

A House Divided

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(clean version)

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A HOUSE DIVIDED

"When in the course of human events..."

ACT ONE

FADE IN ON:

A NEWS CAST. We see a grainy image of the WHITE HOUSE. A man's voice narrates, like he's on the nightly news, but there's something not quite right about it. The voice is weirdly distorted. The images blur, as if from second or third generation dupes...

NEWSCASTER

It's been one year since the election of John Roosevelt Russell to the Presidency of the United States. And what a year it's been...

We see shots of JOHN ROOSEVELT RUSSELL, campaigning, shaking hands, giving speeches. Russell is young, handsome.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Russell, a Liberal Democrat, won the state of Ohio by fewer than 600 votes, but that gave him the Electoral College, and made him President...

Images of election day, long lines at the polls, then talking heads on TV calling the election, arguing about the results.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

But he lost the popular vote nationwide by more than *five million votes*, an historic margin. The results were controversial, to say the least...

And then suddenly, we SMASH CUT TO:

INT. WEST POINT CLASSROOM - DAY

ANDERSON

Let's talk elections. 1860. The most important vote in American history...

PROFESSOR ANDERSON STEVENS (40) stands in front of a room full of buzz-cut ARMY CADETS. Anderson radiates a vibrant intelligence. With his hipster haircut and intellectual's glasses you wouldn't guess that he too was a West Point grad and an Army Ranger. But he was, and a fierce one at that. A title comes up on screen:

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY, WEST POINT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

The rise of Abraham Lincoln. The election that sparked the Civil War. A war that killed 600,000 Americans. More men lost than in all our other wars combined.

The cadets hang on his every word. They love Anderson.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

It's inconceivable. Brother against brother. How could Americans turn against each other with such ferocity?

Hands begin to shoot up. Anderson points to cadets.

CADET #1

Sir, slavery! It needed to end.

ANDERSON

Why would Southerners give their lives to protect an institution as morally bankrupt as slavery?

CADET #2

Sir, economics. It was their livelihood.

ANDERSON

Slavery was a terrible way to make money.

CADET #3

Sir, they were racist.

ANDERSON

Maybe. But why fight to keep someone else in chains? The whole thing makes no sense. Come on, somebody nail this...

SMASH CUT BACK TO:

OUR OFF KILTER TV NEWSCAST. IMAGES of election officials recounting votes, lawmakers yelling at each other, protestors waving placards.

NEWSCASTER

There were accusations of vote fraud, and legal challenges that went all the way to the Supreme Court. The results stood, and Russell took office, but many Americans were not happy...

Inauguration Day, demonstrations in the street, police pushing people back. Tear gas flies. The newscasters' voice loses its calm neutrality, gets angrier, weirder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Russell never missed a beat. He pushed forward with his sweeping Liberal agenda, increasing the size and scope of government every chance he got. He raised taxes, bankrupting hard working Americans...

We see For Sale signs on homes, unemployment lines, unrest in a squalid inner city. And then BANG, CUT BACK TO:

INT. WEST POINT CLASSROOM - DAY

Anderson spins, points to an Hispanic Cadet.

ANDERSON

Sanchez. Help me out. Why lay down your life for slavery?

SANCHEZ, in front, thinks, then --

SANCHEZ

They didn't die for slavery, sir. They died for their way of life.

ANDERSON

Ding, ding, ding. All civil conflicts are preceded by a perceived threat to somebody's way of life. To their families, their pocketbooks, their belief system. It is always the same. Angola. Yugoslavia. Chechnya. The American South was no different.

He looks over his cadets, locks in their attention.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

When you're in the field, remember this: Threaten a way of life and you're putting a match to a tinderbox -- *and it doesn't take much to start a revolution.*

A moment's silence as the Cadets soak in this information, awed by it. Anderson smiles -- he loves his job, and then BANG, we CUT BACK TO:

THE NEWSCAST. The Newscaster rants...

NEWSCASTER

...he made teaching the homosexual lifestyle mandatory in public schools.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

He gave us sky high gas prices and
bureaucratic incompetence. He's pushed
our country to the edge of the abyss...

Images of a city devastated by a natural disaster, lines at a
gas station. Music swells on track, eerie and foreboding. We
are beginning to realize -- this is no normal newscast.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Are you going to stand idly by while
America crashes and burns? Are you going
to let Russell and his jack-booted thugs
take over your lives?

The images are faster now, and weirder: Cops kicking in
doors, a Nazi rally at Nuremberg, tornadoes sweeping across
the Great Plains. A voice breaks in --

ANDERSON (O.S.)

Okay, I've seen enough...

The images FREEZE, narrator cuts off, and CAMERA PULLS BACK
to reveal that we've been watching this on a monitor in...

INT. WEST POINT CLASSROOM - DAY

...the back of Anderson's West Point Classroom. The class is
empty now, except for Anderson and Sanchez. Anderson pops the
tape out of the VCR.

ANDERSON

Where'd you get it?

SANCHEZ

Sir, I downloaded it off a militia web
site. No name attached. I think they're
out of the Midwest.

Anderson reacts, considering this information.

EXT. WEST POINT CAMPUS - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Anderson and Sanchez walk across West Point's idyllic Quad.

ANDERSON

Do they advocate violence?

SANCHEZ

Not explicitly, sir.

ANDERSON

Did they list a plan of action against
the government?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SANCHEZ

No, sir. But it was, well, pretty creepy.

They stop in front of a small, brick campus building.

ANDERSON

They all are. Welcome to the Global Conflict Center.

Anderson smiles, enters the building.

INT. OFFICES, GLOBAL CONFLICT CENTER - SAME

Anderson walks through the headquarters of the Global Civil Conflict Monitoring Station. The offices are cramped; the walls are lined with world maps, the desks are scattered with reports. Volunteer college kids -- both military and civilian -- work the phones or peck busily on computers. They wave to Anderson or salute him, depending on their background.

Sanchez follows Anderson through the maze of cubicles.

ANDERSON

You did good. I'll write it up and send it to Colonel Janowsky at the Pentagon.

SANCHEZ

You think it's that big a deal?

ANDERSON

We're analysts. We take data in, lay out the possibilities. We let other people decide if it's a big deal or not.

Anderson steps into his own office. Sanchez stops at the door, gives a short salute, wheels and heads off. As soon as Sanchez is gone, Anderson's calm smile is replaced by a distinct unease. He drops the tape into his own VCR, hits play. The Newscaster rails on --

NEWSCASTER

The US government is Sodom and Gomorrah, evil beyond speaking...

Anderson reacts. From the look on his face he clearly does think it's a big deal. He grabs a RED BINDER from a shelf, begins to jot notes, and we FADE TO:

EXT. KANSAS FARM - DAY

Morning on the endless Kansas prairie. Budding Spring wheat fields as far as the eye can see. A title comes on screen:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLARK COUNTY, KANSAS

A farmer steps into frame, followed by his four children. He is TOM SAMPSON (35). Sampson is tough, weathered, but still Gary Cooper handsome. He is a man of few words, and unshakable convictions. Like his surroundings, there is a serene majesty to Sampson.

SAMPSON

I want you to do exactly what your teachers tell you today, understand?

His children -- EMMA (5), BOBBY (8), NAN (11) and DANIEL (15) -
- snap back their answers in unison.

THE CHILDREN

Yes sir. Okay Dad. Yes, Daddy. We will.

SAMPSON

(with a sly smile)

Unless what they tell you is wrong. Then you just ignore it.

His kids bust out laughing. The littlest, Emma, hugs him.

EMMA

Daddy! Silly!

SAMPSON

Here comes the bus.

A school bus approaches. The Sampson kids run off, all except Daniel, who lingers.

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

What is it Danny?

DANIEL

I could run the thresher today if you...

SAMPSON

(interrupting him)

Go learn how to do something other than farm. Something useful.

DANIEL

Farming's the best job in the world.

Sampson smiles, puts an arm on his son's shoulder.

SAMPSON

I just want you to have options. Now go on. Don't be late.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Daniel reluctantly follows the others. A voice calls out --

RUTH SAMPSON (O.S.)
Tom! You'd better see this...

RUTH SAMPSON (33) steps onto the front porch of their modest farm house, the family's two Rottweilers playing at her feet.

INT. SAMPSON FARM, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ruth stands at the family computer, a stack of bills in one hand, an accounts ledger in the other. Ruth is pretty, soft-spoken, but ever so slightly fragile. She works hard to keep it together, but she's not always successful.

Across the room, a TV plays CNN with the sound down. Ruth pulls up the Chicago Board of Trade web site.

RUTH
Wheat dropped under \$2.50 a bushel. I spent all morning adding up the numbers. We can't pay the bills at that price...

SAMPSON
The price will go back up. Always does.

She takes a deep breath. Composes herself. She holds out an envelope to her husband.

RUTH
I found the letter from the IRS. You hid it from me. Why didn't you tell me they were putting a lien on our property?

SAMPSON
Ruth. I didn't want to worry you.

RUTH
It's not about worrying. This is real, Tom. We got more taxes and more debt than we can pay. We either sell the farm, or declare bankruptcy. Those are our choices...

Sampson takes her hand in his. He holds it still.

SAMPSON
I know it's hard times. But we're not going to go broke. And we won't sell this farm.

He holds her chin up with his hand, looks into her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

I will not let that happen. I promise.

There is a sureness about Sampson that is compelling. Ruth falls into his arms, fighting to hold back tears. Sampson holds his wife tight. Across the room, the TV plays...

ON SCREEN, President Russell is signing legislation in the Oval Office, surrounded by Cabinet Secretaries. The scroll underneath him reads: "...President Russell signs new taxes into law..."

Sampson stares at this, his face impassive, and CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE, OVAL OFFICE - DAY - SAME

What we saw on TV we now see live. Title on screen:

THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON DC

JOHN ROOSEVELT RUSSELL smiles as CAMERAS FLASH. This is the first time we've seen Russell up close and in person. He is young (early 40s), with movie star good looks. Everything about him screams Jack Kennedy, including his temper, his ambition, and his upbringing.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

America has so much potential. So much greatness in it. But it cannot grow without revenue. The coffers of the treasury are still bone dry. These taxes - and I admit they are numerous -- are a necessary burden. I know this will involve sacrifice. But there's too much work to be done to shy away from the task now. Let's roll up our sleeves and build a better country. Thank you.

A last battery of cameras flash, and then aides begin to usher the REPORTERS from the room, leaving...

A LONE WOMAN standing by the door. She is stunningly beautiful, long and thin and elegant. This is the FIRST LADY, SUSAN RUSSELL (40). She is well-born, well-educated, fiercely intelligent. And on top of all this...she's a rock. President Russell approaches.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL (CONT'D)

So?

SUSAN

I liked the optimism. It was tempered, but I believed you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESIDENT RUSSELL
Did I project gravitas?

SUSAN
Project it? You embodied it.

Russell laughs. Then a moment's doubt crosses his face.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL
I'm up there talking, and all I can think
is -- a hundred million people hate my
guts because of these taxes...

SUSAN
The popularity contest is over. They'll
love you when the economy goes through
the roof.

He looks at her, amusement mixing with admiration.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL
Where would I be without you?

SUSAN
Right here. But with a brunette.

He laughs, moves close to kiss her. A YOUNG AIDE appears at
their side. Russell and the First Lady stop, turn.

YOUNG AIDE
Excuse me, Mr. President. The Prime
Minister of Sweden has arrived.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL
Right.
(looks to his wife)
More later, okay?

SUSAN
I'm counting on it.

President Russell smiles, walks off. Susan watches him go,
proud, but watchful. She is clearly the caretaker in this
relationship.

EXT. KANSAS GRANGE HALL - NIGHT

An old wooden building on the edge of a tiny Plains town. A
sign out front reads: *Wheat Farmers Cooperative. Tonight:
Meeting on New Taxes.* A voice echoes from inside.

FARMER #1 (O.S.)
It's not right!

INT. GRANGE HALL - SAME

Two dozen farmers sit on benches in the Grange Hall. LEON (55), presides over the meeting from a raised dais. Farmer #1 stands at his bench.

FARMER #1

All they gotta do in Washington is talk about ending price supports, and the price of wheat goes in the toilet.

General agreement. Farmer #2 pops up nearby.

FARMER #2

Now a tax on fuel? I spend fifteen thousand dollars on fuel every month!

FARMER #1

And on seeds too! How can that be?

A young WOMAN stands in the back of the room, a cell phone to her ear, a notebook in one hand, Diet Coke in the other. This is PAM JENKS (30), reporter for the local paper. She is funny, frenetic, sly. She defines muckraker: tweaking those in power is what she lives for. She whispers into her phone:

PAM

...just farmers bitching: Blah, blah, cow manure, blah, blah pig manure. The usual.

Farmer #4 stands nearby, a little wild-eyed.

FARMER #4

I heard that President Russell is a crack head. He smokes it in the Oval Office when nobody's watching...

Pam rolls her eyes: *Oh God*. Grunts of approval from the farmers. Leon slaps the lectern, annoyed:

LEON

Charlie, you've been watching too much cable TV!

FARMER #4

I'm just saying...

LEON

Unless you got something constructive to add, sit down and shut up.

(the room quiets)

Now then. Everybody's complaining.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEON (CONT'D)

We're in agreement that this is not a good situation. But what is to be done?

Silence. No one has any idea. Pam hisses into her phone:

PAM

...I'm outta here. I'll meet you at Al's, but you're buying...

SAMPSON

Excuse me. I have something to say.

Tom Sampson rises in the back of the room. Pam's head snaps around. She mutters into her phone...

PAM

Call you back.

SAMPSON

I'm Tom Sampson. I own the wheat farm down route 37.

LEON

We all know you, Tom. And respect the Hell out of what you did in Iraq. The floor is yours.

Sampson steps up. The farmers stare in reverential silence.

SAMPSON

I've been farming for a long time. My father farmed the same land I'm on. I'm not the best at it, but I know what I'm doing. And still...

Sampson speaks plainly, easily. He is a natural in front of an audience. A born orator.

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

...I can't make a living at it. We've got debts. More than we can handle. IRS is threatening to put a lien on my farm. Commodity prices are down. They seem to go down more every day. Not that I blame anybody. That's farming. I accept that. I believe all of us do. But now...

He pauses, as if considering his words. The other farmers -- and Pam -- are hooked. They hang on his every word.

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

There's these new taxes. On everything, it seems like. Fuel and seeds and trucking.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

I understand that the government needs money, but...do they have to take so much?

A farmer lets out a yell of approval: "That's right!" Murmurs go up from the crowd. A gathering tension from the men. Sampson can sense the farmer's enthusiasm, the effect his words are having on them. He draws energy from it.

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

We're trying to feed the country. And it's ruining us. I'll be wiped out. That doesn't seem fair. So I've thought about it. Sat and thought about what I should do. And I made up my mind...

The atmosphere in the room is suddenly electric. The farmers are poised on the edge of their seats. Sampson thunders --

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

I'm not going to pay those taxes. Not a dime. **I don't think any of us should!**

THE FARMERS ERUPT IN APPLAUSE. They shout out their approval. A few rush up to Sampson to shake his hand. Sampson reacts, surprised. He had no idea he had such a power. Pam watches in astonishment, mouth hanging open. Whoa.

EXT. GRANGE HALL - NIGHT - LATER

Sampson shakes a few hands as he walks to his pick up truck. The farmers can't get enough of him. He climbs into his pick up, starts the engine, as Pam runs up.

PAM

Hey cousin...

Sampson lights up when he sees her.

SAMPSON

Hey Pam. How's your momma doing?

PAM

You know. Sciatica. Hemorrhoids. Dementia. She's fine.

Sampson laughs.

PAM (CONT'D)

That was quite the speech. You practice that beforehand?

(CONTINUED)

.CONTINUED:

SAMPSON

You're not going to write about it in that paper of yours, are you?

PAM

I was thinking about it, for sure. You an agitator now? Like Vladimir Lenin?

Sampson shoots her a look. Over his dead body.

PAM (CONT'D)

Seriously, how 'bout you join me and some of the guys for a beer. You know, talk a little politics. I'd like to hear where you stand on a bunch of issues.

SAMPSON

My turn to put the kids to bed. I'll take a rain check.

He backs out of the parking lot. Pam watches him go, smiles her mischievous smile.

PAM

Okay. Rain check, Cuz. See you around.

INT. SAMPSON FARM - OFFICE - NIGHT

Sampson sits at his desk, slowly hand writing a letter. We see the first line: "To Whom It May Concern at the IRS..."

EXT. ANDERSON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Upstate New York. A modest house on a tree-lined street.

INT. ANDERSON'S HOUSE, OFFICE - NIGHT

Anderson is tunnel-vision focused, that red binder open in front of him, stacks of papers all around him. A voice interrupts his labors --

JACKIE (O.S.)

Running another poor, unsuspecting country through the Conflict Matrix?

Anderson looks up. JACKIE STEVENS (35) stands at the door to his office. Jackie is wrapped in a bathrobe, bunny slippers on her feet. She's pretty, and South Boston scrappy. She has a beer in one hand, a Tonka Truck in the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACKIE (CONT'D)

How about a break? Share a beer?

(holds up the toy truck)

Or we could play monster truck smash.

Anderson laughs, pulls his wife close, kisses her. They have a fun, teasing relationship.

ANDERSON

Actually. This is a hard one. I'm struggling to finish it.

JACKIE

Impossible. You invented the damn thing.

He sighs, sips her beer, then flips through the pages, reading aloud as he does.

ANDERSON

This one's different. Potential election fraud. Local paramilitary activity. Violent publications. Threats to local officials. High volume of weapons ownership...

JACKIE

Doesn't sound good. What's the country?

He looks up at his wife. Then --

ANDERSON

Ours.

Jackie does a double take. Anderson flips to the cover of the report. It reads: **CONFLICT MATRIX: USA**. She stares at it, the implications of this information washing over her.

END OF ACT ONE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ACT TWO

EXT. DENVER FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Establishing shot. Morning. Title on screen:

IRS REGIONAL OFFICES, DENVER, COLORADO

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE - SAME

A middle-aged IRS bureaucrat -- ELLIOT (40) -- opens mail at his windowless desk. He sips a coffee, reads a letter. His eyebrows go up in surprise.

CLOSE ON THE LETTER. It's short and handwritten. We see only a fragment of it.

...time in a man's life when injustice
can be tolerated no longer...

CAMERA flashes down to the signature at the bottom: **Tom R. Sampson**

ELLIOT turns to his computer, clicks through a series of screens, types in a keyword.

ON SCREEN. A list of tax withholders appears. All in West Kansas. All in Clark County.

ELLIOT grimaces. Oh man.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

President Russell walks briskly down a hallway. EDMUNDS, his black Attorney General, flanks him.

EDMUNDS

FBI Director Wexler wanted to brief you
himself this morning.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

Did he say why?

EDMUNDS

No sir, just labelled it high priority.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER (65) paces a conference room. Wexler is old school, impatient, and used to getting what he wants. He's also deeply political. His assistants wait docilely behind him. He scowls at a picture of President Russell, just as the President himself enters the room. Edmunds follows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

I'm not crazy about that picture either.

Wexler's grimace disappears and is replaced by a gentle smile. Russell shakes Wexler's hand.

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER

Good to see you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

Same here. Let's get started.

The President drops into a seat. Edmunds does too.

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER

Mr. President, over the last few months the FBI has been picking up an increase in anti-government militia activity in the South and Midwest...

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

(interrupts him)

Doesn't anybody in this country like me?

Silence. Then Russell laughs at his own joke. Wexler forces a smile.

EXT. PLAINS TATTTLER - EVENING

The sun sets over a faded storefront in a one road Kansas town. A sign out front reads: "Plains Tattler. The Truth, Always."

INT. PLAINS TATTTLER - SAME

A ramshackle office, about what you'd expect from a small town weekly. A pudgy editor, SIMMS, waddles across the room.

He stops beside Pam, who works furiously at her computer, slugging down her ever present Diet Coke while listening to her iPod. It's playing so loud you can actually hear the old Morrissey song. The walls around her desk are draped with early American flags, the shelves stacked with history books.

A scraggly CHIHUAHUA sits in her lap. It YAPS at Simms.

SIMMS

Pam! How many times have I told you not to bring that damn dog to the office? And where's tomorrow's front page?

Pam ignores him, hits print and a printer across the room hums to life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMMS (CONT'D)

Pam? I'm talking to you...

Pam rolls her chair to the printer, yanks the large format paper out of the tray, holds it up to the light.

THE FRONT PAGE OF THE PLAINS TATTLER. In the center is a giant photo of TOM SAMPSON. He is in full military gear, with helmet and body armor. He holds an M-16 to his chest. Behind him is a broken down hut, obviously somewhere in Iraq. The caption reads: LOCAL WAR HERO JUST SAYS NO TO TAXES! And then above that, the headline in huge 48-point type screams:

DON' T TREAD ON ME!

Simms reacts, impressed. He nods, despite himself.

SIMMS (CONT'D)

Oh. That's nice.

PAM

Nice? *It's frigging awesome.*

EXT. WEST POINT - LATE AT NIGHT

A last volunteer trudges out of the Global Conflict Center.

INT. OFFICES, GLOBAL CONFLICT CENTER - SAME

Camera moves slowly through the empty offices. It is dead silent in here. We find...

ANDERSON at his desk, plugging data into a complicated spreadsheet on his computer. Around him are binders and reports and newspapers from around the country. He stretches, takes a deep breath. He's finished. Finally.

He stares at the computer, reading once again the results. He reacts...*He does not like what he sees.*

EXT. KANSAS HIGHWAY - DAY

A government beige Ford Taurus cruises down an achingly straight stretch of Kansas highway.

INT. FORD TAURUS - SAME

TAYLOR (50), an IRS agent, drives the Taurus as Elliot, our IRS bureaucrat, sits in the passenger seat.

TAYLOR

Did you try to contact him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLIOT
I think his phone got turned off.

Taylor grunts. Elliot sighs.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
I hate field investigations.

He stares out at the endless prairie.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
And I *really* hate Kansas.

A gas station/diner appears in the distance.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Pull over. I need coffee.

EXT. GAS STATION/DINER - DAY

The IRS employees climb out of the parked Taurus. They amble towards the diner. Taylor stops at the front door, stares at something. He whacks Elliot on the shoulder.

TAYLOR
Is that our guy?

Elliot stares. In a pile by the front door is a stack of brand new PLAINS TATTLERS. Sampson's picture is on the front page, replete with M-16 and military scowl. The "DON'T TREAD ON ME" headline is prominently displayed.

Elliot groans.

ELLIOT
Today is gonna suck.

EXT. KANSAS FARM - DAY

Rolling fields of wheat. Sampson, shotgun in hand, Rottweilers at his side, moves steadily across this budding grain field. He waves the shotgun in the air, yells --

SAMPSON
Ha! Get along! Get out of here!

BOOM! He fires into the air. CROWS rise up out of the field, squawking madly. They fly twenty yards away, then settle right back into the field.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMPSON (CONT'D)
 Damn birds. Okay, you asked for it.
 (to his dogs)
 Get 'em. King. Major. Go!

The dogs take off towards the birds, then stop suddenly, ears pricking upwards. Sampson waves at the birds --

SAMPSON (CONT'D)
 That way. Get the birds. King!

The Dogs take off in the opposite direction, barking wildly, right towards...

THE GOVERNMENT TAURUS driving up Sampson's driveway.

INT. FORD TAURUS - SAME

Elliot driving now, looking nervous, coffee spilling in his lap as they thump over the dirt road. The DOGS' HEADS are visible, leaping up and down in the wheat, charging at the car. Taylor does a double take.

TAYLOR
 Whoa.

EXT. KANSAS FARM - SAME

Sampson sees the car, the dogs heading towards it.

SAMPSON
 Damn it. King! Major! Stop! No boys! No!

He runs towards the car, waving his arms as he does.

SAMPSON (CONT'D)
 Hey! My dogs are out! Stay in the car!

INT. FORD TAURUS - SAME

Elliot sees the dogs, then sees Sampson running behind them, shotgun waving in the air, screaming at the top of his lungs. But they can't hear him -- the windows are rolled up tight.

ELLIOT
 Holy crap.

He slams on the brakes. Dust sprays all around them.

TAYLOR
 Back it up! Back it up!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elliot throws the car in reverse. Taylor pops out his cell phone, speed dials. He barks into the phone.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Taylor here. We got a situation. Full out armed tax resistor!

EXT. KANSAS FARM - SAME

Sampson stops running as the government car does a doughnut in the dirt, races out onto the paved road away from his farm. The dogs give chase for a moment, then give up. Sampson catches his breath, watches them go, baffled.

INT. DENVER IRS OFFICES - DAY

Taylor and Elliot march down an office hallway. Their boss, a woman, MACKENZIE, leads them. They pass rows of cubicles.

MACKENZIE

Does he have any followers?

ELLIOT

Thirteen other withholders in his county.
(hands her a stack of letters)
When word spreads, there'll be more.

Mackenzie stops, scans the letters. Taylor chimes in helpfully.

TAYLOR

Cut off the head, the body dies.

Mackenzie hesitates a moment, then --

MACKENZIE

Bring him in.

She exits. Taylor and Elliot exchange quick, victorious looks. Thumping, militant *Hip-Hop* blasts on track and --

FADE TO:

A MONTAGE --

Night. The Sampson farm. Sampson closes up the barn. He locks the dogs in the house...

A stretch of Kansas highway. Three unmarked SEDANS speed down the road. They look blandly chilling...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Night. Same. Anderson at home, wrestling with his boys, MICHAEL (6) and ADAM (4) on the carpet. It's a Norman Rockwell moment...

Those unmarked Sedans creep up Sampson's driveway. They stop, and TREASURY AGENTS in full SWAT gear leap out...

Sampson climbs into bed with Ruth, turns out the lights...

Anderson tucks his kids into bed, kisses their foreheads...

Our hip hop keeps cranking, and now our montage speeds up...

The agents bust down Sampson's door, shouting as they come...

Anderson washes his face, getting ready for bed. He stares at his wife as she reads peacefully in the bedroom...

Ruth Sampson screams, terrified, as flashlights play in the hall. Sampson rolls out of bed...

The agents charge down the hall, weapons ready...

Anderson wakes with a start in bed, as if from a nightmare...

Sampson jumps for the closet, finds his shotgun. He spins, the shotgun goes off, BOOM...

The agents yell GUN, then fire, BOOM! Sampson spins, hit, as his wife goes berserk...

Anderson stares out at the night, face tight, almost as if he is witnessing what's going on in Kansas. In a sense, he is...

Sampson is dragged, bleeding, from his house, by a pair of Federal Agents. His wife and kids are held at bay, weeping, and FREEZE FRAME on this tableau, all Hell having broken loose...

And our Hip-Hop dies out as the freeze frame turns to black and white, and FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ACT THREE

EXT. ANDERSON'S HOUSE - DAY

Morning. A newspaper is tossed onto the lawn. Thwack.

JACKIE (O.S.)
Do you trust the results?

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Jackie pours coffee as Anderson makes lunches for his kids. Michael and Adam wander in and out of the room in their PJs.

ANDERSON
I set up the Matrix to be objective. It's a predictive algorithm, but it can't tell the future...
(to his kids)
Hey. You guys need to get dressed. I'm not joking about that anymore.

The kids giggle, run out of the room. Anderson sighs.

JACKIE
Did you tell Rand yet?

ANDERSON
He's coming up this afternoon. I know he'll laugh in my face, but...

He drops the report on the table, glares at the reams of data, as if willing it to be wrong.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)
...In my experience, you build to a flash point. Once you get to that point, all it takes is the smallest thing...
(looks up at Jackie)
...And then it's too late.

Michael runs back into the room with a rolled up New York Times, hands it to his father.

MICHAEL
Daddy. Paper.

ANDERSON
Thanks, Mike. And get dressed. Please.

Michael runs out. Anderson unrolls the paper. Stares. Reacts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON THE FRONT PAGE, below the fold, is a picture of Tom Sampson in a hospital bed. The small headline reads: Tax Resistor Shot in Kansas.

EXT. CLARK COUNTY HOSPITAL, KANSAS - DAY

A tiny, single story, brick hospital on the outskirts of a Kansas farming community. A few cars are parked out front. But across the street: News vans, a half dozen in all.

INT. HOSPITAL - SAME

Ruth Sampson walks tentatively down the hospital's main corridor. She stops at a door, tries to open it. It's locked. She knocks. The door opens. A young Kansas State Trooper is there. She looks at him in surprise --

RUTH

I'm, um, Ruth Sampson. I'm his wife.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tom Sampson lies on a white hospital bed. He has an IV in his arm and bandages on his stomach. Ruth sits opposite his gurney. The Kansas State Trooper stands woodenly at the door, watching them silently.

RUTH

Does he have to...?

Her voice trails off. Sampson reaches out to hold her hand, but he only gets a few inches...his hand is CUFFED to the hospital bed. She reacts, startled.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Oh goodness...

SAMPSON

They said it was because I was a criminal.

(disgusted)

It's okay. It doesn't hurt.

She nods. Moves her chair closer so they can touch. They do.

RUTH

Danny wanted to come. But I wouldn't let him.

SAMPSON

That was the right choice. Thank you.

She looks at him, bites her lip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH

This all happened so fast, Tom. There's TV cameras outside.

SAMPSON

Newspaper reporters have been calling all morning.

RUTH

Couldn't we just apologize? To the IRS? Pay our taxes? Get our old lives back?

Sampson reacts. For a brief moment, we can see his bewilderment, his doubt. Then his calm returns.

SAMPSON

I thought about that, Ruth. But then...
After what they did?
(stares at her)
Sometimes you have to take a stand.

Ruth reacts, nods her head, tries to smile. But clearly this is not the answer she wanted to hear.

EXT. KANSAS HIGHWAY - DAY

An aging SUV blasts down an empty stretch of road.

INT. FORD EXPLORER - DAY

Pam is behind the wheel. She's got her Diet Coke in her hand, her Chihuahua in her lap. She stabs at her radio buttons, jumping from one AM talk show to the next.

VOICES ON THE RADIO

...just don't understand why they would shoot the man. Since when does holding back on your taxes justify that...

(new station)

...DC is a cesspool. Everybody there is on the take. Democrats and Republi...

(new station)

...a brand new futon, half price...

(new station)

This is what we should do. March on that hospital. You heard me --

(new station)

...a farmer and a war hero too...

(new station)

...Then we'll storm it. We'll march in there and free him. Free Tom Sampson! How do you like that? *Free that farmer!!!*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pam shakes her head, amazed.

PAM

Oh cousin, what have you started?

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Anderson and Colonel Rand Janowsky (55) sit at a corner table with a half-empty pitcher of beer. Rand is a military lifer, with a jawline to match, but he's not without a sense of humor. He and Anderson are old Army buddies.

Janowsky pushes the Matrix report back across the table.

JANOWSKY

I took the train all the way from DC for this? Have you lost your mind? This is not why we fund your institute.

ANDERSON

Did you read about this guy in Kansas? Federal agents shot him because he withheld taxes...

JANOWSKY

No. He tried to blast the Feds, so they dropped him first. Which is what a good agent is trained to do.

ANDERSON

Things are bubbling to the surface. Stuff you wouldn't normally notice...

(opens the binder)

...Look at this trend line. It's a 70% predictor of serious civil violence.

JANOWSKY

In Angola. Or El Salvador. Sure. But you can't just plug variables into your famous Conflict Matrix and tell me that a civil war is looming in the US-of-A. That's preposterous.

ANDERSON

So now what? You distribute it at your next staff meeting, the Generals file it away and nobody ever sees it again...?

JANOWSKY

(slyly, needling)

Are you teaching Antietam? You know how Civil War battles get you all riled up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANDERSON
 (barks, losing his patience)
 This is not a joke, Rand!

People in the bar stare. Janowsky realizes he's gone a little too far. He puts out his hands.

JANOWSKY
 Okay. Okay. How can I help?

Anderson collects himself.

ANDERSON
 Run a profile on this guy. His history.
 All his contacts. Just so we know what
 we're dealing with.

JANOWSKY
 Fine. I'll have it to you tomorrow.

ANDERSON
 Good. Because I'm going to Kansas in the
 morning...

Janowsky reacts. Anderson drops a twenty on the table, heads out of the bar.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Anderson exits the tavern, Janowsky on his heels. Traffic zips past. Janowsky pleads with his friend --

JANOWSKY
 You've been in too many war zones. Look
 around you. People drive new cars. The
 lights work. Nobody's starving.

ANDERSON
 Maybe you're right. I have no idea what's
 going to happen, Rand. But no one was
 starving in Yugoslavia, either. And the
 lights worked just fine...For a while.

Anderson walks off. Janowsky laughs, shakes his head, as if to say -- you poor, deluded soul. Then he looks down at the red Matrix report binder in his hands, sighs.

INT. PLAINS TATTLER, EDITOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Simms sits at his desk, a printed article in his hand. Pam stands across from him, Chihuahua clutched in her arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMMS

You're urging people to break him out of the hospital? That's a little inflammatory...

PAM

So make it an opinion piece.

SIMMS

...not to mention illegal.

PAM

Thomas Jefferson said every generation needs a revolution. Maybe this is ours.

Simms stares at her. He has trouble figuring Pam out in the best of times. Now is not the best of times.

SIMMS

This is a small town paper. Families read it. You want to peddle radical ideas, write a newsletter in your spare time...

Pam is about to argue, but then she realizes: *That's not a bad idea.* She shrugs, walks out. He watches her, baffled, then calls after her --

SIMMS (CONT'D)

But you're still on my clock! I need that piece on the County Fair!

Pam is long gone. Simms sighs. Anderson's voice on track:

ANDERSON

And the cable bill is due on...

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Anderson packs a bag as his wife Jackie enters, interrupts.

JACKIE

...Friday. Four months in Sudan. Six months in Belgrade. No late fees. Kids got to school on time. I can handle a week in Kansas.

He stops packing, grabs his wife by the waist, hauls her close, nibbles on her neck.

ANDERSON

Your competence is so sexy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACKIE

Just remember to stay away from those farm girls.

Pulls her down onto the bed. He kisses her hard on the mouth. Things get passionate quick. Then Jackie pulls away.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I have to be competent, you know. If I didn't take care of everything, I'd spend all my time worrying about you.

Anderson strokes her face, the reassuring husband. He kisses her again, slowly, tenderly. She responds. The carnal is alive in both of them. They melt into each other.

EXT. SMALL KANSAS HOME - NIGHT

Pam Jenks' modest Kansas home. A light burns in the kitchen.

INT. PAM'S HOME - SAME

Pam is hunched over her kitchen table, pounding away at the keyboard of her laptop.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN she types out her byline. "Written by PAM JENKS."

Pam stares at this, thinks. Hits delete. Thinks again. Types.

ON SCREEN. She taps out: Written by...**ERASMUS**.

INT. FORD EXPLORER - NIGHT

Pam drives her beater SUV through a small town. The window is down. A stack of home-printed, single sheet NEWS BULLETINS sit rubber-banded in the passenger seat. Pam grabs one, tosses it out the window. Thwack. It lands on a lawn. She drives a little further, tosses the next one. Thwack.

EXT. LAWN - SAME

The news bulletin pops open upon landing. We see it in the moonlight: There's a photo of SAMPSON, this one on his farm. And then a screaming headline:

FREE HIM!

EXT. WICHITA, GOVERNOR'S MANSION - DAY

An Executive Aide sprints across the lawn of the Governor's Mansion, papers tucked under his arm. A voice bellows --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOVERNOR MICHAELSON (O.S.)
What the...?!?

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSTON, OFFICE - DAY

Governor RAY MICHAELSON (50), a big-bellied Kansas cowboy, holds up Pam's News Bulletin. Michaelson stares, incredulous.

EXECUTIVE AIDE
Adams drove it in from Clark County this morning.

A second aide opens his copy, reads aloud:

EXECUTIVE AIDE #2
Like-minded protestors should storm the hospital and liberate Tom Sampson, Farmer, Patriot, Hero of West Kansas. Justice must be served...

Silence in the room. The Governor reddens, then explodes at his aides and secretaries who scatter from the room --

MICHAELSON
Get me Saunders at the National Guard!
Find out how soon he can have his men in Clark County. Jesus H. Christ!
(looks at the paper again)
And who the Hell is Erasmus?!?

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. CLARK COUNTY HOSPITAL, KANSAS - DAY

News footage from a video camera. CLOSE UP on a dough-faced National Guard Soldier. He is trying to look tough, but his pasty face just doesn't exude severity.

NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER

Actually, I left the Guard six months ago. But you know, everybody's still in Iraq and all.

(smiles)

I'm an accountant. In Kansas City. Big five company. I don't mind...

(almost sheepish)

Gets me out of the office.

CAMERA swings around, finds a young female reporter. National Guardsmen, 30 in all, are lined up behind her. They are spread out in front of the Clark County Hospital.

REPORTER

So Julie, things are quiet here. The National Guard seem ready to handle anything.

CAMERA pans out over the street. There are news vans, half a dozen of them, and plenty of camera crews, but no protestors.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Although all reports are that this is going to be a very peaceful march...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME

Tom Sampson reaches out over his bed with his uncuffed hand, parts the blinds slightly. Outside, we see the backs of the Guardsmen, the news vans beyond them.

SAMPSON

(mutters to himself)

Don't like this much.

The State Trooper, still standing guard, says nothing.

EXT. FIELD ON THE EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

Cars park in rows on a flattened field. People are gathered in bunches along the edge of the field. These are the marchers, and there are a lot of them. It is a genuine outpouring of support. There are men, women, old and young, college kids and grandfathers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We recognize a few of the FARMERS from the Grange Hall circulating among the marchers. LEON and FARMER #1 and some of the others.

Pam walks among them, interviewing people, snapping picture. She spots a burly-looking, slightly seedy MAN at the back of the crowd. He keeps his head down.

PAM

Hey. I know you, right? Did I do a story on you? Hold on. It'll come to me...

The seedy-looking man grunts, keeps walking.

PAM (CONT'D)

Got it. Militia story. You're in the Kansas Milit...

The words die on her lips. She looks, but the man is gone.

INT. KANSAS CITY AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Anderson, satchel over his shoulder, cell phone to his ear, walks out of a jet way.

ANDERSON

Hey. I just landed in Kansas. Did we get Rand's profile on Tom Sampson?

INT. OFFICES, CIVIL CONFLICT MONITORING STATION - SAME

Sanchez on the phone, a folder open in front of him.

SANCHEZ

Yes sir. He's clean. No arrest warrants. No political trouble. No ties to militias. He's a war hero. Kind of a George Washington-type, actually.

AT THE AIRPORT, Anderson frowns.

ANDERSON

I was afraid of that.

(thinks)

Okay. Fax it to my hotel room. I'll get it tonight. I'll be doing preliminary interviews all day...

(thinks)

...starting at the rally.

INT. RENTAL CAR - SAME

Anderson drives his rental across the Hertz lot to the attendant's booth. A young EMPLOYEE smiles down at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ATTENDANT

Good morning sir. Can I have your rental agreement please.

Anderson hands him the papers.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

We'll have you out of here in a minute.

Anderson nods. His eyes stray over the inside the attendant's booth. Taped onto the glass is a picture of TOM SAMPSON. It looks like a twisted version of a Virgin Mary votive postcard. Anderson reacts, surprised. The Attendant smiles.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

You with us, brother?

ANDERSON

(surprised, but covering)
I might be.

ATTENDANT

I wish I could join you.

ANDERSON

Join me?

ATTENDANT

To free the farmer. Today changes everything, right?

Anderson nods. The attendant is gleefully conspiratorial.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

Time we run our own damn lives.
(hands back his papers)
Drive safe.

Anderson drives off. He watches the man in the rear view mirror, alarm registering on his face.

EXT. CLARK COUNTY HOSPITAL, KANSAS - DAY

A faint roar can be heard wafting towards the hospital. The chubby accountant guardsman in line tenses. The other soldiers stand straighter. A LIEUTENANT strides up.

LIEUTENANT

Easy men. We're policemen here today.
Nothing more.

His cell phone begins to ring. He answers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

Wilcox here...Yes sir, Governor...Don't
you worry...everything's under control.

The line goes dead. The Lieutenant hangs up, watches as the
CAMERA CREWS scurry for good positions. They start to film.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - SAME

Governor Michaelson hangs up his phone. On the TV in the
background, a local news station shows a live feed of the
protest march. Michaelson drums his fingers on his desk.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

Anderson enters a Kansas Circle K along the interstate, looks
around. The place is weirdly quiet. Empty. He goes to the
counter. There's no one there.

ANDERSON

Hello? I want to pay for my gas...

There's a door open a crack behind the counter. Anderson
steps closer, peeks...

IN A BACK ROOM a TV plays live news coverage of the march on
Clark County Hospital. Nobody watches. The place is empty.
And then behind him, BANG...an ANGRY OWNER stomps into the
Circle K, swearing as he enters.

ANGRY OWNER

God Damn kids! Just take off! Don't even
lock the place! And you know where
they're going? That stupid protest!

Anderson reacts. The owner tromps behind the counter...

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Anderson blasts across the Plains in his rental car. His face
is tight with anxiety.

EXT. BEHIND THE HOSPITAL - DAY

Two beat-up VANS pull up about 100 yards behind the hospital
parking lot. A BURLY MAN looks out the front windshield,
checks his watch. He sits. Waits.

EXT. CLARK COUNTY HOSPITAL, KANSAS - DAY

Pam snaps digital pictures and jogs alongside the crowd of
marchers as they work their way down the tiny main street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The news crews gather on the edges of the march. The marchers turn a last corner, revealing themselves to...

THE GUARDSMEN, who clutch their rifles tightly.

THE MARCHERS begin to chant and wave their placards.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME

Sampson watches from his bed. His face tightens with concern. He turns to the trooper.

SAMPSON

Son. You might want to think about calling your boss. See about letting me talk to those people out there. Might make things a little easier. For everybody involved.

The trooper says nothing, as usual, but we see a flicker of doubt cross his face.

EXT. BEHIND THE HOSPITAL - SAME

The burly man climbs out of one of the parked vans. Two more men get out of the other van. They wear camouflage fatigues. They carry rifles. *They are Kansas Militia.*

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME

Sampson lies in bed, frustrated. He motions to the Trooper.

SAMPSON

I need to use the bathroom.

The Trooper shoots Sampson a wary look, then unlocks his handcuffs. Sampson shuffles into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

Sampson closes the door. He has no intention of going to the bathroom. He stands there a moment, collecting his thoughts. Surgical scrubs hang from the door. He grabs them.

EXT. CLARK COUNTY HOSPITAL, KANSAS - SAME

The marchers walk closer to the hospital now, maybe 40 yards away. They chant as they come.

MARCHERS

Free Sampson! Free the farmer! Free
Sampson! Free the farmer!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE SEEDY MAN works his way towards the front of the crowd. He hides himself behind the first line of protestors. He pulls something solid from his pocket, holds it dangling from his hand. He too begins to shout --

SEEDY MAN

Free the farmer! Free him! Let him go!

The marchers step ever closer to the front of the hospital. The seedy man brings that object up level with his shoulder, and we see it now -- it's a PISTOL. A .45 with a long barrel. He aims, FIRES quickly in rapid succession.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

A GUARDSMAN is hit twice in the chest. He staggers and falls. CHAOS ENSUES. We see only fragments --

The Seedy Man fires again. BOOM! Another GUARDSMAN is winged.

GUARDSMAN #2

I'm hit! I'm hit!

The accountant GUARDSMAN screams --

ACCOUNTANT GUARDSMAN

Gun! Gun!

The Guardsmen panic. Half fire into the crowd. The other half are paralyzed with fear. Protestors are mowed down. Some try to flee, but the march has become a tangle of bodies.

FARMER #1 from the Grange Hall falls in a spray of blood.

A COLLEGE KID falls on top of the Farmer. He is lifeless, shot in the back. SCREAMS GO UP. A wall of sound.

PAM gasps.

PAM

Oh no. Oh God.

She dives into the crowd, pulling a wounded WOMAN to safety.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME

Sampson busts out of the bathroom, runs to the window. The Trooper comes at him, panicked himself --

TROOPER

You need to be hand cuffed --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMPSON

I have to go out there! They're coming
for me! I can stop them!

TROOPER

Put your hands in front of you!

Outside, the shots continue. Sampson hesitates, then puts his hands out. The Trooper approaches with the cuffs, and then --

Sampson side steps him, hits the Trooper hard on the back of the head. The Trooper goes down with a crunch. Sampson runs for the door.

EXT. CLARK COUNTY HOSPITAL, KANSAS - SAME

The LIEUTENANT screams at his men --

LIEUTENANT

Cease fire! Cease fire!

But nobody listens. The screams and gunfire drown out any orders. The smoke is everywhere, thick in the air. The NEWS REPORTERS capture it all, trying to stay out of the line of fire, but getting awfully close.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - DAY - SAME

Governor Michaelson watches wide-eyed as events unfold on TV. He clutches the arm chair, mortified. He whispers...

GOVERNOR MICHAELSON

No...please no...please...

INT. RENTAL CAR - SAME

Anderson drives into Clark County Center. He turns a corner, when suddenly --

PROTESTORS come flying at him, running for their lives. Anderson slams on the brakes, barely missing an old man. It is like driving into a flock of spooked birds. Anderson jumps out of the car, grabs a young woman.

ANDERSON

What's going on? What is it?

YOUNG WOMAN

They're shooting us! They're killing
us!!!

The woman flees. Anderson runs against the tide, trying to get to the scene of the tragedy.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - SAME

Sampson runs down the hospital corridor. Doctors and nurses dive for cover. Sampson slides around a corner just as --

A concussion grenade skitters across the floor to his feet. Sampson has only a moment to register what it is when KABOOM! The glass doors and windows around him explode.

Sampson is knocked onto his ass. He tries to stagger to his feet, but he took the full brunt of that grenade. Blood streams from his ears and nose. He drops onto his knees when a HAND GRABS HIM. He looks up --

THE BURLY MAN is standing over him. His Militia comrades surround him, guns ready.

BURLY MAN
Tom Sampson?

Sampson stares at him, wild-eyed.

BURLY MAN (CONT'D)
I'm here to liberate you.

Sampson's eyes ROLL BACK INTO HIS HEAD. He blacks out.

EXT. CLARK COUNTY HOSPITAL, KANSAS - SAME

The Lieutenant throws himself on one of the Guardsman.

LIEUTENANT
Stop! Cease fire! Cease fire!

Slowly the shooting stops. The smoke begins to clear.

ANDERSON runs through the fleeing crowd, comes on the site of the shooting. He slows, stunned...There are a mass of bodies on the street. Some dead, dozens wounded. Groans go up from the injured. It is a massacre.

THE ACCOUNTANT GUARDSMAN begins to weep.

ACCOUNTANT GUARDSMAN
I'm sorry. Oh God, I'm so sorry.

END OF ACT FOUR

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT FIVE

EXT. KANSAS TOWN - DAY

A driving shot, from the passenger seat of a car, watching a small Kansas town pass by. Rain falls from a slate gray sky. There is nobody on the street. The tavern and the restaurant are closed down. The place is deserted.

A POSTER has been slapped up on a building wall. It is a photo of TOM SAMPSON, now in that familiar pose, holding his M-16 in Iraq. Across the bottom of the poster it reads:

**THE FARMER IS FREE.
ARE YOU?**

It is spooky. Like agitprop out of Soviet Russia. An ARMY HUMVEE crosses, going the other direction. The Humvee stops. Two soldiers leap out, rip the poster off the wall, tear it to pieces, then run back into the Humvee and drive off. It is an amazing sight. Kansas being occupied by the US Army.

EXT. FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS - DAY

Establishing shot. Janowsky's voice is audible.

JANOWSKY (O.S.)
Thanks for staying a few extra days...

INT. ARMORY - DAY

Colonel Janowsky walks through the bustling armory building with Anderson at his side. Around them, Army reservists load up Hummers and troop carriers. There is chatter and noise.

ANDERSON
Kind of hard for me to go home once you shut down the airport.

JANOWSKY
Precautionary. We had jokers from around the world trying to book flights in.

ANDERSON
You run all this now?

JANOWSKY
Third in command. I'm in charge of local counter-surveillance. Look, Anderson, you were right about everything. I was wrong. I apologize for not listening to you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANDERSON
Hardly the time to hold grudges.

JANOWSKY
Agreed. We've confirmed it was local militia that sprung Sampson. You have a thumbnail on them?

ANDERSON
Decentralized leadership. A lot of ex-military. They stockpile weapons.

JANOWSKY
Politics?

ANDERSON
Fringe. But change a few key phrases and they're mainstream.

JANOWSKY
Dangerous?

ANDERSON
I think they've proven that.

JANOWSKY
Then you'll have to be careful.

ANDERSON
Me? I haven't been in the service in years. I'm a college professor, remember?

Janowsky stops at a table, grabs papers, a MILITARY BADGE and a HANDGUN. He thrusts them at Anderson.

JANOWSKY
Not anymore you're not.

Anderson stares at the gun, the badge, reacts.

INT. PLAINS TATTLER - NIGHT

The office is dead quiet. No music, no chatter. Pam sits at her desk, staring at a spread of photos from the massacre. They are heart-breaking. Bodies, blood, tears. She rubs her eyes, unbelieving, as if to say: *Was this my fault?*

The phone rings like a gun going off. She answers, startled.

PAM
Plains Tattler.

The voice on the other end is male, and unfriendly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALE VOICE

We need your help with your cousin.

PAM

Who is this?

MALE VOICE

A car will pick you up in an hour.

Click. The caller is gone. Pam stares at the phone.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Establishing shot. A roadside motel with an empty pool.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SAME

Anderson lies on the bed, phone in one hand, copy of the Plains Tattler in the other. The Army gun and badge lie by his side. The TV plays mutely in the corner. It's CNN...

ON THE TV is footage from Kansas: An Army helicopter circles a farm, Rangers track militia in the woods. Then images from the massacre. We'll see these over and over again, like the Rodney King beating: The marchers, the guardsmen, the bodies.

ANDERSON

...Rand asked me to be his eyes and ears on the ground. Give him real-time research, on site. I'll have military clearance...

INT. ANDERSON'S HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME

Jackie is in bed, phone at her ear, both boys draped over her, fast asleep. Her TV plays too: the same footage Anderson is watching. Jackie whispers.

JACKIE

You and Janowsky. Like the good old days. You going to do it?

We CUT BACK AND FORTH between them:

ANDERSON

I've never said no before...

JACKIE

It's never been in your own country before either.

Anderson exhales in silent agreement, exhausted. A loaded silence on the line. Jackie breaks it --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACKIE (CONT'D)

When we got married you said no more commando stuff. Just teaching and research. I realize this is different. And I'll support you, whatever you decide. Just promise me you'll be careful. Remember that you have people waiting for you at home...

ANDERSON

I promise.

She lets out a sigh, half relieved, half knowing there is little she can do from a bedroom in upstate New York. They whisper good-byes, hang up.

CUT TO EACH OF THEM. They seem worlds apart, separated by continents, not states...

INT. WHITE HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUSAN RUSSELL, the First Lady, wakes with a start. She looks over. The bed is empty next to her. The clock reads 2:30 a.m. She gets up, puts on her robe.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

PRESIDENT RUSSELL sits alone, staring at a TV screen. It is the same footage Anderson and his wife were watching. *The whole world is watching it. Over and over.*

Russell seems alternately enraged and completely overwhelmed, his frustration mixing with despair. Suddenly, he looks up...

SUSAN is there. He starts to talk to her, can't quite get the words out, like he's in physical pain from what's happened.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

...I never...my Presidency...would unfold like this...

She takes his hand. She is calm, but there is a steely resolve in her voice --

SUSAN

Great men are defined by their troubles, John. Let this be your defining moment...

He blinks, reacts, as if to say: *Yes. Of course. You're right.*

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Establishing shot. A farm house deep in the Kansas woods.

INT. SECLUDED FARM HOUSE, BEDROOM -. SAME

Tom Sampson wakes on a bed, in an otherwise empty bedroom. Morning sunlight cuts through an open window. He stands, grabs a bedpost to steady himself. There are fresh bandages wrapped around his stomach. He looks healthier -- someone's been taking good care of him.

He goes to the window. A pair of armed men in fatigues stand guard outside. It's hard to say if they are trying to keep people out, or keep Sampson in.

There is sound from just outside his door. Sampson grabs a LAMP from a table top, presses himself up against a wall. The door swings open, and Sampson spins around, lamp in hand, ready to bludgeon whoever comes in, only it's...

...Pam, holding a tray of food. Sampson stops short with the lamp, inches from his Cousin's nose. She GRINS --

PAM

Good to see you up and about. Hungry?

Sampson reacts. Pam puts the tray on the table. There's a stack of newspapers on the tray too.

SAMPSON

How long have I been unconscious?

PAM

About two days. We were getting worried.

SAMPSON

Where am I? Where's Ruth?

PAM

Your wife is fine. I called her. She knows you're okay. Trust me. Eat some food. When you're done, there's some people would really love to meet you.

She points out the window to a large barn across the property. She goes to the door, pauses.

PAM (CONT'D)

It'll all come clear, Tom. Honest.

She exits. Sampson stares at the newspapers. They are from around the country, and around the globe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The lead story in each paper is about the massacre, with pictures of Sampson everywhere. He stares. Good Lord.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Russell sits in the middle of the room. The meeting is in full swing. CAMERA is tense, whipping from face to face. FBI Director Wexler addresses the cabinet.

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER

Every hour we wait makes it that much harder to find Sampson and the militias. Wait another day, and they will disappear into the landscape. I've got more than 100 agents on the ground in Kansas. Give me the go ahead, Mr. President, and we'll flush out the militias, surround their homes, take their loved ones in for questioning. Sampson will come out of hiding instantly. Guaranteed.

Russell's Attorney General, EDMUNDS, speaks up.

EDMUNDS

That would be a terrible mistake, Mr. President. What happened in Kansas is the modern day equivalent of the Boston Massacre. If we go in and start behaving like a colonial power things could get out of hand fast...

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER

Colonial power? Last I checked Kansas was part of our own damn country!

They start to yell over each other --

EDMUNDS

You're missing the larger point!

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER

Unchecked chaos breeds more chaos!

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

ENOUGH!

The room falls silent. All eyes turn to the President. A flash of anger plays across his face. Then calm...

PRESIDENT RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I'm giving Sampson forty-eight hours to turn himself in...There's been enough blood spilled. This will end peacefully.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Edmunds is relieved. FBI Director Wexler is not. He glares at Edmunds, then hides his displeasure.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Let's start working on a speech.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE LAWN - DAY

Wexler walks quickly out of the White House. A pair of aides flank him. Wexler's face is set and angry.

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER

We'll wake up tomorrow morning and Sampson will be in Bolivia. *And they'll blame the Bureau as sure as the God damn sun rises.*

Wexler stops by a waiting car, thinks. Then --

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER (CONT'D)

Put two teams in place. Have them ready by 7 p.m. We might have to take matters into our own hands...

He gets into the car. Rolls down the window. Quietly --

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER (CONT'D)

Make sure we have plausible deniability. Field agents saw a chance, they took it.

The car drives off.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Sampson limps across the grounds of the wooded farm, passing the pair of militia men. They nod to him reverentially.

INT. BARN - SAME

Sampson enters. A cavernous structure, lit by shafts of light slashing through cracks in the roof. Sampson squints as a DOZEN MEN AND WOMEN appear out of the darkness. Pam is with them, standing to the side. A woman steps forward.

WOMAN

I'm Elaine Johnson, from the Second Baptist Church of Topeka. You might recognize some of us, Mr. Sampson. We're from all over Kansas. Jim works at the radio station. Alan's in the state legislature.

ALAN steps up. He wears a suit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AIAN

We're concerned citizens, Tom. Like you, we're upset about the direction this country is going. Who are these people in New York, LA and Washington? They run our banks, write our laws. They tell us how to educate our children, what to believe in, who we can marry. They make us pay their taxes. But what do they leave us with? *Where is our power?*

Murmurs of agreement from the other men and women. Sampson watches impassively. A third member steps up. An older man, white haired and distinguished. He is KEATING.

KEATING

We've come to an historic moment. The people no longer have control of their own lives. And they're fed up. This country, this great country, is no longer our country. And that man in the White House. He is not our President. He is arrogant. He is venal. And he must go...

Sampson stares at this Cabal of shadowy leaders.

SAMPSON

There's people dead in the street. You want more?

ELAINE

What happened back at the hospital, that wasn't your fault. Or theirs. It happened because the two cultures of this country are at war with each other. That war is all around us, but most people don't see it. *You made them see it. You command respect, Tom. A farmer. A family man. A war hero. When you speak, people listen. If you lead, they will follow. You lit the spark of rebellion. Now ignite the fire. Join us. Lead us.*

Sampson reacts, amazed, as their offer hangs in the air.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Susan Russell stands behind a bank of lights and cameras, which are all focused on President Russell, sitting at his desk. She watches carefully as an Assistant Director counts down -- Three, two and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

My fellow Americans. The events of the last two days have left a tragic scar on the face of this nation...

(a moment's hesitation)

...But that scar need not be permanent.

Susan Russell exhales. Thank goodness. Compromise.

INT. FBI HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT - SAME

FBI Director Wexler sits at his desk, TV on the wall playing the President's speech. An aide stands waiting for him.

FBI DIRECTOR WEXLER

Let's move.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT - SAME

Lights burning in the secluded farm house.

INT. SECLUDED FARM HOUSE, BEDROOM - SAME

Sampson looks at his wounds in a mirror. They are healing. He looks better by the hour. There's a knock on the door. Sampson pulls on his shirt, opens the door. Pam is there. She stands silently in the doorway for a moment.

SAMPSON

You side with these folks?

PAM

Well. It does seem kind of crazy, I'll admit. What are the chances of success?

SAMPSON

The people in the barn -- they in charge of the boys with guns?

PAM

Seems like they call the shots, yeah.

Sampson reacts -- he's not sure he likes that. Pam wags a sly finger at him.

PAM (CONT'D)

We will not be transported from tyranny to liberty on a featherbed.

SAMPSON

Let me guess. Thomas Jefferson?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAM

(grins)

Do I repeat myself?

Sampson lets out a rare smile.

INT. SECLUDED FARM HOUSE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

A few of the Kansas Cabal stand in the kitchen, watching a small portable TV. President Russell is on screen, continuing his speech. We hear snippets of what he says --

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

...enough misunderstanding...It's time for saner heads to prevail...

KEATING

As if anybody gives a damn what that man says.

Sampson enters. All heads in the room snap around.

ELAINE

Tom. Have you made a decision?

Silence as Sampson stands there. The others watch him with baited breath. Then --

SAMPSON

You may not like how he got there, but he's still the President of the United States.

(shakes his head)

I have sympathy. With you. Your cause. But I'm a simple man. I need to be with my family. You'll have to find someone else.

They all jump up at once, ready to protest, but Pam steps between the Cabal and Sampson. She puts her hand out.

PAM

Now come on. Tom's made up his mind. I'm sure you'll respect his decision.

Nods from the Cabal. They sit sullenly. In the silence:

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

...offering Mr. Sampson a last chance to do the right thing. You have forty eight hours to turn yourself in. Forty eight hours to spare the nation more bloodshed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sampson watches, reacts. *His name, on national television.*

SAMPSON
I need to call my wife.

INT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

Anderson drives through a small Kansas town. His radio is playing the President's address. He listens carefully.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL (O.S.)
...I am ordering the Army to stand down.
No more patrols on the streets of Kansas
tonight. No curfews...

Anderson pulls up in front of the Plains Tattler building.

EXT. PLAINS TATTLER - NIGHT

Anderson knocks on the door to the newspaper offices. Inside, Pam's Chihuahua barks. But no one comes to the door. Anderson knocks again. Still no one. And then suddenly...

FOUR UNMARKED BLACK SUVs race down the center of town, one after the other. Swoosh, swoosh. Anderson watches, surprised.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Anderson on his cell phone.

JANOWSKY (O.S.)
Janowsky.

ANDERSON
Rand. It's Anderson. You guys have any
trucks on the road tonight?

JANOWSKY (O.S.)
No, We've been told to pull back. See if
this guy comes out on his own. Which is a
big mistake, you ask me...

ANDERSON
I'm not asking that, Rand --

JANOWSKY (O.S.)
You see trucks, they're not ours.

Anderson reacts. *Shit.*

END OF ACT FIVE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT SIX

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Sampson steps out onto the porch of the secluded farm house, waits as his cell phone rings. Ruth answers.

RUTH
Hello?

SAMPSON
Ruth. It's me. Tom.

CUT BETWEEN SAMPSON AND --

INT. SAMPSON FARM - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Ruth bursts into tears at the sound of her husband's voice.

RUTH
Oh God, Tom. I was so worried.

SAMPSON
I'm okay. I'm fine.

Ruth sobs. Sampson says nothing, moved himself. He knows he is *deeply loved*.

SAMPSON (CONT'D)
Listen. Ruth. I don't have a lot of time.
They're after me everywhere. I'm going to
turn myself in. I'll be going to jail.

At the Sampson home, DANIEL, the eldest boy runs into the room. He points out the window --

DANIEL
Mom, there's men outside. With guns.

Ruth reacts, alarmed. In the woods, Sampson can only listen.

SAMPSON
Ruth? What's going on?

Boom! Somebody kicks at the door. She gasps into the phone.

RUTH
People are trying to get in the house...

The other Sampson kids come flying into the living room, terrified. Daniel jets out of the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMPSON
Ruth, who is it? Ruth? Ruth!?!?

INT. SAMPSON'S BEDROOM - SAME

Daniel runs to a closet, pulls out his father's shotgun and a handful of flares. He snaps a flare. It sizzles.

INT. SAMPSON FARM - LIVING ROOM - SAME

BANG, the door is kicked in. FBI Agents pour into the living room, guns drawn. Ruth drops the phone.

AGENTS
Freeze! Hands over your heads!

SAMPSON
Ruth!!!

The children start to cry. Suddenly, FLARES fly into the room, distracting the agents. A curtain catches FIRE.

FBI AGENT
Fire!

DANIEL barges back in, SHOTGUN in hand.

DANIEL
GET OUT OF OUR HOUSE!!!

EXT. SECLUDED FARM HOUSE, PORCH - SAME

Sampson, on the porch, listens as SHOTS RING OUT, and then the phone goes dead. He reacts, stunned. We, like him, have no idea what happened. Pam is at his side in a heart beat.

PAM
Tom?

His eyes blink wildly. Then he takes a breath, as if concentrating all his mental energies.

SAMPSON
I need a car. Now!

INT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

Anderson drives, pulling a map from the glove compartment. He checks papers in the profile Janowsky did on Sampson. His fingers trace a route on the map. His eyes light up.

ANDERSON
Of course.

INT. PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT

Sampson behind the wheel. His face is set and focused. The truck flies down an empty road. Pam sits in the passenger seat, watching him. She reaches into the glove compartment.

PAM
There's a gun in here.

She pulls out a semi-automatic pistol. Sampson waves it off. They come to a rise in the road. The night SKY is glowing ORANGE. Pam reacts, face tightening.

PAM (CONT'D)
Oh no...

They drive over the rise to see...

THE SAMPSON FARM IN FLAMES. A horse runs free in the field. But other than that, there is no sign of life.

Sampson reacts, mute horror passing over his face. He stops the truck, jumps out.

PAM (CONT'D)
Tom, wait...

EXT. SAMPSON FARM - NIGHT - SAME

Sampson runs down the hill towards what's left of his farm. The flames crackle, sending sparks skyward. Sampson slows as he spots something on the ground. He staggers, then drops to his knees in front of...

THE BODY OF HIS SON, DANIEL. The boy is lying face down in the dirt. Sampson falls onto his son's body, tears pouring from his eyes, their silhouettes bathed in orange light. A voice breaks the silence.

ANDERSON (O.S.)
I'm going to need you to put your hands
over your head, Mr. Sampson...

Anderson steps out of the darkness, gun pointed at Sampson. Sampson cranes his head around. His face is wet with tears and his son's blood.

SAMPSON
How could you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANDERSON

I had nothing to do with this. I don't know who did. I just need to bring you in peacefully.

SAMPSON

(hollowed out)

You people. You think you can do anything you want. That we'll just lie down for you. So you can keep getting away with it...

Sampson glares at Anderson with a hatred that looks eternal --

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

My son is dead!

ANDERSON

I'm sorry for that. Honestly, I am. We'll find out who did it. And we'll bring them to justice. But there is nothing that can be done about it now.

PAM (O.S.)

Actually, there is something that can be done.

Pam appears behind Anderson, PISTOL cocked and pointed at his head. Anderson reacts, grimaces. *Shit, his flank*: He left it completely unprotected. He turns to look at who out-maneuvered him, but before he can -- POW!

Pam slams him with the gun butt. Anderson drops like a stone.

Sampson stands. He stares down at Anderson's motionless body. He looks like he's about to rip Anderson limb from limb. Pam moves quickly --

PAM (CONT'D)

Cuz. We got the rest of your family to think of...

Sampson stares at her. She's right. A look comes into his eyes -- a look of cold, calculating fury.

INT. PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sampson drives. Pam in the passenger seat. She talks on her cell phone, relaying information to Sampson.

PAM

...four SUVs were spotted heading North on Highway 96. It's got to be them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMPSON

They're trying to make the border to Nebraska. If we take route 17 we can cut them off. How many men could we have in Grant, Kansas by sun up?

PAM

(into the phone)

How many men could we have in Grant by sun up?

INT. SECLUDED FARM HOUSE, KITCHEN - SAME

The Cabal of local leaders hover around Keating as he talks to Pam on the phone.

KEATING

As many as he needs.

EXT. SAMPSON FARM - NIGHT

Anderson staggers to his feet. His face is streaked with dried blood, his clothing covered in dirt. Behind him, the farm is a smoldering heap. He groans in pain.

INT. SUV - NIGHT

Inside a government van, racing down a highway. Ruth and her three remaining kids sit huddled in back. A FEMALE FBI AGENT drives, while a second, MALE FBI AGENT watches the Sampson family, gun in hand. Out the front windshield, the SUN begins to rise.

Ruth clutches her youngest daughter EMMA, coos in her ear.

RUTH

It'll be okay, sweetie. Don't worry.

EXT. GRANT, KANSAS - DAWN

A fiery dawn washes over the roof tops of this one road town. There's a few storefronts, a diner, a motel, and not much else. The town is quiet. A garbage truck pulls slowly out of a side road, idling. A NEWS VAN pulls into town, parks.

A weary looking NEWS CREW climbs out, including a cameraman, a producer and a young female REPORTER. They unpack their gear, trudge towards the diner, the only open establishment in town. Just then...

...the FOUR UNMARKED SUVs roll into town. They slow slightly as they pass by the closed up store fronts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The news crew stares. It's an odd sight, these four sleek, black SUVs, all identical, all without identifying marks.

The garbage truck begins to back into the street, blocking the way, it's reverse beeper chiming monotonously.

The SUVs stop, one right after the other, waiting for the garbage truck to clear the road. And then all at once it happens...

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! A series of quick explosions rock the road. A pair of parked cars EXPLODE in flames. One car flies into the air, lands CRUNCH right on the lead SUV.

The news crew dives for cover, just as...

TOM SAMPSON walks out from behind the garbage truck. He seems calm, determined, completely unafraid.

The FBI AGENTS dash out of their vehicles, guns drawn, ready to start firing at Sampson, but then...

SMOKE CANNISTERS are launched into the road. In seconds, the main street is blanketed in SMOKE. It is thick and choking. Nobody can see anything. Sampson bellows --

SAMPSON

Now!

BANG! BANG! BANG! -- withering gun fire is aimed at the FBI agents. The agents drop to the ground, return fire, but they have no idea who or what they are firing at. It is a pea soup blanket of smoke.

In the middle of this, a slashing metal song begins to play on track. Maybe Prodigy's Wake Up Call. Something powerful, angry and driving. It gives the action a tense vibrancy.

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

Direct your fire low! They're taking cover on the ground!

Bullets whiz around Sampson. But he is unconcerned. We suddenly understand why he has all those medals from Iraq. He is inhumanly poised under fire.

Around him, in the smoke, KANSAS MILITIAMEN appear from behind cars and buildings. They aim low, bullets scorching the ground.

IN THE SMOKE an FBI AGENT is hit. Then another. A third AGENT grabs his comrades, moves them back towards the safety of their vehicles. *THE METAL SONG BLARES.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE NEWS CREW cowers at the edge of the road. Bullets zing over their heads.

REPORTER
Can we go live?

PRODUCER
The mast's not up! We could do camera phone!

REPORTER
Lots do it! This is unreal!

The Producer breaks out his bulky camera phone.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, BEDROOM - SAME

President Russell and the First Lady sleep soundly in their bed. They are startled awake by a rapping on their door.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT (O.S.)
Mr. President, sir!

INT. SUV - SAME

Ruth holds her children tight as chaos swirls around them. The two agents inside the van scramble --

MALE FBI AGENT
I can't see anything. I'm going out.

FEMALE FBI AGENT
No wait...

Too late. The male agent pops out of the van to join the battle, is immediately hit with gunfire. He drops out of sight. The body of the van is raked with bullets, making a crunching sound against the sheet metal.

Ruth and her children duck low as the windows shatter. The kids scream. Glass flies everywhere. The female agent topples over in the front seat -- she's been hit.

Suddenly the door to the SUV flies open. Someone is there, obscured in the smoke. He moves closer. It's SAMPSON.

RUTH
Tom!

Ruth throws herself on her husband. She grabs him.

SAMPSON
You're safe now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KIDS

Daddy! Dad!

Sampson and Ruth hold each other for a moment. Then --

SAMPSON

I need to get you out of here. Quick. Out of the car.

A pair of Kansas Militiamen appear behind Sampson, ready to whisk the Sampson family to safety. The kids scamper out. Ruth follows. She stops at the body of a fallen FBI agent.

Ruth looks down. Her face changes right in front of our eyes. From meek and afraid she becomes suddenly possessed of a terrifying rage. *She spits on the corpse.* She composes herself, hurries off.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, SITUATION ROOM - SAME

A bleary President stands in front of a bank of monitors. On one, CNN plays the live feed off the reporter's camera phone. Her voice narrates a crackly version of events. The images are blurred, but recognizable as an intense FIRE FIGHT.

REPORTER

...some kind of ambush...the men in the cars...I think are government agents...I don't know who the others are...

The President looks to an aide.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL

What agency?

AIDE

FBI. We think.

The President curses under his breath.

EXT. GRANT, KANSAS - SAME

The fire fight continues. Smoke wafts over the street. A body of an FBI agent is visible between the billows. Further away, a slain militiaman. THE REPORTER yells into her microphone.

REPORTER

...they've taken people out of one of the cars...the attackers seem to be...wait... someone's coming towards us...oh my God!

The Camera Phone pans around in time to see...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM SAMPSON striding out of the smoke. He swaggers like John Wayne in some classic western, all lanky grit and macho. He looks fucking MYTHIC, and completely unfazed by the bullets all around him. Our Metal song squeals on track, accentuating his entrance.

The reporter falls into a stunned silence. Sampson points right at the camera, his face set. When he talks, his voice is calm, collected. *The stage is all his.*

SAMPSON

You have made a terrible mistake. You should not have done what you did. And you *KNOW* what you did...

Those last lines have a chilling certitude.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, SITUATION ROOM - SAME

The President and his aides watch Sampson on screen, mesmerized by his sudden presence. The First Lady steps into the room behind them, bathrobe wrapped around her shoulders.

SAMPSON

(on the monitor)

We will not be ruled by a foreign government. And that is what you have become. Our lives will not be subject to your whims. Look around. This is what will happen. And it will happen everywhere.

CAMERA on the TV tightens on Sampson's rugged face.

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

We are declaring our independence. We are separate now, no longer part of your world.

PRESIDENT RUSSELL stares, locked onto Sampson. It is as if Sampson is talking directly to him. The two men fill our frame. There is no one else in the world besides them.

SAMPSON (CONT'D)

We are the Republic of West Kansas. To the rest of the country I say -- *Join us and be free.*

Sampson makes a slashing motion with his hand, and *BZZT*, the camera phone goes dead. Picture on screen goes to static. Daryn Kagan quickly shows up in her CNN studio, but even she is too stunned for words.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The President and his aides just stand there. You could hear a pin drop. Then Susan Russell breaks the silence.

SUSAN

Did he just secede from the Union?

Nobody answers.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Anderson drives like mad, car whistling down the road. He looks a mess -- blood and dirt covering his face. He comes over a hilltop, slams on the brakes. He jumps from the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME

Anderson stares into the distance.

REVERSE ANGLE ON THE TOWN OF GRANT KANSAS. A thick black pillar of SMOKE billows from its center. A pillar of smoke in an otherwise calm, peaceful prairie. The first signs of **WAR**.

ANDERSON reacts. His face falls as he registers the magnitude of events. The words trickle from his mouth, barely a whisper.

ANDERSON

Oh God...*It's beginning.*

SMASH CUT TO:

BLACK.

END



