

The Great Divide
by
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(Politics)

Revisions by
,

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FADE IN:

1. EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - DAWN

A quiet city with a bruised sky. The Capitol dome glows faintly through a haze of humidity and tension.

Stores boarded up. Political banners – RED and BLUE – fade and tear in the light breeze.

CLARA (V.O.)
America didn't crack in a day.
We sanded ourselves down for years...
Until there was nothing left but
nerves.

Quick montage – disconnected, angry, real:

- DUELING PROTESTS pushing against barricades.
- PODCASTERS shouting over flag backdrops.
- TEENAGERS doom-scrolling political hate.
- A preacher and a TikTok influencer repeating the same phrase:
"Take back your truth."

2. INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

PRESIDENT VICTOR KLINE (58, sleek, disciplined, ex-tech CEO energy) adjusts his tie before a bank of cameras.

AIDES circle him with tablets, scripts, analytics dashboards.

AIDE #1
Engagement models say the "restore order" line tests well with both moderates and suburban conservative women.

Kline nods but looks... reflective. He believes everything he's about to say.

AIDE #2
Sir, just stick to the prompter. No improvisation today.

Kline gives a thin smile.

KLINE

This isn't improvisation.
(It's course correction.)

He steps to the podium.

3. INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Packed. Reporters, crew, bloggers, influencers.

In the back row stands CLARA REYES (mid-30s, Latina, sharp, tired, smart eyes that miss nothing).

She scribbles notes in a battered notebook – not a laptop. She trusts paper.

Kline begins his address.

KLINE

My fellow Americans.
For too long, our nation has been
wounded by misinformation—foreign,
domestic, intentional, and
reckless...

Clara circles a line in the printed script she was handed.

A line Kline skips over:

"Phase I: In accordance with Restoration Playbook / Model Alpha v3."

Her eyes sharpen.

That was deliberate.

4. EXT. WHITE HOUSE - LATER

The speech is over. The press spills out.

Clara walks with her editor MAYA (40s, protective, overworked).

MAYA

Tell me you're not chasing the part
he edited out.

CLARA

He didn't just edit it out – he
buried it six feet deep.

MAYA

Clara... your last crusade almost
ended your career. And your life.

Clara ignores her, eyes distant, wheels turning.

CLARA

What's a "Restoration Playbook,"
Maya?

Maya stops walking – guilt and worry battling inside her.

MAYA

Find out, and we lose advertisers,
funding, and probably you.

Clara keeps walking anyway.

CUT TO:

5. EXT. D.C. STREETS - DAY

Protesters clash within minutes of the speech.

RED SIGNS: "RESTORE ORDER."

BLUE SIGNS: "RESTORATION = REPRESSION."

Clara films the chaos with her phone.

A RED VETERAN (60s, weary) shouts across the barricade.

RED VET

We're tired of being lied to!

A BLUE TEACHER (30s, shaking) shouts back:

BLUE TEACHER

We're tired of you believing lies!

Clara captures both faces – identical fear.

CLARA (V.O.)

There are only two kinds of
Americans now...those terrified of
losing control, and those terrified
of being controlled.

6. INT. SMALL INDEPENDENT NEWSROOM - DAY

A cramped space with thrift-store desks and buzzing fluorescents.

Clara enters.

An INTERN whispers to a coworker:

INTERN (WHISPERED)
That's the reporter who blew the
Russian asset story.

Clara hears it. Winces. Keeps walking.

Maya approaches with coffee and concern.

MAYA
You okay?

CLARA
Just background noise.

MAYA
Noise becomes narrative, Clara.

Clara sits, opens her notebook...

And her phone lights up with a message from an encrypted number.

"You saw the line he skipped. Meet?"

Clara exhales.

She knows this road.

She follows it anyway.

CUT TO:

7. EXT. UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Cold concrete. Echoing footsteps.

Clara arrives, alone, scanning dark corners.

MERCURY (30s, hoodie, glasses, jittery) steps forward.

A data analyst with conspiracy-level anxiety and government-level knowledge.

MERCURY

You don't know me. You don't want to. But you need to see this.

He hands her a thumb drive.

CLARA

What's on it?

MERCURY

The part he didn't say.
The part he's already implementing.

CLARA

The Restoration Playbook?

Mercury nods, eyes haunted.

MERCURY

I thought I was helping design messaging. But this... this is a manual on how to break a nation so only one side can pick up the pieces.

CLARA

Who wrote it?

Mercury hesitates – terrified.

MERCURY

That's the part that scares me.
No one admits to it.
No one signs it.
Everyone follows it.

A car door slams somewhere. Mercury stiffens.

MERCURY (CONT'D)

If I go dark after this... I wasn't a hero. I was late.

He vanishes into the shadows.

8. INT. CLARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clara inserts the drive.

A folder opens:

"REPUBLICAN RESTORATION PLAYBOOK - INTERNAL USE ONLY."

It's not fiery rhetoric.

It's cold. Precise. Surgical.

Sections like:

- "Stage Response Manipulation"
- "Manufactured Distrust Cycles"
- "Blue Overreaction Triggers"
- "Federal Retention Protocol: Emergency Authority"

And at the bottom of multiple pages:

"Model-Validated - Alpha Benchmark."

Clara frowns.

CLARA

Model?

What model?

She scrolls. Horrified.

This isn't politics.
It's behavioral engineering.

Her phone buzzes.

NOAH BRANDT.

Ex-lover. Ex-data operative. The one man who would understand.

She hesitates...

Then answers.

CUT TO:

9. INT. QUIET BAR - NIGHT

Dim light. Empty except for one bartender cleaning glasses.

NOAH BRANDT (40s, rugged, haunted) sits with whiskey.

Clara slides into the booth.

NOAH
When you texted me that word..
"Playbook"...

I prayed you were joking.

CLARA
I never joke about the end of the
world.

She hands him the printed pages.

Noah reads – jaw tightening.

NOAH
This isn't strategy.
This is math.
Behavioral math.
Predictive cycles.

Clara leans in.

CLARA
Who wrote it?

He looks at her – genuinely afraid.

NOAH
Not who.

Nobody in the Party has this kind of precision.

CLARA
So where did it come from?

A beat. Noah drinks.

NOAH
Clara... if you publish this, they
won't just ruin you again.

They'll erase you.

Clara's eyes burn with purpose.

CLARA
Then let them try.

10. INT. NEWSROOM - NEXT MORNING

Clara hits PUBLISH on her exposé:

"INSIDE THE RESTORATION PLAYBOOK: A PLAN TO LOCK IN PERMANENT POWER."

Maya watches the website traffic spike like a heart attack.

MAYA
God help us.

CUT TO:

TVs igniting with frenzy.

Blue networks calling it "The biggest scandal of the century."

Red networks calling it "Fabricated garbage from a disgraced activist."

Hashtags explode:

#ReyesLies

#RestoreTruth

#ClaraForPrison

Clara steps outside for air-

A BRICK smashes her car window.

Followed by a bouquet of lilies left gently on the hood.

Both are messages.

CUT TO:

11. INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

Kline addresses the nation calmly, almost warmly.

KLINE
The so-called 'Playbook' is a
dangerous conspiracy theory
(MORE)

KLINE (CONT'D)
 peddled by a reporter previously
 censured for spreading foreign
 disinformation.

Behind him stands GOP strategist RONALD GREER – the political architect of something bigger.

His satisfied smirk is subtle... but real.

FADE OUT:

12. INT. SENATOR MARA FIELDS' OFFICE - NIGHT

SENATOR MARA FIELDS (early 50s, sharp, moral backbone calcifying into steel) slams Clara's article on her desk.

MARA
 If this is true, Kline is running a
 soft coup.

Her aide flips through.

AIDE
 Then we weaponize it. Full blast.
 Press, courts, donors – tear the
 ceiling down.

Mara hesitates.

MARA
 No.
 We're not fighting fire with fire.
 We're fighting fire with napalm.

CUT TO:

13. EXT. OVERPASS - SUNSET

Clara stands alone, watching traffic divide:

Left lane – BLUE stickers heading into the city.

Right lane – RED stickers fleeing to the suburbs.

Noah approaches.

NOAH
We pull this string any further,
it's not politics anymore.

CLARA
Good.

Politics wasn't getting us anywhere.

Her phone buzzes.

A calendar leak:

"RESTORATION SUMMIT – WAR GAME: BLUE INSURRECTION."

Clara looks at Noah.

CLARA
Act Two starts in a swing state.

CUT TO:

14. EXT. AIRPORT ECONOMY PARKING – NIGHT

A low-rent regional airport. Sodium lights hum over a sea of dented cars and faded paint.

Clara and Noah walk toward the terminal, each with a single carry-on.

NOAH
You really think they'll say "war
game" out loud?

CLARA
People who write manuals on how to
break the country

don't usually whisper.

A car cruises slowly past them. The DRIVER stares too long at Clara, then drives on.

Noah clocks it.

NOAH
You're trending.

CLARA
I've been trending.

Now I want to matter.

They keep walking.

15. INT. AIRPORT - SECURITY LINE - NIGHT

Clara and Noah inch through TSA. Overhead TVs play two networks:

On one monitor:

BLUE HOST
This is the smoking gun. The
Republican Party has a written plan
to seize permanent power.

On the adjacent screen:

RED HOST
This so-called 'Playbook' is a
forgery from a disgraced activist
who hates America.

Clara watches people react:

- One GUY mutters "traitor" when her face appears.
- A WOMAN in a nurse's uniform shakes her head, eyes wet.

Noah leans close.

NOAH
We could still turn back.

CLARA
You could.

I've been burning bridges since my first byline.

She passes her bag through the x-ray. The printed pages of the Playbook are sandwiched inside a paperback.

The TSA AGENT glances at her ID... double takes... then lets her through anyway.

Fear. Recognition. Nothing said.

CUT TO:

16. INT. AIRPORT BAR - NIGHT (LAYOVER)

Clara sits alone with a club soda, staring at the gate monitor for a connecting flight to MIDDLE RIVER - SWING STATE.

Her phone buzzes with UNKNOWN NUMBER.

She answers.

CLARA

Mercury?

Nothing. Static. Then-

A muffled voice. Mercury, panicked, whispering.

MERCURY (V.O.)

They know it leaked. They're saying... "We'll let the story burn her, then we burn her."

A door SLAMS on their end. Footsteps. The line goes dead.

Clara stares at the phone, knuckles white.

Noah slides into the seat beside her. He's been watching from a distance.

NOAH

That sounded like bad news.

CLARA

That was my source,

being promoted to "late friend."

She downs the soda like it's a shot.

17. INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

A cramped regional jet. No first class. Everyone is tired, short-tempered.

Clara has the aisle, Noah the window.

A MAN across the aisle scrolls through a Red news app with Clara's face on it, headline:

"DISGRACED REPORTER PUSHES FAKE COUP STORY."

He looks from his phone to Clara, then back.

Something clicks.

MAN

Hey.

You that Reyes lady?

Noah tenses.

Clara stays calm.

CLARA

Depends.

You like her?

The man laughs once, weird.

MAN

You should be in jail.
I lost my job over one of your
"stories."

Other passengers turn, sensing blood.

Noah leans in.

NOAH

We're all just trying to get
somewhere, man.

MAN

Yeah. I'm trying to get to a
country that still exists.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANT watches, wary.

Clara raises her hands slightly, surrender without defeat.

CLARA

Look, you hate me?
Fine. That's your right.
But don't get us kicked off the
plane. Then we both lose.

The man stares... then sits back, still glaring.

The tension doesn't leave. It just sits between them at
30,000 feet.

18. EXT. MIDDLE RIVER REGIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

A small, gray airport in a swing-state town. Flags flap in a cold wind.

Clara and Noah step onto the tarmac.

A HUGE DIGITAL BILLBOARD near the parking lot blares a political ad:

AD NARRATOR (V.O.)
America is under attack from
within. Stand with those who will
restore what we've lost.

Images of riots, burning flags, then KLINE shaking hands with factory workers.

At the corner of the screen, in tiny text:

"Paid for by The Restoration Committee."

Noah points at the tag.

NOAH
That's a shell.

I've seen it before.

CLARA
Add it to the murder board.

CUT TO:

19. INT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Noah drives. Clara films the roadside through the windshield.

The town is split literally down Main Street:

- One bar with a RED banner: "PATRIOTS ONLY."

- Across the street, a BLUE coffee house: "SAFE SPACE - HATE FREE."

Same music volume leaking out into the street, different lyrics.

CLARA
Same town.

Two countries.

NOAH

The Playbook doesn't care which one wins.

It just wants them too angry to notice who's cashing the checks.

Clara lowers the camera.

CLARA

Did you ever work on anything like this?

Noah takes a beat before answering.

NOAH

I thought I was optimizing ad spend.
Turns out I was optimizing rage.

He forces a bitter smile.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Congratulations, America.
You're now 30% more furious per impression.

Clara watches him.

She's angry at him, for him, with him. It's messy.

20. INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A cheap highway motel: buzzing neon through thin curtains.
Two beds. One table. Ugly art.

Clara spreads copies of the Playbook across the bedspread.
Noah sets up a laptop.

CLARA

Look at this section.

She points to a page:

"Phase II: Encourage 'Blue States' to Declare Themselves Sanctuaries.

Then amplify fringe Blue calls for secession to paint the entire party as treasonous."

CLARA (CONT'D)
 They wrote this a year ago.
 Blue Twitter didn't start yelling
 "secede" 'til three months back.

Noah types, cross-referencing dates.

NOAH
 It's not prophecy.
 It's... steering.

He highlights footnotes at the bottom of the page:

"Model-Validated – Alpha v2.1 – See Behavioral Lab Output."

CLARA
 That damn word again.
 Model.

NOAH
 Every campaign uses models, Clara.

CLARA
 Not ones they keep secret from
 their own strategists.

He doesn't argue. Because she's right.

A beat.

NOAH
 Summit's tomorrow.
 Greer will be there.

CLARA
 You sure?

NOAH
 If there's a war game on the menu,
 Ronald Greer is carving the turkey.

Clara folds the Playbook pages into a manila folder.

CLARA
 Then tomorrow we see how far
 they're willing to go.

Noah watches her, torn between admiration and fear.

NOAH
 Clara... if this gets worse—and it
 will— they'll come after everyone
 around you.

CLARA

Then maybe you shouldn't be around
me.

She says it half as a joke, half as a warning.

He hears both.

NOAH

Too late.

Beat.

Outside, distant CHANTING can be heard.

Some kind of late-night rally.

Clara moves to the window, peels back the curtain.

Her POV:

A cluster of trucks with flags in the parking lot next door.

Men gathering, passing out matching pamphlets.

She zooms with her phone.

The pamphlet cover:

"RESTORATION SUMMIT – VOLUNTEER BRIEFING."

Clara's face hardens.

CLARA (V.O.)

They weren't hiding it.
They were just counting on no one
being willing to read the fine
print.

She hits RECORD.

21. EXT. MIDDLE RIVER CONFERENCE CENTER – MORNING

A glossy convention complex on the edge of a dying mall.
Banners flap in the cold wind:

"AMERICAN RESTORATION SUMMIT – INTEGRITY. SECURITY. DESTINY."

A sea of RED FLAGS and PATRIOT MERCH sellers flank the
entrance.

Clara and Noah stand across the street, blending in with a crowd of arriving attendees.

Clara lowers her sunglasses.

CLARA
Destiny. That's subtle.

NOAH
You should see the branding packet they rejected.

A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS hand out red lanyards.

VOLUNTEER
Welcome, Patriots! Summit badges here!

Noah hands Clara a counterfeit badge he printed last night.

NOAH
This will get you into the public sessions.
For the back rooms... improvise.

Clara tucks it into her jacket.

CLARA
I always do.

22. INT. SUMMIT LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Security is intense but chaotic – a mix of local cops, private contractors, and “volunteer marshals.”

Clara breezes through a distracted guard who barely looks at her badge.

The lobby is packed:

- Booths selling books: “How to Reclaim America.”
- A VR station titled “The Threat Simulation Experience.”
- A workshop signup board:
“Dealing with Blue Radicalism in Your Community.”
“How to Spot Dangerous Speech.”

Clara films discreetly. Her lens lingers on a digital kiosk listing speakers.

Her eyes land on:

RONALD GREER - Senior Conservative Strategist

Closed Session: "The Road to Restoration"

Her pulse quickens.

23. INT. SUMMIT AUDITORIUM - DAY

A packed hall. Organ music blares before the lights dim.

A HOST steps up.

HOST

Patriots!

America is under attack - from within!

Thunderous applause.

Clara sits among attendees, blending in. An elderly woman beside her nods fervently.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Finally someone's telling the truth.

Clara forces a polite smile.

HOST

Today, we discuss how to reclaim our Republic! How to restore order - when others seek only chaos!

More applause.

Clara checks the schedule: Greer's closed session starts in 30 minutes.

She slips out quietly.

24. INT. LOWER HALLWAY - DAY

Dimmer lighting. No windows.

A sign reads:

"RESTRICTED: REGISTERED STRATEGISTS & DONORS ONLY."

A VOLUNTEER MARSHAL blocks the door.

MARSHAL
Strategy wing. Need black-lanyard
clearance.

Clara pulls a RED lanyard from her jacket. Not enough.

She scans the hallway – then spots a STAFF MEMBER leaving a
supply room, black lanyard swinging.

Clara intercepts him.

CLARA
Hey, sorry – where's the restroom?

STAFF MEMBER
Right past the hall–
(beat)
You look familiar.

Clara smiles warmly, steps closer.

CLARA
People tell me that a lot.

He squints.

STAFF MEMBER
You're that reporter– that Reyes
lady.

Before he can shout, Clara gently but firmly pushes a
shoulder into him, guiding him into the supply closet.

CLARA
Please don't yell.
I'm not here to cause trouble.

The man looks more startled than angry. Clara quickly swaps
lanyards.

CLARA (CONT'D)
Tell them whatever you want after
I'm gone.

She slips out and down the hall.

25. INT. STRATEGY ROOM – DAY

A conference room packed with 40-50 high-level Republican
donors, strategists, and operatives.

Clara enters quietly, head down, blending.

At the front, RONALD GREER (50s, polished, charming like a knife wrapped in velvet) adjusts his microphone.

GREER
Welcome, everyone.
This session will not be recorded.

Clara takes a seat near the back, notebook open.

GREER (CONT'D)
We're here to talk about the path
forward.
The Restoration Playbook is not
about power.
It's about survival.

Clara freezes.

He's naming it out loud.

Greer clicks a slide:

"RESTORATION PLAYBOOK – IMPLEMENTATION PHASE I."

Attendees murmur, impressed.

Clara's hands tremble as she scribbles.

26. INT. STRATEGY ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Greer continues like a motivational speaker selling the end of democracy.

GREER
The country is sick.
Confused.
Tired.
And a tired nation accepts strong
leadership.

A donor raises his hand.

DONOR
What about the backlash? The Blue
outrage machine?

Greer clicks to a graphic: a red arrow marked "OUTRAGE CYCLE."

GREER
 Encouraged.
 Not discouraged.

Clara's breath catches.

GREER (CONT'D)
 Outrage destabilizes.
 Destabilization justifies
 intervention.
 Intervention restores order.

He smiles.

GREER (CONT'D)
 Simple. Predictable. Tested.

Clara scribbles:

"They're following the Playbook verbatim."

Then the slide changes to:

"PROJECT LIGHTHOUSE – Data Validation."

Clara sits up straighter.

GREER (CONT'D)
 Our analytics partners ran
 simulations.
 Hundreds.
 Thousands.
 And the models agree:

The Blue states will overreact if we push the right pressure
 points.

Clara whispers to herself:

CLARA
 Models... plural?

A DONOR chuckles.

DONOR #2
 It's like we're running a national
 science experiment.

GREER
 Exactly.
 Control the variables, control the
 outcome.

Clara's face drains.

27. INT. STRATEGY ROOM - LATER

Greer lowers his voice.

GREER

Phase II begins this fall.
We will allow Blue legislators to
push for sanctuary status.
Encourage it, even.

Murmurs of approval.

GREER (CONT'D)

Then, when the chaos hits...
America will cry out for order.
And we will answer.

Clara closes her notebook. She's heard enough.

As she stands—

A MARSHAL blocks the exit.

MARSHAL

Badge, please.

Clara forces a smile.

CLARA

Of course.

She hands him the lanyard — the one from the staffer.

He scans it with a handheld device.

It flashes RED.

His eyes narrow.

MARSHAL

Ma'am...
You're not supposed to be here.

Clara bolts.

28. INT. BACK CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Clara sprints down the hallway, turning corners blindly.

Behind her — SHOUTS, radios crackling.

SECURITY
She's heading east wing!
Black jacket, dark hair!

Clara ducks into a SERVICE HALL.

Footsteps pound behind her.

29. INT. SERVICE HALL / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Clara bursts through double doors into the catering kitchen.

Caterers jump back, startled.

She grabs a bus tray, ducks under a prep table as SECURITY rushes in.

SECURITY #1
She came through here!

SECURITY #2
Check the loading dock!

They barrel past.

Clara crawls out, breath ragged.

She spots a side exit labeled DELIVERIES ONLY.

She slips out.

30. EXT. LOADING DOCK - DAY

Clara emerges into sunlight, disoriented.

A TRUCK DRIVER smokes by his cab.

DRIVER
Rough day?

Clara forces a smile.

CLARA
You have no idea.

She pulls out her phone. One bar of service.

A message from NOAH:

"Security circling. Get out NOW."

Clara raises her hood and runs across the lot, disappearing into the crowd.

31. EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

Clara finds Noah leaning against their rental car, scanning the entrance anxiously.

She reaches him, breathless.

NOAH

Jesus, Clara— what did you do?

CLARA

Nothing illegal.
Just attended a private meeting
about toppling democracy.

She opens the car door.

NOAH

And they let you walk out?

CLARA

Not exactly.

She climbs in.

32. INT. RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Noah drives away fast.

Clara flips through the photos she managed to snap in the strategy room.

Greer pointing at slides.

The Playbook projected behind him.

Noah sees her hands shaking.

NOAH

Clara... you realize what you have
now, right?

She nods.

CLARA

I have proof.

NOAH

No.
You have a target on your back.

Clara looks out at the passing landscape – split towns, angry signs, homes with two flags on one porch.

CLARA (V.O.)

They weren't planning for chaos.
They were planning to profit from
it.

Her phone buzzes. A video sent from an UNKNOWN NUMBER.

She plays it.

Mercury, terrified, whispering into the camera:

MERCURY (ON VIDEO)

They're not... it's not... it's–

Gunshots in the background.

Mercury runs.

The video ends.

Clara's breath shakes.

Noah pulls the car to the shoulder.

NOAH

Clara.
We have to go to underground.

CLARA

No.
We go bigger.
We go public.

She stares at the last frozen frame of Mercury.

CLARA (CONT'D)

This isn't a story anymore.
It's a countdown.

CUT TO:

33. INT. SMALL NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Clara storms into the newsroom with Noah behind her.

Maya looks up from a stack of legal notices.

MAYA

Tell me you didn't—

CLARA

I did.

I got into the Summit.

I saw the Playbook session.

I got pictures.

She slams down her phone, showing photos of Greer on stage with the Playbook slides.

Maya's face goes pale.

MAYA

Clara... this could bring the whole city down on us.

CLARA

Good.

I'm tired of tiptoeing around the truth.

Noah watches her with grim admiration.

NOAH

Show Maya the video.

Clara hesitates—then plays Mercury's last message.

Maya covers her mouth. Tears flicker.

MAYA

We have to publish tonight.

Before someone stops us.

Clara nods.

34. INT. NEWSROOM - LATER

The three of them work like it's a war room:

Clara writes

Noah verifies metadata

Maya formats and preps distribution across multiple servers

The headline forms:

"GREER'S RESTORATION BLUEPRINT: INSIDE THE SECRET STRATEGY ROOM."

A cursor hovers over PUBLISH.

Noah grabs Clara's wrist.

NOAH

Once this goes live... there's no going back.

Clara looks at him – resolute, scared, committed.

CLARA

There wasn't any going back the moment they started writing this damn Playbook.

She hits PUBLISH.

A beat of silence.

Then—

SERVER PINGS explode.

Traffic erupts.

Shares spike in real time.

Maya exhales.

MAYA

We just started the avalanche.

35. INT. WHITE HOUSE – SITUATION ROOM – NIGHT

Kline stands at the head of the table, surrounded by advisers, generals, and Ronald Greer.

The screen shows Clara's article going viral.

AIDE

Sir, the story is everywhere. Blue states are calling for hearings.

Kline reads the article, the photos... and his jaw tightens.

He looks to Greer.

KLINE

You told me the strategy room was airtight.

Greer remains calm, almost amused.

GREER

Leaks are part of the process.

It accelerates the cycle.

Kline stares harder.

KLINE

This reporter is painting me as a tyrant.

Greer leans in.

GREER

No, sir.

She's painting the other side as desperate.

Blue outrage will hit maximum saturation within hours.

And then-

(beat)

they'll overreach.

Kline absorbs this, conflicted.

KLINE

This wasn't my vision.

GREER

It's the model's vision, Mr. President.
We're just executing.

Kline doesn't like that... not one bit.

36. INT. DEMOCRATIC HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

SENATOR MARA FIELDS watches the story unfold on multiple monitors.

Her staff buzzes like hornets.

STAFFER

We need to call for emergency hearings— we demand a special prosecutor— we draft a resolution condemning Kline.

MARA

No.
Not enough.

She steps forward, fire in her eyes.

MARA (CONT'D)

Tomorrow morning, we introduce legislation declaring all Blue cities "Autonomy Zones."
Full sanctuary from Kline's Restoration Act.

The staff gasps.

STAFFER

That's... that's secession.

MARA

No.
It's self-defense.

She stares at Clara's article.

MARA (CONT'D)

They want a fight?

Let's give them one.

CUT TO:

37. INT. CLARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clara sits in the dark, watching reactions on two screens:

Blue pundits:

This confirms everything we feared.

Red pundits:

This woman is a liar, a fraud, a foreign asset.

Noah sits beside her.

NOAH
They're coming.

CLARA
Let them.
I'm not hiding-

A BRICK smashes through the window behind them.

Clara screams. Noah pulls her down.

The brick has a note:

"TRAITORS HANG."

Noah grabs her arm.

NOAH
Get your bag. Now.

38. EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Sirens in the distance. A crowd gathering outside.

Half cheering Clara.

Half demanding she be arrested.

Someone films her; someone else spits at her.

Noah drags Clara to the alley where a battered SUV waits.

NOAH
I called someone.

A friend.

CLARA
Who-

A tall, muscular woman in tactical clothes steps out of the SUV.

TESSA HOLT (mid-40s, former National Guard captain, calm but decisive).

TESSA
Clara Reyes?
I'm Tessa.
Noah said you needed extraction.

Clara blinks.

CLARA
Extraction?

TESSA
From the mob.
From the surveillance.
From the government.

She opens the door.

TESSA (CONT'D)
And from whatever the hell you just
walked into.

39. INT. SUV - MOVING - NIGHT

Tessa drives like she's navigated combat zones (she has).

Clara watches the city outside - protests in every direction.
Police barricades. Drone lights.

TESSA
I used to run National Guard
responses.
Now I help people escape both
sides.
Congratulations... your article
turned the dial to eleven.

CLARA
I didn't write the Playbook.

TESSA
No... but you hit the detonator.

She hands Clara a burner phone.

TESSA (CONT'D)
Your name just hit the "priority
threat" database.
Both Red and Blue factions flagged
you.

Clara's eyes widen.

CLARA
Blue flagged me? Why?

TESSA
Because panic makes everyone
stupid.

CUT TO:

40. EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The SUV speeds down an empty interstate.

LED billboards alternate political messages:

"RESTORE ORDER."

"RESIST AUTHORITARIANISM."

Clara stares.

CLARA (V.O.)
Truth wasn't partisan anymore.
It was radioactive.

CUT TO:

41. EXT. BLUE CITY HALL - DAY (NEXT MORNING)

Huge crowds. Blue flags waving. Anger boiling.

Mara Fields steps onto a balcony.

MARA
From this day forward..
our city is an Autonomous Blue
Zone. Free from Kline's illegal
Restoration Act.

The crowd ROARS.

Cameras flash.

Across the street, Red protesters clash with Blue police.

Clara watches this on Tessa's phone in the SUV as they drive.

NOAH
She's doing exactly what the
Playbook predicted.

Clara's face goes white.

CLARA
We didn't stop it.
We accelerated it.

42. EXT. SUBURBAN INTERSECTION - DAY

The SUV slows as traffic clogs.

Police tape.

Ambulances.

Chaos.

A CAR BOMB has detonated outside a mixed Red/Blue community center.

Dozens injured.

A panicked woman screams into a TV camera:

WOMAN
Blue radicals did this! They warned
us they'd blow up "Red spaces"!

A man shouts back:

MAN
Red militia set this up! False
flag! Everyone is sure they're
right.

Tessa watches grimly.

TESSA
This wasn't either side.

Clara and Noah look at her, startled.

CLARA
How do you know?

TESSA
Because I know how real attacks
look. And how staged ones do.

A beat.

TESSA (CONT'D)
Somebody wants a war.

43. INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Clara's phone buzzes - an encrypted message.

She opens it.

A single line:

"MODEL ALPHA READY FOR PHASE II - VALIDATED RESPONSE
ACHIEVED."

Clara's face drains of blood.

CLARA
Who the hell is sending me this?

NOAH
That's internal phrasing.

Government-level.

TESSA
Translated?

Noah exhales.

NOAH
It means the bomb... did exactly what
it was supposed to do.

Clara covers her mouth.

CLARA
We're not just documenting a civil
war. We're walking into a script
someone already wrote.

Tessa tightens her grip on the wheel.

TESSA
Then let's flip to the last page
before they kill us.

She floors it.

44. EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

The SUV tears down a near-empty stretch of interstate.
Billboards are split between:

"SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT'S RESTORATION ACT"

"RESIST RESTORATION - AUTONOMY NOW."

Clara stares out the window, filming with her phone.

CLARA (V.O.)

The first Civil War had uniforms.
You knew who was on which side.
This one just had... convictions.
And really good marketing.

45. INT. SUV - MOVING - DAY

Noah scrolls through news feeds on a tablet.

NOAH

Three Blue cities just declared
Autonomy Zones.
Two Red governors are mobilizing
their "state defense forces."
And D.C. is putting the National
Guard on standby.

Tessa snorts.

TESSA

You put the Guard "on standby,"
they'll be standing by dead
civilians in twelve hours.

Clara watches them both.

CLARA

What's the endgame?

TESSA

Endgames are for games.
This is an implosion.

NOAH

No.
It's not random.
The responses are too... aligned.

He shows them a graphic someone just posted - a map of the U.S. with Red and Blue splinter lines.

NOAH (CONT'D)

The Autonomy Zones are exactly
where the Playbook predicted
unrest.

Clara closes her eyes.

CLARA
 So what do we do?
 How do you stop a plan that's
 already happening?

Tessa checks the rearview.

TESSA
 You find the people running it.
 Or the machine.
 And you break it.

46. EXT. ABANDONED TRUCK STOP - DAY

The SUV pulls into a run-down truck stop that clearly used to be busy before "the troubles."

Half the gas pumps have Red flags taped to them.

The others have Blue stickers: "AUTONOMY FUEL - FAIR PRICING."

A handwritten sign on the door:

"NO POLITICS INSIDE. SERIOUSLY."

47. INT. TRUCK STOP DINER - DAY

Clara, Noah, and Tessa sit at a booth. A TV in the corner flicks between two feeds on split-screen: RED commentary vs. BLUE commentary about the bombing.

They both show the same footage.

They both tell different stories.

A WAITRESS (50s, worn but kind) pours coffee.

WAITRESS
 You with the Red side or the Blue
 side?

Tessa answers first.

TESSA
 Breakfast side.

The Waitress smirks.

WAITRESS

Good answer.

She walks away.

Clara watches an argument at another table:

– A RED TRUCKER insists the bombing was a Blue terrorist attack.

– A BLUE NURSE insists it's a Red false flag.

RED TRUCKER

They admitted they want to "disrupt Red spaces" – it's in their manifesto!

BLUE NURSE

Your side was sharing threats in those exact words last week! It's pointless. They're not listening, just waiting to talk.

Clara quietly records them.

CLARA (V.O.)

The Playbook didn't say "convince everyone."
It just said "make sure no one trusts anyone."

48. INT. TRUCK STOP BATHROOM – DAY

Clara splashes water on her face. The mirror is cracked.

On the wall, someone has scrawled:

"TRUST YOUR OWN SIDE OR DIE."

Under it, someone else wrote:

"TRUST NO SIDE OR LIVE."

Clara stares at it.

Her burner phone buzzes. New encrypted message.

"IF YOU WANT MODEL ALPHA, STOP CHASING POLITICIANS."

FIND THE LAB. - M"

She frowns.

CLARA
You're supposed to be dead.

49. EXT. TRUCK STOP - LATER

The trio stand by the SUV.

Clara shows Noah and Tessa the text.

NOAH
Either Mercury survived..
or someone's using their handle.

TESSA
What's "the lab"?

Noah takes a deep breath.

NOAH
There used to be an experimental
behavioral lab in a place called
Ravenwood. They did early
simulations on political messaging.

Clara locks onto the word.

CLARA
Simulations?

NOAH
Yeah. They'd feed in different
speeches, events, see how people
"might" react.

A beat.

TESSA
Let me guess.
They shut it down.
Officially.

NOAH
Officially.

Clara pockets the phone.

CLARA
Then that's where we go.

50. EXT. RAVENWOOD RESEARCH CAMPUS - DUSK

A former tech campus in the middle of nowhere.

Overgrown grass, chain-link fence, security cameras that may or may not work.

A faded sign:

"RAVENWOOD INSTITUTE - BEHAVIORAL FUTURES LAB"

"PROPERTY OF DEPARTMENT OF CIVIC STABILITY" (the last part spray-painted over).

The SUV idles outside.

TESSA
Looks friendly.

NOAH
It was never friendly.

51. EXT. FENCE LINE - DUSK

Tessa cuts through a gap someone used long ago.

Clara and Noah follow.

They move low and fast, veterans in their own ways.

52. INT. RAVENWOOD - LOBBY - DUSK

Dust hangs in the air. Dead monitors.

Motivational posters about "understanding voter needs."

Noah finds a power panel. Tessa hands him a flashlight.

NOAH
If anything's still running, it'll
be on backup.

He flips a switch.

A distant hum starts up. Emergency lighting flickers.

CLARA
Great.
Haunted lab aesthetic.

53. INT. RAVENWOOD - DATA FLOOR - DUSK

Rows of server racks, most empty.

A handful still blink with faint LED lights.

Noah moves like a man revisiting a crime scene.

CLARA

You worked here?

NOAH

Consulted. I told myself it was
"just predictive analytics."
Like climate models. Only... instead
of forecasting hurricanes, we were
forecasting riots.

Tessa checks corners, weapon out.

TESSA

Let's move fast.
Abandoned buildings make trigger
fingers itchy.

54. INT. RAVENWOOD - CONTROL ROOM - DUSK

A central control room with a curved wall of dark monitors.

Noah wakes a main terminal.

On-screen:

"MODEL ALPHA INTERFACE - OFFLINE (LIMITED LOCAL ARCHIVE)"

Clara's heart rate spikes.

CLARA

There it is.

Model Alpha.

Noah types furiously.

NOAH

It's not fully online.

Looks like just archival simulations.

Log files appear:

"Test Scenario: Blue Sanctuary Declaration"

"Test Scenario: Red Border Crackdowns"

"Test Scenario: Bipartisan Collapse"

Each log shows "Predicted Outcome Confidence: 94%+"

Clara is horrified.

CLARA

They rehearsed all of this.

She clicks a log.

Simulation video plays in sped-up animation:

Maps shifting colors, protest icons, news ticker mock-ups.

It looks eerily like today's headlines.

CLARA (CONT'D)

These aren't guesses.

They're... recipes.

55. INT. RAVENWOOD - CONTROL ROOM - LATER

Clara films the screens, explaining to camera.

CLARA

This is Ravenwood.

An experimental lab where political
chaos wasn't feared... it was
modeled.

She points to a scenario labeled:

"PHASE II - CIVIL FRACTURE (SOFT)"

CLARA

"Civil fracture."

They even named the break.

Tessa steps up to the monitor, jaw clenched.

TESSA

I've led peacekeeping missions
overseas. We'd get briefings like
this... on fragile democracies.
Not on ours.

Noah pulls a file tree.

At the bottom: a directory marked:

"PATRIOT ROOT - RESTRICTED"

NOAH

I need more access to open that.

Clara notices something else on a secondary screen:

LIVE METRIC STREAMS.

CLARA

I thought you said it was offline.

NOAH

It should be.

He clicks a process monitor.

Several nodes show:

"SYNCING WITH EXTERNAL GRID..."

NOAH

Someone's still using part of this system.

Remote-linked.

TESSA

Can you shut it down?

Noah hesitates.

NOAH

Maybe.
But if I trip the wrong flag,
whoever's on the other end will
know we were here.

CLARA

So either we walk away
and let the script finish...
or we pull the fire alarm
and hope we live long enough to
show people the flames.

Tessa stares at them.

TESSA

We didn't come all this way to
sightsee.

Noah nods, resigned.

He starts to work.

56. INT. RAVENWOOD - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Noah types commands, we see the model outputs flicker.

Some screens show:

"DESTABILIZATION INDEX: 0.71 ? 0.86"

"TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS: DECLINING"

"SECESSION SENTIMENT: RISING IN BLUE ZONES"

Clara zooms in on the numbers with her camera.

CLARA (V.O.)

The country wasn't just divided.
It was being measured...
like a patient circling the drain.

Noah finds something.

NOAH

Got it. Local root access.
We can pull some archives... maybe
enough to prove this designed the
Playbook.

He hits ENTER.

The system pauses... then begins dumping logs to an external drive.

DOWNLOAD PROGRESS: 1%... 2%...

Tessa's radio crackles.

RADIO (DISTORTED)

-units converging- Ravenwood-
possible intrusion-

Tessa curses.

TESSA

We've got incoming.

57. EXT. RAVENWOOD CAMPUS - DUSK

Two black SUVs crest the dirt road, unmarked but very official.

Heavily armed men disembark.

58. INT. RAVENWOOD - CONTROL ROOM - DUSK

Noah watches the progress bar: 14%.

NOAH

We need at least twenty percent to show the chain from Model Alpha to the Playbook.

Tessa looks at the security feed.

The SUVs are closing in.

TESSA

You've got two minutes.

Clara films the screen - including system info.

CLARA

If we don't get the files, at least we show this place existed.

The power flickers as someone tries to cut it externally.

DOWNLOAD: 19%... 20%...

NOAH

Got it.

That's enough to hang someone.

He yanks the drive.

The terminal blares:

"REMOTE OVERRIDE DETECTED... LOCKOUT ENGAGED..."

The screens shift to a single message:

"MODEL ALPHA RESYNCING - PLEASE WAIT."

Clara feels a chill.

CLARA
Resyncing with what?

Tessa's answer is simple.

TESSA
Trouble.

59. INT. RAVENWOOD - STAIRWELL - DUSK

The trio races down a stairwell as BOOTS thunder above.

Tessa hands Clara a small pistol.

TESSA
Last resort.

Aim center mass.

Don't hesitate.

CLARA
I'm a reporter, not-

TESSA
Out here?
You're whatever gets you to
tomorrow.

Clara grips the gun, terrified.

60. EXT. RAVENWOOD - SERVICE EXIT - DUSK

They burst out a side door and sprint toward the tree line.

Shouts behind them.

AGENT
Stop! Federal Communications Unit!

Gunshots crack.

Dirt kicks near their feet.

Tessa fires two controlled shots - enough to send the agents
diving for cover.

TESSA
Move!

They disappear into the trees as the agents take positions.

61. EXT. WOODS - DUSK

They crash through underbrush.

Clara stumbles, catches herself, clutches the drive like a holy relic.

CLARA (V.O.)

We went looking for the people who wrote the Playbook. We found their testing ground instead. A ghost lab... still whispering orders to a dying country.

They vanish deeper into the gloom.

62. EXT. RAVENWOOD WOODS - NIGHT

Dark. Wet leaves. Clara, Noah, and Tessa scramble through thick underbrush.

A helicopter spotlight sweeps the trees behind them.

TESSA

Stay low. Don't silhouette yourselves.

Clara clutches the data drive like a newborn.

CLARA

If they catch us—
they erase the files.
They erase us.

Tessa checks her sidearm.

TESSA

They're not catching us.

63. EXT. OLD SERVICE ROAD - NIGHT

They reach an old service road. An abandoned construction van sits crooked in the dirt.

Tessa breaks the lock with a pry bar.

NOAH

You've done this before.

TESSA
Once or twice.
(disarming small alarm)
Three times.

They climb inside.

64. INT. ABANDONED VAN - NIGHT

Tessa hotwires it with unsettling ease.

Clara watches her.

CLARA
Who were you?

Tessa fires the engine.

TESSA
Ask me when we're not about to get
shot.

They peel away into darkness.

65. EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The van barrels down a nearly empty interstate.

Miles of closed gas stations.

Shuttered shops.

Billboards half-covered in partisan graffiti.

NOAH
(red glow on his face from
tablet)
Every major network is suppressing
the Ravenwood story.

CLARA
All of them?

NOAH
Every damn one.

CLARA
Who ordered it?

Noah looks at her.

NOAH

Everyone with something to lose.

Clara stares out the window at a crumbling union.

CLARA (V.O.)

The truth used to be simple.
Then it became expensive.
Now it was becoming illegal.

66. INT. VAN - LATER

They eat gas-station snacks in silence.

Tessa finally breaks.

TESSA

You want my backstory?
Fine.

She keeps her eyes on the road.

TESSA (CONT'D)

Twenty years in the Guard.
I led crisis responses—riots,
wildfires, hurricanes.
I believed in unity.
Then... politics happened.

CLARA

You got discharged?

Tessa scoffs.

TESSA

I saw a congressman order resources
withheld from a Blue city.
To "send a message."
People died.
I reported him.
Four days later, I was labeled
"unstable."

Clara absorbs the weight of it.

CLARA

You fought for a united country.

And they punished you for it.

TESSA
Exactly why I'm helping you three
idiots.
Someone has to pull the fire alarm.

67. EXT. RURAL TOLL PLAZA - DAWN

Sunrise reveals a Red State Checkpoint hastily constructed out of concrete barriers, razor wire, and military trucks.

A sign reads:

"ENTERING SOVEREIGN DISTRICT OF LIBERTY - ID REQUIRED."

Noah pales.

NOAH
We're not getting through that.

TESSA
Oh, we are.

Just not legally.

She turns off the main road.

68. EXT. DRAINAGE TUNNEL - DAWN

A massive concrete drainage culvert under the road.

Tessa kills the engine.

TESSA
Grab the bags.
We finish this on foot.

The wind carries the distant sound of helicopters.

Clara looks terrified but determined.

CLARA
We get these files out...
and maybe the country stops
burning.

TESSA
Or we burn with it.

She slings her rifle and leads them into the tunnel.

69. INT. DRAINAGE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Dark, dripping, claustrophobic.

Noah whispers:

NOAH

Model Alpha predicted the choke
points.
This is one of them.

CLARA

Meaning?

NOAH

Meaning someone expected people
like us to run this exact route.

A metallic clang echoes behind them.

They freeze.

TESSA

Move.

They sprint deeper into darkness.

70. EXT. DRAINAGE TUNNEL OUTLET - MORNING

Clara, Noah, and Tessa emerge, mud-splattered, into a scrubby
ravine on the other side of the toll checkpoint.

Above them, they can see the line of cars, trucks, and RVs
snaking through armed inspection.

LOUDSPEAKERS BLARE from the checkpoint.

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)

All vehicles entering the Sovereign
District of Liberty must declare
media equipment and political
affiliation-

Tessa gestures them down.

TESSA

Stay low.
They have optics up there.

Clara looks at the checkpoint like it's a foreign border.

CLARA

This is still the United States...
right?

Tessa doesn't answer.

71. EXT. HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING CHECKPOINT - CONTINUOUS

They crawl up just enough to see.

A RED-STATE MILITIA, under the banner of "STATE DEFENSE FORCE," searches vehicles.

- A BLUE FAMILY is pulled out of a minivan, questioned aggressively.

- A RED TRUCK with "SUPPORT RESTORATION" plastered on it is waved through with a smile.

Noah records with a long lens.

NOAH

This is unconstitutional.

TESSA

You're adorable.
We passed "unconstitutional" three
exits ago.

Clara films, voice low.

CLARA

(soft narration, for
herself)

Checkpoints along state lines.
Citizens graded by loyalty tests.
And everyone thinks they're the
ones under attack.

She zooms tighter: a posted notice.

"UNREGISTERED JOURNALISTS SUBJECT TO DETENTION."

"REYES, CLARA" - her photo, printed grainy.

Her breath catches.

CLARA

They put me on a wall.

Tessa sees it too.

TESSA
Congratulations.
You're officially famous.

72. EXT. ABANDONED FARMHOUSE - LATER

A decaying farmhouse sits in a field. One side of the barn is freshly painted with a giant American flag. The windows are boarded.

The three approach cautiously.

NOAH
You're sure about this contact?

TESSA
He owes me his life.
And three months' back rent.

She knocks a specific rhythm on the door.

It opens a crack. A MAN in his 50s, rugged, wary - FRANK - peers out with a shotgun.

FRANK
I told you I was retired.

TESSA
I brought you work anyway.

He eyes Clara and Noah.

FRANK
They trouble?

TESSA
The good kind.

Frank sighs, opens the door wider.

FRANK
Then get in before the bad kind
shows up.

73. INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

A cramped, lived-in kitchen. Maps on the wall. A HAM RADIO rig on the counter.

Frank pours coffee like it's medicine.

FRANK
You're the reporter.

Clara nods, exhausted.

CLARA
Apparently I'm also a terrorist
now.

He snorts.

FRANK
They call everyone something.
Keeps people scared.

Noah sets up his laptop at the table, plugs in the RAVENWOOD
DRIVE.

NOAH
I need a line out.
Low-profile, no ISP logs.

Frank taps the ham rig and an ancient satellite modem.

FRANK
This old girl talks to birds nobody
remembers orbiting.

Tessa gestures to the maps.

TESSA
You tracking anything besides
NASCAR?

We see red pins, blue pins, and black pins marking attacks,
riots, curfews.

FRANK
I track where the country's dying.
Black pins mean "we don't know who
did it, but both sides swear it was
the other."

Clara looks – there are a lot of black pins.

74. INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Noah uploads a heavily-compressed package: Ravenwood logs,
screenshots, their own footage.

On his screen:

"SENDING TO: MIRROR_NODES (12)"

Independent journalists, mirror servers, encrypted clouds.

Clara sits beside him, typing a new piece:

"RAVENWOOD: THE LAB WHERE THEY SIMULATED OUR CIVIL WAR."

Her fingers shake.

NOAH

We send this out right...
and they can't kill the story.

Tessa listens to the ham radio – overlapping channels from Red and Blue zones.

RADIO #1 (RED)

...autonomy is illegal, Governor has
authorized mobilization–

RADIO #2 (BLUE)

...federal agents refusing to leave
city hall, mayor calling for
citizen barricades–

Frank puts down his coffee.

FRANK

You kids are trying to yell over a
hurricane.

Clara doesn't stop typing.

CLARA

Then we make the hurricane listen.

She hits SEND.

Progress bar: UPLOADING...

75. INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

They all crowd around an old TV and Noah's tablet.

At first – success:

ALTERNATIVE NEWS SITES pick up her piece.

Social feeds light up:

#RavenwoodLab

#ScriptedCivilWar

Clara almost smiles.

CLARA

Come on.
Come on.
See it.
Believe it.

Then, almost immediately—

SITES BEGIN TO GO DARK.

NOAH

No... no, no...

He refreshes. 404 errors. "Content Removed for Safety."
"Domain Not Found."

On TV, a major network anchor speaks:

ANCHOR

A dangerous new conspiracy theory
claiming the government 'simulated'
the current unrest is spreading
online. Experts say this is likely
foreign disinformation.

Clara's face hardens.

CLARA

They're calling the truth a
conspiracy about a conspiracy.

Frank turns off the TV.

FRANK

You thought they'd just say "our
bad" and hand you a medal?

Tessa looks at Clara — she sees the hit land.

TESSA

Your piece still reached people.
Some will believe it.
Some will share it.

CLARA

And some will decide I need to
disappear.

She looks out the window at the empty fields.

CLARA (V.O.)
We'd pulled the mask off the
monster. And it just... smiled.

CUT TO:

76. EXT. FARMHOUSE - BACK FIELDS - DAY

Tessa leads Clara and Noah behind the farmhouse, through tall grass toward a rusted old pickup truck half-hidden beneath tarps.

FRANK (O.S.)
She's ugly, loud, and allergic to
modern electronics.
Perfect for staying off-grid.

Frank tosses Tessa the keys.

TESSA
(grinning)
You kept her running?

FRANK
Had a feeling you'd need her
someday.

Clara loads her backpack into the truck bed.

Her recorder dangles from her hand.

CLARA
If they can suppress Ravenwood...
They can suppress anything.

Tessa slams the tailgate shut.

TESSA
Not everything.
They still can't suppress us
breathing.

77. EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

The old pickup rattles down the faded road.

Oil smoke trails behind it like a signal flare.

Noah scrolls through fractured news feeds, pirated signals, underground channels.

NOAH

Blue governors are assembling a joint coalition... but Red states are calling it "an unconstitutional rebellion."

CLARA

Translation, Everyone's accusing everyone of treason.

Tessa eyes the horizon – smoke columns rising from distant towns.

TESSA

Civil wars don't start with declarations.

They start with people deciding they're done pretending to be neighbors.

78. INT. PICKUP – MOVING – DAY

Clara opens the drive Noah pulled from Ravenwood.

Numerical data streams fill the screen – coded logs, simulation outputs, response patterns.

She scrolls...

scrolls...

scrolls...

Stops.

CLARA

Noah... look at this.
She hands him the tablet.

A log labeled:

PHASE II – PREDICTED CHOKEPOINTS (95% CONFIDENCE)

He leans forward, stunned.

NOAH

These are...
These are specific locations.

CLARA

Look at the timestamps.

The predictions were made years ago.

He swipes to a map.

NOAH

This highway— this exact route—
Model Alpha flagged it as a “high
probability defection corridor.”

Tessa overhears.

TESSA

Meaning?

Noah looks up, shaken.

NOAH

Meaning... it expected people like us
to flee Ravenwood using this road.
Down to the mile marker.

Clara's face goes pale.

CLARA

We're not escaping the script.
We're inside it.

79. EXT. OVERPASS - DAY

Tessa slows the truck near an overpass.

Blue graffiti splashed against Red slogans:

“AUTONOMY OR DEATH.”

“RESTORE ORDER.”

A makeshift memorial of candles and photos line the guard
rail.

CLARA

What happened here?

Frank's voice echoes in Clara's memory from earlier:

FRANK (V.O.)

Black pins mean nobody knows who
did it...

(MORE)

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
and everyone's sure the other side
did.

A burned-out school bus lies in the ravine below.

Clara covers her mouth.

CLARA
Oh God...

Tessa gets out, scanning the area.

TESSA
Fresh burn.
Two, maybe three days.

Clara films the wreckage.

CLARA (V.O.)
Before the country fractured, this
road carried kids to school. Now it
carried accusations. Fires. Ghosts.

Noah approaches cautiously.

NOAH
Clara...

the simulation logs predicted an "escalatory event"
in this region weeks before it happened.

She turns the camera on him.

CLARA
Say that again.

NOAH
Whatever happened here— this
specific event— Model Alpha called
it.

Tessa frowns.

TESSA
And what does that tell us?

Noah looks hollow.

NOAH
Either the model is a prophecy
machine... or somebody's using it as
a blueprint.

80. EXT. CHECKPOINT REMAINS - LATER

They continue north.

Up ahead - a former BLUE COMMUNITY CHECKPOINT..

Now abandoned.

Bullet holes pepper the booths.

A burned-out police SUV lies on its side.

A new sign hangs crudely:

"THIS CHECKPOINT IS CLOSED.

CHOOSE YOUR SIDE ELSEWHERE."

Clara films as they pass slowly.

CLARA (V.O.)

When institutions collapse, nobody
replaces them. People just
improvise... and hope they picked the
right improvisation.

Tessa taps the dashboard.

TESSA

Eyes up. Road ahead's narrow.
Perfect ambush terrain.

Clara swallows.

CLARA

Ambush by who?

Tessa stares ahead grimly.

TESSA

Pick a color.
Red or Blue.
Or the ones who want both to burn.

81. INT. PICKUP - CONTINUOUS

Noah loads the next Ravenwood file.

A new directory:

"PHASE III - CONTROLLED DISUNION
(LOCKED)"

(MORE)

TESSA (CONT'D)

He freezes.

NOAH

Uh... Clara?

CLARA

What?

He angles the screen at her.

CLARA

What does "Controlled Disunion"
mean?

Tessa tightens her grip on the wheel.

TESSA

It means the war isn't the plan.
It's the tool.

Clara stares at the screen.

Realizing-

This isn't the end.

Not even close.

82. EXT. COUNTY ROAD - DAY

The old pickup rumbles along a pothole-ridden farm road.

Up ahead-

a line of vehicles at a makeshift barricade.

A massive spray-painted banner hangs between two tractors:

"RED SAFEWAY - BLUE KEEP OUT"

Tessa slows.

TESSA

We're walking in.
Smiles on.
Guns down.
Let me talk.

Clara hides the camera under her jacket.

Noah shuts down the tablet but keeps it ready.

83. EXT. RED SAFEWAY BARRICADE - DAY

AR-15s. Pickup trucks. Homemade armor. Flags.

A group of CITIZEN MILITIA inspects vehicles one by one.

Tessa walks toward the nearest militiaman, hands visible.

TESSA

Howdy.

Just looking to pass through.

The man looks her up and down.

MILITIAMAN #1

State your affiliation.

TESSA

Human.

He doesn't smile.

He jerks his head at Clara.

MILITIAMAN #1

That her?

Clara stiffens.

CLARA

Her who?

He holds up a printed sheet:

CLARA'S FACE - the same wanted poster from the checkpoint.

"UNLICENSED JOURNALIST - AGITATOR."

Noah mutters under his breath.

NOAH

Jesus...

Tessa steps forward, blocking Clara.

TESSA

She's not who you think.

We're heading to Northbridge to
check on family.

MILITIAMAN #1

Everyone says that.

He motions toward a white panel van.

A logo hastily spray-painted over.

The new words:

"LOYALTY SCREENING UNIT."

Clara's blood runs cold.

CLARA

What... what is that?

84. EXT. "LOYALTY VAN" - CONTINUOUS

A WOMAN is dragged out of the van by two militiamen.

She's crying, hands bound.

A BOY (10) screams from the back of a sedan.

BOY

That's my mom! Let her go!

The militia ignores him.

The woman is forced to kneel.

MILITIAMAN #2 flips through her phone.

MILITIAMAN #2

She follows Blue Zone accounts.
And she liked a post criticizing
the President.

MILITIAMAN #1

Intent to disrupt.
Class C offense.

Clara can't breathe.

The boy breaks from the car, racing forward—

TESSA

Kid! Stop!

Too late.

A militia rifle snaps up—

CLARA

NO!

She throws herself forward, grabbing the boy and yanking him down behind a tire barrier.

The gunshot CRACKS overhead.

Tessa draws her weapon smoothly, coldly.

TESSA
Put the rifles DOWN.
Now.

The militia hesitates.

Her posture is pure military command – they feel it.

MILITIAMAN #1
You pointing a gun at state
security?

TESSA
I'm pointing it at incompetence.
You shoot a kid and you'll start a
war even you idiots can't win.

A long, tense beat.

Finally–

The militiaman lowers his rifle.

The others follow reluctantly.

MILITIAMAN #1
(Fine.)
Take your people.
And go.

Clara holds the boy, shaking.

CLARA
Go.
Find somewhere safe.

The boy runs to his mother, who's now released and trembling.

Tessa holsters her gun.

TESSA
(quietly to Clara)
You just risked your life for
strangers.

CLARA
I'm a journalist.
That's my job.

TESSA
That's not journalism anymore.
That's courage.

85. EXT. BACK COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

The pickup bumps away from the militia zone.

Clara is silent, still shaken.

Noah watches her.

NOAH
You okay?

CLARA
That kid... He could've died because
of a "like."

NOAH
That's the kind of world Model
Alpha sees.

Clara looks out the window - the country looks like a ghost.

CLARA (V.O.)
This wasn't politics anymore.
This was purification. Every side
convinced they were the righteous
ones... and righteousness doesn't
compromise. Righteousness burns.

86. INT. PICKUP - CONTINUOUS

Noah reopens the Ravenwood data.

A new log catches his eye.

NOAH
Hold up.

He zooms in.

A simulation run labeled:

"EVENT CASCADE: CHILD IMPACT (ZONE 3)"

CLARA
What's that?

NOAH
(scrolls.)
The model predicted that an incident involving a child at a loyalty checkpoint would accelerate Blue militia recruitment by 17% and cause a 9% increase in Red paramilitary mobilization.

Clara stares at the screen.

CLARA
That was today. That was literally what happened today.

Tessa glances back.

TESSA
You're saying that checkpoint ambush— they wanted exactly that outcome?

Noah nods, horrified.

NOAH
It's not a civil war.
It's a lab experiment.
And the variables are people.

Clara looks sick.

CLARA
Someone is pushing us toward Phase III.

Her burner phone BUZZES.

She checks it.

A message:

"STOP RUNNING. NORTH 28 MILES. OLD RANGER STATION. COME ALONE."

— M
Clara's hands tremble.

CLARA
Noah...

NOAH
What?

She turns the phone so he can see.

NOAH (CONT'D)
(reads)

"-M."
He looks up, stunned.

NOAH
Mercury.

Tessa's jaw tightens.

TESSA
I thought Mercury was dead.

Clara breathes slowly.

CLARA
So did I.

The truck speeds north as tensions rise.

87. EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DUSK

The old pickup climbs a narrow mountain road, pine trees thick on both sides. Fog creeps low across the asphalt.

A sign passes:

"NORTH RIDGE WILDLIFE PRESERVE - RANGER ACCESS ONLY."

Clara watches the GPS dot blink on Noah's tablet.

CLARA
Twenty-eight miles north.
This is the place.

Tessa checks the side mirror.

TESSA
Road's too quiet.
I don't like quiet.

Noah scans radio chatter—static, broken transmissions.

NOAH

Blue militias are massing near
state lines. Red states put Guard
units on "pre-activation alert."
It's all... converging.

Clara stares out the windshield.

CLARA

So are we.

88. EXT. OLD RANGER STATION - DUSK

The pickup turns a corner—

revealing a run-down RANGER OUTPOST tucked in the trees.

Windows boarded.

Door cracked.

A generator hums faintly.

Tessa kills the engine, listens.

TESSA

One person inside.
Maybe two.
No movement outside.

She raises her rifle.

TESSA (CONT'D)

Clara?
This is your rodeo.

Clara takes a breath, terrified but steady.

CLARA

I go alone.
But I want you close.

Tessa nods, positioning herself at the corner of the
building.

Noah stays with the truck, tablet in hand, breathing fast.

89. EXT. RANGER STATION DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Clara approaches the door.

Her hand trembles as she knocks.

A long silence.

Then—

CLICK.

The door opens an inch.

A face appears in the gap, shadowed.

VOICE

You came.

Clara stiffens.

CLARA

Mercury?

The door opens fully.

MERCURY (early 30s, gender-ambiguous, wiry, exhausted) stands there, alive—but barely.

Hair cropped short.

Eyes wild.

Clothes torn.

Like someone who's been hunted for days.

MERCURY

Get inside.
Before they see you.

Clara steps in.

Tessa tenses but holds position.

90. INT. RANGER STATION - CONTINUOUS

Dim lantern light.

Maps and wires everywhere.

A portable battery array hums in the corner.

Mercury locks three deadbolts, then faces Clara.

MERCURY

You shouldn't have published that
article.

Clara bristles.

CLARA
You told me to.

Mercury shakes his head violently.

MERCURY
I told you to expose the Playbook—
not the Lab.

Clara freezes.

CLARA
Why?
What's the difference?

Mercury backs up, running a hand through shaking hair.

MERCURY
Because the Playbook is a tool.
But Ravenwood—
Ravenwood is the monster that built
it.

Clara looks around the room.

CLARA
Who's running it now?

Mercury stares at her.

MERCURY
You think it's Greer?
Kline?
The GOP?
The Dems?

(beat)

It's all of them.
And none of them.

Clara's pulse quickens.

CLARA
Speak plainly.

Mercury steps closer.

MERCURY
The Lab didn't model the Civil War.
It modeled how to make one
inevitable.

A long, chilled silence.

91. EXT. RANGER STATION - SAME TIME

Tessa listens from outside, hearing muffled voices.

Her eyes scan the treeline.

Something moves.

A reflection?

A lens flare?

A glint from metal?

She stiffens.

TESSA
(tight whisper)
We've got eyes on us.

She signals Noah silently.

92. INT. RANGER STATION - CONTINUOUS

Mercury pulls out a metal case.

Inside:

A STACK OF PAPERS.

Printed logs.

Screenshots.

Model outputs.

All stamped:

"PHASE III - CONTROLLED DISUNION."

Clara's breath catches.

CLARA
We saw that file.
It was locked.

Mercury nods.

MERCURY

Because Phase III hasn't begun yet.
You're in Phase II.

Clara looks sick.

CLARA

What's Phase III?

Mercury hesitates... then hands her a page.

Clara reads it aloud:

CLARA (CONT'D)

"Phase III objective:
Achieve stable division of populace
into two non-interoperable
governance systems..."

She stops.

Eyes wide.

CLARA (CONT'D)

"...with limited conflict,
controlled borders, and permanent
ideological isolation."

She looks at Mercury.

CLARA (CONT'D)

They don't want victory.
They want... separation.
A permanent breakup.

Mercury nods grimly.

MERCURY

Red America.
Blue America.
Forever.

93. EXT. RANGER STATION - CONTINUOUS

Tessa suddenly raises her rifle.

In the trees—

SILENCED INFRARED SCOPES glint.

TESSA

(sharply)
Company!

Noah ducks behind the truck.

NOAH
How many?

TESSA
Two spotters—
No—
Three.
Maybe a fourth up the ridge.

She chambers a round.

TESSA (CONT'D)
They followed us.
Or they followed Mercury.

94. INT. RANGER STATION - CONTINUOUS

Clara hears Tessa's warning.

Mercury grabs Clara's arm.

MERCURY
You have to leave.
Now.

CLARA
I'm not leaving without the truth.

Mercury shoves the Phase III documents into her hands.

MERCURY
Then run with it.

Clara hesitates, torn.

Mercury stares at her with tragic urgency.

MERCURY (CONT'D)
I stayed behind to slow them down.
That was my job.
Your job is different.

Clara's voice cracks.

CLARA
You're coming with me.

Mercury steps back.

MERCURY

No, Clara.
I'm not.

A bullet CRACKS into the window.

Clara flinches.

Mercury smiles sadly.

MERCURY (CONT'D)

Told you.
They see everything.

95. EXT. RANGER STATION - CONTINUOUS

Tessa fires a warning shot into the trees.

TESSA

Move! Move!

Clara bursts from the cabin with Mercury's documents stuffed inside her jacket.

Noah waves her toward the truck.

Bullets silently zip past them—

suppressed, deadly, precise.

Tessa covers them, firing bursts into the brush.

TESSA (CONT'D)

Get in the truck! GO!!

Clara reaches the door—

looks back—

and sees Mercury in the doorway, silhouetted.

Mercury mouths:

"RUN."

96. EXT. RANGER STATION - MOUNTAIN CLEARING - DUSK

Clara sprints toward the pickup truck, clutching the Phase III documents to her chest.

Tessa keeps firing precise, controlled shots toward the tree line, forcing the hidden sniper team to stay down.

Noah yanks open the truck door.

NOAH
Clara! Hurry!

Clara dives into the cab.

Tessa backs toward the truck without turning her back on the threat.

TESSA
(steady, military calm)
One team. Well-trained.
Not militia.
Not amateurs.

She fires again. A suppressed rifle answers.

A bullet slices across her shoulder – she grunts but keeps moving.

97. EXT. RANGER STATION DOORWAY - SAME TIME

Mercury stands in the doorway, framed in fading light.

For a moment, the world slows.

CLARA (FROM THE TRUCK)
Mercury! Get in with us!
Please!

Mercury smiles softly – tired, sad, resolved.

MERCURY
You run the story.
I'll run interference.

Another shot rings out.

Mercury steps fully out onto the porch–

raising their hands as if addressing an unseen jury.

MERCURY (CONT'D)
(to the shooters)
Come on, you cowards.
I'm right here.

Tessa sees what's happening.

TESSA
Mercury— NO!

A single suppressed shot.

Mercury's body jerks—

then collapses.

Clara screams.

98. INT. PICKUP - CONTINUOUS

Clara slams her hand against the dashboard.

CLARA
No! NO!!
They killed them—
They killed—

Tessa dives into the driver's seat, blood trickling down her arm.

TESSA
Seatbelt.
Now.

Noah's hands shake violently.

NOAH
Oh God...
Mercury's dead, Clara.
They're—

Tessa grabs Noah by the shirt.

TESSA
We mourn later.
Right now we MOVE.

She guns the throttle.

99. EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The truck fishtails on gravel, tearing downhill.

Bullets hit the rear panel like hail.

Clara looks out the back window through tears.

Mercury's still form lies on the porch.

Motionless.

Alone.

CLARA (V.O.)
 Mercury didn't die for nothing.
 Mercury died because someone wanted
 them gone. Because they knew
 something bigger than the war...
 bigger than the Playbook... something
 we still hadn't seen.

The truck hits a sharp turn – Clara is thrown back into the moment.

100. EXT. SWITCHBACK ROAD – CONTINUOUS

The mountain curves are tight – deadly.

Tessa drifts the truck through a switchback, tires screaming.

TESSA
 We've got two minutes until those
 shooters reposition.

Noah tries to stabilize his tablet.

NOAH
 I picked up encrypted chatter—
 short-range burst. Three-man recon
 team, rotating flanks.

TESSA
 (eyes narrowing)
 Military-trained.
 Gov?
 Private contractors?

NOAH
 Doesn't match any standard unit I
 know.

Clara wipes her face, shaking, but clutches the Phase III folder.

CLARA
 Whoever they are...
 they knew Mercury was waiting for
 us.

The truck hits another curve.

A CROSSHAIR LASER briefly appears through the back window.

TESSA
(shouts)
DOWN!

Clara drops as a suppressed round shatters the rear glass.

101. EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Tessa throws the truck off the main road, barreling onto a service trail winding dangerously close to the cliff edge.

A DRONE suddenly rises from behind them - black, silent, military-grade.

NOAH
We have a drone!
Heat-seeking!

Clara ducks.

CLARA
How?
How the hell did they lock onto us
so fast?

Tessa snarls, scanning for an escape.

TESSA
Because Mercury was right.
They see everything.

She slams the truck through brush toward a narrow tree-covered cutoff.

The drone follows.

102. EXT. CANYON EDGE - CONTINUOUS

The truck bursts through trees and skids to a stop at the edge of a steep canyon drop.

A hundred-foot plunge.

One wrong move ends them.

Tessa reverses hard -

but the drone blocks the path they came from.

Noah frantically swipes through the tablet.

NOAH

Wait—WAIT—
I think the drone is receiving from
the same network Ravenwood used.
It's linked to the model's
predictive routing.

Tessa looks at him like that's absurd — but she knows better.

TESSA

You're telling me it knew exactly
where we'd run?

NOAH

Down to the GPS coordinate.

Clara grips her seat.

CLARA

Then what do we do?!

Noah looks at her, terrified.

NOAH

We go somewhere the model CAN'T
predict.

Tessa nods slowly.

TESSA

Then buckle in.
This is gonna suck.

She floors it.

Straight toward—

THE TREELINE.

103. EXT. FOREST DROP — CONTINUOUS

The truck CRASHES through thick brush—

Leaves and branches explode around them—

And then—

They DROP.

A steep slope.

Controlled chaos.

The truck slams into dirt, rolls once—

Twice—

Lands on its side with a bone-shaking impact.

Silence.

Except for the faint, distant whirr of the drone searching above the trees.

104. INT. UPENDED TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Clara coughs, upside-down, covered in dirt.

Noah groans, hanging from his seatbelt.

Tessa is conscious, blood on her forehead, but alive.

TESSA
(hoarsely)
Check in.
Everyone okay?

Clara checks the folder — Phase III documents intact.

CLARA
I've got the files.

Noah nods weakly.

NOAH
Then we didn't lose Mercury for
nothing.

They hear footsteps above.

Tessa snaps to attention.

TESSA
They found the crash site.
Move.
Now.

She kicks out the windshield as Clara and Noah crawl out.

105. EXT. FOREST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

They spill into the underbrush, battered but alive.

Above them, distant shadows move along the top of the ridge.

Clara looks back one last time –
 toward where Mercury died –
 and clenches the folder with white-knuckle resolve.

CLARA (V.O.)
 We didn't just survive the ambush.
 We survived something worse:
 Proof that we weren't up against a
 political party... or a military
 unit... or even a president. We were
 up against a plan. A plan that
 wanted America broken.
 Controlled.
 Divided.
 Forever.

106. EXT. FOREST – EVENING

Clara, Noah, and Tessa move through dense pine brush, bruised
 and battered from the crash.

The forest is unnervingly quiet.

NOAH
 (whispering)
 Drones stopped sweeping.

TESSA
 That means they think we're dead.
 Good.
 Let's keep it that way.

Clara lags behind, holding the Phase III folder tight.

Her eyes are red but burning with focus.

CLARA
 Mercury didn't die for a headline.
 We get this out...
 or we die trying.

Tessa glances back at Clara – sees the grief sharpening into
 resolve.

TESSA
 Atta girl.

They continue.

107. EXT. FOREST STREAM - CONTINUOUS

A small stream cuts through the trees.

The group kneels to drink.

Noah splashes his face - he looks haunted.

NOAH

I keep seeing it.
The model predicted everything.
Every movement.
Every choke point.
Every reaction.

Clara crouches beside him.

CLARA

We're not numbers on a chart.
They don't own us.

NOAH

(whispers)
What if they do?

Tessa kneels, scanning the terrain.

TESSA

Hey.
Both of you.
Look at me.

They turn.

TESSA (CONT'D)

I've seen soldiers break in
warzones.

You break when you think the enemy is god.

She taps Clara's chest, then Noah's.

TESSA (CONT'D)

Nobody's a god out here.

Just people with toys.

We can beat people.

Clara nods, gaining her footing.

CLARA

Then we start by making sure
Mercury's sacrifice means
something.

108. EXT. OLD SERVICE TRAIL - NIGHT

The trio follows a narrow trail through heavy fog.

The silence breaks - faint ENGINE HUMS echo through the
trees.

Tessa raises a fist.

They drop into cover.

Two vehicles roll by on the trail below:

A BLACK SUV

followed by

AN ARMORED TRANSPORT VAN

with no markings.

Inside the van - silhouettes of armed operators.

No militia patches.

No state logos.

No political flags.

Just matte-black professionalism.

NOAH

(whispering)

Those aren't Red or Blue.

Clara narrows her eyes.

CLARA

Who the hell are they?

Tessa studies the convoy.

TESSA

Contractors.

Private.

High-level.

(MORE)

TESSA (CONT'D)
The kind that don't have names...
just budgets.

Clara's voice is barely audible.

CLARA
Are they the ones who killed
Mercury?

TESSA
If I had to bet my life?
Yeah.

The vehicles pass and disappear into the night.

109. EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Clara leans against a tree, breath shaking.

CLARA
Greer?
Kline?
Which side do they belong to?

Tessa looks at her.

TESSA
Neither.

Clara frowns.

CLARA
Then who—

Tessa cuts her off.

TESSA
Clara... you need to hear this.
I've seen units like that before.
Never domestic.
Never on home soil.

Noah swallows.

NOAH
So they're foreign?

TESSA
No.

She looks at Clara with a steel-hard certainty.

TESSA (CONT'D)
They're American.
Just not... accountable.

Clara feels the air leave her lungs.

CLARA
Off-book.

Tessa nods.

TESSA
Meaning their job is whatever
someone powerful enough tells them
it is. And their job right now... was
eliminating Mercury.

110. EXT. HUNTING CABIN - NIGHT

A faint light flickers ahead – an old hunting cabin,
abandoned but still standing.

Tessa signals.

TESSA
Shelter.
Maybe supplies.
We move quiet.

They approach cautiously.

Tessa checks the door – unlocked.

She steps inside first, gun ready.

111. INT. HUNTING CABIN - NIGHT

Dust. Cobwebs. Old whiskey bottles.

A cold fireplace.

But it's dry, hidden, and safe enough.

The group collapses into the room, exhausted.

Clara sets the Phase III folder on a table.

CLARA
Okay.
We regroup.
We analyze.
(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)
We publish again.
But smarter.

Noah opens the folder – spreads documents across the table.

He finds an organizational chart:

“PHASE III: GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE”

Arrows diagram two separate political structures:

FEDERAL REPUBLIC – RED

CIVIC COLLECTIVE – BLUE

And under them, a third structure with no name:

“COORDINATION NEXUS – AUTHORIZED ACCESS ONLY”

Clara points.

CLARA
What’s that?
Who runs the Nexus?

Noah scrolls the Ravenwood logs.

Finds a match.

He freezes.

NOAH
Oh my God..

Clara leans in.

CLARA
What?

Tessa stays by the window, listening.

Noah flips the document toward Clara.

A project lead is listed:

PROJECT DIRECTOR: DR. EVELYN SHAW

(FORMER WHITE HOUSE TRANSITION ADVISOR)

Clara stares, horrified.

CLARA

Shaw?
She was supposed to be neutral.
She worked under both parties.
Transitioned between
administrations.

Noah nods grimly.

NOAH

Exactly. She's the perfect
architect... because she never
belonged to Red or Blue.
She belonged to continuity.

A silence falls heavy.

CLARA

So the Civil War isn't the point.
It's the... reconstruction.

NOAH

Two Americas.
Stabilized.
Separated.
Managed.
Forever.

Clara whispers the words like they taste toxic.

CLARA

Controlled Disunion.

112. EXT. HUNTING CABIN - SAME TIME

Outside, in the darkness, a faint click of a radio.

A shadow moves behind a tree.

Listening.

Waiting.

Watching the cabin.

113. INT. HUNTING CABIN - NIGHT

The wind pounds the old wood walls.

Tessa sits by the window, rifle across her lap.

Noah combs through the Phase III files with trembling fingers.

Clara scribbles notes for a new article – this time handwritten, physical, something digital suppression can't erase.

CLARA
(printing words carefully)
"Two Americas... by design.
A war to force a divorce."
This is insanity.
Someone has to read this.

Tessa checks her watch.

TESSA
We've got maybe four hours till
sunrise.
Then we move.

Clara looks up.

CLARA
You think the contractors are still
tracking us?

Tessa doesn't sugarcoat.

TESSA
They know everything we know.
They want us dead.
And Mercury bought us time – not
safety.

Clara's jaw clenches.

CLARA
Then we make their time worth less
than ours.

114. INT. HUNTING CABIN - LATER (NIGHT)

Rain starts hammering the roof.

Noah scrolls through fragments of old Ravenwood communications, eyes wide.

NOAH
Clara...
Look at this.

He turns the tablet toward her.

A private exchange:

SHAW: "Phase II is volatile. That's fine."

OPERATOR: "And casualties?"

SHAW: "Acceptable. They accelerate alignment."

Clara's breath catches.

CLARA

Acceptable casualties.
She's talking about our country
like it's a goddamn lab rat.

A sudden CRACK outside.

Tessa jolts upright.

TESSA

Everyone down.

She kills the lantern with one hand and gets low.

A faint metallic clink outside – like someone stepping on a loose can.

115. EXT. FOREST – SAME TIME

The shadowy figure from earlier moves closer.

He wears night vision goggles, a suppressed pistol, and a small comms unit.

He whispers into the mic.

SHADOW OPERATIVE

(soft)

Target cabin located.
Three signatures inside.
Initiate silent breach?

A cold voice replies through the earpiece:

VOICE (O.S.)

Negative.
We retrieve the folder intact.
No fire inside the structure.
Contain them outside.

The operative nods, drawing a combat knife.

116. INT. HUNTING CABIN - NIGHT

The rain intensifies.

Clara crouches near the fireplace, whispering to Noah.

CLARA
I have to publish something.
Anything.

NOAH
They'll suppress it again-

CLARA
Not if they don't know it's me.

She pulls out an old shortwave radio she found in a cabinet.

Tessa sees it - eyes widen slightly.

TESSA
You know how to operate that?

Clara nods.

CLARA
My dad taught me.
Ham radio saved half the
neighborhood during the '05 fires.

Tessa allows herself a half-smile.

TESSA
Alright, journalist.
Let's commit felonies the analog
way.

117. INT. HUNTING CABIN - FIREPLACE - CONTINUOUS

Clara tunes the radio to a frequency that squeals in static.

CLARA (V.O.)
(noir-like)
"When digital truth dies...
analog breathes."

She begins sending MORSE CODE, tapping out a message with a knife tip.

CLARA
(translating quietly)
"Ravenwood.
Phase Three.
(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)
American partition.
Verified."

Noah listens - stunned.

NOAH
You're broadcasting to every ham
operator in three states.

CLARA

Good.

She continues sending the coded message.

118. EXT. HUNTING CABIN - SAME TIME

The shadow operative stops in his tracks.

He hears the faint Morse signal through his headset - an
unsecured analog frequency.

He curses.

SHADOW OPERATIVE
They're broadcasting.
We're losing the window.

The voice on comms replies:

VOICE (O.S.)
Terminate broadcast.
Move now.

119. INT. HUNTING CABIN - NIGHT

Tessa moves toward the door silently.

TESSA
(getting low)
They're close.

A SNAP of a twig.

She motions Clara and Noah behind furniture.

TESSA (CONT'D)
On my mark.

The handle begins to turn.

One inch.

Two inches.

Tessa's breathing stills.

Her trigger finger tightens.

Then—

BOOM!

A boot kicks the door inward.

The shadow operative lunges inside.

Tessa fires—

The silenced pistol fires—

Two shots.

Three.

Bodies collide in the dark.

Clara screams.

120. INT. HUNTING CABIN - FIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Tessa grapples with the operative — they crash into the table, scattering Phase III pages.

The operative is fast — frighteningly trained.

He slashes Tessa's arm with the knife.

She reverses his grip, elbow to the jaw, knee to the ribs.

 TESSA
 (grunting)
 Come on!
 Come on, you bastard!

He tackles her into the wall — knife raised.

Clara grabs the first thing she finds — a broken fireplace poker — and hurls it.

It hits the operative's wrist mid-strike.

He recoils, knife flying.

Tessa uses the opening —

slams his head into the wooden beam.

The operative collapses.

Still breathing.

Barely.

Clara trembles, staring at the fallen attacker.

CLARA

Is he dead?

Tessa wipes blood from her face.

TESSA

No.

But he's not getting up anytime soon.

Noah gathers the scattered Phase III pages.

NOAH

We have to go.

Now.

His team will know he's down.

Clara nods – fear and resolve sparking at once.

CLARA

Then let's outrun the people predicting our every move.

121. EXT. HUNTING CABIN - NIGHT

The storm grows violent.

The trio slips into the darkness, vanishing into the trees.

Behind them, the cabin light flickers.

The operative lifts his head, blood dripping, whispering into his comm unit:

OPERATIVE

(coughing)

Target escaped.

Phase III documents... with them.

A slow chilling reply:

VOICE (O.S.)
Then activate Phase II escalation.
Let the states burn.

Lightning FLASHES through the forest.

Clara, Noah, and Tessa disappear into the night.

122. EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - NIGHT

The storm pounds through the trees.

Clara, Noah, and Tessa trudge deeper into the pitch-black woods.

Thunder rumbles – but beneath it, something else:

Low BOOMS.

Distant. Repeating.

Like thunder... but wrong.

Clara stops.

CLARA
Do you hear that?

Tessa listens, jaw tightening.

TESSA
Those aren't storms.

Artillery.

Noah's face goes pale.

NOAH
The states aren't...
They wouldn't–

Tessa doesn't let him finish.

TESSA
Someone just crossed a line.

123. EXT. RIDGELINE OVERLOOK - MOMENTS LATER

They climb a rocky bluff overlooking a valley.

Below – the distant glow of a city.

But suddenly—

THE ENTIRE CITY GOES DARK.

Lights flicker—

Strobe—

Die.

Thousands of windows vanish into blackness.

Highways go out.

Digital billboards flatline.

A whole metropolis disappears in one breath.

Clara's mouth falls open.

CLARA

Oh, my God..

Noah's tablet beeps wildly as multiple networks drop offline.

NOAH

That's not a normal blackout.
That's a coordinated kill-switch.

Tessa studies the darkness.

TESSA

EMP?
Grid sabotage?

Before anyone can answer—

A MASSIVE EXPLOSION lights up the sky on the far side of the city.

A glowing orange plume rises.

Car alarms begin echoing up the valley.

CLARA

Someone just hit a city center.

Noah watches raw data scroll on his tablet — emergency nodes.

NOAH

Medical networks... offline.
Power grid... offline.
Traffic control... down.

CLARA
 (whispers)
 This is Phase II escalation.

124. EXT. FOREST TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

They hurry downhill, rain lashing them.

Tessa leads.

NOAH
 We need to get this info out.
 People have to see this.

Clara stops, breath shaking.

CLARA
 No.
 They won't "see" it.
 Networks are being shut down.
 Platforms suppressed.
 Newsrooms compromised.

She clenches her fists.

CLARA (CONT'D)
 We do this our way.

Noah looks up.

NOAH
 Analog?

CLARA
 Analog.

125. EXT. ABANDONED RANGER RADIO TOWER - NIGHT

Through trees, a rusted radio tower stands crooked, half-collapsed.

An old concrete shack sits at its base.

Clara points.

CLARA
 There.
 If that transmitter still works...

Tessa studies it.

TESSA
It's a dinosaur.
Might only cover fifty miles.

CLARA
Then fifty miles get the truth.

Tessa nods.

TESSA
Let's go.

126. INT. TRANSMITTER SHACK - NIGHT

Dust. Rotting paper.

A dead console covered in spiderwebs.

Clara wipes it down, starts checking components.

Noah opens a junction box.

NOAH
Some circuits are intact...

Power grid's dead, though.

Clara points at an emergency battery unit.

CLARA
These run separately.
If any charge is left-

He flips a switch.

FIZZ... CRACK...
The console flickers to life.

A faint carrier wave hums.

Clara lights up.

CLARA
Yes... YES!

She grabs an old mic.

127. INT. TRANSMITTER SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Clara speaks softly, voice shaking with fury and purpose.

CLARA

This is an independent broadcast...
to anyone listening...
to anyone left who can hear.
Your city didn't go dark by
accident.
This was planned.

Noah pushes printed Phase III pages toward her.

She reads from them.

CLARA (CONT'D)

"Phase II: Escalatory
destabilization.
Objective: accelerate conditions
for national disunion."
End quote.

Her voice breaks with emotion.

CLARA (CONT'D)

This isn't a political failure.
It's a blueprint.

She leans into the mic.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Two Americas.
By design.
By people who never asked you.
Who think you don't deserve a
choice.

Noah watches her, awestruck.

She looks into the mic like staring down history.

CLARA (CONT'D)

If you can hear this...
tell someone.
Tell everyone.
The Civil War isn't coming.
It's being engineered.

128. EXT. TRANSMITTER SHACK - SAME TIME

Tessa stands guard at the doorway under pouring rain.

Her eyes sharpen.

In the trees -

movement.

One shape.

Two.

Three.

They're closing in.

TESSA
(sharp)
We've got shadows!
Two o'clock!

129. INT. TRANSMITTER SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Clara keeps broadcasting.

CLARA
Your enemies aren't red or blue.
Your enemies are the people telling
you to choose a side.

The signal meter spikes red.

NOAH
Someone's triangulating the
broadcast!

Clara grips the mic harder.

CLARA
Listen to me—
The war is the mechanism—
not the outcome—

A GUNSHOT blasts through the window, shattering glass.

Tessa fires back.

TESSA
Clara! We're done!
MOVE!

Clara hits the cutoff switch, ripping the drive from the transmitter.

130. EXT. TRANSMITTER SHACK - NIGHT

Tessa unleashes suppressive fire into the woods.

Shadows scatter.

Noah and Clara sprint from the shack, ducking gunfire.

Lightning slices the sky.

Tessa backs up, firing.

TESSA

Go!

Go!

GO!

The three vanish into the forest—

armed contractors swarming in behind them—

As the radio tower crackles its last fading signal across the darkened miles.

131. EXT. DEEP FOREST - NIGHT

Clara, Noah, and Tessa stumble through the rain-soaked darkness.

Gunfire echoes behind them.

Shouted commands.

Flashlights slicing across trees like lightning.

Tessa presses a hand against her bleeding arm but keeps moving.

TESSA

(urgent whisper)

Keep low.

Keep quiet.

They're trying to herd us.

Noah slips on wet leaves. Clara catches him.

CLARA

Noah—stay with me.

He nods, breathing in ragged fear.

Suddenly—

A DRONE'S RED EYE flickers through the canopy overhead.

Tessa shoves them into the brush.

TESSA

Down.
Down NOW.

The drone hums, scanning.

Then—

A distant BOOM goes off somewhere in the valley.

The drone pivots sharply and flies away.

Noah frowns.

NOAH

Why'd it change direction?

Tessa listens.

Another BOOM.

And another.

TESSA

Because they've got bigger problems
than us.

132. EXT. FOREST RIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

The trio reaches a ridge overlooking the same darkened city
from earlier.

But now—

multiple fireballs erupt across the skyline.

At least six explosions.

A chain reaction.

Clara stares, horrified.

CLARA

That's... that's coordinated.
Those aren't random gas lines.

Noah watches the city's emergency networks collapse on his
tablet.

NOAH

Hospitals are offline.
Water pressure dead.
Cell networks failing..

He looks up slowly.

NOAH (CONT'D)
This is systematic infrastructure
failure.

Tessa wipes rain from her eyes.

TESSA
Someone just kicked out the spine
of a city.

133. EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Their tablets buzz simultaneously - all three.

Despite the blackout, a text alert forces its way through.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY BROADCAST SYSTEM

"ACTIVE TERROR EVENT IN NORTHERN TERRITORY.

PERPETRATORS BELIEVED TO BE BLUE ZONE MILITANTS."

Clara's anger erupts.

CLARA
Bullshit!
We were just broadcasting-
this is their cover story!

Tessa clenches her jaw.

TESSA
They're framing the Blue Zones.
They want retaliation.

Noah breathes shakily.

NOAH
If Blue governors think Red
contractors blew up the grid-
they'll mobilize.

Clara shakes her head.

CLARA
Model Alpha is pushing escalation.
This is Phase II becoming
irreversible.

134. EXT. OLD LOGGING ROAD - LATER

They follow a narrow logging road through pine shadows.

Clara keeps checking behind them, paranoid.

Noah's tablet pings—

a bootstrap analog relay picking up reactions to Clara's broadcast.

Voices from ham operators in scattered states:

HAM #1 (STATIC)
 "...heard talk of a government plan
 to split the country..."

HAM #2 (STATIC)
 "...Phase Three? Partition? Anyone
 confirm..."

HAM #3 (STATIC)
 "...clipped transmission... reporter
 warning about a blueprint..."

Clara stops walking.

Her eyes widen.

This is the first moment of hope she's had in hours.

CLARA
 People heard me.

Noah nods.

NOAH
 Not many—but enough for it to
 spread.

Tessa checks her surroundings.

TESSA
 Good.
 Now we just need to not die before
 morning.

135. EXT. RUSTED WATER TOWER - NIGHT

They approach a rusted water tower rising from an overgrown clearing.

Tessa signals a halt.

TESSA

We camp here.
It's high ground.
One entrance.
And metal reflects thermal scans.

They slip under the structure.

Clara sinks to her knees, clutching the Phase III folder.

CLARA

I can't stop seeing Mercury.

Tessa kneels beside her.

TESSA

Mercury made a choice.
A hard one.
But not a wasted one.

Clara's voice breaks.

CLARA

If we don't stop this...
the whole country becomes Mercury.

Tessa rests a steady hand on her shoulder.

TESSA

Then don't stop.
Survive.

136. INT. WATER TOWER UNDERSTRUCTURE - LATER

Noah sits with the tablet, trying to stabilize the last saved portion of Clara's broadcast.

Clara wraps her jacket tighter, trembling from shock and cold.

Suddenly-

Noah stiffens.

NOAH

Clara...
you need to see this.

He turns the screen around.

A secret encrypted message is blinking on an unsecured relay.

"DO NOT LET THEM SEAL THE BORDER.

PHASE II COMPLETES WITH SEPARATION.

PHASE III ACTIVATES AFTER."

-E.S.

Clara's breath stops cold.

CLARA

E.S...
Evelyn Shaw.

Tessa mutters a curse.

TESSA

She's sending warnings?
Why the hell would Shaw warn us?

Noah zooms in.

NOAH

It came from the Nexus line.
Encrypted.
But real.

Clara's mind races.

CLARA

If Shaw is warning us--
then someone worse is pushing the
escalation.

Tessa rewinds.

TESSA

Or Shaw's losing control of the
monster she built.

Lightning flashes again - illuminating a figure in the trees.

Tessa raises her weapon instantly.

TESSA (CONT'D)

(sharp whisper)
We've got a tail!

137. EXT. WATER TOWER CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

A lone figure runs through the trees - stumbling, terrified.

Clara steps forward.

CLARA

Wait—
They're not armed.

The figure emerges into the clearing—
A young woman, soaked, bruised, terrified.
She collapses.
Clara rushes to catch her.

WOMAN

(weak, gasping)
Please...
please help me...

Tessa covers them, weapon raised.

TESSA

Who are you?
Who sent you?

The woman coughs, blood on her lips.
She grips Clara's jacket.

WOMAN

I... I heard your broadcast...
You were right...
They're coming...

CLARA

Who's coming?

The woman's eyes widen with absolute terror.

WOMAN

Everyone.

She passes out.

Thunder cracks overhead.

Clara and Tessa exchange a dark look.

Noah stares at the unconscious woman.

NOAH

Then the war starts tonight.

138. INT. WATER TOWER UNDERSTRUCTURE - NIGHT

Rain batters the clearing.

The unconscious YOUNG WOMAN lies wrapped in an emergency blanket.

Clara tries to warm her hands.

Tessa keeps her weapon trained outward.

Noah's tablet flickers with unstable emergency signals.

NOAH

There's a surge of chatter...
from militia channels... governors...
even National Guard bands.

Tessa looks up sharply.

TESSA

National Guard?

NOAH

Yeah.
Multiple states are breaking
command.
Some are refusing federal orders.

Tessa exhales like she knew this day would come.

TESSA

That's how it starts.
Command fractures.
Chain of authority collapses.
Loyalties split.

Clara listens, horrified.

CLARA

Red vs. Blue...
it's finally happening.

Tessa looks her dead in the eye.

TESSA

It doesn't "happen," Clara.
Someone wants it.

139. EXT. WATER TOWER CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

The Young Woman jolts awake - gasping.

Clara kneels.

CLARA
Hey-hey, you're safe.
What's your name?

The woman looks around frantically.

WOMAN
My name's Emily.
I'm- I'm from Carson Ridge.
They burned the whole town.

Clara blinks.

CLARA
Who did?

Emily shakes in terror.

EMILY
I... I don't know.
They wore Red patches...
but they were too organized.
Too professional.

Tessa sits upright.

TESSA
Describe them.

Emily tries.

EMILY
Black gear.
No names.
No insignias.
Just red armbands.
Like... added on.

Tessa curses under her breath.

TESSA
Contractors.
Using Red colors to provoke
retaliation.

Clara feels sick.

CLARA
They're staging atrocities...
to make each side think it's the
other.

Noah scrolls through breaking chatter.

NOAH

Blue militias are already
mobilizing. They think Carson Ridge
was an attack.

Tessa looks grim.

TESSA

And once Blue hits back, Red
governors will call it open
rebellion.

A long silence.

Emily whispers:

EMILY

It's... it's already happening.

140. EXT. FOREST ROAD - PRE-DAWN

A faint glow appears on the horizon - not the sun.

Fire.

The trio moves quickly, Emily supported by Clara.

Noah checks his tablet again.

NOAH

Five states have called emergency
sessions. Three declared federal
overreach. Two just ordered
National Guard units to stand down.

Tessa sighs.

TESSA

There it is.

The fracture line.

Clara stops walking.

CLARA

We need to warn them.

Governors, press, anyone.

Noah looks at her helplessly.

NOAH

Clara... the networks are down.
And once Phase III hits—

Clara cuts him off.

CLARA

No.
Not yet.
We still have time before they
initiate Phase III.
We still don't know what it is.

Emily, weak but determined, speaks:

EMILY

I overheard something... the men who
destroyed my town... they said Phase
III was "the detonation event."

Everyone freezes.

CLARA

Detonation?

Like bombs—?

Emily shakes her head.

EMILY

No.
Not bombs.
They said it would "shatter the
map."

The words hit Clara like ice down her spine.

141. INT. ABANDONED HIGHWAY TUNNEL - DAWN

The group slips into an old service tunnel beneath an
abandoned highway bridge.

They set Emily down on a crate.

Noah spreads the Phase III pages across the concrete floor.

Clara kneels beside him.

NOAH

Every section of this Playbook
assumes total national fracture.
But there's one missing chapter.
Section IV.

Clara flips through the pages.

CLARA
Phase Four?

NOAH
It should be the stabilization
phase— what happens after the
split. But it's missing.

Tessa kneels.

TESSA
So Shaw didn't write that part?

Noah shakes his head with dread.

NOAH
No.
She wrote the first three.
The fourth wasn't written by her.

Clara's eyes widen.

CLARA
Then who—

Noah turns a page.

A signature line:

"PHASE IV - APPROVED BY: DIRECTIVE AUTHORITY"
(Name Omitted)
Clara stares.

CLARA (CONT'D)
What the hell does that mean?

Noah swallows.

NOAH
It means Shaw didn't want to reveal
who was really running this.
Someone above her.
Someone in the shadows.

Tessa looks between them.

TESSA
Which means Shaw's warning wasn't
betrayal.
It was regret.

Clara connects the dots — horrified.

CLARA
Shaw tried to stop it.

Noah nods.

NOAH
But whoever approved Phase IV...
they want the country shattered.
Permanently.

Emily whispers:

EMILY
You have to stop them.

142. EXT. FOREST BLUFF - SUNRISE

The team climbs out of the tunnel, emerging onto a rocky bluff.

Below them -

two armored columns of militias race down parallel highways:
Blue-state militia trucks with makeshift armored plating
Red-state militiamen wearing tactical gear and waving colors
Both sides closing in on a border town.

Clara's stomach drops.

CLARA
Oh God...

NOAH
They're going to collide.

Tessa watches with a soldier's dread.

TESSA
This is it.
First interstate engagement.

A lone helicopter hovers overhead - unmarked black.

Clara sees it and steps forward.

CLARA
They're watching.
They WANT this to happen.

The two militia lines close in-

Shouts—

Gunpoint confrontations—

Then—

The first shot.

A single crack.

Followed by a wall of fire.

Gunfire erupts.

Molotovs arc through the air.

Trucks ram each other.

Chaos spills across the border.

Clara's voice shatters.

CLARA (CONT'D)

STOP!

Please—STOP!

But nobody can hear.

Tessa pulls Clara back.

TESSA

It's done.

The war just started.

Clara collapses to her knees, shaking, watching Americans kill each other.

Tessa crouches beside her.

TESSA (CONT'D)

Now you know what we're fighting
for.

Not sides.

Not states.

People.

And the truth.

Clara stares out at the burning border.

CLARA

Then we bring this truth to the
world..
or we die trying.

143. EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - NIGHT

The burning border town below is now a chaotic smear of fire,
tracers, and smoke.

Clara, Tessa, Noah, and the survivor Emily move up the pass,
away from the clash.

National Guard helicopters roar overhead – not helping either
side, just watching.

Clara's voice trembles.

CLARA

How many more towns go up before
people realize this isn't politics..
it's a takeover?

TESSA

Enough towns burn, nobody cares
about who started it.
Just who'll stop it.

Clara looks at her.

CLARA

Then we find Shaw.

144. INT. ABANDONED OBSERVATORY - DAWN

The observatory sits cracked and lonely on a ridge.

Its dome is half collapsed, but power lines still run to a
basement.

Tessa picks the lock.

They descend the stairs.

Noah powers a dusty terminal.

He hacks into a federal transition archive – long abandoned.

NOAH

If Shaw left a footprint... it'll be
here.

Clara studies a map, tracing connections:

Red Zones.

Blue Zones.

Federal agencies.

Corporate contractors.

Private intelligence firms.

Something clicks.

CLARA

The Playbook wasn't Shaw's idea...
It was her assignment.

Noah finds something.

NOAH

Clara...
You need to see this.

He turns the monitor – an old personnel file:

DIRECTIVE AUTHORITY: DAVID MARLOWE

Undersecretary of Strategic Continuity

Presidential Line of Succession, #12

Clara goes ice cold.

CLARA

Marlowe...
He was supposed to be a neutral
continuity figure.

Tessa shakes her head.

TESSA

Neutral people are the most
dangerous.

Nobody watches them.

Noah scrolls.

He finds a video file.

145. INT. OBSERVATORY - ARCHIVE VIDEO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The video plays.

SHAW sits at a private desk. She looks gaunt, terrified.

SHAW (VIDEO)
(to the camera)
If anyone finds this...
I tried to stop it.
Phase I was supposed to be
resilience modeling.
Phase II - response analysis.
But Marlowe...
he weaponized everything.

She breathes, trembling.

SHAW (CONT'D)
Phase III is not a governance
architecture.
It's a reset.
And Phase IV...
Phase IV is the severance event.

Tessa freezes.

TESSA
Severance?

Shaw leans close to the camera.

SHAW (VIDEO)
He doesn't want two Americas.
He wants none.
He wants a national collapse so
deep that a single shadow
government can "save" what remains.

Clara steps back in horror.

CLARA
Marlowe...
He's engineering the war to step in
as the savior.

Shaw begins crying.

SHAW
(to camera)
If you're watching this...
don't let him destroy us.
Find the Nexus server.
Expose the truth.

The video ends.

Silence.

Tessa breaks it first.

TESSA

Where do we find Marlowe?

Noah switches to the final file: a facility list.

NOAH

There.

The Nexus server.

Deep inside a federal continuity
bunker.

Clara steels herself.

CLARA

Then that's where this ends.

146. EXT. FEDERAL CONTINUITY BUNKER - NIGHT

A reinforced mountain facility.

Patrolled by armed contractors.

Drones everywhere.

Tessa surveys through binoculars.

TESSA

This is suicide.

Clara steps beside her.

CLARA

Not if we go in quiet.

Tessa half-smiles.

TESSA

I don't do quiet.

147. INT. BUNKER ACCESS TUNNEL - NIGHT

They break in through a maintenance shaft.

Tessa leads with military precision.

Clara and Noah carry only what they need:

The Playbook.

Shaw's video.

The evidence.

Emily stays outside in a safe location – wounded but alive.

148. INT. NEXUS OPERATIONS HALL - NIGHT

A cavernous, humming chamber.

Servers glow.

Maps of America flicker with real-time militia movements.

And at the center:

DAVID MARLOWE
calm, polished, in a crisp suit.

He turns as Clara emerges from the shadows.

MARLOWE
Clara. You've made quite the mess.

Clara steps forward, trembling but fearless.

CLARA
You turned Americans against each other.

MARLOWE
No.

I simply removed barriers and watched them choose.

Clara's eyes fill with rage.

CLARA
No one chose this.

MARLOWE
Of course they did.
Fear chooses.
Hatred chooses.
People only need a little...
encouragement.

He gestures to the screens.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

And now?
Now they're begging for order.

His smile is chilling.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

And I will give it to them.

149. INT. NEXUS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Tessa fires at the guards.

Noah races to the main console.

Clara confronts Marlowe.

CLARA

You detonated cities.
You murdered civilians.

MARLOWE

Collateral.
In any rebirth, there are
casualties.

Clara steps closer.

CLARA

You'll never get away with it.

Marlowe laughs.

MARLOWE

My Dear.
I'm not getting away with anything.
I'm saving a nation that begged to
die.

Clara sees it:

He truly believes he's a messiah.

Noah shouts from the console.

NOAH

Clara!
There's a direct broadcast link!
Nationwide analog override!
We can send everything -
Shaw's confession, the Playbook,
everything!

Marlowe pulls a pistol.

MARLOWE

No...
You will do nothing.

Tessa dives, colliding with Marlowe.

The gun discharges, sparks flying.

Clara races to Noah.

CLARA

Send it!
Send ALL of it!

Noah uploads.

Marlowe breaks free, aims at Noah.

Tessa fires –

Marlowe takes a bullet to the shoulder.

MARLOWE

(rage)
I AM THE FUTURE!

Clara grabs the broadcast mic.

She stops shaking.

She speaks.

150. INT. NEXUS HALL – NATIONWIDE BROADCAST – CONTINUOUS

CLARA

(to America)
This is Clara Reyes.
Everything happening to you...
the war...
the sabotage...
the atrocities...
She lifts the Playbook.

CLARA (CONT'D)

It was planned.
By the man running this bunker.
By the people hiding behind you.
Behind your fears.
Behind your flags.

She uploads Shaw's confession.

Screens across the country begin showing the truth.
Videos.
Files.
Maps.
Orders.
Everything.

CLARA (CONT'D)
You are not each other's enemies.
You are being manipulated.
Separated. Divided...so that you
would beg for a tyrant.

Marlowe screams in fury.

MARLOWE
CUT THE SIGNAL!

Tessa keeps guards pinned.
Noah locks the systems.
Clara holds the mic close.

CLARA
Choose truth.
Choose unity.
Choose each other... before someone
else chooses for you.

151. EXT. AMERICA - INTERCUT

The broadcast hits:
Red militias pause mid-fire.
Blue militias freeze.
Governors watch in shock.
Families stare at screens.
Soldiers lower their weapons.
The country sees the Playbook.
The hoax attacks.

The staged atrocities.

The manipulation.

A nation breathes – furious, wounded, awakened.

152. INT. NEXUS HALL – FINAL

Marlowe reaches for a fail-safe.

MARLOWE

If I can't save this country..
I will erase it!

Clara lunges, slamming his hand away.

The fail-safe misfires – detonating the servers.

Fire erupts.

Tessa grabs Clara.

TESSA

We're done!
MOVE!

The team flees as the bunker collapses in flames.

Marlowe disappears in the smoke.

153. EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE – DAWN

Clara, Tessa, Noah, and Emily emerge from a backup exit tunnel as the bunker explodes behind them.

Fireball.

Smoke.

Silence.

Below them–

American militias begin withdrawing.

Emergency cease-fires spread.

Governors issue joint statements.

The war ends before it begins.

Clara watches the sunrise.

CLARA
(stunned)
Did we... actually stop it?

Tessa smirks.

TESSA
You did.
Journalist.

Noah stands beside her, proud.

Emily takes Clara's hand.

EMILY
They heard you.
All of them.

Clara breathes in the dawn air – exhausted, shaking, alive.

The great divide isn't healed.

But it stopped widening.

For now.

FADE OUT.

THE GREAT DIVIDE