

Stay the Course

"Pilot"

by
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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. WNC NEWS DESK

WNC NEWS ANCHOR sits behind a desk. An on-screen graphic shows an island map with the caption "St. Rita". The chyron across the bottom of the screen reads: "Vice-President Takes Office".

WNC NEWS ANCHOR

The newly established nation of Saint Rita may finally begin to see some stability. Vice-President Raul Sanchez was sworn in earlier today on the Caribbean island, succeeding to the office held briefly by his brother, the late General Hector Sanchez.

The island graphic is replaced by a photo of a Hispanic man (58) dressed in the garb of a military general. The caption reads "Hector Sanchez: 1954 - 2012".

WNC NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

General Sanchez, the chief architect of their constitution, died suddenly at his presidential inauguration last week when he was hit by an errant bullet during the celebratory gunfire. It was a mere two years ago that Sanchez organized a coup within the country's military and overthrew the dictatorship that for so long had...

We SMASH CUT (as if changing the television channel) to...

INT. AMERICAN MORNING NEWS DESK

A MORNING NEWSMAN and MORNING NEWSWOMAN sit behind a desk. They are casual and conversational. The chyron across the bottom of the screen reads: "St. Rita Gets New President".

MORNING NEWSWOMAN

...but, they say he's going to keep the same executive staff. Which, as you know...

MORNING NEWSMAN

Lesko?

MORNING NEWSWOMAN

Your favorite guy, the former marketing guru...

MORNING NEWSMAN
And former US citizen...

MORNING NEWSWOMAN
Right, James Lesko.

MORNING NEWSMAN
(looks off-screen)
Danny, do we have that clip?

INT. ST. RITA CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY [VIDEO]

JIMMY LESKO (32), American, is sharply-dressed and shifty-eyed. He is being interviewed by an off-screen BRITISH REPORTER. A chyron on the video reads: "James Lesko - St. Rita: April 13th, 2011".

JIMMY
Sanchez is a brilliant man. A leader.
A scholar. A world treasure.

BRITISH REPORTER (O.S.)
You advised General Sanchez on his
public relations. Is that true?

JIMMY
I'm a lover of democracy. You see?
I'm just doing my part for liberty,
peace, freedom. All that.

BRITISH REPORTER (O.S.)
But you went as far as to renounce
your US citizenship in order to join
Sanchez as a member of his staff...

JIMMY
Look. How many times does a man get
the opportunity to build a nation?
It's a chance to start from scratch.
Avoid all the pitfalls. Learn from
our mistakes.

BRITISH REPORTER (O.S.)
A lovely sentiment, Mr. Lesko, but
perhaps your actions will be seen in
a different light once people learn
that you're under FBI investigation
for fraud.

Jimmy swallows uncomfortably, but doesn't blink. She lets him sweat for a beat.

BRITISH REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 And it looks suspiciously as though
 you fled your home country simply to
 avoid prosecution.

Jimmy looks into the camera and smiles unconvincingly.

JIMMY
 Well.

Freeze-frame on Lesko's guilty mug. The video holds for a moment before we RESUME TO...

INT. AMERICAN MORNING NEWS DESK

The Morning Newsman has a satisfied smile on his lips. He loves that clip.

MORNING NEWSWOMAN
 We have another clip you may like
 even better.

MORNING NEWSMAN
 More Lesko?

MORNING NEWSWOMAN
 No, this is Raul Sanchez.

MORNING NEWSMAN
 Oh, the new President of Saint Rita.

MORNING NEWSWOMAN
 Right. This is footage of Mr. Sanchez
 in Miami a few years back.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT [VIDEO]

The chyron reads "Courtesy of KMFL". This is raw news camera footage. A Spring Break crowd has gathered around a burning car as police try unsuccessfully to move them to a safe distance.

Standing on the hood of the car is the cause of all this mayhem, RAUL SANCHEZ (53), Hispanic, with cigarette in mouth and whiskey bottle in hand. He's wearing a "Spring Break '03" t-shirt and polka-dot briefs. No pants. A FEMALE COP is trying to coax him down.

FEMALE COP
 You need to get off the car, Sir.

Sanchez reaches into his underwear and pulls out a firecracker. He lights it with the cigarette and tosses it over his shoulder. BANG! The female cop grips her night stick.

FEMALE COP (CONT'D)

Sir! This is your last warning.

Sanchez jumps down next to her. Before she has a chance to react, he puts his arm around her waist, leans her backwards and gives her the worst kiss of her life. He pulls back up and raises his bottle towards the news camera.

SANCHEZ

Spring Break! Woo!

The video freeze-frames on this image momentarily before we RESUME TO...

INT. AMERICAN MORNING NEWS DESK

MORNING NEWSMAN

Wow. And he's gonna be their president?

We SMASH CUT to...

INT. AMERICAN POLITICAL NEWS DESK

Two men in suits, the HOST and a PUNDIT, sit on opposing sides of a desk. A chyron reads: "Viewpoint: President Sanchez" next to a mug shot of Sanchez. He is wearing the same "Spring Break '03" t-shirt and now has a black eye.

The host and pundit argue aggressively.

PUNDIT

But you have to consider the people's desire for freedom.

HOST

From this guy? I wouldn't trust him with my ham sandwich, much less my country.

PUNDIT

If you look at the foundation of their government...

HOST

Oh, come on. These people can't govern themselves. Saint Rita needs a real leader. In six months they'll be right back to a dictatorship. That foundation you keep blathering about is a pipe dream.

PUNDIT

Well, it's based on the original United States constitution.

The host looks directly into the camera.

HOST

Exactly.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK (as if turning the TV off)

FADE IN:

EXT. ST. RITA CAPITOL BUILDING - MORNING

Politicians and military officers sit in makeshift bleachers on the lawn of the capitol building. Among them are President Sanchez and Jimmy Lesko. NIGEL PENNINGTON (62), tall and English, stands at a podium giving a speech to hundreds of citizens and soldiers. A goat eats at the rose bushes in the background.

NIGEL

Every nation faces obstacles. And only the strongest of nations persevere. But persevere we will.

Applause.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

We've suffered the loss of a great man in General Sanchez. But, if there's one thing we've learned, it's that freedom is worth any cost.

The politicians nod their heads in agreement. There is a smattering of respectful applause from the crowd.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

And...if there's a second thing we've learned from this tragedy, it's that when firing a gun in celebration, make sure it's pointed up in the air...above everyone's head.

Everyone on stage nods.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

But, I guess we all know that now, don't we...Carlos.

Nigel shoots a glance at "Carlos", off-screen in the crowd. Members of the stage also turn towards "Carlos" and shake their heads disapprovingly. Nigel composes himself.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

But today is not a day to dwell on the past.

(MORE)

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Today we look to the future. For we have a new president. People of Saint Rita, I give you President Raul Sanchez.

Thunderous applause as Sanchez takes the podium. He basks in the adulation.

SANCHEZ

What's up, Saint Rita! I am your new king!

Nigel whispers in his ear.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

Your new president!

Nigel draws Sanchez's attention towards some papers on the podium. He reads the speech as the applause continues.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

Fellow countrymen. It is an honor for me to continue the legacy of my brother. It was his dream to give the people a country in which they had the power to govern.

Applause builds as his speech crescendos.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

A country where every man is entitled to life, liberty and happiness!

The crowd hoots and hollers as he whips them into a frenzy.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

A country where all men are created equal!

Thunderous applause. Members of the bleachers are now standing in ovation. Nigel, again, points to the speech.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah. Except the Portuguese!

The applause becomes deafening as Sanchez raises his arms in triumph. A celebratory gunshot is fired, causing him to flinch. Soon everyone is firing pistols into the air while Sanchez and Nigel do their best not to cower onstage.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

President Sanchez, Nigel and Jimmy are walking down a busy corridor of the capitol building. The president is receiving congratulations on the speech from various workers as they pass him.

A grungy, bearded man fights his way to Sanchez, only to be intercepted and corralled away by Jimmy. Nigel and Sanchez keep walking.

GRUNGY MAN

Mr. President! Mr. President! What are you doing about unemployment? Our families are starving.

JIMMY

The President has a fabulous work program that he'll be introducing in the coming weeks.

(Struggling)

Let me show you the way out.

A young woman, RAMONA, approaches and walks with Nigel.

RAMONA

(to Nigel)

(apprehensive)

Um...Mr. Pennington? There's some guy that wants to talk to you. He's in the conference room.

NIGEL

Who, Ramona.

RAMONA

Umm - He was kinda fat - with a briefcase.

Nigel sighs.

NIGEL

This new job of yours isn't particularly working out, it is?

BEN (O.S.)

Except the Portuguese?!?

Ramona sheepishly turns and almost bumps into an agitated BEN (27), African-Caribbean, who is quickly running after Nigel. Jimmy returns, adjusting his suit after the struggle.

NIGEL

Jimmy. De La Garza. Conference Room. Don't do anything until I get there.

Jimmy nods and leads the president down the hall.

BEN

Is this what I should expect? You're going to change every speech to suit some personal agenda?

NIGEL

Ben, the only agenda I have is to keep this nation from falling apart.

BEN

But you're going against everything it stands for. This isn't what the people want, Nigel.

NIGEL

Look, I've been on this island since before you were born, so I have a pretty good idea of what the people want. Didn't you hear that gunfire?

BEN

Equal rights for everyone. When General Sanchez wrote those words in the constitution, it was supposed to mean something.

NIGEL

Listen, Ben. Everyone makes compromises. Ideals might look good on paper, but they don't last a second in the real world.

BEN

It's too big a sacrifice, Nigel.

NIGEL

Well put it in a speech. In the meantime, I'll be saving this country from another dictatorship. You remember that, don't you? The curfews, the incarcerations, that god-awful anthem. A bossa nova? I mean, really.

Ben looks away, thoroughly dejected.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

What we have now is a whole lot better, and you know it. Support of the people, Ben. It's the only thing that protects us. You remember that.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy, President Sanchez, and Congressman DE LA GARZA (55) sit in silence at a conference table. A goat walks calmly down the hallway outside and bleats as it passes the doorway.

DE LA GARZA

What was that?

Jimmy rolls his eyes.

SANCHEZ

Oh, that's Paquita.

JIMMY

(annoyed)

She's the presidential pet.

Nigel enters the room, closes the door and quickly gets down to business.

NIGEL

I think we all know what this is about, Congressman De La Garza, so you may as well get started.

DE LA GARZA

All right. Gentlemen, on Monday morning I plan to introduce a resolution declaring President Sanchez unfit for office.

SANCHEZ

Are you serious?

Nigel gestures to Sanchez to keep quiet.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

I mean, sure, I've put on a few pounds lately, but I don't think...

NIGEL

Mr. President.

Jimmy stands and begins to pace. Nigel glares at De La Garza.

JIMMY

A resolution? Pfft. Meaningless. I mean, even if it does pass...

DE LA GARZA
My friend, I am expecting an
overwhelming majority.

He looks directly at Nigel.

DE LA GARZA (CONT'D)
Even the great Nigel Pennington won't
be able to stop it.

NIGEL
Is that so?

DE LA GARZA
You can't bribe your way out of this
one, Pennington. The rules don't
bend so easily these days.

JIMMY
(sarcastic)
A vacant presidency; succeeded by
Speaker of the House. Oh, wait a
sec. That's you, isn't it?

DE LA GARZA
I only want what's best for the
country.

NIGEL
Obviously.

JIMMY
This is a pretty bold move,
Congressman. And you really think
you'll have the votes?

DE LA GARZA
With all of the president's
indiscretions...

JIMMY
Such as?

DE LA GARZA
For one, his habitual drug use.

JIMMY
Pfft. That's all in the president's
past and the people know it. Hell,
it's inspirational. He's overcome
demons; grown into a better man.

DE LA GARZA
All in the past, huh?
(MORE)

DE LA GARZA (CONT'D)

I have information here that says he was picked up just two months ago in New York for possession.

Jimmy and Nigel look at Sanchez, who shrugs.

SANCHEZ

It's like nine-tenths of the law up there.

JIMMY

I can assure you and the people of Saint Rita that the president does not make use of improper substances. Now, what else you got?

DE LA GARZA

Let's just move on to the minor felonies, then. Shall we?

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ANDREW PITT (50), grizzled and weary, leans back in his chair while listening to Ben vent. He looks as if he's heard the same story a thousand times.

BEN

Support of the people. That's what he said.

ANDREW

Politics. You'll get used to it.

BEN

This was supposed to be different, Andrew.

ANDREW

Listen, kid. I've lived in countries all around the world and they're all politics as usual. Democracies, Monarchies, Dictatorships. Hell, during the seventies I even spent two years in a hippie commune.

BEN

It's like, we profess these ideals...

ANDREW

I know. "Free Love" this and "Free Love" that. But when you try to make a move, all the hot ones still just wanna be friends.

BEN

If the President was just half the man his brother was, none of this would be happening.

ANDREW

You got that right. He was a hell of a soldier, too.

BEN

You fought with General Sanchez?

ANDREW

Sorta. See, couple years ago I'm on vacation scuba diving with a group out of Aruba. When I come to the surface - the boat, everyone - gone.

BEN

You're kidding.

ANDREW

I must have caught a tide because somehow I wash up on a beach and pass out. When I come to, I can hear Sanchez inciting the charging peasants - "Now is the time for every man to summon his courage and throw off the chains of oppression. Follow my steps on the path to freedom". So, I did.

BEN

Wait. You ran with them?

ANDREW

Well, it was very inspirational. After the battle Sanchez told me he needed a communications director, and - well, I've been here ever since. By the way, if you're ever gonna storm a capitol, don't do it in scuba flippers. I saw the news footage the next day, I looked like an idiot.

Ben drops his head and looks inconsolable.

BEN

When I got here I was so inspired. Now it's turning into the worst job of my life.

ANDREW

(beat)
I used to do crowd warm-up for
Ceausescu.

Ben tries to feign excitement, then admits.

BEN

I have no idea who that is.

Andrew waives it off. Then adds...

ANDREW

We had to escape in a helicopter.

BEN

Well that sounds like fun.

Andrew shrugs.

ANDREW

Ehh.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nigel, Jimmy and Sanchez are now all slumped in their chairs,
thoroughly defeated.

De La Garza leafs through his mounds of evidence.

DE LA GARZA

Partying; carousing all over the
world with no regard for laws. All
while the people of Saint Rita
suffered. Down deep, I don't think
they much appreciate it.

De La Garza packs away his papers. This is almost too easy.

DE LA GARZA (CONT'D)

You can only fool 'em for so long.

He stands and looks directly at the president.

DE LA GARZA (CONT'D)

You're not your brother, Raul.

NIGEL

All right, this meeting is over.

De La Garza is already halfway out the door.

DE LA GARZA

Two days, gentlemen. Monday morning.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy and Nigel are walking briskly down the hall to the president's office. Sanchez follows obediently.

JIMMY

That son-of-a-bitch is going to run us out of office.

NIGEL

Calm down, Jimmy.

JIMMY

Oh, calm down? If we lose power I could be extradited.

NIGEL

You let me worry about De La Garza. He wouldn't have put on that show for us unless he wanted something.

JIMMY

Excuse me if I don't share your optimism. Every time I turn around I'm thinking, "What next?"

Nigel opens the door to...

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

This is the official office of the president and it's decorated as such. Bookshelves, flags, portraits, sofas, desk, and a WOMAN (20) sitting in the president's chair leafing through a folder marked "TOP SECRET". Nigel and Jimmy stop dead in the doorway.

JIMMY

How did you get in this office?

WOMAN

I asked to see the president and they told me to wait here.

NIGEL

(sotto)

We've got the worst security.

WOMAN

Is Raul with you?

Sanchez pushes his way through Jimmy and Nigel.

SANCHEZ

Brenda? ;Guau! I don't believe it.

WOMAN (BRENDA)

Baby!

Brenda and Sanchez race towards each other and embrace.

SANCHEZ

I thought I'd lost you forever.

BRENDA

Oh, I missed my little monkey man.

JIMMY

Mr. President? Aren't you going to introduce us?

SANCHEZ

Guys, this is Mrs. Brenda Louise Oswald-Sanchez.

They stare blankly.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

She's my wife!

They both force a smile.

NIGEL

Brilliant.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Brenda admires the hallway as Ramona reads from a pamphlet.

RAMONA

A small colony of Arawaks lived on Saint Rita until the Spanish arrived. Then it fell under French rule for a short time. Then Dutch, Portuguese, Brando, Spanish again, a Communist revolutionary, and finally -

BRENDA

We met at Occupy Little Rock. Did you know that?

RAMONA

No, I didn't, Mrs. President. Did you know that -

Ramona glances down at the pamphlet.

RAMONA (CONT'D)

- the main export of Saint Rita is bat guano?

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

FATHER VASQUEZ (60) in a white cassock sits on the couch along with Nigel. Paquita sniffs a flag. Sanchez paces, upset.

SANCHEZ

Why do you get to make all the decisions? Why can't I do what I want?

NIGEL

Oh, please, I let you keep the goat.

SANCHEZ

Cut your hair! Wear a suit! Read this - crap!

Sanchez tosses some papers off his desk.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

Why me?

NIGEL

Mr. President. Calm down.

SANCHEZ

So. What? Now I have to go to church?
For "studies"? Maybe I do my own
studying. You ever think of that?

VASQUEZ

Oh, you read the Bible?

SANCHEZ

Only like a hundred times.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

BRENDA

And I'm telling you right now, you
gotta get to know someone before you
run off and get hitched. No matter
how charming, or passionate, or -

Ramona keeps glancing away at her pamphlet.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Ramona, are we going to be friends
or what?

RAMONA

I'm sorry, Mrs. President. They
expect me to know this stuff. If I
keep screwing up, he's going to send
me back to the factory -

BRENDA

All right. Hush. I need to find
Raul, anyway. Where was that office
again?

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sanchez is now slumped in his chair.

NIGEL

Mr. President, Father Vasquez is
sympathetic to our situation. Regular
sessions with the church will not
only boost your image, but the
strength of this entire
administration.

SANCHEZ

Okay, fine. But only one night a
week. That's it.

VASQUEZ

I think that's reasonable.

NIGEL

Support of the people, Mr. President.
Without it, we fail. Instantly we
will be broken and with no chance of
recovery.

Vasquez nods.

VASQUEZ

Proverbs 6:15.

SANCHEZ

Ugh. Can we make it 6:30?

Everyone looks at Sanchez, who shrugs.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

I like to take a late nap.

Brenda pokes her head into the office.

BRENDA

Knock, knock! How it going in here?

NIGEL

Excellent.

SANCHEZ

Horrible.

Vasquez stands to greet Brenda as she enters. Nigel walks
to a table to pour drinks.

NIGEL

Father, this is the president's wife,
Brenda Louise Oswald-Sanchez.

VASQUEZ

Hello, my child.

BRENDA

Padre.

NIGEL

Mrs. President? How do you take
your scotch?

BRENDA

Why, I drink it, of course.

Nigel beams contemptuously, then forces a smile.

NIGEL

Of course. So, the whole bottle is
it?

BRENDA

You quit.
 (to SANCHEZ)
 So, where are you taking me tonight,
 hon?

NIGEL

I'm afraid that's out of the question.
 We have an important dinner tomorrow.
 All of congress will be there - for
 the President's speech. I'm sorry,
 but there won't be any bar hopping
 tonight.

Brenda sulks, then brightens as she produces an object from
 her purse.

BRENDA

Y'all wanna do a jay?

CUT TO:

INT. EXTERNAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Nigel vigorously ushers Brenda out the door.

BRENDA

Hey, what's your problem?!

NIGEL

Now look, missy. You may not realize
 it, but we're trying to run a country
 here. I've got an unemployed mob
 camped at the gates, a congressman
 trying to blackmail me, a president
 who's only work experience is roadie
 for Peter Sodding Frampton, and now
 you trying to muck it all up because
 you're bored.

BRENDA

You can't talk to me like this.

NIGEL

Well someone needs to, because
 apparently you don't know your role
 around here. Three things - Smile
 for the cameras; Champion some cause
 that no one cares about; and, most
 importantly - Stay the hell out of
 my way.

EXT. ST. RITA CAPITOL BUILDING - MORNING

Establishing shot.

INT. JIMMY'S OFFICE - MORNING

Jimmy sits behind his desk having a casual talk with Ben.

JIMMY

Sometimes you just gotta paint your
butt white and run with the antelope.

BEN

It's not just that, Mr. Lesko.

JIMMY

Call me Jimmy.

BEN

Jimmy. The problem is I don't even
know how to write for the guy. Does
he even care about anything? It's
so hard to get a read on him.

JIMMY

Look, Ben. The president - he's
just a born liar. He thinks it
protects him. Hell, he'd lie to
make a dollar when the truth would
make a dollar fifty. No, he's easy.

Paquita walks into the room and bleats.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Paquita, git. Go on. Shoo.
(to BEN)
Now, his wife...

BEN

She does seem pretty young for him.

JIMMY

Oh, I don't think so. The man takes -
what is it - half his age, minus
seven.

BEN

It's plus seven.

JIMMY

Is it?

BEN

It's just weird that she would show
up out of the blue like this.

JIMMY

Yeah.

(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Nigel says she's after something. Personally, I think she just wants to feel special. That's why they say power is the ultimate aphrodisiac. Take myself, for example. Now, self-respecting women shouldn't want to be with a guy like me, but they do. Is it my charm? I doubt it. My good looks? Please. But I tell you what, ever since I got into politics I've been tapping more ass than a blind proctologist. Now, does that seem right to you? Hell no, but I ain't gonna fight it. It's what they call one of them facts of nature.

BEN

You mean...you've never had a woman love you for who you really are?

JIMMY

Shoot. You go right for the jugular, don't you?

BEN

No, I didn't mean to...

JIMMY

Aw, forget it. You gotta have that killer instinct in politics. Take Montezuma. Now, people can talk all day about what a benevolent ruler he was, but I bet you dollars to donuts that Aztec son-of-a-bitch busted some ass when he had to.

BEN

Yeah, probably.

JIMMY

Definitely.

Ramona enters.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Yes, Ramona?

RAMONA

You know how you told me last night to keep watch and call you if Raul - um, the president left his room?

JIMMY
I'm sorry, Ramona. I should have
found you sooner. Go get some sleep.

RAMONA
It's not that, it's...

JIMMY
When?

RAMONA
They were just going for a walk.

JIMMY
When!

RAMONA
Midnight?

JIMMY
Are you kidding me?

Jimmy picks up the phone and dials, still berating Ramona.

RAMONA
He said they'd only be gone ten
minutes.

JIMMY
Oh, really. Our president told you
this. That's a laugh. What else
did he tell you?

Ramona lowers her head and turns away.

RAMONA
(sotto)
That I was pretty.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - NIGHT

Nigel, Andrew, Jimmy and Ben are all talking on separate telephones looking tired and frustrated.

JIMMY

(into phone)

The president! In your bar; have you seen him? - I know he died. It's his brother now, you moron!

Jimmy jerks his head back from the receiver, then hangs up. He addresses the preoccupied room.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Fellas, we've been at this all day. Now Congress shows up in about two hours, so, if you'll excuse me, I have to go figure out how to have a presidential dinner with no president.

EXT. ST. RITA CAPITOL BUILDING - NIGHT

A taxi pulls up to the front of the capitol. Brenda exits, alone, looks apprehensively towards the door?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Brenda sneaks through the hallway. As she steps around a corner she comes face to face with Paquita, the president's goat. Brenda's eyes widen as Paquita bleats an alarm for all to hear.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - NIGHT

Nigel talks on the executive phone. Brenda is slumped on the couch with Andrew and Ramona. Ben paces.

Nigel holds the phone to his chest and addresses the group.

NIGEL

The bartender hasn't seen him in over an hour.

BRENDA

Well, he was there when I left.

NIGEL

Apparently, he's gone off on foot - with a bottle of tequila.

BRENDA

Hey, don't act like this is my fault.

NIGEL

Just think for a moment - did he say anything out of the ordinary?

BRENDA

Pfft. Nothing but. He kept talking about how he was a sword and he was gonna kill all the tyrants.

Nigel and Ben lock eyes. Ben begins to head out, but Nigel snaps his fingers and gestures for Ben to stay.

NIGEL

(into phone)

Okay.

Nigel hangs up the phone.

BEN

I'm going with you.

NIGEL

No, Ben, I don't think "heartfelt sincerity" is going to help us on this one. Just go to the dinner. I'll be back soon.

BRENDA

(to Ramona)

He's lost it, man. He's really lost it this time.

ANDREW

You know, studies have shown that your risk of dementia is six times higher when your spouse has dementia.

Brenda looks him up and down.

BRENDA

Who are you?

RAMONA

Um, what if your spouse has dementia, but - he's just imaginary? What kind of risk would that be?

ANDREW

It's, uh, probably still pretty high.

RAMONA

(sotto)

Damn it.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DUSK

We PAN DOWN a tombstone which reads: HERE WAS BURIED HECTOR ENRIQUE SANCHEZ. SWORD OF THE PEOPLE. DESTROYER OF TYRANNY. 1954 - 2012.

Raul Sanchez sits against a tree in silence while swigging a half-empty bottle of tequila. Nigel approaches.

NIGEL

He would have hated that epitaph.

SANCHEZ

I think it's pretty awesome.
Certainly better than mine's gonna be.

NIGEL

Oh, I don't know. Here lies Raul Sanchez. A drunk bastard who never stuck his neck out for nobody.

They laugh.

SANCHEZ

That's not too bad.

Nigel tosses a medal to Raul.

NIGEL

You should probably keep this. That's the Cross of Valor. Your brother got that in the uprising of '86. He was shot in the -

SANCHEZ

- in the leg. I remember. Hector almost died.

NIGEL

And all because of some stupid accident.

SANCHEZ

What are you talking about?

NIGEL

You didn't know? His gun misfired while he was on patrol. That wasn't the official story, of course, but - I guess they needed a hero.

SANCHEZ

Is that really what happened?

ON Nigel.

NIGEL

(beat)
Absolutely.

Sanchez stares down at the medal.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

The people need you, Raul. All you
have to do is meet them halfway.
There's a driver in the car over
there. He'll take you anywhere you
ask.

Nigel walks away.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

The banquet hall is large and stunning. An elevated stage,
with a lone podium, is fronted by dinner tables. Twenty
politicians mingle in an open area. Paquita stands on a
chair and nibbles at the table dressing.

BRENDA - CONTINUOUS

Brenda and Jimmy are having a heated discussion.

BRENDA

If people only knew about the working
conditions, they'd go shopping with
a whole different perspective.

JIMMY

Please. Sell them a dozen socks for
five ninety-nine and suddenly
ignorance is bliss.

BEN - CONTINUOUS

Ben runs up to Nigel, who is just arriving at the dinner.
Andrew follows slowly, carrying several blue papers.

BEN

Is he here? What did he say?

NIGEL

The official story is that he's come
down with the flu and regrets that
he can't make it.

BEN

But he might show up. Right?

ANDREW

He hasn't even seen the speech.

NIGEL

Ah, the speech. I read it last night.

BEN

And?

NIGEL

It was eloquent, concise and one-hundred percent correct.

BEN

Thank you.

NIGEL

And the people will never hear it.

BEN

What?

NIGEL

Ben, eventually you'll learn that there are times when it's better to just tell people exactly what they want to hear.

Nigel continues into the crowd.

BEN

But -

Ben begins to follow, but Andrew holds him back.

BRENDA - CONTINUOUS

BRENDA

Did you know there's one of those sweatshops right here on Saint Rita? Idonus - something.

NIGEL

Idoneus Vestis.
(to Jimmy)
I don't know, yet.

Jimmy nods.

JIMMY

It seems Mrs. President has found herself a cause.

NIGEL

I see.

BRENDA

I was talking to Ramona, and -

NIGEL

Is that so? The problem with these corporations - once you turn people against the factories they'll just pack up and move to some other third world country. And where does that leave the workers? Do you really think they'd rather starve to death?

BRENDA

But if we could just organize them. If they stood together they could finally get out of poverty.

NIGEL

It doesn't work that way. The factory would be shut down in a heartbeat.

BRENDA

And what makes you such an expert?

NIGEL

Because, my dear. I own it.

They stare at each other in silence. Ramona approaches with De La Garza.

RAMONA

Mr. Pennington? Congressman De La Garza would like to speak with you.

Nigel, genuinely pleased with that introduction...

NIGEL

Thank you, Ramona.
(to De La Garza)
Congressman.

Nigel walks with De La Garza.

DE LA GARZA

So, what's your plan, Nigel? Stomach flu for everything except the photo ops?

NIGEL

Lay off, Tony. The president is ill. I can't control everything.

DE LA GARZA

That never stopped you from trying.

NIGEL

We need to talk.

Nigel turns and bumps into the Grungy Man from earlier. A pistol in the man's hand is momentarily revealed from his pocket. It goes unnoticed.

GRUNGY MAN

Excuse me.

INT. BACK ROOM

Nigel and De La Garza enter a conference room.

DE LA GARZA

I gotta tell you, Nigel, I'm disappointed. I thought you'd at least put up a decent fight.

NIGEL

He's not resigning, Congressman.

DE LA GARZA

Then what are we talking about?

NIGEL

You don't really want the presidency.

DE LA GARZA

Don't waste my time.

NIGEL

This country has a lot of problems. When the excitement wears off the people will want change. Things that we can't give them. And you know who'll take the fall.

Nigel has gotten De La Garza's full attention.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Plus, there's a real chance of revolution. An army takes money. All the soldiers are sitting at home, looking for jobs, thinking about how much better things used to be. Besides, we both know who has the real power in this government.

INT. BANQUET HALL - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy stands at the podium, addressing the crowd.

JIMMY

But, he sends his apologies that he is unable to attend tonight's banquet.

The Grungy Man steps forward from the crowd.

GRUNGY MAN

He's not coming?

JIMMY

No, I'm sorry. Who are you?

The man pulls his gun out and fires it into the air.

GRUNGY MAN

Viva La Revolucion!

Half the crowd fire guns into the air.

ALL

Viva La Revolucion!

GRUNGY MAN

What?

Andrew approaches the man and pats him on the back.

ANDREW

Yes. Viva La Revolucion. We won.

GRUNGY MAN

No. I'm the revolution. You're the establishment.

ANDREW

What?

The Grungy Man grabs Paquita and puts a gun to her head.

GRUNGY MAN

Nobody move!

JIMMY

Paquita!

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DE LA GARZA

So, let's say I change my position. Support the president. What's in it for me?

NIGEL

Whatever you want.

DE LA GARZA

Guano.

NIGEL

No, honestly. Just name it.

DE LA GARZA

No. Guano. The guano farmers of my constituency are having a rough year.

NIGEL

Subsidies? This is the free market. The federal government can't just go handing out money every time a business falters.

Stunned silence. Nigel smirks and they both burst into riotous laughter.

DE LA GARZA

You almost had me there.

INT. BANQUET HALL - CONTINUOUS

Grungy Man is pleading with the crowd while holding a gun to Paquita's head.

GRUNGY MAN

My wife suffers with fever. My children go to bed hungry. And you do nothing!

BEN

I feel your pain. But new businesses are starting every day. Once the markets adjust -

SANCHEZ (O.S.)

How about a job?

The crowd parts to reveal President Sanchez.

GRUNGY MAN

What?

SANCHEZ

A job.

BEN

No. That's not how it works.

SANCHEZ

Okay, then. What's your suggestion?

BEN

We can't just give out jobs to everybody that needs one.

SANCHEZ

We're not. We're giving one to...

GRUNGY MAN (MIGUEL)

Miguel.

SANCHEZ

Miguel. So - which is it, Miguel?
Your choice.

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DE LA GARZA

I think we got ourselves a deal.

NIGEL

Just one other thing. My military?

DE LA GARZA

Oh, come on.

NIGEL

Without an army, none of this matters.
We may as well start planning a parade
for the next dictator.

DE LA GARZA

So, I get you your military money
and back off the president, and you
don't veto any of my farm bills?

NIGEL

Everybody wins.

De La Garza considers, then reluctantly shakes Nigel's hands.

INT. BANQUET HALL - CONTINUOUS

Nigel and De La Garza exit from the back room and go their separate ways. Sanchez stands at the podium reading from the blue speech.

SANCHEZ

But it's a struggle we can overcome.

Nigel notices the speech, stops, and locks eyes with Ben.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

All of us. From the fishermen, to
the farmers, to the factory workers.

Brenda excitedly applauds. Nigel's eyes narrow.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

Together; as brothers - citizens -
equals in this nation.

Applause. Miguel, who has his finger in his ear, suddenly confronts Nigel.

MIGUEL

Excuse me, Sir. This is a private
ceremony.

NIGEL

What? Who the devil are you?

MIGUEL

Miguel Espinosa. Head of Security.

NIGEL

Get out of my way.

MIGUEL

I'm gonna need to see some ID.

Ramona, passing by, pauses.

RAMONA

Oh, he's cool. That's Mr. Pennington.
He's the Chief of Stuff.

NIGEL

Chief of Staff.

Nigel beams at Ramona as she continues on her way.

MIGUEL

My apologies. Please - enjoy the
party.

Nigel refocuses on Miguel and looks him up and down.

NIGEL

You don't really have an earpiece,
do you?

Miguel drops his head and sheepishly pulls out his finger.
Nigel sighs.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

(sotto)
Brilliant.

END OF SHOW