents from Ritter's team gives him an exit.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

Mr. President.

KIRKMAN

(backing away from the  
Deputy's disapproving  
glare)  
Did you find Leo yet?

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

Yes, sir. Agent Ritter is picking  
him up now.

ELECTRONIC MUSIC PULSATES.

CUT TO:

**INT. UNDERGROUND CLUB - NIGHT**

A BLAST OF SOUND AND LIGHT. We're at a RAVE in the basement  
of a DC nightclub. LOOKING AROUND...the club is half-empty  
and those who are there are too strung out to know/care about  
what happened in their city tonight. In a shadowy corner --

A SMALL PLASTIC BAG WITH A HANDFUL OF COLORFUL PILLS INSIDE  
(MOLLY) IS PASSED TO AN UNDERAGE CLUB GOER BY --

LEO -- in exchange for a \$100 bill. Leo quickly pockets the  
cash.

LEO  
Pleasure doin' business with you.

CALEB, his friend, joins him.

CALEB  
Hey, I just sold three more. How  
you lookin'?

LEO  
I still got two more bags left.

CALEB  
Save 'em. We gotta bounce anyway.

LEO  
Screw that. I came here to make  
money.

CALEB  
Don't you have to get home?

LEO  
Not if I call and say I'm crashin'  
at your place tonight.

Caleb smirks.

CALEB  
Man, you just park yourself right  
on that edge.

LEO  
How else are you gonna know when to  
stop?

Just then -- all the lights TURN ON. It's blinding. DC POLICE  
BUST INSIDE -- ON THE HUNT. People SCREAM. SCATTER.

CALEB  
Shit, it's a raid!

Leo takes off -- but quickly runs into a wall of people.  
Seeing the cops advance, he quickly doubles back, fighting  
his way into:

**INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Where he immediately throws open a stall and drops his  
remaining Molly bags into the toilet. Flushes as --

The bathroom door explodes open -- police thundering inside,  
storming right up to him. Leo spins, terrified.

LEO  
Whoa, hold up, I didn't do  
anything!

VOICE (O.S.)  
Leo.

Leo's eyes narrow, recognizing the voice.

LEO  
James?

James Ritter steps forward.

RITTER  
I'm here to take you home.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE - NIGHT**

START ON: A NEWS REPORT -- featuring a file photo of Kirkman.

NEWS REPORT  
Thomas Adam Kirkman was born  
November 14, 1972 in Port  
Washington, New York. Raised by his  
single mother Dena, a political  
activist, Kirkman graduated cum  
laude from Cornell University --

ANGLE -- THE WHITE HOUSE SPEECHWRITERS, Seth among them.

SPEECHWRITER #1  
Great. Not even a real Ivy.

ANGLE -- ANOTHER NEWS REPORT on Kirkman.

ANOTHER NEWS REPORT  
Kirkman is largely unknown. Before  
being appointed Secretary of  
Housing and Urban Development,  
Kirkman worked in both the  
nonprofit and private sectors and  
in academia as an educator --

SPEECHWRITER #2  
Tell me it was at least poli-sci.

ANOTHER NEWS REPORT  
-- teaching architecture and design  
at an inner city New York school.

SPEECHWRITER #3  
This is insane. I mean, this isn't  
really happening, is it?

SPEECHWRITER #4  
It's happening all right.

SPEECHWRITER #2  
But he can't really be the President, can he? Guy has never even be elected to anything.

SPEECHWRITER #1  
He was next in the line of succession.

SPEECHWRITER #2  
By complete happenstance. No one could have ever foreseen --

SETH  
(looking up the computer)  
Why the hell do you think we have a Designated Survivor in the first place, Alan? *Because* this was foreseen.

SPEECHWRITER #3  
What do you got so far?

SETH  
(reading off a draft on his computer)  
"Tonight, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a deliberate terrorist act."

SPEECHWRITER #1  
We don't know it's terrorism.

SPEECHWRITER #2  
What the hell do you think it was?

SPEECHWRITER #1  
What I'm sayin' is we don't know if it was a terror group or a foreign government or --

SETH  
Fine. Just "under attack... This act of cowardice was meant to cripple our nation but as before, America will show the world that we will not bow down to fear. That we will fight back. That we will persevere." And then I get into the continuity of government explanation.

SPEECHWRITER #3

Sounds good.

SETH

That's the problem. It can't sound good. It has to sound great. Kirkman has to nail this. And as a speechwriter I have to know how to deliver and I can't deliver cause I don't know who he is. It took me almost two years to learn how to write for President Richmond. I met Kirkman twenty minutes ago. A writer and the people they write for -- they have to know each other. They have to find their rhythm together or it just doesn't work.

VOICE (O.S.)

So what do you wanna know?

Seth turns around. Kirkman is standing in the doorway.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Shore is finishing up a conversation with some staffers when:

COCHRANE (O.S.)

Aaron.

Shore turns. Sees Cochrane down the hall.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

A word.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - EMPTY WEST WING OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER**

The Deputy closes the door behind Aaron.

COCHRANE

Something needs to be done, Aaron.

AARON

I think we're doing everything that's expected of us, Harris.

COCHRANE

That's not what I'm talking about.

AARON

Then what are we talking about?  
Because if it's what I think it is,  
this conversation is gonna be  
treading dangerously close to  
conspiracy to commit treason.

COCHRANE

You call it treason. I call it my  
civil responsibility.

AARON

He hasn't given us any reason yet --

COCHRANE

He *is* the reason, Aaron. You know  
it just as well as I do.

Aaron does.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

America is on her back right now.  
We've been hit harder than we have  
ever been before. And if we are  
going to get through this we need  
to act. Quickly and definitively.  
Tom Kirkman will not get us through  
this.

AARON

And let me guess... you can?

COCHRANE

We're in a state of war. Who would  
you have rather have leading us?

Off Aaron, hard to argue against his logic:

**EXT. WASHINGTON DC STREET - NIGHT**

A suburban zooms past, bubble lights spinning.

**INT. SUBURBAN - SAME**

Leo sits in the back, sulking. To Ritter beside him:

LEO

How'd you find me?

RITTER

You're not exactly a criminal  
mastermind.

LEO  
You gonna tell my dad?

RITTER  
What? That I found his teenage son  
dealing molly in the basement of  
some underground club surrounded by  
the same kind of strung-out junkie  
he's gonna be one day if he doesn't  
straighten the hell up right quick?  
(beat)  
No. I think your dad's got enough  
to deal with right now.

LEO  
Does another ribbon need cutting  
somewhere?

RITTER  
What the hell do you think your  
father does?

LEO  
I don't know.

RITTER  
(turning back to him)  
That's right. You don't know.

Leo really doesn't. Ritter shows him his phone. On the  
display: STREAMING NEWS FOOTAGE OF THE CAPITOL ATTACK.

LEO  
Oh my God.

A beat as Leo takes it all in. Then catches the street  
outside the window.

LEO (CONT'D)  
I thought you were taking me home.

RITTER  
I am.

Leo's eyes narrow, confused. That's when he sees the car is  
approaching -- THE WHITE HOUSE.

Off Leo -- oh my God:

**EXT. CAPITOL HILL - NIGHT**

FBI AGENTS in white HazMat suits comb through blackened-  
pieces of rubble, gathering evidence, bagging bits of charred  
metal, marking the scene with red-flags, Hannah among them.

Coming across a piece of old cobblestone, she pauses, eyes narrowing. She bends down. Picks up the piece. Examines it. Something about it troubles her. She calls out to Nolan.

HANNAH

Mark.

(no answer)

Mark!

Still no response. Hannah walks over. Nolan stands frozen like a statue.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Agent Nolan, did you hear --

She pauses when she sees what has him so haunted: body remains among the rubble, bloodied. A hand. Leg. They're standing on a graveyard.

NOLAN

I joined the FBI after 9/11. I wanted to do everything I could to make sure something like that never happened here again.

Hannah lets Nolan gather himself before showing him the cobblestone piece she found, back to business:

HANNAH

See this? It's cobblestone.

NOLAN

Yeah. So?

HANNAH

So the Capitol Building's made out of cast iron and marble. This shouldn't be here.

Nolan is still at a loss.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Remember the embassy bombing in Darfur in '09? Bomber built his device inside a silo of cobblestone. Kept the explosion targeted to go straight up through the basement and out -- to maximize damage.

She hands Nolan the evidence bag.

HANNAH (CONT'D)  
 I don't care what else we're  
 looking at. I want this tested  
 immediately. Where it's from. Who  
 sells it. What's on it.

Nolan nods. Off Hannah, theory forming:

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - ROOSEVELT ROOM - NIGHT**

Kirkman, on the phone.

KIRKMAN  
 Yes, thank you for your prayers  
 Madam Prime Minister... You too.

Kirkman hangs up. Turns to Seth, sitting on the couch, laptop  
 out. Jessica sits beside him.

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)  
 Where were we?

SETH  
 The Presidential voice.

KIRKMAN  
 Right. I don't have it.

SETH  
 Not exactly no.

KIRKMAN  
 (to Jessica)  
 You gonna defend my honor here?

JESSICA  
 I will -- once he says something I  
 disagree with.

KIRKMAN  
 (sitting across from him)  
 So tell me. What do you think the  
 Presidential voice is?

SETH  
 (reading from his  
 computer)  
 "All of us here know there is work  
 to be done. We have a  
 responsibility to light the way for  
 every American."

KIRKMAN  
 That sounds good.

SETH

I imagine it would -- to you. You said it two years ago at the Congress for the New Urbanism in Atlanta. Tonight you're speaking to world.

(point-blank)

The country doesn't need a friend right now. You can't be relaxed or disarming. That won't work anymore. You need to be stronger than you've ever been before. All of us -- we need that right now.

It's clear that Seth is also talking about himself -- and the moment gets away from him for a second. Jessica puts a hand on his shoulder, comforting him.

JESSICA

It's okay. We're all feeling it.

SETH

(composing himself)

Thank you ma'am.

JESSICA

Please. Jessica.

SETH

(correcting her)

No. Ma'am. You're the First Lady now.

Jessica pauses -- as if realizing for the first time that tonight's monumental change also applies to her.

The phone on the desk rings. Kirkman rises. Answers.

KIRKMAN

Yes...On my way.

Kirkman hangs up. Bee-lines to the door.

JESSICA

What is it, Tom?

KIRKMAN

(exiting)

Iran.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Kirkman heads up the corridor to the situation room. Puts his hand on the door scanner. Door unseals.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - SITUATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Everyone is still seated when Kirkman enters.

KIRKMAN

Aaron.

Aaron quickly realizes his mistake and rises -- getting the room to follow.

AARON

Gentlemen.

KIRKMAN

Be seated.

(everyone does)

General Pierce.

The Acting Secretary of Defense refers to a monitor image.

ACTING DEFENSE SECRETARY

Sat imagery shows 10 Iranian Navy destroyers leaving Bandar Beheshti port and taking up positions along the Strait of Hormuz.

AARON

(explaining to Kirkman)

Strait of Hormuz is where 30 percent of the world's oil passes through --

KIRKMAN

I know what it is.

ACTING DEFENSE SECRETARY

Mr. President, it does appear that this is a purposeful provocation by the Iranians to take advantage of the night's events and choke off the Western World's main source of oil.

Driving this home:

COCHRANE

Just as we're on our knees the Iranians are gonna step on our throat.

Off Kirkman:

**END OF ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR****FADE IN:****INT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST PORTICO ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

Emily has been finally allowed entry and is granted a visitors pass, slipping it around her neck when she spots Aaron making his way up the hallway ahead of her.

EMILY

Aaron!

Aaron sees her. Keeps going. She catches up, following him into:

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

EMILY

I finally got past the gate. What's going on?

AARON

I can't talk right. I have to get back to the situation room.

EMILY

Is Tom going to be in there?

AARON

It is his meeting.

EMILY

Then I'm coming with you.

AARON

Sorry Emily, but in there it's top secret code clearance or above.

EMILY

I've been with Secretary Kirkman's staff for three years.

AARON

Well, it's President Kirkman now and you're not authorized.

EMILY

If you're choosing this moment for a pissing contest, Aaron --

AARON

That's my point, Emily. It's not a contest. Now excuse me.

With that, Aaron pushes through a set of doors. Emily is about to follow when she's blocked by a MARINE GUARD.

Emily throws up her hands and backs off. You've won this round Aaron...

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - SITUATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Aaron rejoins the room -- where a debate rages on.

COCHRANE

How many more ways can I say it? In the morning, our economy is going to go off a cliff and the Iranians are just seizing the moment.

KIRKMAN

So what would you have me do? Declare war? I just got shown the football forty minutes ago. I think I've waited long enough to try it out.

COCHRANE

Understand this: the Iranians are banking on two things right now: our inability to pick ourselves up off the ground and with all due respect --

KIRKMAN

Because you've shown me so much so far?

COCHRANE

-- your inability to show any strength whatsoever, so yes, Mr. President, I want to fly a stealth bomber over Tehran. I want to drop shells in the supreme leader's backyard. The world thinks it can test us right now and a full, swift show of force is the only thing that's going to remind them that our flag is still flying strong tonight.

KIRKMAN

Yes, but there's more than one way to show force.

COCHRANE

This isn't some consumer group or an urban development caucus.

(MORE)

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

What you need to understand is that the Iranians respect only one course of action and that's action.

KIRKMAN

And what you need to understand is that in between lunches with the urban development caucuses and photo ops with consumer groups, I'm in those cabinet meetings where this very issue has come up. The Iranians have been threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz for 35 years. They didn't just decide tonight to do it.

Kirkman rises -- commanding:

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

General, you can scramble the bombers, but no one engages until I give the order.

ACTING DEFENSE SECRETARY

Yes, sir.

KIRKMAN

(to Aaron)

When's the Iranian ambassador arriving?

AARON

Fifteen minutes.

KIRKMAN

(to Cochrane)

We try it my way. If it doesn't work, we try yours.

(to Aaron)

Have the agents bring him to my office.

AARON

You mean the Roosevelt Room?

KIRKMAN

No. My office.

With that, Kirkman steps out of the situation room.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

And once the door closes -- Kirkman lets out a big sigh. Holy shit. This is all on him now.

**EXT. WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT**

CUT TO:

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Kirkman is heading back to one of the guest bedrooms when he hears voices coming out of the room that Penny is staying in. He stops at the door. Peeks inside.

Sees Penny is awake, upset. Leo is at her bedside, consoling her.

LEO

I know you're scared ladybug, but everything is going to be okay.

PENNY

But why are we staying here?

LEO

Because this is gonna be our new home.

PENNY

Why?

LEO

Because some bad people did something bad tonight and it's dad's job to make sure we're all safe.

PENNY

...Are you scared?

LEO

Yeah.

PENNY

Is dad?

LEO

Are you kidding? Dad's not scared of anything.

Kirkman takes that in -- and slowly backs away from the door and heads down the hallway -- where Aaron awaits him.

KIRKMAN

Is he here?

AARON

Yes, sir. He just arrived.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - OUTER OFFICE - NIGHT**

IRANIAN AMBASSADOR MOHAMMED FAYAD waits in the outer office to the Oval. Rises when Kirkman crosses up with Aaron.

AMBASSADOR FAYAD  
Mr. President.

KIRKMAN  
Mr. Ambassador. Please.

Kirkman leads Fayad into:

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

START ON: PHOTOGRAPHS ON THE RESOLUTE DESK -- PRESIDENT RICHMOND AND HIS FAMILY. PAN UP: Kirkman enters. This is our first time inside the Oval. Kirkman's too busy to take it in. If he did, he'd probably lose it.

AMBASSADOR FAYAD  
Mr. President, let me begin by extending to you and the American people my country's most sincere sympathies on this horrific tragedy. If there is anything our people can do in response to this tremendous act of cowardice, we will do so without question.

KIRKMAN  
I appreciate that, Mr. Ambassador. You can start by removing your destroyers from the Strait of Hormuz.

AMBASSADOR FAYAD  
Mr. President, excuse me, but you have been misinformed.

KIRKMAN  
Is that a fact?

AMBASSADOR FAYAD  
Yes. We have moved no such destroyers into the Strait of Hormuz.

Aaron hands Kirkman a folder. He opens it up. Pulls out satellite photos. Hands them to Fayad.

KIRKMAN  
My defense department has war gamed this out.

(MORE)

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

They're just waiting for my greenlight -- which I'm more than happy to give unless these destroyers are back in Bandar Beheshti in the next three hours.

AMBASSADOR FAYAD

Mr. President --

KIRKMAN

Mr. Ambassador, you may not know much about me, but what you should know is that I'm as straight a shooter as you're likely to meet in Washington, so believe me when I tell you I don't want my first act as Commander in Chief to be an attack on Iran, but it's not always up to us how history plays out. Now I believe your country wasn't preying on our emotions tonight, but nevertheless you'll feel the full effects of them unless you comply with my demands. Dry dock the destroyers immediately. Or the lead story on the news tomorrow isn't gonna be the attack on our Capitol. But the attack on yours.

(beat)

So let's not get off on the wrong foot here tonight.

Fayad is appropriately intimidated -- while Aaron is impressed. He's never seen this side of Kirkman before.

AMBASSADOR FAYAD

I'll relay your wishes to my government.

KIRKMAN

Three hours, Mr. Ambassador.

Fayad nods. Kirkman extends a hand. They shake.

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

I look forward to working with you.

AMBASSADOR FAYAD

Me as well, Mr. President.

Fayad exits the Oval.

AARON

That was incredible.

KIRKMAN  
Make sure you tell Cochrane all  
about it.

AARON  
I'm sorry?

KIRKMAN  
You heard me. I know I don't have  
his trust yet -- or yours -- and  
that's something I'll have to earn  
in time, but as the President, I  
demand your respect. If you can't  
give it to me, there's the door.

Aaron, put in his place, nods.

AARON  
Anything else?

KIRKMAN  
Are the networks ready?

AARON  
They're setting up in East Room.

KIRKMAN  
No. In here.

AARON  
Yes, Mr. President.

Aaron leaves. Kirkman is now alone. He takes a moment to  
consider the office. It's awe-inspiring. A beat.

SETH (O.S.)  
Mr. President.

Kirkman turns. Sees Seth in the doorway, file folder in hand.  
He waves him inside.

Seth hands him the folder. Removes the speech. Reads. Seth  
waits for his reaction.

KIRKMAN  
This is good.  
(beat)  
This is really good.  
(looking up)  
Nicely done.

SETH  
Thank you, sir.

KIRKMAN  
We're gonna get through this you  
know.

SETH  
I do.

Kirkman turns away, reading over the speech. Seth leaves him.  
But then stops. Turns back.

SETH (CONT'D)  
One thing, sir.  
(beat)  
You are a democrat, right?

Seth smiles, hopeful. But when Kirkman answers --

KIRKMAN  
Independent.

-- Seth's smile instantly disappears. Off which -- PRELAP:

ANCHOR ON TV  
We're hearing now that President  
Kirkman's address to the nation  
will take place inside the Oval  
Office...

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT**

Cameras are being set-up. Lights are adjusted. Seth makes  
sure the speech is loaded correctly onto the teleprompter.  
Kirkman stands in the corner with Jessica, adjusting his tie.

KIRKMAN  
Listen...I've been thinking.

JESSICA  
I know what you're going to say.

KIRKMAN  
You do?

JESSICA  
Yes. And don't worry about it. Your  
tie doesn't clash.

He smirks.

KIRKMAN  
I want to do this, Jess. I have to  
do this.

JESSICA  
I know you do.

She finishes up with his tie. Their ritual:

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Keep fighting the good fight.

KIRKMAN  
To the bitter end.

They kiss. He moves away -- to the desk. He considers the chair. His now. A beat, then he sits down -- our first look at him before the desk.

A STAFFER goes to remove Richmond's photo. He stops him.

KIRKMAN (CONT'D)  
No. Leave it for now.

The staffer backs away. A PA gives Kirkman the countdown.

PA  
Mr. President, you're live in five,  
four, three, two --

The red light on the camera across from him turns on. Kirkman now has the world's attention. We PUSH IN --

KIRKMAN  
Good evening my fellow Americans.  
Tonight, our way of life came under  
attack. This act of cowardice was  
meant to cripple our nation but as  
before, America will show the world  
that we will not bow down to fear.  
That will we fight back. That we  
will persevere.

**EXT. CAPITOL HILL - INTERCUTTING**

Hannah and her evidence gathering team pour through rubble, excavating bodies which are zipped into black bags.

KIRKMAN (V.O.)  
The victims were husbands and  
wives, fathers and mothers,  
daughters and sons. Their lives  
were devoted to service. They went  
to work today like any other day.  
Striving to making our country  
safer and our world brighter. Rest  
assured they have not died in vain.

Nolan soon crosses up to Hannah. Hands her a computer print-out. The lab results she was waiting on. As she reads them over, her eyes WIDEN.

Whatever is on it SHOCKS her to the core. Off this mystery:

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE - INTERCUTTING**

Emily and the rest of Kirkman's cabinet staff watch the speech from outside the oval on TV's, annoyed they are being kept out of the inner circle, but nonetheless proud to see their boss rising to the occasion.

KIRKMAN (ON TV)

While we do not know yet who was responsible for these mass murders, take comfort that we are taking every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - RESIDENCE - INTERCUTTING**

Leo, also watching the speech, can't help but be taken back by the sight of his father as the country's new President.

KIRKMAN (ON TV)

None of us will ever forget this day. Where we were. What we were doing. How we were feeling. We are all united in that way and it is in that union we will find strength.

**INT. SITUATION ROOM - INTERCUTTING**

As Cochrane and the rest of the national security team take in new satellite images of the Iranian Navy moving their ships out of the Strait of Hormuz --

KIRKMAN (V.O.)

Immediately following the attack, continuity of government was initiated. As next in the Presidential line of succession, I was sworn in as your new President.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - INTERCUTTING**

As Kirkman makes his plea to the American people.

KIRKMAN

You don't know me. You didn't vote for me. But I'm asking you to trust me.

**EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT**

MOURNERS lay flowers and light candles in front.

KIRKMAN (V.O.)

Our government will continue without interruption. America is open for business tomorrow. And to those who would seek to take advantage of what happened --

CUT TO:

SEVERAL TV SCREENS

As Kirkman's address is broadcasted in several languages around the world.

KIRKMAN (ON TV)

This is an opportunity to you as well. To show the world you stand with peace. With justice. I ask every nation in the world to help us find those who are responsible for this atrocity.

**INT. SITUATION ROOM - NIGHT**

With Cochrane, watching.

ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE

He's not bad.

COCHRANE

For now.

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT**

As Jessica looks on, proud -- Kirkman puts his speech down, looks at camera and speaks from the heart.

KIRKMAN

I'm Tom Kirkman. I'm from New York. My kids names are Penny and Leo. I like the Knicks, but not the Rangers and I will make it my mission to remind you and the world why America is the greatest nation on Earth. Thank you. God bless you. God bless these United States.

The red light atop the camera clicks off.

**END OF PILOT**