

HIGH PROFILE

FADE IN:

EXT. BLUE SKY - DAY

A dot amongst puffy white clouds grows into a sparkling blue turbo-prop plane.

A stylized WWII throw-back: The retro-VW Beetle of airplanes. If a plane could be pin-up girl sexy, this one would be.

It hums closer - close enough to touch, and the words on the side soar by us:

H I G H P R O F I L E

EXT. CAMARILLO AIRPORT - DAY

One hour North of Los Angeles.

A two-runway airport amidst strawberry and onion fields. The road leading to the airport is choked with cars and media vans.

JUST OFF THE RUNWAY

REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS idle. This is the media event of the year....And it's been a long wait.

UNDER A TENT ON THE TARMAC

SENATOR JEFFERSON HAWKS takes questions. He already looks the part he aspires to: the next *President of the United States of America*.

SENATOR HAWKS

I think Helene would make a wonderful First Lady. She embodies the courage, class and adventuresome spirit the world has come to associate with this great country.

All heads turn toward the growing HUM on the horizon. The Senator realizes he's lost them, and looks skyward, too.

EXT. ORANGE COUNTY COURTHOUSE- DAY

GRIFFIN BAKER -- the VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES and Jefferson Hawks' *opponent* in the race for the White House, pounds his fist against the podium at a political rally.

He's oblivious to the mood of the "crowd". The few dozen people before him are less than moved.

VP GRIFFIN BAKER

What's the next gimmick for Jefferson Hawks? This nation needs more than entertainment to talk about at the water-cooler...

Next to a RED, WHITE and BLUE "BAKER 2008" SIGN, Griffin's campaign manager, GEORGE, tracks PEOPLE walking away from the small rally.

George is not the spry youth one might expect in his position. In fact, he might even be older than Griffin.

VP GRIFFIN BAKER (CONT'D)

This country needs leadership. The kind of leadership experience brings. As the Vice President for eight years, I bring experience - sound judgement. It may not be glamorous to talk about, but it makes all the difference to this country and how the rest of the world views us.

George, stuck on the latest pair to meander from the rally, doesn't notice the BEE - until the STING registers in his brain.

As he swats at his neck, his YELP draws a few more pairs of eyes away from Griffin Baker...

EXT. CAMARILLO AIRPORT - DAY

Buzzing with excitement.

A PHOTOGRAPHER moves a huge telescopic lens away from his eye.

PHOTOGRAPHER

There it is!

HORIZON

The High Profile advances upon us. Fast.

The ground is a flurry of commotion as cameras roll and shutters click.

The High Profile dips toward the runway - for a moment hovering just above the surface as if on an invisible cushion.

Sun glints off METALLIC GREEN LETTERING on the tail:

"H Y B R I D" Then...

TOUCH DOWN.

Photographers rush forward.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

Bumper-to-bumper metal boxes bake in gridlock hell. Looming over them, an enormous AD on the side of a building:

A handsome reporter dressed as UNCLE SAM with the words "LIVE at the DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION with CHUCK MCCAFFREY".

We cascade up the wall to an OPEN WINDOW on the 14th floor...*right in the forehead of the reporter in the ad.*

INT. NATIONAL NEWS CORP (NNC) BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

CHARLES "CHUCK" MCCAFFREY - the real live man from the side of the building, gets off the elevator.

He passes a cluster of cubicles and heads pop up. WHISPERS begin.

CHARLES

reaches TANK, his assistant, and tosses a CELL PHONE, still in the box, onto his desk.

CHARLES

Program my numbers in - I need it tonight.

TANK

What happened to the one I just got you?

Charles doesn't break stride for his office.

CHARLES

I tossed it.

Tank only ponders this for a moment. Then shakes it off and waves his co-workers over: "*come-on!*".

CHARLES' OFFICE

The door swings open to reveal BIRTHDAY DECORATIONS and a GIANT "50" BALLOON.

EVERYONE

SURPRISE!

Charles whirls around to the twenty-plus people gathered outside his office.

He tries to look gracious, but we can see he'd rather have his eyes gouged out than endure this...

INT. CHARLES' OFFICE - DAY

Party in progress.

WHISTLES AND LAUGHTER as Charles unwraps another present - a box of DEPENDS UNDERGARMENTS.

Charles smiles - but it's really *not* funny.

He checks the card.

CHARLES

Dick. I should've known.

DICK PINTARD - a rival reporter, younger and, dare I say, better looking than Charles, slaps Charles on the back.

PINTARD

Happy birthday, big guy.

CHARLES

I'm flattered you made an appearance considering what day it is.

PINTARD

Just about to head out.

Charles consults his watch.

CHARLES

You'll never make it.

PINTARD

Dixon's private helicopter is waiting on the roof. I can't sit in traffic - the exhaust sallows my skin. How 'bout Chuckie? Sneak you on board?

Charles bites back absolute loathing.

CHARLES

I'm too old to be in that mosh-pit.

Chuck McCaffrey miss this?

PINTARD

This is Helene Hawks we're talking about - even Barbara Walters is saddling up her broomstick for a sound bite.

CHARLES

Great. Tell her I said 'hi'.

EXT. CAMARILLO AIRPORT - DAY

The High Profile taxis to a hanger draped in an enormous red, white and blue banner: "CAMARILLO WELCOMES SENATOR AND HELENE HAWKS".

TELEVISION NEWS FOOTAGE

A REPORTER addresses his camera...

REPORTER

...The first of its kind, the hybrid prop plane can travel an astonishing two thousand miles without stopping to refuel...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The news footage plays on a large TV.

Vice President Griffin Baker turns off the broadcast and unwraps his SUB SANDWICH. A world away from the Griffin at the political rally - this is the *real* Griffin the public never sees: sloppy, irritable and, often, downright mean.

TIFFY BAKER, Griffin's wife, whacks Campaign Manager, George's arm.

TIFFY

We need a scandal.

George doesn't flinch - he's gotten used to Tiffy "speaking" in punches.

GEORGE

We don't have one.

TIFFY

Make one!

Griffin cracks open a Bud.

VP GRIFFIN BAKER

Out of what? His dog crapping on the neighbor's lawn? The guy's a fucking Boy Scout. He's been a 'big brother' to the same retard for fifteen years. His first wife died of breast cancer - *in his arms*. And now he's married to the daughter of an American hero.

TIFFY

Who gives a shit about him. He's a bore. Go after her. She's the media chum.

Griffin consults George with a look.

GEORGE
She's right. Helene's reputation is more
valuable right now than his.

VP GRIFFIN BAKER
Got anything on her?

George shakes his head.

GEORGE
She's not perfect, but she's pretty good
at looking like it.

EXT. CAMARILLO AIRPORT - DAY

HELENE HAWKS

materializes from the High Profile: A 30-something vision
in white. Timeless, elegant. It's as if she's brought a
cool breeze with her - and it blows her hair back on cue.

She poses at the door, completely aware of her role in
her husband's campaign. And the cameras eat her up like
starved vultures.

INT. CHARLES' OFFICE - DAY

Charles sits amongst the remnants of the party. Swats at
the "50" balloon. It moves to reveal:

MARIE COCKRAM, Charles' Producer and current lover.

CHARLES
I was wondering where -

MARIE
Happy birthday.

She tosses something small onto his lap.

Charles hesitates, then pulls the bow off Marie's "gift".
It's a toothbrush. *His* toothbrush.

CHARLES
You kicking me out?

MARIE
Sad isn't it? That a toothbrush
constitutes a total move-out of your
things?

CHARLES

It's only been a couple months...

MARIE

Ten years of friendship and you only count the couple months we've been screwing.

Charles tucks the toothbrush into his breast pocket.

CHARLES

(to himself)

Never mix work and sex.

MARIE

Why not? You handle them both with the same selfishness. My guess is the end of your career will be much like the end of your last marriage - a surprise to no one but you.

This gets his attention - *The end of my career?*

MARIE

Let's talk about Dixon's wife. You start.

Charles winces - *so THAT'S what this is about.* He pours himself a drink.

MARIE

Forget the fact that you cheated on me for a moment. Are you trying to get us both fired? You're really making some people angry.

CHARLES

Not Dixon's wife.

MARIE

She doesn't sign our paychecks - he does. He's threatening to give Pintard your spot in the Fall. And, not that you care, but that would mean the end of *my* job, too.

And so there it is: this is about job security - not him - that might sting if he let it...But he never does.

CHARLES

Relax, the show is safe, and likewise it's producer.

Marie's look begs explanation.

CHARLES

I got the interview.

It takes a moment to hit. Then, Marie looks as though she just saw Charles walk on water.

MARIE
No, you didn't. You couldn't have...*The*
interview?

CHARLES
The interview. This Saturday - at the
ranch.

At THE RANCH?!!!

Marie falls back onto the couch.

MARIE
Unbelievable. Are you really that
charming or just the luckiest bastard in
he world?

CHARLES
Which would you rather sleep with?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Vice President Griffin Baker watches the door close behind his exiting wife. Griffin is on the edge - and it makes George nervous.

VP GRIFFIN BAKER
We need help, George. There's got to be
something we can do.

GEORGE
We're doing all -

VP GRIFFIN BAKER
Do you know what a winner is, George? A
winner is someone who's willing to do
what the other guy won't.

GEORGE
We can't -

Griffin crunches a newspaper in his hand.

VP GRIFFIN BAKER
See these fucking polls? You turn them in
my favor. I don't care what you have to
do. Do it - or I'll find someone who
will!

EXT. STREET IN LOS ANGELES - DAY

Charles signs an autograph, poses for a photo and then gets into his BMW.

He checks himself in the rear-view and shoots a look up at his likeness on the side of the building - *ahhh, still got it.*

As the BMW pulls away, we see the license plate:
NEWS MKR

EXT. HAWKS' HOME - TWILIGHT

Above the Bel Air estate, MEDIA HELICOPTERS circle.

The home is under media attack. Inside and outside the front gate, it's ablaze with camera and security lights.

TELEVISION NEWS FOOTAGE

From outside the gate of the Hawks' home we look in at the front yard - off to one side, behind a couple CATERING TRUCKS, we see the tail of what appears to be the HIGH PROFILE.

REPORTER

To give you an idea of just how elaborate this party is - a full-scale model of the High Profile was built just for tonight. We're told that tomorrow morning it gets shipped back to Helene's family ranch in New Mexico...

EXT. HAWKS' HOME - TWILIGHT

A LIMO

arrives with Helene and Senator Hawks. It's swarmed with PHOTOGRAPHERS. Security guards literally push photographers back to cut the car a path to the house.

INSIDE THE LIMO

MUFFLED SHOUTS of "Helene!", "Senator!" "Roll down the window!"

The Senator, immune to the calls and flashes popping just beyond the glass, YAWNS.

Helene flinches every now and again as a flash goes off. She checks her watch and takes a deep breath.

INT. BEVERLY HILLS COCKTAIL LOUNGE - EVENING

A COUGH pulls Charles' attention away from the TV coverage of the Hawks' event to

PETER GRANT.

The 30-something Campaign Manager might be good-looking behind the THICK GLASSES and tousled thicket of hair.

He shakes Charles' hand.

PETER

Mr. McCaffrey, Peter Grant. I apologize for being late - traffic was hideous.

Charles motions to the TV coverage of the Hawks' Home.

CHARLES

Perhaps you should apologize for the traffic. Looks like your party's got all Southern California at a standstill.

Peter takes a seat.

PETER

Ironic, isn't it? All the energy consumed to celebrate a hybrid airplane?

CHARLES

I hate to break it to you, but I think people are little more interested Ms. Hawks than the plane.

Peter LAUGHS. It chokes into a cough - a nervous habit...And he is - *very*.

PETER

Which leads nicely to the task at hand - the interview.

CHARLES

No questions about anything except the plane and how wonderful her husband would be as president?

PETER

I'm really not here to feed you questions. I just want to ensure a certain level of respect and...*taste* be maintained.

Charles LAUGHS a little TOO LOUD.

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