



Written by

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INT. BULLETPROOF CADILLAC - DAY

In the back, our maybe-possibly-probably-not-a-heroine LIZZIE DRAKE-BLAKE (18, mixed race - white/black), wears a yellow designer blazer and a face like she just read a Kanye tweet.

BYRON (O.C.)

Ryan, the sunbelt strategy is your strategy. You gave a very memorable presentation. It was full of pie charts and bad ideas...

Lizzie side-eyes her dad BYRON BLAKE, (50s, white, weathered face, reading glasses, salt and pepper hair - oh, and he's the Democratic Nominee for President).

BYRON (O.C.) (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

We're two weeks out, Ryan. Half the mail-in ballots are already in -

She checks that he's not looking, takes a small tin from her matching yellow Christian Louboutin clutch bag and opens it. Magic mushrooms, cut up for microdosing.

She sneaks one out and looks over again at her dad. Coast is clear. She pops it in her mouth.

CHEERS erupt outside. Lizzie looks out the tinted window -

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - CONTINUOUS

Police line the road in front of waist-high metal barriers, which hold back rival crowds -

Democrats CHEERING and waving signs: 'BLAKE FOR PRESIDENT', 'STEEL'S A STOOGIE' and 'CHANGE - BUT NOT TOO MUCH'.

Republicans BOOING with their own signs: 'VOTE FOR STEEL', 'AMERICA FOR AMERICANS' and 'SHARON DONE STEEL OUR HEARTS'

Both are outnumbered by the yellow and black clad supporters of novelty candidate Billy the Buzz, known collectively as THE HIVE, who hold up cardboard bees and chant -

THE HIVE

Don't be silly, debate our Billy!

Five kazoo-wielding Hive members in full bee costumes begin a whiny rendition of *Hail to the Chief*.

INT. BULLETPROOF CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie's face lights up at the kazoo orchestra.

LIZZIE

Dad. Dad!

BYRON

(On the phone)

How did I say it? It's day-ta, not
dah-ta. Or is it?

Lizzie tugs Byron's sleeve. He swats her away.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Lizzie, honey, please.

(to the phone)

Why are you telling me about Star
Trek? Just send me the numbers.

She turns to her phone. A message notification from 'Stu'.

Byron hangs up. She sighs performatively.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Get it out of your system. I need
you smiling when we arrive.

LIZZIE

I know my role.

A message chat. Stu's message: 'almond or passion fruit x'.

She types 'Almond'. '...' 'Stu is typing'.

BYRON

Deep down, LizzieWhizzie, you can't
wait to be First Daughter.

LIZZIE

In this family, First Daughter is
an oxymoron.

He peers over to see who she is messaging. 'Stu is typing'.

BYRON

Speaking of morons, Stu here yet?

LIZZIE

Stu didn't bail on my valedictorian
speech to go to Cedar Rapids.

BYRON

I had to. I didn't want to.

LIZZIE

No one wants to go to Cedar Rapids.

Byron softens. He puts his phone in his pocket.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

It was good. It had gags. I didn't rush the applause lines. I even had a Philip Larkin quote.

BYRON

Did Helen write it?

LIZZIE

Jesus, dad.

BYRON

Sorry.

He's hurt her feelings.

BYRON (CONT'D)

I know this is a lot. I just need you to play nice for a little longer.

LIZZIE

Oh yeah, cos you'll have more time for me when you're President of the United States.

BYRON

If Ryan blows the Sun Belt, then it's back to being one happy family, just you, me and -

His phone rings loudly in his pocket.

EXT. ROOF, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - CONTINUOUS

A helicopter has landed. It's blades WHIR as the door opens -

Lizzie's mom DANI DRAKE (44, Black, CFO of pharma company Ruud Health) steps out, phone to her ear, looking like a boss in shades and a perfectly cut deep blue pantsuit.

DANI

I can't hear you. It's the chopper.

(pause)

I said I can't hear you -

She is met by TV producer JESS (28, barely keeping it together). She shakes Jess' hand.

DANI (CONT'D)
Byron are you there?

INT. BULLETPROOF CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

Byron talks exasperatedly into his phone.

BYRON
You sound like you're inside a
washing machine.

He lifts it to his face, then hangs up. It rings. He answers.

BYRON (CONT'D)
Dani, darling -
(pause)
I didn't hang up.
(pause)
I appreciate your kind words on
this, the most important night of
my life.
(pause)
Ok, yes. Second.
(pause)
Let's settle for third.

Lizzie waves at someone.

BYRON (CONT'D)
After all, it's only a winner-takes-
all showdown to decide if the
United States is still a viable
democracy. So if we -
(pause)
No, sure. Tahoe is nice.
(pause)
You're actually serious?

Lizzie winces. People start HAMMERING ON THE WINDOWS.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - CONTINUOUS

The Hive has broken through the police line and surrounded the car, drumming on the hood, peering through the tinted windows, and rocking it from side to side.

INT. BULLETPROOF CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie starts taking selfies against the window.

Byron leans over to two expressionless Secret Service bodyguards in the front seats - ZEKE and ROSA.

ZEKE
Apologies for the turbulence, sir.

ROSA
We'll be moving momentarily.

Byron stumbles as the car rocks.

BYRON
Aren't you supposed to do something?

ZEKE
We're under orders not to use force, sir. But we have every confidence in local law enf -

BYRON
What orders?

ROSA
The President, sir.

BYRON
The President wants you to let the candidates be harassed by these cosplay idiots?

ZEKE
Sir, we have every confidence -

SPLAT!!! An egg explodes on Byron's window. Lizzie lifts her phone for a selfie, makes a fake shocked face, then smiles.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - CONTINUOUS

Police clear the protestors and the car gets moving.

It pulls up at the entrance, beneath a huge banner:

AMERICA DECIDES

Either side of the words are six-foot-high faces of Byron and his opponent, Florida Governor SHARON STEEL (mid-50s, white, a Wall Street Dolly Parton who used to be an astronaut).

Zeke and Rosa get out and stand by the car doors.

INT. BULLETPROOF CADILLACE - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie opens the door. Byron puts a hand on her arm.

BYRON
What Larkin quote?

LIZZIE
*"They fuck you up, your mum and
dad."*

He winces. She smiles.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
I know my role.

BYRON
Chin up, darling.

She straightens herself and raises her chin. The gesture gives her confidence. She steps out -

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - CONTINUOUS

- to CHEERS from the crowd. Lizzie curtsies and looks for -

EXT. CROWD - CONTINUOUS

Stu (19, white, deeply uncomfortable in a suit), pushes through the crowd while holding a phone and a cup carrier with two boba teas.

He sees Lizzie and waves excitedly with his phone hand.

He keeps pushing until he gets to the barrier. He reaches into his suit pocket - juggling the phone and the drinks - to pull out a lanyard.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - CONTINUOUS

Stu skips over to Lizzie like an excited puppy, nearly spills boba tea, then steadies himself.

LIZZIE
Did you..?

STU
Yeah. You absolutely sure -

LIZZIE
They won't search you, I promise.

Behind them, Zeke opens the car door. Byron's comms guy MAC CROMARTIE (mid-30s, white, shouldn't have gone out last night), leans inside -

INT. BULLETPROOF CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

Mac hands Byron a binder with his debate notes. Byron opens it, and takes out the front page - his opening statement.

MAC

Boss, the performance starts now. When you step out, you're gonna see your supporters to the right. The pool camera's at the rope line, that's Shelly from CNBC. She'll shout, don't answer. You're giving off pure confidence. Pick a point in the crowd, smile. Don't look around or it'll look shifty.

Over Mac's shoulder, Byron sees Lizzie posing and taking selfies. Mac sees Byron looking and looks for himself.

BYRON

I apologize for Lizzie.

MAC

Lizzie's an asset. Stu is a liability.

Mac looks again and sees Stu filming Lizzie.

MAC (CONT'D)

Permission to punch his face?

BYRON

Leave him for now. If I win -

MAC

When!

BYRON

When I win, these guys will sort a one way flight to Diego Garcia. Ain't that right, Zeke?

ZEKE

I serve at the pleasure of the President.

MAC

That's the spirit. You good?

BYRON

I'm good.

He puts the opening statement in his inside pocket.

MAC

Glasses off. Let's roll.

Byron takes his glasses off and hands them to Mac. He raises his chin, just like Lizzie did, and steps out to chants of 'WE WANT CHANGE'.

Lizzie and Stu are mid-TikTok dance – a synchronized routine somewhere between the Macarena and the Timewarp. Lizzie hits each beat with deadpan precision. Stu hams it up.

She shoots him a sharp side-eye and swats his arm into position. He looks up like an eager puppy.

With Byron's giant grinning face from the poster looming over his shoulder, he barks at Lizzie –

BYRON

Lizzie. Stop showing off.

Dani emerges from the entrance beneath the poster, puts her phone in her handbag, removes her shades and strides over.

Mac COUGHS to let Byron know she's here. Byron puts his arms out wide. Dani smiles a big performative smile. They hug. Her smile drops once the embrace ends.

Dani grabs the back of Lizzie's blazer and pulls her over.

They pose for family photos. Stu tries to join but Dani gives him a *don't you dare* look.

SNAP. SNAP. SNAP.

Dani puts her arm around Lizzie and steers her away as Byron poses for solo pictures.

LIZZIE

Why are you so stressed?

Dani talks through her camera-ready smile.

DANI

Nothing. Just a rough earnings call. I see you brought the boy.

LIZZIE

He has a name.

DANI
It's your name I'm worried about.

Lizzie pouts.

DANI (CONT'D)
Keep smiling.

Lizzie smiles sarcastically.

SUPER: 20 MINUTES TO THE DEBATE

INT. SECURITY AREA, DEBATE VENUE - CONTINUOUS

Waiting by a security checkpoint is debate anchor GRACE BUKOWSKI (40, immaculate, serial killer smile) and Jess.

Byron strides through the entrance followed by Dani, Lizzie, Mac and the bodyguards. Stu trails behind.

As Stu is about to enter, he turns to the crowd and opens his jacket, revealing a bee badge on his shirt. Muted cheers. He makes a *shhh* gesture.

Grace reaches out a firm hand as Byron approaches.

GRACE
Senator, welcome.

BYRON
Grace, lovely to see you again.

Stu, not realizing that everyone has stopped, walks straight into Byron's shoulder, spilling boba tea all over him.

BYRON (CONT'D)
Fuck!

LIZZIE
Fuck.

STU
Fuuuuuck.

Lizzie gasps. Mac clenches a fist. Dani is expressionless.

Lizzie grabs Stu and walks him through security. Zeke nods to the guard and they're waved through.

Jess and Mac dab at Byron's shirt with napkins.

INT. CNN PANEL, SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Live TV broadcast. Dramatic news music and a motion graphic:
CNN DEBATE NIGHT WITH SIMPSON BEAUREGARD.

News anchor SIMPSON (50s, white, twinkly-eyed silver fox, only takes off his Savile Row suits to sleep...with your grandma) looks straight into the camera.

SIMPSON

It's debate night in America and
the stakes have never been higher.
We are two weeks out from what some
are calling the most consequential
election of our lifetime.

Turns to camera two.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,
I'm Simpson Beauregard and I'll be
your guide through all the ups and
downs the evening has to offer. And
to help you make sense of it all,
I'm joined by Republican strategist
Luca del Buca -

Single shot of LUCA (40s, Italian-American, smart suit,
tieless with his top button undone).

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

And Democrat pollster Melody May -

Single shot of earnest Melody (30s, Black, nervous, hasn't
called an election right yet).

Back to Simpson.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

And now, the state of play.

A graphic appears on a screen above Melody's shoulder: Bar
chart of a Quinnipac poll showing Sharon Steel (red) on 51%,
Byron Blake (blue) on 44% and Billy the Buzz (yellow) on 5%.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Ohio senator Byron Blake trails,
though he has gained ground in
recent days. Tonight's debate looks
like his last chance. Melody May,
is it a must win for the Democrat?

MELODY

Yes it is. But the more people see him the more they like him. His record fighting injustice as a human rights lawyer. His plans to help working people. If I were Sharon Steel, I'd be worried -

LUCA

Sharon Steel ain't scared of shit. She's a fucking astronaut. Byron Blake is a press release in a five grand suit. She'll eat him up.

MELODY

Well, that's not -

SIMPSON

Apologies, ladies and gentleman, for the curse words there. It's an exciting night. Melody -

LUCA

Hey, fuck you, dipshit.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie, holding Byron's damp jacket, hangs at the back with Stu as Jess leads a tea-stained Byron, Dani, Mac, Zeke and Rosa down a well-lit corridor.

Lizzie nudges Stu as they pass a family restroom. He winks.

The group stops outside the dressing room. Lizzie and Stu catch up as her parents' argument continues. Jess backs away.

DANI

It's not up for discussion, I'm going to Tahoe. Captain Roy is fuelling the jet at Arlington as we speak.

BYRON

You said you'd keep the last two weeks clear. We're doing Ann Arbor and Madison tomorrow, then we have Raleigh and Albuquerque. You're supposed to speak at the dinner with Hillary tomorrow in, in...Mac?

MAC

Little Rock.

DANI
Send Lizzie to Little Rock. I'm
going to Tahoe.

LIZZIE
Why don't we all go to Tahoe? It'll
be like we're a family -

SLAP! A pink-nailed hand smacks Byron on the ass. He jumps.

It's Sharon Steel. Pastel blue pantsuit and a bouffant so
rigid it could withstand a hurricane.

SHARON
Oh, I'd love a weekend in Tahoe
without Alan.

ALAN (60s, white, bald, air of resignation) is behind her.

ALAN
Hi everyone.

Sharon smiles at Dani, who remains stony-faced.

SHARON
He's like a UTI. No matter where I
go, he's always there making me
uncomfortable.

BYRON
Good to see you, Sharon.

SHARON
If it isn't America's happiest
family. You should be enjoying
life, Byron. You're creeping up in
the polls. You're a creeper. Always
have been. Even back in college you
were a little creeper.

BYRON
Sharon, a pleasure as always. I
might just catch you, you know.

SHARON
I'm like Covid. Catch me and I make
you feel like shit.

DANI
He's here to win.

SHARON

Oh, I bet. That explains the U-turn
on chicks with dicks. What happened
to your pride, Byron?

Oof. Byron winces. Lizzie cringes. Mac jumps in defensively.

MAC

The Senator has been consistent in
his support for the trans
community.

SHARON

Relax. I'm just pulling his pecker.

Sharon spots Lizzie and smiles a big, broad smile.

SHARON (CONT'D)

You must be Lizzie. I've read a lot
about you.

LIZZIE

I read about you too. The first
astronaut to come back from space a
bigger cunt than you went up.

DANI

Elizabeth! Language.

SHARON

Oh, I was just as bad before,
darling. Ask your pappy.

MAC

Well, this was fun. But the clock
is ticking.

He opens the dressing room door. Byron smiles weakly at
Sharon and steps inside, followed by Dani.

Sharon winks at Lizzie.

SHARON

I'll leave you all to play happy
families.

She turns, brushing past Zeke as he stands silently against
the wall. She sizes him up approvingly as she leaves.

Lizzie and Stu are alone in the corridor with the bodyguards.

STU

Do these guys..?

LIZZIE
They don't care.

INT. FAMILY RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie ushers Stu in, closes the door and locks it. She sits on the floor as Stu folds down the baby changer on the wall.

LIZZIE
They're impossible.

STU
People fight.

LIZZIE
They didn't used to. When I was a kid they were like the world's greatest love story. Now they just bark at each other like dogs in a fucking park.

Stu takes a baggie of cocaine out of his inside pocket. She mouths *'Thank Fuck'*.

Lizzie feels something in Byron's jacket and reaches in. A folded piece of paper - his OPENING STATEMENT.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
(exaggerated Byron voice)
Good evening America. This is the most important election of our lifetimes. Just like the last one. And the one before that.

Stu taps out some coke on the baby changer and starts chopping it with a card.

STU
You'll be at NYU next fall. You won't have to put up with your dad's shit any more.

LIZZIE
A) That's not the point. And B) I'm gonna have those goons trailing me everywhere, so that's gonna be fun.

STU
Only if he wins.

He gestures for her to come in for a hug. She doesn't.

STU (CONT'D)
You know, my parents divorced when
I was eight -

He snorts a line of coke.

STU (CONT'D)
And I'm fine.

LIZZIE
Who said anything about
divorce? Fuck.

STU
I didn't mean to -

She rips the opening statement in half, rolls it up and uses
it to snort a line.

STU (CONT'D)
Maybe you should do something.

She blinks repeatedly and wipes her nose.

LIZZIE
What?

STU
Endorse Billy.

LIZZIE
Don't give me your Buzz schtick.

STU
I'm just saying. The two big
parties are all corrupt liars.

LIZZIE
Jesus, Stu, that's my dad.

STU
You hate your dad.

LIZZIE
I don't. It's just... You know what
he got me for my birthday?

STU
The funny voicemail from -

LIZZIE
Bill fucking Clinton! Geriatric sex
pest.

STU
You know who almost certainly isn't
a sex pest? Billy -

LIZZIE
Billy the Buzz is a grown man in a
bee costume.

STU
I know, right?

LIZZIE
I think you might be an idiot.

STU
I'm your idiot.

LIZZIE
You're my Alan.

She wipes her nose and starts fixing herself in the mirror.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
Come on.

STU
We actually watching this thing?

LIZZIE
Why do you think we're here?

STU
For the clout. You should do a live
from the dressing room. People love
this behind the scenes shit.

LIZZIE
Mac would go crazy. And if you ever
use the word clout again we're
over. Douchebag.

He gestures with the phone - *you know you want to.*

She smiles performatively for him. He unlocks the door -

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie and Stu emerge into the corridor. She fixes her hair
and turns to him. He holds up a phone to film her.

LIZZIE
How do I look?

STU
Beautiful.

Zeke, Rosa and a grim-faced Mac stand silently in the background near the dressing room.

Stu gives her a thumbs up.

LIZZIE
(to the camera)
You'll never guess where I am. The debate is gonna start in a few minutes and I am outside my dad's dressing room.

Lizzie gestures for the viewers to follow her as she heads to the dressing room door. Raised voices interrupt from inside.

BYRON (O.C.)
You can fuck a four star general in the Lincoln Bedroom for all I care.

DANI (O.C.)
I'm not stepping one foot in the White House, you paranoid fuck.

Lizzie freezes. The door opens a crack. Stu keeps filming.

BYRON (O.C.)
We had a deal, Dani.

Lizzie gestures for Stu to stop filming. He doesn't.

DANI (O.C.)
I've got a deal for you. You win and the first thing you're signing are the divorce papers. You can hold them up for the cameras with that shit-eating grin of yours.

Zeke quietly closes the door. It immediately flings open. Dani storms out, straight past Lizzie.

LIZZIE
Mom?

Dani marches away down the corridor without looking back.

DANI
I'm going to Tahoe.

LIZZIE
Did you just say divorce?

DANI
We'll talk after.

What the actual fuck?

LIZZIE
Dad?

Byron slams the door. Lizzie reaches for it. Mac blocks her.

MAC
You need to take your seat. Your
dad needs his ten minutes of zen.

Stu slowly lowers the phone.

Lizzie stares at the closed door, shellshocked.

Mac marches and over and snatches the phone from Stu.

MAC (CONT'D)
Fuck, was that live?

Lizzie snaps out of it. She looks at Mac, then Stu. Then storms off in the opposite direction to Dani.

Stu snatches his phone back and follows her.

SUPER: 10 MINUTES TO THE DEBATE

INT. ATRIUM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie pushes through the double doors and emerges into a busy atrium full of people in business dress. She stops, blood pumping in her ears. Some people turn to look.

Stu comes rushing into the atrium behind her.

Lizzie sees another set of double doors to her right.

STU
I think that's the -

LIZZIE
I know.

She stops, takes a breath, then raises her chin, turns and walks through the doors.

INT. SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie barges through double doors and -

She's in THE SPIN ROOM - a big hall full of journalists and politicians. *These people know who she is.*

A dozen reporters rush to her, calling her name. A scrum forms around her.

She freezes. *There's too many. They're too close.*

Simpson is at the CNN set on a raised mezzanine at the back of the hall, tissues sticking out of his collar as an assistant dabs him with powder. He sees Lizzie and -

Makes a beeline for her, jostling past people.

Stu follows Lizzie in but can't get to her through the crowd.

Simpson pushes into the press pack and puts his arm around Lizzie's shoulder.

SIMPSON

Lizzie, it's great to see you again. I'm Simpson, we met at the Pasadena rally.

LIZZIE

Yes, I remember.

SIMPSON

Why don't you come with me for a moment? Away from the crowd.

She nods. He makes an faux-apologetic face to the other reporters and guides her away from them, across the floor and up the steps to the CNN set.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Have you considered a career in television? The cameras love you.

LIZZIE

I - no. Do you think?

They get to the panel set up. Simpson ushers Luca - scrolling on his phone - out of his seat and offers it to Lizzie.

SIMPSON

Our viewers would love to hear from you. I'll be gentle, I promise.

A producer attaches a mic to her blazer.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Byron sits cross-legged on the floor, eyes closed, listening to famous speeches played over soothing meditation music.

JFK (RECORDING)

We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard -

INT. CNN PANEL, SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie's pulse races. A photo appears on the screen - Lizzie and her dad blow out candles on her 10th birthday cake.

SIMPSON

This'll be great.

She smiles weakly and takes a deep breath.

She looks around the hall. Everyone is looking up at her.

She takes a big sniff and wipes her nose.

She looks at Simpson, muttering something to a producer.

Another breath.

She's on the edge of doing something very brave or very stupid.

Let's go with brave. Chin up.

Simpson pulls out the tissues from his collar, turns to camera one, waits a beat for his cue, and -

Live TV broadcast. Dramatic news music and a motion graphic: CNN DEBATE NIGHT WITH SIMPSON BEAUREGARD.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Welcome back. The debate is just eight minutes away and I'm joined by a very special guest - potential First Daughter, Lizzie Drake-Blake.

Camera on Lizzie as she smiles professionally.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

There's a lot at stake tonight, how's the mood - nervous? Excited?

LIZZIE
Stressed out.

Another family photo. Byron and Dani cradling baby Lizzie.

SIMPSON
You or him?

LIZZIE
Oh, I'm fine. He's shitting bricks.

Simpson laughs. Her confidence grows. She makes a 'whoops' expression and smiles.

SIMPSON
Apologies, ladies and gentlemen.
Lizzie, it's a family show.

LIZZIE
It's a show, alright.

SIMPSON
It's a big night, some nerves are understandable.

LIZZIE
Oh, I'm not nervous. I'm vulgar.

SIMPSON
Your father talked a lot during the campaign about family values.
What's he really like as a dad?

She lets slip an involuntary laugh.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)
I want to get a sense of what Byron Blake the family man is like.

LIZZIE
So would I.

Simpson raises an eyebrow.

Is she going to do this? Fuck it.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
Before he went into politics, he was a great dad. We were happy.

SIMPSON
Something changed?

Another photo. Young Lizzie on her father's shoulders.

LIZZIE
Everything changed. He barely knows
I'm alive.

SIMPSON
He barely knows you're alive?

LIZZIE
Unless he needs me to smile and
wave. The only thing he cares about
is winning the stupid election.

SIMPSON
You don't want him to win?

LIZZIE
God, no. I hope he loses.

Simpson pauses.

Lizzie takes a breath.

Simpson turns to the camera.

SIMPSON
You heard it here first, folks.
We'll be back after this short
break.

He holds his smile for an uncomfortable amount of time, then
turns to Lizzie.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)
You were great.

He gets up, takes off his mic and leaves.

Lizzie sits alone at the panel, in front of the screen
showing an image of her as a toddler playing with Byron.

INT. ROOF, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - CONTINUOUS

Dani pushes through a fire door and emerges on to the roof
with a fierce look on her face. She stops dead when she sees -

A dozen college age protestors in yellow and black. Some are
sat on the helicopter skids smoking weed.

The pilot is sat at the controls, powerless to do anything.

She looks at him desperately. He shrugs.

DANI
Oh, for fu-

INT. CNN PANEL, SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie steps down from the CNN set.

Luca watches her. Then starts clapping –

Big, deliberate, emphatic claps.

Melody glances at him.

She hesitates... then starts to join in. Tentative, polite.

One clap. Two.

She catches herself.

Stops. Troubled. Looks at Lizzie as she steps down from the mezzanine.

Lizzie doesn't acknowledge any of it. She just walks.

LUCA
(to Melody)
That was some stone cold Sharon
Steel shit.

Luca and Melody watch Lizzie walk calmly across the spin room floor – all eyes on her – and through the double doors.

As they close behind her, the reporters spring into action, leaping for their phones and laptops.

INT. ATRIUM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie has the same determined look on her face as her mother. Stu tries to show her his phone.

STU
That was iconic.

She strides past him. He tries to catch up.

She pushes through the doors back toward the dressing room.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stu struggles to catch Lizzie up.

Ahead of them, Mac knocks on Byron's door and waits. Zeke and Rosa stand on either side, still and emotionless.

Mac sees Lizzie and curses under his breath.

Byron answers the door. He has a clean jacket on and an undone tie.

MAC
It's Lizzie.

BYRON
Is she ok?

MAC
Physically, yes.

Lizzie reaches them.

LIZZIE
What are you talking about?

BYRON
(to Mac)
Whatever it is can wait. Look, have you seen my -

LIZZIE
I thought I heard my name being taken in vain.

BYRON
Just glad you're ok.
(to Mac)
Mac, my opening statement. Have you got it?

MAC
I thought you had it.

BYRON
So did I.

Lizzie takes Stu's hand without looking at him.

LIZZIE
We're going to our seats.

They walk off, passing producer Jess. Without looking back, Lizzie says -

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
Good luck.

Jess observes the friction with a tiny smile.

JESS
Senator, it's time.

Byron ties his tie.

MAC
About Lizzie.

BYRON
I said it can wait, Mac. I've got
to focus.

Jess leads him up the corridor. Zeke and Rosa flank him.

BYRON (CONT'D)
We can talk in the break.

MAC
Yes, sir.

He's frustrated. Then he remembers he was meant to say -

MAC (CONT'D)
Who are you?

Byron, still walking away, doesn't look back.

BYRON
Christopher Reeve.

MAC
Christopher motherfucking Reeve!

Mac turns. Sharon Steel is being shown something on a phone by her comms guy. She looks up, sees Mac and winks.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

A clipboard-carrying floor manager leads Lizzie and Stu into the busy university theater. There are maybe 400 people in the audience, chattering away.

The stage is set - two empty lecterns, a red, white and blue backdrop, two camera operators at big fixed TV cameras either side of the stage, and a third swinging above them on a jib.

Grace Bukowski looks studious behind a desk, reading notes.

Lizzie scans the crowd.

FUCK.

It's Dani. She's still here. Front row, stage left. Two empty seats next to her at the end of the row. She's on the phone.

The floor manager ushers Lizzie and Stu to the vacant seats next to Dani, who hasn't looked up.

Lizzie takes a deep breath. Stu gestures for Lizzie to go first and sit next to her mom. She shoves him in first and takes the end seat so Stu is sandwiched between them.

DANI

(to her phone)

This is ridiculous. We're a lawless society.

(pause)

Well, call right away when they have. I don't want to be here a second longer than I -

She spots Lizzie.

DANI (CONT'D)

Oh, hi, darling.

Lizzie smiles uncomfortably. Dani returns to the call.

DANI (CONT'D)

I don't know, like a baseball bat?

The floor manager hovers anxiously in the aisle.

FLOOR MANAGER

I'm sorry, madam...ma'am...Ms Drake. Sorry, excuse me.

Dani ignores her.

FLOOR MANAGER (CONT'D)

I have to ask you to turn your phone off, please.

She leans over Lizzie and Stu to try and get her attention. Dani swats her away.

DANI

(to the phone)

Just text me. Jesus.

FLOOR MANAGER

Excuse me. You can't be -

She grabs the phone. Dani pulls it back.

FLOOR MANAGER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, but I have to -

They have a tug of war over the phone. Dani yanks it away and the phone flies into the row behind.

The house lights come down.

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Jess is with several production staff at the bank of screens showing different camera angles. She leans into a mic.

JESS
Ok, Grace. Coming to you in thirty.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

On stage, Grace stands and moves center stage. The spotlight finds her. She beams a 10,000 watt smile.

GRACE
Final countdown, folks. Phones off.
We're electing the leader of the
free world, so let's be respectful.
Applause is great, but no cheering,
no booing, no throwing rotten
vegetables. It's showtime.

The bombastic TV intro music plays as Dani leans over the back of her chair to hunt for her phone.

Grace squints to see the commotion, then composes herself.

LIVE BROADCAST: Mid shot of Grace as the music rings out.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Who will be the next President of
the United States? Tonight, America
decides. Good evening, ladies and
gentleman, I'm Grace Bukowski. In
little over two weeks, you will
elect a new President.

Lizzie sees Byron standing in the wings. He looks nervous. She feels a pang of guilt.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Please welcome your contenders -
Governor Sharon Steel of Florida
and Senator Byron Blake of Ohio.

The audience APPLAUDS.

Byron and Sharon emerge from stage left and right. They go to shake hands and - Sharon pulls her hand away and gives him the five-fingered salute.

HA! One unseen audience member enjoyed that.

Byron freezes. Looking delighted, Sharon slaps him on the back - *only kidding* - grabs his hand and shakes, then waves to the crowd and takes her place at her lectern.

Byron waves half-heartedly to the audience but sees -

Dani still fishing around for her phone in the row behind, and Lizzie CRINGING hard.

LIVE BROADCAST: Grace is at her desk.

GRACE (CONT'D)
We'll start with opening
statements. Senator Blake, you won
the coin toss backstage, so you
will go first.

Byron, now behind his lectern, straightens the papers on his lectern and looks up.

BYRON
Thank you, Grace. And thank you
Governor Steel for joining me and
welcome to all of you watching at
home. This election is... The
difference between Governor Steel
and mys... You know, I had a whole
speech prepared, but I lost my...
Never mind. This might be a little
rough and ready. Um. Ok.

Lizzie sinks in her seat.

Byron looks at his notes. The top page just has Superman logo doodled on it. He clears his throat.

BYRON (CONT'D)
My name is Byron Blake, I'm a
senator from the great state of
Ohio and, uh, I want to be your
President not because of my own
ambition but because of what is
happening to our country.

Lizzie takes out the tin from inside her blazer.

BYRON (CONT'D)

I want good paying jobs for everyone, not tax cuts for billionaires. I want us to help those in need not demonize them. I want to lead the world, not bully it. I want the medical treatment people need to be easier to get hold of than a semi-automatic rifle. I want -

GRACE

Senator Blake, that's your time.
Governor Steel.

Lizzie pops a tiny piece of mushroom in her mouth. Dani, upright again, sees her.

SHARON

America, the job's not done. For years, with men like Senator Blake in charge, we got complacent. We sold off our manufacturing jobs to China and let hardworking Americans struggle. We fought wars that had nothing to do with us.

Dani calmly reaches across Stu and takes the tin from Lizzie.

SHARON (CONT'D)

We stopped policing our borders then said you were racist if you complained about it. We put elitist snobs in charge - highfalutin lawyers like Senator Blake - who would rather punish you for what you think than reward you for what you do.

Lizzie gives Dani a defiant look and snatches the tin back.

SHARON (CONT'D)

But we got wise to it, didn't we?
My good friend President Terwilliger started turning this ship around. I'll finish the job.

Dani gives Lizzie a look only a raging mother can give.

SHARON (CONT'D)

I believe in hard work - how do you think a little girl from Jacksonville ended up going to space?

GRACE

Thank you, Governor Steel. I want to turn to an issue that affects families across America. The mental health crisis. In the last decade, rates of anxiety and depression have risen among teens and young adults. As President, what would you do to help our young people?

Stu, wishing he was sat anywhere else, looks at Lizzie, then Dani, then Lizzie.

SHARON

I understand the fears parents have about their kids, especially when they're spending so much time on their phones, about the things they're exposed to online, about the peer pressure they feel.

Dani and Lizzie stare at each other. It's a stand-off.

GRACE

Some in your party have called for a federal ban on phones in schools. Do you agree?

SHARON

I'm not in favor of banning things. I think it's up to parents to take responsibility for how they raise their kids, not the government.

They keep staring. Stu is deeply uncomfortable.

GRACE

Senator Blake, what would you do about the mental health crisis?

BYRON

Thank you, Grace. This is a big priority for me. I set up a task force in Ohio to support young people who slip through the net, whether it's in the justice system or social care.

Dani pounces for the tin, reaching over Stu. Lizzie pulls it away. Dani grabs her arm and yanks it towards her.

BYRON (CONT'D)

I actually disagree with Governor Steel about phones.

(MORE)

BYRON (CONT'D)

I think school should be a safe space where children can learn.

SHARON

You don't think parents should take responsibility for raising their kids? That tracks.

Lizzie, still gripping the tin, pulls her arm back.

BYRON

What do you mean by that?

SHARON

Well, hell, Byron. Your own daughter just went on TV and told the whole world you - quote - barely know she's alive.

Dani and Lizzie stop their grappling and look up.

The blood drains from Byron's face. He looks for Lizzie.

Lizzie looks back at him. *Suddenly, she's a little girl drained of all the bravado.*

Dani releases her arm and slowly straightens up.

Byron narrows his eyes, trying to figure out what on Earth is going on. He turns back to Sharon.

BYRON

I don't know what Lizzie said. But -

SHARON

That figures. The way she tells it, you've not been paying her much attention for a while now.

Dani and Lizzie are frozen, staring at the stage.

BYRON

How dare you politicize my family.

SHARON

I didn't book the interview. Besides, you seem happy to enough to drag poor Lizzie out for photo opportunities when it suits you.

Lizzie's pulse is racing.

GRACE

I'll remind you both, this question is about the mental health crisis.

SHARON

Well then, I take back my answer. I guess parents can't always be trusted to take responsibility for their children.

BYRON

I'm not going to take any parenting lessons from -

SHARON

From me? Because I don't have kids of my own? You really want to go there, Senator?

She flashes Byron a look that says she's prepared to escalate this. He's fuming - but doesn't rise to it. He takes a beat.

BYRON

I love my daughter, Governor.

Sharon smiles a Cruella de Vil smile.

SHARON

You should try telling her that every once in a while.

GRACE

Governor, Senator, please. This is about mental health.

SHARON

I'm a big fan of Lizzie.

Sharon winks at Lizzie. A camera turns to get her reaction. Lizzie grimaces.

SHARON (CONT'D)

You know why? I see all those videos she makes with her phone.

BYRON

I'm proud of my daughter.

SHARON

She doesn't seem so proud of you. What was it she said? Oh yeah. I hope you *lose*.

Byron is bright red. He looks to Lizzie. Their eyes meet. A flicker of pain on both sides.

Lizzie stands. *She has to get out of here.*

Dani lets her past - and glares at Byron.

Lizzie hurries up the aisle, her back to the stage. The camera tracks her, capturing the scene.

Byron watches, forlorn.

GRACE
Senator, what is your policy is on
mental health?

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Jess smiles excitedly at a screen showing Lizzie pushing through the exit door. It SLAMS behind her.

JESS
That is - chef's kiss. Mwah.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie rushes through the corridor.

She's messed up. Bad.

She unlocks her phone. 57 notifications. 16 missed calls.

Shit shit shit.

INT. ATRIUM - CONTINUOUS

She pushes through the doors. Mac is on the phone.

MAC
(into the phone)
I'll call you back.

Lizzie strides past him without making eye contact.

MAC (CONT'D)
Lizzie!

She passes the spin room door and heads straight to a fire exit. She flashes her lanyard at the security guard on the door and barges straight through -

EXT. SMOKING AREA - CONTINUOUS

She emerges into a small courtyard with bike racks to one side and a trash can with an ash tray on top by the door. The sound of the protest can be heard from around the corner.

She stops, her mind racing. She takes a vape pen from her inside pocket.

Mac follows her outside.

LIZZIE

I'm sorry. I messed up.

MAC

Did that sniveling little traitor
Stu put you up to that?

Her demeanor changes.

LIZZIE

I do my own treachery, thank you.

MAC

I need you to get back in that room
and tell all those reporters it was
a joke. A bad joke. And that your
dad is a great father.

LIZZIE

I can't lie. Not in the spin room.

Frustrated, Mac heads back inside.

Someone starts clapping behind her. She turns.

BILLY THE BUZZ (40s, white, bleached blond hair, wearing a full bee costume), leans on the wall, joint hanging from his lips. He speaks in a soft Texan accent.

BILLY

Lizzie Drake-Blake. A star is born.

She has no idea what to do. Billy steps towards her.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to startle you. I'm a
big fan is all. At least I have
been for the last fifteen minutes.

She sucks on her vape, starting to calm down.

BILLY (CONT'D)
You might have given us the first
authentic moment in this whole
campaign. You're a truth teller.

LIZZIE
I didn't mean... I was just angry.

BILLY
We're all angry. That's what makes
you so brilliant.

LIZZIE
I've been called a lot of things,
but not brilliant.

BILLY
You checked your phone? I bet it's
blowing up.

She unlocks it again. She checks her mentions, eyes darting
between Billy and her phone.

'OMG! Lizzie rocks!'

'Someone had to tell it like it is.'

'YASSS QUEEN SAY IT SISTA!'

BILLY (CONT'D)
Struck a nerve, I reckon.

She looks up at him, a little stunned.

BILLY (CONT'D)
I know The Hive loved it.

LIZZIE
What's The Hive?

BILLY
That's what my people call
themselves. You can hear them now.

The strains of 'Don't be silly, debate our Billy' drift in.

BILLY (CONT'D)
I'd wager it goes beyond these guys
though. You're a voice of a
generation.

LIZZIE
Bullshit.

BILLY
How many followers you got?

LIZZIE
On Instagram, like thirty thousand.

BILLY
Check again.

She opens Instagram.

Lizzie Drake-Blake. 613 posts. 1.2 million followers.

LIZZIE
Woah.

Her phone drops out of her hand. Billy catches it.

BILLY
This would be a bad time to crack
your screen.

She looks at him blankly.

He smiles supportively.

A smile starts to leak out from the corners of her mouth.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

The debate continues. Byron looks distracted, Sharon looks confident and commanding.

SHARON
This isn't about being pro or anti
Russia or anyone other damn
country. This is about the
realities of power -

Byron isn't paying attention. He's trying to signal to Dani.

Dani is irritable. She gestures back dismissively. Stu is still next to her, looking like he'd rather be anywhere else.

GRACE
Senator Blake -

Byron, oblivious, mouths 'go find her' to Dani.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Senator Blake, your attention,
please.

He snaps back.

BYRON
Sorry, yes.

Dani reluctantly gets up.

BYRON (CONT'D)
Could you repeat the question?

EXT. HIVE RALLY - CONTINUOUS

A makeshift stage stands a few feet off the ground, complete with a mic stand, a sound system and a yellow and black hand-painted bedsheet with the slogan 'BRING BACK AMERICA'S BUZZ'.

Hundreds of people chant 'Don't be silly, debate our Billy'.

Billy steps onto it from the side. THE HIVE GOES WILD.

He grabs the mic.

BILLY
What a beautiful sight.

Whoops and cheers.

Lizzie comes round the corner. She's at the edge of the crowd of protestors. No one sees her. She watches Billy in action.

BILLY (CONT'D)
You're much better looking than the people in there. All these people in their suits - politicians, staffers, journalists - did you see them going in?

He spots Lizzie and smiles at her. She smiles back.

BILLY (CONT'D)
We've trained the truth out of them. It's like we've all accepted this world where people dress up all smart and say all these things to win our votes - about how they want to help people, how they want to fix what's wrong with our country and - blah blah blah.

Cheers.

BILLY (CONT'D)
None of these people believe a word
they say. It's all a big show. You
know what, just now I met someone
who's different.

Lizzie's eyes widen. *Excitement or fear?*

BILLY (CONT'D)
Someone who told the truth, even
though it was painful. Even though
she wasn't supposed to. I think she
might just be the most honest
person here today. In fact, she's
stood right there.

He points to Lizzie. She's frozen.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Lizzie Drake-Blake.

She gulps.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Her daddy wants to be president.
She told the truth instead. That
took some serious cojones. That's a
real leader, right there. This
country needs a few more Lizzies
and a few less Byron Blakes! A hive
knows a Queen Bee when it sees one.

The crowd ERUPTS. She's taken aback - flattered and
frightened all at once.

A chant breaks out - 'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

She waves.

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

She raises her arms like a prizefighter.

The Hive ROARS.

She smiles. They LOVE her. It's like a dream.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

On the debate stage, Byron has recovered his composure. He
and Sharon are sparring aggressively.

BYRON

You and President Terwilliger take millions from oil companies so they can drill into the ground and pump toxic pollution into the atmosphere. No more.

SHARON

Typical pansy-ass liberal nonsense. We ain't gonna fix the weather by complaining and taking swipes at people who employ Americans and heat their homes.

BYRON

I'm going to do something about it. You're just counting the cash and to hell with the consequences.

SHARON

The difference between you and me is I don't bellyache about things, I fix them. I'm going to fix this the way Americans fix things, by trusting in American innovation.

BYRON

Climate change is real, we caused it, and we have to act now before it's too late.

SHARON

It's getting hotter, sure. But you know what, I don't give a damn who caused it. What's the point in beating ourselves up.

BYRON

It's about taking responsibility.

A lone voice shouts 'BAD DAD!'

Laughter ripples through the audience. Byron looks pissed.

GRACE

Ladies and gentlemen, let's keep things civil. Now, Senator Blake, your campaign has also received donations from -

In his seat, with Dani and Lizzie gone, Stu pulls out his phone, turns and films a selfie with Byron onstage in the background. Stu pulls a mean face and wags his finger.

STU
(exaggerated grumpy Byron
impression)
Bad dad!

The floor manager looks PISSED.

EXT. HIVE RALLY - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie watches admiringly as Billy whips up the crowd.

BILLY
This country isn't going to get its
buzz back until the people in
charge see you. I mean really see
you. Until they start telling you
the truth, even if it's hard, even
if it's messy.

An overweight man with painted yellow face punches the air.

Billy turns to face Lizzie.

BILLY (CONT'D)
What was it you said about your
dad, Lizzie? He doesn't even know
I'm alive. Well, we see you, Lizzie
Drake-Blake. We know you're alive.
Don't we?

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

BILLY (CONT'D)
We want to hear from you, Lizzie.
Why don't you come up here?

Lizzie looks around at the crowd. *Should she do it?*

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

She raises her chin. *She's doing it.*

The crowd parts for her.

She walks through, soaking in the adoration as the chant
continues and welcoming faces urge her on.

Billy offers a hand as she steps up on to the stage.

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

Billy offers Lizzie the mic. She takes it in both hands.

LIZZIE

Hi everyone.

WHOOPS AND HOLLERS. Someone shouts 'WE LOVE YOU, LIZZIE'.

Lizzie looks to Billy, he smiles encouragingly. She looks out at the adoring crowd. She can't help but smile. *They really seem to love her.*

Stu emerges from the smoking area, sees her onstage and pushes excitedly through the crowd.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to cause such a fuss.

Billy leans into the mic.

BILLY

You don't have to apologize for anything, Lizzie. Speak your truth.

LIZZIE

Ok. I guess I -

Dani emerges from the smoking area and sees Lizzie on stage. Lizzie doesn't see her. Dani sizes up the crowd.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

I wasn't expecting this. You all seem nice. Well, some of you seem kinda crazy... but nice crazy.

Cheers. Stu clambers onstage and puts his arm around her. She shrugs him off.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

My job is usually to be seen not heard.

VOICE IN CROWD

We want to hear you!

Lizzie smiles. She's warming up.

LIZZIE

You really do, huh?

More cheers.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

This is so weird. Usually it's my dad who gets the crowds.

BOOS. She flinches.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
No, no -

THE HIVE
Bad dad, bad dad, bad dad -

LIZZIE
He's not a bad dad. I just -

Stu joins in the chant from the stage. Lizzie glares at him.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
You're not listening -

Billy gestures for the crowd to quiet down. They do.

She looks at him. He gestures - go on.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
(to Billy)
What do you want me to say?

BILLY
Anything you want. It's your show.

Dani starts pushing through the crowd, eyes fixed on Lizzie.

VOICE IN CROWD
I love you!

LIZZIE
I love you too.

CHEERS.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
I've got nothing.

CHEERS.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
I don't care who wins. This stoned
guy in a bee costume could win and
it probably wouldn't be any worse.

CHEERS.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
(to Billy, but also the
crowd)
You should wash that costume, by
the way. It's getting kinda gross.

CHEERS.

Lizzie lowers the mic and looks out at the sea of faces.

They're still smiling, still filming. She looks at Billy.
He's smiling too.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
I could say anything and you'd
cheer, wouldn't you?

CHEERS.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
I think they should let Billy do
the debate!

CHEERS.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
It would be a sad indictment of
American democracy.

CHEERS.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
We are not a serious country!

CHEERS.

Billy notices the VIP lanyard round Lizzie's neck. He leans
in and takes the mic from her.

BILLY
This girl just can't stop dropping
truth bombs, America. That's why
she's the Queen Bee!

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

Lizzie soaks in the adoration.

Is this real?

Billy steps back and applauds.

Dani is jostled as she pushes through the crowd.

Stu takes Lizzie's hand and raises it. She pulls it away.

LIZZIE
Dude, too thirsty.

EXT. CNN PANEL, SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dramatic news music and a motion graphic: CNN DEBATE NIGHT WITH SIMPSON BEAUREGARD.

Simpson smiles handsomely at the camera.

SIMPSON

Well, well, well. We've hit the first commercial break of the debate and it's fair to say it is not going as we expected. Melody, has Byron Blake's daughter destroyed his chances?

Melody smiles nervously.

MELODY

It's been rough. But look, families are complicated. When Byron Blake has been able to get his message across -

Luca butts in.

LUCA

That girl did the dirty on daddy and Sharon Steel hit him with a piledriver.

Melody looks determined.

MELODY

He addressed the question to me.

LUCA

Relax darling, we got all night.

MELODY

I just think that when it comes to issues of substance, Byron Blake -

The camera cuts back to Simpson.

SIMPSON

This just in. Another bombshell revelation. A video posted by Lizzie Drake-Blake moments before the debate apparently shows Byron Blake's wife Dani Drake demanding a divorce. Let's play the tape.

Melody is fuming as the screen over her shoulder plays the video Stu shot with Lizzie in the backstage corridor.

Full screen: phone footage. Lizzie outside the dressing room door when the argument becomes audible. Her face drops.

BYRON (O.C.)
You can [BLEEP] a four star general
in the Lincoln bedroom for all I
care. Just -

DANI (O.C.)
I'm not stepping foot in the White
House, you paranoid idiot.

Lizzie gestures for Stu to stop filming.

BYRON (O.C.)
We had a deal, Dani.

DANI (O.C.)
I've got a deal for you. You win
this election and the first thing
you're signing are the divorce
papers. You can do it in the Oval
Office and hold it up for the
cameras with that [BLEEP]-eating
grin of yours.

Back to Simpson, eyebrow raised.

SIMPSON
Melody May, that's gotta hurt Byron
Blake's chances?

Melody is flustered.

MELODY
Well, we don't know the context -

Back to Simpson.

SIMPSON
Sorry Melody, I'm hearing the
candidates are coming back out.
Let's go back to the auditorium.

Melody's face says *WTF*.

EXT. HIVE RALLY - CONTINUOUS

The Hive rally is going off like a carnival. Part Woodstock, part Comic Con. Party music blares from the sound system. The crowd - oddballs and misfits of all ages - dance and play.

On stage, Billy and Lizzie dance. She looks like she's having the time of her life as he twirls her round. Stu keeps trying to join in but she shrugs him off.

Dani pushes past students and weirdos as she tries to reach the stage. But there are obstacles everywhere.

A conga line of people in bee costumes.

A Mad Hatter's tea party on a picnic blanket. The Queen of Hearts, in Sarah Palin specs, offers Dani a cup of tea.

A man dressed as a hobo Winnie the Pooh with a sign saying CAN YOU SPARE ANY HONEY?

A couple in rubber Byron and Sharon masks arm wrestling.

Dani pushes past them. Her phone buzzes. She reads it - *bad news*. Her eyes widen as she reads about the leaked video.

A very large shirtless man bumps into her. He turns, revealing that he's wearing a bonnet and a diaper, with MAN BABIES FOR BILLY written on his chest.

She backs away slowly -

Straight into a Hive flashmob - a dozen or so protestors dressed as bees buzzing around in a wide circle doing a synchronized dance.

Dani tries to push through only to find herself in the middle of the circle. One of the bees stops as the others circle. It recognizes Dani.

RANDOM BEE
STOPPPPPP!

All the protestors stop and look. The bee points at Dani.

RANDOM BEE (CONT'D)
IT'S QUEEN BEE'S MOM!

The Hive CHEERS. Dani has never looked so awkward in her life. The Hive closes in on her, chanting 'QUEEN BEE MOM, QUEEN BEE MOM, QUEEN BEE MOM'.

Lizzie stops dancing. She sees Dani, makes an apologetic face to Billy and exits the stage as fast as possible.

Dani is buffeted by the crowd, which guides her to the stage.

Lizzie is gone.

DANI
(calling over the chanting
of the crowd)
Has anyone seen my daughter?

Billy reaches out a hand. She looks at him the way you might look at a stray dog. He gestures for her to join him. She reluctantly takes his hand.

Lizzie makes a beeline for the smoking area.

Billy guides Dani up to the stage. She brushes herself off.

Stu tries to take a selfie with her. She snatches the phone out of his hand, drops it on the floor and stamps on it - her stiletto heel piercing right through the screen.

DANI (CONT'D)
Expect a letter from some very,
very expensive lawyers.

Stu puts his hands up and backs away.

Billy is impressed. He hands her the mic.

Dani scans the crowd.

DANI (CONT'D)
I'm -

Big squeal of feedback. The whole Hive looks up at her.

DANI (CONT'D)
I'm looking for my daughter.

The crowd LOSES IT. 'QUEEN BEE MOM, QUEEN BEE MOM'.

Billy takes the mic.

BILLY
If anyone is wondering how come
Lizzie is such a badass. Look no
further than this lady right here,
Dani Drake.

More cheers and chants. A confetti cannon showers her with rainbow-colored paper and glitter.

Dani is taken aback by the adoration. *Is she enjoying it?*

BILLY (CONT'D)
(to Dani, off mic)
You know, I'd love to see the
Lincoln bedroom.

Her smile drops. She gives him a *get the fuck away from me* look. He backs off.

Lizzie reaches the edge of the crowd.

Dani spots her. She calls out.

DANI

Lizzie!

But it's drowned out by the Hive's chant.

Dani, glitter in her hair, makes a fast exit.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Byron and Sharon exchange wary glances. Grace takes command.

GRACE

I'd like to move on to the topic of reproductive rights. Several states have placed restrictions on access to abortion services. Senator, you've said you'll support federal legislation ensuring abortion access across the country. Governor, you've said you would not. Senator Blake first. Why overrule the states?

A smile creeps across Sharon's lips as she eyes Byron.

BYRON

Put simply, I believe in a woman's right to choose.

SHARON

Oh, really?

Byron narrows his eyes at Sharon.

GRACE

Governor Steel, please let the Senator answer.

Sharon steps back.

INT. ATRIUM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie rushes through. Dani is a few steps behind her.

DANI

Lizzie!

Lizzie carries on as if she hasn't heard, pushing through the double doors into the backstage corridor -

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dani follows her through the door, hustling to catch up.

Dani grabs Lizzie by the arm.

LIZZIE

Mom!

DANI

Lizzie, stop. Stop all of it. Ok?

LIZZIE

Decided to stick around then?

They are face to face. Lizzie hurt but defiant. Dani pissed.

DANI

You can't just air our dirty laundry for everyone to see.

LIZZIE

Why not?

DANI

Because it's *our* dirty laundry, that's why.

LIZZIE

Maybe if our public lives were more like our private ones people wouldn't think you were such phonies.

DANI

What's going on with you?

LIZZIE

That's the first time you've asked me that for a very long time.

DANI

Stop being petulant. You've made a spectacle of yourself and you might just have ruined your father's chances. In case you haven't noticed, today isn't about you.

LIZZIE

What about you? You'd be halfway to Lake Tahoe by now if it were up to you.

Dani looks into Lizzie's eyes. She evades the look. Dani grabs her chin and pulls her to face her.

DANI

What have you taken?

LIZZIE

Nothing.

DANI

The whole world can see you shifting around like a crackhead. What was in that tin?

Lizzie pushes her hand away.

LIZZIE

Just - a relaxant.

DANI

Well, I hope you're relaxed. You're the only one who is. Who gave them to you? That stupid boy?

They eye each other silently.

DANI (CONT'D)

We'll deal with this later. We are going back to our seats and we're going to support your father. And when the debate is over, you're going to make another little video about how you love him and how proud you are of him.

LIZZIE

I -

DANI

Not one more word.

She takes her arm and leads her back toward the auditorium.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

It's getting heated on stage.

SHARON

You and I, and everyone watching at home, know this is an issue that people feel very deeply. This is personal. It's about faith, about life and death, about people's lives. You want to impose something on everyone. This is a many and varied country, Senator, that's why I believe in the states -

BYRON

Women should have the right to choose what happens to their health - their bodies - no matter where they live, Governor.

There's a glint in Sharon's eye.

SHARON

Is it just women's rights you care about, Senator?

BYRON

What do you mean by that?

Dani and Lizzie enter through the side door, Dani gripping her by the wrist. Dani leads her down the side aisle.

Sharon turns to the camera.

SHARON

Many of you will know that the Senator and I go back a long way. We met at college, actually. It's fair to say we've both been on quite the journey since then.

BYRON

Where are you going with this, Sharon?

Dani stops. Her grip on Lizzie tightens. Lizzie squirms but Dani doesn't let go.

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Jess smiles like it's Christmas morning. She is looking at two monitors side by side: one of Sharon looking confident, the other Byron looking nervous.

JESS

Push in on Steel. Keep camera two on Blake, he's sweating like Nixon in a Turkish bath house.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Close on Sharon.

SHARON

I don't have any children, which is something I've made my peace with over the years. But I could have. I met a young man at college, a law student. We didn't date for too long but we did - things that college students do.

BYRON

Where are you going with this?

SHARON

I got pregnant. I was twenty. I didn't know what to do. I told this young man - this very ambitious young man. And he was very clear what I needed to do.

Lizzie tries to pull her hand away. Dani's grip hurts.

BYRON

Sharon -

SHARON

He told me to get rid of it. And I did.

GASPS in the audience.

SHARON (CONT'D)

We had big things ahead of us, he said. Though I think he was thinking more of his own things than mine. But maybe I'm being unfair. Maybe it was my health he was thinking about. It's a woman's choice, after all. So let's ask him. Senator Blake, was it your choice or mine?

You can hear a pin drop in the auditorium.

Dani lets go.

Byron is floored.

So, for a split second, is Grace.

Lizzie is open-mouthed. She doesn't know what to think.

Byron looks over to Dani and Lizzie. They're frozen.

A wry smile creeps across Sharon's lips.

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Jess punches the air.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Grace regains her composure.

GRACE
Senator Blake, your response?

Byron fumbles for a moment.

Lizzie turns and bolts for the door. Dani doesn't follow.

INT. SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mac stares at a big screen showing the debate.

MAC
Oh no.

A gaggle of reporters all turn towards him.

Luca puts his arm around his shoulder.

LUCA
Didn't prep that one, huh buddy?

Mac shakes his head.

LUCA (CONT'D)
(calling out to the room)
Someone get this guy a diazepam!

He squeezes Mac's shoulder.

LUCA (CONT'D)
Actually, you know what, I might
have one.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is waiting for Byron to respond. He's got nothing.

In the audience, Dani, Stu and Lizzie's seats are empty.

EXT. SMOKING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie pushes through the door. The security guard looks over his shades but doesn't move.

She slumps against the wall and pulls out her vape.

She needs to gather her thoughts. *It's been a lot.*

She takes a deep drag.

The protestors are still in full voice around the corner. A chorus of 'BAD DAD, BAD DAD' breaks out.

She listens. Calming down. Taking stock. She notices a chip on a turquoise fingernail. When did that happen?

The Hive breaks into the Queen Bee chant.

She steps forward so she can see the crowd beyond the corner of the building.

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

Manic faces. Ridiculous outfits. *These people are mad.*

She looks back at the security guard.

LIZZIE

If a pissed black lady in an
expensive pantsuit comes past,
would you mind not letting her
through please?

GUARD

If she got a lanyard, I let her
through.

The Queen Bee chant is still going.

LIZZIE

You do you.

EXT. HIVE RALLY - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie turns the corner and steps tentatively into the crowd.

Stu is right there. He rushes to her and tries to hug her. She shrugs him off.

STU
Hey, I was talking to Billy and he
said that if you -

She's not listening. She's still moving and looking around the crowd.

STU
Earth to Lizzie.

LIZZIE
(sharply)
What?

STU
(taken aback)
Billy wants you.

LIZZIE
Good.

He leads her along the edge of the crowd to a faded yellow VW camper van with blacked out windows.

The kazoo orchestra are standing by it. They strike up a wheezy rendition of *God Save the Queen*.

Billy leaps out of the side door and bows enthusiastically.

BILLY
Your majesty.

He makes a concerned face.

BILLY
Are you ok, darling?

LIZZIE
I'm good.

BILLY
I can only imagine how it must feel
to be collateral damage for your
dad's political career. But I want
to know everyone here thinks the
world of you. You're family here.

LIZZIE
You don't know me.

BILLY

We see you.

LIZZIE

None of you know anything about me.
Like, this is all very flattering
but what do you want from me?

BILLY

Them out here, they just want a
good guy to root for. A ray of
sunshine in this shit stick of a
country. Someone who calls bullshit
on all the things they know are
bullshit. I give them that and I
think you do too.

LIZZIE

What do *you* want from me?

BILLY

Ok. Alright. I know you think the
idea of me being allowed in the
debate is, what did you call it, a
sad indictment of American
democracy?

She smiles. She knows exactly what he wants.

LIZZIE

I'll do it.

BILLY

You'll do what?

LIZZIE

The thing you're about to ask me to
do.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Dani paces at the back of the room, arms folded, deep in
thought. The debate continues in the distance - Byron sounds
angry - but the words are just background noise.

She glances up at the stage and exhales slowly.

The floor manager hovers a few feet away but doesn't dare
approach.

Dani continues to pace. She watches Grace intervening
assertively. The candidates are pointing fingers.

As Dani approaches the far wall, she catches her reflection in a window pane. For a beat, she studies herself.

What role does she need to play now?

She fixes her hair. Smooths her jacket. Chin up.

She turns and strides confidently down the aisle, each step measured, and retakes her seat.

A camera swings to catch her.

Dani Drake: immaculate, cool, unbowed.

EXT. SMOKING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie rushes round the corner. She stumbles with her clutch bag open in her hand. Items scatter everywhere - her phone, lipstick, coins, cards, condoms, receipts.

She looks up at the security guard.

LIZZIE

Oh God.

The security guard comes over to help her pick them up.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

Thank you, sir.

She looks up. Stu runs to the door, holds it open and yells -

STU

NOOOOOW!!!!

The guard looks up.

Dozens of Hive protestors round the corner and FLOOD THROUGH THE DOOR, overwhelming the guard.

Billy pauses to salute Lizzie before calmly walking through.

The protestors keep coming.

This is more than Lizzie expected...

Fuck. There's a lot of them.

She gets up, clasps her clutch bag and waves her lanyard to the guard with an apologetic smile.

INT. CNN PANEL, SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dramatic news music and a motion graphic: CNN DEBATE NIGHT WITH SIMPSON BEAUREGARD.

SIMPSON

It's been bombshell after bombshell, ladies and gentlemen, and Byron Blake is on the ropes. Melody May, can we just call the election now?

MELODY

I wouldn't say -

LUCA

Oh! Did you know about that, the abortion baby college thing? Man. Byron Blake's a bad hombre.

MELODY

I wouldn't -

LUCA

You don't think he's a bad man? I mean, we know he's a bad dad and now Sharon's like BOOM.

MELODY

This isn't a debate. It's trauma porn.

SIMPSON

This just in. We're getting reports that -

INT. SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The doors to the spin room fly open and protestors pour in.

SIMPSON (O.S.)

Protestors have broken into the building.

Some jump on the tables, throw papers and kick over laptops.

The bee-costumed flashmob buzz in a wide circle around a group of journalists doing their synchronized dance.

A man wearing just his underpants slaps notepads and phones out of journalists' hands.

INT. CNN PANEL, SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Simpson smiles nervously.

SIMPSON
We'll be right back.

He unclips his mic.

INT. SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A cameraman with a tripod mounted camera pans across the room, broadcasting the chaos to the nation as journalists and protestors brawl.

A little girl casually walks the round the desks picking up souvenirs - a clipboard, pens, a CNBC mousepad.

The man-baby clambers on to the mezzanine. Melody is in her seat. Luca is on his feet. Simpson is already gone.

A sound guy strangles a man in an inflatable dinosaur suit with the chord of his headphones.

Lizzie appears in the doorway. She sees the chaos she has started.

The man-baby pushes past Luca and leans towards Melody.

MAN-BABY
Will you be my mommy?

She stands calmly.

MELODY
Sir, I'm gonna need you to step away.

Luca barges in.

LUCA
Yo, son. Away from the lady.

Melody fumes.

The man-baby pushes Luca. Luca throws a punch. The man-baby grabs him and they grapple.

The man-baby and Luca roll around grappling, then roll right off the edge of the mezzanine.

Melody snaps. She gets out from behind the desk, picks up a stage light on a stand, weighs it up casually with both hands. Then she raises it above her head -

She leaps off the mezzanine and into the mayhem.

MELODY

Aaaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrgggggghhhhhh!

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

The Hive spills into the auditorium. Protestors run amok.

On stage, Byron stops mid sentence.

BYRON

We need a huge investment in our
nation's infrastructure -

Byron, Sharon and Grace all turn the audience and freeze.

A protestor with a 'BRING BACK THE BUZZ' sign tries to clamber past Dani. She stands, grabs him by the collar and throws him back into the aisle, then sits back down calmly.

Secret service agents rush on to the stage and bundle Byron and Sharon off the stage to the wings.

A man dressed as JFK clambers onstage and grabs a mic.

FAKE JFK

Ask not what you can do for your
daughter. Ask what your daughter
can do for you!

Grace puts her finger to her ear piece -

GRACE

Cut his mic.

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Jess is at the mic talking to Grace.

JESS

This isn't a debate any more,
Grace. It's a season finale.

(pause)

Ok. Ok. I've cut it.

She presses a button.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Fake JFK's mic cuts and he's muted.

Grace gestures to the security guards, but they are all caught up in the chaos.

She looks out over the audience and observes the chaos.

She sighs.

She calmly walks over to the fake JFK and grabs his mic.

GRACE

Get off my damn stage.

He looks at her blankly.

She takes a deep breath, then -

Grabs him by the lapels and chucks him off the stage.

She brushes a hair from her face and goes back to her desk.

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Jess is bouncing in her seat.

JESS

Screw your Pulitzer, Grace. That right there, that's an Emmy.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie staggers in from the side door towards the rear of the room. She stops just inside the doorway.

A man dressed as the Q-Anon shaman runs past her, howling.

All around the room, protestors fight with security, sing, chant and film themselves.

Lizzie drifts aimlessly along the back of the room.

A little girl carries a sign with BAD DAD scrawled on it.

Lizzie passes a trio of protestors squabbling with an audience member. They see Lizzie, immediately stop, curtsy and call her 'Your majesty'.

She notices protestors filming themselves doing Byron impressions. A girl makes a sad face and says 'SAD DAD'. Her friend makes an angry face and says 'MAD DAD'.

Lizzie gets her phone and opens TikTok -

The first thing that comes up is a stitch video that starts with Stu's 'BAD DAD' impression, followed by a man with a pipe saying 'TRAD DAD', then a skateboarder saying 'RAD DAD'.

She looks to the stage. Her dad isn't there.

INT. CLEANING CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Byron and Sharon are bundled into a cleaning closet - barely bigger than a toilet cubicle.

Zeke stands guard with his back to the door.

A moment later, the door reopens and Alan is ushered inside.

Byron shakes with rage. Sharon calmly takes her phone out.

SHARON
I'm making a call.

Byron simmers. She can tell he wants a confrontation.

SHARON (CONT'D)
To the President.

She waits for President Terwilliger to answer.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Marty, hi.
(pause)
Well, I'll be honest with you,
Marty. It's not so funny from where
I'm standing.
(pause)
Sure, but -
(pause)
The secret service tells me you've
told them to stand down -
(pause)
At least the police -
(lowers her voice)
Marty, this is embarrassing -
(pause)
I don't know - that's just the
build up, they don't usually kick
off til after 8.
(pause)
(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)
Eastern, yeah.
(pause)
Miller, Coors whatever.
(pause)
I've not tried that. But look,
Marty, can you just call -
(pause)
No, you've got time. Thanks Marty.

She hangs up.

SHARON (CONT'D)
He says it's great TV.

BYRON
You guys are all -

SHARON
He's going to call the governor...
But not til Monday Night Football
kicks off.

Byron throws his hands up. He looks to Zeke - expressionless.

Alan waits until he has Sharon's attention.

ALAN
You didn't have to go there.

SHARON
I waited thirty years to go there.

A beat. Alan leans against a shelf of cleaning products.

ALAN
We should see if he'll let us use
his place in Tuscany.

Byron asserts himself.

BYRON
What the holy fuck, Sharon?

SHARON
It's actually really lovely. Right
on the ocean -

BYRON
I never forced you to do anything.

SHARON
Did I say forced? I don't think I
said forced.

BYRON
You're trying to ruin me.

SHARON
Oh, Byron, honey. You ruined yourself. Besides, if I didn't enjoy kicking men when they were down I wouldn't have married Alan.

BYRON
This is way, way over the line.

SHARON
Face it, Byron. You are a bad dad. Do you even know where Lizzie is right now?

He doesn't.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Dani calmly enters the room and scans it, looking for Lizzie. She steps into the aisle - the opposite side of the room to Lizzie - and walks carefully past a protestor or two.

Dani pauses as she passes the floor manager from earlier - now collapsed against the wall, headset askew, mumbling -

FLOOR MANAGER
They're not credentialled...
they're not credentialled...

DANI
Tough night.

She steps over her.

On the other side of the room, a Hive fanatic grabs Lizzie for a selfie.

Someone tries to lift her onto their shoulders. She resists and backs away, tripping over a banner: QUEEN BEE FOR PREZ.

She looks around, shaken by what's happened - to Byron, to herself - and *she needs to find him*.

She rushes down the aisle towards the stage.

Dani watches Lizzie as she clambers on to the stage, helped up by Grace, who points to the stage exit.

Dani doesn't call out. She just follows.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie pushes through the door into a long corridor. Two secret service agents stand guard by the door to the closet.

LIZZIE

Is he -

An agents points down the corridor - *he went that way.*

On the wall, someone has spray-painted 'BAD DAD'.

INT. SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Byron stumbles in, Zeke and Rosa behind him.

The place is wrecked - tables overturned, protestors slinking out, journalists re-gathering their things.

He scans the room. No Lizzie.

Zeke touches his earpiece, listens.

ZEKE

We don't have eyes on her.

Byron exhales. He looks small in the wreckage.

Up on the mezzanine, Simpson and the panellists take their positions as a technician straightens a light stand.

INT. CNN PANEL, SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dramatic news music and a motion graphic: CNN DEBATE NIGHT WITH SIMPSON BEAUREGARD.

Simpson straightens his tie. The set is crooked and battered.

SIMPSON

Welcome back, ladies and gentleman.
It's been quite an evening here in Texas where, until very recently, the presidential candidates were battling it out on stage.

Luca is the best dressed he's been all night. Hair slicked back, suit jacket, tie, shirt buttoned all the way.

LUCA

It's been a battle, alright.

Cut to Melody, bruised, bloodied and euphoric.

MELODY

Damn right. Woo!

SIMPSON

As we speak, protestors are on the stage refusing to leave unless Billy the Buzz is allowed to join the debate. Luca del Buca, should they debate the bee man?

LUCA

Well, Simpson -

MELODY

I'll take this. You know what, bring it on. Let the bee guy speak.

SIMPSON

Will Sharon Steel agree to that?

LUCA

Hell, why not? Sharon Steel eats bees like him for breakfast.

MELODY

She eats bees for breakfast?

LUCA

It's a metaphor.

MELODY

For what?

INT. ATRIUM - CONTINUOUS

Byron staggers away from the spin room.

MAC

Byron!

Mac comes running up to him.

MAC (CONT'D)

I just spoke to the Steel team -

BYRON

Have you seen Lizzie?

MAC

No. I've been looking for you.

BYRON

I messed up, Mac.

MAC

We can do it again in four years.
Just take a step back for a little,
do your work in the senate, we can
figure out a big bill for you to
sponsor. Something symbolic.

BYRON

Guns?

MAC

Not guns.

BYRON

I'm sorry you hitched yourself to
me.

MAC

Don't you dare. When I interned in
your office at the firm I was fresh
out of law school and you had that
case, remember.

BYRON

The Yemeni journalist.

MAC

Samira. She'd be in prison today if
it wasn't for you. You're a good
man. You're a damn good lawyer and
you'll be a damn good President.

BYRON

And a terrible father. I need to
find Lizzie.

INT. CNN PANEL, SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SIMPSON

This just in. We're being told the
campaigns have agreed. Billy the
Buzz, the novelty candidate from...
Honestly, I have no idea where he's
from. But he's in.

INT. SPIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Spin Room is wrecked. Lighting rigs hang loose. Debris
litters the floor. The live stream plays on a cracked TV.

The protestors have moved on, but stragglers still mill
around as journos search for notepads and restart laptops.

By the mezzanine, Luca flirts with a young female bee.

LUCA
Actually, I teach ethics part time
at Georgetown.

Mac re-enters the room and sits on the floor at the foot of the big screen next to Melody, wild-haired and untucked.

He takes out his phone and scrolls.

MAC
Are you on LinkedIn?

A protestor whizzes past on a scooter.

They sit in silence. A glitter cannon goes off nearby.

INT. FAMILY BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie is alone, slumped on the floor, doom scrolling.

KNOCK KNOCK.

She looks up anxiously.

Dani pokes her head round the door.

DANI
Room for one more?

LIZZIE
It's a free country.

Dani scans the room. A baby changer with some sort of powder on it. A rolled up scrap of paper - the opening statement.

She picks it up, examines it, then hands it back to Lizzie.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
Did you know?

DANI
It was a long time ago. Way before
we met. Dad wasn't much older than
you are now.

LIZZIE
How could he?

DANI

Have you ever messed up bad? Gotten yourself in a situation that's just too much?

Lizzie evades her eye contact.

DANI (CONT'D)

Your dad loves you. More than you could possibly know.

LIZZIE

Sure he does.

Dani touches Lizzie's chin gently. Their eyes meet.

DANI

He's a good man. He has flaws. We all do. I happen to think he'd be an excellent President.

LIZZIE

So why do you want to divorce him?

Dani sits down beside Lizzie.

DANI

Your father's political career isn't the problem. It was supposed to be the solution. When you were little, he was everything I could ask for as a father. He loves you so much. But we had our tensions.

LIZZIE

I thought you were happy.

Dani sees how hurt Lizzie is - and her part in it.

DANI

At times we were. And we were careful never to argue around you. You were our perfect little girl, we didn't want to hurt you. The truth is, we're both ambitious, dad and me. He was frustrated. I knew he was capable of more than he was doing. So, I told him he should run for office.

LIZZIE

You did?

DANI

He cares about people. I thought if he was doing something he felt was important - and that he was *really* good at - maybe we'd be happier.

LIZZIE

But you weren't?

DANI

I had my career, he spent so much time on the road and in DC. I guess you could say we grew apart.

Lizzie looks down.

DANI (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, baby. For everything.

Lizzie takes her hand.

DANI (CONT'D)

I saw you up there, you know. Outside.

LIZZIE

I'm sorry.

DANI

I was proud. You reminded me of your dad.

LIZZIE

Don't ever say that.

DANI

In a good way!

A pause. They sit, mom and daughter, on the bathroom floor.

DANI (CONT'D)

Now, about that Stu boy.

LIZZIE

Not now, mom.

She stands and picks up the paper from the changer.

EXT. HIVE RALLY - CONTINUOUS

The rally crowd has thinned. The scene is now more like a city park - groups hang out on picnic blankets, couples smooch, people throw footballs and frisbees.

Soft rock wafts from the sound system.

Byron, hair messed up, shirt untucked and tie undone, turns the corner from the smoking area, looking for Lizzie.

Zeke and Rosa stand guard a few feet behind him.

People look up. A few half-hearted boos. A little girl walks past singing 'BAD DAD, BAD DAD'.

Byron scans the scene. No sign of Lizzie.

DRIP.

Something sticky lands on his shoulder. He touches it. Sniffs his finger. Looks up.

Protestors on the roof pour HONEY from a jar.

PLOP.

Right on Byron's face. It's in his hair. On his shirt. Glistening amber syrup runs down his nose and cheeks.

He doesn't react. He is defeated. Rosa approaches him. He waves her away.

Lizzie quietly appears several feet behind him.

A child witnessing her father's humiliation.

Then -

CHEERS.

WHOOPS.

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

Byron turns and they look at each other.

No words.

He smiles half-heartedly, honey running down his cheek.

She can't bring herself to smile.

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

She turns her back on him. Then climbs on a bench and shouts up to the rooftop protestors -

LIZZIE
Hey, can you guys get off the
helicopter? My mom wants to leave.

Murmurs of assent from the roof.

She gets down, turns to Byron. For a moment, neither of them
says anything.

BYRON
I was looking for you.

LIZZIE
I've been here the whole time
making a big old mess.

BYRON
Like father, like daughter.

She smiles.

BYRON (CONT'D)
I don't think I'm going to be
President.

LIZZIE
I dunno, some pretty messed up
people get to be President.

BYRON
What about bad dads?

LIZZIE
Some of them too, I'm sure.

MAC (O/S)
Boss!

They look and see Mac hurrying towards them.

LIZZIE
You should go back in there.

BYRON
I thought you didn't want me to be
President?

LIZZIE
Maybe that's why I think you should
go back in there.

Mac arrives.

MAC
Boss. We're back on.

BYRON
How do I look?

LIZZIE
Kinda like that time at Six Flags
when you didn't realize how big the
splash from the log flume is. But
stickier?

BYRON
That was embarrassing.

LIZZIE
Wearing a suit to a theme park is
embarrassing.

Mac starts to wipe Byron's face with a handkerchief. Byron
snatches it from his hand.

MAC
Ok. We're good. Well, not good, but
you gotta go.

LIZZIE
Dad. One more thing. I don't know
if you need this any more but you
should probably have it.

She takes out the opening statement, tries to straighten it
out, and hands it to him.

He looks down at it.

She hands him the other half she ripped off too.

He holds them up together.

BYRON
Why is it all rolled up?

MAC
Boss.

LIZZIE
Go.

Byron nods and heads back inside.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Grace is at the front of the stage looking up at the gallery and talking to the production team through her lapel mic.

Crew sweep up debris and straighten fallen lighting rigs.

The hubbub is over. The audience is seated - yellow and black Hive members dotted among them.

Two crew members bring a new lectern on from the wings and position it center stage.

INT. STAGE WINGS - CONTINUOUS

Sharon and Billy wait in the wings. One is all business, the other is a man in a bee costume.

Sharon turns something over in her hand - a Hive badge with Lizzie's face on it. Big yellow letters: QUEEN BEE.

SHARON
You made these quick.

BILLY
I have a guy.

Sharon flips the button casually into the air - like a coin.

SHARON
She thinks you like her.

BILLY
I do.

The badge lands and rolls offstage.

SHARON
Careful. She's smarter than that.

A beat. Billy looks up to the stage lights.

BILLY
1996. My dad took me to Cape
Canaveral to see a shuttle launch.

SHARON
Endeavour.

BILLY
You were on it.

SHARON

I was.

BILLY

Pretty badass.

SHARON

Mind games?

A pause. They both eye the stage.

BILLY

Made an impression on me, is all.

SHARON

Me too.

BILLY

You saw the Earth from space.

SHARON

The upper atmosphere, really.

BILLY

Higher than I've ever been.

SHARON

I doubt that.

He smiles. The crowd is stirring.

BILLY

You're a serious person. How does it feel when these idiots call you a fascist?

SHARON

How does it feel to be called a clown?

BILLY

I am a clown.

She looks him over. Beat. Not smiling, not mocking.

SHARON

No. I don't think you are.

She looks out to the audience and sees -

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie stalks down the side aisle, passing the dishevelled floor manager, who is back at work directing people to seats.

A voice from the audience shouts: 'WE LOVE YOU, QUEEN BEE!' and is immediately shhhh-ed by the floor manager.

Dani is in her seat. Lizzie sits, leaving Stu's vacant seat between her and her mom. Dani gestures for her to shunt over. She does, but not happily.

Lizzie wants all of this to be over.

Dani pats her arm and offers a soft smile. Lizzie returns it half-heartedly. Dani, persisting, squeezes her leg.

WHOOPS AND CHEERS.

Shhhhhhh!

Billy the Buzz emerges on stage from the wings, arms aloft making Nixon-style V for Victory signs. He skips excitedly to the central lectern.

He has glasses on top of his head. He puts notes down on the lectern, then theatrically pats his bee costume pretending to not know where his glasses are.

Then he tips his head so they drop on to his nose.

Muted applause. He bows. Then takes off the glasses and throws them over his shoulder.

Grace has her back to him the whole time, still issuing instructions to the production team through her mic.

Stu appears in the aisle and is ushered to his seat by the floor manager. Dani stops him -

DANI

Nuh-uh. You're going to have to find another seat.

Lizzie doesn't intervene.

STU

There are no other seats.

DANI

Then you can damn well stand.

The floor manager doesn't resist. Stu leans sulkily against the wall.

Sharon Steel walks on next, not a hair out of place. She smiles and waves, then sees Billy at the lectern.

She's not letting that little prick take center stage.

Sharon marches over and manhandles him away from the lectern.

He tries again and she shoves him away, then takes his notes from the lectern and tosses them on to the floor.

Lizzie lets out a little laugh, despite herself.

As Billy scrambles to pick his notes up, Byron walks on.

Lizzie is not laughing now.

Byron hasn't even attempted to clean himself up. His hair is sticky, his suit stained, his shirt untucked and tie askew.

He idles up to an empty lectern - no attempt to take center stage - and places his screwed up opening statement on it.

'BAD DAD, BAD DAD, BAD DAD'.

DANI (CONT'D)
(to the audience)
Oh, shut up!

The audience goes quiet again. Lizzie sinks in her seat.

A single voice calls out: 'WE LOVE YOU QUEEN BEE MOM!'

Grace turns, sees that all the candidates are in place, all the while talking to the producers in her ear.

A Hive member pops up from the seats behind Lizzie, taps her on the shoulder and asks for a selfie. Lizzie refuses.

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Jess leans into the mic.

JESS
Ok. Bring us home, Grace.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

The stage lights come on.

GRACE
(to the audience)
Ok, everyone. Round two. Let's try
and keep this civil.

The bombastic TV intro music plays.

LIVE TV BROADCAST: Mid shot of Grace as the music rings out.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Welcome back ladies and gentlemen,
and welcome to the millions of
viewers who have joined us since
the debate started. It's been quite
the spectacle.

She pivots to camera two.

GRACE (CONT'D)
We continue our discussion joined
by a grown man in a bee costume.
Viewers may wish to adjust their
expectations accordingly.

BILLY
Delighted to be here, Grace.

GRACE
I'm sure you are.

Dani gestures to Byron - *straighten your tie.*

He sees. He fixes his tie and tucks in his shirt.

GRACE (CONT'D)
We're going to restart with a
question about foreign policy.
Since we have a newcomer to the
debate, I'll let you answer first
Mister...The Buzz.

BILLY
Billy, please.

GRACE
Mister The Buzz, in recent years
world powers have turned
increasingly insular, imposing
tariffs, restricting movement
across borders and weakening global
institutions. To what extent do you
see economic warfare as a strategic
geopolitical imperative?

BILLY

Well, gee. A lot of big words in there. But for what it's worth, I believe in free trade.

GRACE

Could you expand on that?

BILLY

Did I say free trade? I meant BEE TRADE. I'm a colonizer. Bee colonies. We need to secure the strategic honey supply lines!

GRACE

I see. Governor Steel?

SHARON

Am I supposed to respond to that nonsense or to your question?

GRACE

The question, for all our sakes.

BILLY

Boring!

SHARON

Oh, do shut up.

(to the camera)

My economic platform is simple. Our country was taken advantage of for a long time. Our domestic market was flooded with cheap goods from -

Byron stares blankly into the middle distance. Sharon's voice grows distant and inaudible.

He blinks, as if waking up. He scans the audience, with its pockets of yellow and black.

He looks over at his opponents - Sharon, talking confidently and gesticulating aggressively; Billy picking his nose.

He sees Grace. A pro. Rising above the madness.

He looks at Dani and Lizzie. Dani isn't watching. Lizzie is.

He takes the crumpled opening statement out of his jacket pocket and reads it.

SHARON (CONT'D)
- and if that means we have to hike
up our tariffs, then so be it. We
simply can't tolerate a situation -

BYRON
Excuse me. Could I say something?

GRACE
You'll have a chance to respond in
a moment, Senator Blake.

BYRON
No, it's - I'm sorry, I have no
idea what she's saying. I'd just
like to say something, then you can
all carry on.

GRACE
In a moment. Governor Steel, please
continue.

SHARON
You know what, I've lost my thread.
Let him say his piece.

GRACE
Very well. Senator Blake.

He looks over to Lizzie.

BYRON
Earlier, I couldn't find my opening
statement. Well, I've got it now. I
just re-read it. I've got this
whole riff in here about how we're
so divided now and - it's
platitudes really - and then I was
going to say -
(reads)
"It's time we had a leader who puts
you first".

He looks to Lizzie and Dani.

BYRON (CONT'D)
I'm a hypocrite. I put myself
first, I put winning first, even
above my own family.

He looks to the audience.

BYRON (CONT'D)

I went into politics because I wanted to make a difference. Make things better. But also, if I'm honest, I liked being important. And I really, really wanted to win.

Lizzie's eyes are wet.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Some stuff has come out today - about my past, my marriage, my family. I just want to say to my daughter Lizzie, my LizzieWizzie, I haven't been there for you, and I'm so, so sorry.

Cameras on Lizzie. Deathly silence.

Dani's hand on her knee.

Lizzie doesn't move.

Byron looks at her. Broken. Pleading.

Everyone is looking at her. Grace. Sharon. People dressed as bees.

She raises her chin.

He smiles.

Then, from the aisle -

STU

SAD DAD!

Muted laughs in the audience.

Lizzie is mortified.

Byron is crestfallen.

Dani is livid.

Another Hive member stands up - 'SAD DAD!'

Then another, and another.

Billy joins in.

'SAD DAD, SAD DAD, SAD DAD'.

Grace intervenes -

GRACE

Enough!

The crowd falls silent.

Stu leans in towards Lizzie.

STU

Iconic!

Lizzie refuses to look at him.

Stu doesn't read the signs. He reaches into his inside pocket and pulls out his baggie of cocaine.

STU (CONT'D)

(loud whisper)

Celebratory bump?

Lizzie turns and just stares at him.

Dani, quick as a flash, whips the baggie out of his hand.

DANI

I think we're done here.

She stands and gestures to the corner of the room. Zeke and Rosa emerge from the shadows.

STU

Hey, nah. It's not like that.

Lizzie -

LIZZIE

We're over, Stu.

Silently and efficiently, Zeke and Rosa grab Stu, grip his arms behind his back and march him away up the aisle.

STU

(to Lizzie)

You're just like them.

(shouts)

Fascists!

Dani sits back down, unflustered.

Lizzie sits a little straighter in her seat.

Grace retakes control.

GRACE

Our time is nearly up, so let's move to the closing statements. Governor Steel.

SHARON

Thank you, Grace. I think what's happened tonight speaks for itself. You know, I came here determined to show the world the real Byron Blake. But hell, I probably shouldn't have bothered coming at all. Dani, darling, I'm sorry you had to sit through all that. Can't have been easy. But what I wasn't expecting was to be so impressed by you, Lizzie. You're everything he's not. Honest. Charming.

She glances sideways at Byron.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Presentable. I wish you all the best, darling. Now, America, if you want to put this man in the White House then so be it. You can choose him or me.

BILLY

Or me.

SHARON

You'll get no spin from me. I've said my piece. You decide now.

GRACE

Thank you. Senator Blake, your closing statement.

BYRON

I don't have anything left to say.

GRACE

Very well, I have no choice but to turn to you, Mister The Buzz.

BILLY

My turn? Goodie. Ok, America. Wasn't this fun? You know what, the mean lady is right - it is your choice. You can pick her for President, if that's what you want to do. God knows, I won't, but you do you.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

Or you can pick that sad old bastard over there whose own family don't like him. Neither of those sound like much fun to me. And we should have fun. This is America! Greatest country on the whole goddamn planet. Everything's so serious these days. What's say we get things buzzing again?

WHOOPS AND CHEERS.

BILLY (CONT'D)

But I got a feeling you don't really want to hear from me. Not when the real star tonight is sat right down there.

He points to Lizzie. Everyone turns to her.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Lizzie Drake-Blake. Finally someone who is prepared to tell the truth, even when it's hard. You're big time, Lizzie.

MORE WHOOPS AND CHEERS.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Give us a bow, Queen Bee!

Lizzie, a bit embarrassed, gets to her feet.

The crowd LOVES HER.

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Ms Bukowski, you mind if Lizzie joins us up here on stage?

GRACE

After everything else, why not?

BILLY

Well, alright. Lizzie, would you come and say a few words.

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

Lizzie looks at Dani, who nods encouragingly.

The floor manager gestures - *come this way*.

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Jess punches the air.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Byron comes over and offers a hand to help her up. She takes it. They don't speak. Byron smiles. She smiles back.

HUGE APPLAUSE. Grace hands her a microphone.

BILLY

Lizzie Drake-Blake. Before you speak, I want to ask you a question. You see, this country needs a fresh start. It needs the truth. And it needs to start having some fun.

She smiles bashfully.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Seems to me, that's you in a nutshell, which is probably why you struck a chord with all these good people. So, my question is, will you be my running mate?

WTF?

Billy turns to the audience.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What do you say, guys? Queen Bee for VP.

'QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE, QUEEN BEE'.

Grace silences the audience with a gesture.

GRACE

I'm afraid you have to be thirty-five to be Vice-President.

BILLY

This is America. If the people want it, the people get it. What do you say, Lizzie?

She doesn't know. She grips the mic with both hands.

She looks to Byron.

He gestures - chin up.

She smiles, raises her chin and looks to the audience.

A sea of expectant faces.

LIZZIE

I think it's kinda mad that a man
in a bee costume would ask an
eighteen-year-old to be Vice-
President on live TV - and that you
guys would be cool with that.

Someone WHOOPS.

She turns to Billy.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

So, yeah, I'm not going to do that.
I've already done enough stupid
things tonight.

She grips the mic tighter and looks to Dani, then Byron.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

And I'm sorry for that. I'm sorry
too, dad.

She turns to the audience.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

I don't hate my dad. I hate
politics. I hate that everyone's
performing - myself included - and
we all just go along with it. I
guess we get what we deserve. But
if you ask me -

She turns to Billy.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

I don't want a clown for a
President.

She turns to Sharon.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

I don't want someone who's mean to
be President.

She turns to Byron.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
And I don't want a President for a
dad. But I do want a dad.

He smiles softly. She smiles back, then turns to the
audience.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
So you guys decide. It's your
choice.

Silence.

She walks to Grace and hands back the mic.

One clap.

More clapping.

The audience ERUPTS.

People stand APPLAUDING and CHEERING.

Byron leaves his lectern. She walks to him.

They embrace.

A glitter cannon fires, showering them with sparkling dust.

WHOOPS and CHEERS.

The embrace lingers. Lizzie looks serene.

Grace takes center stage and speaks over the applause.

GRACE
Thank you for joining us tonight.
That was - for the most part - a
Presidential debate. See you at the
polls.

The stage lights dim. It's over.

GRACE (CONT'D)
(to someone off stage)
Someone get my agent.

Lizzie and Byron turn to each other.

LIZZIE
Mom says you really are getting
divorced?

BYRON

I think so, sweetheart. But I'm
never going to stop being your dad.

She knows.

LIZZIE

"They fuck you up your mum and dad"

BYRON

*"They may not mean to but they do.
They fill you with the faults they
had -"*

LIZZIE

"And add some extra, just for you."

She smiles. A silent beat passes.

BYRON

You could go into politics, you
know. You're very good at this.

LIZZIE

No. Just no.

They walk offstage together, arm in arm.

INT. CNN PANEL, SPIN ROOM - DAY

Dramatic news music and a motion graphic: CNN INAUGURATION
DAY SPECIAL WITH MELODY MAY.

Melody is in anchor mode, looking sharp and in control.
Behind her is the Capitol building on a crisp, clear January
day. The wind blows gently in her hair.

MELODY

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen to
the National Mall in Washington DC
as we await the inauguration of the
new President of the United States.
We're just moments away from the
President-elect stepping out to
swear the Oath of Office. I'm
joined by Luca del Buca -

Wide shot with Luca beside her at the desk. He's dressed
smartly and behaving respectfully.

MELODY (CONT'D)

Luca, there's no denying that the President-elect really sealed the deal at the debate.

LUCA

Thank you, Melody, it's a pleasure to be here today. Yes, absolutely. Before the debate we knew it would be a make or break moment and that turned out to be the case.

MELODY

We have just been told that the President-elect is about to step out. Let's go live to the Capitol.

EXT. CAPITOL STEPS - CONTINUOUS

An armoured Cadillac pulls up at the foot of the steps. Rosa steps out and opens the door for -

Byron, who waves to the crowd and the cameras. He then walks around the car and opens a door for Lizzie.

Big cheers. She waves.

A TV reporter calls out to her. Lizzie turns to them for a moment and sees the camera pointed at her.

She smiles and turns away.

She takes her dad's arm and they walk up the steps.

EXT. CAPITOL WEST FRONT PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

They emerge at the top of the steps to the platform where all the VIPs are seated.

Byron shakes some hands as they walk down the steps to where the CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT is waiting, clutching a hefty-looking Bible.

Byron shakes his hand and introduces Lizzie. The chief justice looks excited to meet her.

They take two vacant seats and hold hands.

The Marine Band starts playing HAIL TO THE CHIEF.

Byron and Lizzie look to the top of the steps.

Here comes -

President-Elect Billy the Buzz. In a suit with a yellow and black tie. He waves triumphantly to the crowd.

Lizzie, embarrassed like a teenager with a lame dad, watches Billy walk down the steps to the Chief Justice.

Billy raises one hand and places the other on the bible.

FADE TO BLACK.