

NATURE FORCE

Written by

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FADE IN:

**EXT. FIELD - DAY**

DEAD ANIMALS. Saiga antelope, sprawled as far as the horizon upon a sea of green.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Black specks dot a sun-scorched earth. DEAD BIRDS.

NEWSCASTER #2 (V.O.)  
-- in the middle of migration  
across the southwest United States  
in late 2020. Hummingbirds, geese,  
sparrows, and swallows were all  
reported among those found dead --

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A beautiful vista. For a moment, we're looking at a couple of SILHOUETTES walking on white sand.

Wait, no. Not white sand. It's fish. DEAD FISH. Thousands of them.

And those silhouettes are TWO VERY CONCERNED LOCALS.

NEWSCASTER #3 (V.O.)  
-- with at least 40 tons of dead fish washing ashore in Lebanon in early 2021. Scientists say, such extreme weather conditions will become more frequent and intense as climate change, driven by humans burning fossil fuels, wreaks havoc on our animal and human populations.

INT. ALISSA'S OFFICE - DAY

A room in the Russell Senate Office Building bustling with harried senate staff.

We focus on Senator ALISSA RICHARDS, an attractive African-American woman, 35-45. She's stooped over the computer of an INTERN.

KYLE, preppy, an Ivy Leaguer, male, early twenties, approaches them.

KYLE  
Senator?

Alissa looks up and around at him, noticing his expression. Not good news.

ALISSA  
What is it, Kyle?

KYLE  
You should see this.

He turns and points a remote at the television on the wall and UNMUTES it.

CUT TO:

INSERT - CLOSE ANGLE - TV

A REPORTER (female, 29) in mid-cast:

REPORTER  
(on screen)  
-- historic moment, President Castor announces the formal withdrawal of the United States from the international climate change agreement.

Now the screen cuts to an image of President GARY CASTOR, an imposing figure in his mid-to-late 60s, standing behind a podium in the middle of a press conference.

CASTOR  
(on screen)  
The Paris Climate Accords have been detrimental to our economy for far too long. We are abiding by them, but China, our biggest competitor, has to do nothing until far into the future, after they've surpassed us as the number one economy.  
(MORE)

CASTOR (CONT'D)

I believe our withdrawal from this agreement will go a long way in lifting the burdens put on our growth and continuing American prosperity!

BACK TO:

INT. ALISSA'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Alissa reacts as she watches the news report -- she's pissed.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE ROSE GARDEN - DAY

AMANDA CASTOR, an adorable 6-year-old, laughs as her little feet carry her across the lawn. She is the president's granddaughter.

SANDY, President Castor's dog, a gold-and-white collie, lopes along behind her.

VERONICA (O.S.)

Amanda.

(beat)

Amanda!

Now Amanda stops running. She turns to see VERONICA CASTOR, the president's beautiful 36-year-old daughter who is Amanda's mother, trucking across the green.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

(motioning for her)

Come on! Your grandpa is almost finished.

Amanda looks at Sandy. The dog's tail wags excitedly. They both take off in Veronica's direction.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE WEST COLONNADE - MOMENTS LATER

Castor and his ENTOURAGE are leaving the press briefing room, making their way along the colonnade.

Amanda and Sandy come in on a whirlwind, cutting them off.

Castor smiles when he sees them.

CASTOR

There she is!

He goes to one knee and Amanda flies to him, wrapping her arms around his neck, Sandy right next to her.

Castor scratches at Sandy's head and stands up.

CASTOR (CONT'D)

(to Veronica)

How is that husband of yours we never see? Still working on that big legal case?

VERONICA

He's fine, dad. Yeah, he's still working on that case.

Now he's moving again, his entourage following, Sandy trotting along beside him.

We hold on this image: Castor, Amanda, Sandy, and Veronica together.

TED (V.O.)

Now, if you would, let's turn to look at methods of tracking greenhouse gas emissions.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Dr. TED SORENSEN, looking every bit the quirky, 50-something intellectual that he is, sits behind a desk at the front of the classroom. He's looking out at a sea of blank slate faces.

SUPER: UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

A hand shoots up from somewhere in the midst of that sea. Ted doesn't see it, too busy fidgeting with his computer and the PowerPoint presentation.

STUDENT

(hand waving)

Dr. Sorenson?

TED

Hmm?

(looking up)

I'm sorry, who's that?

STUDENT

Back here.

TED  
(clocking the hand)  
Oh...  
(beat)  
Remind me your name?

STUDENT  
Lana.

TED  
Yes, Lana. That's right. Go ahead.

LANA  
Are you going to talk about the president's withdrawal from the climate agreement?

Ted sits back in his chair. He peels off his glasses and massages the indentations on the bridge of his nose.

TED  
Well, it wasn't on the agenda for today's class --

LANA  
With all due respect professor, you're one of the foremost experts on climate change. I mean, you helped draft the Paris Climate Accords. I think we're all interested in what you have to say.

TED  
Okay, if you insist.  
(beat)  
I think the president has made a blunder of historic proportions. And not only for the humans on this planet, but for all the other glorious creatures we share it with. These wonderful animals who have been suffering and facing existential threats by our hands for far too long. We can do better, folks!

Those blank slate faces register what he's saying, and off this we hear --

HOST (V.O.)  
Now please, everyone, let's give a warm welcome to our next guest, Dr. Clarissa Waverly!

Applause and the music begins to build and we --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TALK SHOW SET - DAY

A BAND blares into an intro segment. A wall panel slides open and CLARISSA WAVERLY, an attractive intellectual, 35-45, steps onto stage.

She crosses to the chair next to the HOST (male, 40s). They exchange smiles and a light hug and take their seats.

HOST  
(way too excited)  
Welcome, welcome, welcome, Dr.  
Waverly.

CLARISSA  
It's good to be here, thank you.

The host holds up a BOOK. He aims the cover toward one of the cameras covering the segment.

HOST  
For those of you who don't know,  
Dr. Waverly is a world-class  
veterinarian, the president of the  
Animal Rights Association, and a  
leading expert in the field of  
animal psychology.  
(to Clarissa)  
Is that even a real thing?

CLARISSA  
I can assure you it is.

HOST  
(back to camera)  
Her book "Animal Intelligence,"  
which I have here, is a bestseller,  
and you should all read it.  
(back to Clarissa)  
So, Dr. Waverly, let's get into  
this for just a minute. It's your  
theory that animals have more  
intelligence than we realize --  
that they actually have  
sophisticated emotions -- that they  
grieve when they lose a loved one --  
that they have compassion for  
others.

CLARISSA

That's right. They feel and think and communicate. They have not only physical, but emotional needs too. There are numerous examples in my book of animals exhibiting enormous intelligence beyond what humans would ever believe. And they constantly tell us things, if we would just take the time and have the patience and compassion to listen.

HOST

So, you know, my neighbor has this cat that likes to come and sit on my windowsill when I've got the TV on. His name is Elvis.

CLARISSA

Oh, I love it.

HOST

Yeah, Elvis is cute as can be. But what you're suggesting is that Elvis can watch the television, for example, and understand what he's watching?

CLARISSA

(chuckling)

Well, it's entirely possible.

(beat)

Have you seen the videos of the elephant that can paint, or how birds and humans communicate with each other to find bees nests filled with honey? And then of course there's the famous gorilla, Koko, who could understand and communicate more than two thousand English words in sign language.

She gives the camera a small smile.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)

Like I said, it's pretty amazing.

And off her smiling face we --

CUT TO:

## EXT. SHORELINE - DUSK

Above the ocean waters, the setting sun burns up the skies. A beached WHALE CARCASS rocks gently with the rising tide.

## SUPER: SOUTH AFRICAN COASTLINE

Now we see that this dead whale is not the only one. This is a MASS MARINE ANIMAL STRANDING event.

In the distance, silhouetted against the torched horizon -- a majestic GIRAFFE. This is GIRO (soft "g," short "i"), male, age 8. (Giraffes live to be 20 to 28 years old).

We hear the screech of a HARPY EAGLE, a powerful bird of prey that can weigh up to 20 pounds, soaring overhead. This is HARPY, female, age 8. (Harpy eagles live 25 to 35 years). And suddenly we're following her along the beach.

Harpy glides along until she touches down gently on Giro's back. They both look out over the shoreline of the dead.

There, emerging from the watery graveyard, are TWO WALRUSES. The first, an older creature with long tusks. This is WOLLIE, male, age 25. (Walruses live for approximately 40 years. Adult walruses weigh 2200 pounds). The second, younger walrus is his son, WILLY, male, age 10.

They make their way up the shoreline to join the giraffe and the eagle.

GIRO

(re: the dead whales)

Look at them.

(beat)

When I was a calf, I lost my mother and most of our herd due to a heat wave caused by the fossil fuels humans like to use. We lost our vegetation, our food supply. I watched them all starve to death.

A single tear rolls down his snout.

They all regard the dead animals.

WOLLIE

(sullen)

I lost my wife, Willy's mother, along with my brother and many others. They died in a stampede to get on the beach because the climate change caused the loss of stable sea ice.

HARPY

(emotional)

My precious baby daughter was killed when the temperatures caused a forest fire to burn so intensely and spread so fast that the whole flock she was in, burned to death while they were asleep, before they could escape.

The sound of STATIC breaks into the conversation. They all look around.

Next to one of the carcasses, half-buried in the sand beneath some wood and rubble, is an old TRANSISTOR RADIO. Willy, already next to it, uses his flipper to scrape it free of the sand.

As its antenna clears, a news report comes crackling over the speakers.

RADIO REPORT (V.O.)

-- appears that President Castor is resolute --

(static)

-- decision to pull out of the Paris Climate Change Agreement --

The broadcast dissolves into static.

The faces of the animals fall, looks of forlorn and resignation.

Giro bows his head, tightly closes his eyes in anger.

GIRO

That's the last straw.

(beat, thinking)

We have to do something about this.

WOLLIE

What can we do? This is our fate.

We will all just die off. That's it. Forget about it, Giro.

HARPY

(sympathetic)

He's right, Giro. There's nothing we can do.

Giro lowers his head in agreement and resignation. Then, suddenly, his eyes snap open. He looks up at them.

GIRO

No...

(beat)

No, wait. I have an idea. It's a crazy idea, but hear me out.

Wollie and Harpy exchange looks. Finally, they nod. Go on.

GIRO (CONT'D)

We all know that different species of animals have incredible powers. If we were ever to unite -- all of us -- against a common threat...

HARPY

What are you suggesting Giro?

GIRO

That we organize the different species of animals and get these humans. Eat them alive.

HARPY

We can't kill all the humans, Giro.  
That's crazy!

WILLY

They deserve it.

Wollie glares at his son -- watch your mouth.

WOLLIE

Harpy is right, Giro. There is a balance in nature. To eliminate every human is to destabilize the entire planet.

(beat)

But I agree, something has to be done...

He thinks for a long moment.

WOLLIE (CONT'D)

Perhaps...

HARPY

What are you thinking, Wollie?

He takes a breath before responding.

WOLLIE

We do limited but targeted strikes. We attack soft, vulnerable targets.

(MORE)

WOLLIE (CONT'D)

Hit them where they live, where they play. We attack them in different ways. Unlike what Giro is proposing, we have a higher purpose. Our purpose is not to wipe them out.

(beat)

We must attack them into submission, until they stop causing our suffering, the destruction of our habitat, the loss of our food and water supply -- our extinction.

(beat)

Just like their military, we will use the different species of animals to attack them from the land, air and sea.

Giro paws the sand with his hoof in eager anticipation.

GIRO

Then I will give the order. Every animal that moves upon the land will mobilize against the human plague. Harpy, you will lead the animals from the air. Wollie, you will lead them from the seas.

HARPY

But many humans will be slaughtered.

GIRO

(heated)

If we do nothing, we will all be dead!

WOLLIE

Please, you both have valid points. We must take action only for the limited purpose I mentioned. And we must be smart. Humans have technology, innovations, advanced weaponry that we do not. If we are careless, many animals will die.

HARPY

Then what do you suggest?

WOLLIE

We must plan carefully. Strategize. Employ tactics. They underestimate us. That is our greatest advantage.

(MORE)

## WOLLIE (CONT'D)

But, perhaps more than anything, we will need an envoy, one special human to speak on our behalf, to convey our plight and our demands. Someone that has great empathy for animals, respects them, understands them. Someone who appreciates our intelligence, emotions, and our right to co-exist on this planet.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARISSA'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A room lit only by scented candles. A CAT lounges on the bed, her paw wrapped in gauze.

The bathroom door opens, light spills in, steam rolls across the floor.

Clarissa emerges from the bathroom in a bathrobe, her hair wrapped in a towel. The cat looks up at her as she crosses to the nightstand where there's a GLASS next to a BOTTLE OF TEQUILA.

She picks up the bottle, pours some into the glass, and glances over at the cat.

As she sits the bottle down again, she sits down on the edge of the bed.

Clarissa picks up the cat, gently examines the wrapped paw. A tear glistens in her eye.

CLARISSA

(softly)

How can people be so cruel to animals.

(gently petting the cat)

You're going to be okay, my precious.

She picks up the glass of tequila and takes a long drink.

BACK TO:

EXT. SHORELINE - DUSK - SAME TIME

Harpy cocks her head, thinking. After a moment:

HARPY

I have someone in mind. Someone I think would be willing.

WOLLIE

And who is that?

HARPY

A Dr. Clarissa Waverly. She's the head of the Animal Rights Association. And a veterinarian, I might add.

GIRO

Well, what makes her so special?

Harpy crosses to a nearby backpack on the sand and with her wings, opens it and pulls out Clarissa's book on animal intelligence. She holds it in her wings, turns it to the back cover.

There's a picture of Clarissa there, and some complimentary short quotes. She shows it to Wollie (and Willy, who sneaks in close for a peek). Wollie nods and perches his lips together, impressed.

Harpy flies it up to Giro who skims the quotes, then nods in agreement.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAVANNA - NIGHT

Giro has mobilized the creatures of the savanna: gorillas, elephants, wildebeest, lions, leopards, hyenas, and others.

He's standing before them, loudly proclaiming:

GIRO

We will muster on the land, the air, the sea!

CUT TO:

EXT. SKIES - DAWN

Harpy cuts through the clouds, flanked by HORDES of birds: crows, falcons, swallows, owls, eagles, and more.

CUT TO:

## EXT. ANTARCTICA - DAY

Wollie and Willy, perched on a glacier, direct the animals of the sea. There are whales present, sharks circling, penguins arriving on the backs of polar bears, then lining up in rows like troopers. Dolphins, seals, all manner of fish in the water.

WOLLIE  
(strong, sermon-like)  
We call up our friends from the depths, from the farthest corners of the planet!

CUT TO:

## EXT. OCEAN - DAY

A cruise ship cuts a narrow path through the waters, white foam billowing in the wake.

SUPER: THE CARIBBEAN

## EXT. CRUISE SHIP - SAME TIME

Lots of commotion. Families laughing, music pumping, kids cannonballing into pools.

A BOY, seven, maybe eight, runs to the railing with an ICE CREAM CONE in hand. He cranes his head over the side of the ship and looks down at the waters below.

The waters begin to CHURN, dark shapes swirling beneath the foamy surface.

Now the boy looks around. He spots MOM in conversation with a gaggle of other women.

BOY  
(waving)  
Mommy. Mommy!

Mom notices him, moves away from her friends and starts toward him.

MOM  
What is it, sweetie?

She joins him at the railing. He points at the water.

BOY  
Look! Fishies!

Her eyes follow his finger over the side of the ship and suddenly go wide. Alongside the ship are sharks surfacing, baring their teeth, orcas (killer whales), a gigantic blue whale, venomous pufferfish and blue-ringed octopus.

Mom turns and GRABS the boy. The ice cream cone hits the deck.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

SUPER: OFF THE COAST OF NORWAY

A 1000 foot Commercial LONGLINER FISHING FISHING SHIP flying the Norwegian flag, hoists a 350 pound, 7 foot, BLUEFIN TUNA out from the water on hooks.

CUT TO:

EXT. LONGLINER SHIP - SAME TIME

The CREW of NORWEGIAN FISHERMEN CHEER the haul. The CAPTAIN grins and claps a hand on the shoulder of a passing CREWMAN.

Suddenly a shadow falls over them. They look up.

A strange, warbling BLACK SHEET has overtaken the sun.

The realization hits the captain like a ton of bricks. BIRDS. Lots of birds.

Suddenly the black sheet BURSTS as the birds PLUNGE toward them, a great black cloud dropping from the sky.

The crew scrambles for cover as the birds ATTACK, a teeming swarm of vultures and hawks, a pure Hitchcockian fever dream.

The birds' claws glint in the sunlight as the birds swarm the crew, clamping down and carrying them up over the railing and sending them rag-dolling into the water.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

A white building with modern, brutish architecture.

SUPER: U.S. EMBASSY - JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - SAME TIME

A desk with a phone that's RINGING. It's loud, jarring, annoying.

Finally, a SECRETARY sits down behind the desk. She blessedly picks up that blaring phone.

SECRETARY  
(into phone)  
Hi, thank you for calling --

THE WALL BEHIND HER EXPLODES!

SIX RHINOS POWER THROUGH THE OFFICE SPACE, HORNS TEARING ASIDE TABLES, CHAIRS, DESKS, AND PEOPLE.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - EVENING

Sandy chases a ball across the room, picks it up, and trots back over to Castor. He's sitting behind the Resolute Desk, Amanda on his knee.

Amanda grabs the ball from Sandy.

AMANDA  
Ew! It's all wet!

Castor laughs as Amanda hurls the ball across the room and Sandy gives chase again.

Now Amanda looks around at him.

AMANDA (CONT'D)  
Grandpa?

CASTOR  
Hmm?

AMANDA  
I think it's time for another dog.

CASTOR  
Another dog?

AMANDA  
Uh-huh. Or maybe a cat. Sandy needs a friend.

CASTOR

Oh, she needs a friend, does she?  
But she's got you!

AMANDA

But I'm not always here.  
(whispering)  
And sometimes I think she gets  
lonely.

CASTOR

(amused)  
Is that so?

The door opens and President Castor's wife, NATASHA CASTOR, enters. She's 50, a tall, beautiful former model. Sandy looks up at her, ball in mouth, tail wagging.

Amanda hops off Castor's knee and rushes to her.

AMANDA

Grandma!

Natasha smiles and hugs her granddaughter.

NATASHA

Can you take Sandy outside for a few minutes? I need to talk to your grandpa.

Amanda nods. She turns and waves at Castor, then hurries out the door. She motions for Sandy to follow her. After a moment, the dog darts out of the room behind her taking the ball with her.

Natasha closes the door, turns on Castor. Her eyes drill into him.

CASTOR

I know that look. Am I in trouble?

NATASHA

I think you made a very bad decision. And I know that you know what I think, because you've been avoiding me.

Castor sighs. He stands up and crosses to one of the sofas in front of the desk. As he sits down, Natasha drops onto the couch across from him.

CASTOR

Look, the climate change accords are terrible for the economy.

(MORE)

CASTOR (CONT'D)  
You and I have talked about this,  
Natasha.

NATASHA  
(rolling her eyes)  
Oh, the economy, schmonomy. That's all you ever talk about. But there won't be any need for an economy if the inhabitants on this planet have no quality of life, if people can no longer leave their offices or homes because the air is too dangerous to breathe. Or, better yet, if human and even animal life ceases to exist. Haven't you noticed all the fires we're having, and the deadly storms? C'mon, Gary. If you don't care about you and me, what about our children, our grandchildren? Get back in the deal, Gary. You're allowed to change your mind.

CASTOR  
Natasha, aren't you being a little extreme? This climate change nonsense is crippling our great country.

Natasha shakes her head, her nostrils flaring.

NATASHA  
Gary, I can't help you if you won't let me. And I'm telling you, withdrawing from the accords is a terrible decision. It will be bad for your re-election. Don't you know that Senator Richards is chomping at the bit, just waiting for an opportunity like this one to crucify you when she runs against you?

Castor considers it for a moment, then stands up and straightens his tie.

CASTOR  
I'll think about it. But right now I have to --

The door OPENS again.

Both of them look around to see General WALTER HARTMAN, 68, the National Security Advisor, his uniform fully decorated with stripes and medals, thundering into the room.

CASTOR (CONT'D)  
Evening, Walter. Ever heard of knocking?

HARTMAN  
I apologize, sir. But we have a situation on our hands and this can't wait.

Natasha and Castor exchange looks.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Castor and Hartman blow into the JFK CONFERENCE ROOM.

The ADVISORS making up the National Security Council immediately rise to their feet. Castor waves them back down.

CASTOR  
C'mon, c'mon, details. Just the facts. I'm late for another meeting.

Hartman gestures to one of the television screens on the back wall. A series of SATELLITE IMAGES flash across the screen, one of smoldering ruins of the U.S. Embassy in Johannesburg, another of the cruise ship.

HARTMAN  
(talking fast)  
In the past several hours, we've received numerous reports of animals attacking people across the globe. A fishing vessel off the coast of Norway, a cruise ship in the Caribbean, our Embassy in Johannesburg. These aren't the only ones, Mr. President, but they're the most prominent.

CASTOR  
Our Embassy?

HARTMAN  
Yes sir.

CASTOR  
The cruise ship -- Americans  
onboard?

HARTMAN  
Yes sir, many.

Castor scans the images on the screen, growing concerned and looking a little flustered.

CASTOR  
Animals, you said?

HARTMAN  
That's right.

CASTOR  
Isn't there an animal control unit  
to call, or...?

HARTMAN  
Sir, with all due respect, I don't  
think you're understanding the  
scope of the situation here.

CASTOR  
Explain it to me, then.

HARTMAN  
The situation in Johannesburg has  
been contained -- the Embassy has  
been evacuated. But the cruise ship  
still has hostages -- American  
citizens.

Now Castor squints at the image of the cruise ship. The waters around the ship are dark and churning. He sees it now. And damned if he knows what to make of it.

CASTOR  
What are my options?

HARTMAN  
We send in a rescue unit to the  
cruise liner. I've already made the  
calls and informed the Bahamans,  
we're clear to move. I have a  
Marine unit ready to deploy at your  
discretion.

CASTOR  
(groaning)  
The media is going to have a field  
day with this...

CUT TO:

INT. CLARISSA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Clarissa paces the floor in front of her television, a phone pressed against her ear.

CLARISSA  
(into phone)  
Yes, yes, I know. I --  
(beat)  
Sure. Yes. I'll hold.

She groans. Looks at the TV. She lifts the remote and UNMUTES it.

CUT TO:

INSERT - CLOSE ANGLE - TV

Clips from cell phone footage flash across the screen: the destroyed Embassy, people scattering from a CHARGING RHINO.

The headline: BREAKING NEWS -- ANIMALS ATTACK!

REPORTER (V.O.)  
-- United States Embassy in South Africa. Other reports are coming in from around the globe, what appear to be more animal attacks on people. We're still trying to understand what we're seeing here, but it appears --

Clarissa, mesmerized, fixated, looks shocked and amazed as she watches and listens, perhaps thinking that something is going on with the world's animals.

The sound drops out. MUTE appears on the screen.

CLARISSA (O.S.)  
(into phone)  
Yeah, I'm here.

BACK TO:

INT. CLARISSA'S HOME - SAME TIME

She tosses the remote onto the couch and resumes pacing.

CLARISSA

I know, Jerry. Look, we need to get in front of this. Have Lisa draft a statement.

(beat)

No, tonight. Yes. Tonight. You're seeing what I'm seeing, right?

(beat)

Then you know what this means. The ARA needs to be prepared to meet this head on and --

(checks phone)

Hang on a minute, Jerry. I've got another call coming in. I'll call you back.

(clicks over)

Hello?

CUT TO:

INT. TED'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Ted, sitting in his office at the university, on his phone. The lights are dim.

His computer screen reflects in the lenses of his glasses. He's looking at the same NEWS REPORT.

TED

(into phone)

I know I'm probably the last person you want to talk to, but --

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

Clarissa reacts, more than a little surprised.

TED (V.O.)

(filtered)

-- I'm assuming you've seen the news about the animal attacks?

CLARISSA

Yup.

Ted peels off his glasses and sits back in his chair.

TED

Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

CLARISSA

I hate to agree with you about anything but unbelievably, finally, it looks like the animals are coordinating and rising up against us.

TED

I knew you would agree Clarissa. You're the smartest person I know when it comes to animal behavior. The media's gonna spin this every way except the way it is. You have a platform with the ARA. I just...

CLARISSA

"Just" what, Ted?

Ted thinks about why he actually called.

TED

I just wanted you to know I'll do whatever I can to help.

CLARISSA

(short)

Thanks, but if the world ended tomorrow and you were the only other human being remaining, I wouldn't ask for your help.

She hangs up.

Ted looks at his phone, taps it against his chin. Well, what did you expect?

BACK TO:

INT. CLARISSA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Clarissa stands with her hand on her hip, foot tapping impatiently.

The cat with the bandaged foot limps around the corner of her sofa, brushing up against her leg. She kneels down and pets it gently, the gears in her mind turning over and over.

A moment later, she rises and crosses to the nearby coffee table where her glass of tequila sits. She picks it up and takes a drink while glancing at the television.

Suddenly the image cuts to a shot of Castor in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room.

She picks up the remote, UNMUTES the TV again.

CUT TO:

INSERT - CLOSE ANGLE - TV

CASTOR (V.O.)

-- and by now you have all seen the footage. American lives are in danger. But our best and brightest are working around the clock to meet this new and unprecedented crisis head-on. And know that we will not rest until our people are safe. Thank you. No questions.

Castor moves away from the podium as hands creep up into the shot.

BACK TO:

INT. CLARISSA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Clarissa MUTES the TV again.

She drops her glass back onto the table then thumbs at her phone, brings it to her ear.

The call is answered on the first ring.

CLARISSA

(into phone)

I need you to get me as much information on these attacks as you can, specifically how they were carried out. I need to see evidence before confirming my suspicions.  
I'm on my way in.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S. SOUTHCOM HEADQUARTERS - DUSK

A large, white square of a building.

SUPER: U.S. SOUTHCOM HQ - DORAL, FL

A HELICOPTER swoops into shot, touching down on the lawn outside of the building.

The door slides open and CLAY HARTMAN, 29, climbs out. The kind of Marine for whom buzzcut season is year-round.

Parallel silver lines on military fatigues -- a Captain. He also happens to be General Hartman's son.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S. SOUTHCOM HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Now he's being escorted into a small room with a long table surrounded by chairs filled with military personnel from every branch: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard.

DAN SHELTON, 45, wearing a simple suit, looks around and extends his hand as Clay enters.

SHELTON  
Captain Hartman, Dan Shelton, U.S.  
Army Veterinary Corps.

Clay returns the gesture and can't suppress a grin.

CLAY  
(prodding)  
Vet Corps, huh? We must be  
desperate, then.

SHELTON  
(good-natured)  
On this one, I think the DoD's just  
excited to be able to say all the  
money they funnel into our research  
is finally paying off.

Clay nods. Okay. Cool guy.

He clocks the satellite images of the cruise ship projected on the wall, notices the dark shapes swirling beneath the surface.

CLAY  
So. You boys weren't joking when  
you said we were going fishing.

SHELTON  
Do you know what you're looking at,  
Captain?

CLAY  
If I had to hazard a guess, I'd  
say... fish?

SHELTON  
Orcas, to be precise. Killer  
whales.

CLAY  
Like Shamu?

Shelton smiles at him. He knows how it sounds.

SHELTON  
Yeah, like Shamu. Now, despite the  
moniker, they're actually dolphins.

Clay looks around at him, thoroughly uninterested.

CLAY  
(dripping in sarcasm)  
Really?

SHELTON  
(unfazed)  
They have the second largest brains  
on the planet. Five times that of  
humans. They're creative thinkers,  
and function within complex social  
constructs. They work in concert,  
and they're very, very smart,  
exhibiting high levels of both  
social and emotional intelligence.  
And they're dangerous super-  
predators. Great white sharks leave  
town when they're around except in  
this case, it's like they're  
working together. In other words,  
captain, they're not to be  
underestimated.

Clay holds his stare for a moment, then looks again at the  
screens.

CLAY  
So dolphins and sharks have taken  
hostages on a cruise ship...  
(beat)  
And I thought today was going to be  
normal.

SHELTON  
Not just dolphins and sharks,  
Captain. You see those two blue  
masses?

Clay takes a step closer to the screen.

SHELTON (CONT'D)

Those are two blue whales. Each one weighs over three-hundred thousand pounds. The largest animals on the planet. Just one of them is capable of capsizing a cruise liner.

CLAY

What are those?

SHELTON

Oh those. Pufferfish, maybe. One of them carries enough toxin to kill thirty adults. Twelve hundred times more lethal than cyanide.

(beat)

And that bright blue light? Like neon? See that?

Clay nods.

SHELTON (CONT'D)

Blue-ringed octopus. Try not to touch one. Its venom is ten thousand times more lethal than that.

Clay looks at him again. Shelton flashes a hollow smile. It's his turn to be ironic.

SHELTON (CONT'D)

Good fishing, Captain.

On the table, a phone RINGS.

One of the men sitting nearby snaps it up, answers the call. He turns and passes the phone to Clay.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S. SOUTHCOM HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Clay steps out of the conference room. He grimaces as he lifts the phone.

CLAY

(into phone)

You know if I wanted to talk to you, I'd call.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Hartman stands in the corner of the room, talking on a cell phone.

HARTMAN  
(into phone)  
But you never call.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

Clay paces the hallway.

CLAY  
Exactly.

HARTMAN  
(already regretting this)  
Look, son, I just wanted to say  
good luck.

CLAY  
(cold)  
I think we can handle some fish,  
Walter.

Hartman blinks. "Walter." That stings.

HARTMAN  
Just be careful, okay?

Clay glances back into the conference room, sees Shelton conversing with the military brass.

CLAY  
(much gentler)  
How's mom?

HARTMAN  
She's well. We're supposed to be at  
the ranch this weekend, but with  
this situation --

CLAY  
Go.

HARTMAN  
Say again?

CLAY  
Go. Don't cancel, Walter. You  
cancelled for twenty years. Doesn't  
matter what's happening. Go.

Hartman hears this. He considers it.

HARTMAN  
Clay, I --

CLAY  
Gotta go, General.

Clay ends the call. He takes a deep breath, then returns to the conference room.

Hartman composes himself, pockets his phone, goes back to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLARISSA'S HOME - BACKYARD - DUSK

Clarissa, sitting at a round, white, out-door table with her glasses on, looks into the middle of her own book, "Animal Intelligence," while sipping a glass of wine.

Suddenly Harpy lands on the table, startling her.

CLARISSA  
Whoa.

She turns her head, eyes open in amazement. Did you see what I just saw? She stares quizzically at the bird.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
( inching forward)  
Well, hello there...

She catches her own reflection in the eagle's watchful eye.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
You're a long way from home, aren't you?

Clarissa lifts a hand to touch her and Harpy cocks her head suddenly. Clarissa hesitates.

Then:

HARPY  
Dr. Waverly?

Clarissa blinks. Her mouth drops open. Did the eagle just...? No, this isn't a dream.

She checks the wine bottle on the table to see how much she's been drinking, realizing it can't be that. The eagle is talking to her. The eagle is talking. And it's talking to her.

And suddenly the shock of it begins to give way to possibility. Clarissa's right about these animals. She's been right all along.

CLARISSA

I --  
(beat)  
Um...

She shakes her head, trying to recover.

HARPY  
You are Dr. Clarissa Waverly, yes?

CLARISSA  
Yes -- Yes. I'm Dr. Waverly.

HARPY  
You have been chosen.

CLARISSA  
I'm sorry, "chosen?" Chosen for what?

HARPY  
We need a human voice. Someone who understands us. Someone who can speak for us.

CLARISSA  
"Us?" You mean...?  
(putting it all together)  
The animals. You mean the animals?

HARPY  
Yes. We have been silent about what's been happening to us and our habitat for too long. We have lost friends, children, parents, our food supply -- all due to the climate changing destruction caused by human indifference.

Clarissa steps closer, her voice growing hoarse.

CLARISSA  
So that's what this is.  
(beat)  
(MORE)

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
You're all rising up, fighting  
back?

HARPY  
We are making ourselves heard.

CLARISSA  
But to what end? I mean, you're not  
considering...?

HARPY  
We do not wish for human to be  
eradicated. Only that they listen.  
We can live together, in peace. But  
first, things must change.

Clarissa nods, suddenly understanding.

CLARISSA  
What can I do?

HARPY  
I have watched you for a long time,  
Dr. Waverly. And I've read your  
book. Truly a masterpiece.

Clarissa smiles at the compliment.

HARPY (CONT'D)  
Your work has been critical to  
helping humans understand animals.  
We would ask that you speak on our  
behalf, that you help us be heard.

CLARISSA  
Are you the leader of the animals?

HARPY  
We are led by a joint committee of  
three who have joined forces to act  
together in unison. I am the leader  
of all manner of birds. Giro, a  
giraffe, is the leader of all land-  
dwelling animals. And Wollie, a  
walrus, is the leader of all sea  
creatures.

CLARISSA  
Hmm.

Clarissa stares at the eagle. This is it -- all the  
validation in the world about everything she's been saying  
concerning animal intelligence.

HARPY  
Will you speak on our behalf?

Clarissa considers it. Cocks her head, thinks about it.

CLARISSA  
(nodding)  
Okay.  
(stronger, determined)  
Okay, I will.

CUT TO:

ALISSA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ELLIOT RICHARDS, 40, fit, athletic, light-skinned African American, good-looking, still wearing the white dress shirt and suit pants from work that day, carries a plate of food across the kitchen.

At the table, Alissa sits with papers sprawled out in front of her. She's on the phone.

ALISSA  
(into phone)  
Mmm-hmm. I agree.

She sees Elliot coming with the food and begins shoving the papers aside, making space.

He drops the plate in front of her, then crosses to the other side of the table and takes his seat.

ALISSA (CONT'D)  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
Okay. Thanks Kyle.

She hangs up, sets the phone on the table, looks across at her husband.

ALISSA (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

ELLIOT  
No apologies. Senatoring is hard work.

"Senatoring." She grins and looks down at the plate in front of her.

ALISSA

You made this? All by yourself? And  
I thought your biggest talent was  
making money on Wall Street.

ELLIOT

(teasing)

Were you expecting carryout?

ALISSA

No, but...

ELLIOT

(playful)

Are you about to insult my cooking?

ALISSA

No, no! It looks great. Really.  
Thank you.

She picks up her fork to dig in when her cell phone RINGS.  
She groans and looks at the screen.

The call's from: TED S.

Elliot notices her noticing the phone.

ELLIOT

It's okay.

ALISSA

(apologetic)

I'll just be a minute.

He nods. Yeah. Sure.

She answers the call.

ALISSA (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Ted. Hi.

CUT TO:

INT. TED'S CAR - SAME TIME

Ted's behind the wheel. His CELL PHONE is mounted to the dash, linked to the car's sound system.

He talks while he drives.

TED

Good evening, Senator. Thanks for taking my call.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

Alissa excuses herself from the dinner table, meanders into the living room while talking on the phone.

ALISSA

What can I do for you?

TED

I'm assuming you've seen the news about the animal attacks.

ALISSA

Of course.

TED

They're rising up. They're laying claim to their piece of the planet. Castor's pull-out from the accords was just the gasoline that erupted the simmering fire.

Alissa considers this, a questioning look on her face.

ALISSA

We don't know if what's happening is a response to the president's decision, Ted.

TED

I spoke with Clarissa.

ALISSA

(shocked)

You spoke with Clarissa?

TED

Yes. And we both think the same thing. This is a response to the president's withdrawal from the climate agreement, and about a thousand other things we're doing wrong. If the president's not willing to see that, to try and work in harmony with the animals on this planet, I'm afraid this could only be the beginning. Don't you see? They've had enough of us. They're revolting en masse.

Alissa flips on the television. The volume is low, but she sees IMAGES OF CLARISSA on screen. The headline beneath the images reads: VET CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN CONTACTED BY ANIMALS TO BE THEIR SPOKESPERSON.

A look of disbelief from the headline crosses Alissa's face.

ALISSA  
So you're saying this is...?  
(beat)  
What? Some kind of animal  
rebellion?

TED (V.O.)  
It's only a rebellion if someone is  
recoiling from authority, Senator.  
Perhaps that's our mistake right  
there. We think of them as our  
subordinates, rather than  
respectable neighbors.

Now Alissa thumbs up the volume just a bit, enough to hear the news report.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
-- claims of Dr. Clarissa Waverly,  
widely considered the foremost  
expert in the field of animal  
intelligence and psychology.

Ted glances at his phone. Alissa's silent.

TED  
Senator?

Alissa stares at her television for a long moment, taking it all in, realizing the situation.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Castor sits at the head of the table, conversing with one of his advisors, ADVISOR 1, an Asian American male, age 60.

Hartman, sitting next to him, looks up and notices the NEWS FEED playing on one of the television screens. It's the same one Alissa was watching.

HARTMAN  
Mr. President?

Castor looks around at him. Hartman gestures at the screen.

Castor spins in his chair, sees Clarissa's face. And sees the headline. He smirks.

CASTOR

This is what happens. One little incident, and every PETA-loving hippie who thinks they can talk to animals comes out of the woodwork. What does it say about the state of the news media that this is the kind of stuff they're covering?

Hartman looks at Castor, then back at the news feed, unsure of what to make of any of it.

INT. ARA OFFICES - NIGHT

The place is abuzz. Phones ringing, people dashing back and forth. There are stacks of signs in the corner, ARA membership flyers lying on desks. Organized chaos.

Clarissa blows through the door in a whirlwind, trucking toward her office.

JERRY, an eager 25-year-old in wiry glasses, shoulders his way through the hustle and bustle to fall into lock-step next to her.

JERRY

We've got calls coming in from news stations local and national.

CLARISSA

That's all?

JERRY

And Europe. And one in China, two in Japan, Africa --

CLARISSA

That sounds about right.

JERRY

So you do know what you're doing, right?

She slows to a stop, turns and looks at him.

CLARISSA

What's that supposed to mean, Jerry?

JERRY  
Just that Ellis called, and --

CLARISSA  
Ellis?

JERRY  
Yeah. And he --

CLARISSA  
Glad to know he isn't wasting time.

LISA, early-twenties, office secretary, comes swooping in, paper in hand.

LISA  
Hey, Clarissa.

CLARISSA  
Lisa. What's up?

LISA  
(re: the paper)  
Here's that statement you wanted.

CLARISSA  
(taking the paper)  
Oh. Right. Um, look, good work on this. But we're going to have to change some things. This just became way bigger than a couple of lines we post on our website.

LISA  
(re-taking the paper)  
I figured.

CLARISSA  
Give me a couple of minutes, I'll get with you. I know what we need to say.

LISA  
Sure thing.

Lisa breaks off, Clarissa and Jerry continuing on.

CLARISSA  
(to Jerry)  
Look, I know you're busy, but I need one more favor.

They reach her office.

JERRY  
That's fine, but --

CLARISSA  
I want you to set up a press  
conference in an hour, can you do  
that?

She begins to open her office door.

JERRY  
(frustrated)  
Yes, fine, but Clarissa --

CLARISSA  
(equally frustrated)  
What?

CUT TO:

EXT. CRUISE SHIP - NIGHT

The cruise ship is being smashed alternately by a massive blue whale on each side, causing it to sway from side to side, tossing people around from one side to the other. Great white sharks are rising up beneath the waves, baring their teeth. People are screaming, petrified.

BACK TO:

INT. CLARISSA'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

As the door opens, LORN ELLIS, 45, Chairman of the ARA Board, in a suit that's buttoned up tight, looks around from the chair he's sitting in.

Clarissa pauses when she sees him.

From behind her, she hears:

JERRY (O.S.)  
Ellis is already here.

She takes a deep breath.

CLARISSA  
Thanks, Jerry. I'll get with you in  
a few.

She steps inside, closes the door.

Ellis adjusts his tie.

ELLIS  
Evening, Clarissa.

CLARISSA  
What can I do for you, Lorn?

ELLIS  
I think an explanation would be a  
good place to start.

Clarissa crosses to her desk, sits down, turns on her computer.

CLARISSA  
What's there to explain? It's  
exactly what you've already heard.

ELLIS  
What, that you're talking to  
animals now?

She glares at him.

CLARISSA  
Lorn, I was contacted by them. I  
didn't ask for it, I didn't go  
looking. But it happened. And this  
is so much bigger than anyone  
realizes. Especially the president.

ELLIS  
The president?

CLARISSA  
That's right. You saw how  
impulsively he withdrew from the  
climate accords.

Ellis rises from his chair to lean on the side of her desk.

ELLIS  
Look, right now, you are the  
president of this organization.

He lets that sit there, like it's supposed to mean something. Clarissa shakes her head at the obvious.

CLARISSA  
(sarcasm on thick)  
Gee, Lorn, thanks for telling me  
what I am in my own office.

ELLIS

(growing frustrated)

What the ARA doesn't need is a president who's going to make the cover of every tabloid magazine by tomorrow morning accused of being a looney toon. Think of what it'll do to this organization. We can't have that, Clarissa. Are you still sober or have you fallen off the wagon?

Her head snaps around. Excuse me?

ELLIS (CONT'D)

I mean, aren't you being a little delusional? Animals talking to you? C'mon, Clarissa. You think the board is going to let you make fools of this organization? Maybe you should go easier on the bottle. Take some time off, get some counseling.

Now Clarissa leans forward, tapping the desk in front of him.

CLARISSA

You know, Lorn, that's always been your problem. You hide behind your cynicism to mask the fact that you're too damn scared to say or do anything that might actually make a difference. Sure, the media is full of people playing angles. And yes, the ARA will be hung out to dry, just like we are every time someone puts a camera on us. But people need to hear what these animals have to say, that they have spoken to me, and that I am not delusional or crazy. If it takes some bad press for that to happen, then so be it.

His jaw tightens, eyes narrow.

ELLIS

Look, Clarissa, I've already spoken to the other board members. You're not going to drag this organization through the mud anymore on a personal crusade. If you want to tarnish your reputation, that's fine. But you'll do it without dragging us down with you.

(MORE)

ELLIS (CONT'D)

If you go through with this press conference thing, you're through.

Clarissa's on her feet now and getting right in his face.

CLARISSA

I was asked to be president of this organization because my "personal crusade," as you call it, and the ARA's values are one and the same.

ELLIS

No, Clarissa, you were selected as president because this organization needed a recognizable face, one that had credentials, that was full of empathy for animal rights, but one that was reasonable. Or, at least one that appeared to be. Because you wrote a best-selling book. And, sure, it had some crackpot ideas in there. But we were willing to overlook that for what you brought us.

He holds up his phone. On the screen, a breaking news headline: AUTHOR WHO CLAIMS TO TALK TO ANIMALS HOLDING PRESS CONFERENCE WITHIN THE HOUR.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

(re: the headline)

But this? I'm sorry, Clarissa. But if you go through with this, when you wake up in the morning, you best find another organization to cripple.

He pockets the phone and turns for the door.

Clarissa's breathing hard, struggling to keep herself contained. She watches him go for a moment. He's nearly out the door when she says:

CLARISSA

What do you think is happening here, Lorn? You've seen the news stories. People being held on a cruise liner by sea creatures. An embassy attacked in South Africa. A fishing ship overrun by birds. That doesn't seem strange to you? You can't sense that something is going on? If we don't address this, things are going to get much worse.

And with that, he's out the door.

Clarissa stares after him. Angry, but resolute.

She takes a deep breath to compose herself.

A printer spits out a page.

Clarissa picks it up, sits back in her chair, looks it over.

A knock at her door.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
(annoyed)  
What?

The door opens and Lisa sticks her head between the door and the jamb.

LISA  
I got your email. The statement  
looks good.

CLARISSA  
Thanks.

Lisa doesn't leave. After a moment, Clarissa notices.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
Anything else?

Lisa hesitates. Should she say something? Finally, she steps into the office and gently shuts the door.

LISA  
Look, I have to ask. Is it true?

Clarissa sets the paper down and looks up at her.

CLARISSA  
Is what true?

LISA  
That they spoke to you.

CLARISSA  
Lisa, do you think I would risk  
everything, my career, this  
organization, if it weren't true.

Lisa swallows hard and shakes her head no.

LISA  
The, uh, the press. They're here  
now.

Clarissa nods.

BACK TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - NIGHT

Castor, Hartman, and the rest of the advisors are staring at satellite images of the cruise ship no longer swaying.

A phone next to Hartman rings. He snatches it up lightning quick.

HARTMAN  
(into phone)  
Go.  
(beat)  
How bad?  
(beat)  
Thank you, Colonel.

He hangs up the phone and looks at the president.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
The cruise ship has been secured.

And it's like the entire room gasps in relief. Castor nods enthusiastically.

They continue to stare at the satellite images of the cruise ship.

Clay is leading some Marines helping the passengers off the cruise ship and onto a military transport plane on the ship's deck, including the relieved ice cream boy and his mother holding him tightly.

Adjacent to the ship, we see images of large pools of blood in the ocean and dead great white sharks, orcas, pufferfish, blue-ringed octopus and two blue whales, all dead.

There are images of some dead passengers being wheeled off on gurneys, white sheets over their bodies and faces.

And images of some surviving but injured passengers being wheeled off on gurneys, sitting up, one with a bandaged head, another with their arm in a sling.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
We lost one attack helicopter,  
that's two pilots. One Marine. Some  
civilians. Not sure how many yet.

Castor swallows hard, shakes his head.

CASTOR  
To fish? We lost American soldiers  
and civilians to a bunch of fish?

Another phone rings. An ADVISOR, VICTOR CORTEZ, a  
conservatively well-dressed, Hispanic American man in his  
fifties, answers it.

CORTEZ  
(into phone)  
Hello?  
(beat)  
What?!  
(beat)  
Yes. Thank you.

He hangs up and picks up a small remote. He switches one of  
the televisions to a news channel.

INSERT - CLOSE ANGLE - TV

Clarissa. The press conference, inside the ARA auditorium.

CLARISSA  
(onscreen)  
-- hours ago, I was contacted by  
one of these animal leaders.

Hands immediately begin shooting up, REPORTERS burning with  
questions to be asked.

Clarissa holds up a hand.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
Please! Please! Let me get through  
this, then I'll take your  
questions.

Things settle.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
Thank you.  
(beat)  
Now, as I was saying, these attacks  
are not random. And neither are  
they unprovoked.  
(MORE)

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
For too long ever-increasing  
climate change from our  
irresponsible behavior has been  
wreaking havoc on the lives of  
these highly intelligent and  
capable creatures with whom we  
share this planet. They want to be  
heard and have chosen me to deliver  
their message.

Gasps throughout the room.

Castor practically snorts. Huh?

REPORTER #1 (O.S.)  
Does this have anything to do with  
the president withdrawing from the  
climate agreement?

CLARISSA  
That was the tipping point.

REPORTER #2 (O.S.)  
Why are the animals choosing to  
talk to you?

CLARISSA  
Well, I suppose --

REPORTER #3 (O.S.)  
Can all animals talk? Why can  
we all not hear them?

REPORTER #4 (O.S.)  
Are all animals going to  
start rebelling? Are any of  
us safe, Dr. Waverly?

REPORTER #1 (O.S.)  
Can you prove any of what  
you're saying?

REPORTER #5 (O.S.)  
Dr. Waverly, what is the  
ARA's official position on  
these issues?

Things are quickly spiraling out of control, the room  
erupting in chaos.

MUTE appears on the screen.

BACK TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Castor stares at the screen for a moment longer before  
spinning his chair.

CASTOR  
(to no one in particular)  
Who is she?

CORTEZ  
A Dr. Clarissa Waverly. Some  
researcher on animal intelligence.

CASTOR  
(for real?)  
"Animal intelligence?" Hmm.

CORTEZ  
Sir, I think you should respond to  
her claims in light of what we're  
seeing.

CASTOR  
Respond? What, and lend credibility  
to that nonsense? This woman is  
claiming to talk to animals. Let  
her run her mouth. She'll hang  
herself.

INT. CLARISSA'S OFFICE - LATER

Now Clarissa's sitting alone in her office.

She taps the space bar of the keyboard. The computer screen  
lights up. The first thing she sees is a news story. The  
headline: ANIMALS ARE TALKING NOW? ARA PRESIDENT HOLDS PRESS  
CONFERENCE.

She chews her lip nervously as she clicks on it.

A live news report begins playing. A NEWSCASTER (female, 30)  
and a GUEST (male, 45).

CUT TO:

INSERT - CLOSE ANGLE - COMPUTER SCREEN

NEWSCASTER  
What are we seeing here? I mean, we  
have a woman claiming to talk to  
animals.

GUEST  
Right, I mean, isn't that absurd?  
How ridiculous is that? Dr. Waverly  
used to be someone I looked up to,  
I've read her research.  
(MORE)

GUEST (CONT'D)  
And her work in the field of animal  
intelligence is groundbreaking. But  
this? I mean, as far as I'm  
concerned, the woman has lost it.

BACK TO:

INT. CLARISSA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

She closes the news report and sits back in her chair.  
Discouragement written all over her face.

After a moment, she sighs. Reaches over and opens the top  
drawer of her desk, retrieves a BOTTLE OF TEQUILA and a SHOT  
GLASS.

She sets the glass on the table, opens the bottle, pours some  
into the glass.

She throws it back and it burns all the way down. But it's  
good.

Pours another.

A knock at the door.

CLARISSA  
Not now, Jerry.

Another knock.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
I said not now!

The door opens anyway.

She looks up, fire in her eyes.

And Ted's head cranes through the opening.

TED  
You want to pour me one too?

Clarissa blinks. Ted?

She swallows the shot and returns the bottle to the desk  
drawer. She closes it and looks up at him.

CLARISSA  
(cold)  
What do you want, Ted?

TED  
(sighing)  
Look, can I come in?

She considers it. After a moment, she shrugs.

CLARISSA  
Fine.

He steps inside, lets the door close behind him. He crosses the room and sits down across from her, gesturing at the room around them.

TED  
Nice office.

CLARISSA  
Yeah, well, I'll try to make the next one feel just as cozy.

TED  
The next one? You're leaving?

CLARISSA  
Lorn Ellis has already called. He wants me out as soon as possible. Heard he's interviewing for my replacement as we speak.

TED  
That jerk's still around?

CLARISSA  
Unfortunately. The board is going to be meeting in the morning to discuss "organizational restructuring." Lorn has felt cheated out of the spotlight ever since the board selected me for president. I'm sure he won't miss his chance to push his way to the front of the line.

(beat)  
Ted, I'll be honest, on my list of people I'd like to see right now, you're at the very bottom. What are you doing here?

TED  
I saw the press conference. And the media response. And I jumped on the first plane out. I just figured that right now you could use someone to talk to.

(MORE)

TED (CONT'D)  
(re: the empty glass)  
Because that is not the best way to  
deal with it.

CLARISSA  
(rolling her eyes)  
Oh, what the hell do you care about  
how I deal with things?

TED  
Clarissa, that's not fair.

CLARISSA  
(suddenly heated)  
Fair? Fair? After what happened  
between us, you're going to come  
into my office and talk to me about  
what's fair?

Ted opens his mouth to respond, but quickly closes it again.

We hold on them, Clarissa behind the desk, Ted sitting in  
front of her. And from this we --

FADE TO:

INT. TED'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The same shot. Only this time, Ted's behind the desk and  
Clarissa's sitting in front of him.

They're both younger. Ted's in his late 30's. Clarissa her  
early 20's.

Ted's thumbing through a paper. After a moment, he removes  
his glasses and looks up. He passes her the paper.

TED  
I have to say, Clarissa. I've never  
had another student latch onto my  
ideas regarding climate change like  
you have. You really seem to  
comprehend what I'm saying.

Clarissa nods excitedly.

CLARISSA  
Well, Dr. Sorenson --

TED  
(holding up a hand)  
Please, call me Ted.

CLARISSA

Alright. Ted.

(beat)

I find your evidence-based theory on climate change and the destruction of the natural habitat of animals, fascinating. I think if you just found a way to make it more explainable to a broader audience, it would get the wider recognition it deserves.

TED

Broader audience, huh? Well, if you have some thoughts on how to do that, I'd love to hear them. Maybe over dinner? My place?

Clarissa, shy, but flattered, smiles at him.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - LATER (FLASHBACK)

Now Clarissa is walking across the lawn, looking over the paper with Ted's handwritten notes.

ALISSA (O.S.)

Hey, Clarissa. Wait up!

She turns around and sees an early 20's Alissa racing to catch up with her.

CLARISSA

Hey girl. What's up?

ALISSA

Ugh, that stupid pre-law exam just killed me.

CLARISSA

I'm sure you passed with flying colors, as always.

ALISSA

What's up with you? I haven't seen you lately.

CLARISSA

I know, sorry. I've been with Ted.

Alissa cocks her head, raises an eyebrow.

ALISSA

"Ted?"

CLARISSA  
(a little embarrassed)  
Dr. Sorenson.

ALISSA  
(amused)  
Our environmental professor who I  
see you mesmerized by in class? You  
call him Ted?

CLARISSA  
He told me I could!

ALISSA  
(sarcastic, impressed)  
Hmm. And what did you and "Ted"  
talk about?

CLARISSA  
Oh, you know. My paper. And dinner.

ALISSA  
(excited)  
Dinner?!

CLARISSA  
(red-faced)  
I know.

INT. TED'S APARTMENT - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Clarissa is standing in the living room, looking at the books on the bookshelf.

Ted enters with two glasses of wine. He passes one to her.

CLARISSA  
Thank you.

He clinks his glass against hers.

TED  
You're welcome.

They drink.

On the wall, Clarissa notices a couple of PICTURES of Ted as a young man, along with an OLDER WOMAN and an OLDER MAN.

CLARISSA  
Are those your parents?

TED  
That they are.

CLARISSA  
Your mother was beautiful.

TED  
She was. A very kind woman. My father, on the other hand. Bit of a hard ass.

Clarissa nods. His openness is a little awkward.

CLARISSA  
They still around?

TED  
No, my dad passed when I was in my twenties. My mom died just a couple of years ago.

CLARISSA  
Oh. I'm sorry.

TED  
It's alright.

She sips at her wine glass.

He brushes her hair out of her face very suddenly. She nearly chokes on her drink.

TED (CONT'D)  
Sorry! Sorry.

CLARISSA  
No -- it --  
(coughing)  
It's alright.  
(recovering)  
Whew.

TED  
It's just that you're a very beautiful woman.

CLARISSA  
Oh, well, thank you, Dr. --  
-- Ted --  
Right.

TED (CONT'D)  
Call me --  
Right.

They smile at each other, both of them laughing a little.

FADE TO:

INT. TED'S APARTMENT - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Sunlight coming through the blinds, piercing the curtains.

Ted, asleep. He rolls over and readjusts his pillow.

Clarissa in the bed next to him. She's staring at the ceiling.

She looks over at him, watches his chest rising and falling in steady rhythms.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Now she's walking with Alissa.

ALISSA

All weekend? Really?

CLARISSA

Yep.

ALISSA

He must really like you.

CLARISSA

Right?!

PIPER (O.S.)

Hey!

Both girls turn around to see PIPER, snotty, female, 23, thundering toward them.

ALISSA

(annoyed)

Great. Piper.

Piper walks up to Clarissa, wagging her finger in her face.

PIPER

Now listen up. I don't know who you think you are, or what you think he said to you, but you are nothing special. You're not the first one to have spent the night with him and you sure as hell won't be the last.

CLARISSA  
Excuse me?

PIPER  
You heard me. So, before you get it  
in your pretty little head that  
Ted's interested in you  
exclusively, you better think  
twice.

And with that, she shoves past them and storms across campus.

Clarissa looks at Alissa.

CLARISSA  
What. The. Hell?

INT. HALLWAY - LATER (FLASHBACK)

Clarissa, walking quickly toward Ted's office.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK)

She tears through the door.

Ted tears himself off of ANOTHER STUDENT.

Clarissa stares at him, her face a mixture of rage and hurt.

Ted's shocked, red-faced.

She turns and flies from the office.

TED  
Clarissa! Clarissa, wait!

BACK TO:

INT. CLARISSA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ted shakes his head.

TED  
Look, I know things didn't end well  
between us.

CLARISSA  
That is the understatement of the  
century. My shrink tells me I have  
trust issues with men because of  
what you did to me.

TED

I'm sorry, Clarissa. I really am.  
If I never said it before, I'm  
saying it now. I'm sorry.

Clarissa sits back in her chair, seething.

CLARISSA

Is that why you came here after all  
these years? To tell me that you're  
sorry?

TED

No. Well, yes. But that's not the  
only reason.

CLARISSA

Then what do you want?

TED

To help you.

CLARISSA

(sarcastic)

Oh, to help me. Of course. I'm  
about to be fired by the board, I'm  
lambasted in the media for speaking  
on something that I have never been  
so sure about in my entire life,  
whatever credibility I have in the  
scientific community is gone to  
hell. And you, what could you  
possibly do to help me?

Ted leans forward, his voice quiet but sincere.

TED

Look, Clarissa, I don't know about  
this talking with the animals  
thing, but...

CLARISSA

Oh, so you think I'm crazy too?

TED

I don't think you're crazy  
Clarissa. But you know, too much  
alcohol can play tricks on your  
mind.

CLARISSA

There are no tricks being played on  
my mind, Ted. It's fine if you  
don't believe me.

TED

Clarissa, I'm not saying I don't believe you, but...

(beat)

Listen Clarissa, all I know is that you have deepened my understanding of animal intelligence more than anyone else. With all of my work on climate change, the one thing I have never been able to master is the animal component. But you have. And I totally believe that climate change is adversely affecting animals in a big way. On that point, I totally agree with you.

(beat)

And I think, on this, we're going to be better together.

Clarissa considers it. A moment passes, she leans forward, elbows on her desk.

CLARISSA

What are you suggesting?

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

SUPER: SOUTH AFRICAN COASTLINE

TENTS have been set up along the shore. A pride of LIONS patrol outside like sentries.

A PEREGRINE FALCON (male) dive-bombs through an opening in the top of the largest tent.

INT. CHIEF TENT - DAY

Wollie, Willy, and Giro are in the tent. They look up as the falcon enters, slows its rapid descent, and perches nearby.

FALCON

Harpy has made contact with the human, Dr. Waverly.

WOLLIE

And Dr. Waverly's response?

FALCON

She agreed to be our emissary.

Wollie's head bobs up and down, relieved.

WOLLIE

Good. Very good.

GIRO

We will see if the humans take her seriously.

WOLLIE

Some optimism, Giro, would go a long way.

(to the falcon)

Anything else to report?

FALCON

The military took the cruise liner.

WOLLIE

By force?

FALCON

(nodding, solemnly)

All of ours and some of theirs were lost.

Giro flares his nostrils, stamps his hooves.

GIRO

You see, Wollie? This is the only language humans understand!

WOLLIE

But we got their attention, which was the goal. Now, perhaps, they'll listen to Dr. Waverly.

GIRO

Or crucify her publicly. I didn't agree with Harpy's plan to approach her.

WOLLIE

Harpy was right. We needed a human voice and Dr. Waverly was the best choice.

GIRO

You have too much faith in these humans.

(beat)

We need to attack. The cruise ship cannot go unanswered.

WOLLIE

I agree. It will not go unanswered.  
But we must be smart about this.

(to the falcon)

The American president has made no  
indication that he will reconsider  
his decision on pulling out of the  
climate accords?

FALCON

None. And the response to Dr.  
Waverly has been...

WOLLIE

Out with it!

FALCON

Not pleasant.

GIRO

(angry, to Wollie)

You see!

Willy inches forward, drawing up next to his father.

WILLY

(to Wollie)

I think Giro's right, dad. We  
cannot let this go unanswered. And  
if people are not listening to the  
woman, then what choice do we have?

Wollie considers his son's words.

WOLLIE

Have the gorillas returned with the  
ship?

WILLY

Yes.

WOLLIE

(to the falcon)

Go and rest. Relay this message to  
the other flier: return to the  
states, let them know we are  
coming. We will make landfall in  
several days. Then spread the word.  
Our assets know what to do.  
Understood?

The falcon nods and blasts upwards, disappearing through the  
hole in the top of the tent.

WOLLIE (CONT'D)  
(to Giro)  
Ready the animals, Giro.

Giro glares at him. He turns and stomps out of the tent.

Wollie looks at his son.

WOLLIE (CONT'D)  
Be careful, Willy. Giro cares for our kind, but he has witnessed the terrible effects of human indifference on animals, including losing his own mother and entire herd. He has lost much.

WILLY  
So have we, dad.

WOLLIE  
Yes. But I have also seen humans at their best. I know what it's like to live alongside them when they care about us. Though we are about to escalate our attacks, our goal should not be to eliminate them, but to assert ourselves. We want them to hear us, not hate us. Don't forget that son.

INT. CLARISSA'S HOME - DAWN

Keys jangle in the lock.

The door swings open and Clarissa enters, Ted right behind her.

She turns to him as the door shuts.

CLARISSA  
Give me just a minute to get some clothes together.

And she disappears down the hall.

Ted's eyes wander over the place. He notices a shelf absolutely packed with books and moves over to it.

As his eyes drift along the spines of the books, most of them research texts on animal behavior patterns, he comes across one titled: CLIMATE CHANGE -- OUR GREATEST THREAT. The author: TED SORENSEN.

Curious, he pulls the book off the shelf and leafs through it. The book has seen much use, its pages creased and crinkled, it's stained throughout.

Finally, he turns to the cover page. Scribbled there, just below the title, in aged ink: "Clarissa, keep up the good work, you'll make it big one day. Much love, Ted." Recognition flashes in his eyes. He smiles to himself.

INT. CLARISSA'S HOME - BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Clarissa enters the bedroom and crosses to the closet.

The doorbell rings.

CLARISSA  
(yelling)  
Can you get that Ted? It must be  
Alissa.

She pulls out a suitcase and tosses it on the bed, flips it open and begins cleaning out a nearby dresser of clothes in a hurry.

Suddenly there's a familiar flutter of wings, and she looks over her shoulder and through the glass doors leading out to the backyard.

There, she sees Harpy perched on the same white, outdoor table she landed on before, radiant against the rising sun.

EXT. CLARISSA'S HOME - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

The glass doors slide open, and Clarissa steps out from the bedroom.

She pauses long enough to glance over her shoulder. Ted and Alissa are nowhere to be seen. Then she pulls the sliding door shut, leaving only a crack.

She turns and approaches Harpy.

CLARISSA  
Look, I'm sorry. I'm doing as much  
as I can. I called several news  
organizations, I held a press  
conference. I'm trying, really.

HARPY  
I know that. We know that.

CLARISSA

I knew this was going to be a hard sell, but I'd hoped that, with everything going on, with the animals uniting and all...

HARPY

We are grateful for your effort.

Clarissa sighs and runs her hands through her hair, frustrated.

CLARISSA

So, what happens now?

Harpy bows her head.

HARPY

As much as I hate for there to be an escalation of violence, I'm afraid it's inevitable.

Clarissa stares at her.

CLARISSA

Escalation?

HARPY

(nodding)

The other chiefs do not believe that it's possible to resolve this without increasing our attacks, without more human carnage, without real, human, pain.

Clarissa looks out at the sunrise. It's really a thing of natural beauty, a beauty somehow diminished by the prospects of dark things to come.

CLARISSA

(resigned)

Maybe they're right.

(beat)

Look, I have another chance to get in front of people who can do something about this. People who can convince the president to not retaliate, to listen.

Harpy cocks her head.

HARPY

Do you think it'll work?

CLARISSA

I don't know. But it might be our last good chance and I need to take it. I'm leaving for Washington, you'll be able to find me there.

HARPY

Very well. I'm sure the other chiefs will want to speak with you when they arrive.

Clarissa's eyes go wide.

CLARISSA

They're coming here?

HARPY

(nodding)

I had hoped they would arrive under better circumstances.

Suddenly Harpy turns her head, her sharp eyes catching the figures of Alissa and Ted standing on the other side of the sliding door, staring at them.

Clarissa follows her gaze, spots Alissa and Ted.

HARPY (CONT'D)

(to Clarissa)

Hurry, my friend. Or I'm afraid all-out war is inevitable.

Harpy's wings explode outward, an impressive display. And she soars off the balcony, heading east, into the sun.

Clarissa watches her go for a moment, then heads back to the sliding door.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - SAME TIME

She steps inside, now face-to-face with Ted and Alissa.

CLARISSA

(warmly)

Alissa!

She gives Alissa a warm hug.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)

How long were you guys standing here?

TED  
(amazed)  
Long enough.

ALISSA  
So, it's true. They really are  
talking to you. Was that their  
leader?

Clarissa nods yes.

CLARISSA  
She leads the air animals, a  
giraffe leads the animals of the  
land, and a walrus leads our  
friends from the sea.

(beat)  
But the only thing that matters  
right now is that we get where  
we're going as quickly as possible.

She crosses to the bed, shuts the suitcase, zips it up, and  
drags it behind her out of the bedroom.

After a moment, Alissa and Ted start after her.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

A SHIP cruises westward through open waters, flanked by  
DOLPHINS and SEALS.

A hundred other dark shapes move beneath the surface,  
trailing behind the vessel.

INT. WHEELHOUSE - DAY

The CAPTAIN, a man in his sixties sweating like a work mule,  
turns the wheel. TWO GORILLA SENTRYES stand on either side of  
him.

The regular CREWMEN have been forced to sit on the deck next  
to the railing as two other GORILLAS stand watch over them.

The captain looks around at one of the gorillas standing next  
to him. The gorilla nods, and the captain steadies the wheel.

He swallows nervously as he looks out the large window and  
onto the deck below.

Giro is standing there, staring out across the waters, solemn  
and alone.

EXT. DECK - DAY

Giro turns his head to see Willy approaching him.

WILLY

Things are only going to get worse before they get better, aren't they?

GIRO

I'm afraid so, Willy.

WILLY

My father believes that if we're not careful, we'll cause the humans to hate us.

GIRO

Your father is entitled to his opinion, Willy. But he and the eagle are blind to the truth.

Willy stares up at him for a long moment.

WILLY

And what truth is that?

GIRO

That when the time comes, we must not hesitate to be strong and take the necessary action. That unlike your father, Willy, you will not hesitate to take the necessary action.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Clarissa and Ted sit next to each other. Alissa is seated a few rows in front of them.

Ted watches Clarissa empty a little bottle of vodka into a plastic cup of Coke sitting on the tray in front of her.

She sips at it, notices him staring.

CLARISSA

What?

TED

Getting started a little early, don't you think?

CLARISSA

You, of all people, have absolutely no right to judge my decisions. You forfeited that right the moment I walked into your office that day and found you on top of whoever that girl was. In fact, the only reason I'm talking to you now is because you're making this meeting with Congress happen. After this, we're through.

Ted sighs, shifts awkwardly in his seat.

TED

Look, Clarissa. I will never say that what I did to you was right, or acceptable in any way.

CLARISSA

Me? This isn't just about me, Ted. There were a lot of girls. More I learned about well after we were through.

TED

Yes, I know that, and --

CLARISSA

Knowing is one thing, Ted. Dealing with it is another.

TED

I know that we haven't spoken for a long time. And you have every right to be angry. But what happened between us happened a long time ago, and things are different now. People can change, Clarissa. And often do. And I stopped being the way I used to be.

CLARISSA

What way?

TED

(uncomfortable)

You know.

CLARISSA

No, Ted. Say it. If I'm an alcoholic, then what are you?

Ted blinks at her. She holds his gaze, unblinking, unflinching.

TED  
(lowering his head,  
shameful)  
I was a womanizer.

Clarissa downs the rest of her drink.

CLARISSA  
Good. I just wanted to hear you say  
it.

A DING as the INTERCOM comes online.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
(over intercom)  
Ladies and gentlemen, we will be  
arriving shortly, please prepare  
for landing

Clarissa slams her tray shut.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

All the iconic shots. The Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the White House.

The plane carrying Clarissa, Ted, and Alissa appears in the clouds overhead, beginning its descent.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Castor sits behind his desk. His Chief of Staff, JENNIFER STEWART, an African-American woman in her forties, standing next to him, reviewing some documents.

The Vice President, HARRY JOHNSON, white male, early 50's, a full head of gray hair, is seated on a couch next to the president's desk.

STEWART  
(re: documents)  
-- and these are the addresses.

Castor sighs and nods. He looks up and notices the expression on her face.

CASTOR  
What?

STEWART  
It's nothing, sir.

CASTOR  
You're my Chief of Staff. If you  
can't say it, nobody can.

Stewart takes a deep breath.

STEWART  
I just...  
(beat)  
I just think you should at least  
consider rejoining the climate  
change agreement, Mr. President. If  
what Dr. Waverly is saying is  
right, then --

Castor looks over at Johnson.

JOHNSON  
I don't agree Mr. President. I  
think we should stay the course.

The door of his office cracks open. Amanda's face appears, peeking around at him from behind the door.

Castor looks up and sees her, smiles, motions for her to come in.

She scurries inside and rushes to him. He picks her up, sits her on his knee.

CASTOR  
Hi there, sweetheart.

She beams up at him.

Castor grins and looks back at the documents.

STEWART  
As I was saying --

AMANDA  
Grandpa?

CASTOR  
Hmm?

AMANDA  
What were those animals doing on  
the TV?

Castor glances at Stewart and Johnson.

CASTOR  
Give us just a minute.

Stewart nods and walks out, followed by Johnson.

When they're gone, Castor looks at Amanda.

CASTOR (CONT'D)  
What animals, sweetheart?

AMANDA  
Grandma was watching TV and they  
were talking about these animals.  
And I saw one picture of this ship  
or something and there were all  
these dead animals in the water and  
stuff.

Castor clears his throat. How to approach this?

CASTOR  
Well, sweetheart, sometimes animals  
behave badly, and we have to do  
what we can to stop them from  
hurting people.

Amanda thinks that one over. Then she cocks her head to the  
side and looks at her grandpa.

AMANDA  
But what about when people do bad  
things to animals?

CASTOR  
Well, we have laws for that, too.

AMANDA  
But that's not what the lady on the  
TV said.

Castor narrows his eyes.

CASTOR  
What lady?

AMANDA  
The lady who talks to the animals.  
She said that people do things to  
hurt animals, even if they don't  
realize it. She said the president  
was doing that, too. Aren't you the  
president, grandpa?

Now Castor's getting angry. He opens his mouth to respond when the door snaps open and Hartman enters.

HARTMAN  
Sir, we have a situation.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Castor storms in, Hartman behind him.

CASTOR  
What is it now?

Hartman looks at Cortez.

CASTOR (CONT'D)  
(beat)  
Cortez?

CORTEZ  
Sir, we're getting reports that zoos are being overrun by the animals.

Castor sees the view screens. Every news report covers a different zoo: Los Angeles, Riverbanks (Columbia, SC), Brookfield (Chicago, IL), the list goes on.

CASTOR  
What the hell is going on?

HARTMAN  
The animals have started turning on the zookeepers, sir.

CASTOR  
Casualties?

HARTMAN  
None reported yet.

CORTEZ  
It's not just in our cities, sir. We've gotten reports this is happening all over the world. London, Paris, Rome, Beijing, Tokyo, more reports coming in by the minute.

Castor turns to Hartman.

CASTOR

What are we dealing with, Walter?

HARTMAN

(hesitant)

Perhaps what the veterinarian said  
in her press conference was more  
viable than we originally thought.

Castor squints at him. Did I hear you right?

CASTOR

(incredulous)

The woman who thinks she can talk  
to animals?

HARTMAN

Remember what she said, sir. That  
the tipping point was pulling out  
of the climate accords.

Castor looks again at the screens, watches the news stories  
play. It's like a dream.

He shakes his head and realizes the truth, as his eyes widen.

CASTOR

This is rebellion. Payback for  
getting us out of that climate  
deal.

HARTMAN

Should we bring her in then? This  
Dr. Waverly?

Castor turns on him.

CASTOR

Why would we do that?

HARTMAN

Because she at least claims to have  
been in contact with these animals.  
Maybe she knows something.

CASTOR

No, we contain this. We figure it  
out on our own, then we'll help our  
allies across the ocean. Do  
whatever it takes, Walter. Destroy  
them all if we have to. I will not  
be humiliated by this. I have a re-  
election at stake here.

Hartman blinks at him. Are you serious? That's what you're thinking about right now?

HARTMAN

Sir, I --

CASTOR

You heard me, Walter.

(to the advisors)

You've all heard me. I'll set up a  
an address to the nation for later  
today, and I'll say what needs to  
be said. We're drawing a line in  
the sand, people. I've had just  
about enough of this. As of now,  
this is war.

He turns and storms out of the room.

Hartman groans and passes a hand over his face. He turns to the advisors.

HARTMAN

All right, get me the director of  
the National Guard on the phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Four middle-aged golfing buddies, big men, some in weight, some in height, ex-professional athletes, 2-3 African-Americans and 1-2 white men are on the course.

A white ball sitting on its tee.

CRACK!

It disappears, swept away by a CLUB wielded by one of the large African-American men.

As their eyes follow the ball up into the sky, their expressions change. Their eyes are no longer interested in the golf ball.

Instead, they focus on a BLACK SWARM of menacing crows swooping down on them from the sky at high speed, whizzing by and swiping their heads, cawing loudly.

GOLFER

(panicked)

Holy -- Let's get out of here!

They drop their clubs, get down low and start running, head-first, fearing for their lives.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAWN - DAY

In front of a middle school, a SHERIFF in a wide-brimmed cowboy hat being interviewed.

INSERT - NEWS FEED POV:

NEWS CAPTION: IDAHO MIDDLE SCHOOL ON LOCKDOWN. SURROUNDED BY MOUNTAIN LIONS.

Tight on the sheriff. In the background, we see a MOTHER, her arms open wide, as her DAUGHTER runs up and embraces her.

MOTHER  
(sobbing)  
My baby!

SHERIFF  
(into camera)  
The situation has been successfully concluded. The school has been taken off lockdown. All six mountain lions were killed. I am happy to report there were no human deaths or injuries.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - EVENING

The Golden Gate Bridge, stretching between San Francisco and Marin.

INT. CIVIC CENTER - EVENING

An absolutely packed venue.

A SINGER on a massive stage, one of those teen pop sensations backed by shimmering DANCERS. God-awful music BLARES from way too many speakers. A sea of FANS scream their heads off.

SINGER  
You've been a great audience.

The lights come up, the exit doors open far in the back. People begin filing out.

CUT TO:

## EXT. CIVIC CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Concertgoers who have just stepped out of the building FREEZE as they realize they're face-to-face with snarling BEARS -- BLACK BEARS and GRIZZLIES. Massive, lumbering behemoths advancing on them.

One of the grizzlies rises up onto his hind legs, towering over the people. For a moment, their faces are a mixture of awe and terror.

Then the grizzly lets out a BLOOD-CURDLING ROAR, and the concertgoers begin running back into the concert hall, looking back as they run.

There is a mass stampede to re-enter the hall.

A line of POLICE CARS, lights flashing, are a safe distance away. A few cars with "Animal Control" emblazoned on them are there too.

A HELICOPTER is overhead.

A TV news truck and a male reporter speaking into the camera, are also a safe distance away.

Snipers are on the roof of the building.

SUDDENLY: GUNSHOTS! From the helicopter and the roof!

The grizzly JERKS as its pelted with bullets.

THE GRIZZLY FALLS.

The other bears are rapidly, systematically killed.

CUT TO:

## EXT. TAXI - NIGHT

Alissa in the front seat, Ted and Clarissa in the back seat of a taxi weaving its way through the streets of D.C.

All of their phones start to buzz. They pull them out. On their screens, the same reports, with headlines: "ANIMALS ATTACK EX-PRO ATHLETES GOLFING!" "LOCKDOWN LIFTED FOR SCHOOL SURROUNDED BY MOUNTAIN LIONS!" "CONCERTGOERS RESCUED FROM BEARS!"

They exchange terrified, eye-opening, knowing looks. It's starting.

EXT. U.S. SOUTHCOM HEADQUARTERS - EVENING

The Venom touches down and Clay and the surviving Marines pile out.

Shelton shouting over the roar of the helicopter blades.

SHELTON

Captain, I know you're just now  
getting here, but you're needed in  
Washington!

CLAY

(shouting)

What?! Why?!

SHELTON

Your father's orders! Things are  
getting bad!

CLAY

How bad?!

SHELTON

C'mon! I'll explain on the way!

INT. CAR - EVENING

Clay and Shelton in the back seat.

Shelton shows Clay his phone. The headline: "ANIMAL  
REBELLION: ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS TAKEN OVER."

SHELTON

I'm taking you to the airport.  
You're on the next flight out.

CLAY

(re: the news report)

This is insane.

SHELTON

It's likely only going to get worse  
from here.

CLAY

What's happening out there?

SHELTON

They're turning on their  
zookeepers. Taking over. Taking  
hostages.

Clay looks at him.

SHELTON (CONT'D)  
I told you. Don't underestimate them.

Clay holds his gaze for a long moment, then turns his head and looks out the window. He's starting to realize the gravity of the situation.

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT

A DOCK WORKER (male, 40) stacking crates.

He notices a SHIP powering toward the docks. We recognize it.

He steps out from behind the crates to get a better look. Realizes that the ship is not slowing down. He turns and RUNS.

The ship PLOWS through the piers, splintering wood and tearing through concrete and metal.

The ship finally stops moving, its deck run aground.

Suddenly, gorillas pour over the side.

A massive door drops open, CRUSHING the stacked crates. LIONS and CHEETAHS sprint down the ramp, the vanguard before Giro, Wollie, and Willy appear behind them.

They make their way down the ramp and onto land.

As they reach the docks, Harpy swoops down from the night sky, landing in front of them.

HARPY  
You made good time.

WOLLIE  
(looking up over at the  
gorillas)  
We had some help from our friends.

GIRO  
Are the zoos and aquariums under  
our control?

HARPY  
They are. We have hostages.

WOLLIE

Good. Your falcons are fast  
messengers.

HARPY

Fastest on the planet.

WOLLIE

And Dr. Waverly?

HARPY

She's trying to get our message to  
the powers that be. Whether they'll  
listen, take her seriously, or do  
anything about it is another story.

WOLLIE

Then let's hope she gets through to  
them before this gets real ugly.

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - NIGHT

The Statue of Freedom looks out over the city, hand on her  
sword.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER - SAME TIME

The Senate and the House. Together in the massive room.

The SPEAKER (female, 70) stands before them.

SPEAKER

At the request of Senator Richards,  
I would like to invite Dr. Clarissa  
Waverly to address this joint  
session before we begin.

Many of the heads swivel around. Uncomfortable looks all  
around. Even the Speaker seems uneasy.

Clarissa stands up and moves behind the nearest podium.

CLARISSA

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

She glances over at Ted. He gives her a small nod.

Alissa, seated at her station, smiles at her. Go ahead.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
(addressing them all)  
For those of you who don't know me,  
my name is Dr. Clarissa Waverly. I  
am first and foremost, a  
veterinarian. I have cared for  
animals my entire life. I also  
serve as the president of the  
Animal Rights Association. I have  
dedicated much of my research to  
the study of animal psychology and  
intelligence. It has long been my  
conviction that animals have  
voices. However, we do not hear  
them, because we do not wish to  
listen. But I am here to tell you  
now that I have finally heard their  
voices.

CUT TO:

INT. ARA OFFICES - SAME TIME

Jerry, Lisa, and the rest of the office workers are staring at the television.

Ellis is there too.

There is a real-time feed of Clarissa on screen, addressing the joint session.

CLARISSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
They have entrusted me as their  
messenger to you, the people of  
this world, and I am humbled by and  
take very seriously that  
responsibility.

(gesturing at Ted)  
My colleague, Ted Sorenson, the  
esteemed professor at the  
University of Colorado and the  
foremost expert on climate change,  
can confirm that he himself has  
witnessed one of the animal  
chieftains speaking with me.

The camera cuts to Ted. He nods in agreement.

CLARISSA (V.O.)  
And so has Senator Richards.

The camera cuts to Alissa. She nods as well.

Back to Clarissa.

CLARISSA (V.O.)  
I am here to tell you all that  
things have got to change.

Ellis looks around the room.

ELLIS  
What the hell is she doing?! She  
didn't tell us about this!  
(to Jerry and Lisa)  
Did you two know anything about  
this?!

Jerry shakes his head. Lisa shrugs.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Castor, Hartman, and all of the advisors are staring at the television screens, watching Clarissa.

CLARISSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The animals will no longer allow  
people to cause the ever-increasing  
severe changes to the climate that  
causes their suffering and,  
ultimately, their extinction.  
(looking directly into the  
camera)  
President Castor. We must rejoin  
the climate treaty, or I'm afraid  
we're looking at a scenario of  
escalation of animal attacks on us,  
our property, and our children. No  
one will be safe, immune, or spared  
because, frankly, that's the way  
they see our behavior toward them.  
We will never be at peace unless we  
change. The animals will continue  
their attacks more often, with more  
ferocity. But there can be peace if  
we respect their right to exist and  
flourish.

Hartman looks at Castor.

The President's jaw is tight. He's listening intently.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

The animal chieftains converge on the iconic park.

CLARISSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If we reduce our destruction of the environment and commit to it by rejoining the climate treaty. This is what they want. This is what they need. This is what they must have. And we must give that to them, to us, to all of us. To this one planet.

Giro looks at a CROW (male) perched on one of the tree branches. He gives the smallest of nods.

The crow flies off.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER - SAME TIME

CLARISSA (CONT'D)

But if retaliation is our answer, then the animals are prepared to meet violence with violence.

Now an undercurrent of conversation begins to thread throughout the chambers. Concerned looks from many members of Congress, but disbelief from many others.

Ted reads all the signs. It's going south fast. He springs to his feet to defend her.

TED

She's not lying! I've heard one of the animal chiefs speaking with her myself.

He looks to Alissa.

TED (CONT'D)

And so has Senator Richards.

Alissa nods in agreement.

TED (CONT'D)

This is what they want. This is what they're fighting for! Listen to what she's saying!

CUT TO:

EXT. SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL ZOO - SAME TIME

The crow dodges a NEWS HELICOPTER as it DIVES down, cutting through the trees and entering the zoo.

It lights on a rock next to a group of TIGERS prowling around a CLUSTER OF TERRIFIED HUMANS.

The crow gives a curt nod to one of the tigers.

The tiger turns on the humans, HISSING.

BACK TO:

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER - SAME TIME

Suddenly cell phones begin RINGING.

There are audible GASPS and SHOUTS throughout the room.

Clarissa's looking around at them all, staring in horror at their phone screens. Several of them are getting to their feet. The place is falling into pandemonium.

Clarissa's eyes lock onto Alissa, then Ted. What is happening?

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

The phone in front of Hartman rings. He snatches it up.

HARTMAN  
(into phone)  
Go.

Castor spins in his chair. Hartman looks up at him, and the look on his face says, "Yes. Be concerned."

After a moment, he drops the phone back onto the cradle and picks up the nearest remote. He switches one of the televisions to another news station.

On the TV, aerial footage of the Smithsonian Zoo, and a headline: "RAMPAGE AT LOCAL ZOO."

REPORTER (V.O.)  
-- greatest fears, it appears as  
though the animals have begun  
killing the humans that were being  
held hostage!

More aerial footage, we glimpse a shot of a man who has been mauled to death by a tiger that's standing over him. It's a quick shot, but it does the job.

WOLLIE (V.O.)  
That wasn't supposed to happen!

Castor faces Hartman. The game has changed.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
Reports are still coming in, but --

CUT TO:

INT. ALISSA'S OFFICE - MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Clarissa sits across from Ted. Her legs trot nervously. Ted's staring at the floor.

The door snaps open, Alissa walks in.

She looks at them.

ALISSA  
It's bad.

Now she sinks into one of the empty chairs.

CLARISSA  
How bad?

ALISSA  
Fourteen dead at the Smithsonian Zoo. Half of Congress thinks you should be committed to an asylum and are demanding my resignation for bringing you in. Someone named Lorn Ellis has issued a statement on behalf of the ARA board saying that you were removed as president, and that this is all a terrible PR stunt. So, about as bad as it can get.

Clarissa shakes her head.

ALISSA (CONT'D)  
They wanted Castor's attention?  
Well, now they've got it.

TED  
What do you mean?

ALISSA  
The president will speak to the  
nation about the situation at nine  
tonight.

Ted and Clarissa exchange looks.

ALISSA (CONT'D)  
Some kind of military operation, if  
not a full-scale war, is  
inevitable.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Castor enters.

Amanda is asleep on the couch, her head in Natasha's lap.

Sandy's lying on the floor, her eyes following Castor as he crosses to sit down opposite his wife and granddaughter.

Castor loosens his tie, rubs at his tired eyes.

CASTOR  
Fourteen. Fourteen dead.

Natasha stares at him. She says nothing.

CASTOR (CONT'D)  
(catching her eye)  
What?

NATASHA  
What did you expect to happen,  
Gary? If half of what Clarissa  
Waverly says is true, then--

CASTOR  
Oh, c'mon. Not you too.

NATASHA  
(heated)  
Obviously the way you are handling  
this isn't working.

CASTOR

I am not about to validate the claims of a woman who thinks she can talk to animals, Natasha. Think of how the party would respond. Think of what it would do to this presidency, not to mention my re-election chances.

NATASHA

Well that professor and Senator Richards heard them talking to her too.

Castor is silent.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

People are dead.

CASTOR

You think I don't know that? But you know our policy, Natasha. We don't negotiate with terrorists.

NATASHA

Terrorists? These are not terrorists, Gary. They are animals. These are not some foreign invaders looking to disrupt a political system. They share this planet with us. They have as much right to be here as we do.

Castor throws up his hands.

CASTOR

Then what? What would you have me do?

NATASHA

You are the president of the United States, Gary, the most powerful man in the world. You can stop all of this by just listening. Sign the accords. They protect not only the people, but the animals who live with us.

CASTOR

Absolutely not. It's a terrible --

NATASHA

Economic decision? I know, I've heard that before.

(MORE)

NATASHA (CONT'D)

(beat)

Listen to me. You can't see past  
your own ego in this. I've already  
discussed it with the children.  
I'll be leaving in the morning.

Castor stares at her in disbelief.

CASTOR

(you're serious?)

Leaving?

NATASHA

Washington. I'm leaving Washington,  
Gary.

CASTOR

And going where?

NATASHA

Somewhere that isn't here. There  
isn't enough room in this house for  
your ego and your family. Veronica  
will be coming with me and she'll  
be bringing Amanda.

Castor takes a step toward her, hand outstretched.

CASTOR

Now wait just a minute --

Suddenly Sandy is on her feet, BARKING and SNAPPING at him!

Castor jerks his hand back. He stares at his dog, shocked. He  
backs away slowly as the door BURSTS open.

Two SECRET SERVICE agents enter.

Sandy's going crazy, growling and baring her teeth.

The commotion awakens Amanda.

Natasha stands, taking Amanda into her arms. She turns and  
starts out the room. Sandy trails after her, glowering at  
Castor as she passes.

AGENT

(to Castor)

Are you all right, sir?

Castor stares after his family, watching them leave.

CASTOR

I...

(beat)

Yes. Get me General Hartman.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - NIGHT

Wollie looks around at the other two chieftains, FUMING.

WOLLIE (CONT'D)

What went wrong?!

HARPY

The tigers claim to have been  
acting under orders carried by  
crows.

WOLLIE

Did you give that order, Harpy? Air  
is your division!

HARPY

You know I wouldn't.

WOLLIE

Then who did?

Giro straightens up, towering over them. He clears his  
throat.

GIRO

I did.

Wollie and Harpy snap around to face him.

WOLLIE

What?!

GIRO

I gave the order.

HARPY

Why would you do that, Giro?

GIRO

(seething)

Because neither of you have what it  
takes to do what's necessary! The  
veterinarian failed.

(MORE)

GIRO (CONT'D)  
You wanted to get their attention,  
to scare them into submission, and  
now we have it! You're welcome.

He turns and storms away, ducking to avoid the branches of the trees.

Wollie sighs and turns to Harpy.

HARPY  
Should I go and get Dr. Waverly?

WOLLIE  
Bringing her here will only put her in danger. Things are only going to get worse now. And we have to prepare for it. I wish I were a fly on the wall to know what they're planning against us.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Press in on a few flies scattered on the white office walls.

The national security advisors are oblivious to the flies.

Cortez hangs up a phone.

CORTEZ  
The president's about to go live.

He picks up a remote, points it at one of the screens. The president's face appears.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - EAST ROOM - NIGHT

Castor stands behind the podium at the room's fore. He's addressing the nation.

CASTOR  
My fellow Americans. Tonight, fourteen Americans were killed at the Smithsonian Zoo.

CUT TO:

INT. ALISSA'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Clarissa, Ted, Alissa, and the senator's staff all watch the broadcast on a wall-mounted screen.

INSERT - CLOSE ANGLE - TV

CASTOR (V.O.)

Our cities have been attacked from within. Currently, there are upwards of four hundred souls being held captive in zoos and aquariums across this country. We have no choice but to answer this escalation in violence with the full force of our nation's military.

Clarissa and Ted exchange nervous looks.

INT. HELICOPTER - SAME TIME

Clay and a team of marines onboard a helicopter, the Smithsonian Zoo rapidly approaching below.

The president's address is broadcasting over his headset.

CASTOR (V.O.)

We will put down this threat with immediate and decisive action. As of now, we are at war. We will not allow animals to rule us. This is a fight for the very control of our planet.

BACK TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - EAST ROOM - SAME TIME

CASTOR

May God bless America and protect our troops.

He turns on his heels and walks out of the room.

EXT. SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL ZOO - NIGHT

A spotlight falls across the tigers, their jowls stained with blood.

Immediately GUNSHOTS begin ringing out! Automatic rifle fire, from a gunner in the helicopter.

Two of the tigers JERK VIOLENTLY and pitch over, the others break for cover.

INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Clay sees them scattering. He turns and motions at the Marines with him.

CLAY  
(shouting)  
Let's move! And check your fire!

EXT. SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL ZOO - NIGHT

Ropes fall from the helicopter. The Marines rappel down them, Clay in the lead.

They fall into defensive formations as soon as their feet hit the ground.

WHAM! One of them is KNOCKED OUT OF HIS BOOTS by a MASSIVE ROCK.

Clay looks around and --

A GARGANTUAN GORILLA hammers his chest and THUNDERS TOWARDS THEM!

CLAY  
Weapons free!

The Marines OPEN FIRE!

The Gorilla takes a DOZEN ROUNDS to the chest, but keeps coming.

Clay DIVES OUT OF THE WAY as the Gorilla swipes at him, FIRING until the Gorilla, howling, pitches sideways in a heap.

Clay struggles to his feet.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Castor, Hartman, and the advisors are all watching LIVE FOOTAGE from the assault on the television screens.

One of the camera screens lingers on the dead gorilla.

CLAY (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
Area secure. We're moving to secure  
the remaining hostages.

We're on Hartman as he watches and listens. He's got his fist clenched so tight his knuckles are turning white. Sweat's beading his forehead. He's nervous.

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - NIGHT

Now tents have been set up beneath the cover of the trees.

INT. CHIEF TENT - NIGHT

Wollie, Willy, Giro, and Harpy in the tent.

A FALCON blows through the top.

FALCON  
The military has engaged at the zoos!

WOLLIE  
How bad is it?

FALCON  
The animals are defending themselves, brave soldiers them all, but many will be lost.

Harpy shakes her head, looks at Giro.

HARPY  
This is your fault. Every life that is lost is on you!

GIRO  
Just as every life lost because you refused to do anything is on all of us. I can live with that. Because maybe now we'll be noticed.

HARPY  
(to Wollie)  
This is madness, Wollie. It has to stop before we're all, humans and animals, wiped out.

WOLLIE  
(to Giro)  
Harpy's right.  
(MORE)

## WOLLIE (CONT'D)

We had plans in place, Giro. Solid plans, a strategy. Your scheming has thrown all of that up in the air. We had leverage, now we are the unnecessary aggressor. We have to rethink. An all-out attack against us is coming, and we have to prepare for it. We will bring as many animals as we can here. This is where we'll make our stand.

Giro's nostrils flare. He stomps his hooves violently, looks at Willy.

## GIRO

Do you see it now? Only when we are extinct. That is when they will finally see the truth.

He turns and storms out of the tent.

## WOLLIE

(to Harpy)

Assemble the messengers. Tell all of the animals within a fifty-mile radius to marshal here at the park. Because of Giro's reckless actions, they will be coming for us now. And it's only a matter of time before they find us.

Harpy nods, spreads her wings, and races out of the tent, followed by the falcon.

Now Wollie and Willy are alone. Wollie turns to his son.

## WOLLIE (CONT'D)

What's bothering you?

## WILLY

What do you mean?

## WOLLIE

I know you've been talking with Giro.

## WILLY

It -- It's just that...

(beat)

I can't help but think that maybe he's right. Why don't we slaughter these humans while we have the advantage? You've seen how they respond. They're afraid of us.

(MORE)

WILLY (CONT'D)  
That's why they'll kill us if we  
don't assert ourselves now!

Wollie considers his son's words. After a moment, he takes a long breath and exhales slowly.

WOLLIE  
Son, when I was just a little older than you, I felt the same way. Eager, zealous. Those aren't bad qualities. But they must be tempered. When I discovered the works of a human military strategist named Sun Tzu, I began to change my ways of thinking. In his work, *The Art of War*, he talks about the importance of fighting a war well. Planning, strategizing, thinking carefully. It's twice as effective as just rushing in. That is what I have tried to do here. Think carefully. Plan. Minimize casualties on both sides. Now, you see, Giro's thoughtlessness has unnecessarily cost many human and animal lives. And for what? Revenge?

WILLY  
(heated)  
But he lost his mother because of the humans! They killed her! Just like they killed mine! She was your mate!

WOLLIE  
Willy, you still don't understand. Humans should not be wiped out. As with all things in nature, there is a balance. When that balance is tipped too far in one direction, the repercussions for all of us are severe. We must find a way forward together with the humans. Remember that, son.

Now Wollie moves past him, disappearing from the tent.

Willy's alone, letting his father's words wash over him.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Clarissa, sitting on the edge of the bed and drinking straight from a bottle of liquor. She stares at the news report playing on the TV.

CUT TO:

INSERT - CLOSE ANGLE - TV

Images of the Smithsonian Zoo, now swarmed by police, EMS, military. Hostages being escorted out. Bodies of dead humans, battered and bloodied, being wheeled off to the morgue. Bodies of dead animals all around.

REPORTER (V.O.)

After a harrowing day, we are now receiving reports confirming that zoos and aquariums around the country are being liberated. We do not know yet how many people have been killed, but we do know that animal deaths are substantial.

BACK TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

She switches off the television. Stands up and crosses to the window. She peels back the curtains, sees the CAPITOL BUILDING in the distance.

She looks down at the street below. It is PACKED with people.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

ANIMAL RIGHTS PROTESTORS, by the HUNDREDS. Marching with signs reading "SAVE THE ANIMALS!" and "NO MORE DEATH!" and "HEAR THEM!"

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Snipers on the roof maintain overwatch.

More animal rights protestors have gathered outside the gates beyond the White House lawn. They are pressed right up against the fence, SHOUTING and WAVING SIGNS.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Castor, grim and solemn, looks out the window behind the Resolute Desk. In the distance, he can see those protestors screaming at him.

BACK TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A knock on the door behind Clarissa turns her attention from the protests below.

She takes a long pull from the bottle, turns away from the window, staggers over to the door.

She opens it. Ted's standing on the other side.

TED

Hey.

CLARISSA

What do you want?

TED

Just checking on you. Can I come in?

She thinks about it for a second. Then sighs and walks away from the door.

After a moment, Ted enters, lets the door shut behind him.

Clarissa sits down on the side of the bed.

CLARISSA

Well, I failed.

TED

No, you tried. And that's what matters.

She waves his words away, taking another drink.

Ted storms over and wrenches the bottle out of her hand.

TED (CONT'D)  
Enough.

She looks up at him, fire in her eyes as she reaches for it. He moves it out of her reach.

TED (CONT'D)  
Clarissa, stop!

Now she's on her feet.

CLARISSA  
You don't just get to come back  
into my life and tell me my  
problems, Ted! I told you, after  
that speech to Congress, we're  
through.

TED  
Then why did you just let me in?  
Why didn't you tell me to just go  
away?

She tries to stand, nearly stumbles, Ted catches her with one arm.

For a moment they stand there, listening to the shouts of the protestors outside.

Now there are tears burning her eyes.

CLARISSA  
How many more animals have to die  
because I failed? I've dedicated my  
life to understanding them, to  
helping them. And now...

Ted sets the whiskey bottle on the nightstand, then eases onto the bed. Clarissa sits down next to him.

He takes her hands into his.

TED  
Clarissa, listen to me. You are the  
most caring and compassionate  
person I know. You have not failed.  
The animals came to you because  
they knew that you were the one  
person who would listen to them.  
You tried. You did what you could.  
But things happened that you  
couldn't control. That's not your  
fault.

Her eyes search his face.

TED (CONT'D)

I really hurt you. And I'm sorry for that. After you left, I realized what I had done. I saw how much I hurt you, and I swore I'd never do it again. And because I felt so guilty for what I did, I have kept myself alone for so many years now. But being with you the past couple of days, I see now what I've been missing.

Now he reaches up and takes her face into his hands. He wipes the tears from her cheeks.

TED (CONT'D)

I don't know what the future holds. But I know the animals are going to need you, whatever happens. You can't do it alone. And I know I'm not the best person, maybe not even the right person. But I am the person who believes in you and believes in protecting the animals and our planet more than anyone else, except for you!

They sit there for a long moment, staring into each other's eyes.

Then, finally, she kisses him.

EXT. MARINE CORPS BASE - NIGHT

A helicopter touches down on the lawn.

Clay and his team, bloodied but alive, pile out.

As they move across the lawn, Clay FREEZES.

Up ahead, he sees Hartman waiting.

CUT TO:

INT. MARINE CORPS OFFICE - LATER

Hartman stands alone in the dimly lit office space.

The door opens. Clay enters, cleaned up, having changed out of his fatigues.

They face one another.

CLAY

What can I do for you, general?

HARTMAN

I'm your father, Clay. And I'm not here on military business.

CLAY

Well, you're in uniform. And this is a Marine base. So anything else you've got to say should probably wait.

Hartman swallows hard.

HARTMAN

The president extends his personal thanks for your handling of both the cruise ship and the zoo.

(beat)

That's why he's requesting you for a special task force.

CLAY

Ah. Well, tell him I'm happy to serve.

Clay turns to leave.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I guess that means I'll be seeing you soon, then.

HARTMAN

Actually, I'll be running this op remotely.

Clay looks back at him.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

I'm taking your mother to the ranch.

Clay's more than a little shocked. But it's a pleasant surprise.

CLAY

Huh.

Hartman moves past him and exits the room.

HARTMAN (O.S.)  
You'll be briefed at 0900. Get some rest.

Clay stares after him as the door shuts.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Castor enters. He's exhausted, looking like hell.

He starts across the room, loosening his tie and undoing the top button of his shirt.

He pauses when he spots Amanda staring out the window at the rose garden.

After a moment, she turns to look at him. There are tears streaking her face.

Castor starts toward her.

CASTOR  
(concerned)  
What is it, sweetheart? What's wrong?

AMANDA  
I saw the pictures on TV, grandpa.  
And people were saying you're a bad man, because you're killing all the animals. Why are you killing them?

Castor's flustered. He clears his throat as he kneels down next to her.

CASTOR  
I have to keep us safe, Amanda. I have to keep you safe.

She wipes the tears from her face.

AMANDA  
But I love the animals, grandpa.  
(beat)  
Are you going to kill Sandy too?

Castor opens his mouth, nearly chokes.

CASTOR  
What? I --

The door snaps open behind him. Natasha, and their daughter, Veronica.

VERONICA  
C'mon, Amanda.

Amanda looks at Castor for a long moment, then she moves across the room to join her mother.

CASTOR  
Wait.

Veronica picks up Amanda, leaves the room.

Now it's just Castor and his wife.

NATASHA  
You'll never win her back, Gary.  
Not if you stay on this course.

And with that, she's gone.

CASTOR  
Natasha --

The door slams shut.

Castor touches a very dry tongue to his lips as he looks around the office.

Now he's completely alone.

He spins in his chair and looks out the window again. The protestors are still out there.

The look on his face says it all. He's reconsidering everything.

FADE TO:

EXT. RANCH - DAY

A thundering of hooves.

HARTMAN, on the back of a staggeringly beautiful STALLION, guides the horse across an obstacle course.

His WIFE, riding a beautiful MARE, races behind him.

SUPER: MONTANA

They put their animals through the paces, and finally draw up next to each other. Both animals are lathered with sweat.

Hartman smiles at his wife.

HARTMAN  
I've missed this.

He pats the sweat-sticky neck of his mount.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
And I've missed you too, boy.

The horse NEIGHS beneath him.

WIFE  
Thank you for taking the time to  
come out here, Walter. It means a  
lot.

Hartman nods. Checks his watch.

HARTMAN  
I need to get back to the ranch  
house. I've got to be on a call  
soon.

He tugs on the reigns and the horse trots away, moving out of  
shot.

His wife brushes at her mare's mane.

Suddenly there's a sickening SNAP!

Offscreen, the horse BELLOWS and Hartman SHOUTS.

His wife looks around and SCREAMS!

WIFE  
Walter!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. RANCH - LATER

A VET hovers over Hartman's stallion. The horse is lying on  
the ground, breathing hard. Its leg is a MANGLED MESS.

The vet straightens up and turns to Hartman, standing nearby  
with his wife.

VET  
(shaking his head)  
No good, General. It's no good.

HARTMAN  
What is it?

VET

The leg is broken, and the fall  
punctured a lung. There's nothing  
else to do.

Hartman looks at his wife, then moves away from her, stepping over to the horse.

He kneels down and pats his horse's neck.

HARTMAN

(getting emotional)

But I've had him since he was a  
baby.

VET

I'm sorry, sir. It's going to take  
some time, but I can head back to  
my place, get the necessary drugs.

HARTMAN

How long will that take?

VET

I'll go as fast as I can.

HARTMAN

But he'll be suffering.

VET

We're pretty far out in the  
country, sir. It's going to take a  
little time.

HARTMAN

No. No, I'll do it. I'm not going  
to watch him suffer.

After a moment, the vet nods. Turns and walks away.

Walter pulls his BERETTA from his waistband, careful to keep it behind his back as he pets his horse's nose.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

(softly)

Easy, boy. I'm sorry about this.

The horse gives a pained neigh. More like a whimper.

Hartman stares right into the horse's eye, and sees something like resignation glowing there.

He kicks the safety off the handgun. Presses it against the side of the horse's head.

The horse doesn't move, having accepted what's coming.

And there are tears streaming down Hartman's cheeks as his finger tightens on the trigger and--

BOOM!

The report carries like a cannon shot across the countryside.

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - DUSK

A SNIPER SCOPE focuses in on the chieftain tent.

Clay lowers his RIFLE and adjusts his EARPIECE

CLAY  
(quietly, into earpiece)  
This is November one. I've got eyes  
on the tent.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Castor and his advisors are staring at the screens, where a LIVE FEED of the situation in the park is unfolding.

VOICE (V.O.)  
Copy that, November one. Confirmed.  
Those are the chieftains.

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - DUSK

Clay glances over his shoulder at the SPECIAL UNIT of camouflaged soldiers hunkered down behind him.

CLAY  
(quietly, into earpiece)  
Copy.  
(quietly, to his soldiers)  
Move in.

Slowly, the soldiers creep toward the tent.

High above them, the branches break the golden sunset into fragmented beams.

On one of those branches, perched, unmoving, is an OWL. Slowly, its head turns so that it's looking directly at those soldiers converging on the tent below.

It HOOTS.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Stop.

The soldiers FREEZE.

He looks up, scanning the trees.

Another HOOT, further off.

SOLDIER (O.S.)  
(over earpiece)  
What is it?

Clay stares up into the canopy, his eyes searching the shadows there.

CLAY  
Maybe nothing. Let's move.

CUT TO:

INT. CHIEF TENT - SAME TIME

The chieftains are looking over plans scratched into the earth.

Harpy's head cocks to the side, all sound falling away. Then, she hears it.

A HOOT.

HARPY  
They've found us!

Wollie looks up at her.

WOLLIE  
It's time. You know what to do,  
Harpy.

She EXPLODES upward, bursting out the top of the tent.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - DUSK

As she clears the top of the tent, a legion of eagles erupt from the trees and fall into formation with her. As they sail above the treetops, Harpy looks around at them.

HARPY

Call out their positions when you see them!

BACK TO:

INT. CHIEF TENT - SAME TIME

Wollie to Giro.

WOLLIE

We hold our own. No unnecessary killing.

Giro snorts and leaves the tent.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

Through his scope, Clay sees Giro emerge from the tent.

CLAY

(quietly, into headset)  
Eyes on. We have the giraffe.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Castor and his advisors are watching a live feed of the operation on the video screens.

Shelton is there.

Cortez looks around at the president.

CORTEZ

The intel checks out, Mr. President. That's them, it's gotta be.

Castor swallows hard.

CASTOR  
Give the order. Take them out.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHIEF TENT - SAME TIME

Wollie emerges from the tent behind Giro.

WOLLIE  
Giro, I'm going to find my son.  
We'll meet you --

BOOM!

Wollie GASPS, the air driven from him. He looks down. There's a GAPING WOUND in his chest.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

Clay sees the walrus's reaction through the rifle's scope. Watches as Wollie collapses onto his side.

CLAY  
(into headset)  
One chief is down.

Suddenly, one of his soldiers SCREAMS and FIRES wildly into the underbrush.

Bullets tear through the brush, striking trees and snapping branches.

A BLACK SHAPE pounces up from the undergrowth, TACKLING the soldier to the ground, followed by ANOTHER, and ANOTHER!

Off the terrified expression of one soldier as he stares past BARED TEETH we realize we're looking at --

PANTHERS!

The jaws close around the soldier's face, and the place erupts in CHAOS!

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

CLAY (V.O.)  
(filtered, over radio)  
It's a trap! They set a trap! We --

The lines goes dead.

Castor looks around at his advisors, sheer panic on his face.

CASTOR  
Order the rest of our forces to  
move in!

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - MOMENTS LATER

Now DOZENS of soldiers are moving through the trees.

One of them looks up. He sees Harpy and the eagles overhead.

SOLDIER  
Contact!

He lifts his weapon and begins FIRING INTO THE SKIES.

Harpy and the eagles evade the gunfire.

HARPY  
We've found them!

She SCREECHES!

BACK TO:

EXT. CHIEF TENT - SAME TIME

Giro approaches Wollie, looks down at him.

The walrus struggles to breathe.

GIRO  
Fool.

He turns and starts to leave him, only to see Willy emerging from the trees, harried.

WILLY  
Giro, what's happening?! I heard --

Now Willy sees his father.

WILLY (CONT'D)  
What? No...

He crosses to Wollie.

WOLLIE  
(dying)  
Son...

WILLY  
I -- I'm sorry, I wasn't here...

WOLLIE  
Listen... to me. You -- you must  
take my place... as the chieftain  
of the sea animals.

WILLY  
What? No, I -- I can't -- I'm not  
ready.

WOLLIE  
You must. Remember, son. The  
only... way forward with humans...  
is together.

Wollie dies.

Willy's stunned. How could this have happened so quickly?

He looks around at Giro.

WILLY  
Giro, I...  
(beat)  
What happens now?

GIRO  
(darkly)  
We show these humans what we're  
really capable of.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Castor's staring nervously at the screens.

CORTEZ (O.S.)  
Sir, our forces have engaged the  
animals.

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - MOMENTS LATER

Another detachment of soldiers moving through the brush. Their leader, sweat beading his forehead, holds up a FIST and his team stops moving.

He cocks his head, listens. A few limbs snap nearby. Something's coming...

He raises his rifle, prepares to meet it -- only for his legs to be taken out from under him! His gun FIRES WILDLY into the air as he falls.

A KOMODO DRAGON MAKES OFF WITH THE SOLDIER as the rest of the team begin to FIRE INTO THE BRUSH.

Suddenly GOLDEN POISON FROGS LEAP FROM THE TREES, LATCHING ONTO THE BODIES AND FACES OF THE SOLDIERS!

They swat at the frogs, FIRING AIMLESSLY. They're woefully unprepared for this kind of threat.

BACK TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Castor sees several of the real-time feeds from the helmets of soldiers on the ground.

He looks around at his advisors.

CASTOR  
WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING OVER THERE?!

The advisors shake their heads, just as confused.

Shelton studies the images on the screen.

SHELTON  
 (quietly, almost to  
 himself)  
 Golden poison frogs.

Now everyone looks at him.

He realizes he's just become the focus of the room.

SHELTON (CONT'D)  
 Oh, um...  
 (beat)  
 Those are golden poison frogs.  
 Their skin secretions...  
 (MORE)

SHELTON (CONT'D)  
very toxic. Just one can kill up to  
twenty men.

CASTOR  
I'm sorry, who are you?

SHELTON  
(awkwardly)  
Uh, Dan Shelton, Mr. President. Vet  
Corps.

CASTOR  
What are we supposed to do about  
these frogs?

SHELTON  
They're small. Fast.  
(flustered)  
I don't know, Mr. President. Those  
soldiers are not prepared for this.

Castor looks back around at the screens, mortified.

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

Giro and Willy advance through the trees, flanked on all  
sides by lions and tigers.

Harpy touches down on a branch above them.

HARPY  
The poison frogs have slowed them  
down.

GIRO  
Are they retreating?

HARPY  
No, they're sending more units. My  
eagles are on overwatch.

GIRO  
Send in the bullet ants.

HARPY  
Already done.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - MOMENTS LATER

POV from the camera on the helmet of a soldier as his detachment sweeps through the underbrush.

Suddenly he looks down.

BULLET ANTS, crawling on the toes of his boots.

SOLDIER

What...?

He looks around at the others. They're all noticing them now. It's like the whole ground is crawling.

They begin to FIRE at the earth.

Suddenly the soldiers begin SCREAMING and DROPPING from pain as if they've been shot, as the ants pour into their boots.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Fall back! Fall back!

BACK TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

We're now seeing the same POV on one of the wall screens.

Castor points at the feed.

CASTOR

What are those?

SHELTON

(trying to make out the  
footage)

Um...

CASTOR

(looking around at him)

Well?

SHELTON

I'd have to say bullet ants, sir.  
Their sting is... excruciating, to  
say the least.

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

The soldier with the POV helmet retreats strategically, firing at the ants.

But there are so, so many of them. He TURNS to run -- ONLY TO BE TAKEN OUT BY A BLUR OF ORANGE AND BLACK! A MASSIVE, STEALTHY TIGER, taking advantage of the distraction.

BACK TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

The POV feed goes dead. The last image any of them saw was the image of the tiger flashing across the screen like something out of a horror movie.

Cortez shakes his head.

CORTEZ  
This is a bloodbath.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

Giro looks at one of the beautiful WHITE TIGERS he's got with him.

GIRO  
Get word to the tarantula hawks.

The tiger nods and springs into the thicket.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

The POV feed has been restored.

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - MOMENTS LATER

The soldiers are strategically retreating now. Some moving, turning, laying down covering with fire while the others fall back and do the same.

Suddenly we hear a BUZZING, a loud, menacing hum. Several of the soldiers stop and look around. The place is dark now, the shadows are thick and heavy.

What is coming for them?

And it's like the night around them EXPLODES WITH --  
TARANTULA HAWKS!

Massive numbers of these tarantulas envelope the soldiers like a dark cloud.

They all drop to the ground, SCREAMING!

BACK TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Castor's horrified at the sight on the screens.

CASTOR

My god...

SHELTON

Tarantula hawks.

Castor looks at him. He's never heard those two words side-by-side before, and it's downright petrifying.

CASTOR

What?

SHELTON

Spider wasps. It's a toss-up between those and bullet ants as to which one causes more pain.

CASTOR

Why don't we send in some drones?

SHELTON

Mr. President, get those soldiers out of there.

Castor swallows. He nods quickly.

CASTOR

Yes. Give the order. Retreat.

The advisors immediately snatch up the phones.

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

Giro sees the flashes of muzzles through the darkness, hears the screams as the soldiers run.

Harpy appears on a branch next to him.

HARPY

They're in full retreat.

GIRO

Good.

He turns around, but Willy moves in front of him.

WILLY

But won't they come back for us?

GIRO

Of course they will. But we won't give them that chance. Come with me.

Giro moves past him.

Willy and Harpy exchange looks, then Willy starts after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHIEF TENT - NIGHT

Giro and Willy emerge from the trees.

By Wollie's body, now there is a cluster of black panthers, their faces slick with human blood. They're circled up around Clay like a makeshift cage. His fatigues are torn, his face cut and bloodied.

GIRO

(approaching them)

Well done.

Clay looks squarely at Giro.

CLAY

I don't know if you can hear me.  
But my name is Captain Clay  
Hartman, United States Marine  
Corps. We know you're here. You'll  
never get out. You gain nothing by  
holding me. So let me go or kill  
me. Just don't waste my time.

Giro stares at him. Blows hard, then turns and moves into the tent.

Clay stares after him. Was that a smirk?

Willy stares at him, then looks at his father. Clay sees it.

Then Willy moves into the tent.

We see Harpy on a distant branch. She looks at Wollie's body, a tear runs down her beak.

Her wings burst outward and she rockets off into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. CHIEF TENT - SAME TIME

Willy approaches Giro.

GIRO  
I'm sorry for your loss, Willy.

WILLY  
They killed him.

GIRO  
Violence. It is the way of humans.  
You must now assume your father's  
responsibilities.

Giro gestures back outside of the tent.

GIRO (CONT'D)  
That soldier will be our manifesto.  
Our way of ensuring our demands are  
met.

WILLY  
What?

GIRO  
Just remember, Willy. Your father  
is dead because he wasn't willing  
to do what's necessary. Don't make  
the same mistake.

Willy considers this, realizing the scope of what's now happening.

He's going to have to step up. And off his reaction we --

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON MONUMENT - NIGHT

Clarissa and Ted are holding hands, looking up at the monument.

Nearby, there are animal rights protestors shouting and news cameras covering the scene.

Clarissa glances at them, then looks back at the monument.

CLARISSA

You know, of all the times I've been to DC, this is the first time I've been to this particular monument.

TED

Really?

CLARISSA

Mmm-hmm.

TED

Well, I guess you can strike this one off your bucket list.

He kisses her.

TED (CONT'D)

Would you excuse me for a moment?  
Need to use the restroom.

CLARISSA

(nodding)

Sure.

Ted moves out of eye and earshot.

Suddenly a SCREECH and Harpy SLAMS down on the ground before Clarissa.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)

Harpy?!

HARPY

Dr. Waverly, I know you tried to help us before, and things did not go well. But right now, you are our only chance.

CLARISSA

Why, what's happened?

HARPY

The military, they launched some kind of attack on the chieftains. They found out we're here.

CLARISSA

The chieftains are here?

Ted, from a distance, is now walking toward Clarissa and sees the two of them. He stops in his tracks, out of earshot and out of their sight. He watches intently.

HARPY

Yes, we've been here, in DC, the president's own backyard. It was Wollie's plan, the last place they'd look. But he's... now he's...

Clarissa touches Harpy's feathers warmly. She gets it. Empathy.

CLARISSA

I'm sorry.

HARPY

Giro, the chieftain of the land animals, he's taken a prisoner. A soldier.

CLARISSA

A soldier?

HARPY

Yes. Please, Dr. Waverly. Is there anything you can do? Giro will use this hostage to escalate this to an all-out war. We must do something.

CLARISSA

Does this soldier have a name?

HARPY

His uniform said Hartman.

CLARISSA

That name sounds familiar. There's a General Walter Hartman who works with the president. I wonder...?

(beat)

Let me look into it Harpy and see. If they're connected, we'll get to this General Hartman!

HARPY  
Good luck, Dr. Waverly.

Harpy flies off.

Ted returns, eyes open inquisitively to Clarissa.

She takes his hand urgently.

CLARISSA  
C'mon, we have to move. I'll  
explain everything on the way.

They start fast-walking.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Hartman paces the living room, phone pressed against his ear.

His wife is sitting on the couch, clutching a pillow. Her face is streaked with tears.

HARTMAN  
(into phone)  
Please, Gary. This is my son we're  
talking about.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - SAME TIME

Castor, behind his desk, on the phone.

He's disheveled. His hair's a wreck. He looks absolutely spent.

CASTOR  
I know that Walter. We'll do  
everything we can to make sure he  
gets out unharmed. The animal  
chiefs must be eliminated.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

Hartman sighs.

HARTMAN  
Mr. President, I've been  
thinking...

He looks at a picture of himself and his horse hanging on the wall.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Maybe these animals...

(beat)

Maybe they deserve what they're asking for. Maybe what they're asking for isn't too much.

Castor sighs and rubs his tired eyes.

CASTOR

Walter...

HARTMAN

Maybe giving them what they're asking for is the right thing to do.

CASTOR

(honest)

I don't even know what the right thing is anymore. If I re-enter the accords, my re-election...

Hartman's shaking in anger now.

HARTMAN

Mr. President, just sign the damn accords!

Castor sighs and shakes his head.

CASTOR

Walter, just get back here as soon as you can. We'll do everything we can to keep Clay alive.

HARTMAN

Mr. President --

Castor hangs up the phone.

He sighs, drops his head, lips pressed together, deep in thought. Then he looks up. His Chief of Staff, Stewart, is sitting on one of the couches in front of his desk waiting to talk to him. V.P. Johnson is sitting on another couch next to the President's desk.

CASTOR

What?

STEWART

The protests are getting worse.  
Devastating fires have broken out  
in the western States, likely the  
results of climate change. This  
isn't going away, Mr. President.  
You need to make a decision.

Castor looks at Johnson.

JOHNSON

(solemnly)

She's right, Mr. President.

Castor nods. He knows.

CASTOR

Has there been any word from my  
wife or my daughter?

STEWART

No, sir.

Castor presses his lips together. What can he do?

CUT TO:

INT. RANCH HOUSE - SAME TIME

Hartman stares at the phone. He can't believe it.

His wife is sobbing uncontrollably.

He crosses the room, sits down next to her, puts an arm  
around her.

HARTMAN

We'll figure this out. I promise.  
I'll get him back.

The phone RINGS. He answers immediately.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

This is Hartman.

ALISSA (V.O.)

General Hartman, this is Senator  
Alissa Richards.

HARTMAN  
(confused)  
Okay? What can I do for you  
Senator?

ALISSA (V.O.)  
I think, General, the better  
question is what I can do for you.  
I understand your son is being held  
by the animals?

HARTMAN  
Senator, how did you know that?

ALISSA (V.O.)  
I think there's someone you should  
talk to.

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - NIGHT

Torches light the park beneath the canopy of trees.

Animals of the land and air are all gathered there. Wollie's body lies on a LARGE ROCK at the edge of a POND, where fish keep a silent vigil just beneath the surface.

Clay is bound by vines and on his knees next to the rock.

CUT TO:

INT. CHIEF TENT - SAME TIME

Willy peers out of the tent at the scene outside.

He retreats inside and turns to face Giro.

WILLY  
What is this?

GIRO  
What's necessary. Between your  
father and the eagle, there has  
been much dissension among our  
ranks. But that human out there has  
killed your father. The sea animals  
will want their revenge. As their  
leader, you must give it to them.

WILLY  
What are you saying, Giro? That I'm  
to kill the prisoner?

GIRO

Precisely. Blood for blood. Once the sea animals have their revenge, the eagle will fall in line or be ousted by her own kind. And from this point forward, there will be no disunity. All the animals will be unified in our mission to hurt, maim, and kill more humans until they capitulate to our demands.

WILLY

My father would not want it to go this far, Giro.

GIRO

And look at where he is now.

(beat)

Don't be like your father, Willy.  
Do what's necessary.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - NIGHT

Castor and his advisors are sitting around the conference table.

CASTOR

All right, people, are we ready?  
Cortez?

CORTEZ

The strike team is awaiting the green-light, sir.

CASTOR

Good.

Shelton clears his throat. They all look around at him.

SHELTON

Mr. President, if I may...  
(beat)

I don't know that this is the best course of action. We've only seen a fraction of what these animals are capable of.

CASTOR

Do you have a better suggestion, then?

SHELTON

Mr. President, maybe it's time to consider re-entering the accords.

Suddenly the door snaps open. A SECRET SERVICE AGENT pokes his head in.

AGENT

Mr. President?

Castor looks at him.

AGENT (CONT'D)

General Hartman just arrived. He's waiting in the Oval Office, sir.

Castor glances at the other advisors.

CASTOR

Hold for five minutes. Nobody moves until I get back.

He stands up.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Hartman is sitting on the couch.

The door opens and Castor enters.

CASTOR

Walter, I --

He stops dead in his tracks.

Because sitting next to Hartman is Clarissa.

CASTOR (CONT'D)

What the hell is this?

Hartman stands up.

HARTMAN

Gary, listen to what she has to say.

CASTOR

Absolutely not. We're in the middle of a rescue operation here.

HARTMAN

Sir, all I'm asking is that you listen to her. That's it.

Castor shakes his head. This is ridiculous.

He crosses the room and sits down behind the Resolute Desk.

CASTOR  
(resigned to listening)  
Go ahead Ms. Waverly.

Clarissa stands up.

She crosses to stand directly in front of him. They lock eyes.

CLARISSA  
Mr. President, after everything you've seen from the animals. After everything this nation has been through in the past few weeks. Can you honestly sit there and tell me that re-joining the accords is not at least something to consider?

CASTOR  
What would that say about this presidency, Ms. Waverly? If I were to pull out and then rejoin?  
Consider what --

CLARISSA  
With all due respect, sir, this is not about you. This is about stopping the loss of life on both sides, and ensuring it never comes to this again. This is about protecting the environment for all those who occupy it. Your children, grandchildren, and, yes, the animals.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

Giro and Willy approach Clay.

All the animals are watching, their faces somber, grim.

CLARISSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
You have an opportunity here, Mr. President. A chance to turn back the tide, to start anew, to repair the damage that has been done.

(MORE)

CLARISSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Lead the world, Mr. President.  
That's what America is supposed to  
do.

BACK TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Castor studies her. The conflict is evident in his expression. He's so tired.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
Animals have been crying out for a long time from the destruction we've been causing them, sir. When you leave this office, your legacy could be one that signals a new day for human and animal relations. You are the President of the United States, sir. Right now, every man, woman, and child on this planet is looking to you to point the way forward. Call for peace, Mr. President. Sign the accords.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

Willy approaches Clay. He glances at the water. All it will take is one push, and Clay tumbles in.

Now he looks at Giro, who gives a slow nod.

He looks again at Clay.

Then:

CLAY  
Look, I've heard that you can understand me. I don't know if it's true.  
(re: Wollie's body)  
I can see by the way you look at him, he meant something to you.  
(beat)  
What was he? Your father? I want you to know I'm sorry. Do you understand that? I'm sorry.

Willy stares at him. Clay holds his gaze.

Willy looks at his father's body. Suddenly, a sound. Quiet. Bleeding in from the ether.

WOLLIE (V.O.)  
There is balance in nature. To  
remove every human is to  
destabilize the entire planet.

BACK TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Clarissa puts her hands on the desk, leans close to the president.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
Not another drop of blood needs to  
be spilled, sir. Not human. Not  
animal.

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

Willy looks back at Clay.

BACK TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Castor tears his eyes away from Clarissa.

He looks at the PICTURE of himself, Amanda, and Sandy on his desk.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
There is a way forward.

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

Clay's breathing hard. Is this the end?

WOLLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...the only way forward is for  
animals and humans to...

He slams his eyes shut.

BACK TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
And that way forward is --

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - SAME TIME

WILLY  
(whispering)  
Together.

Clay's eyes snap open.

He stares at Willy. What the hell? Did the walrus just --

Willy arches his tusks downward, TEARING OFF THE RESTRAINTS.

Then turns and looks at Giro defiantly.

Giro STOMPS angrily.

BACK TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Castor picks up the picture. He touches the image of his granddaughter's face.

After a moment, he swallows hard and looks up at Clarissa.

She holds his gaze. More resolute than the desk.

CASTOR  
Dr. Waverly...  
(beat)  
I'll do it.

CLARISSA  
Excuse me sir?

CASTOR  
I hate to admit it, but I've been  
wrong.  
(admitting, sadly,  
sickeningly)  
(MORE)

CASTOR (CONT'D)

I've seen the devastation to our planet and animal life. Pulling out of the accords was a mistake. This country is supposed to be the example that leads the world and I am its leader.

Castor puts his thumb and middle finger around his forehead, bows his head, exhales.

CASTOR (CONT'D)

Plus, we're also a significant climate offender, ourselves. I'll rejoin the accords.

He looks at Stewart.

CASTOR (CONT'D)

Make the arrangements.

Stewart stands, nods shortly.

STEWART

Yes sir.

As she turns toward the door, she throws a fist into the air. Yes!

And it's like the whole world sighs in relief. Hartman exhales the breath he's been holding.

Clarissa smiles at Castor as he stands up.

He's bolder than he's ever been as he strides across the room.

CASTOR

I have a mission to abort. Wait here.

He leaves the office.

Clarissa and Hartman look at one another.

HARTMAN

Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens. Castor enters.

Everyone looks to him.

CASTOR  
Abort the mission.

The advisors, including Cortez and Advisor 1 (the Asian American male), look around, confused.

Castor looks at Shelton.

CASTOR (CONT'D)  
Prepare to open a channel of  
dialogue with the animal  
chieftains. There's someone in my  
office who can speak with them.  
It's time to negotiate.

Shelton smiles and nods.

FADE TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAWN

Sunrise over the Potomac.

Harpy flies escort for a HELICOPTER.

EXT. ROCK CREEK PARK - DAWN

The HELICOPTER touches down.

Clay, Willy, and Giro emerge from the chieftain tent.

The helicopter doors open. Hartman climbs out.

Clay looks at Willy, who gives him a short nod.

Clay walks forward to meet his father, smiles and tears.

Hartman PULLS HIM INTO A HARD EMBRACE.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER - DAY

Castor stands before Congress.

Clarissa and Ted are sitting nearby.

He looks at them. Clarissa smiles. You're doing the right thing.

Castor shuffles his papers. Clears his throat.

## CASTOR

My fellow Americans, distinguished members of Congress. After much consideration, I've come to the conclusion that the suffering and destruction we have caused our animal brethren with whom we share this planet is untoward and unbecoming of the nation that is supposed to lead the world. We have not been good stewards of the environment, and this is just one reason I am reversing my decision. America will re-enter the climate accords.

Ted sees Clarissa's leg trotting nervously.

He reaches over and takes her hand.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - EVENING

Castor, surrounded by his cabinet. Alissa is there, along with Clarissa and Ted.

This is the signing ceremony, and the climate accords are lying on the Resolute Desk.

He signs the originals, then passes the pen to the last person surrounding him as a souvenir.

When he's finished, he stands and holds up the document. The room breaks out into applause.

Castor turns and shakes the hands of those gathered there.

As Alissa grips his hand, she grins at him.

## ALISSA

You made the right call, Mr. President.

(playful)

But I'm still going to crush you in the next election.

## CASTOR

Keep dreaming, Senator.

All at once, his legs are nearly taken out from under him by Sandy. She's prancing all around him, practically leaping into his arms.

He laughs and goes to one knee to pet his friend. He looks up and sees the door opening. Amanda's rushing through the door toward him, arms open wide, an even wider smile. Veronica's right behind her, smile on her face.

Then comes Natasha. Castor smiles when he sees her. There are tears in her eyes as she smiles at him with a look of love and admiration. You did the right thing.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

A crowd of about 40 are gathered on the green lawn, waving signs that read "THOMPSON FOR PRESIDENT!"

Senator BRIAN THOMPSON, buttoned-up suit and tie, white-haired, male, 50, a U.S. SENATOR. He faces them, speaking into a microphone.

THOMPSON

I strongly disagree with the president's decision to re-enter the climate accords. That's why today, I'm announcing that I will be challenging him for the party nomination.

The crowd is hooting and hollering, waving their signs in support.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

A HORSE SHOE tumbles through the dirt.

Hartman shakes his head, disappointed.

HARTMAN

Close.

Clay lines up his shot.

He throws the shoe. It CLANGES against the peg. A perfect shot.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Since when did you get so good at this?

CLAY

Practice, dad. I do it to relax.

Hartman walks over and claps a hand on his son's shoulder.

HARTMAN  
It's good to have you back son.

The door of the house opens, and Hartman's wife emerges onto the porch. She beams at them.

WIFE  
Are you boys coming to dinner  
anytime soon?

Father and son glance at each other and start for the porch, Hartman's arm around Clay's shoulders.

EXT. SPEARHEAD-CLASS EXPEDITIONARY FAST TRANSPORT - DAY

The animal chieftains stand on the stern of the transport ship.

Clarissa and Ted are standing before them.

A helicopter sits on the pad behind them, blades spinning.

Clarissa turns to Ted.

CLARISSA  
Give me just a minute.

He kisses her, then turns and heads back to the helicopter. He climbs inside.

Clarissa looks at the chieftains.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
You'll all be home very soon.

Harpy flutters forward, touching down in front of her.

HARPY  
Thank you, Dr. Waverly. For  
everything.

CLARISSA  
Thank you for saving the animals,  
for saving the planet.

There are tears in her eyes, betraying how much she loves them.

HARPY  
Do you think the accords will be  
respected and that peace will last?

CLARISSA

Who knows about anything in this world? But I do know that it's a start.

(beat)

We'll be monitoring all of you, keeping close watch on the environment. If you notice any violations, just let me know before almost starting World War III.

She reaches into her pocket and removes a small bracelet. She kneels down and fastens it around Harpy's leg.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)

Just activate that. And I'll know to come looking.

Harpy nods her approval.

HARPY

Thank you.

Clarissa smiles at them, turns, and starts for the helicopter.

HARPY (CONT'D)

Dr. Waverly?

She stops and looks back.

HARPY (CONT'D)

We have one more condition.

CLARISSA

I don't understand. The treaty's already been signed.

HARPY

It's not for the world. It's just for you.

Clarissa turns around again, intrigued.

HARPY (CONT'D)

We know about your problem.

CLARISSA

My problem?

Willy moves forward.

WILLY

Dr. Waverly, I know you didn't get the chance to meet my father. But he told me something that I think you should hear. In nature, there's a balance. It's why humans and animals need each other. I think, within each person, there has to be a balance, too. A calmness from within.

CLARISSA

So what are you asking?

Giro moves forward.

GIRO

That you remain sober. If you're going to speak for us, we need to know we can count on you.

Clarissa considers it. Closes her eyes. Exhales. Finally, she nods. Opens her eyes.

CLARISSA

It's a deal.

Then, with a smile, she heads for the helicopter.

INT. HELICOPTER - SAME TIME

She opens the door and Ted helps her inside. A male co-pilot is at the front, right.

She gets settled in the seat next to him, putting on the headset.

TED

(over headset)

Have you seen today's headlines?

CLARISSA

(over headset)

Oh, no. What now?

TED

(downright giddy)

Lorn Ellis. Apparently the FBI arrested him for illegally trafficking in exotic animal parts.

Clarissa considers that for a moment.

CLARISSA  
(relishing it)  
What goes around, comes around.

TED  
I'm sure the ARA will be needing a  
new president and that you'll be  
the first one on their list.

CLARISSA  
We'll see.

The door opens. The PILOT, a beautiful, pony-tailed brunette, 34, gets on board and takes her position at the controls at the front, left.

Ted stares at her, mesmerized, not paying attention to Clarissa.

Clarissa notices and elbows him, breaking his trance.

She wags her finger at him teasingly.

CLARISSA (CONT'D)  
I'm watching you professor.

TED  
Sorry, sorry.

They hold hands.

Ted then closes his eyes, relieved. He shakes his head "no," tells himself, "I have to do better."

TED (CONT'D)  
(snapping out of it)  
Oh yeah! I almost forgot.

He pulls out a GIFT-WRAPPED BOX.

TED (CONT'D)  
Courtesy of the U.S. Navy.

He opens it. It's a very expensive BOTTLE OF WINE.

Ted looks at the bottle, then turns to Clarissa.

Her eyes linger on it for a moment, then she glances back out the window at the animal chieftains standing on the ship.

CLARISSA  
(re: the bottle)  
Give it to the pilots.

Ted grins as he closes the box again.

EXT. SPEARHEAD-CLASS EXPEDITIONARY FAST TRANSPORT - SAME TIME

The animal chieftains watch the helicopter leave the stern of the ship and head back toward the mainland.

And as the music swells, we --

CUT TO:

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

On Clarissa, looking out the window at the animal chieftains.

A breathtakingly beautiful flock of white doves fly by.

Ted takes her hand.

And on her smile we --

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.