

A Matter of Distortion
by
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Registered with WGA

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FADE IN:

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. DAVID FOGARTY, in his mid-fifties with thinning hair and a creased forehead, shoves several files and floppy discs into a briefcase. He locks it shut.

INT. DAVID & CLARA'S KITCHEN - DAY

David enters as CLARA, also mid-fifties, frail with tanned skin, hums washing dishes at the sink.

EXT. DAVID & CLARA'S HOUSE - DAY

David steps onto the porch and looks over a desolate community in the desert. Sitting on the steps is JIMMY, a nineteen year old in blue jeans and a flannel shirt.

Jimmy stares at the ground as David sighs.

DAVID
It's going to be okay.

JIMMY
(scared)
How can you be so sure?

David smiles at Jimmy, shrugging without assurance.

DAVID
Take care of your Mom for me. I'll
be back tomorrow.

Jimmy nods as David slaps his son on the back, walking to a pick-up truck.

As he pulls away, David waves to Jimmy just as Clara exits the house.

CLARA
(with a laugh)
There he goes again, never giving
me the chance to say good-bye. He's
as secretive as ever.

JIMMY
He has to be, Mom.

CLARA
Why?

JIMMY
I shouldn't say.

Clara shakes her head with frustration, wiping sweat from her forehead as she enters the house.

Jimmy watches the dust settle behind his father's speeding car.

INT. DAVID'S PICK UP TRUCK - DAY

David steers through curving, elevated roads in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

He passes a sign showing over 200 miles until Los Angeles, then switches on the radio.

Skipping over a variety of country, rock and talk stations, David settles on a news broadcast.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
President Roland Garen won by a landslide in his re-election last night. He delivered his victory speech from Republican campaign headquarters last night in Washington D.C. and...

David smirks, turning off the radio.

Entering a sharp turn, his left front tire suddenly blows out with a loud crack.

David's eyes dilate. He kicks the brake pedal furiously, the truck picking up speed on a downward slope.

The road's twists turn sharper as the tire wears to the rim.

He enters a tight curve, hitting a boulder on the side of the road.

The truck bounces off a wall of rocks, shooting off the cliff and into a deep gorge.

The pick up hits the valley floor with no explosion. The gorge resumes its natural quiet as dust rises.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: SIX YEARS LATER

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - MAGIC HOUR

Jimmy, now twenty five with dirty blonde hair, heavy growth on his face and mirrored sunglasses, walks alongside the Reflecting Pool at sunset.

His clothing consists of dirty jeans, tattered sneakers and a torn sweat shirt.

Staring at the pool's surface, the wind causes the water to ripple. Jimmy watches his reflection distort.

As the reflection becomes unrecognizable, Jimmy steps back, hurrying away.

A federal helicopter suddenly appears above the trees, passing noisily overhead.

Jimmy ducks unnecessarily, staring at the government logo on its side with anxiety. He jumps up, rushing toward the Lincoln Memorial.

Breathing erratically, Jimmy has begun to look behind him with panic.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - MAGIC HOUR

Jimmy mounts the stairs at a rapid pace, getting curious looks from TOURISTS.

He runs faster, glances over his shoulder in fear. At the top of the monument, he dashes past the sculpture of Abraham Lincoln.

Reaching the edge, Jimmy looks down to see he is 30 feet above the ground.

He presses back against a wide, white column.

JIMMY

I didn't tell anyone! You don't
have to worry!

Jimmy's eyes widen with panic before he jumps to the ground.

Rolling to a stop, Jimmy scampers toward a highway.

Jimmy turns back to make sure he is alone, but as we turn back toward the Lincoln Memorial, we see that no one is following him.

INT. MAKE-UP ROOM - NIGHT

ALISON RAMSEY, forty eight years old with dyed black hair and dark brown eyes, fidgets as a DENISE applies a final powder, covering some of Alison's wrinkles.

DENISE
You okay? Seem kind of quiet
tonight.

ALISON
I'm fine.

Denise nods without confidence, finishing Alison's hair.

INT. WNBS NEWS STUDIO - NIGHT

Alison rushes to the console as the TECHNICAL CREW readies for broadcast.

RICK, the stage manager, shouts across the studio over the opening theme music and graphics.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Winner of ten Emmy's for
outstanding local news coverage,
Washington D.C.'s finest anchor
team, the WNBS News at Six with
Alison Ramsey, Steve O'Donohue and
Dave Leech with the sports.

RICK
Ten seconds to air
(a beat)
And six, five, four, three...

Rick continues the count on his fingers, pointing to Alison on one.

ALISON
Good evening, I'm Alison Ramsey.
Here are tonight's top stories.

Alison turns to another camera, reading from a teleprompter.

INT. WNBS NEWS ROOM - NIGHT

The NEWS ROOM STAFF watches the broadcast on monitors around the room.

PETER, in his early thirties with short, slicked back hair, watches as he speaks on the phone.

In a stylish suit and shirt, Peter puts his feet up on the desk, revealing expensive, Italian shoes.

PETER
No, I'll be home by eight. I
promise.

Peter hangs up, watching Alison report on the trial of a Pentagon Security Official.

Peter slouches down as TIMOTHY approaches.

TIMOTHY
Hear the news?

PETER
(points at monitor)
I'm watching it.

TIMOTHY
(also points at monitor)
No, the news about her.

Peter shakes his head as Timothy takes his index finger, running it across his neck, mimicking a sliced throat.

PETER
She's the best we've got! Why would
they fire her?

TIMOTHY
They want different faces. I hear
it's time for a new image.

PETER
(extends arms)
I'm here waiting!

Timothy laughs as Alison introduces DONALD, a man in his late twenties with the perfect looks of a model.

Donald delivers a report on recent drug raids in the D.C. area.

TIMOTHY
My sources say it's him.

PETER
Donald? Look at him! He's smiling
during a report about the death of
innocent bystanders at a drug bust!

TIMOTHY

(laughs)

No one ever said the news biz was fair.

PETER

You don't have to tell me twice.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Jimmy dashes across a busy street, nearly getting hit by a car. He sneaks into a sleazy hotel near the White House, haggard and filthy.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Jimmy pulls out a wad of singles, dropping them on the front desk. He looks at the DESK CLERK, an overweight man in a ripped T-shirt.

Behind the desk, a television set silently plays with Alison anchoring the news.

DESK CLERK

You want it for the whole night or just a few hours?

The clerk chuckles, picking his nose. Jimmy moves back with fear.

JIMMY

The whole night.

The clerk nods, counting the crumpled singles.

INT. JIMMY'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy flips the TV on to the WNBS news and enters the bathroom.

A corporate image spot for Dow Chemical plays, singing how they 'help you do great things.'

Alison returns to the screen after the commercial, wrapping up the news.

Jimmy returns, drying off his face with a ratty towel and does not see Alison as she signs off.

He lays on the bed as commercials return, closing his eyes.

INT. WNBS NEWS ROOM - NIGHT

Donald walks from the studio, passing Peter and Timothy.

PETER
Great job, Donald.

Donald stops short, turning to Peter with an annoyed smile. He walks away as Timothy lets out a laugh.

TIMOTHY
Your reputation holds true. You are a troublemaker.

PETER
Is that all they're saying about me now?

Peter looks up as Alison hustles toward her office, following her with his eyes.

INT. ALISON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Alison organizes papers on her desk with ELOISE, her secretary, as Peter knocks on the door.

Alison looks up, Peter smiling boldly.

PETER
Hello, Ms. Ramsey. We haven't officially met, but I'm Peter Edwards. I just started at NBS a few weeks ago. I wanted to tell you what a great job you did tonight.

Alison continues clearing her desk, nodding apathetically. Eloise exits, rolling her eyes at Peter.

Peter extends his arms to shake, but Alison ignores it. He turns to gawk at dozens of Alison's awards on a shelf.

PETER (CONT'D)
I think you're the best anchor in D.C., including the networks. I've always respected your style and...

ALISON
(interrupting)
Sorry, Mr. Edwards, but I'm not in much of a mood for compliments.
(smirks)
Especially those only meant to put you in my good graces.

Peter turns from the awards, a look of shock as he laughs.

PETER

Do you think I'm the kind of person
to do that?

ALISON

The news biz is relatively small.
You'd be surprised what I've heard
about you.

Peter looks out at the Washington Monument in the distance.

PETER

I didn't realize I was considered a
hack.

ALISON

Not a hack, just a touch too
aggressive.

PETER

(laughs)
Don't you think that's needed in
this town?

ALISON

(putting on coat)
There's a fine line.
(grabs briefcase on her
way to the door)
It all depends on how you cross it,
and when.

PETER

Maybe you can show me how to cross
it, then.
(a beat)
And when.

Alison grins and exits. Peter inhales, crossing his arms.

INT. JIMMY'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy wakes with a jolt, screaming. His face is covered in
sweat as he rushes to the bathroom.

Washing his face, Jimmy stares at his pale reflection.

He's close to tears, staring at his own expression of fear as
water spills across his face.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peter enters, smiling at SUZANNE on an oversized couch.

Suzanne has curly, blonde hair and a gravelly voice. She looks up from behind a magazine, looks at a clock reading 10:15, then back to Peter with annoyance.

Peter smiles apologetically, kneeling at her side as he pulls the magazine away.

PETER

I've got a lead on a story that might make me.

SUZANNE

(laughs)

How many times have I heard that?

Suzanne squirms away from Peter, heading to the kitchen.

PETER

I'm serious!

SUZANNE

So am I!

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Suzanne pours herb tea from a steaming kettle as Peter enters.

Throughout, they speak in a flirtatious, joking manner: they've had this conversation before.

PETER

You don't think I'll ever make it, do you?

SUZANNE

I think you already have, Peter. You're in Washington D.C. Most reporters would kill to work here!

PETER

Some have.

SUZANNE

You've paid your dues all over the country and were good enough to get this job. Can't you be satisfied with that for a change?

PETER
It's local news, Suzanne. We both
know it's not the big time.

SUZANNE
(dropping the joking
manner)
Oh, Peter!

Suzanne exits as Peter follows.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Suzanne goes through her clothes closet as Peter leans
against the door frame.

PETER
Maybe I have dragged you all over
this country, but I only do it so I
can get a good job and make us
comfortable! Eventually I will find
the story to break me out of the
minors.

SUZANNE
I'm not uncomfortable, Peter, but
you're always trying to live up to
some crazy idea of success that you
might never...

Peter walks out angrily as Suzanne turns to him.

She sees Peter is gone and groans: the conversation has ended
as it always does.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Jimmy approaches the gleaming office building in his raggedy
clothes while BUSINESS MEN and WOMEN wear suits.

Jimmy looks up at the huge building before him before being
pushed into a revolving door by the crowd behind him.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Jimmy enters slowly and stares at the chaos of the building's
lobby at mid-day.

As he steps in, we see we're at ABC-TV's D.C. offices. Jimmy
turns to see CHARLIE GIBSON crossing the lobby.

JIMMY
(rushing toward him)
Charlie Gibson! Charlie!

Gibson doesn't hear Jimmy in the noisy lobby, continuing toward the elevators.

A SECURITY OFFICER steps up, grabbing Jimmy by the arm.

SECURITY OFFICER
Can I help you, sir?

Gibson disappears into the crowd as Jimmy waves to him. The security officer eyes Jimmy suspiciously.

INT. ABC-TV WAITING ROOM - DAY

Jimmy fidgets in the brightly lit reception area. Across the room, a RECEPTIONIST eyes Jimmy with fear.

GREG, a young man wearing a messy shirt and tie, sits down.

GREG
I understand you have a story, Mr. Edwards?

JIMMY
(reluctant)
I wanted to tell Charlie Gibson.

GREG
(laughs)
Wouldn't we all. Still, you've got to tell me before we pass it on to him.

Jimmy looks at Greg as he continues to chuckle himself.

JIMMY
(looking around room)
I don't think I can talk about this here.

GREG
(leans close to Jimmy)
I promise you, I'm not wired.

JIMMY
I'm worried about you. It's the F.B.I.

Greg nods, moving away from Jimmy's shaking frame.

GREG

Oh.

Greg gives Jimmy the once over as Jimmy glances around for bugs.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The security officer holds Jimmy by the arm, leading him out of the building.

The officer gives him a dirty look before re-entering the building, leaving Jimmy alone in the plaza.

Jimmy looks around at MEN and WOMEN in suits eyeing him before dashing down a flight of steps away from the building.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Peter waits outside a federal courthouse amongst TWO DOZEN REPORTERS and CAMERA OPERATORS.

Across the street, a CROWD protests a court ruling to allow the building of an incinerator in rural Maryland.

The demonstration attracts slight news coverage since the crews are nearby. Their chant of "Dioxin doesn't disappear" continues beneath Peter and GWEN'S conversation.

PETER

I'm so tired of waiting.

Gwen, pretty and in her early thirties, fans herself with her channel's stationary.

GWEN

All good things, my dear.

(a beat)

So, I hear Ramsey is leaving NBS.

Peter looks at Gwen suspiciously before answering.

PETER

Don't know much about it. I've tried making contact with her, but she's a tough lady.

GWEN

My producer said she's hard to work with. He calls her the Queen Bitch.

PETER

I think it's an act. I'm sure she's frustrated at being one of the first female anchors and still having never made it to the big time.

GWEN

Maybe they'll replace her and you'll get a promotion.

PETER

Or maybe they'll hire someone else. I haven't been there long enough to make any impact. There's so many goddamn reporters in this town, it's impossible to get a scoop.

GWEN

It happens. Every reporter gets at least one story to prove themselves with. If they screw it up, it's no one's fault but their own.

(staring at crowd)

But if they handle it right, they'll get noticed.

Peter musters a nod as the news crews hurry toward the courthouse steps. A GROUP OF LAWYERS exit to make a statement.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Looks like our wait is over.

Peter and Gwen join the hustle of reporters and camera operators.

INT. ALISON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Although there is a computer terminal beside her, Alison works on a manual typewriter.

Peter peeks in and Alison turns to see him, shaking her head.

ALISON

You don't give up, do you?

PETER

That's supposed to be a good quality in a reporter.

ALISON

Sure, but scoring points with me isn't going to help you much. I'm on my way out, or hadn't you heard?

PETER

I've heard gossip, but not the real story.

ALISON

(smiles)

Don't be misled by gossip. It's usually based on some piece of fact, even if somewhat distorted.

PETER

(flops into seat)

Then you are being fired for being too old for a female anchor.

ALISON

(looks up quickly)

Antagonizing the subject!

(laughs)

Another quality of a pushy reporter.

PETER

A good reporter eventually finds out the truth, regardless of what stands in his, or her, way.

(sly smile)

And being pushy only speeds up the process.

ALISON

I can't tell you the truth, Edwards. I don't know it myself.

Alison stands, taking the paper from the typewriter.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Maybe I am too old or maybe I've just lost my touch. I could argue with them, but how will I ever know which is true?

(walking towards door)

You see, sometimes it isn't the truth you're after. Sometimes it's your vision of the truth. I'd just like to believe I've lost my touch.

(stops at door)

There's your scoop, Edwards. Run with it.

Alison exits as Peter watches her disappear through the maze of desks toward the makeup room.

Peter glances at his watch. With ten minutes to air, Peter flips on the TV, sitting behind the desk and getting comfortable in the roomy office.

INT. JIMMY'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

As the TV plays, Jimmy looks out the window at the run-down buildings around the hotel.

On the ledge are several photographs with Jimmy, David and Clara posed at tourist sights in the Southwest.

He picks up a photo of David wearing a white lab coat and holding an award.

Jimmy's face twitches as he stares at the photo, suddenly startled by the opening music of WNBS' news broadcast.

He watches as a photo of Alison shoots across the screen via computer graphics.

Jimmy watches as Alison begins a story on a corrupt landlord.

As she reads, footage is shown from the court house, Peter asking questions off-camera.

PETER (O.S.)

Will your lawyers appeal, Mr. Jensen?

MR. JENSEN

Of course they will! I'm not guilty! Just ask the people who live in my buildings if I'm a bad landlord!

Peter wraps up the story from the courthouse stairs before Alison returns, her name appearing on the bottom of screen.

Jimmy leans close to the television, touching the screen where Alison's name appears.

Grabbing the phone, Jimmy holds the receiver with fear.

He hangs up hard, hurrying to the door. After listening through it a moment, he rushes out.

INTERCUT:

INT. ALISON'S OFFICE - DAY

Peter sits at Alison's desk watching the broadcast as Donald reports on a gang war in D.C.

Peter throws scraps of paper at the screen.

PETER

You suck, Donald, you really do!
What do your beautiful, white teeth
and perfect hair have to say about
that?

The phone rings, causing Peter to jump. He swivels around and answers it calmly.

PETER (CONT'D)

Alison Ramsey's office.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Jimmy stands outside Randy's Tavern, hiding in a phone booth.

JIMMY

Can I talk to her?

PETER

(making a paper airplane)
She's on the air right now. I doubt
she's appreciate the interruption.

JIMMY

I have a story to tell her.

PETER

You can try back later or...
(sits up straight)
I'm her assistant. If you let me
know what you need, I can talk to
her for you.

There is a long pause with only street noise in the background.

PETER (CONT'D)

Hello?

JIMMY

(out of breath)
I need to talk to her about what
the government is doing in Nevada.

Peter's eyes widen, tossing the paper airplane aside. His tone of voice becomes more cordial.

PETER

I can talk to you and relay the information to Alison.

JIMMY

I need to tell her myself.

PETER

(rushed)

You will, you will! I just need to make sure this is a legitimate news story. We have to screen out prank calls, right?

Peter leans closer to the phone, waiting for an answer.

JIMMY

I guess.

PETER

So where can we meet? Where are you now?

JIMMY

(looking at sign)

I'm standing outside a place called Randy's Tavern.

PETER

I know where that is. Go on inside. I'll be there in ten minutes.

JIMMY

Just you, though! No F.B.I.

Jimmy shakes his head ferociously as Peter stands.

PETER

Of course not. I'll be alone.

INT. NEWS ROOM HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter dashes down the hallway, passing Alison after the news.

ALISON

(putting hand up)

What's the matter? In too much of a rush for a little flattery?

Peter stops short, whispering into Alison's ear.

PETER

I'm going to check on a lead that
just might break me.

(rushing away)

And it might even save your butt,
too!

Peter rushes to the elevator as Alison's smile fades. She watches him disappear, then heads toward her office with confusion.

INT. RANDY'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Peter squints through the smoke and darkness, buying a beer as he looks around.

Jimmy steps up from the shadows, poking Peter in his back.

JIMMY

Are you Alison's helper?

Peter's back stiffens since Jimmy's finger feels like a gun.

PETER

Who?

Jimmy steps around to face Peter, eyeing him cautiously. Peter sees Jimmy has no gun, just a finger.

JIMMY

Do you work with Alison Ramsey?

PETER

Yes, yes I do. I'm Alison's
assistant.

Peter extends his hand to shake. Jimmy ignores it.

JIMMY

My name is Jimmy.

(motions)

Let's sit back here.

Jimmy heads toward the back of the bar as Peter follows hesitantly.

The booth is engulfed in darkness, barring some blinking all-around Christmas lights on the ceiling.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Have you known Alison long?

PETER
Sure, we've worked together for
years

JIMMY
Is she nice?

PETER
Yeah, she's nice, but I thought you
had a story to tell. If you're just
obsessed with Alison I'll have
to...

Peter makes a move to slide out of the booth as Jimmy grabs
his wrist.

JIMMY
(panicked)
I just want to make sure I can
trust her.

PETER
(sitting back down)
Of course you can. She's one of the
most reputable reporters in the
business.

JIMMY
And you?

PETER
Am I trustworthy?
(forced laugh)
You could say that.

JIMMY
I have to be careful. If they knew
I was talking to you, I'd be in
even more trouble.

PETER
They who?

JIMMY
The F.B.I.

Peter leans back and inhales; he's starting to doubt Jimmy's
validity.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Just being in Washington is
dangerous. They think they can stop
me before I tell anyone, but I have
to before anyone else gets hurt.

PETER
Who will get hurt?

JIMMY
Innocent people. Women and
children.
(panicked)
People not involved with war. Even
those people that are in the war,
but don't know it's happening to
them!

PETER
You're losing me, Jimmy. Let's take
it from the beginning.

Jimmy moves restlessly in his seat.

JIMMY
All right, I'll tell you how my
father died.
(hesitant)
They thought he would tell
everyone. That's why I have to be
so careful. If I'm not careful...

Peter raises his hand to stop Jimmy.

PETER
Jimmy, how did you father die?

JIMMY
A tire was blown out on his car and
he drove off a cliff. They made it
look like they didn't do it.
Everyone thinks it was an accident.

PETER
And what makes you think it wasn't?

JIMMY
Because I saw the tire with the gun
shot hole in it! My father taught
me how to shoot a gun when I was a
boy so I know what a...

PETER
Do you have the tire?

JIMMY
I couldn't take it! Then they would
know I knew, but then they took all
the tires off so there wasn't any
proof left.

PETER
Maybe someone else was after him.

JIMMY
No! It was them! He knew what they were trying to do with those chemicals.

PETER
What chemicals?

JIMMY
The ones they used to hurt people.
The ones they used in Vietnam.

PETER
Napalm?

Jimmy shakes his head vigorously.

PETER (CONT'D)
Agent Orange?

JIMMY
(excited)
Yes, that one and others! They weren't supposed to make them anymore, but they did! They were making them and my father tried to stop them!

Peter looks around the sleazy bar for a moment before stepping out of the booth.

PETER
C'mon. We shouldn't talk about this here.

INT. PETER'S CAR - NIGHT

Peter speeds through the rainy streets of Washington D.C. as Jimmy looks out the window at the monuments.

PETER
Are you saying that the U.S. Government is producing Agent Orange?

JIMMY
No.
(a beat)
What they're making is much worse than Agent Orange.
(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I worked there for a while. My father told me what it could do. He told me what would happen to people if it was used on them.

PETER

And you think the F.B.I. is after you now?

JIMMY

I know they are! They followed me from Nevada. They don't want me to tell anyone, but I have to because...

PETER

Okay, okay. I know. Do you have someplace to stay?

JIMMY

I'm at a hotel, but I don't have any more money.

PETER

Then come with me. You can stay at my apartment until I can talk to Alison.

JIMMY

You'd really do that?

PETER

(patting Jimmy's shoulder)
Someone's got to look out for you, right?

Jimmy shakes his head nervously as Peter speeds along Independence Avenue.

,INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jimmy drinks soda, playing with a glass desert dish from the coffee table as if it's a toy.

Peter and Suzanne's speech flows under a closed door, but Jimmy is unaware of their conversation as he switches on the television to a sit-com.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Suzanne cleans the bedroom frantically as Peter paces.

SUZANNE

He looks like a crack addict and you invite him into our apartment?

PETER

Look, maybe he's not completely normal, but even if half his story is true, it's still a big scoop! This could break me!

SUZANNE

Or it could finish you off! He's having paranoid delusions that the F.B.I. is following him! How realistic is that? Look at him!

PETER

He's been traveling for days to get here. He had to take trains, buses and hitchhike to lose them.

SUZANNE

(falls onto bed)
You used to have such sharp instincts.

PETER

(kneeling beside bed)
I still do. I know I'm right about this one.

SUZANNE

It's your funeral, Peter.

PETER

Sometimes in life you have to take a chance to make it big.
(shrugs)
This is my chance.

Peter gives Suzanne an encouraging expression, trying to win her over.

INT. HAROLD'S OFFICE - DAY

HAROLD struts around his desk, avoiding looking directly at Alison.

HAROLD

The board has been talking and...

ALISON
You're cutting my shifts again,
aren't you?

Harold hesitates, then nods.

HAROLD
It's nothing personal. It's just...

ALISON
Of course it's personal. What else
could it be? I'm not the young,
attractive Alison Ramsey I used to
be. What could be more personal
than that?

(louder)
I'm just an ugly, talking head who
can't keep up with men and their
graying, distinguished good looks.

Harold sits, shaking his head. Alison stands and puts her
hands on the edge of his desk.

ALISON (CONT'D)
If that's not it, what is it?

HAROLD
We want you to produce the weekend
edition. You wanted to produce for
a long time. I thought you'd be
pleased!

ALISON
(holding back anger)
Pardon me. I'd rather advance
because I'm a good reporter than by
default.

HAROLD
I wish it didn't have to be this
way.

ALISON
(walking to door)
Don't worry about me, Harold. I've
got plenty of job offers coming in
and maybe some of the other
stations won't be so picky about
the looks of their anchorwomen,
hmm?

Alison exits.

INT. ALISON'S CAR - DAY

Alison climbs into her car in an underground parking garage. She sits in silence for a moment, trying to fight back the tears. She loses.

INT. VIDEO EDITING SUITE - DAY

Peter sits at a bank of video screens watching footage from Vietnam and America in the late 1960s and 70s in a choppy, erratic sequence.

REPORTER 1 speaks over shots of CHEMISTS in a lab.

REPORTER 1

Salts have routinely been used in farming to kill unwanted plants and fungus. Sodium nitrate, iron sulfate and copper salts are used to kill bacteria that inhibit crop growth.

Peter watches video of American farmers spraying their crops. In another shot, cattle graze.

ANCHOR 1

...phenoxy herbicides were created in the 1940's by Dr. E.J. Krauss to aid the agricultural industry in eradicating weeds. The chemical works by imitating the action of plant hormones. Cells that shouldn't divide, do. The channels where nutrients flow are clogged and root growth becomes unbalanced.

(a beat)

The United States government have since taken the compound and strengthened it for use in the war in South East Asia...

Peter fast forwards to video of American soldiers filling tanks with Agents Orange, White, Blue and Purple, dependent on the color of the barrels.

REPORTER 2

...Operation Hades, later named the Ranch Hand Operation, was approved by President Kennedy in 1962 to be used by U.S. troops to clear crops and enemy cover necessary in the guerilla fighting of the Vietnamese jungles...

Peter views rough super 8 footage of troops in the jungle.

REPORTER 3

...sprayed from helicopters,
planes, boats and the backpacks
carried by soldiers...

Peter pops in another tape, covert footage of U.S. planes dropping Agent Orange on Vietnam mangrove forests.

ANCHOR 2

...the herbicide, which has a
strong petroleum odor, has
destroyed 4.5 million acres of
Vietnamese countryside, some of
which was sprayed five or six
times...

Peter fast forwards to footage of barren land, trees and foliage destroyed.

ANCHOR 3

...tetrachlorodibenzo p-dioxin, or
Agent Orange, has been referred to
as, "perhaps the most toxic
molecule ever synthesized by man."
It is said to be 100,000 times more
potent than thalidomide as a cause
of birth defects in some species.

Peter pops in another tape, a shot of MAN with rashes and skin irritations.

ANCHOR 4

...while there is still some
speculation as to just how strong
the U.S. government knew it to be,
Agents Blue, White and Orange were
not originally intended to be used
as weapons, since they had
widespread uses in America.

Peter changes tapes to news footage of a VETERAN being pulled away from a V.A. hospital by POLICE.

Behind them, his car is crashed into the entrance. The veteran yells, "This is what Agent Orange did to me" in the background as the reporter speaks.

REPORTER 4

...has allegedly been linked with birth defects, severe fits of depression, paranoia, loss of hair, outbursts of rage, numbness, dozens of forms of cancer...

Peter fast forwards to footage from the mid-70s.

REPORTER 5

...over 20,000 Vietnam veterans filed a claim today against the Government Advisory Committee in response to the multitude of health problems they have experienced with Agent Orange.

Peter changes tapes to a press conference held in 1979 with PAUL REUTERSHAM and his LAWYERS.

REPORTER 6

...Paul Reutersham, a former helicopter crew chief in Vietnam, organized a ten million dollar lawsuit representing veterans against the three main producers of Agent Orange: Dow, Monsanto and Diamond-Shamrock Chemical. Yesterday, at the age of 28, Reutersham died of intestinal cancer.

Peter fast forwards to footage of Reutersham's funeral.

ANCHOR 5

...the Department of Defense today claimed the accusations against 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, which make up Agent Orange, are greatly exaggerated and that the substance is relatively non-toxic to humans and animals...

Peter pops in a tape of North Vietnamese footage released during the war with children born with birth defects and brain damage.

ANCHOR 6

The President signed a bill today for the government to take responsibility for three illnesses caused by Agent Orange, including Non-Hodgkins's lymphoma and soft tissue sarcoma, but did not acknowledge the numerous health problems

that many attribute to exposure to the herbicide.

Peter stop the tape on a shot of President Bush signing the legislation with a smile.

On the monitor beside it is a shot of a barren swamp area in Vietnam after being sprayed by Agent Orange.

INT. VIDEO EDITING SUITE - DAY

Alison sits on a couch as TWO EDITORS assemble a story on a Virginia serial killer.

Peter pokes his head in, moving toward the couch.

ALISON
(without looking up)
I'm working.

PETER
I don't want to both you, but I need your help.

ALISON
(looks up/laughs)
It takes a big man to admit such things.

Peter sits as an editor turns to Alison.

ALISON (CONT'D)
(to editor/pointing)
Pick it up from there and we'll leave a two second slug for the photo.

Alison turns, giving her full attention to Peter.

PETER
You know I wasn't lying when I said I admired your style. I've read about you for years. I just wish I'd met you sooner.

Alison listens with curiosity.

PETER (CONT'D)

I've always wanted to work with someone who has the highest standards so I could learn how to do it right.

(laughs)

It's not very easy to find that in this business.

ALISON

(laughs)

You don't know when to stop, do you?

(seriously)

Still, I have to admit I liked the piece you produced on that abortion clinic attack.

(a beat)

In this day and age where everyone wants it all to come easy, I find your ambition...refreshing.

Peter smiles as Alison looks back to the bank of monitors.

EXT. BUSINESS PLAZA - DAY

Peter and Alison walk as they eat hot dogs in a large, open plaza near WNBS, the area busy with BUSINESS MEN & WOMEN.

ALISON

You expect me to believe this?

(swallows food)

Listen, Peter. I know you're anxious to move up the ladder, but you can't create stories out of thin air.

PETER

I'm not making this up! This guy is an eyewitness.

Alison sits, looking over the busy plaza.

ALISON

I remember when the problems about Agent Orange first came to light. The thought that the government would experiment with them again is unbelievable.

PETER

But what if it isn't? What if they thought they could use them again? What about third world countries? You think chemical weapons wouldn't come in useful in a ground war?

Peter swings his arms, widening his eyes for dramatic effect.

PETER (CONT'D)

It's easy to ban chemical weapons when a war is over, but when the next one comes along, we all know both sides will do anything to win.

(a beat)

There's been use of weapons like Agent Orange in Laos, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen in the last twenty years. They've even been used in Arizona and Massachusetts by companies that thought it would save their crops.

ALISON

(grins)

At least you've done your homework.

EXT. WNBS BUILDING - DAY

Peter and Alison attempt to cross the busy street in front of the station.

PETER

Our government used chemical weapons and claimed they didn't know what it would do for people, but do we believe that? Can we trust them?

(a beat)

You might be right. This may be far fetched, but what if it's not?

Peter stops, leaning toward Alison.

PETER (CONT'D)

Besides, this story could save your career.

ALISON

(smiles)

Maybe I don't want to save it. Maybe I'd rather watch it go down in beautiful flames!

PETER
 (shaking head)
 You've worked too long and too hard
 just to be forgotten because they
 think you're not as beautiful as
 you once were.

Alison stops dead, turning to Peter angrily.

ALISON
 That's not all there is to it,
 Edwards!

Alison hurries away. Peter flinches with embarrassment.

INT. WNBS LOBBY - DAY

Alison approaches the elevators as Peter runs up from behind.

PETER
 I'm sorry. I didn't mean to insult
 you. It's just easy to get caught
 up in this and be angry.

Alison ignores him, looking up for the next elevator.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Just a few days ago you told me
 that the truth was what you
 perceived it to be.
 (a beat)
 Maybe this guy's truth is real.

The elevator door's open and they step in.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Alison and Peter stand in the rear of a CROWDED elevator.

PETER
 Think about it. You could go to
 Nevada and get in early on this
 year's number one political hotbed.
 It could turn your career around.

Alison stares away from Peter, not answering in the elevator.

INT. WNBS OFFICES - DAY

Alison and Peter step off the elevator.

She heads down the hall as Peter watches. Suddenly, she stops and turns around.

ALISON

Are you willing to work your ass
off on this?

A smile comes to Peter's lips as he nods.

ALISON (CONT'D)

That's what this is going to take
to make this believable.

(walks to Peter)

Keep a low profile on the whole
story, even here. If this is true,
we don't want to lose it to another
reporter, but if it's not, you
don't want to wreck your reputation
with such bullshit.

(a beat)

We have to move fast, but no
stunts, got that?

Peter reluctantly nods as Alison hurries back to her office.
Peter smiles coyly at her.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jimmy sits in front of the television eating a variety of
junk food and watching cartoons, laughing at all the wrong
moments.

Suzanne enters, quietly moving into the kitchen without Jimmy
seeing her. She watches him on the edge of his seat, giggling
like a little boy.

Suzanne moves across the apartment quietly, but Jimmy
flinches when he sees her.

Suzanne stops and smiles weakly.

SUZANNE

Hi there.

Suzanne hurries into the bedroom, leaving Jimmy with a
terrified look on his face.

INT. NEWS ROOM - DAY

Harold rushes across the news room, handing Peter a sheet of
paper.

HAROLD

Edwards, you have to cover the press conference at the White House today. Gil is sick, but it's not a big deal. Just get out there with a camera crew. I doubt they've got anything earth shattering to say, but it's been a slow news day.

Harold disappears into the flurry of activity as Peter looks to see it's a conference to update reporters on Middle Eastern peace talks.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

CLAIRE and ROBERT load in camera equipment as Peter gets the crew cleared by White House SECURITY.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

DOZENS OF REPORTERS convene for the conference, listening to the White House Spokesperson, BILL HAVERSHAM, speak at the podium, the presidential emblem behind him.

Peter straightens his tie and Claire laughs.

CLAIRE

Don't worry, Peter. You won't be on TV this time.

PETER

(grins)
You never know.

Peter moves through the crowd to sit as Haversham finishes his announcement.

Peter looks cautiously around the room filled with reporters.

REPORTER 1

With the current situation in the Middle East, they are hoping to discuss economic and military reform. How willing is this administration to lend support?

HAVERSHAM

The United States is currently waiting to see how these countries respond to their internal conflict and...

DISSOLVE TO:

Peter looks around the room apprehensively as Haversham finishes answering a question.

He takes another from a YOUNG FEMALE REPORTER from CBS News.

REPORTER 2

Will the Secretary of State be broaching the topic of nuclear arms deployment at these talks?

HAVERSHAM

There is another summit scheduled for this October where that subject will be focused on at greater length.

Haversham puts up his hands to end the Q&A session.

HAVERSHAM (CONT'D)

Thank you all for coming today. We will continue to update you on the talks in the coming weeks.

Peter looks around as the reporters start chatting and packing to leave.

His face is covered with sweat as he jumps to his feet, blurting out his words.

PETER

Excuse me, but could you give us some information about the Agent Orange lab in Nevada? From what I understand, the plant is producing herbicides for use in future chemical warfare situations.

The room of reporters quiet down, turning to Peter.

They instantly turn back to Haversham for a response. He stops as he steps away from the podium.

HAVERSHAM

The U.S. government doesn't produce Agent Orange and hasn't in over twenty years.

Haversham turns to exit as Peter speaks.

PETER

According to some sources, there is a plant producing these weapons.

HAVERSHAM

Agent Orange wasn't intended as a weapon. It was a defoliant to uncover the enemy in jungle combat situations.

PETER

Of course, I'm sorry. I'd just like to get an official comment on the recent U.S. production.

HAVERSHAM

I have no comment about that matter. To my knowledge, no such plant exists.

PETER

But it might? It may not be public knowledge, but it...

HAVERSHAM

(raising hand/speaking loudly)

This conference was called to make the press aware of recent developments in Middle Eastern peace talks. Your question will have to be asked at another time, Mr...

PETER

(swallows hard)

Peter Edwards, WNBS-Washington.

HAVERSHAM

Mr. Edwards, I don't know where you received such information, but I can assure you it is not true.

Peter and Haversham stare each other down as the room of reporters glance at Peter, each of them making a note.

HAVERSHAM (CONT'D)

Good day.

Haversham steps away from the podium as Pete squirms.

Realizing all the other reporters are eyeing him, Peter makes his way toward the camera crew, a REPORTER jumping up to block his way.

REPORTER 3

Is that true or were you just storming him?

Peter smiles, climbing over reporter 3. He approaches CLAIRE and ROBERT as they shake their heads.

CLAIRE

You're crazy, Edwards. You can't come in here and start a rumor like that.

PETER

Who said it's a rumor?

Peter hurries toward the door as MARCUS KRAMER watches him. Marcus is an F.B.I. agent in his late forties with brown hair and a crisp, black suit.

He scribbles down Peter's name and the station's call letters off Claire's camera equipment.

INT. NBS NEWS ROOM - NIGHT

The news room bustles with activity as six o'clock approaches.

Peter struts to his desk, getting stares from other REPORTERS.

Harold approaches angrily as Peter sits at a computer. The rest of the office watches the argument.

HAROLD

What kind of shit was that?

Peter looks up to Harold slowly.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You don't ask questions like that without clearing them with me first, Edwards! If you've got a lead, then...

PETER

You would have shut me down.

HAROLD

You goddamn know it! You're going to discredit this station and every person whose worked so hard to make it what it is!

PETER

The damage is done, then. Let me go with it, on the air.

HAROLD

You think I'd reward you? You're going to ruin our relationship with the White House! They'll never feed a story to any of our reporters again!

PETER

Harold, you can bet your ass that every reporter in that room is going to cover this story tonight. Having me go on the air with it will bring you huge ratings!

HAROLD

Peter, we're not "A Current Affair!" We at least try to tell the truth!

PETER

(stands)

Okay, I should have cleared it with you, but you wouldn't have believed me.

HAROLD

You've got evidence? If you can prove this with facts...

PETER

I have an eyewitness. I can interview him live on the air.

HAROLD

(angrily)

Does he have any definite proof that they were making chemical weapons and not insecticides or plastics?

Peter stands tall, but does not speak.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

I didn't think so.

(turns and walks away)

Don't go anywhere, Peter. I want you around to take the flak from the F.B.I. when they come down on me! And believe me, it won't take long!

(as he gets further away)

I knew I shouldn't have hired him!

Harold stomps toward his office, the news room staff turning to Peter in silence.

INT. F.B.I. OFFICES - DAY

Marcus walks through the busy offices with ABE, an overweight man in his sixties with broad shoulders and dark, brown eyes.

ABE

This kind of statement cannot be made.

MARCUS

I know.

ABE

Who is this Edwards fellow, anyway? His name doesn't ring a bell.

MARCUS

We haven't come up with much information.

(flips through note pad)

He's worked at a dozen different TV stations around the country, none of which have much good to say about him.

ABE

Great! Another ambitious maverick stirring up a make-believe scandal!

INT. ABE'S OFFICE - DAY

Abe's office is huge and well-kept. He sits behind his desk as Marcus paces the room.

MARCUS

A friend of mine died from exposure to Agent Orange.

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

After he returned from Vietnam he spent most of his time in psychiatric hospitals. They couldn't figure out what was wrong.

(inhales)

One of his children was born deformed, but they never thought it was related.

ABE

Well, Agent Orange doesn't kill you, Marcus!

MARCUS

It can. He hung himself in his garage. He just couldn't take being sick anymore. During the autopsy they found 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T.

ABE

I'm sorry to hear that, but perhaps that will give you the extra incentive to stop this reporter.

(a beat)

We have to discredit his story, now.

MARCUS

I understand.

EXT. WNBS ROOF - NIGHT

Peter stares off at the illuminated D.C. monuments as Alison paces along the perimeter of the roof.

ALISON

You've blown the whole thing. You had a perfectly good lead, but that's all it was!

(shakes her head)

You were supposed to investigate it, get evidence, document your case! Then you go on the air with it!

PETER

I just thought it was a good way to put some heat on the government.

ALISON

You've got to prove guilt before you hang them in the town square!

PETER

So you can go to Nevada and get the proof and we'll be set!

ALISON

From what your witness has said, it's all speculation. There's nothing that convinces me. What makes you so sure?

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Alison and Peter sit at the counter of a greasy spoon in downtown D.C. eating dinner.

On the TV set, Donald goes into his first story about a plane crash in California.

Peter jumps to his feet, walking to the counter. LAURA, a young waitress looks at him as he motions at the TV.

PETER

Can you turn the volume up?

Laura turns the sound up loud.

PETER (CONT'D)

Do you have a remote control?

LAURA

Would you like to cook up a few meals while you're here, too?

Peter smiles, tilting his head to flirt with her.

PETER

Actually, I'm a reporter and...

LAURA

And you're got a big breakthrough story on tonight's news, right?

(handing him remote control)

This town's bursting at the seams with 'em.

Laura walks away as Peter flips around the dial.

The other networks air footage from the airplane crash, then go on to stories about new developments in South Africa and a fire in Arlington, Virginia.

PETER

What about my story?

ALISON

What about it? You didn't think anyone would touch something like that without proof, did you?

Peter returns to his seat. Alison takes a newspaper from beside her, sliding it in front of Peter.

ALISON (CONT'D)

And that's just the beginning.

Alison points to a short article on the bottom of the page in the Washington Post.

PETER

This says it's all a lie! How they be so sure already?

ALISON

There's more invested in this than you think, Peter. A lot of people have economic interests that are going to keep this story out of the media. The owners of WNBS, for one, have a lot of political friends, government friends. A little self-censorship from them wouldn't surprise me a bit.

PETER

So they'll kill the story before anyone can even investigate it? What kind of journalism is that?

ALISON

(grins)

Who said it had anything to do with journalism?

Alison turns to the TV as Donald speaks on the screen. Her own smile fades.

INT. WNBS HALLWAY - DAY

Peter struggles with an arm load of videotapes. He rounds the corner, spotting Marcus and DAN LOVETT standing at the SECRETARY'S desk outside Harold's office.

MARCUS

Is Mr. Greenbaum in? I'm Marcus
Kramer from the F.B.I. We have an
appointment.

Peter hides behind the videotapes, hurrying by.

SECRETARY

Yes, Mr. Kramer. Let me buzz him.

INT. NEWS ROOM - DAY

Peter grabs his coat, exiting quickly.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Peter sets up a tape recorder in front of Jimmy, pacing the
apartment.

PETER

You've got to tell me more
information. I need as much
evidence as I can get, like the
names of scientists or the
herbicides they were creating!

JIMMY

I'm not a scientist! I worked in
the office there. It's a maximum
security plant. There's no way I
could take samples even if I knew
what to take!

Peter moves to the couch where Jimmy is shaking with
frustration.

PETER

Okay, Jimmy, it's okay. You have to
relax or no one will believe you!

Jimmy looks at Peter with fear and moves away.

Peter sees Jimmy's discomfort, his voice turning cordial and
understanding.

PETER (CONT'D)

You just can't be nervous on
television. People will think
you're...

Peter stops himself.

JIMMY

What, crazy? They'll think I'm
crazy because I'm scared of being
killed like my father was?

PETER

No, it's just that...

JIMMY

(interrupting)
Do you believe me, Mr. Edwards?

PETER

(with a blank stare)
Believe you?
(a beat)
I, I don't doubt that it's true,
but there is something so fantastic
about it, I need more proof.

Jimmy stands, pacing frantically.

JIMMY

My father risked his life to expose
this! No one else wanted to lose
their job, but he couldn't go on
making something that he knew could
hurt people!
(more intense)
And why do I have to go on
television? They'll know where I am
and try to kill me!

PETER

They won't dare hurt you after we
reveal the story. Once you're in
the spotlight you'll be safe. You
just have to be calm when you get
on the air.

Jimmy looks at Peter with fear, breathing hard. The telephone
rings and Peter jumps to get it.

JIMMY

(frantically)
Okay, I'll be calm. I'll be calm.

INTERCUT:

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S KITCHEN / ALISON'S OFFICE - DAY

PETER
(answering phone)
Yeah?

ALISON
Neither the police nor the local newspaper think David Fogarty's death was anything more than an accident.

Peter falls against the stove with disappointment. Alison doodles on the cover of Time Magazine.

ALISON (CONT'D)
The sheriff there said Fogarty was always having car troubles, he never took care of it. He wasn't all that surprised when Fogarty's tire blew out.
(a beat)
The local word on Jimmy is that he's not all that well adjusted. It makes me wonder if we can trust anything he says.
(raising eyebrows)
Still want to go with this, Mr. Cronkite?

Peter holds tight, his mind facing.

ALISON (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, kid. This looks like a big dead end.

Peter takes a deep breath, looking in to see Jimmy playing like a child with several knickknacks from their shelves.

PETER
Can you come over and meet him?
Once you hear the story from him...

ALISON
Did you hear what I said? There's nothing here, Peter! It's a dead end!

The phone in his fist, Peter speaks with determination.

PETER
Can you come over and meet him?

ALISON
(exhaling)
I'll be there at two.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Peter rushes back to Jimmy, speaking in a panic.

PETER
I'm going to tell you the story the way I understand it and you have to learn how to repeat that, okay?

JIMMY
Why can't I tell it the way I told you?

PETER
Because you've got to say it a certain way or no one will believe you, all right?

Jimmy nods quickly. Peter scribbles an outline to the story.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Peter leads Alison in as Jimmy sits nervously.

Jimmy stands and shakes Alison's hand as she smiles; he's in awe to meet the person he saw on TV.

ALISON
(to Peter)
Could you give us a few minutes?

Peter looks at Alison with surprise before stepping toward the bedroom.

PETER
You know where to find me.

Peter closes the door behind him as Alison sits.

ALISON
Peter told me your story. I'm sorry your father had to die trying to do some good.

Jimmy nods.

ALISON (CONT'D)

But, you have to realize how easy it is for people to not believe this. Americans don't like to admit their government has a dark side.

JIMMY

But it's true!

ALISON

Of course it is, to you, but this story may be impossible to prove. I could go to Nevada and try to find some facts at the laboratory, but...

JIMMY

You can't go in there! They won't let you in! It's for scientists only!

ALISON

We'll, I'll just talk to as many people in the town as I can.

JIMMY

No one will! They all have to be quiet. My father was supposed to be quiet, but he couldn't!

(looks away/choked up)

He tried to save people's lives and they killed him. No one in Arrow's Creek would believe that. My mother thinks I'm exaggerating it all. She thinks it was just a freak accident.

Jimmy leans closer to Alison, tears ebbing in his eyes.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

You've got to help me. You've got to.

Alison purses her lips as Jimmy tries to blink the tears away, shaking without control.

EXT. PETER & SUZANNE'S TERRACE - MAGIC HOUR

Alison steps up from inside as Peter watches the sun set, silhouetting the capitol's monuments.

ALISON

I knew he was a little odd, but you could have told me he wasn't emotionally stable.

PETER

(hesitates)

I didn't think it mattered that much.

ALISON

Oh, it matters and you know it! If he had his head on straight I might buy this, but the way he was acting...

PETER

Just because you're paranoid it doesn't mean they're not watching you.

ALISON

Clever, Peter. You would prefer to ignore the fact that he's disturbed and just believe he's telling the truth, right?

PETER

Is this where you lecture me on the virtue of ethics?

ALISON

Ethics? I'm surprised you even know the word!

(turns quickly)

Tell me something. What drives you to succeed so badly? Is it wealth, fame or just some basic insecurity you're trying to overcome?

Peter laughs, leaning against the terrace railing.

PETER

I don't think I could describe it with one word.

ALISON

Try.

Peter looks away, then back to her with anger.

PETER

Why, do you aspire to fail?

ALISON

There's a difference between failing and being able to look yourself in the mirror every morning.

(sits)

You might think I'm a failure because I'm not up there with Koppel and Brokaw and Walters, but I'm satisfied with my career. I'm proud of the work I've done.

(a beat)

And I've never compromised myself or a source for the sake of a story.

Peter laughs, looking at the floor.

PETER

If you're so satisfied, why are you here?

Peter looks up to Alison with a sly grin.

Alison stares back at him for a long beat. She shakes her head, looking away with a laugh.

INT. VETERAN'S ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL - DAY

Peter walks with SHELLEY, a doctor in her late forties.

SHELLEY

I know Suzanne's skeptical about your story, Peter, but I thought you might want to meet some of my patients.

Peter and Shelley approach "Vietnam Vets: Ward 5."

INT. VETERAN'S ADMINISTRATION - HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

Peter sits beside a bed with ROGER laying on it, the ward filled with VETERANS.

Roger is in his early fifties with a linebacker build. Shelley stands nearby.

Roger's arms and legs are covered with chloracne, a disease of the skin resembling a pustule rash.

ROGER

I don't know. Maybe this shouldn't surprise me. It was a war, right? Things like this happen in wars, but it shouldn't come from your own side.

Shelley steps away, speaking with CLIFF.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I handled the stuff for most of my stay in country. When all this started, I never thought it was related.

Roger opens his robe to reveal the skin deformities across his body.

ROGER (CONT'D)

This isn't even so bad. It's the cancers I worry about. I don't know what's coming next.

Shelley returns with Cliff, in his late fifties with various tattoos around his body.

SHELLEY

Peter, Cliff also was in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot.

(a beat)

He flew defoliant runs.

Peter stands.

CLIFF

Shelley told me about your story. Me and my buddies fought the government when we started getting sick. We tried to get them to hear our problems, but they'd never listen.

(a beat)

Now I can't even fight with them. They've already died.

Peter looks to Shelley with discomfort.

INT. VETERAN'S ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL LIBRARY - NIGHT

Peter drinks black coffee in the dimly lit room.

Spread across the table are straight-forward photographs of Agent Orange victims, including U.S. military personnel and Vietnamese.

Most are the people are so deformed or covered with rashes and burns they are difficult to look at.

Shelley speaks from behind a bookcase as Peter looks away from the photos with anguish.

SHELLEY

From what I've seen, it's caused fatigue, migraines, birth defects, impairment of the senses, gastrointestinal disorders, respiratory distress, spontaneous abortions and cancer to just about every part of the body you can think of.

(pokes head out)

Mind you, as an employee of this hospital, I'm not supposed to believe that.

Shelley returns to hunting through the bookshelf.

PETER

How do those men stay here if the government says Agent Orange wasn't responsible?

SHELLEY

Technicalities. We shuffle papers. Some were injured in combat and to the administration, that's acceptable.

Peter scans the photos again, flipping through files of independent studies on chemical weapons.

PETER

There's just so much here. How can I absorb it all? How can I...

Shelley steps out from behind the shelves with a stack of books and folders.

SHELLEY

You all right?

PETER

(shrugs it off)

Yeah, it's all just so maddening!

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

They're told they're fighting for freedom, but this was kept a secret from them! How can that happen?

SHELLEY

Greed, ambition, pride. The military loses perspective of their goals. They'll do whatever they have to do to win.

Shelley sits and exhales.

PETER

Do you think they will ever admit that this isn't just a coincidence?

SHELLEY

No.

Peter scans the photos again as Shelley holds the top of a thick file on Agent Orange.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

Ready?

PETER

Not really.

Peter reluctantly nods, pulling up a seat beside Shelley.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jimmy sits quietly at the table as Peter reads over a variety of books on Agent Orange.

JIMMY

I read this material you left about Agent Orange and it make me think.

PETER

Think what?

JIMMY

They made it to kill plants so that the troops could see the Viet Cong, right?

Peter nods.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

But I never saw any plants in the lab.

(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

There were cages with rats and mice and monkeys, but I never saw any plants.

Peter nods slowly as the phone rings.

PETER

Hello?

JEFFREY (O.S.)

Peter, this is Jeffrey O'Neil at WRTM. I'm calling to ask you about that lab. Was that a genuine question or were you dared to ask that?

Peter hesitates, looking at Jimmy's nervous frame.

PETER

Which do you think?

JEFFREY (O.S.)

(laughs)

I'm not trying to scoop you, Edwards, but if you ask that kind of question it's bound to interest a lot of people. Everyone in Washington is calling each other for leads, but no one could get through to NBS and this is the first time you've answered your phone all day!

(a beat)

I just don't want to be left behind on this one. You know how it is.

PETER

Oh, I know. The story is real, Jeff. It's all going to be revealed next week.

JEFFREY

Just out of curiosity, where is that plant?

PETER

(laughs)

I'm not that stupid. I know an exclusive when I've got one!

Peter hangs up, turning to Jimmy.

PETER (CONT'D)
It's okay, Jimmy.
(grinning from ear to ear)
Everything is going to be okay.

Peter pats Jimmy hard on the back and laughs.

INT. WNBS HALLWAY - DAY

Alison and Harold hurry towards his office.

HAROLD
I want you to meet them before
Peter does. They'll know you. It'll
put their minds at ease.

ALISON
You're worrying all out of
proportion.

HAROLD
(stops at door)
No, I don't think I am.

INT. HAROLD'S OFFICE - DAY

Harold, Dan and Alison sit at the desk. Marcus circles them.

MARCUS
You can't have reporters making
accusations without proof. You can
fire Mr. Edwards, but in this day
and age, it's hard for people to
believe it's not true unless they
see it on CNN and 60 Minutes.
People believe reporters over
politicians more and more.

ALISON
That's probably smart of them.

MARCUS
The integrity of our politicians
isn't the issue, Ms. Ramsey. Peter
Edwards is creating a scandal with
one simple question! He's also
creating a solid case of libel if
the station chooses to pursue this
story. Without solid evidence, it's
slander. Let's not forget
Westmoreland vs. CBS.

HAROLD

(exaggerated)

I don't think we'll ever forget about that!

(leans toward Alison)

You don't know anything about Peter's story, do you, Alison?

ALISON

(shakes head)

But I trust his judgment. If he thinks it's a valid story, I believe him.

DAN

That's not the point, Ms. Ramsey.

ALISON

(turns to Dan/annoyed)

What is the point? You're quick to tell us we're reporting something incorrectly, but why should we believe you? If there's the slightest possibility this story is true, it should be investigated.

HAROLD

Alison!

(stands/to Marcus)

I can assure you we will not follow up on this. Peter Edwards will be fired and we'll drop the whole matter. We'll issue a public apology for his actions.

Alison looks at Harold with disgust, rising to leave.

ALISON

I see all rational discussion has ended on this topic.

(to Marcus)

It was very nice to meet you.

MARCUS

I hope you're not offended, Ms. Ramsey, but we can't have journalists making up such ridiculous stories for the sake of your ratings.

ALISON

As you say, Mr. Kramer, that's not really the issue.

Alison walks out quickly, closing the door quickly.

INT. WNBS HALLWAY - DAY

Harold hurries down the hallway after Alison.

HAROLD

(overly sarcastic)

Thanks for putting their minds at ease, Alison. I'm sure they won't bother us any more!

ALISON

I can't believe you're even listening to them! This could be a very big story, but you're so chicken-shit scared, you won't even try to find out the truth!

Harold smiles, leading Alison into a copy room away from the busy flow of the news room.

INT. WNBS COPY ROOM - DAY

Harold blocks the doorway. Alison stares at him angrily.

HAROLD

I've seen you and Peter talking lately. I know you know more than you're saying.

ALISON

And what if I do? Would I then be valuable to you again?

HAROLD

(laughs)

Don't play games, Alison. I only ask because I also think there's something to this.

ALISON

Would the F.B.I. be here if there wasn't?

HAROLD

(smiles)

The thing is, I can't condone any further investigation. Do you know what I mean?

Alison leans against the copier and nods. Harold is about to exit when she steps forward.

ALISON

Don't fire Peter. It will just make NBS look cowardly, like we're trying to cover something up.

(raises eyebrows)

And don't give away my office to Donald just yet. Maybe you can think of some redecorating ideas instead, hmm?

Alison pushes Harold's arm out of the way as she heads for her office.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Peter dresses as he speaks on the phone.

PETER

Listen, I have to protect my source's anonymity.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Has the government talked to you yet?

PETER

They'd love to bury this one, but that's not going to happen.

(looks at watch)

Whoops, got to go.

Peter hangs up, hurrying to go.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jimmy finishes his breakfast as Peter switches on the answering machine.

PETER

(making his tie)

Don't answer the phone, okay Jimmy?
Don't even listen to the messages.

Jimmy shakes his head vigorously.

PETER (CONT'D)

And keep practicing the answers to the interview. We'll have you on the air soon.

JIMMY

(inhales/looks down)

But what if they want to hurt my mother because I talk? What if they try to kill me later?

PETER

They won't kill you. You'll be safe once this is out in the open.

(grabs briefcase)

It's going to be okay, Jimmy. I promise.

Jimmy watches Peter exit with fear. After a moment, the phone starting ringing, Jimmy sitting across the room with fear.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Peter speeds down the ramp into the underground parking garage at WNBS.

He spots U.S. Government license plates and brakes hard, inhaling deeply before racing for a parking spot.

INT. HAROLD'S OFFICE - DAY

Peter sits in front of the desk as Marcus paces the room. Harold keeps his eyes fixed on Peter throughout the scene.

MARCUS

I'm not sure what you thought you were doing, Mr. Edwards, but I can assure you it won't boost your career. If anything, it's going to end it, and quickly I might add.

Peter rolls his eyes.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

But that's not my concern. I'd just like to meet your source so we can evaluate its validity.

PETER

(laughs)

'Evaluate its validity?' Don't you mean, 'shut my informant up?' Is that a polite way of saying you want to kill this story?

MARCUS

There's no story to kill. The United States does not manufacture Agent Orange. The idea that we do, especially in the light of what we know, is ridiculous.

PETER

You can tell me that with absolute confidence?

Marcus laughs slightly, rubbing the corner of his eye.

MARCUS

Mr. Edwards, I don't have to disprove anything to you until you prove it to me.

(smiles)

You think you can suggest this, get the government to plead 'no comment' and make us look guilty, don't you?

Peter stands, speaking an inch away from Marcus' face

PETER

Is that 'no comment' on the record or off?

Marcus steps even closer to Peter.

MARCUS

(softly)

If you have written evidence or photographs or video tape, show it to me. If you have an eyewitness, let me meet him because until you do, your investigation is not going to continue.

PETER

(to Harold)

Then we'll put him on the air. He can tell the whole story himself.

MARCUS

You're not putting anyone on the air until I meet him.

Peter turns back to Harold, who nods.

PETER

Aw, this whole scenario is beginning to stink! I can see how easy it would be to cover this up.

MARCUS

There's nothing to cover up. We're simply trying to get to the bottom of this.

PETER

I'm putting my source on the air, Mr. Kramer, and you can't stop me.

MARCUS

Maybe I can't, but he will.

Marcus thumbs toward Harold. Peter steps toward him.

PETER

You're going to censor this story because the F.B.I. doesn't like the sound of it? Who the hell is producing the news show, anyway?

HAROLD

It's not censorship if there's nothing to censor.

Peter swings his arms angrily at them.

PETER

Then I'll go to another network. I'll get this on the air and when it comes out that there was a cover up at NBS...

MARCUS

(interrupting/putting on coat)

No other network will broadcast this story. There are guidelines to follow. You simply can't avoid them.

(walks to door)

I suggest you consider revealing your source. The sooner you do, the sooner this can all be resolved.

Marcus nods to Harold, shutting the door loudly as he exits. Peter spins to face Harold.

PETER

I've got the scoop of the year and you're going to shut me down?

HAROLD

You've got nothing, Peter. You jumped the gun before Alison could get any evidence.

Peter looks at Harold with surprise.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

That's right. I know where she's going and honestly I hope she does find something. I wouldn't mind being the producer of the news show that broke a story like this.

Peter sits, leaning his head against the chair.

PETER

You do know this story is buzzing all over town?

HAROLD

Of course it is, but half the reporters don't believe it and the other half are scouring the Southwest looking for this lab. You've got the source, Peter, but until you have something to back him up, this isn't anything more than a bunch of rumors.

Peter slowly nods with frustration.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter follows Suzanne around the tiny kitchen as she cooks.

PETER

He needs to practice before he goes on the air.

SUZANNE

I don't know if you've noticed, Peter, but I don't like this! I'm all for your fame and fortune, but not at his expense.

PETER

(whispering)

It's not at his expense!

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

He believes this is true. I do, too. The more I read about chemical weapons, the more I realize how dangerous they could be. They could contaminate the water supply of any country and it would slowly kill or deform everyone in it.

SUZANNE

The United States of America is going to do this?

PETER

Maybe, or maybe they'll sell it to another country. Think of how many warring countries would love to have it.

Suzanne shakes her head in disbelief.

PETER (CONT'D)

Alison believes it, too. She's going to Nevada to investigate it. Can you imagine the attention we'll get when this story breaks?

SUZANNE

That's if it breaks. I still wouldn't trust him. He just looks too haggard.

Peter smiling, jumping toward the bedroom.

PETER

Wait until you see this.
(yells)
Jimmy, can you come here a minute?

Suzanne eyes Peter with confusion.

Jimmy appears, clean shaven and his hair cut short and conservatively. Wearing a sweater and chinos from Peter, Suzanne jerks her head back.

SUZANNE

Well, it's an improvement.

Jimmy looks at Suzanne with distrust.

PETER

Think you'll believe him now?

Suzanne shrugs.

PETER (CONT'D)
Tell her, Jimmy.

Jimmy looks to Peter with worry.

PETER (CONT'D)
You've got to practice if you want
to get good at it.

Jimmy stares at the ground, slowly managing to look at
Suzanne.

JIMMY
I'm here in Washington D.C. to tell
you about a laboratory the United
States Government employs in
Nevada. From my own experience, and
from the information I...

Jimmy falters.

PETER
I received from...

JIMMY
I received from my late father, I
can prove that the government has
been producing the outlawed
chemicals used to kill plant life
during the Vietnamese hostilities.

PETER
(to Suzanne)
Like that? Hostilities, not war.
That way they won't think we're a
bunch of left-over hippies.

Peter signals to Jimmy to continue.

JIMMY
My father tried to alert the Los
Angeles Times about the chemical
weapons, but his car was run off
the road by the F.B.I.
(to Suzanne/softly)
I don't think they ran him off the
road. They shot out his tire,
though.

SUZANNE
Great, Peter! Now you're
embellishing!

Suzanne turns back to her burning meal.

PETER

It's not embellishing. I'm organizing the facts the way I heard them.

(to Jimmy)

Why don't you go watch some TV or something?

(slaps Jimmy's back)

You did a great job.

Jimmy exits.

PETER (CONT'D)

Now don't tell me that's not convincing.

SUZANNE

You've got a tougher crowd than me to convince. I'm not the entire United States of America.

Suzanne returns to cooking. Jimmy yells from the living room.

JIMMY (O.S.)

Peter, Alison is on television!

SUZANNE

(laughs)

Alison is on television? What a surprise!

Peter smirks at Suzanne as he exits.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy hovers close to the TV set with a smile. Peter enters after Alison has begun the newscast.

ALISON

Rumors of drug abuse on Capitol Hill have abounded for years, but a WNBS exclusive shows that they may be more than just rumors. Donald Stewart has the story.

The camera pulls out to reveal Donald at the console beside Alison.

DONALD

Thanks, Alison.

(to camera)

(MORE)

DONALD (CONT'D)

Senator Michael O'Rourke today denied allegations of suspected drug use that surfaced from an anonymous caller I received several weeks ago. We've been tracking the story and here's my report.

Peter switches channels quickly to see the other news programs starting off with a story on a visiting Ambassador from Africa.

Peter switches back to NBS, pounding the coffee table with his fist.

PETER

Shit!

Jimmy looks at Peter with fear as Suzanne rushes into the room.

PETER (CONT'D)

(to Suzanne)

Donald's got a scoop! He's going to fucking blow me away!

Peter shakes his head in anger, stomping out of the room. Jimmy looks to Suzanne with confusion as Peter slams the bedroom door.

SUZANNE

(shrugs)

You know reporters. They're very temperamental.

Suzanne exits and Jimmy looks back to the screen. His eyes widen as Alison returns.

ALISON

Thanks for that report, Donald.
We'll see you again as this story develops.

Alison starts another story as Jimmy watches her closely.

INTERCUT:

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S BEDROOM / ALISON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Peter speaks on the phone, sprawled out on the bed. Cleaning up her office, Alison hurries around as the phone cord restricts her.

PETER
I can't believe he got that story!

ALISON
He works hard, Peter. You can't deny that. He's spent a long time networking in this town and it's paying off for him.

Peter rolls over on the bed, sighing to change the subject.

PETER
Any luck with your scientist friends?

ALISON
I have a contact at the Pentagon that might be of help, but your little White House stunt is going to keep a lot of lips sealed tight.

PETER
(closes his eyes)
Let me know how it goes.

Peter hangs up as Suzanne opens the door.

SUZANNE
Is Jimmy in here?

PETER
He's in the living room.

Suzanne looks back into the living room where the television blares.

SUZANNE
He's not out there, Peter, and if he's not in here...

Suzanne shrugs as Peter jumps to his feet, dashing toward the door.

EXT. D.C. STREET - NIGHT

Peter flies out of his building's lobby and into the street, looking in every direction.

PETER
Fuck!

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Peter storms in and slams the door, leaning against the stove. He inhales deeply as Suzanne steps up.

SUZANNE

He can't have gotten far. He's got no money and he doesn't know anyone other than us, so...

Peter punches the refrigerator.

EXT. D.C. STREET - NIGHT

Jimmy walks through the desolate streets of a poverty stricken neighborhood. He gets stares from local residents since now he's well dressed.

Several PEOPLE speak to him, but Jimmy continues down the block toward a main intersection.

As he nears the corner, THREE MEN step out from the shadows and in front of him.

MAN 1

Look it here, a sharply dressed man just wandering down our street.

MAN 2

Guess he's lost, don't you think?

MAN 1

Looks very lost to me. Maybe we can help find his way home.

Jimmy looks at the three men with fear, breathing hard. They laugh, surrounding Jimmy quickly.

JIMMY

I didn't tell him anything, I swear! I didn't tell him a thing and I won't do it again!

MAN 3

Looks like we've got ourselves a crazy, sharp dressed man.

The men laugh, poking Jimmy as he turns more frantic.

From around the corner, a car speeds up to where Jimmy and the men stand.

MAN 2

Hey, a car too! Tonight would be a good night for a ride, don't you think?

The men nod as the car approaches with Peter behind the wheel.

As a baseball bat appears at the driver's window, the men step back.

Men 2 and 3 take out switch blades as Peter swings the bat.

Jimmy runs deeper into the desolate area as Peter tosses the bat beside him and drives alongside Jimmy.

PETER

Get in the car, Jimmy!

Jimmy doesn't turn to see Peter.

JIMMY

I didn't tell him anything! I promise you I won't tell them anything anymore!

Peter looks in his rearview mirror as the men chase Jimmy.

PETER

Jimmy, it's me! It's Peter! Will you get in the goddamn car before you get us both killed?

Jimmy runs faster as the three men nearly catch up with him. Two of the men grab pieces of wood strewn on the sidewalk as they chase the car.

JIMMY

You can't fool me! I know what you want to do to me!

Peter looks in the mirror. The men are inches from Jimmy.

PETER

Either come with me or get your ass kicked, Jimmy!

Peter swerves the car in, Jimmy finally seeing Peter's face.

JIMMY

Mr. Edwards?

Peter pulls onto the sidewalk in front of Jimmy, weaving in between fire hydrants and sidewalk garbage.

He pops the latch beneath his seat, opening the trunk.

The three men are close to grabbing Jimmy when he leaps into Peter's trunk. Peter pulls onto the street, speeding away.

The three men stop short, dropping their sticks as Peter's car disappears.

MAN 1

Damn, that was a good one!

MAN 2

I haven't ran like that in a long time!

(laughs)

Goddamn!

The three men laugh, heading back to their spot on the street.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Peter drives back to his neighborhood with Jimmy in the passenger seat.

PETER

I was only talking to Alison on the phone. I'm sorry if I worried you.

JIMMY

I trust you, but I don't know about Suzanne.

PETER

You can trust her, Jimmy. She's just a little sarcastic.

JIMMY

(shaking head violently)

I don't know if I can trust her. I don't think I can.

Peter looks back at Jimmy, watching as he shakes.

PETER

It's okay, Jimmy. I'll take care of it.

Jimmy continues to shake as Peter drives on.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter sits on the bed as Suzanne packs a suitcase.

SUZANNE

I can't even believe this! I thought I had seen it all from you, Peter, but this is just the most ridiculous...

PETER

I don't want to break up, Suzanne! I just asked if you could stay with a friend until I can get Jimmy relaxed! He's in no shape for an interview, but if this works out all right, he could be what brings me up to network news!

SUZANNE

Or he might just be some phony jerking you around! Did you ever think of that?

Peter steps toward Suzanne, grabbing her shoulders.

PETER

Please don't end this now!
(softly)
I can't do this without you.

Suzanne shakes Peter off, closing her suitcase.

SUZANNE

I've put up with a lot of crap from you, Peter, but I will not come in second place to some lunatic you think is going to make your career! If it's that important to you, I wouldn't want to distract you by being here!

Suzanne grabs her bag and exits.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy watches from the couch as Suzanne exits. Peter follows.

PETER

Tell me where you are so I can call you.

SUZANNE

It's too late, Peter. For the last five years you've been dragging me around trying to make something of yourself and it didn't even matter what I wanted! In fact, you never even asked!

Suzanne bangs the suitcase against the door as she exits, Peter breathing hard before he follows.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter runs after Suzanne as she steps into the elevator.

SUZANNE

(holding elevator door
open)

I can understand wanting to be successful, but what are you trying to prove?

(a beat)

He's been dead a long time, Peter. You don't have to prove yourself to your father any more.

Suzanne removes her hand, the doors closing.

Peter stands in the empty hallway, listening to the sounds of the elevator dropping.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peter returns, closing the door slowly.

JIMMY

I'm sorry, Mr. Edwards.

PETER

It's not your fault. It's mine.

Peter enters his bedroom as Jimmy lays down, staring at the ceiling in the dark.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - DAY

Alison sits with MITCHELL, in his late sixties and a sloppy suit and tie.

The restaurant is crowded and noisy, but they speak quietly.

ALISON

I know it sounds far fetched, but my colleague thinks there's something to it.

MITCHELL

Oh, I don't know. During the Manhattan Project the press had to keep silent about it. Things like this happen all the time, but the media's usually kept out of it.

ALISON

Have you heard any rumors about it?

MITCHELL

(shakes head)

Something like this would only be known by the top brass. The State department probably wouldn't know a thing about it. I don't know if it exists or not, but it's always possible.

(shrugs)

Anything is possible nowadays.

Alison sips wine, slowly nodding in contemplation.

INT. WNBS NEWS ROOM - DAY

Alison sits on the edge of Peter's desk.

ALISON

I didn't get anything firm, but he seems to think it's possible. Even if the government isn't using Agent Orange, it might be produced. It's still being used in a lot of third world countries.

(a beat)

Now that they know more about dioxin, they could use it to its full potential.

Peter's eyes light up with excitement. Alison waves her hand.

ALISON (CONT'D)

I've chased my share of bad leads, Peter. This might just be one more. I'm leaving for Nevada tomorrow morning. I have to check this out in person.

PETER

Jimmy's mother might be a good source for information, but he said she doesn't know anything about the lab.

ALISON

Don't worry. I'll find out what we need to know.

EXT. WNBS BUILDING - MAGIC HOUR

Peter and Alison exit and head down the street at dusk.

As they approach a busy intersection, Peter spots Marcus leaning against his car at the curb. Dan sits in the car.

Peter taps Alison's shoulder, pointing toward Marcus and Dan.

Alison raises her hand to calm Peter as he begins to look annoyed. Peter and Alison walk toward Marcus.

PETER

(shaking his head)
I didn't realize I'd done anything to merit 24 hour surveillance.

MARCUS

That depends on who you ask.

Peter rolls his eyes, turning to walk away.

ALISON

Good night, Mr. Kramer.

MARCUS

(steps past Alison to Peter)
Do you know what you're doing? You're taking an issue that's haunting thousands of vets and using it to further your career!

Peter speaks with his back to Marcus.

PETER

And what do you know about it?

MARCUS

I served in Vietnam for two and half years.

Peter cringes with embarrassment, turning quickly.

PETER

Then you should be angry about this, too!

MARCUS

The only thing that angers me is irresponsible journalism!

ALISON

That's a pretty subjective term in this case.

PETER

(rushing toward Marcus)
If I'd broke this story in the 1960s I'd have bene called irresponsible, but I wouldn't have been! Back then the only people who knew about the danger of dioxin and Agent Orange was Dow Chemical and the other companies who produced it! They didn't have the balls to warn anyone until it was too late. Now we all know and can do something about it!

Peter gets close to Marcus, poking him once in the chest as he speaks.

PETER (CONT'D)

They might have brainwashed you into thinking the government is always right, but not me. I'm not that naive.

Marcus looks down at Peter's hand, then slowly to his face.

MARCUS

Are you picking a fight, Mr. Edwards?

Peter doesn't blink as he steps back. Alison grabs Peter's arm.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I'm sure you'd like that. It would make great copy for your next broadcast. "F.B.I. agent slugs reporter over faked story." I'll pass.

Marcus steps away, heading for the driver's side of the car.

ALISON

Peter, sometimes you just have to walk away.

Peter inhales deeply as Marcus slams the door. He starts the engine, about to pull away as Peter jumps to Dan's window.

PETER

I'm only doing my job. If you were in my shoes and someone told you about this wouldn't you investigate it?

Marcus and Peter lock into staring at each other. Peter waits for the answer, but Marcus pulls away instead.

ALISON

It's never good to give your enemy ammunition, Peter. It usually just gets used back on you.

Peter wrings his hands, stomping off. Alison follows with a sigh.

INT. PETER'S CAR - NIGHT

Peter drives into the Dulles Airport departure's entrance. Alison gathers her things as Peter pulls to the curb.

ALISON

Tell me something. Do you believe Jimmy or is this story just a way to improve your career? Be honest.

Peter lets out a short laugh, staring at the steering wheel.

PETER

Isn't it a little late to worry about now?

Alison grasps Peter's arm, forcing him to look at her.

ALISON

I'm asking you to be honest.

PETER

I didn't believe him at first. I just kept thinking about the possibilities of breaking a story like this.

(a beat)

But I think I believe him now.

Alison releases Peter's arm and laughs.

ALISON

Well, you're confused, but at least
it's honest.

Alison smiles as she grabs her bag. Peter waves to her as she enters into the mayhem of the busy airport.

INT. SUIT STORE - DAY

Peter holds up a gray suit to Jimmy, stepping back to eye it.

Jimmy eyes Peter with concern as Peter takes the suit away, lifting another up. He holds the next one up to Jimmy.

JIMMY

This is the first suit I'll ever
own.

PETER

Really? Well, you haven't missed
much. It's like being imprisoned by
your own clothes.

A short SALESMAN with a measuring tape steps up.

SALESMAN

That's a nice suit. You can wear it
anywhere and it will last forever.

Peter turns and smirks at the salesman, leading Jimmy into the dressing area.

INT. SUIT STORE DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Jimmy enters a booth, closing the western-style doors.

Peter stands outside, repeatedly making a tie in front of a mirror as he speaks to Jimmy over the door.

PETER

I got my first suit when I was
eighteen. My father told me it was
necessary since I would soon be
going to weddings and funerals.

(smiles)

And so that I could get a job that
much sooner.

JIMMY

Did you go to college?

PETER

For a year or so, but I had to pay
for it myself. I didn't last long.

(a beat)

That didn't make my father too
happy, but I just left and started
working.

JIMMY

(as he changes)

Were you always a reporter?

Peter laughs, pulling the tie up to see it's uneven. He pulls
the knot out and starts again.

PETER

No. I've had more jobs than I can
remember, but somehow I ended up at
a newspaper and saw the excitement
and the prestige. I thought it was
something I could do okay.

Jimmy pulls the suit's pants on behind the door.

PETER (CONT'D)

Of course, my father never thought
so, no matter how many times he saw
me on TV.

Peter pulls the knot up to his neck making a perfect knot as
Jimmy steps out of the dressing room.

Peter adjusts the jacket on Jimmy as the SALESMAN enters.

SALESMAN

Oh, it's quite a handsome fit. A
few alterations and...

Peter laughs, turning to the salesman.

PETER

Relax, we'll take it.

The salesman steps up, making alteration marks as Jimmy
stands there awkwardly.

INT. D.C. STREET - DAY

Peter and Jimmy walk to the car. Jimmy looks around anxiously
and Peter notices, starting a conversation to distract Jimmy.

PETER

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

JIMMY

No, my father thought one was enough.

Peter opens the door for Jimmy.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Do you?

PETER

Yeah, an older sister.

Jimmy climbs in and Peter closes the door.

PETER (CONT'D)

But I bet my father had thought the same thing.

Peter laughs to himself as he walks to the driver's side.

EXT. RENO AIRPORT - DAY

Alison slams the door of her rental car, driving out of the parking lot in Nevada.

EXT. NEVADA ROAD - DAY

Alison drives into the small town of Arrow's Creek, pulling in front of the post office.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Alison speaks with an OLD MAN behind the counter, waving an envelope and appearing distressed. The old man writes down an address for her.

EXT. NEVADA STREET - DAY

Alison pulls onto a dusty road, looking at the numbers on run-down houses.

EXT. FOGARTY HOUSE - DAY

Alison looks at the disheveled house, ringing the doorbell.

Clara, now in her early sixties with wiry, grey hair and wearing a house frock, comes to the screen door.

ALISON

Clara Fogarty?

CLARA

(laughs)

I haven't been called that in years! No one used last names around here.

ALISON

(smiles)

I guess not.

(quickly)

I work for a television station in Washington D.C. We're doing a series of reports on scientists in the Southwest. I understand your husband was quite a brilliant man.

CLARA

Oh, in his day perhaps, but those young fellows know so much more now.

Alison smiles as Clara opens the door.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Let's have some tea. Maybe I can tell you something you don't already know!

INT. CLARA'S SUN PORCH - DAY

Alison sits in the plant-filled porch, the afternoon sun beating through the windows as Clara serves tea and cookies.

CLARA

David didn't talk much about his work. I guess he didn't even trust his own wife with military secrets.

ALISON

(faked surprise)

They did military work there?

CLARA

Oh, experiments and whatnot. They were always blowing up some kind of bomb out in the desert.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

He did that for a while, but when they started seeing what the radiation did to you, he worked on other projects.

ALISON

But he never told you about them?

CLARA

He had to sign an agreement swearing his secrecy, so I didn't ask.

(smiles)

We were happy enough without me knowing all the details of what he was doing!

ALISON

I understand he died several years ago.

CLARA

Yes, in a car crash.

Alison puts down her cup as Clara picks up a cookie.

ALISON

I'm sorry to hear that. Someone in town told me there was some confusion over how he died. They said it wasn't an accident.

CLARA

(waves her hand)

Oh, my son Jimmy probably told them that. He was very close with his father. He thought David's accident had been planned by the government.

ALISON

You don't believe that?

CLARA

Of course not! Why would they want to kill David?

ALISON

If he was working on secretive projects, isn't it possible that he...

CLARA

(interrupting)

The government doesn't do things like that! Jimmy believes it, but he always had an active imagination. He always used to make up stories to get attention.

Clara smiles nervously, pouring more tea into Alison's cup.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I told him he should have been a writer or something, but Jimmy could never sit still long enough. He was always on the go, always running off somewhere.

ALISON

Where is he now?

CLARA

A month ago he said he had to go east for a while. He borrowed some money and disappeared. I was worried at first, but he's a big boy. I simply can't take care of him all his life, especially if he's going to be causing such problems.

Alison nods with uncertainty, staring out at the desert.

INT. PETER'S CAR - DAY

Peter drives down the busy streets of D.C., glancing occasionally in his rearview mirror.

He spots Marcus and Dan following him, quickly turning off the main street to elude them.

Marcus and Dan follow after Peter makes another quick turn. At a red light, Peter eyes the mirror carefully.

Peter slowly slides out into the intersection, creating a traffic jam as cars brake and honk at him.

Marcus tries to follow but the intersection becomes a mess of cars blocking each other.

Peter pulls into another lane where Marcus cannot follow him.

The gridlock slowly clears as the lights change, but Peter is nowhere in sight.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Peter rushes in, startling Jimmy on the couch.

PETER
Get your shoes on.

JIMMY
What's the matter?

Jimmy fumbles for his sneakers.

PETER
I'm taking you to Alison's
apartment. She gave me keys in case
of an emergency.

JIMMY
An emergency?

Peter looks at his answering machine to see there are 39 messages. He smiles as Jimmy rushes to get his laces tied.

EXT. D.C. STREET - DAY

Peter walks out to his car, looking around cautiously before signaling for Jimmy to follow.

Jimmy dashes toward the car and jumps in as Peter pulls out of the spot, running a stop sign to hurry down the street.

INT. PETER'S CAR - DAY

Peter drives over the Arlington Memorial Bridge into Virginia, keeping his eyes on the rearview mirror.

INT. ABE'S OFFICE - DAY

Marcus sits across the desk from Abe.

ABE
Did you talk to that reporter?

MARCUS
Yes. He's a bit arrogant, so I want
to keep an eye on him. I don't want
him circulating any more rumors.

ABE
Good. It's crucial that stories
like this don't reach the press.
(MORE)

ABE (CONT'D)

There are hundreds of secret experiments going on all over America, but if the media were to get a hold of them, it could be a national security disaster.

Marcus looks up with confusion as Abe fingers an un-lit pipe.

MARCUS

But I thought it wasn't true? I thought...

ABE

(interrupting)

It doesn't really matter if it is true or not. It's simply our responsibility to keep that information privileged.

Abe keeps his back to Marcus as he paces the room.

MARCUS

But I'm asking you if it is true, Abe. I served in Nam. I saw the effects it had on people. I still see its effects.

ABE

(calmly)

I didn't say it was true, Marcus. Where did you get that idea? I'm just saying that it's our job to keep that sort of journalism in check. We have a level of security to retain, right?

Marcus nods and stands. He walks toward the door and walks out with a tense expression.

INT. F.B.I. HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - DAY

Marcus exits Abe's office and stands still with a look of concern as Dan walks down the hallway.

Marcus leads Dan away from Abe's door, speaking softly as they approach their offices.

MARCUS

I'm taking a few days off. You're going to have to keep a close watch on Edwards.

DAN

Yeah, sure. Is everything all right?

MARCUS

An old friend died. The services are out of town. I'll be back early next week.

Dan nods as he walks away. Marcus enters his office and closes the door.

INT. CLARA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Alison and Clara sit in the dimly lit kitchen eating dinner.

CLARA

So why didn't you marry him?

ALISON

At that time, I was spending my days in the news room and my nights sleeping. I didn't see where a marriage would fit in.

CLARA

Do you wish you'd married him now?

ALISON

Sometimes, but it takes an understanding spouse to put up with this kind of work. It's a lot to ask and I couldn't. Sometimes you have to sacrifice things to get what you want. Maybe I could have tried to make things work, but what's done is done.

Alison looks to Clara for a response but she merely nods solemnly. Alison forces her tone of voice to be cheerful.

ALISON (CONT'D)

But I'm not all that sorry. I've had an exciting life.

CLARA

(clearing the table)

It certainly sounds that way. You traveled all over the world with your job. The farthest I've ever been is to my sister's place in Dallas.

(puts dishes in sink)

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

Would you like to stay here while you work on this story? I've got a spare room upstairs and all it needs is some fresh sheets.

ALISON

I don't want to be a bother.

CLARA

You wouldn't be. I'd enjoy the company, to be honest.

ALISON

(smiles)

Then I'd love to stay.

Clara smiles and begins washing the dishes.

INT. F.B.I. LIBRARY - DAY

Marcus rapidly looks through a reel of microfilm from a Reno newspaper.

He checks the obituaries from several different issues, coming across one for David Fogarty.

As he reads the article about David's car accident, he spots the mention of Arrow's Creek, pulling the microfilm from the machine.

INT. MARCUS' HOUSE - DAY

Marcus speeds up to the driveway of a large house in the Maryland suburbs.

INT. MARCUS' BEDROOM - DAY

Marcus quickly packs a suitcase as his wife, JILL, faces him.

JILL

I don't get it. You're going on business but the Bureau isn't paying for it?

MARCUS

I have to check something out before I can continue with this case. I can't ask them to send me.

JILL

You're starting to believe it.

MARCUS
 (shutting suitcase)
 I don't know what to believe
 anymore, that's why I have to go.
 If Eleanor calls, tell her I'll be
 there soon.

Marcus kisses Jill on the lips before rushing out the door.

EXT. ELEANOR'S PATIO - DAY

Marcus sits at a picnic table as ELEANOR brings out two glasses of iced tea.

CLIFF, a deformed teen-ager, plays in the backyard. One of his arms is shortened and on the other limb he's missing several fingers.

Eleanor is in her late forties, shoulder length brown hair and bright, blue eyes.

ELEANOR
 How is Jill? I haven't talked to
 her in weeks.

Eleanor sits across from Marcus as he watches Cliff. Eleanor sips her drink and leans toward Marcus.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 I know that look, Marcus. What's
 the matter?

Marcus turns around, but cannot face Eleanor.

MARCUS
 I'm going on a business trip and...
 (a beat)
 I've been thinking about Sam
 lately.

ELEANOR
 Nightmares, again?

MARCUS
 No, It's just that I'm
 investigating this story on Agent
 Orange.

Marcus looks to Eleanor as her face goes pale.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Elly.
(looks away)
I miss him, that's all.

Eleanor nods, reaching her hand across the table to Marcus. He clutches her hand tight, but cannot look at her.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter exits the elevator and approaches his apartment. As he reaches his door, he hears noises coming from inside.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peter enters, quietly shutting the door. He moves toward the bedroom where the loud noises come from.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter opens the door, spotting a figure moving inside a walk-in closet.

He breathes softly before rushing toward the figure and wrestling it in the closet.

Suzanne screams as Peter pulls away to look at her.

PETER
What are you doing here?

SUZANNE
I came to pick up some of my things! Is that okay with you?

Peter sighs, helping Suzanne to her feet.

PETER
I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else.

Suzanne rushes to the closet, grabbing clothing. On the bed are two suitcases which she packs throughout the scene.

SUZANNE
You're getting as paranoid as your little friend. Where is he, anyway?

PETER
He's at Alison's. I didn't feel safe leaving him here anymore.
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)
 (sits on bed)
 You don't have to leave now.

SUZANNE
 I think we've passed that point,
 Peter.

Suzanne empties the night stand drawer as Peter sits in awkward silence.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)
 So, how's your big story going?

Peter looks at Suzanne with anger. He walks to the living room.

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peter hits the answering machine and rewinds the tape. It reaches the beginning and starts playing back its messages.

GWEN (O.S.)
 Hi, this is Gwen from the Baltimore Journal. I'd like to speak with you about that information you have, Peter. Maybe we can work something out. My number is 555-8435.

The machine beeps to the next message.

LANCE (V.O.)
 Peter, this is your buddy Lance at KRTL in L.A. I hear you've got yourself a scoop and I was wondering if you wanted to share the wealth. I've got some contacts at the Pentagon and...

Peter fast forwards to the next message as Suzanne steps in, standing near the doorway.

MARTHA (O.S.)
 This is Martha Robinson from the Boston Globe. A few of my friends and I have a wager over whether your story is true. could you let us know?
 (a beat)
 Oh, by the way, if it is true, I'd watch my back. The reporters in this town are piranhas.

The machine beeps again and Peter shuts it off before turning to Suzanne.

PETER

Still think no one will believe it?

Suzanne allows a smile to rise to her lips. Peter nods his head.

INT. ALISON'S CAR - DAY

Alison drives across the open desert with Clara, the sun setting on the horizon as they pass an Indian Reservation.

ALISON

I appreciate you showing me around.

CLARA

Oh, it's no problem. I don't have much else to do, but I'm lucky David left me enough money to live on. Work isn't easy to find around these parts.

ALISON

He'd saved a lot of money?

CLARA

He wasn't too far from retiring, so the lab gave me some compensation. They said it was the least they could do.

Alison turns to Clara with concern as they near the lab.

CLARA (CONT'D)

This is where David worked. You can't go inside, though, unless you've got a special pass.

Alison drives slowly by the entrance to the plant. Behind a mile-long fence stands a huge, industrial building.

Alison eyes the trespassing signs, one of which reads, "Anderson Industries Inc. Entry limited to authorized personnel only."

Alison looks at the security booth where THREE GUARDS are stationed.

As they watch Alison's car suspiciously, she accelerates and continues down the road.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Alex always liked working there, at least until the last year or two.

ALISON

Did he say why he didn't like it anymore?

CLARA

No.

(sad laugh)

He just said he couldn't talk about it.

Alison nods, surveying the grounds before they speed off.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter and Suzanne eat at the kitchen table.

SUZANNE

I don't know. I know you want to make it big and if that's what you want, fine. I just can't be an extraneous part of your life.

PETER

You're not and after this is all over, I won't have to worry about it. We'll be more secure. I won't have work as hard.

SUZANNE

(sits back and sighs)

Proving your worth could take a very long time, Peter.

PETER

(reaches for her hand)

It's going to be different this time. I promise.

Peter smiles and Suzanne forces herself to smile back. The telephone rings and Peter turns his head quickly.

PETER (CONT'D)

After this one, okay?

Suzanne laughs sadly as he rushes to the phone.

INTERCUT:

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S BEDROOM/EXT. NEVADA PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Peter grabs the phone. Standing in phone booth, Alison stares at the sunset beyond the desert.

ALISON

Peter? I've been trying to reach you all day, but your line's been busy.

PETER

Every reporter who's heard of it is calling for a piece of this story! It's breaking wide open. How about out there?

ALISON

I'm staying with Jimmy's mother. She doesn't suspect anything, but there's too many loose ends. I'm beginning to think Jimmy's story isn't all make believe.

(taking off sunglasses)

How is he?

PETER

Fine. He's at your place. I don't feel safe leaving him here. I think I was being followed today.

ALISON

You don't really think the F.B.I. would touch him, do you?

PETER

Maybe not, but the rest of these reporters would sure like a piece of him. He's better off in Virginia. He'll be more relaxed.

ALISON

Okay, well I'll call you when I get a chance.

Peter nods and hangs up as Suzanne enters.

SUZANNE

If the F.B.I. was really following you, don't you think they'd bug your phone?

Peter's face goes pale. He grabs Suzanne by the hand and they rush out of the apartment.

INT. ALISON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter and Suzanne entering slowly and look around.

Peter opens the door to Alison's bedroom as Suzanne hides behind him. They peek in to see Jimmy asleep on Alison's bed.

Peter smiles with relief, then closes the door.

PETER

We may as well spend the night. No reason to leave if we're just going to worry.

SUZANNE

Where are we going to sleep, on the floor?

PETER

(touching her arm)
Who said anything about sleep?

SUZANNE

(moves away from Peter/laughs)
That's the oldest line in the world, Peter. Time to steal a new one.

Suzanne lays on the couch, pulling a blanket over her.

PETER

I'll work on it.

Peter kneels as Suzanne rolls over and gives him her back.

Peter leans over and kisses Suzanne's neck until she turns around to kiss him back.

INT. CLARA'S PORCH - DAY

Clara watches as Alison walks to her car.

CLARA

Good luck with your interviews.

Alison climbs into her car, waving as she drives off. Clara sits and looks up at Marcus pulls up in another rental car.

Marcus gets out, walking to the porch.

MARCUS

Good morning, could you tell me
where I could find Clara Fogarty?

CLARA

You've found her, sir.

Marcus smiles, taking out his F.B.I. identification.

MARCUS

I'm Marcus Kramer from the F.B.I. I
need to ask you some questions
about your husband...and your son.

Clara's smile quickly fades.

INT. ALISON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Suzanne cooks Jimmy's breakfast. He eyes her bashfully.

JIMMY

I'm sorry I made you and Mr.
Edwards fight.

SUZANNE

You didn't. It really has nothing
to do with you.

Suzanne sits across from Jimmy, handing him a plate.

JIMMY

I didn't mean to cause problems. I
just wanted to tell someone.

SUZANNE

Well, if Peter can get more
evidence, the story will be exposed
and you'll have saved people from a
lot of pain. That will make it
worthwhile, right?

Jimmy nods erratically.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

But I should apologize. I didn't
believe you at first, but obviously
you'd be distraught if your father
died that way.

(a beat)

Actually, I think you're brave to
come here. It must be hard to risk
so much.

Suzanne reaches across, touching Jimmy's hand as he smiles.

INT. WNBS HALLWAYS - DAY

Peter and Harold hustle through the busy office.

PETER

I'm not sure he's ready.

HAROLD

Peter, you were the one that wanted to tape an interview! Now I'm giving you the go-ahead! The F.B.I. is calling me every hour to see where your source is. Obviously you're onto something. Let's tape it before they kill the story!

PETER

He's in a very fragile state. I want to make sure he can handle it before I stick him in a studio with a crew and...

Harold stop short, turning to Peter as NEWS ROOM PERSONNEL pass between them.

HAROLD

That's just it, Peter! We don't tape in the studio! We fly you out there and shoot it at the lab! It will give him that authentic image we'll need to convince the American public!

PETER

Whoa, sloa down! Jimmy's not going to go back there! He's convinced they're trying to kill him. From the way they've been following me, I don't doubt it.

HAROLD

Okay, we'll work it out. Right now you've got to come meet someone.

Harold leads Peter into an empty recording suite.

INT. WNBS RECORDING SUITE - DAY

Harold closes the door as KENNETH, in his late thirties in a suit and tie, stands.

HAROLD

Peter, this is Kenneth Mills.

Peter steps up to shake Kenneth's hand.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

He's the reporter David Fogarty was going to see in L.A. when his car crashed.

Peter holds Ken's hand still and turns to Harold, looking back to Ken with confusion.

KENNETH

I heard about the White House briefing and wanted to get in touch with you.

Peter sits as Harold leans against the audio console.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

When I first heard from David Fogarty I didn't believe him, but we spoke several times and he told me he could get evidence to back up his story. He was terrified. He seemed possessed when I spoke to him, but I trusted my instincts and tried to help him.

PETER

Did he ever give you any evidence, any samples?

KENNETH

I never actually met David Fogarty. He was on his way to give me evidence when he had the accident.

(a beat)

The first time I saw him was when his picture ended up in the obits.

PETER

So what are you telling me?

KENNETH

I'm telling you he was in fear for his life and lives of his wife and son. From the way things ended up, I'd say he had good reason.

PETER

Did you investigate it further?

KENNETH

I took a drive out there, but my editor didn't see it panning out to much. Obviously, I couldn't get into the lab.

PETER

So what does all this mean?

HAROLD

He's telling you he believes Jimmy Fogarty is on to something!

KENNETH

(to Harold)

I can't say that for certain.

(to Peter)

But what I can tell you is that his father believed there was something dangerous going on.

(a beat)

And he was willing to risk his life to expose it.

Peter turns, looking at Ken with fear.

EXT. ARROW'S CREEK STREET - DAY

Alison strolls along the sidewalk in the small, Nevada town.

She looks around at the local stores; a laundromat, grocery store, barber shop, feed store and bar.

INT. CACTUS BAR - DAY

Alison enters, the room dimly lit and smoky.

Several MEN turn from their bar stools as Alison approaches since there are no other women in the bar.

CHRIS, the bartender, smiles to Alison.

ALISON

Can I have a beer?

Chris goes for it as Alison turns to MITCH, an older man sitting near her.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Excuse me, have you lived in Arrow's Creek all your life?

ERIC

Yes, I have.

ALISON

(taking beer from Chris)

I'm from back east, myself. I'm writing a book about the Southwest and heard there used to be labs near here that produced chemical weapons for the government.

(to Chris and Eric)

You know anything about those?

ERIC

Sure do. Used to work at one myself.

Alison takes out a note pad, writing down notes which seems to attract Chris' attention.

CHRIS

They pulled up stakes when Nixon said they might be harmful.

ERIC

Yeah, I'd say they might be harmful. I've got a 40 year old son who served in Nam with more cancers than I can count.

(a beat)

They won't admit that it's their fault, though. God forbid.

ALISON

(sips beer)

They've never opened up again?

CHRIS

Nah, they wouldn't do that. They didn't know they were dangerous back then, but they do now.

ALISON

I heard there's a lab out on route 35.

ERIC

That's some airplane building thing, I think. I don't know for sure, though. They don't hire locals anymore.

Alison nods, setting her beer down. Chris and Eric resume their routines.

EXT. NEVADA ROAD - DAY

Alison pulls off the road a quarter mile from the lab. She takes a knife from her purse, puncturing the front tire.

From the trunk, she pulls out the spare tire and throws it to the side of the road.

Alison hides a camera in the glove compartment and pulls back onto the road.

EXT. NEVADA ROAD - DAY

Alison approaches the entrance to the lab as the tire deflates.

EXT. SECURITY BOOTH - DAY

Alison stands outside the lab's security booth as a GUARD speaks on a telephone.

She looks at the industrial building behind the fence, a three story, grey building similar in size to an airplane hanger.

The guard returns as Alison smiles at TWO GUARDS near the gate entrance.

Throughout her encounter, Alison fakes a southern accent.

ALISON

I don't understand these car rental companies, not giving you a spare tire!

GUARD

The tow truck will be here half an hour.

ALISON

(points at building)
You folks don't have any kind of tow trucks in there? I'm really in a rush.

GUARD

We use the garage from town. We don't have many vehicles to take care of, so...

Alison looks into the security booth to see it is just a few desks and file cabinets. She turns to the guard and walks away.

ALISON

I do appreciate your help, but do you have a bathroom I could use? I'm afraid I won't be able to last half an hour, if you know what I mean!

Alison laughs with exaggeration as the guard politely smiles.

GUARD

We're not allowed to let civilians onto government property.

Alison smirks and waves her hand.

ALISON

Well, I understand, but don't you think, just this time...?

The guard reluctantly nods, walking past the gate to a jeep parked on the property.

Alison climbs in as he speeds toward the building in the distance.

INT. ANDERSON BUILDING - DAY

The GUARD leads Alison through grey hallways.

They pass a set of doors with windows, but the guard blocks her view on the way to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Alison stands in front of the mirror as she hears the GUARD shuffling his feet down the hall. She paces a few moments before exiting.

INT. ANDERSON BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Alison looks to see that the GUARD is facing the opposite direction. She slips out the door silently, rounding a corner just before the guard turns around.

INT. ANDERSON BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Alison moves down the hallway, peeking through the glass on a locked door.

Inside is a huge laboratory with TWO DOZEN SCIENTISTS working, but she cannot see what they are doing.

Stepping up for a better look, a SCIENTIST approaches the door and Alison scurries away from the door.

Alison walks quietly back toward the bathroom, rushing in, flushing a toilet and exiting.

INT. ANDERSON BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

The GUARD leads Alison through the same hallways to the exit.

ALISON

I don't know how to thank you for this, sir. What is it you said you make here?

GUARD

Fighter jets.

ALISON

Oh, I do love airplanes! I wish I could just look around. I used to love those shows they did up in...

GUARD

We don't allow visitors, ma'am.

ALISON

Oh, no. Of course not. I'm just saying I love airplanes.

(sniffs)

What's that smell?

GUARD

Gasoline. You need gas to fly planes, right?

Alison nods as the guard walks in front of her, not paying attention as she glances through circular windows on a door.

Inside is a large room filled with machinery and more SCIENTISTS. The guard hurries her along.

EXT. SECURITY BOOTH - DAY

Alison waves to the GUARD as she drives away in a tow truck with her car hooked up.

DRIVER

You're lucky we have a garage not too far from here. Those fellas back there aren't known for their friendliness.

ALISON

No?

DRIVER

People in town don't like them much, anyway. They used to do all sorts of bomb testing out here. People in town say it damaged their kids.

ALISON

What do they make there now?

DRIVER

Don't know. The employees don't talk about the work and they don't hire locals.

(a beat)

Like I said, they're not too friendly.

Alison nods, watching the building disappear in the distance.

INT. CLARA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alison lets herself into the dark house.

ALISON

Clara? Mrs. Fogarty?

Alison approaches a light coming from the kitchen.

INT. CLARA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alison looks at the table where Clara and Marcus drink coffee. Clara stands, eyeing Alison with anger.

CLARA

Why did you lie to me?

Alison looks into Clara's eyes with embarrassment and sighs.

ALISON

You didn't know Jimmy had gone to Washington and I didn't want to worry you until I had all the facts.

Clara turns from Alison as she steps closer. Marcus looks up.

ALISON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I didn't know how much you knew and until I could get into the lab, I couldn't tell you anything.

CLARA

(turns back)

You got into the lab?

ALISON

Yes, and something is definitely going on. I don't think Jimmy is wrong at all.

MARCUS

(stands/waves his hands)

Let's stop speculating about what might be true! Until we get the facts, I don't want any more hypothesizing!

Alison looks at Marcus with anger, turning to Clara.

ALISON

Did David have any work papers at home, anything that was left after his accident?

CLARA

There's a few boxes in the basement that I haven't thrown away, but I don't know what's in there.

Clara exits as Alison leans against the table over Marcus. She speaks with urgency, but in a whisper.

ALISON

You can't shut me down, Kramer. I am too damn close to the truth. If you try, I'll make sure you're exposed for a cover up!

MARCUS

(leans away from Alison)
Are you threatening a federal
agent?

Alison steps back, biting her tongue. Marcus suddenly smiles,
shaking his head.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I came out here to find out if this
was true or not myself. I don't to
shut you down. I've got my own
reasons for coming.

Marcus raises his eyebrows as Alison slowly smiles and
relaxes.

ALISON

In that case, I'm glad we're on the
same side.

MARCUS

(smiles)
I'm surprised you'd have me.

Clara returns with two boxes of papers and files.

INT. ALISON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Peter sits at the computer as Donald walks past the doorway.
He returns, looking at Peter with a smirk.

DONALD

You probably think you'll end up
with an office with a view.

PETER

That's not what this is about.

DONALD

(enters)
Oh, c'mon! I'm sure you've thought
it all out. So far you've figured
out how to take a man and make him
your personal gold mine and make
yourself into this year's media
hero.

PETER

He's trying to save his father from
becoming an unknown martyr. He's
got a story to tell and he happens
to be telling me.

DONALD

Right. You just happened to be in the right place at the right time. What a load of bullshit.

PETER

What do you care? You're going to be the big-time hot-shit anchor!

DONALD

Whether you believe it or not, I have a moral code. I see what you're pulling with this story and I think it sucks.

Peter laughs, walking away from the desk.

PETER

So you don't believe me. Who cares? It's not my job to convince you. It's my job to inform people of the news, of the facts.

DONALD

(heading for the door)
Right.

PETER

Hey, Donald, suppose no one knew what Hitler was doing in the 1930s. No one knew about Watergate or Ceausescu's Romania, but those things happened.

(a beat)

Maybe it isn't neat or comfortable for you, but if it's true, wouldn't you want to know?

DONALD

You prove it to me and every other American out there. Then I'll believe you. Otherwise, it's just a load of bullshit.

Donald exits with a grin. Peter holds in his anger before returning to the computer with a vengeance.

INT. CLARA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Clara, Marcus and Alison go through piles of papers set around the kitchen floor, table and counters.

MARCUS

Any paperwork about the military could be helpful.

CLARA

I just can't believe David was killed because of what he knew! Jimmy and David was best friends, they were inseparable, but I always thought Jimmy just had an vivid imagination!

Alison pulls out a newspaper clipping about David's death. She reads it quickly before turning to Clara and Marcus.

ALISON

Where was he going at the time of his accident?

CLARA

Los Angeles, I think, to speak at UCLA for some science class.

ALISON

Is it possible he was going to the press with the story? Maybe that's why they caused his accident.

MARCUS

(looks up)

We don't know that David's crash wasn't an accident. Our job is to find out if they're making Agent Orange!

Clara takes the article from Alison, starting to cry at the sight of a photo of David.

CLARA

All this time I thought it was just an accident. To think that they might have killed him over some secret...

(looks up)

David would never work on such a project. He was a scientist, but he wanted to do something helpful!

ALISON

You said yourself he wasn't happy the last few years. If they swore him to secrecy, he'd have to keep that oath, even if it went against all his beliefs.

Clara places the article on the table as Alison picks it up.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Do you want to help us find the
truth, Clara?

Clara looks up quickly, wiping her eyes of tears.

CLARA
Of course I do.

ALISON
Okay.

Alison holds up the article. Marcus looks to her with a grin.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Peter stands in the park in front of the White House with a
CLAIRE, ROBERT and a glaring light pointed at him.

He appears exhausted as he lifts the microphone to begin
taping.

PETER
James Fogarty has risked his life
to tell the story of American
chemical weapon production. He has
traveled thousands of miles and
spent his last dollars to bring
this story to the public. We can
only hope it will not go unheard.
(a beat)
Reporting from the White House,
this is Peter Edwards for WNBS-
Washington.

Peter looks to Claire with fatigue.

CLAIRE
What do you think?

Peter clears his throat.

PETER
Let's try it again.

Robert nods, getting ready to tape again.

INT. PETER'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter staggers down the hallway, opening the door to his apartment.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter flicks on the light and sets his bag down.

Looking around the apartment he sees it's been completely ransacked; the furniture is overturned, books, papers and clothing strewn everywhere.

He walks to the center of the dishevelled living room, sitting with a groan.

EXT. NEVADA RAVINE - SUNRISE

Alison and Marcus walk down the side of a ravine at dawn.

ALISON

I feel bad doing this behind
Clara's back.

MARCUS

She's better off sleeping. I don't
think she'd want to see this,
anyway.

Marcus steps forward, then stops short.

Buried beneath years of plant growth is David's pick up truck. It's been turned over since the initial crash, burned out including the tires.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

The article in that paper said the
car didn't explode. He died from
the impact.

Alison takes photographs of the car and the lurking cliffs above the sight of the crash.

Marcus pokes around inside the blackened car, prying open the glove compartment.

A black, metal box is wedged inside the compartment. Marcus works it free and it falls to the floor.

Sifting through the box, Marcus pulls out David's ID badge from the laboratory and holds it out to Alison.

Alison grins, snapping a picture of it.

EXT. ALISON'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Peter stands on the balcony in a robe and wet hair looking out over suburban Virginia. Jimmy opens the sliding door.

JIMMY

Are you okay, Mr. Edwards?

PETER

(off guard)

Yeah, I'm fine.

Jimmy nods, starting to close the door.

PETER (CONT'D)

Wait a minute.

Jimmy pushes the door back.

PETER (CONT'D)

Before we tape the interview tomorrow, I just want to tell you that...

(a beat)

...with or without evidence, I believe you.

JIMMY

You do?

PETER

(nods)

And I hope after you expose this story, you'll be able to put some demons to rest. Know what I mean?

JIMMY

I think so.

PETER

Good. I know what it's like to have ghosts around.

Jimmy smiles slowly before moving back into the apartment. Peter turns back to the view of suburban Virginia with a satisfied expression.

EXT. CLARA'S PORCH - NIGHT

Alison steps onto the dark porch where Marcus swings. Seeing him, Alison tries to leave.

MARCUS
Please, stay.

Alison reluctantly takes a seat on a wicker chair.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
I've been wanting to ask you if you truly believe all of this.

ALISON
(hesitates)
I don't know, but I couldn't turn my back on the chance to find out. I'm sure you hope this isn't true.

MARCUS
(shrugs)
I've worked for this country for the last thirty years. I know it's not perfect, but it beats the hell out of the other nations I've been to. But if this lab does exist and is doing what Jimmy Fogarty said...

Marcus' voice trails off as Alison turns to him.

ALISON
Don't beat yourself up, Kramer.

MARCUS
When I left Vietnam I thought it would all be forgotten. I knew I'd have to live with it all my life, but it's been much harder than I thought.

ALISON
You lost someone because of Agent Orange, didn't you?

Marcus turns to Alison with surprise.

ALISON (CONT'D)
No one would risk their career for any less.

MARCUS

(stands)

Sam was a great guy, a good friend,
a great husband. We were in
different units in country, but
after he died I did a little
research and found out he was in an
area heavily sprayed by herbicides.

(voice cracking)

They must have sprayed it half a
dozen times and that doesn't take
into account the other parts of
Vietnam that he ate or slept in
that were also contaminated.

(walks to screen door)

My wife tells me I should be
grateful that I didn't stay in his
unit or me and my kids would be
sick too, but...

Marcus shakes his head, opening the door to enter when Alison speaks.

ALISON

I don't know if it matters to you
or not, but I think you did the
right thing coming here.

Marcus slowly nods with appreciation as he enters the house.

EXT. PETER'S CAR - DAY

Peter speeds into Washington D.C. with Suzanne and Jimmy.

INT. PETER'S CAR - DAY

Peter pulls up in front of his apartment building, spotting Dan in a car across the street.

PETER

(turns to Jimmy)

Go inside and get changed. I'll
meet you around the corner.

SUZANNE

What's the matter?

PETER

Nothing. Just please hurry.

Suzanne nods with uncertainty as she leads Jimmy toward the building entrance.

Peter watches Dan as Dan watches Suzanne and Jimmy enter. Peter cruises down the block, keeping his face out of Dan's view.

EXT. NEVADA HIGHWAY - DAY

Clara pulls the car off the road. Marcus and Alison get out.

ALISON

Tell them you need to pick up your husband's belongings. Once you get inside we'll get out of the trunk and meet you here tomorrow morning, okay?

Alison takes a super 8 video camera from her bag, climbing into the trunk.

CLARA

I don't know if they'll still have David's things. It's been over six years.

MARCUS

Don't worry. With that ID badge they'll let you on the base and then we'll be set, all right?

Clara nods as Alison and Marcus climb into the large trunk. They hold the trunk closed as Clara pulls onto the highway.

EXT. D.C. STREET - DAY

Suzanne and Jimmy exit the apartment building. Jimmy is dressed in a suit and tie, his hair combed neatly.

They walk towards the corner as Dan and another F.B.I. AGENT cross the street.

DAN

Excuse me, could I speak with you for a moment?

Suzanne grabs Jimmy by the arm, pulling him down the street.

DAN (CONT'D)

Wait! This is a federal matter!

Dan and the agent chase Suzanne and Jimmy. They round the corner, seeing Suzanne and Jimmy get into the car with Peter.

Dan weaves through parked cars as he runs after them. Jimmy looks at Dan with fear as he slams the door.

DAN (CONT'D)
Hold it, Edwards! You can't keep
running away! This is a...

Peter pulls away with a screech. Dan stands in the street as cars honk and nearly hit him. He rushes back to his car.

INT. PETER'S CAR - DAY

Jimmy breathes hard as Peter speeds down the streets.

JIMMY
They were after me!

Suzanne leans into the back seat, speaking calmly.

SUZANNE
It's okay, Jimmy. Everything will
be all right once we get to the
station, right Peter?

PETER
(unsure)
That's right.

Suzanne turns to Peter with worried eyes, but Peter can only shrug as they speed toward the station.

Peter looks in his rearview mirror to see Dan and several other cars speeding after him with sirens.

Peter accelerates, weaving around other cars near The Mall.

EXT. ANDERSON SECURITY HOUSE - DAY

Clara pulls up to the gate as GUARD 1 walks to her window. She hands him David's ID card and her driver's license.

CLARA
I'm just stopping by to pick up my
husband's things. He died a few
years ago, but I haven't been able
to do this until now. You know how
it is.

Guard 1 looks over the identification, returning it to her.

GUARD 1

I don't know if Dr. Fogarty's things will still be there, but I'll have them check. I'll radio up to the building to have an escort meet you.

Clara forces a smile as GUARD 2 moves the gate. She drives inside the plant.

INT. CLARA'S TRUNK - DAY

Marcus and Alison huddle in the trunk, bouncing about before Clara comes to a stop.

EXT. LABORATORY - DAY

GUARD 3 opens the door for Clara.

GUARD 3

Hello, Mrs. Fogarty. I knew your husband when he worked here.

CLARA

Did you?

Guard 3 leads Clara toward the entrance to the building.

GUARD 3

I was sorry to hear he'd died.

Clara enters the building, glancing at the guard with anger.

Marcus slowly opens the trunk door, climbing out with two white lab coats in hand.

He helps Alison out and they close the door before rushing to a side entrance. They open the door and enter.

EXT. WNBS BUILDING - DAY

Peter speeds to the front entrance, jamming on his brakes.

He pulls Jimmy and Suzanne from the car, rushing toward the NBS building as Dan and the other AGENTS come screeching to a halt.

INT. WNBS NEWS ROOM - DAY

Peter and Suzanne rush Jimmy down the hallway to Harold's office and barge in.

INT. HAROLD'S OFFICE - DAY

Harold reaches out to shake Jimmy's hand.

HAROLD

Are you ready to go on the air,
son?

Jimmy looks to Peter for support as he speaks nervously.

JIMMY

I guess.

HAROLD

(quickly/to Peter)
Take Jimmy down to makeup. We'll
tape in studio C. Everything's
already set up.

Peter and Jimmy hurry through the busy news room.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Alison and Marcus walk slowly near the walls of the hallways in lab coats.

Alison points the way toward the main room.

MARCUS

We'll find somewhere to hide scour
the building tonight.

Alison nods as they approach the doors where Alison has seen the activity earlier.

INT. WNBS NEWS ROOM - DAY

Peter leads Jimmy from makeup toward the studio as Dan and SIX F.B.I. AGENTS barge into the busy newsroom.

Dan hurries across the room, yelling loud enough to stop most of the news room STAFF.

DAN

You can't put him on the air,
Edwards!

Peter passes Jimmy off to Suzanne, who hurries him to the studio.

PETER

This is only a taping. We aren't airing anything until we have our proof.

DAN

We want to question him on where he heard this story so we can clear it up for the media's sake.

PETER

Why not let the media clear it up themselves? If it's not true, you can deny the allegations, but if it is, you'll be covering up a story that you claim isn't even correct.

Peter points to the room full of reporters and camera crews, including Timothy, Donald, Claire and Robert.

PETER (CONT'D)

And then you'd be making a bigger story out of nothing, wouldn't you?

Peter turns and struts into the studio. Dan and the agents follow quickly.

INT. WNBS STUDIO - DAY

The stage has been readied with two chairs and a table between them.

STAGE CREW TECHNICIANS ready for the taping.

Peter puts his hand on Jimmy's shoulder, trying to soothe and calm him.

PETER

(whispers)

Everything will be fine.

Jimmy nods nervously, playing with his hands as the stage lights intensify.

Harold steps up, whispering in Peter's ear.

HAROLD

I'm really sticking my neck out on this one. The owners of NBS are none too pleased with me this week.

(MORE)

HAROLD (CONT'D)
(pats Peter's back)
I just pray you're right.

Peter nods confidently as he straightens his tie.

Rick, the stage manager, steps up, signaling the CAMERA OPERATORS and to Peter and Jimmy to take their places.

Behind the cameras and technicians, Harold, Suzanne, Dan, the SIX F.B.I. AGENTS and most of the WNBS NEWS ROOM STAFF looks on.

RICK
And 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4...

Rick counts to 1 on his fingers, pointing to Peter.

PETER
This evening we have a disturbing tale about U.S. military activities inside our own country. My guest is Mr. James Fogarty from Arrow's Creek, Nevada.

Jimmy fidgets, breathing erratically.

PETER (CONT'D)
(cautiously)
Mr. Fogarty, tell me how you became aware of this information?

JIMMY
My father died in a car accident going to Los Angeles. His tire blew out.

PETER
Why were you suspicious about this accident?

JIMMY
Because my father knew some things about the laboratory where he worked. He told me about the chemicals they were making.

PETER
When did he die?

JIMMY
Six years ago.

PETER

And why did you wait so long to
tell this story?

JIMMY

Because I was scared.

PETER

You were scared of what?

JIMMY

People were following me.
(looks at Dan)
They wanted to stop me.

PETER

Stop you from what, Mr. Fogarty?

JIMMY

(running out of breath)
They wanted to stop me from telling
everyone about the lab. They didn't
want anyone to find out they were
making a new kind of Agent Orange,
a stronger kind.

The crew throws each other glances as Peter leaves a dramatic
a beat in the interview.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Alison and Marcus hurry into the room and keep their eyes low
as they enter. Alison suddenly stops, raising her eyes.

As they look around they see the room is completely empty.
All that is left is some refuse on the floor.

MARCUS

Are you sure this is the room?

ALISON

(with disbelief)
They cleared out. They knew we were
coming.

Alison kneels down and picks up a test tube. She holds it up
to the light to see if there is any chemical residue left.

The test tube is freshly washed, as clean as can be.

INT. WNBS STUDIO - DAY

Peter and Jimmy sit on the stage.

PETER

I thank you for coming here, Mr. Fogarty. I know you're putting yourself in danger by telling this story to the American public and I thank you for your courage.

Rick signals cut and Peter rises from his chair. Jimmy remains in his seat as he watches Dan and Harold argue.

DAN

You can't air that, Greenbaum!

Peter steps up behind Suzanne as Harold speaks.

HAROLD

We won't air it until we have more proof, but once we do you can't censor us. It's our duty to report the news whether it tarnishes the government or not!

Peter smiles, but remains silent. Jimmy watches from across the studio as the F.B.I. Agents eye him.

Jimmy begins breathing erratically, looking for a route to escape. From the corner of his eye, Peter sees Jimmy sneak out a studio door.

Peter grabs Suzanne by the hand and runs out the exit.

INT. WNBS HALLWAY - DAY

Jimmy dashes down the hallway toward a staircase.

Peter and Suzanne burst through the door.

PETER

Where are you going, Jimmy?
Everything is fine now!

JIMMY

They're going to take me away, I know it! I should never have told that story! I should have stayed quiet!

Jimmy enters the stairwell, Peter and Suzanne following quickly.

From the studio, Dan, Harold and the AGENTS exit in pursuit.

INT. WNBS STAIRWELL - DAY

Jimmy leaps down several stairs at a time as Peter and Suzanne falls over each other to catch him.

SUZANNE

It's okay now, Jimmy! You'll be safe! They won't touch you, they can't!

JIMMY

I don't believe you! I know what they can do!

Jimmy rushes out of the stairwell and into the lobby as Peter and Suzanne gasp for breath.

INT. WNBS LOBBY - DAY

Jimmy looks around the lobby where various TELEVISION EMPLOYEES walk in and out.

Suddenly, Jimmy hallucinates that there are F.B.I. Agents everywhere, each of them wearing the stereotypical dark suits and sunglasses.

JIMMY

I didn't tell them the truth! I swear! I lied! I just lied!

Jimmy rushes out the door and into the street.

The people in the lobby eye Jimmy with confusion, some laughing at his behavior.

EXT. D.C. STREET - DAY

Jimmy flies through the revolving doors and onto the busy street. Without looking, Jimmy charges across a busy, four lane road.

Peter and Suzanne run to the curb as Jimmy dodges honking cars.

PETER

Jimmy!

As Jimmy nears the other side of the street, a car hits him hard, sending him a dozen feet into the air.

Jimmy lands on the pavement as Peter, Suzanne, Harold, Dan and the AGENTS make their way toward him.

The DRIVER of the car jumps out, yelling as Peter reaches Jimmy.

DRIVER

He just came right out of nowhere!
He ran right in front of me!

Suzanne props Jimmy's bleeding head up with her jacket as Peter holds Jimmy. Peter turns to Harold and screams.

PETER

Get an ambulance!

A CROWD forms on the sidewalk as traffic comes to a halt.

JIMMY

I'm sorry, Mr. Edwards, but I can't
let them get me. I can't!

PETER

(voice trembling)
Save your strength, Jimmy. Just
stay quiet until the ambulance gets
here.

Peter moves his hand from Jimmy's head to see blood running down his fingers. He looks to Suzanne with desperation as tears cover his face.

Jimmy grips Peter's hand tighter as an ambulance's siren approaches.

INT. CLARA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Alison, Marcus and Clara sit around the kitchen table drinking coffee.

ALISON

(shaking her head)
They moved everything out after the
story broke. I warned Peter, but he
was too anxious.

CLARA

We'll never know then, will we?

Marcus shakes his head with uncertainty.

MARCUS

You should call Peter and tell him
to send Jimmy back home.

(to Clara)

Perhaps you can work out your
problems with him now that this is
over.

Alison nods, dialing the phone.

INTERCUT:

INT. D.C. HOSPITAL / CLARA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Peter and Suzanne sit in a waiting area, haggard and
distressed.

A NURSE approaches and Peter looks up anxiously.

NURSE

No word yet on Mr. Fogarty, but you
have a phone call.

Peter steps to the phone at the nurse's station.

PETER

Hello?

ALISON

Peter, it's Alison. I called the
station and they said you were at
the hospital. What happened?

PETER

(slowly)

Jimmy was hit by a car. He was
running away from the F.B.I. agents
and ran out into the street. It
doesn't look good.

(voice cracking)

He told me he wanted his mother to
forgive him...

(near tears)

...for leaving her alone when she
was in so much danger.

Alison looks to Clara, but forces herself to turn away.

ALISON

I don't know how to tell you this,
Peter, but the lab is empty.

(MORE)

ALISON (CONT'D)

It was filled two days ago, but they must have heard about the story and moved out.

(a beat)

There's nothing left but security guards and maintenance men.

Peter holds the phone as his hand shakes.

PETER

So this was all for nothing?

ALISON

No, Peter, but right now we have no other proof besides Jimmy's word.

Peter nods as the nurse returns. She catches Peter's eye, shaking her head sadly.

Peter stares at the nurse as the color fades from his face. Suzanne closes her swollen eyes, covering her face with her hands.

INT. CLARA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Alison hangs up and turns to Clara.

ALISON

Clara, something terrible's happened.

Alison watches as Clara's eyes fill with tears.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WNBS NEWS STUDIO - DAY

Donald sits at the anchor's seat reading off a teleprompter.

DONALD

Reports of a Nevada laboratory producing Agent Orange were denied today by the defense department. The story originally came to light several weeks ago when...

Donald reads as images of the Peter/Jimmy interview are shown without audio.

INT. ALISON'S OFFICE - DAY

Alison stands behind her desk in a daze. She packs several of her awards into a cardboard box.

INT. MARCUS' OFFICE - DAY

Marcus takes several family photos from his desk as Dan knocks on the door.

DAN

Are you sure about this? You're so close to retiring. Sure you want to give it all up?

Marcus packs the last of his things into a briefcase.

MARCUS

Yes.

Dan nods as Marcus walks away from the cleared desk with a satisfied grin.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Peter stands before a tombstone, its inscription facing him.

His eyes are bloodshot and swollen. He kneels to place a flower at the base of the stone.

Peter forces his hands into his pockets and walks away.

As he disappears we move around to see it is the tombstone of his father, George Edwards, with the inscription, "A loving husband and father of two."

INT. PETER & SUZANNE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Peter packs cardboard boxes as Suzanne enters from the bedroom with garment bags.

SUZANNE

How's it going, sport?

PETER

(startled)

Okay.

(holds up tape)

Do you want to keep this tape of Donohue?

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

I think it was the show about
living with an overly ambitious
mate.

SUZANNE

(shakes head/smiles)
No, thanks.

Suzanne exits as Peter stuffs the video tape into a box.
Silently, Alison enters through the open door.

ALISON

Where are you going?

Peter looks up with surprise.

PETER

Suzanne and I are moving back to
Pennsylvania. We'll stay with some
friends for a while. I don't know
what I'll do, but I've got to get
out of D.C.

Alison moves toward Peter, speaking softly.

ALISON

It wasn't your fault. You were just
trying to help him.

PETER

(wearily)
Don't try to make me feel better,
Alison.

ALISON

You can't take the blame. You had
no idea he'd run into the street.
Even Clara doesn't hold you
responsible.

PETER

(defensively)
You make it sound like he was
crazy, but I don't think he was. He
was telling the truth!

ALISON

Maybe he was, but no one is angry
at you because you tried to expose
that.

PETER

I'm angry with myself, Alison.
That's all.

Alison sits as Peter continues to pack.

ALISON

I'm going back with the body to Nevada. Clara's having a tough time of it. I think I'll stay there a while.

(a beat)

Marcus Kramer quit the F.B.I. today. We're going to keep the investigation going and would like your help. It's going to take a long time to build a case, but we think it's worth it.

PETER

I'd like that.

Alison kisses Peter on the cheek before she turns to leave.

PETER (CONT'D)

Hey, Alison.

(a beat)

Thanks for the lessons on reporting.

Alison smiles, waving as she walks out.

Peter returns to packing, coming across a video tape on the coffee table. There's no label on it, so Peter inserts it into the VCR.

After a moment of static, Jimmy's face appears on the screen from the interview.

Peter watches the television with apprehension.

PETER (CONT'D)

And why did you wait so long to tell this story?

JIMMY

I was scared.

PETER

You were scared of what?

JIMMY

Because people were following me.
(looks at Dan)
They wanted to stop me.

PETER

Stop you from what, Mr. Fogarty?

JIMMY

(running out of breath)

They wanted to stop me from telling everyone about the lab. They didn't want anyone to find out they were making a new kind of Agent Orange, a stronger kind.

There is a moment of silence as Peter rubs his face and forehead hard.

PETER

But you're taking a risk by telling me about this now, isn't that so?

JIMMY

Yeah, they want to keep me quiet.

Peter's face grows tense and distorted.

PETER

Why would they want to keep you quiet?

JIMMY

Because I know about something that no one is supposed to talk about.

Peter reaches forward quickly, stopping the tape. The screen returns to static, the intensity of the buzzing growing.

FADE OUT