



Bath City USA

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INT. FARMHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

2:00 AM. Quiet in Big Springs, Michigan. A young girl is nestled in bed with her favorite stuffed animal.

Graphic reveals the year is 1925.

Suddenly, her bedroom is filled with the brightest light imaginable as thunder wakes the girl. Clutching her toy, she nervously walks to the light of the window.

INT. FARMHOUSE PARENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

The girl walks into her parent's bedroom to find them sound asleep. They don't wake up. She creeps down the stairs to the front door, puts on boots, hat, wraps herself in a blanket. She opens door to the frozen tundra outside.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Instantly, the arctic winds follow the girl trudging through this wintry mix. At barn, she peers through window as darkness is washed with warm light.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Music: a song like "They Reminisce Over You" by Pete Rock

Door closes. The girl creeps towards the light. Cautious. She grabs a pitchfork. Just in case. Focus on her face. The camera holds on her reaction before slowly pulling back to reveal a pool of glowing black water bubbling at the surface of a hole in the barn floor. Drops the pitchfork. She steps closer, kneels down and reaches her hand into the dark waters. Smiling.

TITLE CARD APPEARS - "BATH CITY USA" - hold on this image as the opening credit sequence begins.

INT. ELEVATOR IN THE DETROIT NEWS BUILDING - DAY

ZAK WASHINGTON (33), athletic black man, once rising star reporter, hits the 10th floor button. Anxious. Late again, he presses the door close button, tucking in his dress shirt. A graphics card reveals the year is 2025, Detroit, Michigan.

ZAK

Come on. Come on. For fuck's sake.

As the elevator doors begins to close, a hand reaches through, followed by a nerdy man (50s) who pushes the 7th floor button, only to then press the 8th floor button.

MAN

Oopsie. My bad. I'm new and still learning how to navigate this place.

ZAK

(annoyed, still getting dressed)
No worries my man. Got nowhere to be.

Uncomfortable silence. Elevator arrives at 7. Opens. Awkward pause. Exasperation as the door starts to close and reopens. Eye roll, Zak looks at his Apple Watch.

INT. NEWSROOM FLOOR - DAY

Elevator opens on 10. Zak hurries out, speed walking through cubicles. He narrowly escapes a collision with a coffee cart. Reaching the conference room, he peers through the glass making eye contact with his editor.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Seated around the conference table are the Detroit News' best reporters. ED BRADSTREET (70s, black), Pulitzer Prize winning editor in chief, and Zak's uncle, presides. Seated to Ed's left is the News' most powerful voice, JACKSON FOSTER BRIGGS (40s), the poster child of Grosse Pointe white privilege.

ED

(raising his hand, quiets the room)
Okay, quiet down. You have your assignments. Need progress this week. Specifically on that sit down one on one with the President.

JACKSON

Chief, it's not a problem. We're working all the angles, and, frankly, POTUS owes us from the election coverage, right? But if all else fails, maybe Zak-ey here could call on his buddies from the administration?

The room erupts in laughter.

ZAK

Wow, I haven't heard that one before.
Jackson, you a damn comedian now too?

ED

Let it go. I think that's enough for
one morning. Go. This paper isn't
going to write itself. Except you Zak.

Reporters disseminate. Zak moves closer to the table. As
Jackson and his two clones pass by, they whispers something
derogatory and erupt in laughter.

ZAK

(uttering under his breath)
Dickheads...

ED

I heard that. Come on son. How many
more times do we need to have this
conversation? Have you not learned a
god damn thing since Charlottesville?

ZAK

Ed, you know how it is. These MAGA
bros like him love to poke at me. You
should see the emails I still get to
this day. Fucking nut jobs.

ED

Listen, as your uncle and the guy who
gave you this second chance, you know
I am with you. But as your editor, I
brought you here for a reason and you
need to get your house in order, put
that head down and do what you do
better than 99% of these hacks... damn
son, it's time to show me something.

ZAK

I know, I know...

ED

No, you don't. If you did, your sorry
ass wouldn't be late on the regular.
So, here's what we're going to do. You
need a reboot and I need someone to
head up to Big Springs and cover their
centennial event...

ZAK

Come on Ed, you know that's not my jam. Some puff piece in the sticks?

ED

There's a good story there. Local family discovers a healing water source, now generations later, they are looking to expand. Maybe a good human interest piece is what you need to restore some needed perspective. Plus, I'm not asking.

ZAK

Sir yes sir. But promise me something meaty when I get back. Uncle Ed, I'm ready to get back in the game. You know I can handle the big stories.

ED

Don't worry, that shit show isn't going anywhere. Stop by Mary Ann's desk on your way out. She's got a packet full of research on Bath City. Trust me, this will be good for you.

ZAK

Bath City? Really? Fuck my life.

ED

Uh huh, stop your crying. Go, get out of here. Tired of looking at you.

Zak collects his things and leaves. Ed's leans back in his chair, rubs his eyes in utter exhaustion.

INT. DETROIT NEWS OFFICE CUBICLE- DAY

Zak working at his desk, struggling to stay awake. An unwelcome visitor stops by, startling him to attention.

JACKSON

Wake up Washington. Boy, you really are stealing money from this place.

ZAK

Briggs man, what do you want now?

JACKSON

Ahh, don't be like that. Just wishing you luck on that huge assignment. You

won't stick out at all up there. But hey, on the bright side, maybe this is the start of a new career path. One step away from covering community theater and zoning meetings, the sky is the limit!

ZAK

Uh huh. So tell me, what's the angle for the chat with President Putin? You giving him the full red hat reach around to completion? Or just the tip?

JACKSON

(now irritated)

Whoa, easy boy. The last time you ventured down this road, it nearly cost you a career. Don't worry, I'll send you a postcard from Mar-a-Lago.

ZAK

No thanks. I'm good. Save the trees.

JACKSON

(leaning in real close)

Sure you are. Just remember one thing Zak, you - even Easy Ed over there - will never replace us. Not today, not tomorrow, not ever. You hear me, boy? Have fun playing reporter.

Jackson pats him dismissively and walks away. The rage is building, visible in the reflection on the computer screen.

EXT. BIG SPRINGS - NIGHT

Music: a song like "The Funky Baseline" by Sankofa. The town of Big Springs on the outskirts of Lake Huron. Fly by key scenic landmarks. Find Zak's old Jeep Grand Cherokee as it passes by the "Welcome to Bath City USA" sign. Follow his SUV as it pulls into the darkness of the Big Bear Lodge.

INT. BIG BEAR LODGE - NIGHT

The central design theme of this rustic motel appears to be 1970s wood, bad lighting, darkness and dust. A giant taxidermic black bear is impossible to miss.

HOTEL REPRESENTATIVE

Hello and welcome to the Big Bear Lodge, how can I help you?

ZAK

Oh hello, Colleen is it? Checking in. Zak Washington with the Detroit News, my office set up a reservation...

COLLEEN

Yes, let me see. Here we are. We have you booked for an extended stay...

ZAK

Hopefully not too extended.

COLLEEN

Well, we will just agree to disagree on that. What brings you to Big Springs Mr. Zak?

ZAK

I'm here to cover the centennial event on Saturday, the expansion of the Newlight Water Company, people, the whole nine...

COLLEEN

Oh fantastic, I know the Newmans were looking forward to your visit. You might say they are the first family of our little Big Springs community.

ZAK

Good to hear. Tell me, any ideas on where to start? I'm planning to get an early start tomorrow.

COLLEEN

Well, throw a rock around here and you might hit a Newman. Try breakfast at Theo's in the morning. Best biscuits and gravy in the state. Patty Newman is there most mornings.

She hands Zak a large vintage room key dangling on a chain.

ZAK

That's old school, I can dig it.

COLLEEN

So we have you in room, #135, just outside, fourth door on your right.

ZAK

Sounds good. Thank you.

COLLEEN

If you need anything, let me know. And please be mindful of noise. They don't call Big Springs a sleepy town for nothing.

ZAK

I'll do my best.

Zak collects his bag and fist bumps the bear on the way out.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Placing his bag on the bed, Zak checks out his modest room. He walks to the window to close the blinds. Looking out, he makes eye contact with the front desk lady staring back at him through the glass. He raises his hand to no response.

ZAK

(to himself)

Night, night, creepy motel lady. I'll be checking out a-s-a-fucking-p.

Light goes out in the lobby but the silhouette of the lady looking out into the dark is clearly visible.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The clock reads 3:33 as Zak is suddenly woken by the crashing remnants of a hailstorm pounding Big Springs. He slowly rises from the bed and unlocks the front door. Gusts of wind make opening the door a workout in itself. He steps one foot out.

EXT. BIG BEAR LODGE LOT - NIGHT

The hail is coming down in buckets as Zak steps out of the room. Down the road from the hotel, frozen branches are strewn across power lines, illuminated by the faint lights of pickup trucks as a group of men work to clear the debris. A flash of lightning reveals a shadowy figure lurking by the end of the building.

ZAK

Hello? Is someone there?

A voice answers from behind. Startling him.

COLLEEN

No sir. It's just us out here tonight.

ZAK

Jesus! My god, I didn't see you there.

COLLEEN

Is there anything you need Mr. Zak?
Radar says the storm will soon pass.

ZAK

Yeah, thought I saw... something.
Sorry to make you come out here, I'm
all set, thank you.

COLLEEN

It is my pleasure. Sweet dreams now.

Zak goes back inside and closes the door. Colleen stands there staring at his room.

INT. THEO'S DINER - DAY

Breakfast at 7:30 am finds Zak eating and making notes.
Dressed in jeans and a black hoodie. Looks like a slacker.

WAITRESS

Would you like more coffee sir?

ZAK

Please. I'll take the check too. These
biscuits are no joke. What's in them?

WAITRESS

(deadpan delivery, pouring coffee)
It is our secret recipe. I'd tell you,
but then we'd have to kill you.

She leaves the bill. Before long, a surprise visitor arrives.
PATTY NEWMAN (70s) salt and pepper hair and nearly wrinkle-free skin that defy her age. Holding a warm pastry.

PATTY

You must be Mr. Washington from the
paper. Hello, I'm Patty Newman.
Welcome to Big Springs.

ZAK

Oh wow. Hi Mrs. Newman. How did you
know it was me...

PATTY

Well, we don't get many "tourists" around these parts, and even less so this time of year.

ZAK

Is that right? I forgot how dang cold it gets to up these parts.

PATTY

Indeed. I wanted to introduce myself, oh, and bring you one of our famous cinnamon rolls. Compliments of the house, of course.

ZAK

Wow. Thank you. Glad you stopped by because I was wondering when would be a good time for us to talk?

PATTY

Great. We have been waiting for just the right moment to tell our story to the world. Perhaps tomorrow night. Supper. I won't take no for an answer. Say 5:00?

ZAK

That sounds perfect. I may even be hungry again by then.

PATTY

Wonderful. I'll leave directions to the farm with the Big Bear.

ZAK

I guess word gets around...

PATTY

(smiling slightly)

We do like to keep our finger on the pulse of things around here.

She stands up.

PATTY (CONT.)

Well, Mr. Washington, it's been a pleasure meeting you. I look forward to our little chat.

ZAK

Same here. Please call me Zak.

Expressionless, she walks away. Zak pushes the pastry away, lays down \$20 and collects his things. A pretty young black woman is walking out the front door. He rushes to follow her.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Main Street is idyllic. A modern day Bedford Falls. Small business shops line the street. Lamp posts still decorated from the holiday season that ended months ago.

It's where we find GRACE HARPER (late 20s) walking at a brisk pace. Her winter uniform - Patagonia coat, hat, gloves - earbuds offering tranquility en route to her job of educating the youth of Big Springs.

MUSIC CUE: a song like "Luther" by Kendrick Lamar.

Over her shoulder, Zak follows. She walks through the town square, past a park bench as the high school comes into view. She stops suddenly, reaches into her bag, turns to face her fast approaching pursuer.

GRACE

(weaponizing her keys)

Who are you? Why are you following me?

ZAK

(nearly out of breath)

Whoa, whoa. Easy. I'm sorry to scare you. Shit you walk fast. I've been trying to catch you since the diner.

GRACE

You didn't answer my question.

ZAK

Sorry. I'm Zak Washington with the Detroit News. I'm writing a story. Do you have a few minutes?

GRACE

(putting the spray away)

No, not really, I have class.

ZAK

So you teach here at the school?

GRACE

I teach history. But we're such a small community we all kind of pitch in wherever. Sorry, I have to go.

The blasting sound of a school bell.

ZAK

Of course, I'm trying to better understand this town from the perspective of the people who call it home. Could we meet sometime after school? You name it.

She takes a few seconds to ponder the question.

GRACE

There are better sources. I've only lived here for a bit. But maybe I can point you in the right direction.

ZAK

I'll take it. Thank you so much.

GRACE

Don't thank me yet. I have papers to grade after school. Come back at 4:00. I'll meet you up by the main entrance door and let you in.

She walks hurriedly away.

ZAK

Last question, do you have a name?

GRACE

(not turning around)
Promise to stop stalking people?

ZAK

No can do. It's kind of my job.

GRACE

(stopping to face him)
Might be time for a new profession, Mr. Washington. Grace Harper, and thanks to you, I'm late for class.

ZAK

(calling out to her)
Nice to meet you Grace Harper.

She rushes up the steps as the door opens for her.

INT. TOWN LIBRARY - DAY

The town library is nearly empty with the exception of four townies playing euchre. One wears a red MAGA baseball hat.

Zak is pouring through a collection of local newspapers.

Headlines:

MAGICAL HEALING WATERS DRAW VISITORS FROM ACROSS THE U.S.

MAN SWEARS BATH HOUSE CURES DISEASE

BIG SPRINGS CAPTURES IMAGINATION OF WHITE HOUSE CAMPAIGN

ZAK

(mumbling to himself)

That's some weird ass shit.

His phone rings. He fumbles to find it, a delay long enough to attract looks of distain. It's Ed.

ZAK

Hey Unc... what's up?

ED

You tell me Zak and we'll both be rich. Making sure you actually made it and weren't sleeping one off again...

ZAK

Funny guy. All good. Met the target this morning in fact. Now just doing my thing, looking at story angles, history, the key players and shit.

His voice cuts through the library like a crying baby in church, eliciting a hearty "sshhhh" from the euchre table.

ZAK

My bad, sorry... Ed, I'll hit you back later. Don't worry. I'm locked in.

ED

That's what I like to hear. Remember there are no small stories just small-minded people who don't want to see what's right in front of them.

ZAK

Thank you Uncle Sam Jackson.

ED

Give America what it wants. Another rags to riches success story.

ZAK

Especially when the successes come from people as white bread as these mutha fuckers.

Eye contact with the euchre table, Zak flashes a smile.

ED

Shiiiiittt, ain't that the truth. Go forth young man and make America proud. Maybe even great again!

ZAK

Later boss man.

Zak returns to his research. A black and white article from the 1960s features a photo of Patty Newman. She looks exactly the same as she does today.

ZAK

What the shit...

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

3:55 pm as the last students file out of a classroom, oblivious to the stranger in the hallway.

ZAK

Hope you don't mind I let myself in.

GRACE

Dude. I said meet out front, didn't I? You know we have rules to protect kids these days from random strangers.

ZAK

Sorry. My bad. Is now a good time?

GRACE

Are you my stalker now?

ZAK

Ahh, I'm not like that. I just want to wrap this story up and get out of

here. The vibe in this town is...

GRACE

Like a real life Stranger Things?
Yeah. Welcome to Bath City USA.

ZAK

So, how did someone like you...

GRACE

You mean why did a black girl choose
to teach in this vanilla town?

ZAK

I wasn't going to put it that way...

GRACE

Plus not very relevant to your story.

ZAK

Just natural curiosity is all.

GRACE

This is my third year. And to answer
your implied question, yes, I've
taught at "diverse" schools too, but
wanted, or needed a fresh start, and
Big Springs was my only option.

ZAK

Hmm... sounds like there's more to
that story. But what do you know about
the Newman family and Newlight Water?

Suddenly, the mood has changed.

GRACE

(anxiously looks around)

I don't know them well, I mean...

She stops, visibly uncomfortable.

ZAK

Whoa, did I say something wrong?

GRACE

(whispering tone, leaning in)

No. Careful. These walls have ears.
Can we go for a walk or something?

ZAK

Sure thing. Whatever you need.

Grace quickly collects her things and they walk out.

EXT. BIG SPRINGS TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Local park features a pavilion, stage, park benches, rows of bare bushes and leafless trees. Some teens walk past and awkwardly wave at Grace who is seated with Zak on a bench.

GRACE

Hey kids, better study for the quiz tomorrow! If I were you I'd brush up on the Constitution. It still matters!

Zero reaction.

ZAK

What happened back there?

GRACE

What do you mean?

ZAK

You went dark on me as soon as I mentioned the Newmans.

GRACE

If you haven't realized, that family runs this town. They own everything and everybody. So keep my name out of your article. I still need this job!

ZAK

Noted. They're just people, like us.

GRACE

They're not like us. Trust me.

ZAK

Not tracking. Besides the fact they own this old bath house that became a water company, everything checks out.

GRACE

That's by design. Ask yourself. How did one family come to own so much of one town? Patty is like the mayor of Big Springs. But we have no elections.

GRACE (CONT.)

Her husband Larry is a straight up mute weirdo, and he pops up everywhere you turn. Have you met their boys yet?

ZAK

I've not had the pleasure yet, but going to the farm tomorrow for dinner.

GRACE

The Newman ranch? Wow. Lucky you! My advice, watch what you say. It can and will be used against you. I've said too much...

Grace stands up.

ZAK

Can we meet in a few days just to help me wrap up loose ends?

GRACE

Maybe, if you do something for me. It would be good for students to hear the wisdom of an actual "working writer" versus me talking at them all the time. Sit in on class tomorrow?

ZAK

Hmm, I'll see if I can find one for you. Sure. Of course. Send me the details, I'll be there.

He digs through his coat pocket, hands Grace a business card.

GRACE

Okay funny man. Good luck with the Newmans. Remember, tread lightly.

She walks away. A homeless looking man across the square shouts something indistinguishable at Zak as he rummages through the trash can.

ZAK

Bro, can't hear you. Okay. You do you.

A police officer approaches, gives Zak a disconcerting glance and continues towards the homeless man, who scurries away.

ZAK

Evening officer...

INT. BIG BEAR LODGE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Hotel room finds Zak seated at the small desk, typing on his MacBook. Open pizza box, bottle of bourbon, red solo cup.

MUSIC: A song like "Make a Livin' by MC Lyte"

Focus on the screen to see the preamble to his story.

The words: *Thousands of feet below the surface. On one of the oldest farms in the great lakes state. Lives a mineral water source of unknown origin. A veritable gold mine. And in 1925, this hidden gem was discovered in Big Springs, a small town on the banks of Lake Huron a few hours from Detroit.*

He takes a healthy sip. Rises from the chair, stretches, paces the room in conversation with himself. Sits back down and starts writing again.

INT. THEO'S DINER - DAY

Music still playing. Flash through a sequence of Zak speaking with local patrons at the diner - construction workers, a group of vets, a real estate agent, a table full of ladies, two Catholic nuns. Zak smiling and taking notes.

Cut to Zak putting on his dark pea coat and knit hat. He drops another \$20 bill and exits the diner.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Cold and overcast. Zak approaches the Big Springs Hardware Store, a throwback to the General Stores of the past that housed everything from appliances to tools and supplies to pieces of candy in wooden barrels. The register is manned by an older white man with a mop of brownish grey hair, reading a prayer book. The man is LARRY NEWMAN (70s).

Window reflection reveals SHERIFF BECKY HESS (50s, white with straight reddish hair), short, sturdy, strangely attractive. In her sheriff's uniform, she looks more like a park ranger than an agent of law enforcement. Music ends.

BECKY

Hello Mr. Washington. Can I help you with find something?

ZAK

Oh, wow, hi. No, I'm good. Just out here seeing the sights, meeting the people. Doing reporter things...

BECKY

Word gets around. I'm Sheriff Hess. I hope you are finding what you need. What you are doing here matters to us a lot.

ZAK

Yes ma'am. All good so far.

BECKY

Well, if you need anything at all, please come see me at the station. My door is always open... for you.

ZAK

I appreciate that. Maybe I'll stop by tomorrow after meeting up with the Newmans this evening.

BECKY

Tell me, I was curious how your conversation went with Grace Harper yesterday?

ZAK

(a bit perplexed)

Fine... I guess. She was helpful and very nice. Seems to enjoy living here.

BECKY

That's good to hear. You know Big Springs is not for everyone. Especially outsiders. I trust you'll be attending the Centennial on Saturday...

ZAK

(steps back to leave)

Absolutely. Wouldn't miss it. Nice meeting you Sheriff.

BECKY

Likewise. Be safe out there. Oh, in case you were wondering, that's Larry Newman inside... it's his store.

Zak nods. Becky watches him go. She makes eye contact with Larry. Long, deep breath, holding it in, she releases the air through her nose without changing her deadpan expression.

EXT. NEWMAN FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Zak's Jeep Grand Cherokee driving an unpaved country road just outside of town. He passes the entrance to the Newlight Water Treatment Plant, its massive water towers, buildings and a fleet of white Ford F-150's lining the lot.

Top of the hill is the Newman estate, a grand 6,000 square foot log structure flanked by barns and a view of downtown Big Springs. He pulls into the circle drive. Two men walk towards him from the closest barn. JACOB and SAMUEL NEWMAN (20s, white, bearded) rugged, capable-looking young men, both clad in dirty Newlight Carhartt cold gear.

JACOB

Can I help you? You look lost.

ZAK

Is this the Newman place?

SAMUEL

Depends on who's asking...

The two have now circled around Zak, boxing him in. The front door opens. Patty Newman appears.

PATTY

Good, you found us. And met the boys. Jacob, Samuel... this is Zak, the reporter from The Detroit News I told you about. He is joining us tonight for supper. Now go, get cleaned up. The pig should be done soon.

JACOB

(giving Zak a once over)
Reporter huh? If you say so Mom...

SAMUEL

Sure as hell don't look like any of the reporters at 47's rally.

The boys slowly back away and disappear around the house.

PATTY

Don't mind them. They're harmless. We don't get out of Big Springs much.

ZAK

Not my first rodeo in covering stories with less than enthusiastic subjects.

PATTY

I've heard. They won't give you any trouble. Let's head inside and talk for a bit before supper.

ZAK

Sounds like a plan. Ms Newman, your place is amazing. I thought ranches like this only existed in Montana or Texas, not in Michigan...

PATTY

Well Zak, that's as good a place as any for us to begin then. My family has owned this land for generations...

They ascend the steps as the tall, heavy front door swings open to welcome them inside.

21 - INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Newman den features a grand stone fireplace and sitting room. A roaring fire illuminates the space as dusk turns to darkness. A framed photograph of Patty on a campaign stage with the President of the United States is featured.

PATTY

Our original house is down by the water towers. Some of the first healing baths were performed right in that barn.

ZAK

So, it was your dad, Dorr Newman, who discovered this rejuvenating water source?

PATTY

Daddy had bad skin. We found the only thing that gave him relief was bathing in this water. At first, we didn't understand how to harvest its full potential. Eventually, we figured out a way to share its power. Our water made Big Springs what it is today.

ZAK

It sounds like you've had some pretty famous clientele over the years... Babe Ruth, Marilyn Monroe, and looks like a few Presidents apparently...

PATTY

People once flocked from miles and miles away to experience our healing baths. Some were crippled and could barely walk. By the time they were finished, the righteous walked again.

ZAK

That's amazing. Why is this not the biggest story on the planet? Why are we not harnessing this power for everyone?

PATTY

Well, not everyone is worthy of salvation, are they Zak? Isn't that what your Bible teaches us?

ZAK

Depends on which version you read.

PATTY

I think it's past time we share our gift. This world has suffered enough, don't you think?

From the shadows, Larry Newman appears. Silent. Staring.

PATTY (CONT.)

Hi dear. Supper ready? Please inform the boys, we'll be right there.

Larry nods. Says nothing and dutifully leaves the room.

ZAK

Tell me, so your water is solely used for healing purposes? Aches and pains, skin care... but do people drink it?

PATTY

Some do. Mostly, we bottle it for the townspeople to take home from the store. Some goes to the hospital. We also support the church. Did you know that every baby born in Big Springs over the last, say 50-60 years, has been baptized with Newlight water?

ZAK

Seriously? That's amazing.

PATTY

I like to think it's one reason why we rank as one of the healthiest places to live in the midwest. I always say the loneliest job in town is a Big Springs doctor. They don't stick around these parts for very long.

Samuel and Jacob appear from the kitchen area.

PATTY

Let's take a break. Our chef has been smoking a pig all day for this special occasion. And he's prepared Mac and cheese, collared greens, homemade corn bread... it's all for you Zak.

ZAK

Collared greens? You shouldn't have.

PATTY

It was no trouble at all. We want you to feel welcome at our table.

Patty leads Zak out of the den. The camera returns to the photograph of her posing with the President.

INT. NEWMAN DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Candles burn as Larry, Patty and their boys are enjoying supper with their guest. The mountain of food is spread across the massive wood dining table. The head of the pig stares directly at Zak.

ZAK

(putting his fork down)

Thanks again for the meal. I hope it wasn't any trouble.

Jacob and Samuel ravenously consume pork and macaroni.

PATTY

Not at all. Our crew works up a healthy appetite. It takes energy to do what we are attempting.

ZAK

Yeah about that. What is the goal with the expansion? Seems like you have a good thing here in Big Springs...

PATTY

We do. But, like any good business, we need to grow. Organic growth. And we've fully tapped this market. There's an opportunity, an appetite for what we offer, now more than ever.

ZAK

Why now?

PATTY

We've been waiting for the right time. The right leadership. Someone in charge with influence over his followers. I think we've got that now.

ZAK

Some might say it's more like a cult? I was surprised to read how much influence your lake town had on swinging the last Presidential election for the MAGA side.

Patty silently stares through Zak.

SAMUEL

(glaring, in between bites)
Easy there boy.

ZAK

(ignoring him)
But that's all in the past. I would love a chance to see the original well. Where the water comes from. Grab some photos. Talk to the plant workers if possible.

Silence around the table. No one moves.

PATTY

Oh I'm sorry Mr. Washington. That area is strictly off limits to outsiders. But we have professional photographs of the area which we would be happy to share with you. I'll make sure you receive them immediately.

Awkward silence.

INT. BIG BEAR LODGE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

His hotel room provides an escape from another late season Michigan storm. He brushes off snow, sits down at his laptop. Still in his hat & coat. A new email catches his attention.

The email: *Hey Alex Cross: On my way to interview POTUS. Hope you are enjoying purgatory, be nice to the Newman family, they are important donors to the cause. I wouldn't want you to end up in Alligator Alcatraz with the other deplorables. Sincerely, JFB (aka future boss)*

ZAK

Such an asshole.

Closing his laptop, he walks towards the closet to take off his coat. A mirror reveals a disheveled looking man peering through the window. Busted, the man stumbles backward.

ZAK

What the fuck? Dude! Stop!

Zak flings open the door, rushes outside into the wintry mix. He sees a figure running past the building, turning, disappearing out of view.

Zak takes off. See the freshly made tracks leading into the forest area behind the lodge.

We follow Zak as he navigates low hanging branches and snow mounds. The man is visible in the distance.

ZAK

Stop! Dude, I just want to talk.

Slipping on ice, Zak loses his footing and falls. Panting, looking up, he closes his eyes as a shadowy figure is standing over him.

INT. HUNTING SHACK - NIGHT

Zak opens his eyes to find himself wrapped in old, tattered blankets inside a wooden shack. A single kerosene lamp reveals the homeless man who called out to Zak. WILLIAM WALKER (60s, black, unshaven) hands him a tin cup.

WILLIAM

This is all I got but will warm you up real quick.

Zak sits up, wincing from the fall, grabs the cup from

William. Takes a sip and immediately coughs.

ZAK

Jesus. What is this?

WILLIAM

Homemade shit. We do what we can with what little they give us.

ZAK

Who are you? Why follow me?

WILLIAM

William. William Walker is my government name. I saw you check in the other night. Thought maybe we might have some things in common.

ZAK

Was that you the other night? What the fuck dude?

WILLIAM

If you haven't noticed, people like us around these parts are hard to find. Ms. Harper tells me you here to do a story on the Newmans. Well, I reckon you might want to see the other side of Big Springs...

ZAK

What other side?

WILLIAM

What they hide from the world. Them Newmans are not what you think. Sure as shit, them folks are bad people. I've seen it with my own eyes.

ZAK

How so? Some details would be helpful.

WILLIAM

That water is fucking people up. I worked there for a bit. They are forcing it on townsfolk. Feeding it into their food... drinks... for years on end. People not aging like normal. Never getting sick. And never leaving this hell-hole.

ZAK

Isn't that the entire point? To harness its healing properties?

WILLIAM

That's what they want you to think! Christ almighty! They're building something bad. Everything is secret and shit. Get to that farm, go to the source, you will see!

ZAK

See what?

WILLIAM

The truth. The water is the beginning... and the end.

We hear the sound of dogs barking nearby. Police dogs.

WILLIAM (CONT.)

You gotta get on outta here. They can't know we talked. They watching me, I just know it. Get out! Now!

ZAK

(standing up)

Okay, man. We need to keep talking.

WILLIAM

(pushing Zak towards the door)

Everything you need is at that farm. I'm telling you. It's not safe. Now get the fuck up out of here!

EXT. BIG BEAR LODGE - NIGHT

Zak walks down the path of the buildings towards his room. As he approaches, a shadowy figure greets him.

BECKY

It feels a bit late for a nature hike. Find anything interesting out there?

ZAK

No ma'am. Just stretching my legs.

BECKY

In this cold? People tend to disappear out there at night... just making sure you got home safe and sound.

ZAK

All good Sheriff. Sorry to have troubled you this fine evening.

Zak reaches for the door to his room. She grabs his wrist with a surprisingly strong grip for someone her size.

BECKY

Word of advice. Keep your focus on the task at hand. We wouldn't want a repeat of Charlottesville, Zak, now would we?

ZAK

(becoming annoyed)

Can I go to bed now?

She smiles and lets go of his wrist.

BECKY

My apologies. Have a good night Mr. Washington. We'll see you tomorrow.

Sheriff Hess walks to her squad car. The blinds split slightly apart as his eyes watch the car drive away.

EXT. EMANCIPATION PARK, CHARLOTTESVILLE (FLASHBACK)

Graphic Super: 10:30 am

August 12, 2017

Charlottesville, Virginia

Hundreds of white supremacists protesting the removal of Robert E. Lee's statue. Tension is high. Angry mob chants directly in the faces of citizens locked arm-in-arm.

NAZIS

"One people. One nation. End immigration!"

"Blood and soil! Blood and soil! Blood and soil!"

Louder, more intense, a ticking time bomb. The Nazi contingent moves closer to the counterprotesters, screaming right in their faces. One man shoves another and bedlam ensues. Pushing, shoving, punches, kicking, some attempt to escape the mayhem.

We follow a fleeing woman who falls down. A slightly younger Zak and his photographer stop to help her up.

ZAK

We got you. Let's go! The police station is down the way.

The three start running away from the scene with hordes of fascists in pursuit. The photographer collides with another person, dropping the camera. He and Zak stop.

ZAK (CONT)

No! Keep going, I got it. Go!

The man takes off as Zak navigates the masses of fleeing people and smokebombs to collect the camera.

Picking it up, Zak is suddenly surrounded by alt-right protesters. He feebly attempts to break free and is pushed aggressively to the ground.

NEO-NAZI MAN 1

Where you going! We just getting started with your black ass!

One of the neo-nazis tries to pull Zak up from the ground. As he does, Zak pushes him hard.

ZAK

Get the fuck off me man!

The other members of the gang descend on Zak. They drag him to the confines of a nearby parking garage, chanting...

NAZIS

"Jews will not replace us! Jews will not replace us!" "YOU will not replace us!"

The Nazi's throw Zak against a cement wall and begin beating him. One of them uses a torch. Another hits him repeatedly with the butt of a Confederate flag. A passing woman stops.

WOMAN

Leave him alone! Police! Help!

For a brief moment, they stop. On all fours, bleeding, Zak grabs a loose brick. He rises and swings it at one of the distracted Nazis. The blow grazes his forehead.

NEO-NAZI MAN 2

You're going to regret that monkey boy!

Zak is struck on the side of the head, knocked down. They continue to kick him. An overhead security camera is revealed as police arrive on foot.

INT. CHARLOTTESVILLE JAIL (FLASHBACK CONT.) - NIGHT

Hours later. Face swollen. One eye closed. Zak is seated alone in a holding cell. The cell door slides open and a friendly face steps inside.

ED

Jesus Christ Zak.

Zak stands, emotional, falls into his uncle's arms.

ED (CONT)

It's okay. I got you. Listen to me, we're going to get through this.

ZAK

Get through what? Me getting my ass beat by a mob of angry racists?

ED

No. They've got you on charges of assault and battery.

ZAK

Ed, I was defending myself.

ED

I know. Things are bad right now. The President just came out and said some shit about there being good people on both sides.

ZAK

What the fuck? Are you serious?

ED

Spineless race baiting. Listen, we have good lawyers, there may be even be footage. What happened son?

ZAK

We were down there covering the story like you said. Things just spiraled man. It got heated quick. Fuckin' backwards ass white Nazi scumbags.

ED

Careful now. Remember where we are. A lot of the same bullshit went down in Detroit back in the day when the city burned. But we gotta rise above. Especially as part of the media and the Black media at that. We gotta cover the story, not BE the story. You hear me?

ZAK

I tried Uncle Ed. We ran away. But the mutha fuckers wouldn't stop. Four, five against one, that ain't fair.

ED

Consider yourself lucky then. Nothing fair about it. That lady in the garage saved your ass. Could have been worse.

ZAK

Really? I need to find her.

ED

You got bigger problems. And some pretty pissed off folks in the administration who want to hang you out to dry as one of the "woke" media.

ZAK

Fuck that. Fuck 'em all to hell.

ED

One step at a time. Let's get you out of here. Some food. Maybe a shower too... because god damn you stink.

Arm in arm, they walk out of the cell and disappear.

EXT. PARK BENCH IN TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Zak sitting alone in the park. The previous night's storm has been replaced with a bluebird sunny day. He takes a small sip from his to-go coffee cup, steam billowing out. A familiar face approaches from Main Street.

GRACE

What did I tell you about stalking?

ZAK

Can't a brother just enjoy his morning coffee in peace these days?

GRACE

Uh huh. Follow me. The young and highly impressionable minds of Big Springs await.

ZAK

I thought you'd never ask. So, what am I getting myself into here? Reporters like to be prepped before entering hostile territory.

GRACE

You'll be fine. They're mostly harmless. You might have to endure some awkward silences, maybe read an essay or two, give constructive feedback, that kind of thing...

ZAK

Piece of cake.

GRACE

(she stops to face him)

And maybe even talk about yourself for five minutes. Like how you ended up as a reporter? Why journalism still matters in this day and age?

ZAK

How long do I have? That may take a bit as I'm still trying to figure that out myself.

GRACE

I bet you are Mr. Washington. Well, if nothing else, you are doing me a favor so there's that.

ZAK

Happy to oblige. Lead the way, madame.

They walk and continue chatting towards the school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The age of distracted teens exists even in Big Springs. Kids glued to phones. Doodling, whispering. Welcome to teaching.

ZAK

I was on a mission to prove that someone who looked like me could actually be taken seriously in a space that has been, historically speaking, not receptive. I want to be the one who brings the stories of the underserved into the light... that's my why... it's as simple as that.

GRACE

Thank you Mr. Washington. Thank you for sharing with us. Okay class, who has questions? Let's hear 'em.

No one says a word. Painful silence.

GRACE (CONT.)

Nope. How 'bout we try this again. Let's see here... Beatrice. Why don't you get the discussion started. You seem super engaged this morning.

She is clearly not paying attention.

BEATRICE

Um, sure, we were wondering if you can make money as a journalist? You don't look like you make much, if I'm being honest with you. No offense!

ZAK

Well, there are more financially rewarding careers out there.

GRACE

And there are more important things than money too! Right? Things like finding the truth, justice, the power of the free press, service to others?

BEATRICE

Sure Ms. Harper, if you say so.

GRACE

I do. Dig deeper. Alan, how 'bout you?
What role does the media play on how
we view the world?

ALAN

(looks up from his phone)
You can't trust the media. It's all
fake news. They only report on things
that align with their liberal agenda!

ZAK

Actually, that's not what we do. At
all. Journalism is one of the few
unbiased professions left today.

ANOTHER MALE STUDENT

There's nothing unbiased when you feed
the "woke" machine! My daddy said this
class was going to be a waste of time!

The students all laugh at his remark.

GRACE

Stop it! What has gotten into you
kids? Mr. Washington is here donating
his story, his experience, to help you
become better. Show him respect.

ZAK

It's fine. Listen, I get it. It's all
a bunch of nonsense these days.
Sometimes it's hard to tell good from
bad. Am I right? Because when you are
fed a diet of mistrust and
misinformation on a daily basis, it
becomes really tough to distinguish
what's real...

Bell rings loudly. Students start to pack up.

ZAK (CONT)

Listen, don't settle for what someone
tells you is the truth. Ask why things
are the way they are, and try to see
both sides... in everything you do.
Thank you for your time.

The students groan, begin filing out as fast as possible.

GRACE

We're not done talking about this! I expect all revisions to your essays will be turned in by Monday morning! Make time this weekend while you are out celebrating!

The last student leaves the room.

GRACE (CONT.)

Jesus. I need a drink. I am so sorry.

ZAK

Nah, hopefully, one person heard me. Just takes one, right? I was once one of them, questioning everything. So, are you done for the day?

GRACE

Yeah I'm done. Hey, there's this quiet hole in the wall in Franklin, the next town over. The food is average as hell, but the drinks are cold, with normal people, and it's not Big Springs! That's my favorite part!

ZAK

Now you're talking my language.

INT. FRANKLIN GRILL - NIGHT

The sign was broken on the old brick building perched along a lazy river bed 10 miles outside Big Springs.

A vintage jukebox provides the entertainment as a handful of patrons quietly gather for a cheap beverages. Music: a song like "Crowded Table" by The Highwomen.

Zak and Grace sit in a quiet corner booth with bowls of chili, basket of fries, two whiskeys and two beers.

GRACE

Tell me. How's the seeing both sides part going for YOU since Charlottesville?

ZAK

So you know how to use Google, is that it? Okay. Just because I know something to be true don't mean I always follow it.

GRACE

No judgment here. From where I sit,
you had every right to defend
yourself.

Waitress stops by with two ice waters, placing them down.

WAITRESS

Here's some water for you kids.

GRACE

Oh, we're fine, but thanks though.

WAITRESS

Don't worry, they're clean.

The waitress winks and walks away.

ZAK

What does she mean "clean" water?

GRACE

It means the water isn't from Big
Springs. Meaning, it's not from the
farm. I know you have a story to tell
on the Newmans, but you need the
complete picture.

ZAK

I'm all ears. Hit me.

GRACE

It's about control. When I got here a
few years ago. A man approached me
while I was walking home from school.
He was spouting all these conspiracy
theories that Big Springs was haunted,
the water was poison, and that Patty
Newman was the ringleader of it all.

ZAK

Let me guess. He's about 6-feet, black
dude with grey hair, tattered clothes,
looks like he rarely bathes...

GRACE

Yep. Walker. Whenever I see him
around, I try to make him come here
and eat. For obvious reasons, we tend
to stick out in Big Springs.

ZAK

I haven't noticed.

GRACE

Yeah, I know right. I wonder what it could be. Seriously, we're not part of their tribe. We see what we see. A cult of weirdos who don't age, don't seem to ever get sick, and they never freaking leave... like no vacations, no relatives coming to visit, nothing! Walker claims it's the magic water! I don't know what to believe.

ZAK

So you're saying, the Newmans discovered the 'fountain of youth' right here in northern Michigan?

GRACE

More like "don't touch the water, it will fuck you up!" So I'm meeting folks at church, around town, at PTA meetings and I start asking questions about the Newmans, the story of the water, because I'm a history buff, I want to learn about the place I live. Then, out of the blue, Sheriff Hess shows up at school. She spends an entire afternoon sitting in my classes. I'm like, can I help you with something, freaky lady?

ZAK

Jesus. Why?

GRACE

That's what I said! She didn't take a note. Just sat there. Staring at me. The bell rings, she stands, walks out, like nothing happened. I go to the office, my principal shuts me down, told me to mind my business. So since that day, I don't ask questions. I do my job. I go home. I come here. When I can get away for a weekend, I take it. And I never touch that water!

ZAK

So why do you stay here? You're young.
And seem like a semi-capable teacher
who can get a teaching job anywhere?

GRACE

Semi capable? Asshole. I'm still here
because I'm blacklisted. Every
application to every school district
in the state got rejected.

ZAK

Why? Did you do something?

GRACE

Well, fuck you too! No. There was a
principal at my last school in
Hillsdale who wouldn't take no for an
answer ... he kept coming at me, when
I finally said enough is enough and
reported his groping ass, I come to
find out he is super connected in the
Michigan GOP down in Lansing and I was
sent to Siberia... aka Big Springs.

ZAK

Maybe I can help you when this is all
said and done, after we shine a light
on Bath City USA?

GRACE

Best thing you can do is finish your
article and go home. Get far away from
here... and that farm!

INT. NEWLIGHT WATER COMPANY - NIGHT

Inside a Newlight water treatment facility is a sterile,
white laboratory. Workers in protective suits carefully
extract water via an intricate web of vacuum-sealed pipes.

A meeting is taking place high above the fray.

PATTY

What's the latest on the announcement
plans for tomorrow?

BECKY

Everything is set. At the conclusion
of the ribbon cutting ceremony, the
stage will be yours.

PATTY

Perfect.

JACOB

Yeah ma. This is your baby, we'll make sure it all goes smooth.

PATTY

I know you will dear.

SAMUEL

Wave one of the delivery trucks head out tomorrow at dawn. The crew has been running shifts day and night...

JACOB

We've got enough reserves to cover the entire state of Michigan, even stretching into Ohio and Illinois.

SAMUEL

Yeah, don't forget the Chicago libtards and the blacks. No doubt, they would benefit from a good cleansing.

PATTY

Excellent. Well done my beautiful boys. Remember, this is only step one. First, Michigan...

JACOB

Then, the Midwest, and the whole dang country!

SAMUEL

Fucking a-right! Millions bathed in our light.

PATTY

Yes, but only if they are worthy... as we know, some may not be salvageable and that's okay too.

EXT. BIG BEAR LODGE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Zak exits the passenger side of Grace's Subaru at his hotel.

ZAK

(tipsy, holding the door)
Thanks for the conversation and for the ride. I may have been over served.

GRACE

It happens. Always good to have company. Even washed up reporters like you who can't handle their alcohol.

ZAK

Well played. Good night Ms. Harper. I'll catch up with you before I go.

GRACE

Can't wait. Good night Zak.

He closes the door. Now standing in the dark parking lot as he watches her drive off. Breath visible. Zak looks at his hotel door, turns, walks towards his Jeep.

INT. ZAK'S JEEP - NIGHT

Opening the car door, Zak is startled to discover someone sleeping inside.

ZAK

Walker? The fuck. Is that you?

WILLIAM

(startled, waking up)
What? Who! Oh, man. Not so loud.

ZAK

Why are you in my car?

WILLIAM

(sitting up)
Because you need me to take you there.

ZAK

Are you drunk? Where are we going?

WILLIAM

You know where. We're going to the plant. Time for you to see it.

ZAK

Fine. But we're gonna talk about boundaries on the way. Sheeeeet!

WILLIAM

Whatever. Let's go. Neither of us getting any younger here.

EXT. NEWLIGHT WATER COMPANY - NIGHT

The plant is mostly silent as the last of the night shift depart in their white F-150s. Zak and William parked with lights off, hidden from view behind a large row of trees.

WILLIAM

Okay, Mr. Zak. You ready to do this?

ZAK

Do what? Trespassing after hours? I'm good.

WILLIAM

Not trespassing if you get caught.
We'll walk through them apple trees
over there. Out of sight from cameras.

ZAK

(dropping the keys on the seat)
I don't understand. You say that you
worked there. That the water is poison
or some shit... so why haven't you
reported this to the FBI or police?

WILLIAM

You don't think I tried that? Them
Newmans got friends in high places.
All I got for my trouble was a visit
from the Sheriff and her goon squad.
With a few nights in a cell. They've
been hating on me ever since. Follow
my ass everywhere I go. I can't get a
job, and I ain't got nowhere to go.

ZAK

Sorry man. I didn't know.

WILLIAM

How could you? Ms. Harper is about my
only friend left in the world. I gave
everything to this country. Watched my
friends die for what... for this? I'm
done. If they won't listen to me,
maybe, they will listen to you.

ZAK

No promises there. Lead the way.

EXT. NEWLIGHT WATER PLANT - NIGHT

The two men creep across the gravel road into the orchard.
The back entrance to the plant is visible.

WILLIAM

Almost there. Come on pokey reese.

ZAK

How do you suppose we get in again?

WILLIAM

I may not know much these days but I
am betting they still ain't never
changed the code on the door. 1925,
the year this place was born. Let's
go. See them cameras, once they face
north, we got like 15 seconds... now!

William moves for the door with Zak trailing. Racing to the
door, he frantically enters the code. Nothing.

ZAK

Let's go! Is it not working?

William tries the numbers again. This time pressing enter at
the end, the door clicks to open.

WILLIAM

Bingo bango!

INT. NEWLIGHT CAFETERIA - NIGHT

The men slowly enter the plant's cafeteria. Across the room
is a door, illuminated from the inside. Zak accidentally
knocks over a chair in the dark.

WILLIAM

(whispering tone)

This way. Shhh! Keep it down!

At the door, they peer inside to reveal an empty factory
floor of machinery, pipes, bottling stations. Everything
connected to a pipe that runs from the ceiling to the walls
to a door marked "Do Not Enter"...

WILLIAM (CONT.)

(still whispering)

This is what they don't want you to
see. Again, we need to move quick
here. On my mark... now!

They race across the room to the door, William enters "1925" on the keypad, and it unlocks.

INT. NEWLIGHT SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

Inside, they become bathed in light. In front of them sits a massive well and overhead piping system. The walls are decorated in unrecognizable symbols. The water bubbles, steam rises into the air. Zak steps closer.

WILLIAM

What are you doing? Don't touch it!

ZAK

Why not? It's beautiful.

WILLIAM

Wait a second. Here...

William reaches into his coat pocket, pulls out a dead mouse.

ZAK

Bro, what the hell?

WILLIAM

Just watch.

He tosses the lifeless mouse into the well. The water gurgles as the two men stand there intently watching in silence.

ZAK

I don't get it. Walker?

WILLIAM (CONT.)

Wait for it. Wait for it. Come on little fella. You can...

Suddenly, the mouse drags itself out of the well and races towards the men. Zak crashes backwards into a control panel, triggering the alarm.

ZAK

Holy fuck! How did you...

WILLIAM

Shit! We gotta go, NOW!

William opens the door, hurries them out of the room. They rush through the cafeteria and race out the door.

EXT. NEWLIGHT WATER COMPANY - NIGHT

Safety lights now illuminate the premises. Up the hill, the headlights of four-wheelers move in their direction from the Newman house. Zak stops. Hear dogs barking. He turns and notices William is gone.

ZAK

Walker! Walker! God damn it!

Zak takes off. Unfamiliar with the terrain, running through never-ending rows of apple trees as the chase vehicles and the dogs close the gap.

He dives behind a row of hay bales. The headlights tracking them have gone dark. His pursuers are on foot. Everything is quiet for a moment. Zak peers around the corner. Shadows moving. Behind him is a German shepherd, barking.

Footsteps approach. A bright flashlight. Zak looks up from his crouched position. Sees the silhouette of Samuel Newman. Before he can utter a word, Zak is blindly struck by the barrel of a shotgun and knocked out cold.

JACOB (VOICE)

Fuck around and find out. You ain't in the big city no more!

SAMUEL (VOICE)

Help me get this piece of shit into the truck.

INT. BIG SPRINGS POLICE STATION CELL - NIGHT

Lying on a metal bench inside a police cell. Zak comes to, reaches for his throbbing head. He sits up, tries to stand, cannot. Sensing another presence, he opens his eyes.

BECKY

I wouldn't do that Mr. Washington. You've had quite the adventure.

ZAK

Where am I? What happened?

BECKY

You tell me.

ZAK

(groaning, still coming to)
Sheriff, it's not what you think.

BECKY

You don't know what I think.

Middle of the night. The station is quiet.

ZAK

I can explain. I was only trying to capture b-roll for the story.

BECKY

By trespassing, breaking and entering?
Is that how they do things in Detroit?

ZAK

Call my editor. He will vouch for me.

BECKY

Who was your accomplice? How did you get into the plant?

ZAK

No one. It was just me.

BECKY

(standing up from her stool)
Uh huh. Sure. I'll give you a few minutes to think. Maybe your "memory" will come back to you.

ZAK

I'm telling you the truth.

BECKY

Well, I guess we will see about that won't we Mr. Washington.

She slides open the cell door, leaving it ajar.

BECKY (VOICE)

He's all yours...

Into frame walks Patty Newman, her face wearing the unmistakable look of disappointment and displeasure.

PATTY

Hello Zak.

INT. NEWLIGHT WATER PLANT (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

After hours as a 'cleaned up' version of William Walker dutifully sweeps the factory floor at Newlight Water.

Walker is dressed in sterile white Newlight Water coveralls as he slowly and deliberately attends to his work. Approaching the restricted area of the floor, he notices that the security door has been left ajar. He looks right, then left, before opening the door and stepping inside.

INT. NEWLIGHT SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

Inside the room, Walker discovers the primary water source aglow and bubbling at the surface. He moves closer, taking a knee as he stares into the source with wonder. The glow of the water emanates off his face. He smiles and stands up. He turns to leave and finds himself face-to-face with Larry Newman, who breaks into a creepy smile.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Present day. Walker hides on the side of the gravel road about a mile to so from the Newman property. Camouflaged in sticks, leaves, brush, snow. He waits.

See the approaching headlights of pickup trucks. Moving in a pack. Slow and steady. Spotlights from the beds illuminate the surrounding fields as the search party closes in.

Hear the ruffling conversation on CB radio.

CB VOICE 1

Keep an eye out. The old man couldn't have gotten far.

CB VOICE 2

10-4. We are clear on the east side. I repeat, east side is all clear.

They are close. William lowers his head. He holds his breath as the spotlight moves in his direction.

CB VOICE 3

Hold on! I see something moving ahead. All units. Go!

The pickups take off in hot pursuit. William breathes a sigh of relief, shaking his head.

WILLIAM

Way too old for this shit.

He stands. Walks in the opposite direction of the trucks.

INT. POLICE STATION JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Patty calmly places a stool in front of Zak.

PATTY

I think it's time we cleared the air.

ZAK

I apologize. I didn't mean to...

PATTY

To what? I thought we had an understanding Mr. Washington. Did we not? I invited you into my home.

ZAK

I'm just trying to do my job. To follow the story wherever it may lead. I didn't mean any harm.

PATTY

(standing up, pacing)

That's the thing. You did do us harm. Sneaking onto my property like that, that's something we can't just ignore.

ZAK

I apologize. It was wrong. I was wrong. And I'll accept whatever consequences come my way. But, I have to ask... what are you not telling us about Newlight water?

She ponders this question for a moment. She steps closer to Zak. Now inches from his face. Boxing him in. They lock eyes.

PATTY

That's the question of the day. Isn't it Zak! Better I show you...

At that moment, Patty's eyes turn pitch black and grow larger. Dramatic music. Her skin morphs from white to a pale greenish tint as air appears to be completely sucked from her now sunken face. Moving even closer. Frightened, Zak falls backward on his stool. Looking up from his perspective we see this blurred new form of Patty Newman standing over him.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND BIG BEAR LODGE - DAY

Sunrise in Big Springs. Spring is in the air as William Walker makes his way through the woods. Weary. Exhausted from the trek home. He pauses at the thawing stream. Looking up he sees the shack. Almost there. He trudges forward.

INT. WALKER'S SHACK - DAY

Stepping inside, Walker removes his wet coat. He walks to his fireplace and strikes a match. Sitting down across from his makeshift fire that's struggling to catch, he takes a deep breath, unaware of the visitor.

SAMUEL
(stepping into view)
Good morning Walker.

WILLIAM
Jesus! No, no, no...

William leaps out of his chair and makes a break for it. The door is opened from the outside to reveal another guest.

JACOB
Going somewhere! We've been looking everywhere for you. Come back inside, let's talk. Where were you last night little buddy?

WILLIAM
I ain't got nothing to say to the likes of you fools!

SAMUEL
We can do this the hard way too! Come on now. We've got all day.

Jacob pushes William through the door, steps inside, and closes it behind him. Camera pulls back. Hear his screams.

WILLIAM (VOICE)
Fuck off me man! I ain't playing!

INT. POLICE STATION JAIL CELL - DAY

Eyes open to the ceiling of his dirty cell. Zak slowly sits up, head still throbbing, with the hungover feeling of an undergrad when day-drinking fun turns into late night regret. The clock on the wall reads 9:11 am. Cell door opens.

BECKY

Morning sunshine! You have a visitor.

He rises from the cold cement floor, brushes the dust off his clothes, shuffles forward and down the hall.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Zak steps inside an interview room with a table and chairs to find a familiar face seated at the table.

ED

(standing up to greet him)

Damn, don't you look like hell on wheels this morning.

They embrace. Hold tighter than normal.

BECKY

I'll leave you two. We should have his paperwork processed shortly.

ED

Thank you Sheriff.

She closes the door, alone at last.

ZAK

Uncle Ed, I didn't do nothing! These people are insane!

ED

Boy, you must be outside your damn mind. The hell wrong with you? I can't give you an easier gig than this. Like literally, this is a god damn puff piece just like you said. Now we got another Charlottesville and my ass is bailing you out a-gain!

ZAK

I know. I'm sorry. I can explain.

Zak leans in closer. So only he and Ed can hear.

ZAK (CONT)

It's not safe to talk here. They're listening to every word. You have to believe me!

The door opens and Sheriff Hess appears.

BECKY

Mr. Washington. It looks like you are free to go. The Newmans have decided to drop all charges.

ED

Well, that's mighty kind of them.

ZAK

Yeah, what's the catch?

BECKY

No catch. As you know, we've got a lot on our plate with the centennial. Bigger fish to fry as they say. I'm sorry things didn't work out for you here in Big Springs. I do hope you come back and see us sometime.

ZAK

(getting up to leave)

Uh huh. Sure. I bet you do. I'll add it to my bucket list this summer.

ED

(leading Zak away)

Not another word out of you. Walk son.

Sheriff Hess stares into the now empty room. She looks to her left at the two-way glass. She smiles.

EXT. BIG SPRINGS MARINA - DAY

Hot coffee in hand. Ed and Zak rest on a bench overlooking the harbor. The warmth of the sun melts the last remaining bits of late winter snow.

ED

That's a crazy tale Zak, even by your standards.

ZAK

Ed, I know what I saw.

ED

So what is she... a shapeshifter? A mystical being? Is that what we're going with? You know I can't put any of that in print. You know that right?

ZAK

It's not just her. That family is whacked. Sheriff Hess is up to something too, I know it. She's been on my ass since I got here. Little freak shows up wherever I'm at.

ED

There you go with the police. I can't do this again with you. Maybe it's time to call it a day here in Big Springs. Take some time. Get that help your dumb ass has been avoiding.

ZAK

I'm real close to something here. Let me finish the job. Please Ed!

ED

I'm not asking. You've got enough to write the piece for the Sunday edition. I read the skeleton draft. The photogs will capture the celebration. We're good here.

Ed stands up to leave.

ED (CONT)

Nothing positive is going to come from you sticking around this place. Put any finishing touches you want on the story ASAP and send it over to Howard for proofing. Go home, get some sleep. We can talk on Monday. You hear me?

Zak looks aimlessly at the water. He lowers his head and stares into the ground for a few seconds.

ZAK

I hear you. I just have a few people to see before I hit the road. Most of all, I need to check in on Walker, make sure he got home last night.

ED

First smart move you've made in a bit. And I ain't gonna tell anyone about this neither. Last thing we need is more ammunition to feed Briggs' ego.

ZAK

Or you can just kill me now. I'd
rather die than listen to that clown.

The two men continue walking down the pier together.

ED

(stopping, facing Zak)
Wait, did they use any of that magic
water bullshit to make this coffee?

ZAK

For your sake, I hope so. Your old ass
could definitely use any help it can
get! Seriously man...

Ed smiles, playfully puts Zak into a headlock before pushing
him away. Like they did in the old days.

EXT. BIG SPRINGS ROADS - DAY

Grace is two miles into her run through the scenic areas of
Big Springs proper. Music - a song like "Elevate My Mind" by
Stereo MCs. The warmth of an early spring sun hits like a
jolt of energy. Her sanctuary. A moment interrupted by the
approaching sounds of emergency vehicles.

Sensing something, she stops, pulls the buds from her ears.
Police, fire and ambulance speed by her.

EXT. BIG SPRINGS PIER - DAY

The emergency vehicles are now stopped at the base of the
pier. Lights flashing and general commotion greet Grace as
she stops. Her eye is drawn to a gathering of people by the
base of the pier, among the rocks. A first responder is
tending to what appears to be a man on the ground.

BECKY

(approaching from behind)
Can I help you Ms. Harper?

GRACE

Oh, hi Sheriff. What happened here?

BECKY

Hard to say. Maybe a suicide. A drug
overdose. Or a drowning. We're not
ruling anything out at this point.

GRACE

Really? Someone was out night swimming
this time of year? Is that a thing?

BECKY

Like I said. Anything is possible.

The emergency team places the body into a bag for transport.

GRACE

Who is it?

BECKY

He's a nobody. Name is William Walker.
Just another drunk, drug addict the
government has been propping up...

Grace brushes past Sheriff Hess. She sees William's weathered
face as the body bag is zipped close. She audibly gasps.

BECKY (CONT.)

Quite the reaction, did you know Mr.
Walker well?

GRACE

(quickly composing herself)
No, not really. We crossed paths a few
times around town. He seemed harmless.

BECKY

Well, in my experience, they're the
ones you need to keep an eye on the
most. I have to ask you to let us do
our job please. Move along. Thank you.

Slowly backing away. Grace is speechless. Tears in her eyes,
she starts running. Becky watches her go before turning back
to the rescue team.

BECKY (CONT.)

Okay boys, let's finish bagging and
tagging this piece of shit.

INT. BIG BEAR LODGE - DAY

Alone in his room, Zak is reviewing a draft of his article.
He attaches the document to an email to the copy team.

EMAIL COPY: *Howard, here's the latest version of the Big
Springs piece. I was hoping to gather a few quotes at the
Centennial event, but Ed thinks we've got enough to make the*

Sunday edition. LMK if you need anything else. I'm packing up here. Should be back in the D later this evening if you need to reach me. Thanks, Zak

He hits the send button. A brief scan through his email reveals a new message that captures his attention. The sender is Jackson Foster Briggs.

NEW MESSAGE COPY: *Sending you warm regards from POTUS. He was shocked when I told him you were still working at The News. I guess infamy is better than obscurity! You have both LOL! JFB*

Included in his email is an attachment. Zak opens it and a photograph appears of Briggs wearing a red MAGA hat standing alongside the President, drivers out on the first tee.

Disgusted. Zak lays down on his bed.

EXT. BIG BEAR LODGE PARKING LOT - DAY

Suitcase loaded, time to go home. Zak looks back at the main lobby, Colleen, watches through the window again.

ZAK

There you are. Just can't get enough
of what I'm selling. Get in line
creepshow, you can't afford this!

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Zak fills up his Jeep. He disconnects the pump as a car arrives in a haste, aggressively slamming on the brakes and settling into a nearby parking spot.

GRACE

(exiting her vehicle)
Oh my god. There you are. They said
you had checked out. We have to talk!

ZAK

Hey there. I was going to swing by to
see if you were around. What's wrong?

GRACE

I can't believe this is happening...

She opens the passenger door to Zak's Jeep and sits inside, placing her head into her hands and screams. Zak follows her into the car and closes the door.

ZAK

What's happening? Grace, talk to me.

GRACE

(composing herself a bit)

William is dead. He's dead Zak! They killed him! Oh my god, I can't ...

ZAK

What! I was just with him last night. How? How do you know this?

GRACE

I saw his body. Was out on my run. Police, fire, Sheriff Hess was there. He washed up near the Pier. She fed me some crap of a possible overdose... but he was clean Zak!

ZAK

Holy shit. This is my fault.

GRACE

No, they never liked him. Police and store owners treated him like trash.

ZAK

Grace, he came to me last night. After you dropped me off. We went to the farm and he showed me something... you won't believe me... but shit went down, we got caught, or I got caught, but they must have caught up to him.

GRACE

The Newmans?

ZAK

Yep, Jacob and Samuel. I got whacked in the head, spent the night in a holding cell.

GRACE

Jesus Christ. Are you okay? Zak, what are they hiding? For real...

ZAK

I'm fine. I can't believe they got to Walker. This is insane. I'll tell you what I know, what I saw... but warning, you won't believe me.

GRACE

Fuck this place. I'm done looking the other way with these people. Drive.

INT./EXT. - NEWLIGHT WATER COMPANY - DAY

Music: a song like "Introspection" by Alias Molombo

The Newlight Water Plant is busy. All hands on deck as fork lifts load cases of product onto 18-wheelers, while the assembly line brims with activity from stone-faced factory workers clad in branded white coveralls.

Inside, Patty Newman and a special guest are descending the stairs from the office to the lab. The man is STEPHEN MILLHOUSE (40s, white, thin and bald, wearing a blue suit with a red tie). A member of the President's inner circle.

PATTY

I think you'll find our operation has been scaled up to your satisfaction.

STEPHEN

Fantastic. POTUS will be pleased. Ballpark, what are we talking about here with products? How's distribution? Let me know if we need to rattle some cages.

PATTY

Thanks to you, we go live on Amazon by Monday morning. Let's just say we were able to give Mr. Bezos a compelling pitch. Our bath products, skin care, pain relief, the flavored waters... all with next day delivery. Soon these trucks will be stopping at every Target, Wal-Mart and CVS from Traverse City to Columbus.

STEPHEN

So what are we talking about from a conversion rate? I understand that not everyone experiences the desired reaction, is that still the case?

PATTY

You are correct. For some, the transformation only takes a single exposure. For others, it may take months or even years for the effect...

PATTY (CONT.)

But by the time the world figures out what's happening, our numbers will be too large to overcome.

STEPHEN

Well then, consider us grateful to be early adopters then.

PATTY

Indeed, we must the prepare the table.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE AT EDGE OF PIER - DAY

Grace and Zak lean over a railing. A calm lake bristles below as the sun kisses the water for the first time in months.

GRACE

Jesus. None of this makes sense. Who are they? What do they want?

ZAK

The sense I get is they want to get this water... or whatever the fuck it is... into everyone. But why?

GRACE

Do they really care THAT MUCH about healthy skin? It doesn't make sense.

ZAK

It's more than that. They are building up to something. We need to find proof of what this water does to people.

GRACE

Yeah. But how? You tried breaking into their plant and how'd that go for you?

ZAK

I don't care. We need to try again. I gotta know what they are up to.

GRACE

Well, here's the thing. They all seem preoccupied with the celebration event. We can use this.

ZAK

Yes we can. Come on... I have an idea.

They begin walking back down the pier towards the shore.

EXT. BIG SPRINGS TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Teams of workers put the finishing touches on event preparations. Vendor booths. Rides. Tents. The biggest reserved for Newlight Waters. A large bronze statue of a farmer and a little girl staring up into the sky is being mounted. The statue is quickly covered. Sheriff Hess, Patty and Larry Newman stand by.

BECKY

(pointing to the statue)
What a beautiful addition this will be
to our downtown. It's simply glorious.

PATTY

Yes it is. And it was all Larry's
idea, isn't that right sweetie?

Larry manages a sheepish grin in response.

PATTY (CONT.)

Stop it Larry. You are too modest.

BECKY

My sources tell me that our Detroit
News friend checked out. He won't be a
problem any longer.

PATTY

That's a shame. I was so looking
forward to sharing our gift with Mr.
Washington too.

The two of them smile. Larry doesn't react.

BECKY

Well, perhaps his time will come down
the line. I do think we have a Grace
Harper problem that might need to be
addressed.

PATTY

Really? Sorry to hear. She has
potential, beyond the obvious genetic
shortcomings.

PATTY (CONT.)

Larry my dear. Why don't you head back to the store. Becky and I can manage this perfectly fine. Go on hon.

Larry quietly walks away.

BECKY

God love that man and his loyalty. The world could use more men like Larry, who simply know when to shut up.

PATTY

He is one of a kind. My sweet Larry.

EXT. BIG SPRINGS MAIN STREET - DAY

Parked on a side street is Zak's Grand Cherokee. Inside Zak and Grace have a clear view of Patty, Becky and Larry talking in the park. Larry is now heading their direction.

ZAK

Here we go. Frankenstein at 10 o'clock. Come to papa big boy.

GRACE

Where's that weirdo off to?

ZAK

Wherever he goes, we go.

GRACE

Aye, aye captain.

Larry closes in on their position. They slink down in the seat to avoid detection. He passes by without incident.

GRACE (CONT.)

That was close. Now what?

ZAK

We make soloman grundy find his voice.

GRACE

Okay, you think we can just make him talk? Really, that's your plan?

ZAK

Assuming the troll has a voice...

Hoods on, they exit and walk towards Main Street. Off in the distance, Becky and Patty walk onto the main stage.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

The store appears to be empty as Zak and Grace enter. A bell on the door rings marks their arrival. Splitting up, Grace pretends to search through kitchen accessories as Zak walks down an aisle of tools. Larry suddenly appears behind her.

GRACE

Oh hi. I didn't see you. Would you
happen to have any to-go containers?

Larry points at the boxes of containers on the shelf directly in front of Grace. She quickly scans the options and discovers a box too high for her to reach.

GRACE (CONT.)

Sorry to bother you Mr. Newman. But
would you be so kind and help me reach
this box? Yes, this is the one.

Larry grunts, grabs a stool, steps up, reaches for the box.

At that moment, Grace kicks the stool, causing him to fall.

GRACE

(looking down at the man)
Oh my god, I am so sorry. Are you
okay? Let us help.

Zak joins Grace over him. Larry closes his eyes.

INT. GENERAL STORE BACK ROOM - DAY

Larry is tied up in a desk chair in an office. He raises his head to see Zak holding a crowbar.

ZAK

Welcome back Mr. Newman. We're sorry
it had to go down like this but your
family left me no choice.

Larry stares at both Zak and Grace. A bit amused.

GRACE

We just have a few questions is all.

ZAK

While I know talking ain't your thing,
we're hoping you might make an
exception this time.

For a few seconds, nothing. Just Larry staring back at Zak
and Grace. That is until his lips begin to slowly purse into
his creepy smile and he speaks.

LARRY

Why you meddling kids. Bravo.

Grace and Zak look at each other with shocked faces.

GRACE

He talks!

LARRY

(relaxing a bit)
Don't act so surprised. My silence is
my choice. It's how I express my
devotion to Patty as the chosen one.

ZAK

What are you talking about?

LARRY

The future we are building together.
It's been ordained for centuries. Your
planet was chosen for a reason. We're
just here to facilitate the rebirth.

GRACE

Who are you?

LARRY

That's not my story to tell. Now, can
we just stop with the silly theatrics
please. I have things to do.

ZAK

(flashing the bar)
We're not done with you yet.

GRACE

Yeah, tell us what you know!

LARRY

Silly fools. Think I'm done here...

His eyes turn black, his face morphs in the same way that Patty's did in the jail cell. Larry tears himself out of his bindings and stands up. He faces Zak and Grace. Zak attempts to hit Larry with the crowbar. Larry catches the blow and tosses the metal bar down. His mouth opens, now filled with wicked sharp teeth.

LARRY

(growling)

There is no escaping what's coming!

Zak and Grace rush out. Larry calmly walks after them. Slowly his face and body begin to morph back into his normal humdrum human appearance.

EXT. BIG SPRINGS MAIN STREET - DAY

Zak and Grace racing down the street. Behind them, the form of Larry Newman steps out from his store. Following. They turn the corner to the Jeep only to discover someone waiting for them at the car.

BECKY

Well, well, well. We have to stop running into each other like this Mr. Washington.

Behind Becky are several of her officers.

ZAK

(catching his breath)

Listen Sheriff. We're just on our way out of town. We don't...

BECKY

I bet you are. And what about Ms. Harper? Just going to leave our kids behind? Now, that's no way for someone charged with shaping the young, impressionable minds of Big Springs to behave, is it?

GRACE

It's not what you think. Zak and I were just...

Zak grabs Grace's arm and they run down an alley.

BECKY
(unamused)
Oh my heavens, these two are so dang
cute. Alright boys, you know what to
do. Go fetch!

The officers take off as Becky calmly walks back to her patrol car. Larry arrives. They exchange a knowing glance.

INT. BIG SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL - DUSK

Dark inside the empty school. Grace and Zak slam the door shut. Safe for a moment.

ZAK
(catching his breath)
You good?

GRACE
Yeah, I think so...

The door behind them starts to violently shake. Hear a strange clicking sound on the other side.

GRACE (CONT.)
Come on, we have to move...

Running through the darkened hallways, they race into the library. Hear rumblings above, they look up to see figures moving across the glass ceiling. Clicking sound intensifies.

ZAK
Whoa. Wait. Don't move.

The movement and noise above has stopped.

GRACE
I think they left. We should...

Suddenly, hands begin to smash the glass on the ceiling as cracks begin to form.

ZAK
Jesus Christ! Run!

Grace and Zak take off. The ceiling glass breaks, shattering to the floor, as three fully transformed creatures enter. Marked with sunken faces, beady black eyes, pointy teeth and greenish skin, the creatures click to each other before leaping from table-to-table and following their prey out.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL THEATER - DUSK

Grace and Zak open the theater door and sprint down the aisle towards the stage.

GRACE

Over here. The trap room! Go! Go!

The two of them jump onto the stage and pull open the hidden entrance on the floor, disappearing into the pit below. Dramatic music builds as the door to the theater opens.

In the darkness, their pursuers arrive and spread out.

INT. THEATER TRAP ROOM - DUSK

Inside the pit, Zak and Grace huddle. A dim light around the outline of the stage trap door. Grace is trembling.

ZAK

(reassuring tone)

Easy, I've got you.

Zak grabs a loose two-by-four. Suddenly, crash! The floor above shakes as the intense clicking noise returns. There clicking stops suddenly. The trap door begins to raise. Zak grips the two by four hard, ready to fight.

INT. THEATER - DUSK

The creatures surround the trap door, begin to open it, until they are stopped by a familiar voice.

BECKY (VOICE)

Stop! We're needed back at the plant.

It's a code red situation.

Dropping the trap door handle. The creatures turn to face her. Their clicking sound repeats.

BECKY (CONT.)

I know. You did real good here. But the boss needs us elsewhere.

The three officers begin to transform back to human form. The cell phone attached to Becky's hip buzzes. She answers it.

PATTY (VOICE)

Sheriff, checking in on your status.
Has the situation been handled to your satisfaction?

BECKY
(motioning the officers to leave)
All set here ma'am.

PATTY (VOICE)
Good. I am beginning to lose my
patience with the nonsense.

BECKY
Ma'am, I am so sorry they laid hands
on your sweet Larry. This is my fault.
I should have sent that awful man...

PATTY (VOICE)
Sheriff. What's done is done. See you
soon.

Click. Becky holsters her phone and stares down at the trap
door for a few seconds. Shaking her head.

BECKY
Good riddance.

The camera remains fixated on the trap room on stage.

INT. NEWLIGHT WATER PLANT - NIGHT

Conference room. Patty Newman seated at the head of the
table. Larry beside her. Jacob, Samuel and underlings engaged
in spirited conversations. Patty leans forward, raising her
hand. Everyone stops talking.

PATTY
(standing up, pacing)
I want to commend you all for getting
us to this point. I know we've pushed
your teams hard these last few months.
And for that I want to say thank you.

JACOB
No need to thank us Mom. We know
what's at stake here.

SAMUEL
Damn right we do. A new world order
and a new beginning for our people.

JACOB
It's harvest season baby. Time to pick
the fruit.

PATTY

Yes indeed Jacob. But, there are some loose ends in need of attention. I've heard rumblings of Franklin folks across the bay planning to disrupt our little ceremony. That cannot happen.

SAMUEL

The losers who frequent that shitty ass bar? I'll burn that place to the ground. Consider it done.

PATTY

Just pay them a visit this evening, have a drink with our neighbors, convince them to sit this one out.

JACOB

Sounds like fun! With any luck, those dumbasses will start some shit!

PATTY

Boys, we cannot afford any negative coverage right now. For this plan to work, we need to control the narrative and flood the zone as Mr. Stephen likes to say with the healing power of Newlight. Sheriff Hess is bringing you reinforcements. Be firm, make sure they hear you, but be discreet about your delivery. I don't want to see any protest signs on our big day. Not one, do you hear me?

SAMUEL

So, don't turn the Franklin cesspool into a wasteland? Got it.

JACOB

We hear you ma. We won't let you down.

The two boys eagerly rush out of the conference room.

PATTY

So where are we with shipments?

INT. FRANKLIN GRILL - NIGHT

Zak and Grace huddled in a dark corner. The remains of two draft beers on the table.

GRACE
(leaning in, whispered tone)
Did you see how they moved? Climbing
walls? And the clicking sound...

ZAK
I think it's how they were
communicating.

GRACE
We've got to warn people.

ZAK
And say what?

GRACE
Let's start with don't touch the
water.

ZAK
Fucking story I just submitted won't
help. I might as well have told folks
to bathe in the shit. Who's going to
believe me now?

GRACE
What we need is a plan.

ZAK
We need to take over that celebration
tomorrow and tell people the truth.
One of us needs to get on that stage.

GRACE
Tell the world what we know, out in
public. In front of everyone. Where
they won't risk transforming...

ZAK
Exactly! We just need to get on that
stage. And kill the story.

GRACE
Call your uncle. Can't he pull it?

ZAK
Worth a shot.

Zak takes out his cell phone and presses the button to call
Ed Bradstreet. The call is instantly forwarded to voicemail.
Repeats, same result.

GRACE

Damn, anyone else at the paper?

ZAK

Maybe. I can try his secretary.

Zak dials the number to Mary Ann. She answers.

MARY ANN (VOICE)

Detroit News, this Mary Ann.

ZAK

M.A. it's Zak. Is my uncle around? I really need to talk to him.

MARY ANN (VOICE)

Hey stranger. I thought he was with you? I haven't heard from him since he headed up to Big Springs.

ZAK

Really? Weird, he left hours ago.

MARY ANN (VOICE)

He probably stopped at some random antique store. Do you want to talk to Howard?

ZAK

No, Howard can't help me. Has to come from the man. But if you talk to him, have him call me back. Thanks.

They hang up.

GRACE

What did she say?

ZAK

Hasn't heard a peep. That's weird.

GRACE

Do you think they got to him? Like Walker..

ZAK

I don't know. God damn it. So we hide out here tonight. We're going to get you on that stage tomorrow!

GRACE
 (standing up)
 Sounds like a plan to me. Order me
 another, I'll be right back.

Grace crosses the bar to the bathroom. Zak picks up his phone again and dials his uncle again.

ZAK
 Where you at Unc. Pick up. Come on.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Flashback sequence: Ed leaving Big Springs after bailing Zak out. Follow his Volvo as it passes landmarks and the Big Bear Lodge. Pan into the car. Music track: a song like "Can I Kick It" by A Tribe Called Quest.

ED
 (calling Mary Ann, voicemail)
 M.A. It's me. Not sure if you are
 getting this. On the road home. My
 nephew sure as hell owes me another
 one. God damn it. Anyway, call if you
 need me. Back in a few hours...

Call failed. Ahead in the distance, it appears there is an accident with a bunch of trucks in a blockade formation.

ED
 Oh hell...

As he pulls closer to the scene, we see the sight of the familiar Newlight white F-150s. Ed stops. A younger, burly man walks towards his car.

ED (CONT)
 (car in park, lowers window)
 What's the trouble here?

SAMUEL
 No trouble at all. Unfortunate thing
 is this road is closed... for you.

ED
 What do you mean closed? Move these
 fucking trucks please.

Suddenly, the front passenger door opens and Jacob Newman slides into the Volvo.

JACOB

Howdy partner. Let's say we all go for a little drive. There's something you need to see.

Samuel hops into the back seat of the car. Ed reaches for his phone and tries to dial 9-1-1... Jacob knocks it out of his hand, when he attempts to escape the car, Samuel grabs him by the neck and pulls him back in.

SAMUEL

Whoa. Calm down Mr. Bradstreet. It's just a quick field trip. Easy does it!

Outnumbered, he settles down.

ED

I got no beef with you folks. Let me go, this stays between us.

JACOB

Yeah, wish we could. But mama says you're another dang pot-stirrer like that nephew of yours. Let's go!

Cut to the sedan as it backs up to return to Big Springs.

INT. FRANKLIN GRILL - NIGHT

Present day. Inside the tavern, regulars throw darts and play cards. A few are bellied up to the bar. Doors open, the air is sucked out of the room. Jacob, Samuel and three henchmen make their entrance. One sits down uninvited at the card table. The other two interrupt the darts game. The Newman boys head to the bar and flank two seated men.

JACOB

Barkeep, another round here for our friends.

PATRON

We're good, Pete. Thank you kindly.

SAMUEL

But you could be better. Am I right?

JACOB

You know that's a great point Sammy. Listen boys, we could use your help with something.

BARKEEP/PETE

What do you guys want? We don't bother you none.

SAMUEL

Whoa. easy cowboy. This is a peace keeping mission. A reminder. You keep your heads down tomorrow, don't do anything stupid, we leave you alone.

JACOB

He means we let you exist in this shithole. How's that sound big guy?

PATRON

Listen, we're just trying to get through the day.

JACOB

That's what I like to hear!

The Newman boys turn and scan the establishment - admiring the work of their dogs - a surprising discovery.

SAMUEL

(walking in Zak's direction)

Well look what the cat drug in...

Jacob and Samuel sit down. Taking note of the two drinks.

JACOB

Where's your girlfriend?

ZAK

She went home. You just missed her.

SAMUEL

Is that so? Don't matter much. We know where to find her.

Zak notices Grace emerging from the bathroom. She quickly closes the door. The brothers notice his glance.

ZAK

(getting their attention)

We doing this here?

JACOB

Doing what shit-stain? Only thing we're doing is making sure these a-holes stay in their lane tomorrow.

SAMUEL

Something your dumb ass can't seem to understand but...

Zak suddenly grabs a mug and strikes Samuel, knocking him off the chair. Jacob tackles Zak as the rest of the henchmen arrive. A beating ensues. They usher Zak to the door.

JACOB

(to everyone watching the mayhem)
Put this mess on our tab. Consider Big Springs closed for business these next 24 hours. See ya around losers.

INT. NEWMAN FARM, BARN - NIGHT

Inside a barn on the Newman ranch. Door slides open and Zak is tossed into the hay of an empty horse stall. His arms already zip-tied behind him, the henchmen attach a halter around Zak's neck, pull it tight and secure the lead rope to a tie ring on the stall wall. He's fucked.

JACOB

Well done boys. You can go now.

The henchmen depart leaving Zak alone with the brothers. Zak tries in vain to break free.

SAMUEL

Look at that Jakey... we got ourselves a live one! Dang!

ZAK

Fuck you! Big tough guys.

Samuel approaches Zak. He punches his exposed abdomen.

SAMUEL

That's for the glass dickhead.

JACOB

Yeah boy! Get me some of that action.

Jacob lifts Zak's face up and cocks his fist back.

PATTY

That's enough.

SAMUEL

Ahh come on Ma. We're just letting off a little steam. It's been a long day.

PATTY

Go wash up boys. I can take it from here. Supper's on the table. Be good boys now.

They exit, as Patty steps closer to face her prisoner.

INT. FRANKLIN GRILL, GRACE'S CAR - NIGHT

Parking lot. Grace attempts to call Zak. No luck. Exasperated. A tap on her window.

BARKEEP/PETE

Listen, whatever you are planning right now, don't go back there. They are dangerous.

GRACE

(opening the window)

I have to go back. They have Zak.

BARKEEP/PETE

Yeah I figured you would say that. For chrissakes. Alright. Maybe then consider taking this...

The Barkeep offers her a Glock 19mm pistol. She hesitates.

BARKEEP/PETE (CONT.)

Please Grace. Pray you won't have to use it but you are about the only normal person from B-S town that comes around here. So take it.

GRACE

(reluctantly takes the gun)

Thank you. Do me a favor and tell people here to avoid Big Springs tomorrow. I'll be back. I promise!

INT. NEWMAN BARN STALL - NIGHT

Alone at last. Zak and Patty Newman face-to-face.

ZAK

Want to unhook me from these chains Mrs. Newman? The history books said Lincoln freed the slaves in the 1800s.

PATTY

Sorry, my boys can get a little overzealous at times...

ZAK

You think? You've done a bang up job raising the new Hitler youth.

Patty smirks, unhooks the halter, cuts his arms lose.

PATTY

There you go. Is that more agreeable?

Zak backs away and sits down on hay, facing his tormentor.

ZAK

Listen, can we cut the bullshit now and tell me what the fuck is really happening here? I don't know you, what you are, how you people change... none of this makes any sense.

PATTY

How we evolve? Yes. I imagine that's quite unnerving for the average human to see. You do get used to it. And you learn to control it in time...

ZAK

English please! Who are you people?

PATTY

(sitting down on a bale of hay)
We're just like you Zak. Only better. I met my family about 100 years ago. They traveled across space and time. The last element of life from a distant race of people whose selfishness destroyed their world. That life-force, the water source you witnessed with Mr. Walker... may he rest in peace... it spoke to me.

INT. BARN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Flashback sequence to the little girl entering the barn a century ago. She approaches the water, dipping her hand in to form a cup and bringing it to her mouth. Eyes closed. Her skin slowly begins to morph.

PATTY (V.O.)

I was just a scared little girl who
bravely answered the call to resurrect
an entire species. It was my destiny.
And it became our destiny. All of us.

Behind the girl, reveal that her brother has followed her out
to the barn. The boy sits down beside her and we see his hand
reach for the water too.

PATTY (V.O. CONT.)

Even my dear sweet Larry... my
brother, my partner, my love. My loyal
servant who gave me the strength and
the will to make this resurrection
dream a reality.

INT. NEWMAN BARN STALL - NIGHT

Present day.

ZAK

You're insane. People will stop you.

PATTY

It's already done Zak. We have the
support of your government. One might
say they've seen the light.

ZAK

Jesus. I don't believe you.

PATTY

Do you think the Covid-19 pandemic was
an accident? An act of your God? When
the President was sick with the virus
and closer to death than you or the
media ever knew, we saved him. We
healed him. And we made certain that
when the time was right, he would
return to power with a life-force that
now flows through his growing MAGA
army of believers. They have been the
easiest to convert.

ZAK

Damn fools who will believe anything.

PATTY

Is that any way to talk about your
fellow citizens?

PATTY (CONT.)

One might expect more from a once rising star reporter. Our life force is not for everyone. But slowly, over time, it changes you. Big Springs has taught us so much over the past 100 years. Ordinary people who are gifted extraordinary freedom to be their authentic selves for eternity, isn't that what made America great in the first place?

ZAK

Then why haven't more people turned into your creatures? It's not something you can hide forever.

PATTY

For the less worthy, it does require a more intense approach. Rest assured, we won't be hiding in the shadows forever. That's what tomorrow is all about. We're bringing the promise of our people to a world that so desperately craves salvation.

ZAK

Delivered inside products that regular folks can get on Amazon, or at Target and Wal-Mart?

PATTY

Someday yes! Now you're catching on! A new world order. Reborn with the gift of everlasting life... starting here in Michigan, and soon to be available at a retail store near you.

She stands up. Silence.

PATTY (CONT.)

I sense you are still skeptical. That's okay. We've recently baptized a new believer, someone I think will be able to ease your troubled mind...

The stall door slides open and Ed Bradstreet enters.

EXT. NEWLIGHT WATER PLANT - NIGHT

The hour is nearly midnight as Grace emerges from the shadows. Gun drawn. She creeps towards a side entrance of the plant. Door is locked. Ear to the wall, she slowly moves towards the light around the other side of the building. Hearing the growing rise of commotion. She stops. A fleet of white F-150s are assembled.

JACOB

That outta do her. Boys, you can drop these products off in town.

SAMUEL

You heard the man, get on with it.

The crew fans out into the fleet and drive off.

SAMUEL (CONT.)

Do you reckon' ma is done with the dark one yet?

JACOB

Which one? God, I hope not. We still owe that piece of shit a brotherly ass-whooping!

GRACE

(emerging from hiding, gun drawn)
Stop, don't move!

SAMUEL

(pretending to be scared)
Oh shit! Well, look at this one. Just when I thought tonight couldn't get any better!

GRACE

Shut the fuck up! I'm not playing.

JACOB

You sure about this sweetie pie?
Because I'm betting you and that gun don't know each other well.

GRACE

(pulling back the hammer)
Try me and find out. Where's Zak you pieces of shit!

SAMUEL

Whoa. Easy does it. He's right as rain. We'll take you to him. No one needs to get hurt this evening.

GRACE

We'll see. Walk dickheads...

With Grace trailing at a safe distance, the three of them venture towards the main house.

INT. BARN STALL - NIGHT

Ed walks towards Zak. He reaches out and touches his face.

ED

Easy now. I'm here.

ZAK

(pulling back)

What happened to you? Why are you here? We've got to get out now!

ED

Relax. You're in the best place possible for this moment. Trust me. The Newmans, they are not crazy. What they showed me... it was indescribable. So pure. So much life. I want to share it with you.

He steps closer to Zak again.

ZAK

(pushing him back again)

No! Wake up unc! You are talking nonsense!

ED

Zak, it's me. This is the new me. A life without pain or worry. Don't you want that? Haven't we suffered enough?

ZAK

What did they do to you? Seriously man. Stay away! I don't want to hurt you. And whatever they promised you, I don't want any part of this. I ain't submitting. Not now, not ever! I'll never be one of them!

ED

That's where you're wrong, Zak. You've been chosen, you're already one of us. I'm just here to show you...

He steps towards a frightened Zak. We don't see Ed's face.

EXT. - NEWMAN MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Grace and the Newman boys arrive at the residence.

GRACE

That's far enough. Where's your mom?
In the house or the barn?

JACOB

I reckon she's inside, probably resting up for the big day.

SAMUEL

Mamma needs her beauty sleep...

GRACE

I bet she does. Damn freaks. If you don't take me to Zak in the next 10 seconds, I promise these gunshots will wake up your entire plantation!

JACOB

Easy there Cleopatra Jones. We'll take you to him. He's in the barn right over there.

GRACE

Let's go. I don't have all night Jethro.

INT. BARN STALL - NIGHT

The door slides open and Grace pushes the two men in. Spread out across the hay strewn floor is an unconscious Zak.

GRACE

You two... help him up. Now!

They follow her command and pick Zak up, leading him to her. He looks mostly unharmed and begins to come to.

GRACE (CONT.)

Jesus. What did you do him? Zak, are you good? Talk to me...

ZAK

Yeah, yeah, I'm good. How long was I out? I had the strangest dream...

SAMUEL

See! The boy is fine. As promised.

JACOB

Yeah, go ahead and take him. I'm sick of looking at that ugly mug.

ZAK

The feeling is mutual assholes.

GRACE

(pointing gun again)

Here's how this is going to go. We're leaving this place. And you're going to let us. You hear me?

Grace pushes Zak towards the door, begins to back pedal.

SAMUEL

Bravo. You do realize we let you point that thing at us and take us here. All this power you think you have right now isn't real. You do get that right?

He begins to step closer to Grace. Jacob follows his lead.

JACOB

I nearly burst out laughing at one point. You thinking you can hurt us? When we're just playing with our food. Here's the thing Gracie girl...

Both their eyes turn pitch black. Transformation has begun.

JACOB

(face morphing, growling)

I suggest you run!

Samuel leaps forward, Grace pulls the trigger. The bullet explodes into his chest knocking him down. Stunned, Grace and Zak take off. Jacob places his transformed hand on his brother's body, and closes his eyes. He opens his eyes, the pitch black color has turned to glowing gold. The color on Samuel's face slowly returns as his transformation is complete. The bullet gently falls out of his chest. Samuel stands. Clicking noises begin.

EXT. NEWMAN ESTATE - NIGHT

In the darkness of the moon, Grace and Zak run through the farm to the dirt road. Zak stops and bends over.

ZAK
(breathing heavy)
Give me a quick second. I'm still a little woozy.

GRACE
No, no, no. We gotta keep moving.

ZAK
Just need to catch my breath.

GRACE
What did they do to you?

ZAK
I don't know. Everything is a blur. I was in there with the old lady then I must have blacked out or something.

GRACE
Tell me about it, like after we get far away from here!

They start running through the apple trees. Behind them, there is movement. They're coming. Clicking getting louder.

EXT. APPLE TREES - NIGHT

The moon illuminates the way as our heroes navigate rows of apple trees. They come upon a tool shed in the orchard.

ZAK
Here, in here. Might buy us some time.

The door is locked. Zak looks around and picks up a rock. He smashes the handle repeatedly until it finally breaks.

GRACE
You sure this is a good idea?

ZAK
We need to get out of sight.

GRACE
If we stop here, they will find us.

ZAK

Where then? This is your town.

GRACE

The woods. We lose them in the forest,
hide out, find a phone, call for help.

ZAK

Okay. Fine. Lead the way!

The two of them run towards the forest. A few moments later, the lights from two RVs roll up onto the scene. Jacob and Samuel dismount, stepping towards the shed. Using hand signals they open the broken door.

JACOB

Come out, come out wherever you are!

SAMUEL

I can still smell 'em.

Jacob makes a loud clicking noise. Suddenly, appearing from the trees, are dozens of transformed Newlight workers as the horde unleashes a primal scream.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The sound reverberates through the forest like a sonic boom, knocking Zak and Grace to the ground. The echo has awoken armies of sleeping birds who take flight in unison.

GRACE

What the hell was that?

ZAK

I don't know, but let's not stick
around to find out.

GRACE

(rising)

Once we reach town, there will be more
places for us to disappear and wait
this out. Wait for daylight.

The clicking sound is getting closer.

ZAK

Shit. They're here. Damn it. Run!

As they run, Zak looks up to see they are not alone. Three shadowy figures are flying from tree-to-tree.

Until one of them lands 10 feet in front of them. They stop.

GRACE

Holy shit!

The creature stands tall. Beady black eyes, claws ready, it bares its teeth and hisses.

ZAK

(holding his palm up)

Easy big guy. Let's talk about this.

The creature takes a slow step towards Grace.

GRACE

Umm Zak... a little help here.

ZAK

Don't move. I've got him. He doesn't want to hurt...

The creature suddenly grabs Grace by the neck and lifts her off the ground. She squirms in an attempt to break free. Zak throws his body into the creature, which releases the grip.

ZAK (CONT.)

Grace! Get out of here!

Grace hauls ass. The creature turns its head from Zak.

ZAK

(picking up a large stick)

Hey! Hey! Where you going? It's me you want. We're not done here!

Zak swings the stick and strikes the beast. He takes off in the direction they came just as the rest of the horde arrive and begin their pursuit of him.

INT. STORAGE SHED - NIGHT

Zak opens the broken door and ducks in. Outside the clicking noise fills the air as the vengeful horde fans out across the fields in search of him. The interior of the shed offers the protection of darkness and objects to hide behind.

A moment of stillness is interrupted by an object crashing into the exterior wall, startling Zak, who buries his head into his fetal positioned body. The door is ripped from the hinge and a creature steps into view. Scanning. Sniffing. It begins to take another step deeper into the shed until a

noise from outside draws it away in pursuit. Zak steps out from his hiding spot and nervously peers outside. A deep exhale as he gently pushes open the remnants of the door allowing the light of the moon to illuminate the full interior of the shed - also revealing that seated directly above Zak in the rafter is a creature! As he turns around, a dramatic music hit accompanies the creature's attack on Zak.

INT. BIG BEAR LODGE LOBBY - NIGHT

Frantic, Grace begins to pound on the entrance door of the sleepy motel. Colleen appears and let her in.

COLLEEN

Good evening ma'am, is there something
I can help you with?

GRACE

Oh my god yes! My car broke down. Can
I come and make a call?

COLLEEN

You sure can dear. Please. Let's get
you out of that cold. How's a warm cup
of tea sound?

Grace enters the lodge, noticing the giant stuffed bear.

GRACE

As long as it's no trouble...

COLLEEN

No trouble at all. The phone is right
over there. Make yourself comfortable.
I'll be right back.

The creepy lady exits as Grace hurries to the phone. She dials 9-1-1 and we hear the call ringing.

ANSWERING MESSAGE (VOICE)

*We're sorry, your call cannot be
completed as dialed. Please hang up
and try the number again.*

Perplexed, she hangs up and dials 9-1-1 again. Same result. Grabbing the phone book, she calls the Franklin Grill.

ANSWERING MESSAGE (VOICE)

*The number you are trying to reach is
no longer in service. Please check the
number and try again.*

GRACE

What is going on? Come on!

A steaming hot cup of tea is placed in front of her.

COLLEEN

Having trouble dear?

GRACE

(clutching the warm mug)

Actually, yes. I can't seem to get anyone on the line. Is that normal?

COLLEEN

No Grace. It's not.

GRACE

(about to take a sip)

How do you know my name?

COLLEEN

We've been waiting for you, for so very long. Welcome home my child.

Grace stands. Colleen mimics. This can't be happening.

GRACE

Stay away from me. I mean it.

COLLEEN

(her eyes turning black)

Or what?

Grace throws the cup of hot tea into Colleen's face causing her to sheik. She makes a break for the door. It's locked.

GRACE

(screaming, banging aggressively)

Open! Help! Help!

Colleen grabs her by the arm. She's transformed.

COLLEEN

Something I need to show you Grace...

INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Zak is thrown onto the floor by the Newman boys. Clothes tattered. Someone who lost a fight. Opening his eyes, he realizes where he is.

ZAK

(muttering to himself)

Fuck this place again.

PATTY

Is that any way to talk about your new home Mr. Washington?

ZAK

I'll never join you people. I promise you that.

PATTY

(amused)

I look forward to it then. Nothing worthwhile was ever easy. No pain, no gain, right?

ZAK

Whatever. Where's my uncle?

PATTY

I don't know what you're talking about. I imagine he is comfortably resting in his bed back in Detroit.

ZAK

You didn't touch him?

PATTY

Now why would we do that? What we're building is happening with or without you.

ZAK

I'm so dang sick and tired of this shit. What are we doing here? What do you want from me?

PATTY

Why nothing at all. You've already played your part. The article you wrote is wonderful. I read an advance copy. In fact, I hear they may even syndicate it across the country. So, Mr. Washington, I guess it should be me thanking you.

ZAK

Save it. I need to find Grace. If you hurt her, I swear to god...

PATTY
(laughing)
Hurt Grace? One of our best and
brightest teachers, who is literally
shaping the minds of our youth in Big
Springs? I wouldn't dare.

ZAK
Good. Let's keep it that way.

Zak stands to leave. Jacob and Samuel block the doorway.

PATTY
One more thing. Since leaving seems to
be such a difficult undertaking for
you, I've arranged transportation back
to your apartment in Detroit. Boys...

Zak turns around to face the brothers, who have already
transformed into creatures.

ZAK
Oh for fuck's sake...

EXT. BIG SPRINGS CENTENNIAL EVENT - DAY

A picture perfect late winter, early Spring day in Big
Springs. Hundreds of residents are gathered in the town
square park. The local high school jazz band entertains from
the main stage. Song ends. Big applause. Sheriff Hess steps
to the microphone.

BECKY
What a day! And what a wonderful
performance from our best and
brightest. Thank you kids.

More applause.

BECKY (CONT.)
Thank you everyone for joining us
today as we celebrate the 100th
birthday of our beloved Big Springs.
And I think we can all agree that this
anniversary wouldn't be possible
without the tireless leadership and
innovation of our founding family -
the Newmans.

Another round of applause.

BECKY (CONT.)

It is my sincere pleasure to welcome to the stage our First Lady... Patty Newman... to officially kick off the festivities. Patty, they're all yours!

Patty walks onto the stage, followed by Larry, Jacob and Samuel, who take position behind her.

PATTY

Thank you Sheriff Hess. Wow, what a day. It is my honor to formally welcome you and the world to our oasis of Big Springs, Michigan. There is no simply place like it on Earth.

She pauses for the audience to react.

PATTY (CONT.)

Many years ago we made a deal with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, in full measure, and that is what brings us to today.

The camera pans into the crowd.

PATTY (V.O.)

In the coming days, when much of the world sleeps, America will awake to a new age... an age where we are free from pain, a future that was born right here in Bath City USA!

Close up on Grace, who is revealed to be on stage.

INT. NEWLIGHT WATER PLANT (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

Flashback sequence. A fully transformed Jacob and Samuel Newman "baptizing" Grace in the secret room. They have her head completely submerged in the bubbling dark waters.

PATTY (V.O.)

A moment, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds its place on earth...

The men raise Grace from the water as she gasps for breath. Patty Newman approaches her.

PATTY (FLASHBACK)

Welcome to our family Ms. Harper.
We're so very lucky to have you.

Grace's eyes turn black for the first time.

EXT. BIG SPRINGS CENTENNIAL EVENT - DAY

Present day. Close-up of Grace Harper standing on stage. The slightest smile creeps across her face. Return to Patty.

PATTY

The world has experienced so much anxiety and concern in recent years. And that is why we are thrilled to announce the expansion of Newlight Waters today, with the complete support of the United States government. And we're just getting started. The experience we promise through our family of products is only possible because of all of YOU! This town. The true believers, who will always be ground zero for the future we are building. Today marks a NEW DAWN for Michigan and for our people! The Golden Age has arrived. Thank you!

The crowd erupts in cheers and wild applause. Patty and her family embrace, wave to the crowd. At that moment, a few of Grace's students pull the silk to unveil the new statue of a young Patty looking up into the heavens.

INT. ZAK'S APARTMENT - DAY

6 a.m. according to the alarm on Zak's cell phone. Music: a song like: "Can You Get to That" by Funkadelic.

Groggy, he rises from bed and stumbles into the adjacent kitchen. He opens the cupboard and grabs an empty bag of Starbucks, which he throws into the garbage. He stumbles to the front door, opens it, picks up the Sunday edition of the Detroit News.

Removing the paper from its plastic wrap, Zak turns over the cover to reveal his featured article in all its glory. A large image of Patty Newman and her family is prominent.

The headline: A CENTURY OF HEALING: HOW BIG SPRINGS MICHIGAN BECAME THE EPICENTER FOR THE FUTURE OF WELLNESS.

He closes the paper and checks his phone. A text message from Grace Harper.

Message reads: *Good morning sunshine! Have a great week - G*

INT. DETROIT NEWS ELEVATOR - DAY

Music playing. Stepping into the elevator with a to-go coffee in hand, Zak presses the button for the 10th floor. Before the door closes, the same nerdy man from the week prior joins him. He presses the button for the 8th floor.

MAN

Oh hi. You again. Don't worry. This time, I know where I'm going.

ZAK

You're good dude. No problem at all. Happy to chill right here.

MAN

You seem different?

The elevator door closes.

INT. DETROIT NEWS OFFICE - DAY

The door opens and Zak steps out onto the hustle and bustle of a daily newspaper hard at work. Walking towards his desk.

MARY ANN

Welcome back Zak! Great job on the story! When you're all settled, Big Ed would like a word.

ZAK

Thanks. Is everything okay? Yeah, he and I should probably chat. Any idea what it's about?

MARY ANN

(whispering)

Well, between us, think he has a juicy story. Maybe even Part Two of your Newlight Water expose perhaps. Have you tried their products? A-mazing!

ZAK

I bet. Yeah, give me a few minutes to catch up, and I'll venture down that way.

Zak arrives at his messy desk. He puts his bag down and connects his laptop to the monitor. The screen opens on the Detroit News home page and a can't miss top story.

The headline: WELCOME TO THE GOLDEN AGE OF AMERICA: OUR EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP by Jackson Foster Briggs.

Zak leans back into his chair. Staring at the story and the images of the President and Briggs walking together.

An instant message appears on his screen. From Ed Bradstreet. It reads: **Z-Money! Welcome back! Come see me when you can. Got good news for you. EB**

INT. DETROIT NEWS BATHROOM - DAY

Zak opens the door and walks to the sink. He looks into the mirror for a beat, and splashes cold water on his face. As he dries off, a stall door opens.

JACKSON

(joining Zak at the sink)
Well. Well. Well. The prodigal son
returns from the northern abyss. How's
life in the land of the lost?

ZAK

You tell me Briggs. How was vacation?
Did you get a chance to visit
Alligator Alcatraz?

JACKSON

Yep, picked out a room for you. Has a
great view of the swamp. Listen, as
fun as this is, you did a half decent
job on the Newman piece. Powerful
storytelling. I'm being serious.

They finish washing hands and face each other.

ZAK

(turns, grabs the door handle)
And I almost believe you. Take care of
yourself Briggs.

JACKSON

Do you want to know my favorite part
of your story? It's the part where
Uncle Ed had to bail your dumb ass out
of jail... again!

JACKSON (CONT.)

Jesus Christ Washington! You're a damn child. It's fucking pathetic!

Zak closes the door. Puts his head down and takes a deep breath. He turns to face Briggs. They stare at each other. Suddenly, Zak's eyes turn pitch black and his face begins to transform. Briggs gasps and stumbles backwards onto the floor.

ZAK

You know Jackson, there's something I've been meaning to show you...

INT. DETROIT NEWS OFFICE - DAY

The door to bathroom opens and Zak emerges, back to normal. We follow him as he walks to Ed's office, opens the door as he and Ed share a smile.

Camera pans out the window. See a massive billboard featuring a photo of Patty Newman with her Newlight products. We hold on the billboard. Until the image of Patty transforms from her human form into her creature form.

End scene. End film. Roll credits.

Music: a song like "Mind Playing Tricks on Me" by Geto Boys.