THE SURGEON GENERAL

"Pilot"

Written by
Samuel Baum

TEASER

AN AMERICAN FLAG fills the screen. It suddenly whips aside -- the canvas flap of a U.S. Aid Station tent flying open and --

INT. BATTALION AID STATION - AFGHANISTAN - DAY

We move with **DR. JOHN SHERMAN**, 45, a man of solid build and solid character -- that rare mix of resolve, humanity, and dry wit. Amid the flurry of Medical Staff hustling to treat a dozen or so Soldiers, Sherman eyes a Doctor-In-Training who finishes suturing a leg laceration. Calls out to him:

SHERMAN
Don't just stitch and ditch. Treat those blisters on his feet 'fore you send him back to humping twenty miles a day.

The Doctor-In-Training gives a deferential nod.

Another Patient GROANS. Sherman strides over, a NURSE approaching him.

NURSE
Doctor Sherman, I gave him fifteen mils diazepam but he's been groaning on and off the last half hour.

Sherman looks from the hulking, drugged Soldier to his I.V.

SHERMAN
Triple his dextrose. This guy's a Gunner, used to eating four thousand calories of MREs. He's groaning 'cause he's starving.

Rapid-fire, Sherman's onto the next Patient, grabs an MRI film. The PATIENT (20s) calls out from his bed, scared.

PATIENT
Doc, I can't feel anything from my waist down. I gonna be able to -- ya know, <u>get</u> with my girl back home?

SHERMAN
(examining the MRI film)
That'll be up to her not me -- sacral nerve's intact.
(turning to him)
But keep thinking about your girl, Don Juan. It'll help ya get home to her faster.

The soldier smiles, grateful as the loudspeaker SOUNDS:

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)
Urgent Surgical Incoming...

MEDICS wheel in a semiconscious WOUNDED INFANTRYMAN (24). Sherman and a YOUNG SURGEON (30s) hotfoot it to the TRAUMA BAY, the Medics in tow.

MEDIC
Gunshot wound to the chest, severe coagulopathy. Carotid is palpable, but BP's 70.

SHERMAN
Prep for thoracotomy.

The Infantryman is transferred onto the operating table and prepped by two Nurses and the Young Surgeon. Sherman goes to work with machine-like efficiency:

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
FFP, cryo, and platelets.
(to Nurse)
Left vest pocket, check for a wallet. Any photos, put 'em in front of his face.

The Nurse retrieves a photo of a BABY BOY from the Soldier's vest. She holds it in front of his bleary eyes and we see a flicker of recognition. The will to live.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
Scalpel.

Sherman makes a deep incision along the ribs on the right side, blood pouring.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
Rib spreader. Suction.
(to the Young Surgeon)
Grab the Bovie. Start cauterizing.

The Young Surgeon uses an electrocautery to repair tissue.

YOUNG SURGEON
Right lung's punctured.

Sherman probes the gaping cavity. He EYES something, FREEZES. To the other Surgeon, measured:

SHERMAN
Stop. Turn it off, slowly remove your hand.

Surprised, the Young Surgeon complies, looks in the cavity, seeing what looks like the tip of a SILVER LIPSTICK CASE -- *Hunh*...? Then he realizes, his eyes going wide. PANICKED:

YOUNG SURGEON
Oh my God, that's an RPG -- it's the warhead. It's live ordnance!

SHERMAN
Evacuate the station, get an explosives team here.

YOUNG SURGEON
That's a tank buster. What are you --

SHERMAN
Now.

CUT TO Staff RUSHING OUT Patients, the loudspeaker sounding:

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)
One hundred feet! Evacuate one hundred feet from the station.

It grows QUIET as the last of the other patients is moved out.

Sherman, alone with the wounded Infantryman, resumes operating, now entirely on his own.

The Battalion's LIEUTENANT COLONEL (50s) storms in. Barks:

LIEUTENANT COLONEL
Do not operate -- EOD will transport him to a sandbagged bunker.

SHERMAN
No time, he'll bleed out before they get him there.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL
You wanna get blown into pink mist? The protocol is to treat him as expectant and get him outta here!

SHERMAN
(not looking up from the surgery)
The protocol is for you to get the hell out of my light.

Off the Lieutenant Colonel, COWED...

TIME CUT to MOMENTS LATER -- The Station is empty and eerily silent except for the Patient's LABORED BREATHING and Sherman's GRUNTING. SOAKED in SWEAT, he's trying to expand the cavity with one hand, maintain pressure with the other and crane his neck to angle his surgical headlight so he can see the path of entry. The gymnastic strain of a one-man surgical team.

His headlight illuminates the WARHEAD, now fully visible, lodged in the chest cavity. *Terrifying*.

ADRENALINE SURGING, Sherman starts to very slowly and methodically inch out the bloody, jagged warhead. Suddenly, the Patient WRITHES in pain.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
No! Hold still. Ya gotta hold still --

The Patient lays back, settles. Sherman EXHALES -- *close call*.

Sherman resumes... Applying pressure, he draws out the warhead one centimeter at a time until... he EXTRACTS it clear of the wound, which he clamps. He turns as --

Two EOD TECHS (Explosive Ordinance Disposal) arrive with a CONTAINMENT VESSEL and KEVLAR.

EOD TECH
Gotta suit up, Doc!

SHERMAN
(re: the Patient)
Just get him out!

One EOD Tech rushes the Patient out.

Then, petrified but laser-focused, Sherman delicately extends the live explosive from his bloody thinly-gloved hands into the Kevlar-gloved hands of the other EOD Tech. The Tech lowers the explosive into the CONTAINMENT VESSEL.

Finally safe... Sherman groans with RELIEF, SLUMPS against an exam table, sucking down breath.

The Tech starts away and then -- BOOM! In a FLASH he's BLOWN BACK by the EXPLODING ORDNANCE, dampened by the containment vessel, but powerful enough to send the empty exam table CRASHING and KNOCK SHERMAN DOWN HARD. BLACKOUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

The formidable frame of an AIR FORCE C-17 bears down on us, engines booming as it taxis to a stop.

A crowd of TV CREWS and WELL-WISHERS greet its arrival.

Sherman deplanes, arm in a sling, gash above his eye peeking out from his aviators as a CBS News Correspondent reports:

CORRESPONDENT
At Joint Base Andrews near the nation's capital, Dr. John Sherman arriving home in reasonably good health. Both he and the Infantryman whose life he saved are expected to make a full recovery.

Sherman's daughters, JULIET (18, a uniformed Annapolis Cadet, the dutiful firstborn) and LILY (16, plucky, a free spirit) hurry to the jetway stairs and hug him.

SHERMAN
God, I missed you two.

Sherman pulls Lily in close -- In the embrace, he sees four new EAR PIERCINGS (a la Pink) hiding behind her hair. Not pleased:

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
Seems I missed quite a few new piercings as well. Somehow those weren't visible on the video chat.

LILY
You almost get blown up by an RPG and you're worried about my earrings...

SHERMAN
I know I can remove an RPG. Getting you to remove those earrings...

Not so easy, he shrugs.

JULIET
Seriously, Dad, you could have been killed. Can you imagine what Mom would say right now...?

MARY BETH (O.S.)
I can.

Sherman turns to find his Mother-in-law, MARY BETH (68, strong, perceptive). As they hug:

MARY BETH (CONT'D)
Somewhere my daughter is very proud. And very pissed.

SHERMAN
(wistful)
A safe bet.

LILY
Dad, look at this --

She gestures at the crowd, finding it weird but awesome.

LILY (CONT'D)
You're like a rock star.

SHERMAN
I am on narcotics and getting cheered just for doing my job, so kinda...

AIR FORCE SERVICEMAN (O.S.)
Doctor Sherman --

Two AIR FORCE SERVICEMEN (Security Forces Group) approach him.

AIR FORCE SERVICEMAN (CONT'D)
We've been instructed to escort your family home and for you to come with us.

SHERMAN
I've been away from my kids for two months. Instructed by whom?

AIR FORCE SERVICEMAN
The White House, Sir.

Off Sherman's surprise...

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - WHITE HOUSE - DAY

A Secretary seats Sherman in a dainty FRENCH BAROQUE CHAIR, his cut forehead, his arm sling, his whole being not fitting in. He shifts in the uncomfortable seat, eyeing the European decor. He's not impressed.

The VICE PRESIDENT, ARTHUR KILLIAN (55, polished) and White House CHIEF OF STAFF, RICK WITTER (45, short, a junkyard dog), enter. Sherman stands up.

SHERMAN
Mister Vice President --

KILLIAN
"Doctor Fearless" -- as cable news has dubbed you.

SHERMAN
Just one more reason not to believe cable news, Sir.

The Vice President smiles, shakes hands, gestures at Witter.

KILLIAN
White House Chief of Staff, Rick Witter.

WITTER
The President is overseas but he asked me to commend you for your outstanding courage. Beyond bravery.

SHERMAN
Our guys are outside the wire every hour every day. I only had to face it for half an hour.

KILLIAN
"A hero is no braver than the ordinary man. But he is brave five minutes longer." Emerson. Please --

He gestures for Sherman to take a seat. Sits, looks at a file.

KILLIAN (CONT'D)
So, John Sherman, tell me if I have this right: Grew up on a farm outside St. Louis, second in your class at Truman State, GI Bill to Johns Hopkins Medical, landing at Walter Reed, deploying three months a year to Kandahar. Widowed five years ago, two daughters. No arrests, six speeding tickets this year.

SHERMAN
(surprised by all the intel)
Yes, Mr. Vice President. But why is my life flashing before my eyes a second time this week?

KILLIAN
At my recommendation, the President is nominating you for the highest medical office in the nation -- The Surgeon General of The United States.

Sherman is floored. Beat.

SHERMAN
I'm honored, Sir. But...

As he hesitates, Witter jumps in, in sales mode.

WITTER
The President told me this morning he can't imagine a better choice. I'm eager to get you right into Senate confirmation because I fully agree.

SHERMAN
And your last two picks got shot down.

WITTER
Yeah. This time we need someone who's bulletproof. And look, politically you're untouchable -- you're a war hero. And personally -- you're a widower, no chance of a sex scandal.

Sherman reacts to this breathtaking crassness. The VP hurries to do damage control:

KILLIAN
What Rick means is -- with your record, you'll sail through the confirmation and be in your Vice Admiral stripes in a month.

SHERMAN
I appreciate that, but I've already got the best medical job in the world. Never have to deal with insurance companies or think about whether patients can pay. No politics, no business, no bullshit. Just what's best for the patient.

KILLIAN
Doesn't everyone deserve that kind of care? This is your chance to make it possible. Not just for a select few but for every soldier, for every veteran, for the entire country. The doctor to three hundred and twenty million patients.

This lands with Sherman. We see the spark in his eyes.

SHERMAN
What kind of resources would I have?

WITTER
The Surgeon General picks his own team and has six thousand Commission Corps Officers who report to him -- from CDC to FDA. Hurricane Sandy, oil spill in the Gulf... they're boots on the ground.

Sherman considers -- resources, authority, *impact*. Then:

SHERMAN
I'm a doctor not a politician. And that's not gonna change. I'd need your word that line is crystal-clear.

KILLIAN
I am a politician. But as you may know, I'm also the father of a girl with serious medical problems and I know what she needs is doctors not politicians. So I promise you that.

SHERMAN
Then I say -- Yes, Sir.

Sherman and the Vice President shake hands. Witter interjects.

WITTER
There is <u>one</u> outstanding <u>issue</u>...

Anticipating it, Sherman sighs *yeah*, reaches into his pocket...

SHERMAN
If I'm gonna be Surgeon General, I guess this is my last pack.

Off Sherman, looking with a mournful smile at the <u>PACK OF CIGARETTES</u> in his hand...

CHYRON: "THREE MONTHS LATER" over...

EXT. OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL (OSG) - ESTABLISHING

At the epicenter of power, a glass and steel K Street office tower overlooks the White House and the Washington Monument.

INT. OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL (OSG) - DAY

A palatial entrance bearing the caduceus, Navy anchor, and American Eagle proclaims "Office of the Surgeon General."

Doors fly open to a bustling bullpen of young STAFFERS in East Coast business attire and DOCTORS wearing lab coats in surrounding conference rooms and offices.

Sherman, now recovered from his injuries, cuts quite a figure as he strides along in his Navy Three-Star Vice Admiral blues. A Communications STAFFER hustles over.

STAFFER
Sir, the press conference is all set. 9:30, full Press Corps. And the White House just sent over this script for your remarks.

SHERMAN
Thanks.

Sherman grabs the script and <u>drops it in a recycle bin without looking at it</u>.

He shoves off past the surprised Staffer and is intercepted by **DR. CONNOR MCCALLAN** (36, tall, handsome, brash epidemiologist).

MCCALLAN
Vice Admiral --

SHERMAN
It's been almost three months. Call me John already.

MCCALLAN
Not gonna happen, Sir. But good news -- West Nile Virus in Texas has been contained.

SHERMAN
Any new cases?

MCCALLAN
Not after the aerial spraying. We took out those mosquitoes. Shock and awe -- boom.

Sherman gives a nod, peels off, crossing paths with **DR. ALAN FISCHER** (39, a short, neurotic psychiatrist, a gentle soul).

SHERMAN
Dr. Fischer, how's the nation's mental health?

FISCHER
I'd have to say grim, Sir. Levels of stress, depression, anxiety, all on the rise.

SHERMAN
And how much of that is you personally?

FISCHER
(smiles)
I could account for a lot of it.

Sherman ducks into the OFFICE KITCHEN, tees up a cup of coffee at the machine. As it brews, he takes off his jacket, rolls up his shirt sleeve to his muscular bicep, where we see a NICOTINE PATCH. He rips it off and replaces it with a fresh one as his CHIEF OF STAFF, **LYDIA FERRARI** (40, tough, savvy, sexy, fiercely loyal) enters.

SHERMAN
These damn things don't work. Can I issue a Surgeon General's Warning that quitting smoking makes you a miserable sonofabitch?

FERRARI
Need more data. You were kind of a miserable sonofabitch before you quit.

It's said with affection and he gives a knowing smile -- these two are clearly longtime friends.

SHERMAN
You saying that as my friend or my Chief of Staff?

FERRARI
Yes. You get the script from the White House for the press conference?

SHERMAN
I didn't get a chance to look at it.

She knows him too well --

FERRARI
You threw it out.

SHERMAN
Yeah.

FERRARI
(not pleased)
After firing your speechwriter.

SHERMAN
I didn't fire him. I just told him to write up something useful.

FERRARI
And when he asked "like what?" -- you said "like the lunch specials in the cafeteria."

SHERMAN
I can never read that little sandwich board.

He grabs his coffee, heads for his office, Ferrari following.

FERRARI
You have a unique two-prong approach to key politicians. You ignore most and piss off the rest. Including the guy whose idea it was to hire you in the first place.

SHERMAN
You're not happy about my comment to the press yesterday.

FERRARI
I'm not happy about the timing.

SHERMAN
It's a fact. Seventy thousand senior citizens die every year from infections they got in the hospital. It's unacceptable.

FERRARI
And the Vice President was glad you chose to share that fact the same day he was in Florida plugging his health care victories for seniors.

SHERMAN
We're doctors not spin-doctors. People deserve the facts.

FERRARI
That may be, but public health is the Vice President's "issue" and he's got clout. He hired the President's Chief of Staff, he controls that little mutt, and he controls the agenda.

SHERMAN
Not our agenda. That was the deal.

He heads past his Assistant's desk, trailed by Ferrari into...

INT. SHERMAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

An American flag and a U.S. Commission Corps flag adorn the stately suite. Sherman approaches his immaculate DESK, discovers a SOFTBALL on it. Mystified, he looks to Ferrari:

SHERMAN
Do you know why this is here?

FERRARI
'Cause I put it there.

Sherman goes to pick it up, can't.

SHERMAN
It's --

FERRARI
Superglue.

SHERMAN
How do I get it off?

FERRARI
You don't. From now on, I want you to look at this ball before you make every decision. It is to remind you occasionally to play ball. Because I'm here to tell you, this whole game is won by people who play ball. And that means making nice with the White House, and their friends.

Sherman considers this, then looks at the ball, confounded.

SHERMAN
Superglue...?

With "*that's right, bitch*" bravado:

FERRARI
Superglue.

INT. OSG - PRESS ROOM - DAY

Three dozen REPORTERS BUZZ about the room before a PRESS CONFERENCE. They fall silent as Ferrari steps up to the podium.

FERRARI
Under the leadership of the Office of the Surgeon General, at 11am this morning, a chain of 84 kidney transplants will begin in 17 cities involving over a hundred surgeons and 168 patients including, as you all know, the Vice-President's daughter. This is the largest transplant chain in history. Links are made possible when someone has a living donor who isn't a match for them but may be a match for someone else who's in the same situation. For such patients, these paired exchanges are a life-saving innovation.

She gestures to PHOTOS of the 84 kidney donors.

FERRARI (CONT'D)
Behind me you see the kidney donors who are making this possible. Teaser for your human interest stories: Among them is a woman who's donating for her ex-husband, who recently divorced her but whose life she's nonetheless trying to save.
(re: the juicy story)
You're welcome.

She turns to **ALEKSY MYASKOVSKY** (33, Russian accent, in a wheelchair, 4.0 GPA from M.I.T.)

FERRARI (CONT'D)
I want to acknowledge our team's computer scientist, Doctor Aleksy Myaskovsky, who developed the algorithm-matching program. And finally, the Surgeon General, who recognized that ninety thousand people are on the kidney transplant waiting list and launched this initiative on his first day in office. Vice Admiral John Sherman --

Sherman takes the stage. Ferrari exits, whispering to him:

FERRARI (CONT'D)
Just try not to be yourself.

He steps up to the podium with no notes. Off the cuff:

SHERMAN
You can't count on politicians. You can't count on insurance companies.

Watching from the wings, Ferrari closes her eyes, ready to put a bullet through her head. Behind her, McCallan notes the surprising remarks.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
We have to count on each other. This is what America means to me -- these donors right here -- strangers of all kinds coming together. Black, white, Latino, Asian -- one family. Sacrificing together. Surviving together. One American fighting for another, literally giving a part of themselves.

Even the jaded Reporters are a little moved. And as Ferrari listens now, she looks at Sherman with something more than admiration, though she'd never admit it.

INT. OSG - PRESS ROOM - LATER

Reporters pack up, the press conference just concluded. McCallan falls in with Ferrari headed to their offices.

MCCALLAN
Giving up a kidney to the ex-husband -- damn. Maybe I need an ex-wife.

FERRARI
That generally requires committing at least briefly to one woman.

MCCALLAN
Oh yeah, that won't work... But really -- would you give a kidney to your ex-husband?

FERRARI
He cheated on me with a nurse at the oncology clinic where I was getting my chemo.

MCCALLAN
So that's a no...?

Ferrari gives him a look as she peels off. McCallan's Assistant, TESS (late 20s) hustles over to him.

TESS
You have an urgent call on two from a hospital in West Virginia.

INT. OSG - MCCALLAN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

McCallan is on the phone. He listens, CONCERN MOUNTING.

MCCALLAN
Okay... Yeah, hang on...

He clicks a link in his email. SCRUTINIZES something closely, pulling on headphones. Then, sudden SHOCK on his face.

MCCALLAN (CONT'D)
Tess --

She hurries in.

MCCALLAN (CONT'D)
Get the Surgeon General.

TESS
...I think he's in a meeting.

MCCALLAN
Well interrupt.

INT. OSG - COMPUTER LAB ("KIDNEY GROUND CONTROL") - DAY

"Ground Control" of the transplant chain: a giant LCD streams a video conference with Surgeons in hospitals across the country.

Flanked by Ferrari and Myaskovsky, Sherman gives final instructions with the intensity of a General preparing for war.

SHERMAN
I want to be in lockstep -- you think you're gonna run two minutes late, report in to my Chief of Staff. But every donor gets treated like they're the only one. Take the time to check for anatomical variations and --

ALL EYES go to the door as it swings open, Tess hesitantly entering. Sherman looks at her -- *a serious room to interrupt*.

INT. LECTURE HALL - WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY - DAY

A physics PROFESSOR stands in front of a CLASS of COLLEGE STUDENTS, instructing a young woman who writes an equation on a WHITE BOARD on the wall.

PROFESSOR
Correct. Newton's second law: the sum of the forces equals mass times acceleration.
(checks a list)
Mike Harris, complete the next step.

MIKE HARRIS (19, athletic, boyish) approaches, starts to write. Suddenly his ARM JERKS and he SMASHES HIS FACE into the wall over and over. BLOOD streaks the equations on the WHITEBOARD.

He turns to face us, bloodied, confused, helpless as the image FREEZES and we MATCH CUT to --

INT. OSG - SHERMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The image on an LCD, Sherman and McCallan watching. McCallan turns to Sherman, ALARMED:

MCCALLAN
Altered mental state, ataxia, muscle jerk...

Sherman, grave, stares at the young man on the screen. Nods.

MCCALLAN (CONT'D)
And the thing is, the kid's never been out of the country. So if he is infected, he was infected here. In which case, we could be looking at an epidemic.

SHERMAN
With no cure.

That surgeon's decisiveness, he turns from the LCD to McCallan.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
Get me the CDC Director, Secretary of Health and the White House.

McCallan nods.

MCCALLAN
Need anything else, Sir?

SHERMAN
Yeah. A cigarette.

Off Sherman, fight in his eyes...

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. WEST VIRGINIA HOSPITAL - EXAM ROOM - DAY

CHYRON: Morgantown, West Virginia

A very UNWELL Mike Harris sits on an exam table. BANDAGED NOSE, rigid posture, his arm subtly JERKING intermittently, he looks dazed and exhausted as McCallan examines him.

MCCALLAN
Mike, now I need you to close your eyes and touch your nose.

MIKE
(weakly, a faint smile)
That's easy, it's the size of a grapefruit.

We like this kid. Just outside the room, Fischer (our Mental Health Director) tends to Mike's dad, JIM HARRIS (40s, burly) and Mike's pregnant sister, KELLY, 25. They look on, distraught.

MR. HARRIS
I was on the job working highway construction, outta nowhere I get a call from the college, and then I find my son like this.

Mr. Harris's POV: McCallan has Mike try to CAP A PEN but he keeps MISSING. His father can barely stand to watch.

KELLY
What's happening? My brother's an athlete -- he plays three sports. Why can't he do that?

FISCHER
It's a shock, I know. You want to be able to help... There's nothing harder.

In the exam room, Mike, frustrated with the pen, throws it against the wall, sweeps everything off the nightstand, sending a pitcher crashing to the floor. He covers his face, ashamed.

MR. HARRIS
I don't understand -- my son is not aggressive like that. He's a quiet kid. A good kid.

FISCHER
Mr. Harris, my psychological exam confirmed Mike is suffering from a physical illness and any changes you see in him are symptoms,
(MORE)

FISCHER (CONT'D)
nothing else. He’s still the same good kid.

Mr. Harris nods, appreciating Fischer’s empathy.

A NURSE enters, approaches McCallan.

NURSE
Doctor McCallan, labs are in.

He takes the print-out, looks, jaw tightening. With more urgency than empathy, McCallan approaches the family.

MCCALLAN
Mr. Harris, we’re going to make sure we do everything we can for your son, but we’re also going to need your help. Along with CDC, we get referred any hospital case with symptoms suggestive of a high-consequence infectious disease, meaning one that could do a lot of harm to a lot of people.

MR. HARRIS
(blanches)
“Infectious disease?” What -- what are you saying he <u>has</u>?

MCCALLAN
The physical exam, lab results, and Mike’s neurological state are all suggestive of a condition called Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease.

KELLY
What is that?

FISCHER
It’s what people more commonly know as “Mad Cow Disease.”

MR. HARRIS
(a choked whisper)
Oh my God.

KELLY
Well... let’s get him tested, get him treatment...

MCCALLAN
(takes a breath)
Unfortunately, there is no blood test. And if it is Mad Cow, I’m very sorry but there’s no effective treatment. The disease is terminal.

INT. OSG - HALLWAY - DAY

Sherman's Assistant, TED (20s, Nebraska's finest, puppy dog earnestness) hustles along with him toward reception.

TED
The third kidney transplant is complete. And you got calls from your Officers at FDA, the Park Service, Toxic Subs, and The Indian Health Service.

SHERMAN
I have guys who report to me at The Indian Health Service?

TED
Yes, Sir.

Sherman nods -- *that's crazy, but okay, good to know...*

Ted peels off as McCallan walks in. Sherman wastes no time:

SHERMAN
Give me odds.
(off McCallan's hesitation)
To get a sense, not 'cause I'll hold your ass to the fire with it later.

MCCALLAN
EEG, pulvinar sign, positive 14-3-3 CSF protein -- everything I've seen fits Mad Cow and everything else on the differential has been ruled out. But the only way to be a hundred percent sure is an autopsy after death -- you see that infected prions have eaten away at the brain. Looks like swiss cheese.

Not an appealing option to Sherman. We sense he doesn't love the slight glibness about it either.

MCCALLAN (CONT'D)
If the patient's fever subsides, a neurosurgeon could perform a brain biopsy, but not in his current condition.

SHERMAN
Where are you on the source?

MCCALLAN
This is where it gets bad --

SHERMAN
It's pretty bad now.

MCCALLAN
Well, assuming it's Mad Cow, the kid contracted it from eating infected beef. And he eats almost every meal at his college cafeteria which is supplied by Becker Foods. Becker produces ninety percent of the beef in West Virginia and supplies a dozen other states.

As Sherman considers, Ferrari approaches, calls out to him:

FERRARI
I've spent two months fighting to get this meeting. Let's not keep the Senator waiting...

SHERMAN
(turns back to McCallan)
Get a Field Team over there right now. Call me the minute you know anything.

INT. U.S. SENATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sherman and Ferrari shake hands with SENATOR KENNETH NORBERT (50s, imperious, Gingrich-esque).

SHERMAN
Senator Norbert -- John Sherman, appreciate you seeing us.

NORBERT
Vice Admiral --

FERRARI
Lydia Ferrari.

NORBERT
Ferrari -- like the race car.

She smiles -- *wow, 'cause I've never fucking heard that before*.

FERRARI
Like the race car.

NORBERT
Vroom vroom.

She marvels -- *never underestimate a powerful man's ability to think he's clever*.

SHERMAN
Why don't we get down to it?

FERRARI
Senator, as Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, you know all too well how many of our troops have been injured in combat over the last decade. What I certainly didn't know is that eighteen hundred U.S. soldiers have sustained genital injuries in the field and now can't have children without In Vitro Fertilization. IVF, however, is not covered by the Pentagon's health insurance and it's too expensive for most servicemen to afford on their own.

SHERMAN
They got their nuts blown off for a country that won't help them have a family.

Ferarri looks at Sherman -- *that's another way to put it*.

NORBERT
It's terribly unfortunate, but it's a thorny issue.

SHERMAN
Thorny -- well, let's get at what exactly's thorny.

FERRARI
We understand you face huge pressure to curb spending. But to be clear, this isn't about extending health benefits. This is about restoring something that was taken from these men.

NORBERT
Look, no one cares more about the welfare of our uniformed men and women than I do.

SHERMAN
Absolutely. That's why I'm counting on you to sponsor a bill that'll cover IVF for injured vets. 'Cause I know you'd never let political considerations harm our veterans' welfare...

This is exactly what's going on. The Senator tries to evade:

SENATOR
Of course not... but there are religious concerns to grapple with.

SHERMAN
(nods, gestures at Ferrari)
She told me you might raise that. It's why I'm eager for you to meet my friend, Billy. He had his pelvis shattered in an ambush in Paktika Province -- now he needs IVF to start a family with his wife.

Sherman opens the door. Billy crutches in, greeting him warmly.

BILLY
There's the good doctor --

Billy is in full CHRISTIAN CHAPLAIN'S UNIFORM with a large silver cross and he's MISSING A LEG.

SHERMAN
Forgot to mention he's an Evangelical Chaplain, devout as they come, so I figure he might help you grapple with those "religious concerns."

Off the Senator's uncomfortable smile, his bluff called...

INT. BECKER FOODS PROCESSING PLANT - DAY

CLOSE ON the head of a COW. A two-inch wide PNEUMATIC BOLT FIRES into its forehead.

Pull back to McCallan and **DR. PAGE WYATT** (37, a cute offbeat biochemist) standing next to the SLAUGHTER LINE of the state's largest BEEF PROCESSOR. McCallan tries to keep his lunch down as he watches one cow after another take a bolt to the head.

MCCALLAN
Eight years of grad school -- look Ma, it was all worth it!

WYATT
(genuinely psyched)
I know, right?

MCCALLAN
You don't get out of the lab much, do you, Wyatt?

WYATT
(thinking about it)
I don't <u>sleep</u> there, most nights. And some of my discretionary time I spend --
(off his look)
Oh, is this the "literal thing"...?

McCallan looks at her, *yeah*.

From behind them, the gruff voice of CHARLES BECKER:

BECKER (O.S.)
Welcome, Flyswatters.

Hunh? They turn to find Becker Foods' CEO, a 50-year-old barrel of a man in a bespoke suit. Becker holds forth, pedantic:

BECKER (CONT'D)
That's why CDC started in Atlanta -- malaria down South. Just exterminators. Flyswatters. And look at you now...

Confident as McCallan is, even he finds this guy intimidating.

MCCALLAN
You must be Mr. Becker. Doctor Connor McCallan, Doctor Page Wyatt --

Becker just looks at them.

MCCALLAN (CONT'D)
We need to test all the meat, cattle, and feed at this site. You can agree to voluntary testing or we'll get a court order.

BECKER
You want to test our feed?

WYATT
Mad Cow Disease originates from --

BECKER
(interrupts)
Using cow protein in the feed -- feeding cows to cows. Illegal but cost-saving. I'm not sure which is more insulting -- thinking I didn't know that or suggesting it's happening here.

WYATT
Then I'm sure you also know you wouldn't be the first plant to break the law.

BECKER
(scoffs)
Between the overregulation, the inspections, the media attacks -- "pink slime," "mad cow" -- you're smearing an industry, and workers pay the price. We've had to cut salaries, cut hours, breaks. And for what? There's never been a single person who's gotten Mad Cow Disease from American beef.

MCCALLAN
There's always a first. And you supply every public school in the state, which means that the 250,000 lunches that'll be served tomorrow could all be deadly.

Becker holds McCallan's gaze for a beat. Shakes his head:

BECKER
My tax dollars at work. Enjoy your field trip, kids.

INT. OSG - SHERMAN'S OFFICE SUITE - DAY

Sherman hustles in. His Assistant, Ted, looks up from his desk.

TED
Congratulations, Sir, I heard the IVF bill is going to happen.

Sherman nods.

TED (CONT'D)
Your Chaplain friend dropped off a thank-you present.

On Ted's desk is a framed HUGE GOLD CROSS and a thank-you note.

TED (CONT'D)
Should I put it up in your office?

SHERMAN
I'm good.

He swipes a PACK OF NICORETTE from a stack on Ted's desk.

INT. OSG - SHERMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sherman presides over a meeting with Ferrari, McCallan and Wyatt. He tears into the Nicorette.

SHERMAN
Where are we on the testing?

WYATT
We took close to a thousand samples at the plant. They're being analyzed now but the soonest we'll have results back is mid-day tomorrow.

MCCALLAN
By which time Becker Foods will ship an additional ninety-eight thousand pounds of potentially infected meat, putting hundreds of thousands of lives
(MORE)

MCCALLAN (CONT'D)
at risk. We need to suspend their production and issue a recall now.

FERRARI
Easy there, Erin Brokovich. If we do that and Becker ends up not being to blame here -- we unfairly damage the company, cause a big consumer scare, possibly costing jobs industry-wide. And as a bonus, we look like douchebags.

Sherman is conflicted -- *tough call*. To McCallan:

SHERMAN
Still no other suspected cases?

MCCALLAN
No. But the course of foodborne infections can vary. I've seen one patient present with symptoms right away, and then a month later, a hundred more with the same illness.

SHERMAN
You see anything at the plant?

WYATT
A repulsive CEO and five processing violations but no visibly sick cows. That doesn't say much, though, 'cause infected cattle can transmit the disease before they show signs of it.

SHERMAN
(to McCallan)
Any possible sources besides Becker?

MCCALLAN
I took a food inventory from Mike Harris and his family. Doesn't account for every meal, but Becker supplies all the meat Mike's eaten at college, the local supermarket, his favorite sub-sandwich shop, you name it.

FERRARI
Yeah, it's a half a billion dollar business. And let me tell you who owns it. The Becker brothers were the President's third largest campaign contributors and delivered the state of West Virginia for him.

Displeased, Sherman turns to McCallan and Wyatt:

SHERMAN
Give us the room a minute.

Mccallan and Wyatt exit. Ferrari jumps in with Sherman:

FERRARI
I'm giving you the political reality.

SHERMAN
And I've told you I'm not gonna be political. Told the Vice President too, before I took this job and he accepted that. Gave me his word.

FERRARI
Oh yeah, did he pinky swear? He said whatever it took to close you.

She looks at Sherman, solemn:

FERRARI (CONT'D)
Don't risk getting this wrong three months into the job. Wait for the testing to come back. Without it, you can't know for sure.

SHERMAN
No you can't. But doing nothing 'til you're sure -- that's not leadership, it's covering your ass.

FERRARI
You can't do the job right if you're <u>out</u> of the job.

Sherman registers the stakes at hand.

SHERMAN
That's true.
(beat)
Get USDA, shut it down.

EXT. SHERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A country road with HORSES and a BARN along side it. Idyllic. An F-150 PICK-UP BLOWS by the MAILBOX -- Sherman motoring up the winding road of his six acre FARM HOUSE in Manassas, VA.

He's on his cell with an anxious Governor of West Virginia.

SHERMAN
That's correct, Governor. All Becker beef is being pulled from supermarket shelves nationwide and their school lunch contract has been suspended... I certainly will.

The pick-up pulls in front of the house. Sherman gets out, greeted by CHESTER, his huge black Mastiff. Rubs his belly.

Heading for the front door, Sherman sees a MOTORCYCLE parked outside, TWO HELMETS over the handlebars. He eyes it, LEERY.

INT. SHERMAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A LEATHER JACKET UNZIPS. Its inhabitant, a Taylor Lautner-esque young man, ROB (17, earrings), enjoys a soda with Sherman's sixteen year old daughter, Lily, who's exhilarated. They're mid-conversation with Sherman's mother-in-law, Mary Beth.

ROB
They get a bad rap but I think it comes down to how safe a rider you are.

Mary Beth looks at him -- *Oh, is that right*? Lily jumps in:

LILY
Grandma, you'd actually love it. You just feel totally free.

They turn as Sherman strides in, calling out to Rob:

SHERMAN (O.S.)
Is that your bike out front?

ROB
...My brother's, yeah --

SHERMAN
And you took my daughter on it?

LILY
(defensive)
Dad, Rob --

SHERMAN
Don't waste your breath.
(to Rob, livid)
You know what we called 'em in the ER? Donorcycles. Every week some "cool guy" like you -- just a puddle of blood and leather getting carted in. Had one guy who was out riding with his wife, got T-boned into a dump truck -- she got split in half, he got dragged fifty feet, had his nose ripped clear off his face. So let me tell ya, you ever take my daughter on the back of that bike again, you're gonna look a lot like that guy.

LILY
Dad -- Rob doesn't even know how to ride... I was the one riding it.

SHERMAN
Excuse me?

LILY
("Don't freak out")
I've been learning the last couple months after school -- I took Rider Safety and like thirty hours of on-cycle class. I borrowed his brother's bike 'cause I had my road test today, which I passed.

What?! Sherman knew nothing about this.

LILY (CONT'D)
I didn't want to tell you 'til after 'cause I knew it would just upset you.

SHERMAN
(to Mary Beth)
You have any idea about this?

MARY BETH
What do you think?

SHERMAN
You just took your last ride.

LILY
Dad, I have my license and I finally saved enough to get a starter bike. You won't get me a car and --

SHERMAN
Sixteen-year-olds don't need cars.

LILY
-- and I can't afford one on my own, so this is the answer.

SHERMAN
It is not the answer. End of discussion.

LILY
I didn't wait tables every Saturday night the last six months for nothing. And it's not like we live in the city. It's an hour on the bus just to get to school.

ROB
(tentative)
Sorry but I told my brother I'd have his bike back already. He's going to the monster trucks show tonight.

SHERMAN
(glares at him)
It's going in my pick-up and I'll drive you home. Wait for me outside.

Rob heads for the door. Lily follows, exiting. At a loss, Sherman turns to Mary Beth.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
How could she go and do that without telling me? Or you?

MARY BETH
She is my daughter's child... Fiercely independent.
(shrugs)
And she's had to be. I forget sometimes -- Juliet was already in high school when she lost her mother but Lily was eleven years old.

Sherman nods, thoughtful. Beat.

SHERMAN
I knew what to do with Jules -- she was born an Annapolis cadet. With Lily...

Mary Beth sees Sherman beating himself up.

MARY BETH
John, your problem is you feel like a failure at something if you don't succeed completely. With parenting, it's the other way around. You're a success if you don't fail completely.

Off Sherman grateful for her support...

EXT. OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL (OSG) - MORNING

At sunrise, K-Street is already bustling with Beltway Bandits.

INT. OSG - COMPUTER LAB ("KIDNEY GROUND CONTROL") - DAY

The huge LCD displays the progress of the kidney transplant chain by category: Completed, Remaining, In Surgery, etc.

Myaskovsky (our Russian computer scientist) drags a picture of a patient to the "completed" section. Ferrari intently looks on, walking back and forth like an NBA coach on the sidelines.

MYASKOVSKY
With Seattle, that makes twenty-six transplants complete. Fifty-eight remain.

Ferrari takes out a DONUT, chomps, still to-ing and fro-ing.

MYASKOVSKY (CONT'D)
What do you do for exercise that you can eat like that?

FERRARI
I pace.

MYASKOVSKY
You should relax. Do you realize what has happened because of publicity you arrange? Number of people volunteering for kidney donation with the National Registry has doubled in one week.

FERRARI
Huh... And we'll get a lot more coverage tomorrow when the Vice President's daughter's up.

MYASKOVSKY
It is already big story. I got call from Kiev -- from ex-girlfriend who saw my name in newspaper. She wishes now she had not disposed of me.

A VIDEO CALL rings on the LCD -- "Detroit Medical Center." Myaskovsky clicks, bringing up a DOCTOR on video conference.

FERRARI
Good morning.

DOCTOR
I'm afraid not. Kidney recipient #39, Mark Jamison, just suffered sudden cardiac death. A spike in his potassium caused an arrhythmia.

Ferrari and Myaskovsky take this in. He clicks on the photo numbered "39", eyes the patient's details ruefully:

MYASKOVSKY
He was going to receive his transplant at three o'clock today.

DOCTOR
Correct. And his wife, Barbara, who's supposed to donate her kidney this afternoon -- now refuses.

What? -- this bombshell lands on Ferrari and Myaskovsky.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
She says the only reason she agreed to donate her kidney to a stranger was to help her husband get a transplant, and now...

FERRARI
Did you remind her that that stranger is counting on her donation? That there's an entire chain?

DOCTOR
She was unmoved. Evidently her husband's diabetes treatment wiped out their savings, they reached the lifetime benefit cap on their insurance -- she said she can't afford to risk possible complications from donating. However rare they are.

Holy shit. Ferrari turns to Myaskovsky.

MYASKOVSKY
I'll start looking at contingency plans but this is not small problem.

INT. OSG - HALLWAY - DAY

Sherman walks with McCallan, pressing him.

SHERMAN
You're positive we got to them all?

MCCALLAN
It's locked down. All sourcing from Becker Foods has stopped.

SHERMAN
Every single vendor nationwide?

MCCALLAN
All 291. Double checked the list myself. Only place you're gonna find Becker beef is in the trash.

Sherman nods as they head into his OFFICE.

MCCALLAN (CONT'D)
And the story's out, so consumers know. Wall Street knows -- Becker's stock is getting a beat-down. A little payback for dishing out disease.

Sherman's cell phone DINGS -- a TEXT from his DAUGHTER: "LOVING THE BUS!" He taps it.

INSERT SHOT: a self-taken PHOTO of Lily on the school bus, crammed against the window next to a 250-pound football player who's leaning on her, asleep.

Sherman looks at it, frustrated.

SHERMAN
It's what you do in high school -- you ride the damn bus. I rode the bus.
(looks up at McCallan)
You rode the bus to school, didn't ya?

MCCALLAN
Uh... no, Sir.

SHERMAN
You had a car?

MCCALLAN
We had a driver.

SHERMAN
You mean like a chauffeur?

MCCALLAN
Yes, Sir.

Sherman shakes his head.

SHERMAN
Well good for you.

Wyatt knocks, hurries in, anxious.

WYATT
Doctor Sherman -- we have a problem with Becker Foods.

SHERMAN
If their meat went out to a single vendor --

WYATT
It's not the vendors. The testing from the plant came back. There was no trace of Mad Cow. Becker's not the source.

Off Sherman, processing this disastrous turn...

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. OSG - SHERMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

A Business REPORTER gives a live market update on TV:

REPORTER (PLAYBACK)
On the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, Meat & Livestock still down 8% following the contaminant scare at Becker Foods.

Distressed, Sherman stands watching with Ferrari.

REPORTER (CONT'D)
The company's been cleared and their products will return to supermarket shelves next week, but Becker stock, still feeling the pain, off more than 12% --

Sherman clicks it off, trudges to his desk as Wyatt pops in.

WYATT
McCallan's at the hospital running more tests but he said the kid's cognitive decline still suggests Mad Cow. So we're trying to fill in every hole in his food inventory, looking for another source.

Sherman nods, sits as Wyatt exits. He stares at the SOFTBALL on his desk in front of him, stewing. ANGLE on the softball.

SHERMAN
You can say it. Just say it.

Ferrari looks at him, thoughtful. He turns to her.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
Say I shoulda waited for the tests to come back like you told me. I shoulda played ball. Go ahead, say you were right.

FERRARI
(snaps)
You were right. I was shrewd. There's a difference.

Sherman is disarmed, being judged so kindly. We see in his eyes a flash of the warmth he feels for her.

FERRARI (CONT'D)
(shrugs)
We play our parts...

Her delivery is casual but there's the faintest sadness, a longing -- to be pure of heart like Sherman? To *be with* Sherman? Perhaps to feel *good enough* to *be* with Sherman.

The intercom beeps. Through the phone, Sherman's Assistant:

TED (O.S.)
Sir, the White House Chief of Staff is here.

Ferrari claps her hands, bouncing back to her usual self:

FERRARI
Ready for a good ass-reaming? Here we go...

They brace themselves as the White House Chief, Witter enters.

WITTER
Vice Admiral... Lydia...

As it turns out, though, he's fairly cordial:

WITTER (CONT'D)
I briefed the Vice President on the Becker Foods shut-down and the results of your testing at the plant. He asked me to convey that moving forward we need more communication and collaboration.

Ferrari nods, *okay*. Glances at Sherman, surprised -- *huh, no ass-reaming*. Witter turns to Sherman:

WITTER (CONT'D)
That's what the Vice President said, now let me translate since you seem to have the political savvy of a six year-old. <u>Never</u>. <u>Ever</u>. Screw with the <u>money</u>. Do you know how many people on this planet can write checks like the Becker brothers? And you go and blow 'em up? Over an imaginary problem? I'd fire your ass if it wasn't so goddamn embarrassing to the President three months in.

Sherman eyes Witter, stone-faced.

WITTER (CONT'D)
Let me give you a little advice: Keep your head down. 'Cause we can burst any balloon we want. Like your IVF for Veterans bill, which
(MORE)

WITTER (CONT'D)
the Vice President just killed with one call.

Sherman and Ferrari absorb this gut punch.

INT. OSG - SHERMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

A HAND anxiously opens a desk DRAWER, RIFLES through it, grabs an unopened PACK OF CIGARETTES.

Sherman, now alone, rips open the cellophane, removes a cigarette. He slowly turns the pack over, looks: The SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING. He's ambivalent, despondent. Beat.

Fuck it -- Sherman puts the cigarette in his mouth, grabs a lighter, goes to the window, opens it, sits in the window sill.

As he's about to light up, he finds he's face to face with a FRAMED PHOTO on a side table. It's a WEDDING PICTURE in which he's exchanging vows with his BEAUTIFUL WIFE. Her Maid of Honor, FERRARI, looks on with great love. We linger on the engraving: "For my best friends, All my love, LYDIA.

Sherman looks at the photo, takes a breath. It's the most vulnerable we've seen him.

He suddenly grabs the cigarette out of his mouth with disdain, trashes the whole pack.

INT. OSG - FERRARI'S OFFICE - DAY

A sleek power office. Ferrari is typing a hundred words a minute. Her octogenarian Assistant DORIS, walks in.

DORIS
I thought you should know that the "Ask The Surgeon General" web feature hasn't been updated.

Ferrari shoots her a look -- *do I look like I give a shit*?

DORIS (CONT'D)
People are very fond of that feature. Right now someone wants to know if spray-on tans cause cancer.

FERRARI
Spray-on tans cause sluts. And right now someone is expecting a life-saving kidney transplant that I may not be able to deliver...

DORIS
Guess I'll take lunch then.

Doris turns, looks at her iPhone 5, and we see she has the latest chrome Bluetooth in her ear.

FERRARI
No one your age should have Bluetooth. It's creepy.

DORIS
(as she goes)
Never too old to adapt, Ma'am.

Another ASSISTANT pops his head in.

ASSISTANT
It's the Vice President on one.

Ferrari takes a breath, answers.

FERRARI
Hello?... Yes, Mr. Vice President. We're working on the transplant chain right now, but with this many patients who need matches, it's -- I understand the -- If it's possible, we'll...

Dial tone. Ferrari lowers the phone -- *thanks for that*.

INT. OSG - COMPUTER LAB ("KIDNEY GROUND CONTROL") - DAY

Myaskovsky is constructing SCHEMATICS of possible alternate transplant chains, displayed on the giant LCD. Think *Minority Report* but with donors' faces, antigen type and blood type. Ferrari enters.

FERRARI
Alright, pencils down. What do ya got?

MYASKOVSKY
This donor who dropped out, Barbara Jamison -- her phenotype is very rare. We have contingency plans to back up many donors -- no problem. But without this woman, here is longest chain possible now.

Ferrari looks at the chain on the LCD, alarmed.

FERRARI
It's much shorter. How many transplants fall out?

MYASKOVSKY
Seventeen.

FERRARI
Seventeen? No... No, we need another donor with the same phenotype as that woman. You checked every registry at every hospital across the country?

MYASKOVSKY
And recent cadaver donations. But this phenotype -- it is needle in the haypile. And right now we have kidney sitting on ice. No time for wait and see.

FERRARI
(refusing to concede)
So... What? We help only these patients, cut our losses with the other seventeen...

MYASKOVSKY
Or risk losing every remaining transplant. All fifty-eight.

The weight of this bears down on Ferrari.

FERRARI
This can’t be happening.

INT. OSG - HALLWAY - DAY

Sherman hustles along, talking on his cell. In triage mode:

SHERMAN
Put all the transplants on hold. I want the kidney that’s on ice pumped continuously with perfusate. That’ll safely buy us one more day. Then we gotta go.

McCallan approaches, eager to talk to Sherman.

SHERMAN (CONT’D)
(covers phone)
Walk with me.

Sherman heads into the stairwell.

EXT. OSG - ROOF - DAY

A steel door heaves open. Sherman marches out, McCallan in tow.

MCCALLAN
It’s freezing --

SHERMAN
Clears the head.

Sherman looks out: 20th floor JETLINER VIEWS of the Capitol, Washington Monument, etc. We are atop the halls of power.

MCCALLAN
So, good news. We now have the chance to confirm a Mad Cow diagnosis for Mike Harris. His fever's down, I can order a brain biopsy.

Sherman reflects. McCallan tries to rally him, fired up:

MCCALLAN (CONT'D)
This is huge. The White House is saying we reacted to an "imaginary problem?" Wait 'til we prove this is the first homegrown case of Mad Cow, nothing imaginary about it. Ferrari unleashes a monster press conference -- boom -- the White House can suck it.

SHERMAN
(looks at him)
What about the hole in his skull?

McCallan's face falls.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
That's what we're talking about. We're talking about drilling a hole in a nineteen-year-old boy's skull and cutting out a piece of his brain. Asking his father to let us do that to his son -- to confirm a diagnosis for which there is no treatment and no cure.

MCCALLAN
(beat)
His doctors have no alternative diagnosis. And with Mad Cow... you have the entire country to think about. Statistically, one patient...

SHERMAN
There's never one patient. There are fathers and mothers and sisters and friends and they're all affected.

MCCALLAN
(seeing this cuts deep)
I'm... I...

SHERMAN
In the O.R., there's that moment right before you operate -- you disconnect, cut off, go technical, and the patient's not a human being anymore -- it's all ventricles and vessels. You have to or you'd be paralyzed with fear. It has to happen in there. Don't let it happen to you out here.
(beat)
We're not ordering a biopsy. We're asking for one.

INT. WEST VIRGINIA HOSPITAL - EXAM ROOM - DAY

Mike Harris lies on a gurney, gravely ill, semi-conscious. On the other side of the observation window, Sherman stands with a Neurosurgeon talking to Mr. Harris and Mike's Sister, Kelly.

Anguished, Mr. Harris nods *okay*.

INT. WEST VIRGINIA HOSPITAL - LATER

A flowing series of vivid shots over a soulful ballad:

-- Transport rails on Mike's gurney are raised by two Nurses.

-- Mr. Harris fights tears as he leans down, puts his hands around his son's face, whispers something to him.

-- Crying, Kelly lets go of her brother's hand as Nurses wheel him away.

-- Mr. Harris watches his son disappear down the long hallway, desperately hoping it isn't the last time he'll see him.

-- Mike is wheeled into the O.R., met by a Neurosurgery Team.

-- An electric razor SHAVES his head.

-- Orange antiseptic is spread in concentric circles over his BARE SCALP.

-- The used antiseptic pads are placed in a RED BAG marked INCINERATE ONLY.

-- The bolts of a stereotactic head frame lower to his scalp.

-- A long ELECTRIC DRILL lowers into the head frame, preparing to make the burr hole.

-- As the drill bit begins SPINNING, we drift to Sherman outside the room, looking in. A sacred silence.

EXT. HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

CHYRON: Detroit, Michigan

Ferrari pulls up in a rental car. Looks for an address, parks.

INT. HOUSING COMPLEX - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ferrari takes a deep breath, rings the doorbell to an apartment. The door unlocks, opens, revealing a bereft, exhausted looking woman, BARBARA JAMISON (40).

FERRARI
Mrs. Jamison -- Thank you so much for seeing me.

Mrs. Jamison wearily gestures to Ferrari to come in --

INT. HOUSING COMPLEX - APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ferrari steps into the cramped living room, where a LITTLE GIRL is scooped up by a second WOMAN and hauled to the kitchen in the b.g. Guarded, Mrs. Jamison turns to Ferrari as they sit:

MRS. JAMISON
You said <u>five minutes</u>...

FERRARI
(nods, then)
I'm very sorry about your husband.

MRS. JAMISON
...I finally thought we were safe. After four and a half years on that list, waiting to get him a transplant. Praying our number would come up, worrying every day it would be too late...

FERRARI
It must've been awful.

Mrs. Jamison nods -- *it was*.

FERRARI (CONT'D)
That's what we're trying to bring an end to for all the people in this chain. And you happen to be the linchpin of the whole thing. Without your incredibly rare HLA, seventeen people won't get the transplants they desperately need.

Mrs. Jamison digests this. The phone RINGS. The Woman in the kitchen answers.

MRS. JAMISON
That's the funeral home. I can't even afford the flowers for the service.

FERRARI
I know you're concerned about the cost of medical care you might need. But complications from kidney donation are extremely rare. And just to remove all financial concern, we've gotten a private foundation to cover any medical expenses related to your donating.

MRS. JAMISON
I have a daughter. Who's got no father now... I can't...

Ferrari digs in, taking out a PHOTO.

FERRARI
This man, David Messler, donated his kidney -- the organ that failed to reach your husband in time. He donated so that his younger brother would receive a kidney. But his brother won't get that chance if you don't keep your commitment.

MRS. JAMISON
(beat)
I just can't...

Ferrari looks as steely as we've seen her, but then something unexpected: she softens, suddenly fighting deep emotion.

FERRARI
I lost my best friend. And it never should have happened... A different problem, but totally preventable, just like this... And I will do anything to save another person from going through that. From seventeen people going through that.

Mrs. Jamison is moved to tears. Looks swayed. Then, resolved:

MRS. JAMISON
No.

Off Ferrari, crushed...

INT. HOUSING COMPLEX - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ferrari looks hollow as the door to Mrs. Jamison's apartment closes behind her and locks. For a moment, she just stands there, shell-shocked.

She slowly walks to the elevator, rings.

A door opens behind her, and she turns to see the other Woman (ANN) who was in the apartment. In close-up we see Ann resembles Mrs. Jamison.

ANN
I heard what you said to my sister... All those people. I don't have any kids. I know she and I are the same blood type. Don't know if my kidney's the same, but I'll do it.

A flicker of hope for Ferrari.

INT. OSG - BULLPEN - NIGHT

McCallan walks, listening to Coltrane on the latest red chrome headphones. He lifts one up, hearing a STAFFER call his name.

STAFFER
Doctor McCallan -- latest CDC epidemic maps.

McCallan takes the maps, paging through as he walks.

He rounds a corner and sees Fischer peering into the Research Lab at Wyatt, clearly enamored.

Fischer reaches for the door, then hesitates, reconsidering.

McCallan approaches him from behind.

MCCALLAN
"He who hesitates is lost"...

Fischer turns, unpsyched that McCallan has seen this. Angsty:

FISCHER
He who hesitates is me...

MCCALLAN
Enough with the overthink. Just put it out there. A little spontaneity.

FISCHER
It's funny, you know what isn't a big spontaneity booster? When you spontaneously buy a ring and spontaneously propose to your
(MORE)

FISCHER (CONT'D)
girlfriend of two years and she spontaneously says she’s moving out.

MCCALLAN
(sympathetic)
It’s been nine months, Fish. Gotta shake that off, get your game on.

FISCHER
Yeah, well, we don't all have game. Some of us are without game. We're <u>sans</u> game.

McCallan shakes his head. As he starts away:

MCCALLAN
She’d be lucky, bro.

He heads off. His Assistant, Tess, hurries over to him.

TESS
The lab’s on the phone with Mike Harris’s biopsy results.

McCallan hustles into his office, decorated with photos of his work fighting epidemics in exotic places. He hits speakerphone:

MCCALLAN
It’s McCallan --

LAB TECHNICIAN (V.O.)
We ran the full assay for VCJD. The biopsy is negative.

MCCALLAN
(shocked, grabs the phone)
Negative for Mad Cow?

McCallan racks his brain -- W*hat else could this possibly be*?

INT. OSG - SHERMAN’S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sherman rolls up his sleeves. Literally. Slaps on a fresh nicotine patch, declaring:

SHERMAN
No one’s leaving this room ‘til we know what the hell this thing is.

He looks at McCallan and Wyatt. Wyatt is confounded. McCallan is still in disbelief. He’s lost in his own thoughts, frustrated:

MCCALLAN
Every symptom was textbook Mad Cow. I still don’t --

SHERMAN
Hey -- get your brain out of reverse. Need you looking forward.

WYATT
(shrugs)
Maybe it's not foodborne.

MCCALLAN
I've ruled out every other clinicopathologic category -- neoplastic, metabolic, anything immune-mediated. It's not Mad Cow, but I still say this is a foodborne disease.

WYATT
But like what? Listeria? Toxoplasmosis? Parasites like toxo only become life-threatening in people who already had a weakened immune system. This kid was previously healthy.

MCCALLAN
I know.

McCallan sighs -- *that's what's so at odds.*

SHERMAN
What is the latest on Mike?

MCCALLAN
Fischer's at the hospital now. Said Mike was in Post-Op, but too early to tell if the biopsy caused any complications.

INT. WEST VIRGINIA HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sounds of a STRUGGLE. Hospital Orderlies restrain Mr. Harris, who tries to push past them, DISTRAUGHT:

MR. HARRIS
NO! NO!

Nearby, Fischer, ANGUISHED, is on his cell phone.

FISCHER
Put me through.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OSG - SHERMAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sherman, McCallan, and Wyatt anxiously huddle around the speakerphone.

SHERMAN
Don't tell me he lapsed into coma...

FISCHER
(grim)
No.

Sherman knows that tone of voice -- *Oh God, the kid's dead.*

Fischer looks into a hospital room -- FISCHER'S POV: Mike looks like death, but <u>he is alive, if barely</u>. You can see his arm jerk sporadically.

FISCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He's conscious.

Sherman, McCallan, and Wyatt breathe in RELIEF.

BACK to FISCHER'S POV: PAN FROM Mike, his ARM JERKING, to HIS PREGNANT SISTER lying in a different bed, <u>HER ARM JERKING</u>, as Doctors rush in to deliver care.

FISCHER (O.S) (CONT'D)
It's his sister.

Off Sherman, McCallan and Wyatt faced with this nightmare...

<u>END OF ACT TWO</u>

ACT THREE

INT. OSG - SHERMAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sherman is in action mode with McCallan and Wyatt.

SHERMAN
Whatever this thing is, a brother and a sister don't just happen to present with the same neurologic symptoms two days apart. Whatever he was exposed to, she was too.

WYATT
(to McCallan)
Maybe you were right -- could easily be foodborne, if they both ate the same thing.

MCCALLAN
And the sister's pregnant, which means she's immunocompromised. Weak immune system fits with a parasite diagnosis.

WYATT
But the brother was healthy before. And no domestic parasite causes life-threatening illness to...

She stops cold -- an ALARMING conclusion dawns on her.

WYATT (CONT'D)
It's a foreign parasite.

MCCALLAN
Yeah... We should start them both on broad-spectrum anti-parasitic medication. That could slow the progression of the disease. But there are hundreds of species of human parasites --

WYATT
138 nematoda, 113 digenea, 3 turbellaria and --

MCCALLAN
("easy, nerd")
Yeah, okay sure. The point is effective treatment requires knowing which one it is in order to kill it.

SHERMAN
Well, I know one thing. The kid's never left the country, so he didn't go to the parasite. The parasite came to him.

WYATT
And just one can reproduce millions of times.

SHERMAN
(nods “exactly”)
So there gotta be more cases somewhere...

INT. OSG - BULLPEN - NIGHT

A dozen RESEARCHERS at their computers filter through recent CDC PATIENT HISTORIES, passing relevant cases to McCallan and Wyatt. Sherman conducts the orchestra:

SHERMAN
When you can’t solve a big problem, make the problem bigger. I want any case with symptoms similar to the Harris siblings’. Not just undiagnosed cases. Look for misdiagnoses. Anything that could be part of this cluster.

A TIME LAPSE of the HIVE OF ACTIVITY buzzing late into night:

Lists of patients’ symptoms, differential diagnoses, and treatments DISSOLVE into one another as McCallan and Wyatt devour the files they’re handed.

They discard one after another, finding no link, intensity giving way to frustration.

Researchers down coffee. Refill coffee. Pore over more patient histories. Hand off case after case. Painstaking work. Until...

...McCallan, bleary-eyed, flips between several printouts of patient histories, suddenly onto something:

MCCALLAN
Okay... Okay... Sonofabitch.

He hustles over to Sherman. Wyatt follows.

MCCALLAN (CONT’D)
Six cases in three states, all with the same early-stage symptoms as the Harrises. All misdiagnosed. Look at the patients’ food inventories.

McCallan shows the files to Sherman and Wyatt.

MCCALLAN (CONT’D)
Four of them have something in common: Burgers -- from our friends at Becker Foods.

SHERMAN
Time to get a court order.

INT. OSG - COMPUTER LAB (“KIDNEY GROUND CONTROL”) - MORNING

On the giant LCD, a computer program is analyzing the antigen type of the new potential donor. Myaskovsky turns to Ferrari:

MYASKOVSKY
Six antigens determine if one person’s kidney is compatible with another or if organ will be rejected. Here are Barbara Jamison’s:

We see on the monitor: A2, A30, B8, B70, DR3, DR8.

MYASKOVSKY (CONT’D)
For her sister to take her place in chain, we look for those six markers to match. Program is determining her antigen type now.

FERRARI
Statistically, what are our chances?

MYASKOVSKY
In siblings, chances of identical match are one in four.

FERRARI
One in four...

Ferrari nods, solemn, *a lot of lives riding on those odds*.

FERRARI (CONT’D)
What do Russians do for good luck?

MYASKOVSKY
Leave Russia.

Ferrari smiles as Myaskovsky points to the monitor, pleased --

MYASKOVSKY (CONT’D)
Look. First marker is a match.

We see “A2” and “A2” displayed below it. They watch with bated breath, as we see the <u>results drop in</u> one by one like reels on a casino slot machine:

MYASKOVSKY (CONT’D)
So is the second. And the third... four, yes... Come on... Five, five, one more...

Her heart in her mouth, Ferrari’s focus could burn a hole in the LCD as she stares waiting, praying, until...

...We see the final pair come together. <u>Six</u>.

MYASKOVSKY (CONT'D)
It is perfect match!

Ecstatic, Ferrari grabs Myaskovsky's face with both hands, plants a bruising KISS on his forehead. Shocked but delighted, he turns to her in his wheelchair as she leaves:

MYASKOVSKY (CONT'D)
Maybe we do more antigen-matching sometime...

INT. OSG - MORNING

Sherman, his 5 o'clock shadow working overtime, grabs coffee in the kitchen. Ferrari spots him from the hallway. Sympathetic:

FERRARI
You look like shit. Have you been to sleep?

He shrugs no, comes out, slugging down coffee as they walk.

FERRARI (CONT'D)
You need sleep.

SHERMAN
I need a cigarette. Trade you my kidney for one.

FERRARI
Don't need it now.

SHERMAN
Evidently. Damn.

Ferrari smiles, starts away toward her office.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
Hey, Lydia... Good work.

They share a look and Sherman heads off. McCallan and Wyatt anxiously hustle over.

MCCALLAN
Sir, I just spoke to the hospital -- Mike Harris has lapsed into coma and his sister is showing signs of parasitic anemia, which endangers the fetus. The broad-spectrum drugs are having limited effect and --

He gestures to Wyatt, who hands Sherman a document.

WYATT
Our court order against Becker Foods was denied.

SHERMAN
(looks, livid)
"Insufficient cause"? Did we tell the judge at least six patients in three states are critically ill? Possibly more.

WYATT
(nods, outraged)
We told him we need to test at the plant immediately to try to identify the parasite -- so those patients can get proper treatment. Had no impact.

MCCALLAN
And after last time, there's no way Becker lets us in voluntarily.

Screwed -- Sherman looks like he's about to explode. And just then, his puppy-dog Assistant has the poor sense to approach.

TED
Sir, I have the National Park Service Director holding for you again. He really wants to talk to you about the bees.

SHERMAN
(starting to lose his shit)
The Park Service wants to talk about the bees...

TED
Mm-hm.

McCallan looks concerned the puppy dog's about to get mauled.

Then, suddenly something shifts in Sherman, the vitriol draining out of him as he REALIZES SOMETHING. He turns to Wyatt.

SHERMAN
Get the Field Team ready.

WYATT
With no court order against Becker?

SHERMAN
I think he'll help us out.

Off McCallan and Wyatt, highly dubious...

INT. OSG - FERRARI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ferrari watches a TV news broadcast: The Vice President addresses a throng of Reporters outside a D.C. hospital.

KILLIAN
Before I join my daughter to be with her for her surgery, I'll just say that the medical miracle of this transplant chain is more proof that our country has the finest doctors in the world.

The news report cuts to the ANCHOR.

ANCHOR
And earlier today we spoke to a number of the upcoming transplant recipients...

NOTE: This will be real interview footage of actual recipients talking directly to camera, getting choked up:

MALE RECIPIENT (40s)
How do you say thanks enough... another person is saving your life. I'm just, it's... They're an angel.

FEMALE RECIPIENT (50s)
My son moved up his wedding to last month 'cause the doctors told me... I might not see it otherwise. Now, I'm gonna live to see my grandkids.

It's moving to see such humanity. Ferrari watches, gratified, the true compensation of this grueling government-salaried job. She turns, seeing Myaskovsky wheeling in, files on his lap.

FERRARI
The man of the hour. Hope you're gonna pour yourself a double of something tonight.

As Myaskovsky approaches, Ferrari reads his expression.

FERRARI (CONT'D)
What's the matter?

MYASKOVSKY
I was going over details of every remaining transplant to make sure no more unwelcome surprises. I discovered something: This is the date the Vice President's daughter registered for the transplant waiting list.
(hands her the file)
It is <u>two years before</u> she was first diagnosed with a renal problem according to her confidential medical chart. Look --

Myascovsky shows her the medical chart. Ferrari is troubled:

FERRARI
She registered for the kidney waiting list years before she found out she had kidney disease...

MYASKOVSKY
Vice President must have had someone at National Registry change registration date -- backdate it -- so she would skip five-year wait and go to front of the line.

Stricken, Ferrari stares at the chart. She takes a breath, turns to Myaskovsky:

FERRARI
Thank you. I'll handle it.

MYASKOVSKY
(looks at her, dissatisfied)
Someone else should be getting transplant she is about to receive. We must tell --

FERRARI
(interrupts, firm)
I'll handle it. Anything else?

Off Myaskovsky looking at Ferrari uneasily...

EXT. BECKER FOODS PROCESSING PLANT - DAY

HERDS of BLACK ANGUS are unloaded from trailers. WORKERS begin SPRAYING down the cattle.

Sherman, flanked by McCallan and Wyatt, approach Charles Becker. Becker takes Sherman in.

BECKER
(mocking)
The Surgeon General. In uniform...

SHERMAN
My daughter says it makes me look like a flight attendant.

Sherman's unassuming manner takes Becker by surprise.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
Mr. Becker, we need to test your plant for this parasite. People are going to die if we don't.

BECKER
Like they were going to die of Mad Cow last time? That little fiasco cost me twenty-two million dollars.

SHERMAN
That was an unfortunate consequence.

BECKER
Yes it was. Speaking of which, I understand you ran into some problems with a Veterans bill you had high hopes for.

Sherman notes this, doesn't respond.

BECKER (CONT'D)
And now you want to test, but you don't have a court order. That Judge Hendricks from the Fourth Circuit can be tough. Especially off the tee. I play eighteen holes with him over at Bethesda couple Sundays a month.

Wyatt and McCallan react -- *are you fucking kidding me?* Becker looks Sherman over with a condescending smile.

BECKER (CONT'D)
You're new to the job. But you'll learn how the levers of power operate.

Sherman's team can barely stand to watch this emasculation. Sherman doesn't lose his cool though, just nods:

SHERMAN
I'm sure I could learn a thing or two about politics. Or business...

BECKER
First thing you better learn is there isn't any difference.

SHERMAN
Does seem that way an awful lot. And you're right I am new to the job. I mean, until a few months ago, I didn't even know what the Surgeon General did. I thought he just went around telling everyone don't smoke, don't eat like a pig, and that was it. Might've preferred that. But it turns out the Commission Corps that reports to me has officers in the Park Service. This problem with the bees -- all the bees that are disappearing, no one knows why -- that's my problem.

Becker stares. McCallan glances at Wyatt -- Has he *lost* it?

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
I have Commission Corps officers in The Indian Health Service. Department of Mental Health. Toxic Substances.
(looks at his watch)
Immigration. The Coast Guard. Let me think what else...

BECKER
I don't know how a crackpot like you got the job, but I'll tell ya --

KKKSSHH! A LOUD and STRANGE SOUND. Becker bellows to a WORKER:

BECKER (CONT'D)
The hell was that?

WORKER
Sounded like the refrigeration --

A different WORKER, holding a SPRAYER that's RUN DRY, yells:

SPRAYER WORKER
All the water's off!

SHERMAN
Oh right. Water -- knew I forgot one -- the EPA -- got guys over there, too. In fact, we're starting an environmental study in the area. Probably a few days before we can switch the water back on... could be more, could be less...

McCallan and Wyatt look at Sherman -- *Holy. Shit.*

Becker stiffens.

BECKER
Are you blackmailing me*?*

SHERMAN
I'm just telling ya how the levers of water and power operate...

Off Becker, outmaneuvered, and Sherman, unblinking...

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. BECKER FOODS PROCESSING PLANT - DAY

Over music, a SERIES OF ENERGETIC CUTS: Sherman, McCallan and Wyatt direct an army of FIELD TEAM TECHS who COLLECT and EXAMINE samples from every corner of the plant: MEAT from grinders, processors, hide-strippers, etc. SWABS from the pneumatic bolt guns, the cooling vents, the bathrooms, the storage rooms. They SCOUR the place.

INT. BECKER FOODS PROCESSING PLANT - LATER

Wyatt and McCallan approach Sherman, distressed.

WYATT
We found E.coli and enterococci in two of the grinders and in the bathrooms, but no parasite.

MCCALLAN
The cooling vents are filthy -- full of listeria. But no parasite.

SHERMAN
Well keep looking. The longer this takes, the closer that kid is to brain death.

WYATT
There's nowhere else to test. I even looked at the blueprints of the plant to be sure.

Blood pressure rising, Sherman thinks.

SHERMAN
Alright, forget the plant. I want to talk to the workers.

INT. BECKER FOODS PROCESSING PLANT - MOMENTS LATER

As Workers gather, Sherman thinks aloud to Wyatt and McCallan.

SHERMAN
Work conditions here are a time-bomb for something like this. Of course we found E.coli -- these guys get no scheduled breaks -- barely have time to wash their hands when they use the bathroom.

WYATT
What about the enterococci? It's usually found in ice.

SHERMAN
Don't see any fans -- gotta be hot as hell in here in the summer. Guys probably put ice on the back of their necks to stay cool -- it's dripping in the grinders. The question is what else they're bringing in --

He turns to the dozens of WORKERS assembled. Lot of big boys.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
You guys get no lunch break. What do you do about food?

WORKER #1
(parroting the company line)
No food or perishables of any kind are allowed on the processing floor. It's a contamination risk.

SHERMAN
Well, not everyone here is exactly model-thin and with no breaks -- you gotta be eating something in here.

WORKER #2
(reluctant)
We eat packaged snacks -- Powerbar, beef jerky -- but nothing fresh like fruit that could cause bacteria.

Sherman thinks. Half-smiles, a question occurring to him:

SHERMAN
Who here smokes?

Some hands go up.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
So what do you do? You can't take a smoke break...

WORKER #3
I chew the nicotine gum.

McCallan looks over the smokers. He EYES one in particular who looks UNWELL, a familiar muscle rigidity to his posture.

McCallan turns Sherman's attention to him.

SHERMAN
You raised your hand. What do you do?

The Worker hesitates.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
You're not going ten hours without something -- I sure as hell can't.

The Worker pulls out a TIN of CHEWING TOBACCO.

WORKER #4
I take a pinch every couple hours to get through my shift.

Sherman takes the tin -- we see it's strangely marked.

SHERMAN
Where's this from?

WORKER #4
Honduras. My cousin sends it to me.

Honduras... Sherman eagerly hands Wyatt the tin. She opens it:

With the naked eye we see nothing but chewing tobacco.

Wyatt examines it with her handheld digital microscope --

MICROSCOPE POV: HUNDREDS of PARASITES WRIGGLING, EGGS BURSTING.

WYATT
Jackpot.

Off Sherman's immense relief...

INT. OSG - RESEARCH LAB - DAY

Wyatt examines a sample under a light microscope. Next to her, on his laptop, McCallan writes up the case. Fischer walks in.

FISCHER
Go ahead, give me one more thing to keep me up at night. What was it?

WYATT
Take a look.

FISCHER
Nope. Not a chance.

WYATT
(smiles)
It was a nematode, a roundworm. If you look, you'll see they have six lips, no stomach, and the males are smaller than the females. They're actually my second favorite parasite.

Fischer finds this cute. McCallan's like -- *Good God*...

WYATT (CONT'D)
And get this -- a parasite surviving in tobacco... it's actually a perfect storm. Chemically, tobacco's a toxin, it kills most parasites. But the ones it doesn't kill become stronger... Super-parasites.

MCCALLAN
That's why it was so virulent... The Honduran worker would've built up some basic resistance growing up, but someone like Mike Harris with no prior exposure -- sitting duck.

FISCHER
So what's the prognosis?

MCCALLAN
Mike, his sister, the other six patients -- they're all starting a course of albendazole and pyrantel pamoate. Time will tell...
(grabs his laptop)
My work complete, I will leave you to your "lab work" with Wyatt.

Nettled, Fischer gives McCallan a look.

MCCALLAN (CONT'D)
(aside to Fischer, exiting)
Dude, she's mildly autistic and you're shy as hell. Gotta throw some gas on the grill...

INT. OSG - SHERMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Two folders are open on Sherman's desk: the Vice President's Daughter's medical chart and her National Kidney Registry file.

Sherman looks at them, stunned by the magnitude of the Vice President's abuse of power.

SHERMAN
No...

He looks up at Ferrari. She nods. Sherman is apoplectic.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
You got to be kidding me. How did this happen? When did this happen?

FERRARI
(unapologetic)
I found out this morning.

SHERMAN
This morning? Before his daughter got the transplant?

FERRARI
Yes.

SHERMAN
And you didn't tell me? -- What the hell were you thinking, Lydia? I stood up and said this is what this country is all about -- regular people sharing the sacrifice. How could you not tell me?

FERRARI
'Cause I knew what you'd do.

SHERMAN
I would have stopped it. Exposed him.

FERRARI
(nods)
You would've destroyed the rest of the chain, ended the Vice President's career -- and in so doing, ended yours.

SHERMAN
That was my call to make!

FERRARI
I made a promise.

SHERMAN
You made a promise to who? To the White House? To the Vice President? To the President? To who?!

FERRARI
To her...

Ferrari points to the PHOTO of Sherman's WIFE, KATHERINE. This stops Sherman cold. He looks at Ferrari searchingly.

FERRARI (CONT'D)
Katherine made me promise.
(shakes her head)
Only person in the world more goddamn stubborn than you... The last thing she said to me was to look out for you.

A long beat.

SHERMAN
(an apology)
That's the real reason I have a softball glued to my desk...

ANGLE ON THE SOFTBALL.

Ferrari nods.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
Well, good thing it can't go anywhere.

FERRARI
(shrugs)
Superglue.

SHERMAN
Yeah.

He puts his hand on the softball. It's a poignant moment between them. Sherman takes a breath.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
So what do we do with this?

He points to the files on his desk.

FERRARI
We celebrate the fact that eighty-four people received life-saving kidney transplants, that, as a result, record numbers of new donors are signing up, and you don't shit in this punchbowl. Instead --
(takes the file)
You hold this card, you privately let the Vice President know that you hold it and that if he doesn't get behind IVF for Veterans -- and start honoring his original promise to you -- you'll dust this off and jam it up his ass.

Beat.

SHERMAN
I think I can play that kinda ball...

INT. OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL (OSG) - DAY

Over music, POV shots of the team at work as Sherman heads out:

McCallan taking down an epidemic map of the parasite cases.

Myaskovsky marking the last kidney patient as "Completed."

Fischer and Wyatt in the lab connecting -- over the nematode.

EXT. OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL (OSG) - DAY

Sherman walks out, meeting up with his daughter, Lily. She's not excited to be here.

SHERMAN
Hey.

LILY
You're seriously gonna make me watch motorcycle crash tests.

SHERMAN
Pulled a string over at the Highway Safety Administration, they're gonna let you sit in.

Lily shakes her head, *unbelievable*.

They walk down the street and Sherman approaches a hideous-looking maroon USED STATION WAGON. He unlocks the driver door.

LILY
Why are you driving this piece of crap?

SHERMAN
I'm not.

He holds the door open, dangles the keys.

LILY
Really? Oh my god, it's amazing! I love it. I just didn't get a good look at it before.

SHERMAN
Yeah yeah.

Lily checks out the car, ecstatic. Off Sherman, gratified despite himself...

INT. WEST VIRGINIA HOSPITAL - DUSK

M.O.S. SEQUENCE over music:

A sea of Medical Staff move through the hallway.

At the far end, Sherman appears, walks toward us, his Navy blues a striking contrast to the white lab coats and white walls. Doctors and Nurses take note of him as he passes.

Sherman approaches a PATIENT ROOM, looks through the window:

Mr. Harris is LAUGHING, the first time we've seen him not looking anguished.

Sherman is pleased. He opens the door and walks in. Mr. Harris looks up at him, grateful.

Sherman heads further into the room, where we see Harris's daughter, Kelly, looking healthy. She smiles at him.

Sherman turns to the bed next to her, and we see her brother, Mike -- he has multiple IVs in his arms and looks exhausted, but he's back to life.

Sherman puts a hand on Mike's shoulder, nods he'll be alright.

A PLUMP NURSE comes to change the IV -- Sherman starts to go.

MIKE
(hazy)
Is that guy my doctor?

NURSE
Honey, he's America's Doctor...
(under her breath, watching Sherman go)
...Mmm. And he's fine...

EXT. WEST VIRGINIA HOSPITAL - DUSK

Music rises as the hospital's double doors slide open and Sherman emerges.

Something catches his eye: A bunch of Doctors, Nurses and Staff stand nearby SMOKING.

Sherman walks over, stops a few feet away, lingering in a CLOUD of CIGARETTE SMOKE. He breathes it in deeply, savoring it, the first free moment he's had in thirty-six hours... When his cell phone RINGS. He looks, answers it:

SHERMAN
Yeah...

And while we don't hear what this latest crisis is, we recognize that laser-focus in his eyes.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
Anyone injured?
(listens)
I'm on my way.

Sherman blows through frame, the doctor on call to a nation...

END OF PILOT