

Matrix of Leadership

by

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Based on original story by Andrew Watters

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INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

An ANCHOR (45) and a CO-ANCHOR (40) on a cable news channel debate the 2028 election for President of the United States.

ANCHOR

Can you think of anyone less qualified than Alan George? I mean, this guy has never held office before. He's a nobody from California whose only experience in leadership comes from running a basic law practice.

CO-ANCHOR

Why Jameson would be leaning toward George for his V.P. is just baffling.

ANCHOR

It must be a fluke of the open application process -- a first in the 21st century -- this is just not how things are done.

CO-ANCHOR

And with the impending conflict with Russia only escalating, we need leaders now who are qualified and have been through the ringer already. I can't imagine Putin being very intimidated by fresh meat like Alan George.

ANCHOR

Only time will tell. To everyone just joining us, you're watching CNN's live coverage of what Presidential candidate Tito Jameson has called "the fairest selection process in the land." Also described by critics as a reality show in which the winner runs for Vice President, and a clear indication of just how far politics in this country have fallen. Sources say the leading applicant is Alan George, an unknown from California.

The Anchor shakes his head, clearly disgusted with the process.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

ALAN GEORGE (40), a tall African-American man with a precise and calculating demeanor, meets with TITO JAMESON (55), aged handsomely, looking like the all American silver fox, for a final interview before an official decision and announcement.

JAMESON

Did you know I read over 200 applications over this process?

ALAN

No, sir. I was unaware.

Jameson laughs.

JAMESON

Call me Tito, Alan. There's a good chance we're going to be working together very closely soon.

ALAN

I understand, sir- I apologize... Sir. I just have a great deal of respect and admiration for you. I want to address you formally because you deserve it.

Jameson is honored. A beat.

JAMESON

You're not like any of the other applicants. You're not like anyone I've ever worked with either. Your application really spoke to me.

ALA

Thank you, sir.

JAMESON

It's my hope that we can formally announce our partnership by the end of the week, but I do have one final question: you indicated in the application that you had a major "ask," but you didn't say what it was. Before I say that I'm confident I can deliver it, what is the ask?

ALAN

It's going to sound crazy, but it's

critically important to me.

JAMESON

Go ahead.

A beat.

ALAN

I went to law school because it's what I thought I wanted to do. But I was wrong for so many reasons. If I could do it over again, I would serve our great nation in the military.

JAMESON

I don't understand.

ALAN

Am I too old for flight school?

JAMESON

I'm lost. Still.

ALAN

My requirement for running as your Vice President is that I get to do what I have always wanted to do: join one of the services and actually contribute to the defense of our country. I had in mind the Air Force because I want to fly an F-15.

Jameson is dumbstruck.

JAMESON

Do you have any idea what I'm going to have to do to make that happen? I don't even know where to begin!

ALAN

Yes. Congressional approval and my own line item in the budget.

JAMESON

Are you serious, George? A line item is the least of our concerns. As Vice President you would be serving the nation, I can't have my number two out there putting his life on the line.

ALAN

If our leaders took on more accountability and actually served like they've sworn an oath to do instead of ruling like medieval kings, then I believe many of our nation's, and the world's, problems could be put to rest.

JAMESON

Jesus, you are serious about this.

ALAN

Deadly so.

(beat)

But if you'd rather I speak in political terms, I also believe this gesture could be the edge you need to win this election.

Jameson is curious now.

JAMESON

Go on.

ALAN

This would make me more relatable, more accessible. You had a reason for holding an open call to select your VP candidate. You wanted fairness and to give equal opportunity so you might find authenticity in a candidate instead of more conniving and deceitful politicians. You wanted someone who knew the people they would be serving. Now take it one step further and show the people that your candidate is not only one of them, but will continue to serve alongside them. No matter what.

Jameson is stunned. He stares dead-pan at Alan.

Alan is emotionless. He stares right back.

JAMESON

How do you expect me to pull this off?

ALAN

I don't know, sir. I am fine with all of your conditions, so this is my only

ultimatum.

JAMESON

You're saying it's a deal-breaker. What do I get out of it? Having my number two flying around in an F-15 instead of being by my side was not what I had in mind with all this.

ALAN

You get a dedicated, selfless V.P. who wants to serve our country, congressional interest, and probably your only chance at getting enough broad public appeal to win. So this is an opportunity, not a problem.

Jameson starts to realize the gift he's being given. A wry smile crosses his face.

JAMESON

All the opportunities in the world and you want to put your life on the line. They don't make 'em like you anymore.

ALAN

Thank you, sir.

JAMESON

Well Alan, let's look into it. I hope you'll understand that I can't make an official selection for Vice President until we determine whether this is possible.

ALAN

I totally understand. If it's not possible, I'm sure one of the alternates would make an excellent choice for your ticket, and I will be rooting for you in 2028 no matter what.

Jameson just laughs.

EXT. SKY OVER THE ENGLISH CHANNEL - DAY

SUPER: TWO YEARS LATER

Two F-15EX fighter jets enter frame. The lead fighter is painted in red, white, and blue Air Force One-type livery and

has "V.P. Alan 'JUDGE' George" stenciled under the canopy. The pilot is not identifiable in his oxygen mask or visor, until he thumbs the radio to talk to his wingman, COBRA (30).

ALAN
(V.O.)
Angels fifteen, left three-zero.

COBRA
(V.O.)
Roger. Two bandits inbound, two minutes.

ALAN
(V.O.)
Roger.

The pilots flip a few switches and perform their final checks before the intercept.

INT. F-15EX COCKPIT - DAY

The camera goes into Alan's cockpit and shows icons on his screen representing two Su-27 fighters. The icons get closer.

ALAN
I'm going to take 'em down the left side.

From Alan's point of view, the enemy fighters rapidly approach and cross the left side of his view. He quickly turns left and goes after them. An aerial dogfight ensues.

ALAN
I'm too close for missiles; I'm switching to guns.

He stays on the first bandit through several maneuvers, each punctuated by the ripping sound of jet engines through the rushing air.

The green-hued sight on Alan's head-up display (HUD) shows that he could gun the bandit at any moment, except that the weapon is on "safe" ("XXXXX" appears on the HUD instead of "M61 20MM").

Finally, the Russian pilot has enough of the dogfight and goes straight and level, with Alan behind him. Alan accelerates and moves side by side with the Su-27. The Russian pilot turns to look at Alan.

ALAN
(into radio)
Attention Russian fighters! This is
the Vice President of the United
States. You are instructed to land,
land immediately!

The Russian pilot turns back to look ahead and ignores Alan.
Alan drops back behind the jet and radios his wingman.

ALAN
(into radio)
Hey, where you at? This guy isn't
bugging out.

Silence.

ALAN
(into radio)
Cobra? Where are you?

Silence.

ALAN
(into radio)
Cobra? Come in, Cobra.

Silence. Alan looks around and finally notices a cloud of
smoke and a parachute a few miles away.

ALAN
Oh shit.

The first Su-27 suddenly turns sharply away.

VOICE ON RADIO
(O.S.)
Judge, this is Strike. Return to base
immediately.

ALAN
(into radio)
What's going on? I've lost Cobra and I
have two bandits left.

VOICE ON RADIO
(O.S.)
Return to base immediately, Judge.
Angels thirty, zone five.

Alan hesitates for a second, with this instruction not making

sense.

ALAN
 (into radio)
 Roger. Angels thirty. Judge is bugging
 out zone five.

As the two Su-27's regroup and start to pursue Alan, he hits the maximum afterburner setting and slips away at 30,000 feet and 1,650 miles per hour. The Su-27's gradually fall behind, and then turn away.

EXT. ROYAL AIR FORCE BASE LAKENHEATH - DAY

Alan approaches the base for what seems like a routine landing.

ALAN
 Air Force Two to Lakenheath tower,
 requesting permission to land.

LAKENHEATH TOWER
 (O.S.)
 Be advised: Air Force Two is now Air
 Force One. Air Force One, cleared to
 land runway two left.

ALAN
 (beat)
 Roger.

Alan nervously lands his jet on this U.S.-administered base in the U.K. SAMANTHA (37), a frantic woman with cherry red hair stands in a cheap pant suit with a group of officers tensely waiting for him. He parks the jet in his usual spot and opens the canopy.

ALAN
 Sam. What's going on?

She rushes over.

SAM
 I- I'm sorry sir, I don't know.

ALAN
 You're my chief of staff, how do you
 not know?

SAM
 Whatever it is, it's above my pay

grade, sir.

Finally, JEROME (50) a war-hardened colonel, marches over to talk to him.

JEROME
Mr. President.

ALAN
Vice President.

JEROME
Not anymore, sir.

A wave of horror crosses Alan's face.

ALAN
No...

-- There's a quick flashback--

It's Alan driving down a freeway in a red convertible.

A booming ethereal voice echoes around him.

ETHEREAL VOICE
Alan. You will be President of the
United States.

Alan in the car looks around, terrified.

BOOM! Like the clap of thunder.

-- We're back --

Alan facing the colonel wears the same terrified expression.

JEROME
Come with me, sir.

Alan's face changes to share a sad look with Sam. She is in total shock.

Alan, the Colonel, and several officers walk to a briefing building. Sam snaps back to reality and chases after them.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

An American CHAPLAIN (55) wearing a uniform is waiting for them with a bible, as well as an American JUDGE (60) wearing a business suit.

COLONEL

Your honor?

JUDGE

(to Alan)

Sir. Raise your right hand and read the oath on this card aloud.

The judge hands Alan an index card with the oath of office written on it. Alan raises his right hand.

ALAN

I, Alan Andrew George, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.

JUDGE

Congratulations, Mr. President. Good luck to you.

A photographer snaps photos. The judge shakes Alan's hand and walks out, leaving Alan alone with the officers.

ALAN

What the hell is this?

COLONEL

Sir, we lost President Jameson. He was in L.A. and an explosion destroyed his limo. It's being investigated. You're the President now. The Secretary of Defense is standing by to brief you.

ALAN

(weakly)

What happened to my wingman? I lost her in a plume of smoke over the Channel.

COLONEL

Cobra was recovered by the RAF after being shot down.

After a few technical glitches, the SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (55) appears on a video screen in the briefing room.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

(O.S.)

Mr. President, it appears the Russians launched a "decapitation strike" against us. They tried to take out both Jameson and you at the same time, but they only managed to get Jameson-- with a submarine-launched cruise missile.

ALAN

Why would they do that? That's crazy.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

We're still trying to piece it all together, sir. Although that's all the information I have for you at this time, I respectfully request that you make a decision on what to do next. We are at DEFCON 3 at the moment.

ALAN

I need to address the nation. Activate the emergency alert system.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Sir, that is a civilian program and would need to go through FEMA instead of DoD.

Alan is embarrassed. He's unsure if he's ready for this sudden new position.

ALAN

Oh, right.

SAM

I'll handle it, sir.

Alan nods approval to her.

She rushes off.

ALAN

Meanwhile, let's keep the situation as stable as we can and watch the Russians' defense activity.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Yes, sir.

The Secretary of Defense hits the "end call" button on his end of the link. The screen goes blank. Alan pauses for a moment.

For the first time since hearing the news, Alan lets out a breath.

ETHEREAL VOICE

It's time, Alan.

Alan tenses and his eyes dart up at the sound of the echoing voice.

He tries to maintain his composure.

Then bolts up and out of the room.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

Alan types a brief speech on a computer. The words appear on the screen at a superhuman level of speed.

COLONEL

Do you need anything, sir?

ALAN

Not at this time, thank you.

He continues typing. When ready, Alan signals to the Colonel, who is behind a TV camera.

COLONEL

Mr. President, you're live to the nation in five, four, three...

He signals "two" and "one," then points to Alan. A red light goes on, and the text Alan was typing scrolls up the TelePrompter.

ALAN

Good evening. This is President Alan George live to you from RAF Lakenheath, a base in the United Kingdom.

(beat)

Earlier today, a foreign power attacked our country and killed the President of the United States, Tito Jameson. They tried to kill me as well. I have just taken the oath of office as your President and initiated

the defense of our nation from this threat.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Alan is being broadcast from every screen. People stop in shock and react to the President's news.

ALAN (O.S.)

We have assessed with 99% confidence that the Russian Federation was behind this attack.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DAY

Two PARENTS sit on the couch with their eyes glued to Alan's announcement. A little GIRL sitting on the floor looks back at them. The father holds his wife tight and looks at the girl with concern.

ALAN (O.S.)

Putin's insatiable thirst for power and utter disregard for human rights has had us butting heads with their expanding federation since they began occupation of Finland in an attempt to extort their sustainable climate capabilities.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

ALAN

But with this, he has gone much, much too far. Accordingly, I am hereby invoking Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty and calling for our NATO allies to support appropriate action in order to rectify this senseless attack.

INT. BAR - DAY

A crowd of concerned Americans are fixated on the screens which previously held their favorite sports game.

A MISFIT MAN (32) doesn't wear any sports gear, but instead looks rather smart, finishes his drink, eyes glued to the presidential address, and quickly exits the bar.

ALAN (O.S.)

We are still evaluating options and

will update the public at the earliest possible opportunity, but I wish to assure the American people, this will not be forgotten.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

ALAN

Long ago, I pledged to fight amongst you should the need ever arise. Know that that promise stands true. Know that I am not only at your head, but by your side as well. Thank you.

The red light goes off as the broadcast ends.

EXT. PARLIAMENT - DAY

Alan, now wearing a suit, approaches Parliament in his motorcade. This is the mother of all motorcades, with U.K. Army troops and armored personnel carriers escorting President George to Parliament. Alan steps out of his limo and enters the building.

INT. PARLIAMENT - DAY

KING WILLIAM (42) greets Alan as he comes in.

The PRIME MINISTER (50) presides over a session of Parliament. The SERGEANT-AT-ARMS (50) announces Alan to Parliament.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Mr. Prime Minister, the President of the United States of America!

A silent hall of skeptical faces stare back at the new President.

PRIME MINISTER

His Majesty's government welcomes the President of the United States.

Alan approaches the podium.

ALAN

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. Members of Parliament, I am here upon the invitation of the king. Having invoked Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty, I am respectfully calling upon

the United Kingdom for support as our longest allies.

(beat)

This support may take many forms, ranging from logistical and intelligence sharing to a more broad portion of the spectrum of conflict. At this time, it appears that...regime change in Russia is the logical choice.

There are audible gasps in the audience. King William nods in agreement.

ALAN

In any case, we are exploring the options available to us, and rest assured: the U.K. will be fully informed every step of the way.

(beat)

I understand there have been doubters of my claim to the Vice Presidency since the beginning. I don't expect that has changed now that I have assumed the position of President. One of the problems in any war is a lack of buy-in from the political leadership. We aren't going to have that problem this time. I think that if the President wants to have a war, he should have to risk his own life. So I am letting everyone know now: I am going to personally fight in this war because that's what I believe in.

There are even more gasps in the audience.

The speech continues, indistinct.

EXT. LONDON GATWICK AIRPORT - DAY

The regular Air Force One jet sits on the tarmac, with security personnel around it. Alan's motorcade approaches, and Alan eventually gets out and boards the plane. The plane takes off.

EXT. SKY OVER THE ATLANTIC - DAY

The flight back to the U.S. is uneventful, but there are several groups of fighters escorting the plane each step of the way.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - DAY

The president sits in his airborne office pouring over documents.

One STAFFER after another comes to interrupt him and ask questions or opinions.

After the last staffer leaves, Sam sits across from him.

ALAN

I didn't see you at the parliamentary address.

SAM

Oh I was there. There's a lot to catch up on. They do not make this easy.

ALAN

None of this is easy.

SAM

Sorry... That was insensitive. Damn it. You're right. I'm just nervous.

ALAN

It's ok. Where are we on the VP picks?

SAM

Um- A few good candidates. We're vetting them now.

Alan nods.

SAM

Sir?

ALAN

Yes?

SAM

How are you feeling?

Alan looks at her, confused.

SAM (CONTD)

Well, I can only imagine everything you're going through. It must be a lot.

He thinks over this for another minute.

ALAN

There's no place for feelings in duty.
I have been called into action, and
now all I can do is respond.

Sam looks like she disagrees, but keeps quiet.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Boxes of the late Tito Jameson's personal effects sit next to the Resolute Desk. JULIO (27), a young, up and comer aide with a clipboard sits in one of the side chairs next to Sam, with President George behind the desk, and STEVE WILSON (60), Jameson's old chief of staff standing at the front of the desk, leading the meeting.

STEVE

Mr. President, we don't think we have the votes in the Senate for an actual war. Senator Newsom is the ringleader of the peace faction, and he's saying he will only vote for a cyber campaign, not a war.

JULIO

That guy's a jerk.

STEVE

Even so.

SAM

Isn't he up for re-election in '32?

STEVE

Yeah.

SAM

Any way we can sweeten the deal?

STEVE

Absolutely not.

SAM

I'm sorry, Steve. I know it must be hard for you to be handing over the chief of staff position under such horrible circumstances. But I think this could be worth exploring.

STEVE

President Jameson fought very hard NOT

to play those kind of tit for tat political games during his time in office. It would be a disgrace to his name to start now.

ALAN

I agree with Steve on this. That's not how I'm starting my presidency.

JULIO

That's admirable, sir. But you have to get real if you want this to happen.

STEVE

Excuse me? And just what would you even know about the situation?

SAM

Julio's family has a long history of serving presidents. All the way back to JFK.

JULIO

Yea. And you don't start on the cleaning staff and end up giving advice to the president because you know nothing.

ALAN

I am not going to trade political favors in order to accomplish the right thing to do.

JULIO

Radical honesty doesn't always work, sir.

Alan contemplates that admonition for a moment.

SAM

Alan- Mr. President Alan, sir. He might have phrased that poorly, but Julio is on to something. Radical anything doesn't always work. This isn't flight school, sometimes you have to bend the rules for the greater good.

JULIO

And Newsom is facing bribery charges that he would probably be glad to see

go away with a presidential pardon.

ALAN

Let's play the game our own way. Leak to the media that Senator Newsom is willing to trade his vote on the war resolution for a pardon on his bribery charges, that it's basically extortion, but that I'm considering going for it anyway.

STEVE

Are you sure about that, sir?

ALAN

This is as "just" of a war as you can get. We have to find a way to make it happen.

SAM

It's a good call.

JULIO

I'm reminded of why I like you, Mr. President.

STEVE

This is just as bad as actually offering to pardon him. I can't get behind it.

ALAN

Jameson brought me in because he needed a new way of doing things. There is a greater plan in place than playing political games. If you can't get behind it, you can get out.

Steve looks infuriated.

He storms out of the office.

ALAN

They say if you want a friend in Washington, bring a dog.

JULIO

The secret is to bring two dogs, because one of them will turn on you.

They all share a laugh, but the room becomes a little more

uncomfortable.

INT. SENATE CHAMBER - DAY

SARA RHODES (38), president of the Senate. Rhodes sits in the Senate president's chair with a gavel.

RHODES

The chair recognizes the gentleman from California, who will give the Armed Services Committee's report on the President's proposed Russia campaign, S.110.

SENATOR NEWSOM (50) rises from his seat.

NEWSOM

In all my years of public service--

There are loud coughs and a couple of laughs in the gallery.

NEWSOM

--Excuse me. In all my years of public service, I have never seen a committee report like this one. Here, we have a late President who was killed by a foreign power, and a new President whose life was threatened by the same foreign power. Our new President has proposed a "regime change" campaign on foreign soil. The Armed Services Committee...supports and strongly recommends the immediate passage of S.110.

Gasps and murmurs permeate the audience.

NEWSOM

S.110 authorizes the President to use any and all means necessary to accomplish our nation's strategic objective of regime change in Russia. We fully support this bill, and I move to bring it to an immediate voice vote.

RHODES

Is there a second?

Another SENATOR (50) rises.

SENATOR
Madam President, I second.

RHODES
The gentleman from Virginia seconds
the motion for a voice vote. All in
favor?

VOICES
AYE!

RHODES
All opposed?

Silence.

RHODES
The motion passes. All in favor of
S.110?

VOICES
AYE!

RHODES
All opposed?

Silence.

RHODES
The bill passes. S.110 will be sent to
the President for his signature. God
be with us all. We are adjourned.

She bangs the gavel.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

A COURIER (30) rushes in with the bill as passed by the House
and Senate. He opens a folder and sets it in front of the
president.

ALAN
Thanks.

Alan signs the bill. He picks up his desk phone and dials an
extension.

VOICE ON PHONE
(O.S.)
White House Military Office.

ALAN
This is the president. Initiate
Operation Valkyrie.

VOICE ON PHONE
(O.S.)
Yes, sir.

They hang up.

The door to the office opens.

In steps a tall, striking woman with dark features and green eyes. COBRA (30) nods to the President.

COBRA
Mr. President?

ALAN
Cobra.

He gets out of the chair and rushes to hug her.

She looks shocked.

He breaks the hug.

COBRA
Ah... Everything ok?

He resumes his calculating demeanor.

ALAN
Yes. I'm just relieved to see you. I
feel like I've been set in motion down
a path where I have no control, no
choice but to keep moving forward,
pushed by an invisible hand. I'm sorry
I haven't had time to check in since
the incident.

COBRA
You've had your hands full.

ALAN
It's all happening. We received
congressional approval this morning.
I'm giving you a field promotion to
Colonel. But I want you to be my RIO
for the Moscow strike.

COBRA

Sir, you're not really thinking of flying the mission, are you?

ALAN

The mission starts in Riga, Latvia and is a simple straight line to the Moscow air base. I will be personally taking this one, which is why I need you to plan the mission.

COBRA

Alan. I know this dream to serve was fulfilling some big calling for you when you insisted on it as vice president. But you are actually leading the country now, you can't seriously be in the trenches.

ALAN

You have to trust me, Cobra. I need to do this.

COBRA

Why?

ALAN

For the people.

COBRA

That's bullshit. There's something you're not telling me.

ALAN

There's a plan. I just need you to know that.

COBRA

I can't support this. You expect me to be able to focus during war time knowing that my chief is out there on the front lines?

ALAN

I'll be right beside you.

COBRA

As my commander, I have to execute your wishes. As your friend, I am not happy about this.

ALAN

I'm sorry, Cobra. This is just the way
it has to be.

Cobra stares him down, then spins to leave.

Alan watches after her.

-- Another flashback jolts the scene away. --

INT. ALAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alan's face is match cut to his face 13 years ago. A very different Alan. He's overweight, his skin is pale, eyes sunken. He sits in the dark behind a computer, furiously typing away on a keyboard.

ETHEREAL VOICE

Alan George.

Alan grabs his head in anger and frustration, trying to shut out the voice.

ALAN

Ugh!

He slams his head down on the desk.

EXT. PENTAGON - DAY

President George's motorcade arrives at the Pentagon. He gets out and walks into the building.

INT. PENTAGON - DAY

Multiple military officers greet the president and usher him into an operations center inside a SCIF-- Secure Compartmented Information Facility. The Secretary of Defense is waiting for him in a room bustling with activity and bursting with computer screens.

ALAN

I guess you weren't kidding when you
said you wanted to hack the shit out
of the Russians.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

I was serious, Mr. President. I think
we're on the same page.

ALAN

We are. I want to absolutely shatter their air defense networks and put them on their heels before I fly in. That's my interpretation of maneuver warfare.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Understood, sir.

ALAN

Talk me through this.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

You're watching the top one percent of our cyber teams while they penetrate the Russian internet and plant kill switches at junctions that have strategic value.

ALAN

It's perfect. What do you need from me?

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Just decisions, sir. If this blows up in our faces, we're going to need immediate action to resolve the situation. I just want to make sure it's consistent with the law.

ALAN

You defend the nation; I will take care of the heat.

Alan walks out. A broad smile crosses the Secretary of Defense's face.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

(to himself)

My kind of president.

INT. PENTAGON - DAY

President George walks into another section of the building, this one with a large screen showing the positions of ships and submarines overlaid on the Baltic sea and Barents sea. There are a lot of U.S. and allied submarines, which are marked with small flags, and a smaller number of Russian submarines marked with small flags.

The CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS (55) stands near the screen.

ALAN
(nods to him)
Chief.

CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
Sir, this is real-time positioning of our and our allies' naval assets and the Russian subs and surface combatants that they are tracking.

ALAN
So the moment we execute, they pull the trigger on those enemy ships.

CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
Yes, sir. All we need is the order and those Russian vessels will be gone. Same with their spy vessels that are interfering with our undersea cables.

ALAN
I want to get the second fleet and the sixth fleet as close as possible before we launch the air campaign.

CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
I think we can make that happen, sir. Stennis in the Barents and Truman in the Baltic would make sense.

ALAN
That sounds like a plan. How long to get in position?

CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
They're each about two days out.

---naval campaign---

---cyber campaign---

INT. PENTAGON - DAY

Alan stands beside the Secretary of Defense.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
You know, you're a natural at this. If I'm honest, we all had our doubts, but... Somehow you really know what

you're doing.

ALAN

Uh. Thank you, Mike. That means a lot to me.

They stare into a computer screen with black and green graphics.

Alan's gaze is intense. We are drawn into his eyes.

Suddenly the graphics on the computer are expanded beyond the edges of the screen.

Green and gold holographic geometrical shapes take over the room.

Alan is entranced.

The shapes bleed onto his skin, running across the surface like some sort of futuristic tattoo.

Mike does not see what is happening, he remains engaged with the computer screen.

Alan stares at him and then down at his hands.

The green and gold numbers, shapes, codes, flow across his palms and fingers.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: THIRTEEN YEARS EARLIER

Alan is about as far from the presidency as a person can be. He's an unemployed 29 year-old living at home with his parents. At this particular moment, he is guzzling Diet Coke and doing computer programming on his workstation in his pajamas, while looking very disheveled. Job applications and c.v./resume-type printouts are strewn about his desk, piling up next to past due bills. The screen shows him expertly editing a programming file in the Vim text editor.

ALAN

Sick of this shit.
(beat)
Take that!

He triumphantly saves the file, with yet another programming task demolished. He looks at the clock as the sun rises. Instead of going to bed, he keeps working and drinking diet

soda.

The hours pass in a montage or high speed as Alan sits at his desk working. Soon, it's nighttime again. Alan is still working on the computer, looking more and more tired/wired. His MOM (57) comes in the room.

MOM

Alan, don't you think it's time you took a break? You've been at it a couple of days.

ALAN

(rudely)

No. I'm almost at my breakthrough.

She leaves. Alan continues programming as another day passes. He has been sitting in essentially the same position for three days. His mother returns, wearing a different set of clothes.

MOM

Alan, I really think you need to get some rest.

ALAN

Leave me alone! I'm really close this time.

His mother leaves.

He starts getting paranoid.

The screen reveals he is no longer programming; he is instead typing an email addressed to the Director of the FBI, with the subject line "CRITICAL: ENEMY AGENTS DISCOVERED IN THE FBI." He starts off the email with "Dear sir, I believe I have discovered a hidden war in which Russia has infiltrated your agency over a period of years."

After a few moments, he completes the email and hits the send button.

He relaxes at last and closes his eyes, utterly spent.

A few beats.

Alan opens his eyes. A new visual field appears that is formed out of geometric shapes showing connections and links between objects-- which are invisible to the ordinary human eye.

Alan gets up and looks around, feeling as if he is in a virtual reality game.

Apparitions and spirits swirl around as if he can feel, but not see, them.

He starts moving involuntarily, as if guided by an unseen force. It causes him to stand ramrod- straight looking out into the street with a piercing glare.

His glare softens.

VOICE OF GOD (V.O.)
ALAN ANDREW GEORGE.

ALAN
(scared)
Who's there!?

VOICE OF GOD (V.O.)
YOU ARE A DISGRACE TO MY VISION OF
HUMANITY. YOU HAVE LIED, CHEATED,
STOLEN, AND FAILED TO REPENT. YOU HAVE
SHUNNED PEOPLE WHO SOUGHT TO BE A PART
OF YOUR LIFE. YOU HAVE BREACHED THE
TRUST I HAVE PLACED IN YOU. YOU HAVE
ALSO FAILED TO LIVE YOUR LIFE TO THE
FULL POTENTIAL THAT I HAVE DECREED.
(beat)

I FIND YOU GUILTY!

Alan is a quivering mess, unable to find any words in response to this divine decree.

He tries to speak, but fails.

After a moment, he goes to a closet and pulls out a small gun safe.

VOICE OF GOD
NO!

Alan hits the combination on the gun safe.

VOICE OF GOD
NO!

Alan opens the gun safe to reveal a handgun.

VOICE OF GOD
NO! DEATH IS NOT THE ANSWER.

From Alan's point of view, a large red "NO!" appears in his visual field in overwhelming size and color. Alan puts down the safe and starts praying.

ALAN
Only the penitent man will pass.
(beat)
Only the penitent man will pass.

Silence.

ALAN
The penitent man is humble before God.

Silence.

ALAN
The penitent man is humble, and kneels
before God.

He half-collapses, half kneels to the floor, and prostrates himself in order to accept God's judgment.

ALAN
I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry... I'm
sorry!

VOICE OF GOD (V.O.)
ALAN ANDREW GEORGE.

Alan waits.

VOICE OF GOD (V.O.)
RISE NOW AND ACCEPT YOUR POTENTIAL.

Through sobbing tears and his completely broken down state, young Alan looks at the codes of green flowing across his hands.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Alan's hands are normal, he looks up from them and realizes where he is.

Interviewer MATHESON LOOPER (50) sits in a chair across from him and Cobra.

VOICE

(V.O.)

This is CNN.

MATHESON

Welcome to Matheson Looper 720.

(beat)

We're very pleased to be joined this morning by two special guests. The President of the United States, Alan George, and his wingman, Cobra.

Welcome!

Alan is in a sharp business suit, he begins to settle in to his surroundings after being disoriented. Cobra is a stunner in a dress and makeup, which are a marked contrast from her flight suit and plain earlier appearance.

COBRA

Thank you.

ALAN

Ah, yes. Thank you.

MATHESON

Let's start with the obvious: Mr. President, why do you feel like you have to do this?

ALAN

I firmly believe in this cause, and I am willing to risk my own life to accomplish our nation's goals. I think the President should bear the same risks as the many dedicated service members in DoD face every day.

MATHESON

But you already risk your life on a daily basis. You're a lightning rod for threats on your life and crazies who want a piece of you.

ALAN

I have the best personal security and executive protection that money can buy. They're just not the same risks as being in the service. Service members risk their lives every single day with barely a thank-you in return, and sometimes not even that.

MATHESON

Why didn't you just join the service twenty years ago like you wish you had done?

ALAN

(wistfully)

Back then...I was not brave enough.

Stunned silence.

MATHESON

You are a breath of fresh air in terms of your honesty, sir. Not many people, much less politicians, would admit to that.

(to Cobra)

Colonel? What do you make of all this?

COBRA

I'm still getting used to the idea that the President is doing this great thing. I'm happy to be a part of it.

MATHESON

But what do you really make of it?

COBRA

That is what I think... but I also think it's an unreasonable risk for the President to personally fly combat missions in a war. This is someone who is basically a hero and a role model, and it would be a shame if something happened to him. The world would lose a rare man. One who truly embodies the values our great nation stands for.

Alan is taken aback and gets teary-eyed at this huge compliment.

COBRA

Part of me admires the bravery, and the other part of me wonders whether there's some other reason he feels like he has to do this. If I gain a better understanding of that, I can find some measure of peace or acceptance of his decision. But above all else, I trust my commander.

MATHESON

Very moving indeed. But how are the rest of us, who do not know our dark horse president so closely, supposed feel the same trust? I mean no offense, Mr. President, but you are a newcomer on the political scene, a nobody by most standards. It's a big ask of the American people when you have no track record to point to.

ALAN

No offense taken. It's a fair point. If the American people need proven track records, I'm happy to say they need look no further than the team that surrounds me. No one person can do this job alone, and anyone that claims they can is trying to sell you something. I'm not asking for blind faith, but look to the people who have put their trust in me and then you can make your own decision.

MATHESON

Well you've heard it here first. President Alan George asking you to judge for yourself based on the team leading our nation into a war like no other.

INT. GREEN ROOM - DAY

Alan and Cobra take off their TV makeup as they chat about the appearance.

ALAN

I can't believe you said that about me. I'm honored.

COBRA

I meant what I said.

ALAN

And you meant what you said about wanting to know my secret.

COBRA

Yes.

ALAN

Very well.

(beat)

Thirteen years ago, I had a vision. It was a vision of the future. It could only have been God's voice. The voice told me that I would some day become President.

A look of shock crosses Cobra's face.

ALAN

The voice made it clear that I had to live an honest and worthy life. So I've tried my best to do that. One thing I have to do is serve our country properly. My interpretation of that is fighting for what I believe in. And that brings us to where we are today.

COBRA

That's it?

ALAN

Yeah.

COBRA

Jeez, Alan. I thought you had a death wish or were planted by some third foreign government interfering in our politics!

They laugh away the discomfort.

COBRA (CONTD)

We're good. I just think that maybe this came from your own head instead of from God.

ALAN

Do you believe in God?

COBRA

No. Do you? Like really?

ALAN

I don't know. But this actually came true. I'm leaning toward believing.

(beat)

I was in a bad place. You wouldn't

have recognized me for the man I am today. It was God that pulled me out of it and pushed me onto the path that I was meant for, told me that there was something more out there for me.

COBRA

We've all struggled with demons, it's a testament to human strength that there aren't more people who succumb to addiction and listlessness. Life can feel directionless so often. It's up to us to assign our own meaning to it.

ALAN

It doesn't mean we have to navigate the darkness without a guiding light.

COBRA

But not even God knows the future. What happened to free will?

ALAN

I don't know about that. Maybe God knows a limited number of possible futures, and this one is the one that just happened to become reality.

COBRA

Could be.

ALAN

Either way, I think the best we can all do is soldier on as if this is happening according to some sort of plan.

COBRA

About that.

ALAN

What?

COBRA

I trust you, but I'm not ready to hand all the reins over to some God's plan. There are real issues that we're facing here that need attention stat.

ALAN

Like what?

Suddenly in rushes Sam and Julio. Clipboards in hand, bags, they're rushing to move the group on to the war room.

SAM

Alan, Cobra! That was great. A true show of solidarity.

JULIO

You guys could have shown a few points higher in likability though.

SAM

Knock it off. We'll get to all that, you guys looked awesome out there.

ALAN

Thank you, Sam. Julio. But please, Cobra was just about to share her concern with me.

They all look to her.

COBRA

Matheson is right, you don't have a track record with the American people yet and we need their full support if we're really going to go down this road and succeed as a united nation of states after it. You can point to your team, but they don't really know us either.

SAM

She's right, Alan. It's what we were going to say too. You're sweet, you might think the world of us, but we don't have any star power or political prowess in the eyes of the people. To them I'm just dedicated lackey, Cobra's just a soldier, and Julio's the grandson of JFK's housekeeper. It doesn't buy us much.

ALAN

What are you suggesting?

COBRA

We need a new player. Someone truly

unifying.

JULIO

Hey. I take offense to this. I'm a lot more than what Sam just boxed me in to be. I'm also the solution to our little problem.

SAM

Explain.

JULIO

It's going to take some digging. And a whole lot of executive power.

COBRA

Sir, the flight to Latvia is wheels up at 1500.

Alan checks his watch.

ALAN

She's right, we don't have time to hear all the details. Whatever it is, if you think it can help, I want you and Sam to run with it. You'll just have to fill us in after the mission.

SAM

Copy that, sir. We'll handle it.

EXT. JOINT BASE ANDREWS - DAY

Alan, Cobra, Nicodemus, and Kenobi get in their F-15E's for the long flight from Maryland to Riga, Latvia, which requires airborne refueling.

EXT. SKY OVER THE ATLANTIC - NIGHT

The flight passes in silence, with the drone of the F-15 engines being the only real sound.

INT. RIGA AIR BASE BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

Alan, Cobra, Nicodemus, and Kenobi stand around a video screen showing the planned mission into Russia.

COBRA

The rest of our squadron is headed to Kaliningrad naval base as a diversion. Eighteen planes on a massive strike.

For the Moscow military base, it's just everyone here. Welcome to Blade Runner.

She draws on the screen indicating the direction of flight.

COBRA

Our mission is to make it to Moscow, bomb the main Russian air base, and return, all without encountering any MiG's, if possible. Judge and I are Blade Runner one, Nicodemus and Kenobi are Blade Runner two. I'm Judge's RIO and also flight lead. Kenobi, you are Nicodemus's RIO.

(beat)

Our cover is a pair of F-22's, but they will only cover us to the Russian border.

She draws icons of F-22 jets near the Russian border with Latvia.

COBRA

The government doesn't want to risk any F-22's since they're almost a billion dollars each. Whereas we in F-15E's are...

NICODEMUS

Brave.

KENOBI

Expendable.

They share an ironic laugh.

COBRA

Exactly. Anyway, our load out is heavy on the bombs. We need to stay at angels point five or below to avoid enemy air defenses. See you in the air.

EXT. RIGA AIR BASE - NIGHT

Alan, Cobra, Nicodemus, and Kenobi walk from the ready room to the flight line toward their F-15E's, with the only sounds being their footsteps and the rustling of their gear.

ALAN
I feel the need...

COBRA
...the need for speed!

They high-five each other.

ALAN
Ow!

They near their F-15E. Alan inspects the external gun pod on the aircraft.

COBRA
Wow, you really have been waiting your whole life for this.

ALAN
The chance to serve my country in the truest sense of the word. You're damn right I have.

COBRA
That's a nice lookin' toy.

ALAN
I told them I wanted the GAU-8 for this one. They told me I could have the GAU-13. So we settled on the GAU-13 plus the onboard gun. 500 rounds of '20, 353 rounds of '30. 853 rounds total. I get around fifteen seconds of shooting.

COBRA
You're too trigger-happy, dude.

ALAN
Nothing wrong with being prepared.

They get into the F-15E and do their preflight checks. When they finish, they put on night vision goggles and turn down the brightness on their cockpit displays until the screens are barely visible. They take off along with their wingmen in an identical F-15E, NICODEMUS (40) and KENOBI (45).

EXT. SKY OVER LATVIA - NIGHT

Alan and Cobra fly close to the Earth in order to avoid Russian air defenses and radar. Nicodemus and Kenobi follow

them.

INT. F-15E COCKPIT - NIGHT

ALAN

Angels point five, mach point eight.

COBRA

Roger.

They fly in silence, occasionally pressing buttons and flipping switches.

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Blade Runner one and two, this is Gold Rush. You've got a pair of bogeys, zero-nine-zero at forty-five miles.

ALAN

Roger. Do you think they see us?

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Stand by.

(beat)

Negative. It's a pair of Su-27's headed out to the Baltic. They're going to miss you by at least twenty miles.

ALAN

Roger. I'm not seeing them on radar-- they're over my horizon.

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Roger.

They continue the flight.

EXT. SKY OVER LATVIA - NIGHT

The two-ship flight continues.

NICODEMUS

(V.O.)

Hey Judge, I'm picking up a bogey at zero-nine-zero. Do you see it, too?

ALAN
(V.O.)
Negative. Cobra?

COBRA
(V.O.)
Negative.

KENOBI
(V.O.)
I'm now seeing two bogeys at zero-
nine- zero and twenty-two miles.

ALAN
(V.O.)
I'm not seeing them.

COBRA
(V.O.)
Verify radar status?

INT. F-15E COCKPIT - NIGHT

ALAN
Radar is operating normally. At least
it says so.

COBRA
Reboot?

ALAN
Negative, I'm fine with using
Nicodemus's view.

COBRA
Roger. Kenobi, are you seeing a turn?

KENOBI
(O.S.)
Negative. Wait...
(beat)
Affirmative, I'm seeing a turn toward
us. Gold Rush, can you confirm?

VOICE ON RADIO
(O.S.)
Gold Rush confirms. The computer
identifies two Su-27's headed your

VOICE ON RADI
way. Zero-nine-zero at twenty miles

and closing at 800 miles an hour.

ALAN

I'm not seeing them. Nicodemus, how many slammers do you have?

NICODEMUS

(O.S.)

Two.

ALAN

I have two but I don't see a return on my screen yet. Want to handle it?

NICODEMUS

(O.S.)

Affirmative. Stand by.

INT. F-15E COCKPIT - NIGHT

Nicodemus and Kenobi fly a jet that is identical in every respect to Judge and Cobra's plane.

Nicodemus's display shows two Su-27's. He locks them up on radar and fires one AMRAAM missile, followed shortly by another one. The missile icons fly rapidly toward the Su-27 icons.

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Blade Runner one and two, this is Gold Rush. We're picking up four more fighters coming into view at angels one, bearing zero-nine-zero.

ALAN

(O.S.)

Roger. Now I see the first two.

INT. F-15E COCKPIT - NIGHT

Alan adjusts the radar display, which reveals the two Su-27's that Nicodemus fired on. More icons appear.

ALAN

I only have two slammers and two sidewinders. That's four new bogeys. Any ideas?

COBRA

We launch slammers on two of them and

get close enough for the sidewinders.

ALAN
That will be close.

VOICE ON RADIO
(O.S.)
Blade Runner, you've got missiles
inbound.

ALAN
Shit. Activating countermeasures.

Icons of several inbound missiles appear on the display. Alan flips a couple of switches to activate jamming equipment.

VOICE ON RADIO
(O.S.)
Blade Runner, you're now in Russia.
Also your jammers are visible to the
enemy.

ALAN
Roger.
(beat)
Firing.

Alan launches two AMRAAM missiles against two of the new bogeys. The outbound missiles appear on the screen.

EXT. SKY OVER RUSSIA - NIGHT

The first two AMRAAM missiles from Nicodemus destroy two of the Su-27's that were heading toward an intercept. One jet is hit in the engine inlet and the engine explodes; the other is hit by the AMRAAM proximity fuse and both engines are disabled by shrapnel. The pilots eject.

EXT. SKY OVER RUSSIA - NIGHT

The next two AMRAAM missiles from Judge destroy two more Su-27's. That leaves two Su-27's still pursuing Blade Runner.

EXT. SKY OVER RUSSIA - NIGHT

The Russian missiles are jammed by the F-15E jamming pods, and they all miss. The Blade Runner group continues toward Moscow until the enemy Su-27's are within visual range.

INT. F-15E COCKPIT - NIGHT

ALAN

I have the enemy fighters in sight. I want to save my sidewinders if possible-- let's gun them head-on.

NICODEMUS

(O.S.)

Roger.

Alan lines up a shot with the onboard 20MM gatling gun. The gun sight clearly lines up with one of the incoming fighters. Alan fires a couple of short bursts, and a few tracers streak out. A round hits the tail of one of the Su-27's. The rest of the shots miss.

EXT. SKY OVER RUSSIA - NIGHT

Alan and Nicodemus turn to pursue the bandits. An aerial dogfight ensues. Nicodemus makes quick work of the disabled bandit with his cannon. Alan takes out the other bandit with a sidewinder missile.

The F-15E's regroup and continue with the mission.

COBRA

Judge, we have more inbound. Four bogeys dead ahead, 23 miles at 700 miles an hour.

ALAN

At least we're getting gradually lighter.

The radar screen shows more icons approaching.

A moment later, Alan fires a sidewinder missile, which hits one of the bandits and causes the jet to explode in a large fireball.

As the remaining bandits approach, Alan sights in on another bandit and fires a burst from his 20MM gun. He hits the bandit in the engine. A couple other bandits shoot back with their cannons, the rounds barely missing Blade Runner one. One of the bandits finds a lucky angle in a turn and gets on George's tail.

NICODEMUS

Watch your back, Judge, watch your back!

The Su-27 is on Alan like a cheap suit and stays with him through several maneuvers.

ALAN

I can't shake him!

NICODEMUS

I'm on him, Judge. Hold on.

It's not clear where Nicodemus is, but he seems confident.

ALAN

Blast it, Nic, where are you?

From the Russian fighter's perspective, Nicodemus appears out of nowhere and blasts him head-on with the 20MM gun, with tracers filling the screen. Alan breathes a sigh of relief.

ALAN

Thanks, Nic. Good shooting.

The last remaining bandit fires a missile at Nicodemus, but it misses. Nicodemus guns the bandit with his cannon. The mission continues.

EXT. SKY OVER RUSSIAN MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

Blade Runner one and two drop bombs on an airfield complex. Alan gets enthusiastic with his 30MM gun pod and shoots up the bomber aircraft that are sitting on the tarmac. The attack devastates the air base and leaves it in flames.

COBRA

We're Winchester on missiles, low on guns. Getting close to bingo fuel.

ALAN

Turning back. Let's hope this thing runs on fumes.

(beat)

Gold Rush, this is Blade Runner. We hit the target and are bingo fuel. Returning to base.

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Roger. Take angels point five bearing one-eight-zero. We've got an escort of F-22's waiting for you.

ALAN

Roger, angels point five bearing one-eight-zero.

The return to Latvia is uneventful, but tense. The jets follow the Earth in order to avoid Russian air defenses and fighters. They meet up with a pair of F-22's at the Russian border.

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Blade Runner, this is Gold Rush. You are back in Latvian airspace.

Cobra and Alan breathe a lot easier.

COBRA

Thank god.

ALAN

Nicodemus, you're the man.

NICODEMUS

(O.S.)

No, no-- you're the man.

They share a laugh.

EXT. RIGA AIR BASE - NIGHT

The two jets land at the Latvian air base, and everyone gets out of the planes.

INT. RIGA AIR BASE BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

A large screen displays the route into Russia as flown by Blade Runner, with markers at various waypoints. A COLONEL (50) is writing/typing notes as he mouses over the icons, which pop up information about each part of the mission. Alan, Cobra, Nicodemus, and Kenobi take seats with a view of the screen.

COLONEL

Welcome, everyone. Let's begin the debrief.

(beat)

Cobra, you have the floor.

Cobra gets up and stands in front of the screen.

COBRA

Thank you, Colonel.

(beat)

The mission started off with a basic incursion into Russia, in essentially a straight line from Riga to Moscow, angels point five.

She pulls up a Google Earth-type visual showing the pilot's point of view at 500 feet.

COBRA

We encountered eight Russian fighters, which is more than we expected. Eight kills, zero losses. Although the mission was a success, I am still declaring four major errors.

The screen shows a zoomed-in view of Russian air defenses in the route taken by Blade Runner, including the bandits that attempted to intercept them.

COBRA

First major error: Judge's radar. When we couldn't see the bandits Nicodemus was picking up, we should have rebooted immediately rather than risk flying blind.

ALAN

I confirm the error.

COBRA

Second major error: Judge turns to go after a bandit and ends up with the other bandit on his tail.

A visual shows Judge catching a bandit on his tail in 3D.

COBRA

He should have been less aggressive and more conservative, and let the Russians make a mistake before going after them. If Nicodemus hadn't saved us, none of us would be here today.

ALAN

I confirm the error.

COBRA

Third major error-- and this is a

controversial one-- bringing the 30MM gun pod in the first place. It added unnecessary weight and gave Judge too much ammunition.

A schematic of the F-15E pops up showing the size and weight of the 30MM gun pod.

ALAN

This one I'm not sure about. That 30MM gun is great for ground targets.

COBRA

Fourth major error: Judge goes Winchester on missiles before reaching the target. We had no missiles left for the return flight and were simply lucky that no one found us.

ALAN

I confirm the error.

COBRA

It's sheer luck that we are still here today to even talk about this.

ALAN

Sheer luck? Or Divine intervention?

Cobra shoots him a look.

COLONEL

How about Nicodemus and Kenobi?

COBRA

Textbook flying. A great job, and no major errors.

NICODEMUS

All in a day's work. I got lucky too.

COBRA

Give yourself more credit than that, you saved our asses.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Alan and Cobra talk as they change out of their flight suits into regular clothes.

ALAN

Do you ever feel like an external force is directing your actions?

She stares at him for a long moment.

COBRA

No.

ALAN

I've been thinking about our conversation the other day. I do feel like God knows the future.

COBRA

(disbelieving)

Why?

ALAN

I feel like I'm living a life that was planned out for me in advance, as if there was an architect out there building The Matrix.

COBRA

I refuse to accept that. There may be things in life that are out of our control, but it always comes down to us and our own choices.

ALAN

I don't like feeling like I don't have control of my life either. But with everything that's happened to get me this far... There has to be something greater, but it makes me wonder... Why me, and why would God do something like this?

COBRA

I don't know. Don't much want to, either.

ALAN

It just feels like there has to be some sort of a plan.

COBRA

Maybe you were destined to be some type of role model.

ALAN

Trust me: I don't want that to be the case. But I can't shake this idea that I am onto God's secret and somehow I know what is going to happen, or at least what can happen.

COBRA

Alan, I think you need to see somebody. You're starting to make me worried about you.

ALAN

There are just so many questions and not enough answers. But finally, here, I think there is an answer: some premonitions are valid.

COBRA

Premonitions are impossible.

ALAN

I beg to differ.

COBRA

I'm not going to convince you, so let me just say: I'll keep it to myself, but as your friend I'm saying that I think you need some counseling. Also, don't mention this to your cabinet members or they'll twenty-fifth amendment your ass.

ALAN

Yeah, thanks.

COBRA

And no more of that gunslinger shit you pulled today. You haven't even picked a VP yet, if we lost you out there, the country would have no one to turn to for leadership.

Sam and Julio burst in to the locker rooms.

SAM

(out of breath)
Yea... About that!

JULIO

We couldn't wait.

ALAN
What's going on?

SAM
Consider our mission, also
accomplished.

She turns to look back at the doorway they just entered from,
as does Julio.

Everyone's gaze is fixed on the door.

Cobra looks inquisitively to Alan.

He holds his breath.

A hand appears in the door.

In walks...

John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States.

Alive and glowing.

Alan's jaw drops to the floor.

COBRA
Did that voice in your head ever
mention anything about this, boss?

ALAN
Whoa. No. This, this is new.

JULIO
Ladies and gentleman, a man who needs
no introduction...!

JFK
Uh... Hello. I'm John, Kennedy. I
think.

COBRA
Uh oh.

ALAN
Umm. Guys, someone care to explain?

Kennedy stands tall and handsome, albeit fairly bewildered.

Anxious Sam steps in to try and catch the team up to speed.

SAM

Bear with me here, Chief... This might be a hard one to swallow.

ALAN

The truth, Sam. That's all I'm asking for.

SAM

Well sir, we all know that this country has a longstanding history of mystery and intrigue. Conspiracies and secrets. President JFK's untimely death is no exception.

JULIO

Only some of those theories are just straight crazy. Like that the Illuminati assassinated him in order to gain power over the Federal Reserve.

SAM

Right. Well, it's hard to discredit anything when he's standing here living and breathing with us.

ALAN

Then it's actually him?

SAM

This is a fact, sir. In 1966, three years after the president's assassination, it was discovered that his brain, which had been removed during the autopsy and stored in the National Archives, had gone missing. Conspiracy theorists have long suggested the missing organ would have proved Kennedy was not shot from the back by Lee Harvey Oswald, but from the front.

ALAN

So where did his brain go?

JULIO

Frozen, sir. Taken for safe keeping and cryogenically stored until the day when it would be needed again.

COBRA

I don't believe this.

JULIO

Believe what you will, sister! My grandpops was there!

COBRA

Why isn't he saying anything? How did you even get the technology to unfreeze him? Whose body is that??

JULIO

Whoa Cobra, slow down.

COBRA

Slow down?! There is a dead president standing in front of me and you're telling me to "slow down"?!

ALAN

Cobra.

(puts his hand on her shoulder)

It's ok. Somethings require a leap of faith.

COBRA

This is insane, Alan. More insane than the insanity that you've been telling me lately. We are way beyond a leap of faith here.

SAM

Scientists have been working on a solution to bringing back the cryogenically frozen for a century. The technology isn't actually all that new. It just hasn't been used to this extent before... Of course, no one has had the full unadulterated resources of the United States Government either.

JULIO

They've even been cloning JFK's body just waiting for this moment. Nic Cage would be proud.

ALAN

To Cobra's point... Why isn't he talking? Does he remember who he is?

JFK
Hello. I'm John... Kennedy.

He shakes Alan's hand.

ALAN
Uh. Yes, hello.

He gives Sam a "help me" questioning glance.

SAM
Yes, well... We had to rush the process a little. And there was some damage to certain parts of his hippocampus, which is responsible for memory loss.

JULIO
You could say he's still "warming up".

SAM
Don't be crass.
(to the group)
But yes, he's coming back a little slower than we hoped.

ALAN
John. It's a pleasure to welcome you back. We've truly missed you.

JFK
Thank you. I- I can't remember why I left. Or where I went. Can you tell me?

ALAN
There are many things that I would like to fill you in on. And we will get to as many of them as possible. But first I need to know... Whoever you are now, whatever memories you have, are you ready to serve your country once again?

COBRA
No. No, this is crazy.

SAM
This was the plan.

COBRA

THIS?!

ALAN

Cobra, it's the only way. Who else could be a better second? More unifying? The ultimate leader to band the country together in support of this war?

COBRA

He barely remembers his own name!

ALAN

He's still the same man at his core. All I need to know is how he feels about serving his country once again.

JFK

I do know some things, sir. And I know I wouldn't never turn down an opportunity to do right by my country. If they need me, I'm here.

ALAN

That's exactly what I thought you would say. And by God, do they need you.

COBRA

You've lost your mind, Alan.

Julio and Sam look at each other nervously.

Alan looks at them. Then at JFK.

He tries to steer Cobra away to talk privately.

ALAN

Why don't we discuss this on our own.

COBRA

No.

She takes a step back.

COBRA (CONTD)

You're asking me to follow you into battle, into a battle where you are putting your life on the line. My captain and my friend, and I can't

trust your judgment right now.
(beat)
I can't.

ALAN
Very well. I would never ask you to do something that you do not feel comfortable with. But with the new VP selected, mission Eastern Dusk is a go in the morning.

COBRA
I won't be there.

ALAN
As you wish, colonel.

Cobra leaves.

It feels like the air has been sucked out of the room.

SAM
Sir, are you sure that's a good idea? Cobra's the best pilot you have, and it doesn't help our image of a unified front with the public.

JULIO
Couldn't you have demanded she stay?

ALAN
That's not what good leadership is made of. We all have free will here. And if Cobra is not inspired by the mission, then it's her choice not to be a part of it. We will find a way to make due.

They all turn to JFK, silent, but still standing strong.

ALAN
Besides... We have JFK on our side now.

INT. NEWS REPORT - DAY

Two TV anchors sit side by side and report with astonishment.

ANCHOR
Well, to be honest folks, I'm not quite sure what to say.

CO-ANCHOR

It's unprecedented times to say the least, check your ears twice, three times, because you won't believe the news coming out of the White House.

ANCHOR

Sorely missed and beloved dead President, John F. Kennedy is BACK.

CO-ANCHOR

Back, and the new vice president!

ANCHOR

(laughs)

I'm sorry, Jenny, can you pinch me?

CO-ANCHOR

That would be considered sexual harassment, Jim, but I can tell you that you are not dreaming.

ANCHOR

Response from Americans seems to be wildly split down the middle with some being undoubtedly in favor of the resurrection and others being absolutely appalled.

CO-ANCHOR

Beloved hero? Or unnatural zombie? That seems to be the debate taking over the news cycle.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Alan paces alone behind the sturdy desk.

He appears distraught. Worry lines threaten to give away his composure.

A KNOCK. Sam peeks her head in.

SAM

Sir?

ALAN

Sam, come in.

SAM

I'm sorry to disturb you.

ALAN

You're never a disturbance, you know how much I value my staff and friends, the people I can really trust. You're a welcome sight right now. Is something urgent?

SAM

I just feel we miscalculated when we chose JFK as your VP candidate. I thought- I just thought there wasn't any way our citizens would do anything other than show their full support. But we were wrong. Would we have been better off just letting them be unhappy about the war? Is there any point in trying to unify a country who seemingly never agrees on anything?

ALAN

A weighted question. One that men and women much smarter than I have tried to answer for a long time.

SAM

I'm sorry, sir. You have more pressing issues on your mind- the mission.

ALAN

This is equally important. What we do tomorrow. The action will be catastrophic. It's up to us to choose how to rebuild afterwards.

(beat)

47 different men have stood where I'm standing today. Each faced what seemed like impossible choices at the time. Each decision must have felt like it would bring about the end of the world. Yet here we are, here we continue to be. One nation, under God, indivisible...

(beat)

Sometimes I feel my choices are not my own. Like they are guided by a higher power. It may not look like it now, but I believe bringing Kennedy back was the right choice.

SAM

How can you be so sure, sir?

ALAN

I'm not. We can never be certain.
That's why we must have faith. And I
have faith in you, in my country, in
the American people. When the time is
right, they will come through.

SAM

That feels like a fairytale. I just
hope I'm around to see that day.

ALAN

As do I.

(beat)

But whether I am here or not- Our
legacy and cause for the greater good
is what will continue on. JFK knew
that, and I believe he is a prime
example of so many continuing to do
good work even after their leader has
fallen.

SAM

You're a good man, Alan. As good a
leader as he was- is- er... Is?

Alan is deeply moved by the comparison.

ALAN

Thank you. That- That is incredibly
kind of you.

SAM

It's the truth. Now, I think we both
best get some sleep. The mission
leaves in just a couple of hours.

Alan nods.

ALAN

To a new dawn.

SAM

And Eastern Dusk...

She leaves.

Alan stands alone behind the desk once more.

His fingers trace the historic wood.

INT. RIGA AIR BASE BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Back in the briefing room.

This time Alan is the flight lead.

Cobra's seat sits empty.

Alan looks over to it and sadly scans the room.

There's no sign of her.

Alan proceeds.

ALAN

The NSA has just provided us an intercept showing the Russian President's itinerary today. He is scheduled to drive in a small motorcade, instead of fly, from the Kremlin to Saint Petersburg. We thought he was going to fly from Moscow to Siberia in order to hide out in a missile silo, but that is not the case. He's instead apparently hiding in plain sight, and in disguise.

(beat)

Our mission is to perform a sneak attack on the motorcade somewhere between Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

He gestures to a map of the highway between Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

NICODEMUS

Are we sure this isn't disinformation? It seems like a huge risk for him to do that, and really out of character.

ALAN

We're sure. The intercept was from a phone inside President Putin's security detail. That person has no idea his phone is compromised.

Alan pulls up a screenshot of the intercept on a monitor, which shows the time of departure from Moscow and the time of arrival in Saint Petersburg, plus an audio waveform.

NICODEMUS

This could be a trap.

ALAN

Negative. Over the last 24 hours we have gained near-total air superiority in the Western part of Russia. President Putin is now the most wanted man in the world. If he flew out of Moscow, his plane would be hit within minutes. Driving away from the capital incognito actually makes a lot more sense, since everyone is looking for him there.

(beat)

In any case, we will have drone support to confirm he gets in the vehicles at the Kremlin, and we'll also have continuous coverage of the route.

A RQ-170 Sentinel drone schematic appears on the monitor.

We are to take him out with a Hellfire missile or 20MM gunfire, at our discretion.

KENOBI

Why doesn't the CIA just take him out with a drone?

ALAN

Less reliable, and we want positive confirmation of the kill. Also, if I'm honest, I want to pull the trigger so no one else has to. Executive Order 12333 bans political assassinations. This isn't an assassination because it's authorized by law. But it still would make me feel guilty if someone else had to do it.

KENOBI

You're a true role model, captain.

NICODEMUS

Always the first to accept responsibility.

COBRA (O.S.)

But for whose agenda?

Cobra enters the room in uniform.

ALAN

Cobra!

COBRA

Sir. I've always been honest with you. I'm not going to stop now. This whole mission feels like a vendetta.

ALAN

I appreciate your honesty. This guy killed Tito Jameson and tried to kill me. Sometimes vendettas are o.k.

They stand around in silence contemplating Alan's remark.

ALAN (CONTD)

Team dismissed. You all know your stations. Let's get to it.

Everyone shuffles about to leave and get ready except Cobra.

Alan approaches her.

ALAN

I'm so glad you're here.

COBRA

I wasn't sure... Given the amount of "honesty" I've been sharing lately.

ALAN

The friends who tell you exactly how it is will always be welcomed here. If I wanted a yes man I'd visit the Senate.

COBRA

Alan. You are my friend, and my commander above all else. I can't say I understand everything that you are doing, but I swore an oath to stand by you and that means I have to trust you.

(beat)

That, and you've never given me a reason not to.

ALAN

I don't plan on starting today. Let's go take down a bad guy.

They grip hands in firm agreement, pulling each other in with a look of affirmation.

EXT. SKY OVER LATVIA - DAY

The two F-15E's take off again.

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Sorcerer, this is Noble Eagle. Take angels point five bearing zero-one-five for 300 miles. Then turn to zero-seven-zero toward the target. Intercept after approximately 150 miles.

INT. F-15E COCKPIT - DAY

ALAN

Roger. Sorcerer one and two at angels point five bearing zero-one-five.

NICODEMUS

Roger.

The flight over the Baltic is uneventful.

The planes soar at breakneck speeds, but together they almost appear suspended in air.

ALAN

Noble Eagle, this is Sorcerer. Turning to zero-seven-zero. Angels point five.

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Roger.

The flight over the Russian countryside is quiet.

Allied planes are everywhere, their air superiority is undoubtedly clear.

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Sorcerer, this is Noble Eagle. You are approaching the target.

ALAN

I have the vehicles in sight. Which vehicle is the target in?

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Unclear. You'll have to hit both.

ALAN

Roger. Targeting the lead vehicle.

Alan hits the controls for the Hellfire missiles, and his head-up display shows targeting symbology over the first of the three vehicles in President Putin's motorcade.

ALAN

I have a lock. Three, two, one, rifle.

He fires. The missile streaks toward the motorcade and blasts the lead vehicle to pieces. The second and third vehicle panic stop and come to rest on the highway.

ALAN

Coming back around for the second.

VOICE ON RADIO

Sorcerer hold, we're getting static.
Movement on the ground. Missiles.
Engage in evasive maneuvering.

ALAN

Roger, Noble Eagle. Evasive maneuvers engaged.

Alan pulls his plane up just as a ground missile whizzes past.

VOICE ON RADIO

Continue evasion. Missile on lock.

ALAN

I can't shake it.

NICODEMUS

Kenobi and I engaged, we can't get to you Sorcerer, our own tails are locked.

Just then an explosion to the rear of Alan's plane.

COBRA

You're clear, Sorcerer.

ALAN

Cobra. Man, am I glad you put on that

flight suit today.

COBRA

I've got your back chief. Go in for the kill so we can get out of here!

EXT. HIGHWAY IN RUSSIA - DAY

President Putin and some bodyguards get out of the second vehicle, shouting indistinctly in Russian.

A bodyguard pops the trunk on the car and pulls out a shoulder-mounted missile launcher. Putin runs behind one of the vehicles.

INT. F-15E COCKPIT - DAY

Alan's screen shows the missile launcher being set up.

ALAN

Not this time.

Before the bodyguard can get a shot off, Alan guns the whole area with a long burst of 20MM rounds. The Russian president, his bodyguards, and the remaining vehicles are shot to pieces in a hail of gunfire, with the incendiary rounds also triggering a secondary explosion of the shoulder-mounted missile launcher.

Nicodemus guns the area a second time, ensuring no one is left alive.

ALAN

That is a kill. Mission freaking accomplished.

COBRA

Yeah!

NICODEMUS

(O.S.)

Good job, Judge.

ALAN

Thanks.

KENOBI

(O.S.)

You're one in a million.

EXT. HIGHWAY IN RUSSIA - DAY

No one is moving, and there are body parts strewn about the remains of the three cars. The smoking cars are riddled with large bullet holes and also shrapnel from the missile explosion.

Civilians who come upon the scene don't even bother trying to help, due to the obvious futility of doing so.

INT. F-15E COCKPIT - DAY

ALAN

Noble Eagle, this is Sorcerer. Target destroyed. Returning to base.

VOICE ON RADIO

(O.S.)

Roger. Take angels two bearing two-seven-zero.

The return to Latvia is somber, the crews fly in silence.

INT. RIGA AIR BASE - DAY

The crews exit their aircrafts.

The Secretary of Defense comes rushing up with an entourage of worried soldiers.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Mr. President?

ALAN

Wee've got to stop meeting like this, Mike.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

I'm sorry sir.

(beat)

First off, I wanted to say thanks. You and your colleagues have changed the war.

Cobra approaches and stands beside her commander.

He places a proud hand on her shoulder.

ALAN

No, Mike; we have changed the world.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Indeed, sir. Our NATO allies are going to take the lead on the transitional government following the dismissal of most of the Russian ministers. There's a lot of work left to do, but you and the rest of Sorcerer did the key piece.

ALAN

Now what's the real reason you're here?

The secretary hesitates.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

It's the capital, sir.

COBRA

We just took down the biggest threat to world politics and you're saying there are problems at home?

ALAN

Easy Cobra.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

It's the response to JFK. With you on mission, the people have completely lost it. They're protesting at the capital steps. Things could get ugly, we need to get you away from here.

ALAN

Not a chance. I've spent too much time away from home soil already. I need to be on the ground here.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

I really don't think-

ALAN

This is not up for discussion.

COBRA

I really wouldn't try arguing with him.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Very well sir...

ALAN

Now take me to my second. It's time we showed the people why we brought Mr. Kennedy back in the first place. It's time to remind them just how great a nation we can truly be together.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Alan barges through the door, renewed purpose behind every step.

His team is in line behind him; Sam, Cobra, Kenobi and Nicodemus, as well as the Secretary of State.

Julio and JFK are standing by already in the office.

At the grand entrance, Julio stands at attention, JFK coolly turns to the crowd.

ALAN

I hear there's been some trouble at home.

JFK

I hear there are congratulations in order. A successful mission. Well done, commander.

They shake hands.

Two inspired leaders.

ALAN

Thank you. Words that sound like a dream coming from you.

(beat)

But it's time to wake up. What's going on?

JULIO

Ever since the press conference announcing JFK, shit has hit the fan everywhere. Half the country is outraged at the Russia strike and believes it was all a part of your own personal hit list, the other half thinks it's end times because of the ex-presidents resurrection, and the other half are even more upset only because you didn't also bring back

Jackie O! And nearly all of them are under the impression that you're suffering from mental delusions and that you have a God complex or believe yourself to be some sort of divine entity!

Cobra and Alan shoot each other a guilty look.

Julio catches it.

JULIO

Wait- That last part is total insanity, right?

SAM

Why would people be spreading a rumor like that, Alan?

COBRA

(coming to his defense)

It's bogus. There's no reason, they're just be grasping at straws!

ALAN

It's ok, Cobra.

(to the rest of the team)

Where did the rumor come from?

JULIO

Some guy- Dan Loveland. Ever since you took over for Jameson, he's been talking to every press outlet he can get a second of airtime from and telling them that you think you've been sent to the planet by God to save us all. No one was paying him much attention until you miraculously brought an ex-president back from the dead.

ALAN

Loveland.

SAM

You know him??!

ALAN

Yes, I know him.

COBRA

Alan, what are you not telling us?

ALAN

Loveland is my brother.

The group expresses their shock.

SAM

What?!

COBRA

Your brother?

ALAN

My adopted brother. We were close at one time. He was there for me during-
(he hesitates with how much to tell)
During a difficult time.

SAM

Alan. We can't help you if we don't know the truth. The full truth.

COBRA

That's not something you've ever struggled with before.

ALAN

It's just- It wasn't all my story to tell. I wanted to protect him.

JULIO

He doesn't seem to want the same thing for you.

JFK

A great leader makes hard decisions. It's on us to trust when their intentions are pure.

ALAN

Loveland. He's not entirely wrong. He's the one telling the truth here.

Cobra puts an encouraging hand on Alan's shoulder.

ALAN (CONTD)

I do believe that I'm here with a divine purpose. I've seen it playing

out. Everything I heard from the voice of God has come to fruition.

JULIO
Man... This is crazy.

JFK
There's nothing crazy about having faith in something greater.

JULIO
But a mission from God?? That's taking it a little too far!

COBRA
Haven't you ever had a feeling that you just can't explain? An intuition that's proved true?

JULIO
Yea, but I don't hear voices in my head!

SAM
I don't care where the voices come from. Our president, you, Alan, you've never lead us astray.
(beat)
I trust you.

JULIO
Damn. And here I thought resurrecting JFK would be the craziest thing I'd see in my lifetime. Now we've got an angel sent by God leading the country??

ALAN
No. I'm no angel. I just believe that I was given a message, that I was directed down this path.

JULIO
And where do the directions say to go from here?

ALAN
It doesn't work like that.

JULIO
Of course not.

SAM

What do we do about Loveland? He's got the whole country up in arms over this. They're practically at the gates of the White House. By tonight, the whole place could be swarming with protestors.

ALAN

We have to find a way to reach him. If I could just talk to him, face to face, we might be able to get him and the rest of the crowd to back down.

FLASHBACK

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A YOUNG LOVELAND (8) with dark, messy hair and glasses, kneels at a pew, praying intensely.

A GROUP OF KIDS run by, two of the boys near the back go out of their way to shove Loveland as they pass.

He topples over, his prayers disturbed and glasses crooked.

YOUNG LOVELAND

Hey!

YOUNG ALAN (O.S.)

You have to stop letting them pick on you.

Young Alan George (12) stoops over to pick up Loveland's bible and hands it over.

YOUNG LOVELAND

God teaches us to love thy neighbor and be good.

YOUNG ALAN

I didn't see any God telling them that. You're such a weirdo.

(beat)

Come on, let's go home.

Loveland clumsily picks himself up and follows Alan out of the church.