

CIVIL WAR

OPEN ON -

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

- a room in the White House.

Nondescript. A podium, and flags hanging behind.

The PRESIDENT enters.

He is white, white-haired, dark-suited. He has some of the approximate bearing of a statesman, but there's weird anger and intensity beneath.

He takes position at the podium.

Clears his throat.

He looks uncomfortable. Even nervous.

As he starts to speak, we realise he is rehearsing a presidential speech.

THE PRESIDENT

We are now closer than we have ever
been -

He breaks off.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

We are now closer than we have ever
been, to victory.

Beat.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Some -

Beat.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Some are already calling it the
greatest -

Beat.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Some are already calling it the
greatest victory in the history of
mankind.

Getting better.

He starts to find his groove.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
 We are closer than we have ever
 been to victory. Some are already
 calling it the greatest victory in
 the history of military campaigns.

He smiles. Nods.

CUT TO -

INT. LIVE TELEVISISED BROADCAST - NIGHT

- the PRESIDENT making his live speech, straight to camera.

THE PRESIDENT
 Today I can announce that the so-
 called Western Forces of Texas and
 California have suffered a very
 great loss, a very great defeat, at
 the hands of the fighting men and
 women of the United States
 military.

CUT TO -

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - NIGHT

- a three star hotel bedroom.

On the bed, we can see a press photographer's kit.

A helmet, a flak jacket, cameras, and lenses.

Outside the window, we can see the NEW YORK SKYLINE.

The PRESIDENT'S speech is playing on the TV.

As he speaks, a woman enters.

She's 40 years old. American.

The photographer.

THE PRESIDENT
 The people of Texas and California
 should know that they will be
 welcomed back to these United
 States as soon as their illegal
 Secessionist government is deposed.

LEE sits on the bed. Facing the TV.

She stares at the PRESIDENT.

Watching him.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

I can also confirm that the Florida Alliance has failed in its attempt to force the brave people of the Carolinas into joining the insurrection.

LEE picks up one of her cameras.

Zoom lens fitted.

She zooms in on the PRESIDENT'S face.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Citizens of America, we are now closer than ever to a historic victory, as we eliminate the final pockets of resistance.

CLICK.

LEE takes the photo.

She lowers the camera, like a hunter, practising their kill-shot.

But continuing to gaze at the PRESIDENT.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

God bless you all. And God bless America.

AT THAT MOMENT -

- THROUGH THE HOTEL WINDOW, deeper in the city -

- a FIREBALL suddenly rises into the darkness.

A bomb, many blocks away.

A beat later, we hear the sound of the distant detonation.

As the hotel window shakes from the shockwave, LEE turns to look.

She watches blankly, as a secondary explosion sends a fireball into the air.

CUT TO -

EXT. NEW YORK - DAY

- NEW YORK CITY, seen from a distance.

In the foreground, smoke is rising from a burning building.

TITLE:

CIVIL WAR

EXT. BROOKLYN - DAY

AERIAL SHOT of a slightly battered 4X4 SUV car, driving through Brooklyn.

Painted white.

On the hood and sides, the word PRESS is written in large, black letters.

It passes a carpark.

Instead of being full of cars, the carpark is full of TENTS.

INT. CAR - DAY

Inside the car, LEE sits in the passenger seat.

Her colleague, JOEL, is driving.

Early forties, Latino, writer.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW -

- we glimpse a squad of SOLDIERS on patrol.

They are in full combat gear - automatic rifles, helmets, flak jackets.

EXT. BROOKLYN - DAY

The car turns a corner -

- to their obvious destination.

A little way ahead, the road is blocked by what looks like some kind of civil demonstration.

INT. CAR - DAY

JOEL pulls up to the sidewalk.

The moment the car stops -

- LEE immediately exits the vehicle. Carrying her camera.

JOEL reaches to the back seat of the car, where there is a pile of various stuff. Helmets, a ballistic vest, a gas mask.

He grabs a couple of fluorescent vests.

EXT. BROOKLYN/CROSS STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

The crowd are gathered around a cross street.

As LEE approaches, we see that most in the crowd are carrying water containers of one sort or another. Plastic canisters, water cooler bottles, and buckets.

Parked in the centre of the cross street is a TRUCK with a large water container at the back.

This is not a demonstration.

These are desperate people, queuing for WATER.

RIOT POLICE surround the container, trying to manage a line to the back of the truck.

Some of the police hold automatic rifles. Some carry batons.

Nearby, a few journalists stand.

Most wear fluorescent vests, and have a gas mask strapped to a backpack. A few wear white helmets and flak jackets, with PRESS written in black marker.

Among them we see BOHAI - a Chinese photographer.

DAVE - a TV NEWS CAMERA OPERATOR.

DAVE spots LEE.

They nod at each other - familiar.

LEE scans.

Sees tension. The anger in the crowd.

Sees the exhaustion in the cops. Behind their visors, they're dripping with sweat.

Then -

She notices another journalist.

Or - someone acting like a journalist.

A young woman.

This is JESSIE. She's twenty three years old. She wears no protective gear, has two 35mm Nikon FE2 FILM CAMERAS slung around her neck, and a small backpack.

JESSIE has followed DAVE.

She's trying to get the same shot on her stills camera. But is more tentative. Hanging back slightly.

Only moving in when DAVE moves off.

But the moment DAVE captured has gone.

LEE watches the girl for a couple of moments.

Seeing her youth, and obvious inexperience.

The sight seems to transfix LEE for a moment. Displacing her from the surrounding chaos.

BEHIND LEE -

- JOEL has seen a journalist friend.

TONY. Chinese, late thirties.

The two men embrace warmly, pleased to see each other.

The relaxed good humour is dissonant with the sense of anger and chaos in the crowd.

JOEL

Lee.

LEE looks round.

Sees JOEL standing with TONY.

JOEL holds out the fluorescent vest for her to put on.

CUT TO -

- in the crowd, the tension between the cops and the people is suddenly starting to explode.

A fight breaks out.

CUT TO -

- two RIOT POLICE breaking ranks.

Moving forwards. Holding batons.

They reach into the crowd to grab a MAN.

It's unclear why.

The crowd around the man try to hold on to him, as the RIOT POLICE try to drag him out.

A tug of war starts between the two cops and the crowd.

LEE lifts her camera and moves in.

Around her - other press photographers are doing the same.

But LEE moves differently to the others.

She steps almost *in* to the fighting.

As she shoots -

- we glimpse the young girl photographer.

JESSIE.

Though small, JESSIE has also put herself as close to the action as she can.

But unlike LEE, it's too close.

A third COP breaks rank to assist his two colleagues -

- and swings with his baton. He's not particularly aiming for JESSIE. He's just swinging for whoever is between him and his colleagues.

But it strikes JESSIE on the side of the head.

She falls sideways.

Dazed.

LEE sees this.

She pushes herself forward out of the crowd.

Gets a hand to JESSIE.

Grabs her arm.

Yanks her up.

Dragging her.

EXT. BROOKLYN/CROSS STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

LEE pushes the dazed girl away from the truck and the cops and the crowd.

As they walk:

LEE

You okay?

The girl nods.

JESSIE

I'm fine. I just - what happened?

LEE

You got hit.

LEE has reached JOEL'S car.

She turns JESSIE to lean against the hood, and looks into JESSIE'S eyes, checking concussion.

JESSIE

I got hit?

JESSIE suddenly frowns. As if just regaining focus.

And then is staring back at LEE. Wide-eyed.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Oh fuck. No. No way.

LEE

What?

JESSIE

This is crazy. I don't believe it.
You're Lee Smith. You're Lee
fucking *Smith*.

A beat.

LEE'S face. Blank.

Then she pulls off her fluorescent vest.

LEE
Take this.

JESSIE
Oh, no, I can't -

LEE
(hard)
Take it. Now. And put it on.

JESSIE does as she's told.

She looks suddenly like a kid who's been told off.
Embarrassed. Shamed.

LEE softens - very slightly.

LEE (CONT'D)
You need to be more careful.

JESSIE
... I'm really sorry.

LEE looks back towards the water truck.

The commotion is continuing -

- and JOEL and TONY are walking back towards LEE and JESSIE.

Their backs to the truck.

JOEL and TONY saw what just went down with LEE and JESSIE.
JOEL looks half-amused.

But behind them -

- something is happening.

A WOMAN has appeared.

She's come out of a side street.

And she's RUNNING FAST towards the TRUCK and the COPS and the CROWD.

And as she runs - she's lifting something.

Holding it in the air.

It's a STARS AND STRIPES FLAG. Unfurling.

In the commotion by the water truck, no one has seen what LEE can see.

CUT TO -

- LEE.

LEE

Oh shit.

On instinct -

- LEE throws herself into JESSIE, knocking them both to the ground.

And half a beat later, the WOMAN has reached the crowd.

And a half beat after that -

- she EXPLODES.

A massive suicide-bomb blast.

The crowd and the cops are engulfed.

CUT TO -

EXT. SKY - LATE AFTERNOON

- the sky.

Looking directly upwards.

Clouds catching light from a low sun.

CUT TO -

EXT. BROOKLYN/CROSS STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

- LEE, staring up at the sky.

Flat on her back.

Beats pass.

Then she sits up.

Gets to her feet.

She glances at JESSIE.

JESSIE seems uninjured.

Then LEE lifts her camera - and moves towards the hanging smoke.

CUT TO -

- JESSIE.

Picking herself up from the road.

Dazed.

She starts to walk away from the explosion.

Then -

- JESSIE stops.

And turns.

And faces the carnage behind her.

Hanging smoke. Multiple wounded. Multiple dead. Body parts in the road like bits of rubble.

The side of the truck is ripped open. Water has poured over the dead and wounded, creating a pool of bloody water.

And in the middle of the carnage -

- LEE is walking.

Taking photos.

JESSIE hesitates.

Then lifts her own camera -

- and photographs LEE.

CUT TO -

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

A hotel lobby.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

At the hotel bar, there is an almost party vibe. Groups of journalists, talking and drinking.

The Chinese journalist TONY is sat at a table with BOHAI and a few other Asian press. They're raucous. Laughing.

Near them a couple of TV camera teams are passing around and discussing a camera body. Their table is surrounded by Pelican cases.

One of them is DAVE.

Amidst this, on a table near the bar, WE FIND -

- LEE sitting with JOEL and SAMMY.

SAMMY is an African American journalist in his late sixties.

He has a walking stick resting on the chair. When he walks, it's with a limp.

LEE has a laptop open.

LEE

(mutters)

Jesus the wifi is so fucking slow.

She's attempting to upload her pictures from earlier. Watching the blue bar crawl to 100%, in fits and starts.

JOEL and SAMMY are half-drunk, and deep in journo conversation. Clearly, friends.

JOEL

The word I'm getting is July 4th.

SAMMY laughs.

SAMMY

The word you're getting. Like everyone in this room hasn't already heard this bullshit.

JOEL

July 4th, Sammy. The optics are irresistible. The Western forces have stopped one hundred and twenty miles from DC. Texas and the Florida Alliance aren't far South of that.

SAMMY

The WF aren't stopped - they're stalled. They've lost their supply lines. But it's the race to Berlin. There's no coordination between the Secessionists. You watch: soon as DC falls, they'll turn on each other.

JOEL laughs.

JOEL

That's the most depressing thing I ever heard. What the fuck are you offering, Sammy? Eternal war?

SAMMY

What are you expecting, Jo? The peace follows war is only ever peace for some. After Nuremberg - peace in Montana, sure. But not Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East. None of which were unconnected.

SAMMY lifts his beer.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

And now there's no peace in Montana either.

LEE

Huh. That's weird.

SAMMY and JOEL look round.

LEE (CONT'D)

Jo was quoting himself earlier too.

JOEL glances at SAMMY.

JOEL

Nailed?

SAMMY

Yes.

JOEL and SAMMY both laugh.

LEE

Writers. You're so needy.

JOEL

Photographers care nothing for a turned phrase.

SAMMY

But I do love you, Lee.

LEE

I do love you too, Sammy.

AT THAT MOMENT -

- all the lights in the lobby go out.

LEE is only lit by the light from her laptop screen.

LEE (CONT'D)

Really?

SAMMY

It's every night this week.
They'll switch to the generator.

LEE

The upload was *this* close to done.

The lights flicker - then come back on.

LEE puts her laptop down.

JOEL

The eternal upload.

LEE reaches for her beer.

SAMMY watches her a moment. Seriousness now in his face.

Then he speaks. Casual tone. Very loaded.

SAMMY

So where you kids headed tomorrow?
Staying in New York a while, or
venturing out?

JOEL smiles.

JOEL

Fuck you.

SAMMY

Come on, Jo.

JOEL

So you can beat us there?

SAMMY

I couldn't beat you in a brisk
walk.

LEE takes a slug of her beer.

LEE

We're going to DC, Sammy. Tomorrow
morning. First thing.

SAMMY nods.

SAMMY
Front line. I figured.

LEE
No. Not the front line. DC.

SAMMY, who was reclined in his seat, sits forward.

SAMMY
... What?

LEE
I'm going to photograph the
President. Jo's going to interview
him.

SAMMY drops his voice.

SAMMY
Photograph and interview the
President. In DC.

JOEL
That's the idea.

SAMMY
What the fuck are you talking
about? Are you serious?

SAMMY looks at LEE for confirmation.

She gazes back at him.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
They shoot journalists in the
capital on sight. They literally
see us as enemy combatants.

JOEL
Not a single interview in fourteen
months.

SAMMY
How are you going to do this?

LEE
We get there. Before anyone else
does.

SAMMY
You think there's a rush to get
executed on the South Lawn? You're
in a race with *no one*.

(MORE)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Okay - so you don't have a how.
Give me a *why*.

JOEL

Come on. We live for this.

SAMMY

Live for it? It will *kill* you.

JOEL

Sammy - July 4th, July 10th, West Coast Forces or Portland Maoists - it's all the same. DC is falling and the President is dead inside a month. Interviewing him is the only story left.

SAMMY

Not a story if it never gets filed. Lee - can I please talk you out of this bullshit?

Throughout, LEE has been watching SAMMY closely. Impassively.

She ignores his question.

LEE

What do you think the route's going to be like?

A beat between them.

Then SAMMY exhales.

SAMMY

Driving?

JOEL

No, digging. We're going to tunnel our way there.

SAMMY

There's nothing direct. The Interstates are vaporised. And you can't get anywhere near Philly, so you've got to go West. Maybe as far as Pittsburg. Then circle in from West Virginia.

LEE

That's what we thought.

SAMMY

It's pretty wild out there, and only getting worse. The press credentials should keep you safe.

SAMMY pauses.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

But when you get to DC, you should swap out the press pass for piano wire, so they can save bullets and string you up with it.

LEE

You had that route already figured out, Sammy.

SAMMY

... Yeah. Okay.

Beat.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

I'm kind of looking to get down there myself.

LEE and JOEL exchange a glance.

JOEL

Knew it.

SAMMY

Not DC. I don't want a piece of your suicide pact. I want Charlottesville. The front line.

SAMMY lifts a hand before they can speak.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Hear me out. Just because I'm a rival news outlet -

JOEL

You're not a fucking rival, Sammy. We're Reuters, for Christ's sake. You think I care if you file with what's left of the New York Times? Win a Pulitzer, if there's any left. We'd be happy for you.

SAMMY

You're worried I'm too old? Can't move quick enough?

LEE
Aren't you?

SAMMY
Sure. Yes. But -
(suddenly frustrated)
You going to make me explain why I
have to be there? Why I can't not
be there?

LEE looks at SAMMY.

We see - affection.

LEE
No.

Beat.

LEE (CONT'D)
If it's the front line you want,
half the press in here are going to
be heading that way inside twenty
four hours.

SAMMY
You want me to walk around this
fucking room, begging for a ride?

Silence.

Then LEE stands. Picks up her lap top.

LEE
I'm going to restart the upload in
my room and crash out. Hopefully
it will be done by the time I wake.

SAMMY is watching her.

She glances at him. Then back at JOEL.

LEE (CONT'D)
My vote. If Sammy wants to ride
with us, I'm good with it. You two
hash it out.

SAMMY
Thank you, Lee.

JOEL
Yeah, thanks. Make me the bad guy.

LEE starts walking away.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY/ELEVATORS - NIGHT

LEE walks to the elevators.

As she walks past the front desk -

CONCIERGE

Ma'am - just to warn you. If you take the elevator, we do sometimes have power cuts, which might mean a delay during your journey.

LEE

A delay?

CONCIERGE

We offer the option to use the stairs.

Beat.

LEE

I'm on the tenth floor.

CONCIERGE

Your choice, ma'am.

LEE continues walking to the elevators.

Then stops.

Looks at the elevators. Looks at the door to the stairs.

Sighs.

And is just opening the door to the stairs, when -

JESSIE

Ms Smith?

LEE turns.

And sees JESSIE standing behind her, holding the fluorescent vest.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Hey. It's me. Do you remember me? From earlier?

LEE

(thrown)

... Uh, yeah. How did you know I was staying here?

JESSIE

(cuts in, nervous)

- I didn't mean to, like, stalk.
But I know a lot of the press use
this hotel. And - I wanted to say
thanks. And I wanted to give you
this back.

JESSIE holds out the vest.

LEE

... No. It's okay. Keep it.

JESSIE

But -

LEE

Keep it.

LEE turns to go.

Then stops herself. Looks back at the young woman.

LEE (CONT'D)

And buy a helmet and some Kevlar,
okay? If you're planning on
attending any more stuff like that.

JESSIE

I am planning on that. I'm a
photographer. I want to be a war
photographer, actually.

LEE gazes at the young woman.

She seems entirely guileless.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

By the way, you've got the same
first name as my hero. Lee Miller?
She was one of the first
photojournalists into Dachau. You
know her stuff?

LEE

... Yeah. I know of Lee Miller.

JESSIE

Of course.

(hurried)

But - I wanted to say that you're
also one of my heroes. And you've
got the same name too.

LEE smiles.

LEE
Well, thanks. I'm in good company.

Beat.

LEE (CONT'D)
What's your name?

JESSIE
Jessie. Jessie Cullen.

LEE
So, Jessie, I've got to walk up ten flights of stairs. But - if I ever see you again, you'd better be wearing Kevlar and that fluorescent.

JESSIE
... You bet.

LEE leaves into the stairwell door.

The door closes.

Leaving JESSIE alone.

A beat.

Then JESSIE turns.

She looks across the lobby, to the bar area.

The party vibe.

JOEL and SAMMY are still talking.

BOHAI is telling an animated story in Mandarin to his table.

TONY is laughing and contradicting.

A peal of laughter rolls towards JESSIE.

A beat.

Then JESSIE starts walking towards them.

CUT TO -

INT. HOTEL ROOM/BATHROOM - NIGHT

- LEE.

She's lying in the bathtub.

But this isn't relaxation.

She feels very alone.

And she's frozen.

Covering her face in her hands.

CUT TO -

EXT. WAR - DAY/NIGHT

- a sequence of images of WAR.

Memories.

A street in Africa. A car reversing fast.

A street in the Middle East. A group of soldiers, running towards a burning building.

A cluster of palm trees - into which a rocket lands, and explodes.

Two men being beaten. Struck with a concrete block.

An execution, with a hand gun.

A dazed soldier, with a gaping head wound.

A patrol of soldiers, engulfed by an IED.

A man having a car tyre forced over his neck and shoulders, and set on fire.

And AMONG ALL THESE IMAGES OF WAR -

- LEE.

Photographing it all.

CUT TO -

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

- LEE.

In the bath.

Dragging her hand away from her face.

Breathing out.

Processing.

Or trying to.

CUT TO -

EXT. NEW YORK - DAWN

- DAYBREAK.

A sequence of shots around NEW YORK.

6th AVENUE - blocked by a single TANK.

TENTS - laid out on the roof of a building.

GRAFFITI - 'Fuck the WF'

A military SNIPER and SPOTTER - zeroing sights over the skyline.

CUT TO -

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - EARLY MORNING

- LEE exiting the hotel.

She has her canvas camera bag and her rolling luggage.

Parked outside, she can see JOEL, standing by their PRESS SUV.

And there are silhouette figures on the back seats.

LEE frowns slightly as she approaches.

As she gets closer, on the back seat she sees SAMMY.

And then, sat beside SAMMY, JESSIE.

JESSIE sees LEE.

Waves. Holds up the fluorescent jacket.

LEE doesn't wave back.

Instead, she walks straight up to JOEL.

LEE

A word.

EXT. HOTEL FORECOURT - DAY

LEE and JOEL move a little distance from the car.

LEE

What the fuck is that girl doing here?

JOEL

Right, so - she came over to the table last night after you went to bed. We got talking, and - she's very cool. Wanted to tag along.

LEE

So she's coming with us.

JOEL

What? You let *Sammy* tag along. You think he's going to do well, running for cover? Rounds flying over his head?

LEE

She's a *kid*. Did you notice that?

JOEL

Lee, she's like twenty three, and she wants to do what we do. What you do. And - we all had to start one day. Were you much older than she is now?

LEE looks over at the car.

Sees JESSIE looking back at her. Nervously.

LEE looks back at JOEL.

Not happy.

LEE

Whatever happens, she goes no further than Charlottesville.

LEE starts walking back towards the car.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

The car drives down a freeway.

JOEL is driving.

LEE sits in the front seat. She looks pissed off.

SAMMY and JESSIE in the back.

The road is almost empty. The only cars travel in the opposite direction.

Reveal -

- ahead, the freeway is blocked by a massive jam of rusted and burned out vehicles. It's the road to Basra.

JOEL peels off at the next exit.

EXT. CHECKPOINT - DAY

A smaller road.

We watch from a distance.

The car is pulled up at a military checkpoint.

JOEL is out of the car. Talking to AMERICAN SOLDIERS.

Talking. A little laughing.

Then JOEL gets back into the car, and they are waved through.

INT. CAR - DAY

Inside the car, JOEL and SAMMY are trading JOEL'S prospective interview questions.

JESSIE is listening. So happy to be where she is right now.

SAMMY

'Mr President, do you regret any actions implemented during your third term of office?'

JOEL

I'm not going to softball him, Sammy.

SAMMY

'In retrospect, Mr President, do you still think it was wise to disband the FBI?'

JOEL

Passive aggressive.

SAMMY

'Sir, how is your policy evolving on the use of air strikes against American civilians?'

JOEL laughs.

JOEL

Now you're talking.

SAMMY

Just get the words out before the piano wire gets too tight.

LEE spots something in the road ahead.

LEE

There's a gas station up ahead. It looks open.

JOEL

We've got over half a tank. What do you think?

SAMMY

Any chance to refuel, we should take.

JOEL

Okay.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

JOEL pulls in to the gas station.

He stops one of the pumps.

There are three men sat over the entrance to what was once the gas station store. All with automatic rifles.

By the pumps, there's another, armed.

When JOEL turns off the engine, the man by the pumps walks over. Not exactly threatening. But not friendly.

JOEL and LEE get out as he approaches.

GAS STATION GUARD 1
Help you, folks?

JOEL
We're just looking for gas.

GAS STATION GUARD 1
Got a local fuel permit?

JOEL
No. We're passing through.

GAS STATION GUARD 1
Can't help. Sorry.

The guard turns away.

LEE
Sir.

The man looks back.

LEE (CONT'D)
If we pay.

GAS STATION GUARD 1
I was never going to give it for
free.

LEE
I mean pay over the odds.

GAS STATION GUARD 1
What's over the odds?

LEE
Three hundred dollars. We need
half a tank, and two of your
canisters.

The man laughs.

GAS STATION GUARD 1
Three hundred dollars buys you a
sandwich. We got ham or cheese.

LEE
Three hundred Canadian.

The guard hesitates.

Then looks over to his colleague. And nods.

GAS STATION GUARD 1

Okay.

As LEE starts to hand over the cash -

- CLICK. JESSIE door opens, and she gets out.

JOEL sees.

JOEL

Stretching your legs?

JESSIE

No - I saw something from the road.

JOEL

... This isn't going to take long.

He's trying to imply she should get back in the car.

She doesn't seem to realise.

JESSIE

Sure.

JESSIE keeps walking.

LEE watches her go.

Then notices an exchanged glance between three armed men by the store entrance.

One of them detaches and follows JESSIE.

LEE looks back at the GAS STATION GUARD 1.

Her gaze suddenly level, and hard.

LEE

Are we good?

GAS STATION GUARD 1

Yeah, don't worry. We're good.

LEE hesitates a moment.

Then follows JESSIE.

EXT. CAR WASH - DAY

LEE walks around the back of the gas station - where there is a CAR WASH.

Long unused now.

And hanging inside carwash, by their arms, are two men.

CAPTIVES. Stripped to their waist. Bruised. Battered. Streaked in blood. Some fresh; some black, and crusted.

JESSIE stands a few metres away.

Pale, frozen by the sight.

The cameras hanging loose by her sides.

Just behind her is the armed GUARD that followed her.

LEE walks over to where JESSIE and the GUARD stand.

When the GUARD speaks, he feels wired. Drunk, or high.

GAS STATION GUARD 2
I told her. I don't mind her
looking.

LEE
... Who are they?

GAS STATION GUARD 2
Looters.

One of the CAPTIVES, barely conscious, murmurs:

CAPTIVE
I got kids.

GAS STATION GUARD 2
I actually know that guy. We were
in high school together. Never
talked to me much. More talkative
now.

Beat.

GAS STATION GUARD 2 (CONT'D)
We've been debating what to do for
two days now. Going round in
circles.

The GUARD suddenly look at JESSIE.

And smiles. Shows teeth.

GAS STATION GUARD 2 (CONT'D)
Tell you what. Why don't you put
us and them out of our misery.
(MORE)

GAS STATION GUARD 2 (CONT'D)
Make the call. I'll put rounds in
them right now. Or we'll beat them
up a little more, and chain them to
the front. Cut 'em loose after a
few days.

JESSIE is frozen.

GAS STATION GUARD 2 (CONT'D)
Flip a coin if you like.

LEE acts.

She lifts her camera.

LEE
Would you mind standing with them a
moment?

GAS STATION GUARD 2
Standing with them?

LEE
Yeah. I'd like to take your
picture.

Beat.

It feels long.

Then -

GAS STATION GUARD 2
... Okay. Just stand over there?

LEE
Yeah.

He walks to the captives.

Turns.

GAS STATION GUARD 2
Where do you want me?

LEE
Maybe in between the two?

GAS STATION GUARD 2
Gotcha.

CUT TO -

SILENCE THROUGH THE LENS.

The GUARD stands between the two men, holding his rifle.
 Two branches of the tree spreading out above him like wings.
 The two bloodied CAPTIVES hang either side.

CUT TO -

EXT. ROAD - DAY

- the SUV, driving fast.
 Strapped to the back are two gas canisters.

INT. CAR - DAY

JESSIE is shaking.

JESSIE
 I didn't take a photo. I didn't
 take a single photo.

No one says anything.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
 I didn't even remember I had
 cameras. Like I didn't even -

JESSIE'S panic is growing.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
 - Oh God. Oh my God. Why didn't I
 just tell him not to shoot them?

JOEL cuts in.

JOEL
 Jessie - they're probably going to
 kill them anyway.

JESSIE
 (agitated)
 How do you know?

LEE
 He doesn't know. But it's beside
 the point. Once you start asking
 yourself those questions, and you
 can't stop. So we don't ask. We
 record - so other people ask. You
 want to be a journalist? That's
 the job.

SAMMY glances at JESSIE. Sees the way she's shaking.

SAMMY
Hey. Lee.

LEE
What?

SAMMY
Back off.

LEE
What am I saying that's wrong?

SAMMY
I'm not saying it's wrong. She's just shook up.

JOEL
Lee doesn't understand shook up.

LEE
Woah. *I'm* not being protective of her? Jo - you're the idiot who let her in this car. What happened back there is *nothing* in comparison to what we're heading into.

LEE turns around to face JESSIE in the rear seat.

LEE (CONT'D)
You need to understand where we're going is not -

LEE breaks off when she sees JESSIE'S face.

And turns back around.

LEE (CONT'D)
Holy shit. She's crying. The back seat is both a kindergarten and an old people's home. How did this happen?

JOEL
Lee! What the fuck.

JESSIE
(cuts in)
Lee's right.

JESSIE is forcing control into herself.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
I won't make that mistake again.

Silence.

LEE glances back at JESSIE.

As if feeling a sudden moment of remorse. That she maybe she went too far.

JESSIE is staring out of the window.

LEE looks back.

EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY

The car is driving past a STRIP MALL.

It's deserted, and was clearly the location of a fierce battle.

The buildings are shot to bits.

Burned out vehicles - military and civilian - litter the parking lot.

As do corpses.

STRAY DOGS move through the wrecked area.

THE PRESIDENT (O.S.)
The terms of the so-called peace summit could only be rejected, *fully* rejected, by *all* right-thinking Americans.

INT. CAR - DAY

The car is listening to THE PRESIDENT on the radio.

The signal is patchy. Distorted.

THE PRESIDENT
To the Secessionists, I say only this: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. We stand ready to fulfil the promise of our forefathers. To the flag, to the nation, and to God.

LEE is still stewing.

Then - as the car rolls past an intersection - she sees something in the adjacent street.

A crashed APACHE HELICOPTER. On its side, in the middle of the carpark of a roadside strip mall.

LEE's gaze flicks to JESSIE, in the rearview mirror.

Then to JOEL.

She lowers the volume on the radio.

LEE
Stop here a minute.

JOEL
This feel like a good place for a toilet break?

LEE
Pull in.

JOEL stops the car.

LEE turns to JESSIE.

LEE (CONT'D)
Come with me.

JESSIE looks nervous.

LEE (CONT'D)
Just -

Beat.

LEE (CONT'D)
Come with me.

EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY

LEE and JESSIE walk to stand in front of the downed Apache.

It's been sat here for some time.

It's listing to one side - obviously landed hard. Riddled with bullet holes. There are impact strikes all over the front glass, though the glass is still unbroken. All its blades except one are shattered.

The sun is behind it.

LEE
Shoot it.

JESSIE
... Shoot the helicopter?

LEE
Yeah. It's going to make a good image.

JESSIE
... Okay.

JESSIE lifts one of her cameras.

Starts shooting frames.

LEE
FE2s. Don't see them around much.

JESSIE
They were my dad's cameras actually.

LEE looks at her.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Don't worry. He's not dead. He's sitting in his farm in Missouri, pretending none of this is happening.

LEE nods.

JESSIE lowers her camera.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Lee -

Beat.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry I jammed my way into your ride, okay? I know you're really angry about it. And I know you think I don't know shit. But -

LEE
- I'm not angry about that, Jessie. I don't care what you do or don't know.

JESSIE
Okay - but you are angry with me.

LEE exhales.

JESSIE waits.

LEE

There is no version of this that
isn't a mistake. I know because
I'm it. Jo and Sammy are it.

Beat.

JESSIE

It's my choice.

LEE sighs.

LEE

Right. And I'll remember that,
when you lose your shit, or get
blown up, or shot.

JESSIE nods.

Looks away from LEE.

Then back.

JESSIE

Would you photograph that moment?
If I got shot.

LEE

What do you think?

Silence.

CUT TO -

EXT. RAIL YARD - NIGHT

- a star-filled night.

The car is parked up in a rail yard, off the road.

Three quarters of a mile away, where the tracks curve into
the distance, a battle is being fought.

There are alternating crackles of automatic rifle fire, and
thumps of something heavier.

Tracer rounds are clearly visible.

They arc as they fly.

Sometimes they ricochet off whatever it is they are hitting, and spear crazily into the sky.

The sound of gunfire delays after each burst of streaking light.

Not much else can be seen.

A little distance from the car, LEE and SAMMY are sat on an abandoned sofa, watching the distant firefight.

LEE

Every time I survived a war-zone,
and got the photo, I thought I was
sending a warning home. Don't do
this. But here we are.

SAMMY

So it's existential.

LEE

What is?

SAMMY

What's eating you.

Beat.

LEE

Don't worry about me, Sammy.

Another stream of tracer fire. Then the delayed ripple of noise.

SAMMY

Am I allowed to say that I remember
you at her age?

LEE

(anticipating)
And I wasn't so different.

SAMMY

You weren't so different.

SAMMY glances at LEE.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

You think you're being hard on her.
And I think you're being hard on
yourself.

LEE

Okay, writer.

SAMMY

God damn it, Lee. Stop. I'm speaking truth. And for the record, sure, I do worry about that girl. And I worry about you too.

JOEL

What are you worrying about Lee for?

SAMMY looks round.

JOEL is approaching.

He has a bottle of vodka and is smoking a joint.

SAMMY

... Lee's lost her faith in the power of journalism. The state of the nation is QED.

JOEL

Oh. Well I can't answer to that.

JOEL takes a drag on the joint.

JOEL (CONT'D)

But I can tell you this gunfire is getting me extremely hard. Look at that shit light up the sky.

LEE

It's not our story.

JOEL

Yeah. But... you know. Bang bang.

JOEL takes a drag of the joint.

LEE

We're not going anywhere near there in the dark.

JOEL

But sun up.

Beat.

LEE

Sun up, if they're still at it, we'll take a look.

JOEL smiles.

JOEL

Cool.

He hands the joint to LEE.

Then heads back to the car.

SAMMY and LEE sit in silence.

EXT. ROAD SIDE/CAR - NIGHT

At the back of the car, JOEL pulls out a sleeping bag and a sleeping pad.

Then starts to lay it out alongside the vehicle.

JESSIE is sitting on the front passenger seat. She watches JOEL prepare his bedding.

He notices her watching. Winks at her.

JOEL

Action tomorrow.

JESSIE

... We're going down there?

JOEL

Oh yeah.

JESSIE catches her breath. Involuntary. Hit by a sudden rush of adrenaline.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Not you. You're going to hang back.

JESSIE

I don't want to hang back.

JOEL laughs.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

(firm)

I don't want to hang back.

JOEL smiles.

JOEL

You should see your face. Stomach doing turns, right? You won't get a minute's sleep tonight. My advice: don't expect to sleep.

(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)

That way, if you do, it's a nice surprise.

JESSIE

... Are you going to be able to sleep?

JOEL

I've got out of date Ativan. Can give you some, if you like. Got plenty.

JESSIE

No, it's okay.

JOEL

... Or I can stay up with you. Keep you company.

JESSIE

No, I don't want to be - a burden. Or whatever.

JOEL

Sure.

JOEL has finished laying out his bedding.

JOEL (CONT'D)

But seriously, if you do get freaked out, wake me up. It's not nice being scared alone.

JESSIE smiles. Sincere. Grateful.

JESSIE

Thanks, Jo.

JOEL smiles back.

CUT BACK -

- to LEE.

Now alone on the sofa.

Still watching the tracer fire.

CUT TO -

EXT. COMMERCIAL AREA - DAY

- a MILITIA SOLDIER.

He's crouched behind the pillar of a low building, in the gap between two nondescript office buildings.

The pillar is large enough to give him cover - but only just.

He cowers as rounds hit the pillar and the wall behind him.

SOLDIER

I can't - I can't fucking move -
I'm going to get fucking hit -

The noise of the gunfire and impacts is extremely loud. Extremely jarring.

The SOLDIER starts screaming in alarm.

A few metres away, more MILITIA soldiers are stacked up by the corner of the building.

CROUCHED NEAR THEM -

- we find LEE, JOEL, and JESSIE.

LEE is crouched. Photographing.

She's wearing a white helmet and a blue ballistic vest. The vest has PRESS written in prominent white letters.

Behind her, flat against the wall, further away from the corner -

- JOEL and JESSIE. Also in helmets and vests.

JOEL'S expression is strange. His eyes are wide and wild. There's a rictus on his jaw. It almost looks like he's smiling.

JESSIE is trying to move forward. Trying to edge closer to LEE.

ONE OF THE MILITIA -

- a CORPORAL, yells at the SOLDIER under fire.

CORPORAL

Stay small, Mike! Don't fucking
move! We're going to pop smoke!
Don't move!

The CORPORAL FIRES around the corner, at position from which MIKE is pinned -

- then turns to the men behind him.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 Jay - prep a smoke, get ready to
 move. Joe - take a fireteam and
 flank.

SOLDIER JOE looks back at him blankly. Frozen by the noise
 and chaos.

The CORPORAL reaches out and grabs JOE by the shoulder strap
 of his back pack. Speaks to penetrate his confusion.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 Go *around* the building and *lay* a
base of fire.

SOLDIER JOE moves off, followed by two of the squad.

AROUND THE CORNER -

- SOLDIER MIKE screams out as his backpack is hit, spinning
 him around.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 Are you hit? Mike?

SOLDIER MIKE keeps screaming.

The CORPORAL fires again around the corner.

When he pulls back, SOLDIER JAY has the SMOKE GRENADE ready
 to throw.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 Do it.

SOLDIER JAY tosses the SMOKE GRENADE.

The CORPORAL puts a hand on SOLDIER JAY'S back.

Thick white smoke starts floating past their position.

As the smoke starts to push out -

- the CORPORAL pushes SOLDIER JAY.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 GO.

SOLDIER JAY moves to out of cover to the nearest pillar, and
 starts putting down covering fire.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 COME TO ME, MIKE! FUCKING MOVE!
 NOW - NOW - NOW -

MIKE moves.

CUT TO -

- THROUGH LEE'S LENS.

As SOLDIER MIKE starts sprinting.

On the right of the frame, the CORPORAL and SOLDIER W are huddled up against the corner of the building.

Smoke drifting past them.

SOLDIER MIKE trying to cover the short distance to safety.

Then a round hits his pack.

It makes him trip.

He falls forward on to his hands and knees.

He looks up - seeming to look straight down the lens of LEE'S camera.

This moment is captured.

CUT TO -

- SOLDIER MIKE getting hit.

He's only a metre from the corner of the building.

But suddenly he just drops.

There's no spray of blood, or impact jerk. He just loses all motor power and flops face down.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)

Mike's hit! I'm grabbing him - you
got me -

The SOLDIER JAY keeps firing.

As the COROPORAL moves around the corner to grab SOLDIER MIKE

-

- SOLDIER W takes the CORPORAL'S position on the corner.

The CORPORAL grabs SOLDIER MIKE'S arm -

- and drags him the last metre, behind the cover of the corner.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
Collapse, collapse - bump to me -

SOLDIER JAY moves back to cover, firing as he moves, and bumps SOLDIER W off the corner position.

SOLDIER JAY swaps with SOLDIER W - JAY is moving while firing, bumps W out of the way

- as the CORPORAL pulls MIKE onto his back, and opens his flak jacket.

As he does so, blood jets upwards from a wound in MIKE'S torso.

The CORPORAL is yelling - some soldiers behind are frozen - and MIKE is bleeding out.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
He's got an abdominal - there's an exit wound - I need a compression bandage - apply pressure here -

LEE lowers her camera.

Sees JESSIE.

Crouched near the small group attempting to save SOLDIER MIKE.

Photographing.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
He's fucking gone -

CUT TO -

INT. OFFICE BUILDING/STAIRWELL - DAY

- sudden quiet.

Four MILITIA SOLDIERS, including the CORPORAL, still smeared in MIKE'S blood, are moving up the stairwell of the office building.

From deeper in the building, a high whimpering noise can be heard.

Someone inside is wounded.

At the bottom of the stairwell, more SOLDIERS wait.

The three journalists are among them.

Nobody talks.

The first four SOLDIERS all have their guns raised. Covering the stairwell ahead and above.

They have reached the top landing.

There's a doorway ahead. No door on the hinges.

CUT TO -

- LEE, edging forwards, up the first couple of stairs.

A SOLDIER catches her arm.

She looks round.

He shakes his head. Mouths: No.

CUT TO -

The CORPORAL holds out a hand, motioning.

One of the SOLDIERS hands him a grenade. The other SOLDIERS cover the landing.

The CORPORAL preps the grenade, then carefully tosses it through the doorway.

Underarm.

The grenade bounces into the room.

There's the sound of it hitting something. Furniture maybe. An office desk.

There's a pause, as all the SOLDIERS pull back slightly.

Two seconds. Feels like a long time.

Then a sudden detonation.

It makes everybody instinctively hunch.

In that moment -

- LEE again starts edging up the stairs.

This time, no one stops her.

ON THE LANDING -

- through the doorway, the grenade has set fire to something inside the office. There's flame somewhere. There's smoke.

The SOLDIERS on the landing do nothing.

Just wait.

Strange beats pass.

The noise from inside. The SOLDIERS waiting in silence. Guns still trained on the doorway. LEE edging closer.

CUT TO -

SILENCE THROUGH THE LENS.

Now halfway up the stairs, looking up at the CORPORAL and the SOLDIERS on the landing.

This is captured.

CUT TO -

- the CORPORAL and his men moving into the room where the grenade was thrown.

LEE follows.

Inside, we see a WOUNDED SOLDIER propped against the back wall, with a long smear of blood where he has dragged himself along the floor.

As the MILITIA SOLDIERS enter, the WOUNDED SOLDIER lifts a hand -

- then is shot.

EXT. COMMERCIAL AREA - DAY

The office building is on fire.

Thick black smoke pours into the sky.

On road outside, JOEL and SAMMY are interviewing the CORPORAL. JOEL uses a digital recording device. SAMMY writes in a notepad.

Sat where the firefight took place, there are two HOODED PRISONERS.

JESSIE stands by the pillar where SOLDIER MIKE was shot: the area that was once entirely dangerous, and now is safe.

A few feet away, SOLDIER MIKE'S body lies under tarpaulin. One hand protruding, curled into a claw.

LEE and SAMMY do the same.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Okay. You staying the night?

JOEL
Just one.

The SOLDIER nods.

SOLDIER
Park where you can. There's a
canteen where you can eat. No
tents available.

JOEL
Thank you, ma'am.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP/CANTEEN - SUNSET

JOEL and SAMMY sit outside an open canteen tent, eating off paper plates.

In the stadium stands above them, a gang of kids play tag.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - SUNSET

In the stands on the opposite side of the stadium, JESSIE is seated.

Hanging off the handrail beside her, a developed roll of negatives is drying.

In her hands, she holds a compact Paterson developer tank - about the size of a coffee thermos.

LEE approaches, carrying food on a paper plate. Rice, and some kind of meat and vegetables in gravy.

LEE
Brought you something.

JESSIE
Thanks.

LEE
Don't forget to eat.

JESSIE
I'm starving. I'll grab it as soon
as I'm done with this.

LEE puts the plate down. Then sits beside JESSIE.

LEE
Developing negs on the road.

JESSIE
Uh-huh. Got myself a pretty neat travel kit.

LEE
I'm impressed.

JESSIE
Want to know the secret of getting the developer just right?

JESSIE looks at LEE. Smiles.

Then unbuttons her shirt. And pulls out a white plastic bottle of liquid that was pressed against her bare chest.

LEE sees a curve of breast.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Body temperature.

JESSIE pulls her shirt closed.

LEE
... Smart.

JESSIE
Thank you!

JESSIE uncaps the bottle, and starts pouring it carefully into the tank.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
So - how about you tell me the story of how you became a photojournalist?

LEE
You don't know? I thought I was one of your heroes.

JESSIE laughs.

JESSIE
Yeah. I do. When you were at college, and took the mother fucking *legendary* photo of the ANTIFA massacre. Then became the youngest ever Magnum photographer.

LEE

I guess that would be my Wikipedia page.

JESSIE

But what's it missing out?

LEE

... I don't know. A lot.

JESSIE sloshes the liquid around. Then puts the tank beside her.

JESSIE

Well, that's got to sit in there for ten minutes. So you may as well expand a little. What about your folks?

LEE

Actually they're on a farm too. Except Colorado. Also pretending this isn't happening.

JESSIE

No shit.

Beat.

JESSIE over looks at the roll of negs, hanging from the hand rail.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Hey. These are dry. Shall we check them out?

LEE

Sure.

JESSIE pulls the strip down.

Then pulls a little light-box from her pack, which has a clip for her cell phone.

JESSIE

Still need a phone, even though you can't get a signal.

JESSIE clips on her phone. Then hunches over, and starts feeding the negs through the little light-box. Using the phone-camera to see the image.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Oh my God. I don't want you to see these. They're all terrible. They're not even in focus...

LEE

You were in combat.

JESSIE

And the exposures are all wrong...

LEE

Keep looking. I always figure the strike rate for keepers is about thirty to one.

JESSIE suddenly stops feeding the negs.

LEE (CONT'D)

You found it, huh.

Silence.

Then JESSIE passes the light-box to LEE.

LEE looks at the image on the phone screen.

It's a beautiful shot. Contrasty black and white, perfectly framed, focused, and exposed - but horrific.

It's the CORPORAL attempting save SOLDIER MIKE. The fast shutter speed freezes the blood jet from the neck. Black suspended droplets hang in space like planets. The CORPORAL'S face is desperate.

Around them, we can see the other SOLDIERS helplessly watching.

A silent beat.

LEE (CONT'D)

It's a great photo, Jessie.

LEE looks round at JESSIE.

JESSIE is staring straight ahead.

No longer proud or pleased with the photo. Lost in something else. Overwhelmed. The shock of it. Sickened. Scared.

LEE hesitates.

Then puts a hand on JESSIE'S shoulder.

LEE (CONT'D)

I know.

Silence.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - NIGHT

Night the REFUGEE CAMP.

Lights glowing in the tents. A few kids still playing in the stands.

EXT. CAR - DAY

The SUV, driving through the landscape.

We are seeing more and more evidence of war.

Burned-out vehicles and buildings.

A family of refugees, pushing their worldly possessions in a supermarket shopping cart.

Bodies, hung from overpass bridges.

Until -

EXT. TOWN/STREET - DAY

- SUDDENLY, and STRANGELY, the war-torn landscape gives way to a total contrast.

The SUV is rolling down a street in a small town, which seems to be completely untouched by any sign of conflict. As if it is unaware of the war.

Nothing is blown up or burned out. No star-shaped shell markings. No bullet holes.

A water sprinkler is running in a front garden.

A couple of young girls are walking with their mother.

A man is carrying bags of groceries.

INT. CAR - DAY

The journalists gaze out of the windows of the SUV.

JOEL
 ... Did we just drive through a
 time portal?

JESSIE
 It's the Twilight Zone.

EXT. TOWN/HIGH STREET - DAY

JOEL pulls up the car on the high street, outside a clothes store.

The four journalists each get out of the SUV.

Look around.

An elderly woman walks past. Walking a small dog.

The dog yaps at JESSIE as it passes them.

INT. CLOTHES STORE - DAY

LEE, JESSIE and JOEL enter the clothes store.

A SHOP ASSISTANT is reading a book behind the counter.

SHOP ASSISTANT
 Hey there. Welcome. Feel free to
 look around.

LEE
 ... Appreciate it.

Beat.

JOEL
 Hey, out of interest, are you guys
 aware there's a... pretty huge
 civil war going on, across all
 America?

The SHOP ASSISTANT smiles.

SHOP ASSISTANT
 Oh sure. But we just try to stay
 out.

JOEL
 ... Stay out.

SHOP ASSISTANT

From what you see in the news,
seems like it's for the best.

Beat.

SHOP ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Well, let me know if you want to
try anything on. Men's on the
left, women's on the right.

LEE clearly has zero intention of that.

But JESSIE does. She pulls out a summer dress from the rack.

She holds it up to herself, checking her reflection in the
mirror.

Then -

- turns to LEE.

JESSIE

Lee. You got to put this on.

She holds it out to LEE.

LEE doesn't take it.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

What - you're so war-torn you can't
try on a dress?

CUT TO -

LEE standing in the summer dress.

Looking at herself in the mirror.

It's a strange transformation.

LEE is actually lost in it for a moment. It's like seeing
someone she used to know. Or hardly knew.

Then she notices JESSIE watching. Half smiling.

LEE laughs. A little embarrassed.

LEE

Jesus. When you don't see yourself
in a mirror for a few days.

JESSIE

Oh my God. Shut the fuck up.

JESSIE lifts her camera.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Turn around. I want to take your
photo.

LEE
No, come on.

JESSIE
Yes!

A beat.

Then LEE turns.

Waits.

LEE
... Are you going to take the
picture?

JESSIE
You told me not to rush.

LEE
Okay but there's a sweet spot. And
you're missing it.

JESSIE
I don't want to miss your sweet
spot.

LEE is slightly taken aback. Was that an actual flirt.

At that moment - the snap of the shutter. JESSIE has taken
the photo.

LEE
What? No - that was the wrong
moment.

JESSIE
Okay. One more.

JESSIE lifts the camera again.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Lee?

LEE
Yes.

JESSIE
You're pretty when you smile.

Involuntarily, LEE smiles.

Click.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
There ya go.

JOEL
Hey!

JESSIE and LEE look round.

JOEL'S found a hat. Has put it on. Rakish angle.

JOEL (CONT'D)
How about this?

JESSIE makes him wait a beat. Before teasing.

JESSIE
(flat)
Yeah. Nice.

JOEL
... You're not going to take a
picture?

JESSIE
Right. You know what, though? I'm
getting a little low on film.

LEE laughs.

JOEL
You're mean. I'm out.

He dumps the hat and exits.

JESSIE pulls out another dress.

JESSIE
Okay. I'm trying this one on.

EXT. TOWN/HIGH STREET - DAY

LEE exits the shop.

SAMMY is leaning against the SUV.

SAMMY
You actually buy something?

LEE
She did. Paying right now.

SAMMY smiles.

LEE (CONT'D)
It's so weird. This place is like
everything I'd forgotten.

SAMMY
Funny. I was thinking it felt like
everything I remembered.

SAMMY watches LEE.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
Look at the tops of the buildings.
Be subtle.

LEE turns. Looks up. As if checking the weather.

Sees - on the flat roofs of the high street building -
- two men. Glimpses of their heads and shoulders. Blacks
sticks of rifle barrel.

Further down the high street, two more.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
Wouldn't have suited us anyway,
Lee. We'd have got bored.

INT. CAR - DAY

JOEL is driving.

SAMMY is in the front seat.

LEE is in the back with JESSIE.

LEE has her laptop open, balanced on her thighs, and is
editing photos.

On the radio, THE PRESIDENT is broadcasting.

THE PRESIDENT (O.S.)
I remain ready to accept the full,
immediate, and unconditional
surrender of the Secessionist
forces.

(MORE)

THE PRESIDENT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

To liberate the people of the
subjugated states, and start
rebuilding our great nation: the
home of the free, and land of the -

SAMMY switches the radio off.

SAMMY

Enough of this shit. The words
might as well be random.

JOEL

What do you think he'll say if I do
get a mike in front of him?

SAMMY shrugs.

SAMMY

Not much. The ones that get taken -
Gaddafi, Mussolini, Ceausescu -
they're always lesser men than you
think.

SAMMY glances at JOEL.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

At the end, he'll let you down, Jo.

LEE

Just as long as he isn't dead
before I get there.

JOEL frowns.

JOEL

... Hold up.

Then suddenly -

- he is braking. Slowing the vehicle fast.

The laptop nearly slides off LEE'S lap.

CUT TO -

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The flat landscape.

The one road.

The SUV is stopped on it.

LEE scans the landscape.

Aside from the distant barn, it's featureless.

LEE
Not aside from the body.

SAMMY
There was a turn off three or four miles back. Maybe we should turn around. Find another route.

JOEL
You can't see *anything*? No movement at all? No shapes.

LEE
No.

Beat.

JOEL
Okay. I'm going to drive forward a little.

LEE
Slow.

JOEL
Yeah.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Over the dead SOLDIER'S body -
- we watch the SUV crawl closer.

It gets within twenty feet.

Then stops again.

INT. CAR - DAY

JOEL looks at LEE.

JOEL
Shall we keep going -

SPOTTER
You don't want to be there.

A beat later -

- an impact noise.

The front windscreen is has been hit. And the pillar by JOEL'S window is impacted. A hole punched right through the metal.

A bullet has flown right past them.

A short, shocked beat. Then -

JOEL

Fuck.

- JOEL floors the accelerator.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The SUV jolts forwards -

- bumps straight over the body of the dead SOLDIER -

- and swerves towards the grass verge.

The only cover for two hundred yards in any direction.

Then it stops. Hard.

INT. CAR - DAY

JOEL and LEE exit the vehicle - fast.

JESSIE grabs her camera and pops her door.

SAMMY

Where you going?

JESSIE

... With them.

SAMMY

Damn, girl. Don't be such a hotshot.

Beat.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Just keep your head down.

JESSIE

No shit.

JESSIE slips out.

And SAMMY lies himself flat on the seat.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/GRASS VERGE - DAY

JOEL edges along the side of the vehicle.

And sees -

- a few feet away from them, two soldiers, uniformed, lying prone. A SNIPER and a SPOTTER.

Their rifle is trained at a house, across the fields.

SPOTTER
Don't try driving on. This guy's a
good shot.

JOEL crawls up the verge towards the SNIPER and the SPOTTER.

JESSIE and LEE stay in the cover of the SUV.

The SPOTTER glances at them briefly.

Then goes back to his monocular.

JOEL
... What's going on?

SPOTTER
Someone in that house. They're
stuck. We're stuck.

The man's voice is flat. Non adrenalinised. Uninflected.

The SNIPER doesn't seem to be aware of their presence.

Purely concentrating on the view through his scope.

JOEL
... Who do you think they are?

SPOTTER
No idea.

A sharp, snatched buzz sound.

Another round has flow by. Maybe a few feet away.

A beat later, a distant rifle shot.

The SNIPER flicks a bead of sweat off his head.

JOEL pulls out his press pass necklace.

JOEL
... We're press.

SPOTTER
Cool. Now I understand why it's
written on the side of your
vehicle.

JOEL
Are you WF? Who's giving you
orders?

SPOTTER
Nobody's giving us orders, man.
Someone's trying to kill us. We're
trying to kill them.

JOEL
You don't know what side they're
fighting for?

The SPOTTER keeps gazing through his monocular.

SPOTTER
Oh, I get it. You're retarded.
You don't understand a word I say.

He dips his monocular.

Turns to JESSIE.

SPOTTER (CONT'D)
Yo. What's over there in that
house?

JESSIE
... Someone shooting.

SPOTTER
(to Joel)
Complicated?

SNIPER
(quiet, even)
Yo. Guys. Shut the fuck up.

Everyone immediately falls quiet.

Silence.

Extends.

Wind noise.

Grasses moving gently.

Breathing.

Where LEE lies, a beetle is climbing over a blade of grass.
Right in front of her face.

She watches it. Gazes at the bright blue-green back.

Then suddenly -

- the SNIPER fires.

Everyone except the SNIPER and the SPOTTER flinch at the noise.

AT THIS MOMENT -

- JESSIE takes a photo.

Then the SNIPER relaxes his grip on his rifle.

 SNIPER (CONT'D)
 I got good news.

CUT TO -

EXT. SKY - DAY

- the SUN.

In a blue sky.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The SUV drives down a road in open countryside.

Ahead is forest.

INT. CAR - DAY

Inside the car, positions have switched.

JOEL is in the front passenger seat, asleep.

LEE is driving.

JESSIE is half dozing. Her head keeps dropping.

SAMMY nudges her.

JOEL

Hey. Why don't you put your head down there. Take it from an old hand - you never know what's coming around the next corner.

JESSIE

All right.

JESSIE curls up on the back seat.

Closes her eyes.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The car enters forest.

REVEAL -

- some distance back from the SUV, there is one other vehicle.

Travelling in the same direction.

INT. CAR - DAY

JESSIE is asleep.

JOEL is asleep.

LEE keeps checking her rearview mirror.

LEE

Sammy.

SAMMY immediately catches LEE'S tone.

SAMMY

What?

LEE

We've got a car coming up on us pretty fast.

SAMMY checks through the rear window.

See the vehicle through the rear window.

The road through the forest is snaking -

- but as the road straightens, we see the following white car rounding the corner behind.

It's halved the distance since we first saw it, and is closing quickly.

SAMMY
... What do you think?

LEE
I don't know.

SAMMY
Maybe they're just in a hurry.

LEE
Oh, they're in a hurry. He smoked his tyres on the last corner.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The vehicle keeps closing on the SUV.

INT. CAR - DAY

SAMMY
Okay. Well, we're not outrunning anyone in this thing. So slow down a little, Lee. Let them pass.

LEE
Roger that.

SAMMY
Don't look out at them. We just let them roll by.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

The vehicle is now almost on their bumper.

Then it pulls out. Starts to overtake.

But as it draws alongside, it holds speed.

With them.

Then starts honking its horn.

INT. CAR - DAY

The noise wakes JOEL and JESSIE.

SAMMY

Oh fuck. Here we go.

But LEE - who *has* looked out at them - suddenly bursts out laughing.

Reveal -

- in the car alongside is TONY - the Chinese journalist from New York.

He's in the passenger seat, with the window down. Waving and grinning.

The driver is BOHAI.

EXT. CARS/SIDE BY SIDE - DAY

JOEL winds down his window. TONY and JOEL shout at each other over the wind noise.

JOEL

Holy shit, Tony! What the fuck?

TONY

How you doing, guys?

JOEL

You just scared the shit out of us!
Coming up like that!

TONY

Good! That was the idea!

JOEL

What are you doing here?

TONY

I don't know, Jo! What are you
doing here?

JOEL laughs.

JOEL

Fuck you!

INT. CAR - DAY

JOEL turns to SAMMY.

JOEL

Can you believe these guys?

SAMMY
Yeah, I can.

JOEL
Small world.

SAMMY
Small world my ass. They were following us. Did you tell them where you were heading, back in New York?

JOEL
Fuck no!

LEE looks of her window -

EXT. CARS/SIDE BY SIDE - DAY

- and shouts to TONY.

LEE
Tony! Did Jo tell you where we were going, back in New York?

TONY
He was pretty drunk, Lee. When he was hitting on that girl you got in the back seat.

INT. CAR - DAY

SAMMY shakes his head.

LEE
You're a dick.

JOEL
Oh man. I must have been so wasted.

TONY shouts over to them.

TONY
Hey!

LEE
(shouts back)
What?

EXT. CARS/SIDE BY SIDE - DAY

TONY shouts.

TONY
I'm done with Bohai! He's lousy
company, and he drives like a
maniac!

BOHAI
(in Mandarin)
What did you just say?

TONY
(in Mandarin)
You drive like a grandmother.

TONY starts climbing out of the passenger window.

TONY (CONT'D)
I'm coming over to your car.

INT. CAR - DAY

JOEL looks over. Sees TONY half out of his window.

JESSIE
What the *fuck*?

TONY
Keep the car steady!

LEE
Are you crazy, Tony!

TONY
Just keep the car steady, Lee!

TONY'S hand reaches out to grab the window frame of the back seat.

EXT. CARS/SIDE BY SIDE - DAY

TONY shouts to BOHAI.

TONY
(in Mandarin)
Closer!

BOHAI steers, closing the gap.

TONY lunges forwards through the open window.

INT. CAR - DAY

JESSIE tries to make herself small, as TONY clammers over her, laughing hysterically.

JESSIE
(laughing)
That's sick! That's so sick!

JOEL
You crazy bastard, Tony!

TONY half-falls into the footwell.

JESSIE
I'm doing it!

LEE
What?

JESSIE
I gotta do it.

The next moment, JESSIE is climbing out of the rear passenger window.

JOEL
Jesus! Lee -

LEE
Yeah - I see!

JOEL
Don't fucking turn the wheel!

LEE
There's a *corner* coming up!

But the next moment, JESSIE has pulled herself through.

Her feet slips out the window, and she's gone.

EXT. CARS/SIDE BY SIDE - DAY

JESSIE pops up in the back of BOHAI'S car, grinning and laughing.

BOHAI shouts across.

BOHAI
My new passenger - much better!
Much better!

TONY
Fuck you!

BOHAI
Bye bye, Tony! Bye Bye! See you
in Washington!

Then BOHAI floors it.

INT. CAR - DAY

BOHAI'S car accelerates fact away from the SUV.
Disappearing almost immediately around the next corner.
TONY has sat himself up in the back seat.

TONY
Told you he drives like a maniac.

LEE accelerates -

- but the SUV won't take it.

It's not just slower than the other - it's heavier. On the
next corner, it understeers, pulling out to the outside.

SAMMY
What the fuck! Slow down!

LEE eases up.

And when they come out of the corner -

- BOHAI'S car is nowhere to be seen.

TONY is still laughing.

But LEE is not.

All the humour is draining out of her.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

The SUV turns another corner.

The road ahead is still empty.

INT. CAR - DAY

JOEL frowns.

JOEL
Where did they go?

SAMMY
(to Lee)
This feel funny?

LEE
Like what kind?

SAMMY
I don't know. Not right.

LEE
I agree. I don't like this at all.
(to Tony)
Where'd your guy go, Tony?

TONY
He's just fucking around, that's
all.

LEE
I don't want him fucking around. I
want Jessie back in this car.

TONY
Relax, Lee. He's just showing how
fast he can drive. The girl is
fine.

LEE
(suddenly snaps)
How the fuck do you know if she's
fine? Can you see her?

TONY is shocked.

TONY
Hey - cool it! I'm just saying.
She's - fine.

At that moment -

- the thick trees of the forest break.

The car is cresting the top of a hill, from which the road
winds down.

And as it crests -

- it reveals BOHAI'S CAR, a little distance ahead.

It's pulled up on the side of the road, on the lawn in front of a farm house.

Beyond the farmhouse is a BARN.

LEE brakes.

The car stops.

They stare at the sight of the abandoned car for a beat.

SAMMY
... Shit.

EXT. BARN - DAY

LEE, JOEL, TONY and SAMMY have moved up to the side of the BARN.

Around the back of the BARN, two hundred metres away, there is a construction site, of sorts.

CUT TO -

- LEE. Mounting a 24-240mm zoom on to her camera.

CUT TO -

EXT. MASS GRAVE - DAY

- THE VIEW THROUGH THE ZOOM LENS.

Off the road, a digger has excavated a large trench in the earth.

The digger is being operated by a SOLDIER.

Inside the trench, there are stacked bodies. Could be fifty. Could be more.

A dump truck is backed up to the trench - and the back is lifting.

Bodies are sliding into the pit.

The lens REFRAMES -

- and finds two more SOLDIERS, standing by the side of the trench.

BOHAI and JESSIE are standing in front of them, arms raised.

EXT. BARN - DAY

LEE lowers the lens.

She looks ashen.

Beat.

LEE

We need to go down there. Now.

SAMMY

(flat)

Lee. If we go down there, they're going to kill us.

JOEL

What? Sammy, no. Those aren't government forces. Not out here. We're cool. We got our press passes.

LEE

Jessie doesn't.

JOEL

But we do. We're fine. Let's go.

JOEL starts to rise.

But SAMMY catches his arm.

SAMMY

You're not listening to me. Those people do not want to have been seen doing what they're doing.

LEE lifts her camera again.

THROUGH THE ZOOM LENS -

- she can see that JESSIE and BOHAI have been put into a kneeling position, with their hands on their heads.

The two SOLDIERS are apparently in discussion.

JOEL

Tell us, Lee.

LEE

They've got them both kneeling. They're talking.

JOEL
Kneeling is not good.

TONY
They're probably just giving them a scare. They're not going to shoot anyone.

SAMMY
They killed all the people in that fucking ditch. That could be a whole town. But they'll stop now?

TONY
Who knows where those bodies are from?

SAMMY
Are the bodies in uniform?

LEE
No. They aren't.

LEE lowers the camera again.

Rises.

LEE (CONT'D)
I've got to go.

JOEL
I'm coming with you.

TONY
Me too.

SAMMY
Jesus. I'm telling you, every instinct in me says - this is death. Okay? Death.

LEE turns to SAMMY.

LEE
You stay. You *stay*. Because you're too old. And you can't run.

She's not being cruel. She's being hard.

A beat between SAMMY and LEE.

SAMMY
Oh fuck. Fuck this.

LEE starts walking.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - DAY

LEE, JOEL, and TONY walk in a line, side by side, down towards the mass grave.

As they walk, they are spotted by the two SOLDIERS. Who turn to watch them approach.

LEE
(quiet)
Who's doing the talking?

JOEL
(quiet)
Me.

LEE
(quiet)
Okay.

As they near the SOLDIERS, JOEL lifts his hand.

Puts a big smile on his face.

JOEL
Hey guys. What's happening?

JESSIE and BOHAI turn their heads.

JESSIE looks at straight at LEE. She looks terrified.

Neither of the SOLDIERS reply to JOEL'S question.

Just silently watch the group of journalists complete the remainder of the distance.

Once the journalists reach the SOLDIERS, JOEL tries again.

JOEL (CONT'D)
So. Looks like we've got some kind
of misunderstanding here.

One of the SOLDIERS steps forwards.

SOLDIER
Yeah?

JOEL
Yes, sir. Those two guys there,
they're my colleagues.

SOLDIER
What kind of colleagues.

JOEL
Journalists, sir.

JOEL reaches into his shirt. Pulls out his PRESS ID necklace.

JOEL (CONT'D)
We're actually just passing through.

The SOLDIER just stares at JOEL.

His face is dead. Not angry. Not wired.

But it's the deadness that makes him feel so dangerous.

SOLDIER
Passing through to where?

JOEL
Charlottesville.

SOLDIER
What's in Charlottesville?

JOEL smiles again.

JOEL
Good hiking, I hear.

Silence.

JOEL'S smile drops. He keeps trying force the casualness. The no-need for concern.

But he can feel it failing as he speaks. They all can.

JOEL (CONT'D)
We're actually covering the ah - the University Campus there? Which has apparently started a program to reopen the school. It's a real feel-good story. And, ah - we all need that, right?

Silence.

Then the SOLDIER brings his gun round to point at BOHAI.

SOLDIER
This guy here is your colleague.

JOEL
Yes, sir. He is.

SOLDIER
This guy.

JOEL
Yes, sir.

Almost instantly, the SOLDIER pulls the trigger.

Shoots BOHAI in the head.

He flops down.

JESSIE involuntarily screams.

SOLDIER
That guy.

A beat of pure shock.

The strange acceleration of a moment in time, from one space,
to a completely different space.

JOEL starts to speak again.

His instinct is still to try to sound somehow reasonable.
Calm. But he's not able to make a sentence.

JOEL
Okay. So. Okay - please. Just -
please -

SOLDIER
'Just please'. Just what.

JOEL
Sir, we're -

SOLDIER
- Sir, yes?

JOEL
- American journalists.

SOLDIER
You said that already.

JOEL
We work for Reuters.

SOLDIER
Reuters doesn't sound American.

JOEL

It's -

JOEL doesn't know what to say.

He glances down. Sees a huge pool of blood spreading from BOHAI'S head. Pushing into the dust.

JOEL (CONT'D)

- It's a news agency.

SOLDIER

I know what Reuters is.

JOEL

Sir - I'm just saying we're American.

SOLDIER

Okay. And which bit of American are you? Central American? South American?

Beat.

JOEL

... Florida.

SOLDIER

Florida. Central.

JESSIE is hyperventilating.

The SOLDIER turns his attention to her.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

And where are you from?

JESSIE can hardly speak, she's so scared.

LEE

(quiet, firm)
Answer him, Jessie.

JESSIE

Missouri.

The SOLDIER nods.

SOLDIER

Missouri. Okay. Now that is American. Hundred percent.

He turns to LEE.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
You?

Beat.

LEE
Colorado.

SOLDIER
Missouri and Colorado. Now we're
talking.

He turns to TONY.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
You?

TONY swallows.

Says nothing.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
What? You don't speak? Are you
mute?

Silence.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Can't speak English?

Silence.

The SOLDIER lifts his gun.

Points it at TONY'S chest.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
You'd better speak English.

TONY catches his breath. Swallows again.

Then speaks. Shaking.

TONY
I'm from Hong Kong.

SOLDIER
Oh. China.

Beat.

Then the SOLDIER repeats the word.

Kind of spits it out.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

China.

Then without a further hesitation, shoots into TONY'S chest.

JESSIE screams again.

TONY falls back. Gurgles. Mouth filling with blood. His arms flap.

LEE

FUCK -

JOEL

(shouts)

SIR - NO! PLEASE! NO! DO NOT!

SOLDIER

(shouts back)

DO NOT? DO NOT? IS THAT A FUCKING ORDER?

He lifts his gun and points it at JOEL.

JESSIE keeps screaming.

Loud. Helpless. Uncontrolled.

JOEL

PLEASE DON'T -

The combined noise is so loud -

- that no one hears the noise of a car engine.

Until it's too nearly on them.

And at that moment, everyone turns -

- to see SAMMY driving the SUV. Fast. From the side. Right at them.

SOLDIER

What the fuck -

Too late.

The SUV ploughs straight into the SOLDIER. And the other, beside him.

It misses JESSIE, LEE and JOEL by a couple of feet.

The two SOLDIERS are knocked sideways.

One of them impacts JESSIE -
- and knocks her sideways INTO the MASS GRAVE.

The SUV slams on the brakes.

Skids to halt.

LEE turns to look for JESSIE -

- and she is gone.

The space where she knelt is empty.

CUT TO -

- JESSIE.

In bodies of the MASS GRAVE.

Stunned.

Then -

- crawling over the bodies, to the edge of the pit.

CUT TO -

- JESSIE appearing over the lip. Trying to pull herself up.

Then -

- being DRAGGED UPWARDS by JOEL.

SAMMY

(screams)

GET IN - GET IN!

LEE, JESSIE, and JOEL scramble for the SUV.

As they get through the doors -

- the SOLDIER in the digger is jumping out of the cabin.

As the SUV accelerates away, skidding on to the road -

- the SOLDIER lifts his rifle.

Aims at the departing vehicle, as it passes almost parallel to him.

Fifty metres distant.

The SOLDIER fires.

The SUV doesn't stop. Vanishes into the tree line.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The car drives fast through forest.

JESSIE is throwing up in the back seat.

LEE is beside JESSIE, clutching the seat in front. As if trying to anchor herself.

JOEL is hyperventilating.

And SAMMY is looking dazed.

No one says anything.

The only noise is the sound of the car engine, and JESSIE retching.

Then -

SAMMY speaks.

SAMMY
We've got to stop.

JOEL
... What are you talking about?

SAMMY
I can't drive.

LEE is staring across at SAMMY.

LEE
Jo -

JOEL
We *can't* stop. You've got to fucking drive.

SAMMY
I can't.

LEE
JO! He's been *hit!* He's bleeding!

JOEL looks down. Sees SAMMY'S waist is completely soaked with blood.

JOEL
Oh *fuck.*

SAMMY'S expression - he's getting woozy. Fast.

JOEL (CONT'D)

No, no, no -

SAMMY

(slurs)

Got to stop -

SAMMY puts the brakes on.

Stops the car.

Opens the door.

Tries to get out.

Almost immediately collapses.

LEE gets out to help him -

- as JOEL clammers into the driver seat.

LEE helps the bigger, heavier, older man into the back seat.

SAMMY collapses sideways as he sits.

Lee gets into the front seat.

LEE

Go!

JOEL accelerates.

CUT TO -

- JESSIE.

Wide-eyed. Lost in shock and madness of it all.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

The car drives.

Winds along the twisting road.

Gradually, as it drives -

- something starts to be seen through the forest trees.

An orange glow.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

SAMMY - drifting close to the edge of consciousness - lifts his eyes.

To look out the window.

Sees the orange glow.

SAMMY
(quiet)
... A forest fire.

Beat.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
(quiet)
How fucking strange...

No one seems to hear.

JOEL just keeps driving.

Gaze fixed on the road ahead.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

The car drives fast.

Burning trees either side of the road.

Behind the vehicle, sparks are in the slipstream. They whirl into patterns.

We let the car pull away.

And we stay on the empty road, as the fire builds.

EXT. RIVANNA RIVER - SUNRISE

Aerial shot.

Near Charlottesville, 120 miles from Washington DC.

The RIVANNA river.

EXT. RIVANNA RIVER/WESTERN FORCES MILITARY BASE - SUNRISE

By the river, a military base.

Tents. Tanks. Trucks. SAMs. APCs. Jeeps.

Overhead, Chinooks and Apaches.

EXT. WESTERN FORCES MILITARY BASE/MEDICAL TENTS - SUNRISE

The SUV is parked by a medical tent.

SILENCE THROUGH LEE'S LENS

SAMMY leans against the car window.

His eyes are open.

Sightless.

JESSIE is standing outside the car.

Dazed. Staring at him.

EXT. WESTERN FORCES MILITARY BASE/VEHICLES - DAY

A helicopter passes overhead.

LEE has found a place to sit alone.

She's looking through photos on the back of her camera.

She hovers over the photo of Sammy, dead.

She stares at it.

Her eyes fill.

But she doesn't weep.

She wipes the tears away.

Then brings up the delete option on the photo.

Presses delete.

Is offered the option - yes or no.

Pauses.

Beat.

Then chooses no.

EXT. WESTERN FORCES MILITARY BASE/TENTS - DAY

LEE walks through the camp.

Alone.

Until she sees what she's half looking for.

JOEL.

He's is leaning against a jeep. His vodka bottle is mostly empty. He's smoking weed.

With him are DAVE, the TV journalist from New York, and his TV REPORTER, ANYA.

They're both in military uniform - but wear blue Kevlar over the khaki, with PRESS written in large letters on the front and back.

They look round as LEE reaches them.

ANYA

God. We just heard about Sammy.

DAVE

And the other two guys.

JOEL

Tony. Bohai. Their names.

ANYA

Yeah. Christ. Lee - I'm really sorry. I know what he was to you.

DAVE

It's so fucked up.

JOEL

Oh, it's *so* fucked up.

(to Lee)

Wait until you hear what these two embedded motherfuckers have to say.

Beat.

JOEL (CONT'D)

What? Tell her.

ANYA

You know what, Jo? I'm trying to talk to Lee about Sammy.

JOEL

I heard - your condolences. Means a lot. Now tell her.

ANYA pointedly ignores JOEL.

ANYA
(to Lee)
We loved Sammy too. Everyone did.

LEE
Thanks, Anya.

JOEL
(cuts in)
For fuck's sake. The Western
Forces are moving in to DC tonight.
Earlier today, the Government
military basically surrendered.

LEE looks at ANYA.

ANYA
... Yeah. It's true.

DAVE
DC's only protection now is a few
do-or-die soldiers and a handful of
Secret Service. The WF will roll
right in.

JOEL
(to Lee)
So you and me are too late. We
missed the story. And Sammy didn't
even die for anything good.

Silence.

ANYA
... I think we'll give you guys
some space.

They turn to go.

DAVE taps LEE'S arm as he goes.

DAVE
Truly sorry.

LEE and JOEL are left alone.

Silence.

EXT. RIVANNA RIVER/BANKS - DAY

LEE walks long the riverbank, looking for JESSIE.

A little way down, she finds her.

Sitting on the banks. FE2s by her side.

EXT. RIVANNA RIVER/BANKS - DAY

JESSIE looks round as LEE sits beside her.

They sit in silence for a beat.

JESSIE
Where's Jo.

LEE
Processing.

JESSIE
Me too.

Beat.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
I hardly knew Sammy, compared to
you, but -

LEE
- No, you knew him. The guy you
saw. That's who he was.

LEE hesitates.

LEE (CONT'D)
There's so many ways it could have
ended for him. A lot of them were
worse.

Beat.

LEE (CONT'D)
He didn't want to quit.

Silence.

JESSIE
You know, when we were by the
helicopter, I didn't really
understand what you were saying.
But -
(beat)
These last few days, I've never
been scared like that before. And
I've never felt more alive.

LEE looks at JESSIE.

And understands.

JESSIE'S not going to quit either.

EXT. WESTERN FORCES MILITARY BASE - DAY

A deafening noise.

A Chinook flying directly overhead.

Beneath it, JOEL is startled awake, from where he'd been out cold on the ground beside the SUV.

He sits up.

The sky is full of helicopters.

A line of infantry trucks driving right past.

One passes. Two. Three.

And in the third, he sees DAVE and ANYA sat in the back.

ANYA sees JOEL.

JOEL holds up a hand.

ANYA does the same.

Then they are gone.

EXT. WESTERN FORCES MILITARY BASE - DAY

Dejected, beaten, JOEL walks across to the SUV.

JESSIE is by the back of the SUV, loading film.

Another deafening helicopter flies directly overhead.

JOEL walks around to the side of the SUV.

And finds -

- LEE is using a bucket and cloth to wipe SAMMY'S blood off the back seats.

He immediately understands.

They're going to DC.

LEE looks up.

Sees him.

As their eyes lock, **CUT TO -**

CUT TO -

EXT. WASHINGTON - NIGHT

- HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS flying over DC.

In places, the city is burning.

Tracer fire sine-waves curve into the sky.

We fly over the PENTAGON, towards the Potomac and the LINCOLN MEMORIAL.

CUT TO -

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - NIGHT

- LEE.

She's clutching her camera.

But not taking photos.

She's frozen.

REVEAL -

- SOLDIERS, crouched behind armoured vehicles, positioned at the base of the LINCOLN MEMORIAL.

The air is crackling with rifle and machine gun fire.

JESSIE is photographing.

A ROCKET is fired from the LINCOLN MEMORIAL-

It flies past the vehicles and EXPLODES a KIOSK in the park behind them.

The DETONATION rips through the trees.

In reply -

- a SOLDIER with a JAVELIN moves around the side of the vehicle.

Brings the weapon up.

Then fires.

Around him, dust from the road jumps into air, shrouding him.

CUT TO -

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - NIGHT

- the rocket flying between two pillars on the left side of the LINCOLN MEMORIAL.

The explosion shakes the structure.

Smoke and fire balloon out around the pillars either side.

CUT TO -

- JESSIE taking the shot.

Winding the film.

Eyes bright. Wide.

Knowing the shot she just took was iconic.

Knowing she got it right.

CUT TO -

EXT. WASHINGTON/17TH STREET - NIGHT

- the JOURNALISTS moving North up 17th Street -

- following a squad of SOLDIERS.

On the FAR SIDE of the road, another squad is also moving North.

Ahead, blocking the road, is a makeshift barricade of parked cars.

As the FAR SIDE SQUAD reach the barricade, and start to edge past it -

- a hidden IED explodes.

MOMENTS LATER -

- WASHINGTON DEFENDERS open fire from two positions in the buildings ahead. A cross fire.

The JOURNALISTS and the NEAR SIDE SQUAD run for cover - to the PILLARS of an office building ahead.

Surviving soldiers from the FAR SIDE SQUAD take cover behind car barricade.

For several beats -

- sustained gunfire, hitting glass, metal, and concrete.

JESSIE and JOEL catch each other's gaze.

The gaze locks.

Just recognising. Where they are, what is happening.

CUT TO -

- LEE.

In the opposite space.

She's shut down. Staring.

Overwhelmed by horror.

Overwhelmed by the deafening, jarring noise of battle, echoing around the canyon of buildings.

THROUGH THE NOISE -

- the sound of a HELICOPTER.

Engine blast.

FLYING IN from the SOUTH.

FIRING ROCKETS at the WASHINGTON DEFENDER POSITIONS.

The HELICOPTER flares.

Hovers.

Directly ABOVE the barricade.

Rotor wash blasts through the pillars where the JOURNALISTS hide.

BENEATH the HELICOPTER -

- the FAR SIDE SQUAD scatter -

- as a TANK and HUMVEES approach.

And SMASH THROUGH the barricade.

The NEAR SIDE SQUAD move out.

CUT TO -

JESSIE.

Moving. Shooting. Winding.

CUT TO -

LEE.

Falling further into herself.

LEE is breaking.

It is as if the more JESSIE ascends, the more LEE descends.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - NIGHT

ON ROOFTOPS -

- WESTERN FORCES SNIPER and MORTAR TEAMS take positions.

As a MORTAR TEAM FIRES, **CUT TO -**

EXT. WASHINGTON/BARRICADE - NIGHT

- the sound of MORTAR SHELLS landing around the WHITE HOUSE.

- which is on the far side of a high and gated CONCRETE BARRICADE, blocking Pennsylvania Avenue.

LEE, JESSIE and JOEL huddle up by the corner of a building.

JOEL looks around the corner, and SEES -

- the BARRICADE.

- a SQUAD of WF SOLDIERS in a firefight with DEFENDER SOLDIERS, who are positioned by the RECESSED GATE, behind HESCO BARRIERS and inside a CONCRETE TOWER.

JOEL pulls back.

JESSIE
Can you see it?

JOEL
Take a look.

They swap.

JESSIE glimpses.

JESSIE
... Oh my God - we're so fucking
close.

Two HUMVEES roll past them.

Tucked behind the nearest HUMVEE are a SQUAD of WF SOLDIERS,
led by SERGEANT JO.

LEE stares blankly at the same sight.

JOEL grabs her.

JOEL
Come on, Lee - we're nearly there -
move.

ACTION SEQUENCE:

UNDER CONSTANT FIRE, and SOUND OF MORTARS, and HELICOPTERS,
and SURROUNDING FIREFIGHTS -

- the JOURNALISTS fall inside behind SERGEANT JO SQUAD and HUMVEE 1, as -
- HUMVEE 2 ACCELERATES to protect the WF SQUAD, caught in the firefight.
- HUMVEE 1 and HUMVEE 2 open fire on GATE DEFENDERS.
- HUMVEE 2 is blown up by a rocket, fired from the TOWER.
- HUMVEE 1 reverses, leaving SERGEANT JO SQUAD and the JOURNALISTS exposed.
- Two TANKS are rolling in.
- TANK 1 blows up the TOWER.
- TANK 2 fires at the GATE.
- SERGEANT JO SQUAD kill remaining GATE DEFENDERS.
- TANK 2 moves forwards.
- SERGEANT JO SQUAD fall in behind TANK 2.
- JOURNALISTS fall in behind TANK 2.
- JOURNALISTS take position behind HESCO BARRIER.

- TANK 2 smashes through the GATE.

REVEALING -

- the WHITE HOUSE.

CUT TO -

- JESSIE, moving up from cover at the HESCO BARRIER, lifting her camera.

PHOTOGRAPHING TANK 2.

Around TANK 2, we can see the DAMAGE to the area surrounding the WHITE HOUSE.

MORTAR IMPACTS, broken fence, craters, abandoned vehicles.

JESSIE sees as JOEL drags LEE to cover.

LEE seems now fully broken.

JESSIE stares at LEE - in disbelief.

Almost with contempt.

LEE and JESSIE have now almost fully traded places.

JUST AHEAD OF THEM -

- SOLDIERS have moved to the smashed gate.

Now only a couple of hundred yards from the WHITE HOUSE entrance.

SOLDIER

The Beast. Two suburbans. Right outside.

CUT TO -

- ANYA, in full flak and defensive gear, but oddly glamorous -

- facing us, talking into camera.

ANYA

Western Forces have now surrounded the White House, where the President is still believed to be. We are approaching from Pennsylvania Avenue, where -

ANYA is interrupted by RAPID SEQUENCE of MORTAR SHELL EXPLOSIONS, and a ROAR of HELICOPTER NOISE.

ANYA (CONT'D)
 (over the noise)
 Shit - we need to go again.

REVEAL -

- this is a PIECE TO CAMERA.

ANYA and DAVE have moved up, and are close to LEE, JOEL, and JESSIE. Just the other side of the RECESSED GATE.

JOEL
 (seeing them)
 - Motherfuckers.

DAVE dips his CAMERA.

Calls across to LEE and JOEL.

He's as wired as they are. But weirdly conversational.

DAVE
 Lee, Lee, knows where to be. You
 getting good shit?

LEE doesn't seem to hear him.

JOEL covers for her.

JOEL
 Lincoln Memorial. You?

DAVE
 WF rappelling off a chopper to the
 Pentagon roof.

DAVE takes the glimpse around the corner to the WHITE HOUSE.

He pulls back.

DAVE (CONT'D)
 But there's only one shot. Right,
 Lee?

JOEL
 You really think he's in there?

DAVE
 WF have intel from the generals
 that surrendered yesterday. He's
 right in that fucking building.

JESSIE looks towards the WHITE HOUSE.

JESSIE

Fuck.

JOEL

What do you hear they're going to do with him?

DAVE

Kill. No capture. It's whoever gets a gun to his head first. Hey, Lee - don't beat me to the money shot, okay?

ANYA taps DAVE.

ANYA

Dave - going again.

As DAVE RESHOULDERS HIS CAMERA -

- JOEL sees something.

By the WHITE HOUSE, SECRET SERVICE suddenly POURING out of the WHITE HOUSE entrance - surrounding and propelling SOMEONE into the BEAST.

JOEL

... Jesus. It's happening.

SOLDIER

He's busting out!

ACTION SEQUENCE:

- the BEAST and TWO SUBURBANS, accelerating towards the BARRICADE.
- GUNFIRE erupting.
- WF HELICOPTER above, moving in, firing.
- the BEAST and SUBURBANS swerving either side of TANK 2.
- accelerating towards the BROKEN GATE.
- LEAD SUBURBAN, in a hail of bullets, smashes into HUMVEE 2.
- BEAST flashes BETWEEN LEE, JOEL, JESSIE, and ANYA and DAVE.
- REAR SUBURBAN smashes into the TOWER.
- SECRET SERVICE exit HUMVEE 2 and are immediately shot by SERGEANT JO SQUAD.

- REVEAL HUMVEE 3, moving fast.
- HUMVEE 3 makes hard side impact into the BEAST, just as it is about to swerve TANK 1.
- BEAST is pinned.
- HUMVEE 1 moves forwards, firing into the side of the BEAST.
- WF SOLDIERS emerge from everywhere, converging on the BEAST.
- SERGEANT JO SQUAD move in.
- DAVE and ANYA move in, DAVE filming ANYA.

ANYA
(to camera)
The President's vehicle has been
stopped by Western Forces as it
attempted to escape -

CUT TO -

JESSIE. Stunned.

JESSIE
... Woah.

CUT TO -

- LEE.

As if the BEAST screaming past them has jolted.

She stands.

Staring at the WHITE HOUSE.

Coming back to life.

Like a prizefighter. Knocked out. Picking themselves up off the canvas, only out of the fighter's instinct, for one last round.

CUT TO -

JOEL.

He starts to move towards the BEAST -

- then is stopped.

LEE has caught his arm.

LEE
He's not there.

JOEL
... What?

LEE
He's not there, Jo.

JOEL stares at her.

Knows that *she* knows.

LEE starts walking.

Then running.

But not towards the BEAST.

Towards the WHITE HOUSE.

A beat.

JOEL looks back towards the BEAST.

Sees DAVE and ANYA - closing in on the BEAST, as it is
relentlessly shot by HUMVEE 1 and the approaching WF FORCES.

JOEL
Fuck.

Beat.

JOEL (CONT'D)
(to Jessie)
Come on.

Then he starts after LEE, and JESSIE follows.

CUT TO -

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

- the three journalists, running to the WHITE HOUSE.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE/ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

LEE, JOEL, and JESSIE walk into the entrance hall.

In the distance, the sounds of sustained gunfire and
HELICOPTERS continues.

Ahead of them are open doors, with a window to the South Lawn.

A beat, as they all gaze around.

After the chaos of outside, the stillness and the grandeur is surreal.

Their footsteps on the marble floor.

The slight echo to their voices.

JESSIE walks up to the open doors of the room ahead.

Inside, lying on a Persian rug, there are two bodies.

A MAN and a WOMAN.

The WOMAN is face down. The MAN is face up. Both are shot in the head.

Their pools of blood connect.

A hand gun is on the floor.

JESSIE takes a picture.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE/PIANO ROOM - NIGHT

LEE, JOEL and JESSIE enter a large room with a GRAND PIANO.

It's strewn with objects. Loose papers. A weapon crate. A box of soft drinks, the cans spilled across the floor.

JOEL walks to the PIANO.

Plays a couple of notes.

Then turns to LEE.

Almost accusing.

JOEL

This place is empty.

AT THAT MOMENT -

- a SQUAD of WESTERN FORCES SOLDIERS enter, from the direction the journalists just came.

The JOURNALISTS and the SOLDIERS face each other for a beat.

Then the SOLDIER jabs a finger at them.

SOLDIER
Stay the fuck out of our way.

They push past the journalists.

Moments later, there is a sudden burst of gunfire from somewhere in the building.

It's muffled, but unambiguous.

It's almost immediately followed by a second burst. Slightly louder.

LEE, JOEL, and JESSIE exchange a glance.

LEE'S gut was right.

The PRESIDENT is still here.

They set off, tracking the WESTERN FORCES SQUAD.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE/PRESS OFFICE - NIGHT

The journalists approach an ante-chamber office, just off the PRESS BRIEFING ROOM.

Ahead, the SERGEANT JO SQUAD have moved to the open door to the PRESS BRIEFING ROOM.

A female voice is calling out to them.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
I am unarmed. I am alone. I am
standing in the middle of the Press
Briefing Room.

SERGEANT JO gestures to SOLDIER 1.

SOLDIER 1 takes a quick glance around the door frame.

Pulls back.

SOLDIER 1
No weapon.

The WOMAN calls from the PRESS BRIEFING ROOM.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
I am Secret Service Agent Joy
Butler. I am here to talk.

SERGEANT JO talks to SOLDIER 1.

SERGEANT JO
No weapon?

SOLDIER 1
Looks like.

Beat.

Then SERGEANT JO lifts her rifle, then swings around the door.

Steps into the room.

The other two SOLDIERS follow.

LEE moves forward to the doorway.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE/PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

Through the doorway, LEE can see a long room. Almost empty. Unused for some time. Arched windows. The curtain and podium at the back of the room are still in place, and there are a few chairs. Some tipped over.

At the far end, near the door to the West Wing offices, agent JOY BUTLER stands.

Her hands are raised. Palms open.

The SOLDIERS have their rifles trained on her.

BUTLER
I am here to negotiate the
surrender of The President. Are
you the WF?

SERGEANT JO
Take a wild guess.

BUTLER
Can the President be entrusted into
your safe care?

SERGEANT JO has sweat rolling down her forehead. Running into her eyes.

She doesn't wipe it. Blinks it away. Keeps her rifle trained on BUTLER.

SERGEANT JO
Yeah. Sure. Just bring him out.

BUTLER

We are not bringing him anywhere
until we have agreed terms.

LEE lifts her camera.

Takes a shot.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

We need a guarantee of safe passage
for the President. And we need
extraction to a neutral territory.
We request Greenland or Alaska.

SERGEANT JO

No terms. Bring him out.

Beat.

BUTLER

Sir - the President is willing to -

She is cut off - as SERGEANT JO shoots her.

SILENCE THROUGH LEE'S LENS.

Agent BUTLER folds.

CUT TO -

- the three SOLDIERS immediately advancing to the far end of
the room.

As they move, another SECRET SERVICE AGENT appears in the
doorway to the WEST WING -

SILENCE THROUGH LEE'S LENS.

The AGENT is attempting to return fire.

He is immediately shot.

CUT TO -

- the SOLDIERS stacking by the door to the West Wing offices.

One lobs a grenade through the open door.

SILENCE THROUGH LEE'S LENS.

The detonation through the door.

The stacked SOLDIERS either side.

CUT TO -

- the SOLDIERS pushing through the door.

Gunfire.

LEE moves forward.

JESSIE and JOEL follow.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE/WEST WING/CORRIDOR - NIGHT

SILENCE THROUGH LEE'S LENS alternates with ACTION.

The ACTION is deafening. Totally kinetic. PURE INTENSITY.

The SILENCE is a Zen space. Only occupied by **IMAGE** and **SCORE**.

The alternation is like a drum beat. It has a kept rhythm.

ACTION

The SOLDIERS advancing down the WEST WING MAIN CORRIDOR.

SILENCE

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT is shot as he exits the CABINET ROOM.

ACTION

The SECRET SERVICE AGENT opens fire from the door to the OVAL OFFICE, at the far end of the corridor.

SILENCE

The SERGEANT takes cover in the doorway to the PRESS SECRETARY'S OFFICE.

ACTION

SOLDIER 1 gives return fire to the OVAL OFFICE, as SOLDIER 2 moves into the CABINET ROOM.

SILENCE

SOLDIER 1 fumbles as he reloads his rifle.

ACTION

The SERGEANT pulls a FLASHBANG from a vest pouch, and throws it blind from the doorway, towards the OVAL OFFICE.

SILENCE

The flashbang lights up the WEST WING MAIN CORRIDOR in stark white and etches out a SECRET SERVICE AGENT, emerging from the ROOSEVELT ROOM.

As he stumbles sideways from the shock of the detonation, he is cut down by bullets.

ACTION

LEE runs forward from cover to cover - a side corridor opposite the CABINET ROOM.

As she reaches the cover, rounds fired from the OVAL OFFICE slam into the wall behind her.

SILENCE

JESSIE and JOEL crouching behind the corner that leads back to the PRESS BRIEFING ROOM.

JESSIE is starting to move forwards to follow LEE.

JOEL is trying to catch her arm.

ACTION

JESSIE runs out into the WEST WING CORRIDOR -
- but in her adrenaline state, half panic, half courage -
- runs *past* LEE'S position.

AT THIS MOMENT -

The ALTERNATION between SILENCE and ACTION stops.

CUT TO -**SLOW MOTION**

NOISELESS. But NOT THROUGH A LENS.

LEE seeing JESSIE.

The young woman framed in the corridor.

Turning back towards LEE - as if realising her mistake.

LEE'S hand - on her camera.

JESSIE turning - to LEE.

Looking at her. Dazed. Confused.

Then -

- LEE'S hand releases the camera.

CUT OUT OF SILENCE AND SLOW MOTION -

- LEE pushing out of the cover of the doorway.

Throwing herself at JESSIE.

Knocking JESSIE to the ground.

CUT TO -

- the AGENT returning fire from the OVAL OFFICE.

- SOLDIER 1 falling backwards as he is hit.

- SERGEANT JO returning fire towards the OVAL OFFICE.

And right between the intense exchanges of fire -

- the two women.

CUT TO -

SLOW MOTION.

LEE.

In the REPLY IMAGE to the one she saw of JESSIE.

Standing, with the OVAL OFFICE behind her.

CUT TO -

JESSIE face - seeing this.

JESSIE'S hand tightening on her camera.

The camera LIFTING.

CUT TO -

SILENCE THROUGH A LENS.

But not LEE'S lens.

JESSIE'S.

On LEE. Framed perfectly.

As the one of the rounds punches through LEE.
It exits her chest.
LEE lifts her head.
Looks straight down the lens of JESSIE'S camera.
Hold on this a beat.
Then -
- as the CAMERA SHUTTER fires.

CUT TO -

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE/WEST WING/CORRIDOR - NIGHT

- the corridor.
The shooting has stopped.
SOLDIER 1 lies dead.
LEE lies dead.
JESSIE sits on the floor. Her camera in her hands.
Staring at LEE.
The camera that lies beside her. Right by her hand.
JOEL walks down the corridor towards them.
As he reaches JESSIE, he stops.
Looks down.
After a beat, she looks up.
She looks like she did when we first saw her.
Just - young.
A beat between the two.

 JOEL
 (gentle)
 Get up.

Beat.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Get up, Jessie.

He reaches a hand out to her.

She takes it.

Rises.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

JOEL and JESSIE appear in the doorway to the OVAL OFFICE.

The desk.

The curved walls.

The South-facing windows.

There's a dead AGENT at his feet, and another dead agent in the middle of the room.

And on the other side of the room, the SERGEANT and SOLDIER 2 are dragging THE PRESIDENT out from behind the desk, where he has been crouched.

Without speaking - they drag him out by his legs.

Then SERGEANT JO reaches down.

Flips the man over, so he's face up.

The PRESIDENT says nothing. Just looks confused. Hyperventilates.

Then SERGEANT JO rises, and pulls out her sidearm.

Points the gun down at the PRESIDENT.

JOEL
Wait.

SERGEANT JO looks round at JOEL.

JOEL'S face is blank.

SERGEANT JO stares at him. But doesn't pull the trigger.

JOEL walks to them.

Stands over THE PRESIDENT. Finally face to face with the man.

Then JOEL lifts his digital recorder.

Beat.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I need a quote.

Beat.

THE PRESIDENT
... Don't let them kill me.

JOEL nods.

JOEL
Yeah. That'll do.

SILENCE THROUGH JESSIE'S LENS.

As JOEL turns away -

- SERGEANT JO's gun-arm straightens.

SERGEANT JO shoots.

Then, a beat later, she turns to look at JESSIE'S camera.

CUT TO BLACK.

END