

An Unlikely Truth

Screenplay by John Rachel

Copyright © 2014

OPENING CREDITS OVER ...

MULTIPLE SHORT SHOTS:

MARTIN TRUTH is running for U.S. Congress over the previous six years. There are banners and signs, indicating which campaign year it is.

EXT/INT: DAYTON, OHIO – DAY/NIGHT

OPENING: It's 2008 and Martin is on a sidewalk with a few volunteers handing out fliers. No one is taking them.

NEXT: Martin is at the door of a house trying to introduce himself. Owner slams door in his face.

NEXT: Martin is crammed in a small room with a handful of dispirited supporters. TV reports incumbent Matt Gardner wins the election by a landslide, Martin gets 211 votes.

NEXT: It's 2010 and Martin is riding in a convertible which is decorated with bumper stickers, campaign posters, crepe paper and balloons. The convertible gets a flat and Martin has to help change the tire.

NEXT: Martin is standing by a huge pile of boxes, holding up a new campaign t-shirt. It says 'Martin Tooth for Congress'.

NEXT: Martin is in a park on a small stage speaking.

MARTIN

Thank you all for coming today.

New camera angle shows three kids playing in front of the stage. There are many empty chairs. One man is fast asleep, two people are eating out of a picnic basket, ignoring him.

NEXT: It's 2012. Martin is in a dunk-the-clown booth with a 'Martin Truth For Congress – 2012' sign over it. Some kid fires a fastball, hits the bull's-eye, Martin gets dunked.

NEXT: Martin is standing on a pitiful looking parade float. The hitch fails and tractor pulls away without the float.

NEXT: Martin is giving a speech in front campaign office. Street cleaner comes by and ruins his speech.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEXT: MARTIN watches election results on TV with campaign staff. Matt Gardner (R) 173,769. Chris Castiglia (D) 82,338. Peter Potts (LIB) 5,246. Martin Truth (GRN) 1,441.

MARTIN
1,441. See? We're making progress.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: WHITE VAN — DAY

MARTIN is driving, whistling, practicing a campaign speech idea he's working on. He's wearing a gray uniform, driving a delivery van for Future Perfect, a local courier service.

MARTIN (to himself)
Ladies and gentlemen. You deserve better. You deserve to have people in Congress who listen to you, not ... not fatcats taking money from Wall Street and ... and ...

INT: OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE / FUTURE PERFECT — DAY

MARTIN walks into the office of the Dispatcher, EVELYN. She has a heart of gold, face of stone, body of a rhinoceros, and there's always a cigarette in her mouth. Her voice sounds like a Harley Davidson on a cold morning.

EVELYN
How's traffic?

MARTIN
Like cholesterol at a pig roast.

Evelyn points to a huge stack of envelopes and boxes.

EVELYN
Those have to be there two hours ago.

INT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME / KITCHEN — NIGHT

MARTIN and ALISON have finished eating dinner. He's early 30s. She late 20s. He has a trimmed beard, floppy hair, and still dresses like a grad student. She is beauty salon chic and dresses like a business woman. He's reading Mother Jones Magazine, she's reading the Wall Street Journal. They have the comfortable familiarity and mutual indifference of a couple who have been together for almost a decade.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALISON

I got a promotion today.

MARTIN

I delivered an important package
to the Commander of the Air Force
Research Lab.

Martin gets up and puts his plate in the sink.

MARTIN

I'm going out.

ALISON

Where?

MARTIN

You know. Out. Opposite of in.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / CONFERENCE ROOM — NIGHT

MARTIN, Phyllis and Bill are at Martin's campaign office.
They are just getting up, collecting their stuff to leave.

MARTIN

We'll figure it out. We just haven't
quite got a handle on it.

INT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME / BEDROOM — NIGHT

MARTIN comes in, gets undressed and crawls in bed. ALISON
has her back to him.

ALISON

Who is she?

MARTIN

She?

ALISON

Your girl on the side.

MARTIN

(laughing)

You're funny. There's no one else.

Alison turns around and cuddles up to him.

ALISON

I stopped taking the pill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Martin pulls away and rolls over, closes his eyes.

MARTIN
Really long day tomorrow.

MULTIPLE SHOTS:

EXT: DAYTON, OHIO - DAY

OPENING: We see Martin driving Future Perfect delivery van. Camera pulls away for wide sweeping aerial shot of Dayton.

NEXT: Wright-Patterson AFB with planes taking off, military men all around, researchers in high-tech labs.

NEXT: Life in the less wonderful parts of town.

NEXT: Life in chic suburbs. Shopping malls, hospitals, schools, parks, community centers.

CROSSFADE:

EXT: EXECUTIVE OFFICE BLDG / BANK OF AMERICA - DAY

MARTIN is standing outside waiting. ALISON comes out.

MARTIN
I don't understand. How can you work here? They're predators. The absolute worst. Matt Taibi called them the vampire squid.

ALISON
That was Goldman Sachs.

MARTIN
Whatever. B of A is ripping a new asshole in the American Dream.

ALISON
I'm doing something with my life. You should try it sometime.

INT: SHOPPING MALL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MARTIN and ALISON are strolling, glancing in shop windows.

ALISON
You know my friend, Monica? At work? She's pregnant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

Just what the world needs. Another
Republican mouth to feed.

They pass a couple pushing a stroller.

ALISON

Babies are so cute.

They come up on a pet store.

MARTIN

We'll get a kitten. They're cute.

ALISON

Martin. My biological clock is
ticking. We already talked about
this.

MARTIN

You're 28. It's not like you're
staring into the moribund abyss of
menopause.

EXT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME — DAY — CONTINUOUS

MARTIN and ALISON get out of their car, walk toward door.

ALISON

Look at this house. It's perfect.
We've even got an extra room.

MARTIN

I'm just ... I don't ...

Alison gets romantic and sexy with Martin.

ALISON

Come on, Martin. Just say yes.

Suddenly she starts tickling him, getting the best of him.
He can't stop laughing.

MARTIN

Okay! Okay! I surrender.

ALISON

Okay? Really?

Alison starts swirling around dancing.

CROSSFADE:

INT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME / LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

There's a fire in the fireplace. MARTIN and ALISON are looking at a photo album from their college days.

ALISON
We were so young.

MARTIN
Good grief! It wasn't that long ago.

CLOSE-UP: Photos of them at political rallies.

- 1) Martin is giving a speech with Alison cheering him on.
- 2) Martin is in a group being attacked by campus police. Alison is in the background looking horrified.
- 3) They're both sitting on the pavement with their arms locked with several other protesters, with a sign that says 'No blood for oil!'

ALISON
So much has changed.

MARTIN
So much hasn't.

ALISON
Exactly.

MARTIN
Meaning?

ALISON
You tried so hard, wanted to fix things. But what's happened? Nothing at all. In fact, things are worse. More war. More corruption. More money in politics. The rich are richer, the poor poorer.

MARTIN
So we give up? We wave the white flag?

ALISON
No. We fight battles we can win.

MARTIN
There was only one battle I couldn't win. My step-father ... my mom ... Never again. I made my decision.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALISON
Or the decision made you.

MARTIN
'A different world cannot be built
by indifferent people.'

ALISON
Maybe it's about creating new hope
by creating new life. Raising our
children with the right values, so
they can go on and make a difference
in the world.

MARTIN
What about making a world worth
bringing a child into.

ALISON
If we waited for that, no one would
ever have kids.

They look at one another. There's a lot of love. But there
is also distance. Martin is exasperated. Alison determined.

EXT: COFFEE HOUSE / 'SOLID GROUNDS' - DAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

Martin parks Future Perfect van in front. Runs in.

INT: COFFEE HOUSE / 'SOLID GROUNDS' - DAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

Bill is Martin's campaign manager. He is in his 40s, an
all around good guy, funny and optimistic, owner of Solid
Grounds, a hip local coffee house and hang out. He shows
Martin the new 'Martin Truth For Congress - 2014' poster.
Both are excited and laughing. Martin rushes back out.

INT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MARTIN arrives late. There's a Christmas party going on with
several friends. People are talking, drinking, having fun.
Martin quickly takes his briefcase into the other room.

NICHOLAS
Late for his own Christmas party.

ALISON
Martin's an important guy. He had to
put gas in his delivery truck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Martin comes back in. Kent gives him a big hug. Holds up his glass for a toast.

KENT

To our very own next congressman.

ALISON

(under her breath)

I don't think so.

LATER: Everyone is exchanging presents. Martin gives Alison a beautiful necklace. She hugs and kisses him.

VALERIE

Hey, this is a family affair. No tongues, you two.

ALISON

Listen, everyone. You're all my best friends and I have some very special news. Martin and I are going to have a baby.

JULIE

You're pregnant? Oh my god, that's--

LUCAS

Wow! Martin figured out what his wingy dingy is for? Go, Martin!

Martin is smiling but obviously uncomfortable.

MARTIN

Well, not exactly ...

LUCAS

So you haven't figured out what your wingy dingy is for.

ALISON

What I meant was, we're going to get married and start trying. It's time.

VALERIE

Oh my god! This is so exciting!

KENT

Martin. Can I be your best man? I mean, if Ralph Nader can't make it.

MARTIN

We're ... uh, still working out the details.

INT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME BEDROOM – NIGHT

MARTIN and ALISON are getting undressed to go to bed.

MARTIN

Aren't you getting a little ahead of yourself? Do I get some say in any of this?

ALISON

What are you afraid of? You don't want to have kids?

MARTIN

There's over seven billion people living in this world. A terrifying world at that, which lately seems bent on destroying every living thing on the planet. And you want to pop another one into the pile.

ALISON

We're not living in Bangladesh.

MARTIN

The way the economy is heading, we might be better off there.

ALISON

Let's not argue. We both want the same things.

MARTIN

Not necessarily in the same order.

CROSSFADE:

EXT: CITY STREET / GARDNER'S CAMPAIGN OFFICE – DAY

Congressman MATT GARDNER is handsome, built like a star athlete, always with a confident, chemically-whitened smile. He is standing below a huge banner 'Matt Gardner, For A Strong, Proud America'.

MATT GARDNER

It has been my honor to represent the fine, decent people of Dayton and the surrounding area for almost ten years now. Today, my friends, I am here to officially announce I will be running for a sixth term as your congressman. What a great nation! Together, there is nothing we can't accomplish. Thank you everyone! And God bless America!

INT: NEWSROOM STUDIO SET / WHIO-TV — NIGHT

It's SCOTT MacFARLANE of WHIO-TV News Center 7 Washington correspondent. Backdrop is a photo of Congress.

SCOTT MacFARLANE

Dayton's Congressman Matt Gardner is certainly no stranger to controversy. His entire political career, going back to his days as mayor of this city, have been plagued by rumors of kickbacks, influence peddling, misuse of campaign funds, even charges of sexual harassment. But nothing ever seems to tarnish the glittery gleam of his image with the voters. His approval rating is currently at 78%, among the highest in the nation. Now on the heels of the announcement you just heard that he's seeking a 6th term as our congressman, comes yet another flap, this one involving a highly sophisticated but contentious missile defense system, which Gardner is personally sponsoring.

CUT TO: Senator AL FRANKEN's public statement.

AL FRANKEN

This is a boondoggle. Why do we need a missile defense system against North Korea? North Korea can barely get a missile off the ground. This is just more money to line the pockets of this congressman's buddies at Raytheon and Lockheed Martin.

CUT TO: Senator BERNIE SANDERS' public statement.

BERNIE SANDERS

Putting aside specific merits of a missile defense shield against the North Koreans, the simple truth is Mr. Gardner needs to consult a map. He's talking about spending hundreds of billions of tax payer dollars to build this colossal cluster of missile interceptors on the East Coast. Last I checked, North Korea was west of the United States. Mr. Gardner's missile defense system is pointing in the wrong direction.

BACK TO: Newsroom studio set.

SCOTT MacFARLANE

Gardner says this should not be about politics, and is strongly defending his proposal.

CUT TO: MATT GARDNER being interviewed on Fox News.

MATT GARDNER

This is not a time to be penny wise and pound foolish. I don't want to be standing there looking at a huge crater where Washington DC or Dayton, Ohio once was, asking myself why I ever listened to these flower power politicians who think we can just wish away the enemies of this nation. The North Koreans are crazy. Meaning we're even crazier if we ignore the threat that they pose to us and the American way of life. I will stop at nothing, I will spare no amount of energy and dedication, to keep my community and my country safe from terrorist rogue nations and psychotic dictators like Kim Buk Too, or whatever the hell his name is.

WHIO-TV then plays a montage of video footage of Gardner with his beautiful wife and perfect kids in a park, at a family picnic, at church, Gardner playing with the dog in their yard, then him throwing out the first ball at a little league game with doting parents looking on.

SCOTT MacFARLANE

(as V/O)

Congressman Matt Gardner is sometimes called the Teflon candidate. And for good reason. He's been under assault by his opponents, sometimes even members of his own party, for too long to remember. But none of it ever sticks. The one thing that does seem to stick is the love he inspires among the voters here in Ohio.

BACK TO: Newsroom studio set. Big reporter smile.

SCOTT MacFARLANE cont.

That's it for tonight from the nation's capitol. I'm Scott MacFarlane.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME / LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

ALISON is sitting on the couch, brooding and angry. MARTIN enters in a rush, carrying two paper bags.

MARTIN

Sorry I'm late. I brought Chinese.

He tries to give her a kiss. She throws an envelope at him. It's an approval letter from the Registrar of Voters Office, for Martin to run again for congress.

ALISON

You fucking asshole! Why didn't you tell me?

MARTIN

Come on, Alison. I can't just quit. Not yet. I was going to say some--

ALISON

Right. When? You are a total wimp-ass. Why did I trust you?

MARTIN

It's just this one last go at it. I think I have a chance this--

ALISON

You are delusional! Totally fucking delusional. You can't win. You won't win. What is the point?

MARTIN

The point is taking a stand. If we don't try--

ALISON

I'm sure glad we don't have kids. They'd be retarded!

MARTIN

Okay okay. I knew you'd be upset. But let's not go saying things you'll regret later.

ALISON

Now that's something we can agree on. In fact right now I'm going to say something which I will never regret. GOOD-BYE!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Alison storms into the bedroom and comes back out with a suitcase. She slams the door on the way out of the house. Martin sits there stunned.

LATER: Various rooms the Single Family Home.

Martin is drinking a beer with the TV on in the living room. NEXT: Martin is sitting at the table in the kitchen, head in hands. NEXT: Martin in bedroom, can't sleep. NEXT: Martin on back porch drinking whiskey from a bottle. NEXT: Martin passed out in front of his home office computer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE / FUTURE PERFECT — DAY

MARTIN comes in looking like walking death. EVELYN has two cigarettes lit and is eating an apple fritter.

EVELYN

You look terrible. If you need a bone marrow transplant, I'll put a notice in the employee newsletter.

MARTIN

I'm on a hunger strike. I'm protesting 7-11 jacking up the price of their corn dogs.

EVELYN

Well damn, Marty. Good for you. Now that's something I can get behind. Seriously, though. You gonna tell me what's going on with you?

MARTIN

My girl left. It shouldn't have come as a surprise. We were still in our trial period.

EVELYN

How long were you together?

MARTIN

Nine-and-a-half years.

EVELYN

I'm here for you, young man. If you need to talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

I'll hit you up on citizens band.

EVELYN

I mean it.

MARTIN

I know. I'm just being a snide and ungrateful butthead. That's probably why she left me.

EVELYN

Why did she leave you?

MARTIN

I didn't want to start a family. Not while my career is blossoming here.

EVELYN

(without irony)

I can see your point. It's taken me thirty two years to get where I'm at and I sure ain't going to throw away all of this.

She takes a long drag off her cigarette and chokes. Then she puts it out in an ashtray that hasn't been emptied in weeks, goes back to typing on her condiment-smearred keyboard. Then points at a huge stack of packages.

EVELYN cont.

All westside industrial park except for the Victoria's Secret bag. That goes to the Hilton by the airport.

INT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MARTIN is drinking beer, taking hits off a joint, watching Conan O'Brien on television. Conan is leering at the tits of some HOLLYWOOD BIMBO.

HOLLYWOOD BIMBO

Hey, what's the deal? You're not at all interested in what I'm saying, you BAD BOY!

Martin switches channel to an infomercial for an electronic cushion for tightening flabby butts. He turns off TV.

LATER/BEDROOM: Martin is asleep but he's sweating, moaning, tossing and turning, having a nightmare.

FLASHBACK (DREAMING):

Martin is a 9-year-old boy, cowering in a corner. His mother and step-father are having a fight. His step-father, a large muscular man in a military uniform, is beating his mother savagely. Martin jumps in and tries to stop him but is flung aside like a toy. His mother is then hit so hard, she also goes flying across the room, landing next to an end table. She reaches in and pulls out a gun. She aims but doesn't have the courage to fire. Step-father takes the gun from her and shoots her point blank in the face. Martin runs out as his step-father screams obscenities after him.

BEDROOM:

Martin wakes up, looking terrified. Takes a moment to calm himself, then from the nightstand picks up and looks at a photo. It's him as a toddler with his mother.

INT: WHITE VAN — DAY

MARTIN is driving through busy streets making deliveries for Future Perfect, while talking on his cell phone. He looks like death warmed over.

MARTIN

I'm a mess, Phyllis. I didn't know it would hit me this hard.

PHYLLIS (as V.O.)

It's fine. Take some time and get yourself together.

MARTIN

Life goes on. I can't let you guys do all of the work.

PHYLLIS (as V.O.)

Well, then come on Saturday. We've decided to bring in a heavy hitter. A consultant from Cincinnati.

MARTIN

Can we afford that?

PHYLLIS (as V.O.)

We have him on spec for the first week. You know. See if the chemistry is right. So, Saturday at 1:00 pm?

MARTIN

Saturday. 1 pm sharp.

EXT: LOADING DOCK AREA / FUTURE PERFECT — DAY

Martin pulls into Future Perfect parking lot.

INT: OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE / FUTURE PERFECT — DAY

MARTIN walks in. EVELYN looks mortified.

EVELYN

Mr. DeCorte wants to see you.

DECORTE is the chief executive. Martin steps over to his office door, starts to knock but doesn't have to.

DECORTE (O.C.)

Truth. Come in. Don't sit. You won't be long.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Martin steps in. The place is a mess. Decorte is harsh and authoritative.

MARTIN

Hi. Is there a problem?

DECORTE

Is there a problem? I have a dead man who would probably say so, if he could talk.

MARTIN

What dead man?

DECORTE

The MediVac broke down and you were supposed to deliver a kidney. Ring a bell?

MARTIN

Of course, And I took it right from the helicopter pad to the hospital.

DECORTE

They're saying it partially thawed and as a result was unusable. The patient died.

MARTIN

I did--

DECORTE

They're out for blood. As a gesture of my full cooperation in the matter I'm letting you go. Maybe they will only sue us for \$10 billion. Evelyn has your final pay check. Good day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Martin is in shock. He shuffles back out and Evelyn has an envelope for him.

EVELYN

I'm so sorry, Martin. I'm going to miss you. Take care, young man.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

MARTIN, PHYLLIS, BILL and Helen are sitting waiting at the conference table. The clock on the wall says 1:35 pm. Helen is the gofer-secretary. Phyllis is mid-50s, smart, prudent, steadfast, unflappable, no-nonsense, determined, sensible, the commander-in-chief.

MARTIN

He's late. Who is this guy?

PHYLLIS

His name is Charles Montgomery and he's out of Cincinnati.

MARTIN

Wow. Cincinnati.

BILL

He comes highly recommended. He's got a great track record.

MARTIN

Wow. Great track record.

PHYLLIS

Martin, behave.

There is a brief moment of silence.

MARTIN

I got fired.

PHYLLIS

What? Why? I know you. There's no--

Suddenly Charles MONTY Montgomery arrives like a charging bull. He's full of himself, annoyingly energetic, Type A to the power of ten, slick, confident, quick with a big phony smile. He dumps his briefcase and a pile of file folders onto the table like he's body slamming Hulk Hogan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONTY

Well well! Martin Truth. The man of the hour. Boy, am I glad I finally get to meet you! Charles Montgomery. But everyone calls me Monty.

He pumps Martin's hand in a bone-crushing handshake.

MARTIN

And I'm Martin Truth. But everyone calls me a liar.

MONTY

(phony laugh)

That's priceless. I love a good sense of humor. Unfortunately, Martin, others before you have tarnished your noble profession. In terms of public confidence, politicians rank somewhere below the Mafia and slightly above child molesters.

(quasi-reflective)

Martin Truth. Martin Truth. I gotta tell you, in it's offbeat own way, your name is perfect. I like it!

MARTIN

Whew! I am so relieved.

Phyllis shoots Martin a disciplinary look. Monty studies him almost warily.

MONTY

I can tell you're a very complex guy. It's cool. It's cool. Anyway, Martin, I've been looking at your stump speeches. And we need to hone them a bit. Trim the fat, as they say. People want things cut and dry.

MARTIN

As long as I don't end up spouting empty platitudes, I'm fine with it. And, of course, I won't misrepresent my position on anything.

MONTY

Right. Whatever. Listen, Truth. From what I'm hearing, I don't think you get it. See, it doesn't matter what the voters think you believe in. It doesn't even matter what you think

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONTY cont.

you believe in. What matters is winning the goddamn election. Winning, Martin. WINNING!

MARTIN

Winning. Wow. That never occurred to us. Did it?

Martin feigns looking clueless, obviously mocking Monty, who doesn't pick up on it and charges ahead.

MONTY

Truth, you win the goddamn election! Then you go in there and do whatever turns your crank. Fuck yes! Do the right thing, take whatever holier-than-thou stance you want. Mother Theresa and all that shit. Because now you're in charge, baby! You're in charge!

Now even Phyllis and Bill are looking noticeably horrified. Monty gathers up his materials.

MONTY cont.

So listen. I've got another meeting back in Cinci. But I wanted to meet all of you in person. You know. Get things rolling. And I have to tell ya, I'm very excited. Very excited! We got a lot done today. A lot done. Okay. Gotta go. See ya!

Monty charges out the door, smiling like a game show host. Phyllis looks defensive but stands her ground.

PHYLLIS

Listen, Martin, don't start.

MARTIN

What? I was just going to tell you how brilliant I think Monty is. How perfectly he fits in with our team. The important thing is the man has integrity. I respect that.

PHYLLIS

You don't cut anyone any slack. He was just ... just a little nervous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

Nervous? You have to be human to be nervous. That guy was a hologram.

PHYLLIS

Enough, Martin. All I'm going to say is give him a chance. We have a lot at stake here. Let's see what he's got. Everyone raves about him. Everyone I've talked to anyway.

MARTIN

At stake?

BILL

Can I say something here? Martin, you're right. Monty is a slick Willy if there ever was one. But you know, first impressions. You never know. Let's see what happens. Maybe he'll surprise us.

MULTIPLE SHOTS:

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

OPENING: Monty comes roaring in, slams piles of folders on the table. Then Martin, Phyllis, and Bill watch dumbfounded as Monty carries on, wildly gesticulating, pacing, ranting. We hear none of it, just see Monty pontificating.

NEXT: Monty comes roaring in, slams piles of folders on the table. Martin and Phyllis watch Monty's non-stop show. We hear just a snippet.

MONTY

If we get some serious money in the door, I'll tell you what. You know these Diebold e-voting machines. I know a programmer who'll send some votes your way. A lot of votes. He just needs to see the green.

When Monty turns his back, Martin feigns shooting himself.

NEXT: Monty comes roaring in, slams piles of folders on the table. Then Martin and Bill watch Monty draw a completely incomprehensible chart on a white board. Monty gets real excited about it. When Monty turns his back, Martin feigns cutting his wrists.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEXT: Martin, Phyllis and Helen are sitting looking bored and impatient. Martin's head is on the table and he appears to be asleep. Finally, Monty comes roaring in, slams a huge pile of folders on the table, tries to open his briefcase. It won't open. He gets frantic. Starts pounding on it.

MONTY

Open up, you motherfucker!

He starts slamming it against the wall. Bill arrives late and sticks his head in the door.

BILL

What's going on?

Monty goes ballistic. With one sweeping motion of his arm, he pushes all of the file folders off the table onto the floor. Then he picks the briefcase up again, as if to clobber Bill with it.

MONTY

(yelling)

I'll tell you what's going on. I'm outta here. This is a waste of time.

(pointing at Martin)

You are a total fucking loser. I don't want my name on this. I don't want to be anywhere near this shit campaign when it goes down in flames. Truth, you don't stand a chance in China. 'A' is for asshole. 'Z' is for Zanzibar. I hope the polar caps melt. Fuck you very much!

He bolts out the door. There's a moment of stunned silence. Martin looks at Phyllis doing his best to look serious.

MARTIN

How are we polling in China?

Everyone bursts out laughing. It's an uproarious, knee slapping good time.

PHYLLIS

What happened to him?

MARTIN

Bath salts. We're lucky he didn't try to eat our faces.

More laughs. Finally, they calm down. Phyllis looks pained.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPORTS BAR BABE

I gave a cop a handjob last night.
In his patrol car. Maybe you know
him.

MARTIN

I'm not a cop. I was just curious.
It seems like it might be an
occupational hazard.

SPORTS BAR BABE

Everything involves risk. I guess I
like to live dangerously. How about
you?

MARTIN

Me? Do I like to live dangerously?
Oh yeah, that's definitely me. I'm a
real Indiana Jones.

SPORTS BAR BABE

Okay then. Let's have some fun. I
promise to put a smile on that very
sad face of yours.

MARTIN

I'm ... I don't ... I think you
might have better luck with one of
the other patrons here. How about
that guy over there?

Martin nods toward a burly dude in a cowboy hat, who was
sizing up his next shot at the pool table.

SPORTS BAR BABE

But I like you.

MARTIN

I'm sure you do. Listen, how about
if I buy you a drink?

SPORTS BAR BABE

I'll take what I can get.

Martin hails bartender.

CROSSFADE TO:

LATER: There are several empty glasses on the bar. Martin is
obviously fascinated by what she's saying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPORTS BAR BABE

So I get no child support. The bank is foreclosing on my house. I got into one of those sub-prime loans. My sister just moved in with me because she got laid off. She's at home watching my two kids while I'm out here spreading my legs to try to make ends meet.

MARTIN

Are you from here?

SPORTS BAR BABE

Born and raised. My parents still live here too. They want to help. They love the kids. They're great grandparents. But they're worse off than me. My dad? They forced him to retire early. The guy is only 57 and the company he worked at for over thirty years kicks him out on the street. Now he's been diagnosed with colon cancer. My mother's been diabetic all her life. They have no health insurance anymore. They're going to have to declare bankruptcy. Then what? The house they've worked all their lives to buy, the bill collectors will get that. It's fucked! I'm sorry. I shouldn't be--

MARTIN

No no. It's fine. So if you don't mind me asking, what's with your ex-husband? Why isn't he paying child support? He could end up in jail.

SPORTS BAR BABE

Not that slick asshole. He's an attorney and is always coming up with a ton of outrageous shit. I get more summons than everyone else in this state combined. He knows I can't afford an attorney. Plus he's got pull. He's one of the partners at Fennwick, Gardner, Steele & Baldwin. Heard of them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

Uh, yeah. Gardner's our congressman.

SPORTS BAR BABE

What a total creep that guy is too!
Anyway, no money from the old man.
He started banging some secretary
there who's half his age. Out the
door he went. I hope she gives him
herpes.

MARTIN

That won't pay the bills.

She suddenly tears up.

SPORTS BAR BABE

Are you sure you won't go with me?
I really need the money.

Martin pulls out his wallet and hands her all of his cash.

MARTIN

It's all I have. Sorry.

SPORTS BAR BABE

Sixty bucks. Oh my god! Sixty bucks!
Listen, I can give you a blow job.

MARTIN

No. No, just take it. I'd better go.
Take care of yourself. And please be
careful.

SPORTS BAR BABE

I'm always careful. But it's never
enough, is it? Anything can happen.
You're a sweet guy. Thank you so
much. I mean it.

Martin leaves. Sports bar babe strolls over to pool tables.

INT: CAR / SUBURBAN STREETS - NIGHT

Martin drives, lost in contemplation.

EXT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

Martin stands out front just looking at his huge, splendid
house.

EXT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME — DAY

Martin is having a huge yard sale. People are milling all around, picking through and buying his stuff.

INT/EXT: SINGLE FAMILY HOME — DAY

Martin is carting boxes into a rental truck.

EXT/INT: STUDIO APARTMENT — DAY

Martin is setting up in his new budget abode. It is very tiny and humble but he looks pleased with it.

INT: STUDIO APARTMENT — DAY

MARTIN in on the phone.

MARTIN

Phyllis? I'm back from the dead.
Let's have a bake sale.

EXT: CITY PARK — DAY

MARTIN, PHYLLIS, BILL and Helen are in a park. There's a sign: 'Fundraiser — Martin Truth For Congress Bake Sale'. There are tables set up with pies, cakes, cookies, kettle corn. Bill is behind two big urns of coffee. Many people milling about. Smiles all around. Phyllis is the cashier. Martin is putting the baked goods in bags and chatting up everyone.

MARTIN

Enjoy. My all-time favorite cookies.

Police squad car pulls up. OFFICER gets out and comes up to Martin and Phyllis.

OFFICER

Are you in charge here?

MARTIN

I'm Martin Truth. This is the head
of our organization, Phyllis Wagner.

OFFICER

Do you have a permit for this?

Phyllis pulls a slip of paper out of her purse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHYLLIS

Of course.

OFFICER

Sorry, ma'am. This is for the wrong date. (Pulling out similar document) It says here, the permit was for yesterday.

PHYLLIS

There must be some mistake. I am--

OFFICER

I'm going to have to insist that you clear out of here immediately. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Officer looks over goods, picks up a brownie, sniffs it.

OFFICER cont.

This appears to contain a prohibited substance. I'm am sure you are both aware that both state and local laws prohibit the use and distribution of marijuana.

MARTIN

Is this a joke?

PHYLLIS

Who sent you? This is ridiculous.

Officer talks into his shoulder walkie-talkie.

OFFICER

I need some back up. Belmont Park.
(to Phyllis and Martin)
Both of you. Come with me, please.

Officer puts them into back seat of patrol car. Someone off to the side snaps a photograph of it.

EXT: POLICE STATION — DAY

BILL is waiting out front as PHYLLIS and MARTIN exit.

BILL

What the hell was that all about?

MARTIN

Beats me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHYLLIS

After they broke up our little sale,
we find out my permit was good after
all. What? Can't they read?

MARTIN

Cheap harassment.

BILL

Why would anyone bother?

PHYLLIS

One officer took a bite of the
brownie. He said it tasted great but
they'd be sending it to the lab for
analysis. What a charade.

MARTIN

This is definitely one for the books.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / CONFERENCE ROOM — NIGHT

Entire campaign team is meeting. Martin, Lincoln, Imogene and Bob are around table. LINCOLN is an associate professor at University of Dayton and looks the part. Professorial but hip. Mid 30s. He is incredibly smart, intense, usually very serious. BOB is a social worker, late 40s. Balding, carrying a few extra pounds, always dresses like an off-duty building inspector. IMOGENE is also a social worker, early 50s. Frumpy granny glasses hanging around neck on a silver chain. Prematurely gray hair pulled back in a pony tail. She carries the pain of knowing way too much human suffering.

BILL arrives carrying an envelope.

BILL

Where's Phyllis?

MARTIN

I think she's meeting with her
parole officer.

LINCOLN

She's in the powder room.

Bill puts his envelope on the table where Phyllis will be sitting. There are four envelopes already there.

BILL

Ah! Great minds think alike.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHYLLIS comes in, sees the envelopes.

PHYLLIS
What's all this?

She looks in them and sees cash.

LINCOLN
A little help from your friends.

BOB
A bridge over troubled water.

PHYLLIS
I can't take this ... you're all--

MARTIN
I sold my harem of inflatable love dolls. It's not much. They were pretty beat up.

IMOGENE
I consider it an investment in the future of our country.

BOB
I bought Apple stock when it was \$36. I think I can spare some change.

BILL
I kicked up the price of my lattes.

PHYLLIS
This is ... my god! I'm overwhelmed.

MARTIN
The important thing is to always have a little in reserve. You never know when we'll need bail money.

LINCOLN
So the store's still open for a few more weeks. Let's figure out exactly how we can put Mr. Martin Truth here in Congress.

Everybody starts talking at once. There is excitement but also a tangible anxiety and fatalism.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER — CONFERENCE ROOM

MARTIN

We're invisible. The Green Party isn't on anyone's radar.

LINCOLN

Third parties have always been shut out. For good reason. They usually represent a serious challenge to business as usual. The rich and powerful love the status quo. It keeps their gravy train running on schedule.

PHYLLIS

It's getting late. But before I forget. In all the turmoil lately, I failed to mention that we have a young lady coming to us from Rutgers University. She's finishing up her masters in political science and will join us on a practical internship for her degree program.

MARTIN

She must've made some real enemies.

PHYLLIS

Very funny, Martin. Anyway, I don't know when she's arriving--

JAMILA (O.C.)

I do ...

JAMILA enters looking at her iPhone. She is an absolutely stunning, dressed-to-the-nines African-American girl, early 20s. She exudes intelligence, confidence, sex appeal.

JAMILA cont.

... if this is Martin Truth For Congress world headquarters.

Jamila looks up from her phone and has the most charming smile in human history.

CLOSE-UP: MARTIN is overwhelmed, captivated, smitten.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / PHYLLIS'S OFFICE - DAY

PHYLLIS is talking privately with JAMILA.

PHYLLIS

We are very thrilled to have you here, Ms. Parks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA

Please, just Jamila.

PHYLLIS

I've been at this for a long time.
It's always great to have fresh
ideas. So don't be shy.

JAMILA

You don't have to worry about me,
Phyllis. I'm definitely not shy.
I'll need a week or so to get to
know the lay of the land. Enjoy the
peace and quiet for now. 'Cuz once I
get started, you'll be scrambling to
find the mute button.

PHYLLIS

Just let me know what you need.

JAMILA

Actually there is something. I'd
really like to be a fly on the wall
for Martin's coming appearances. You
know. Listen to him speak. Get a
feel for his campaign style.

PHYLLIS

I'm sure he'll appreciate whatever
constructive suggestions you have.
Martin is a very special person.

JAMILA

I can see that already.

MULTIPLE SHOTS:

INT: VARIOUS LOCATIONS — DAY/NIGHT

OPENING: Martin speaking in the cafeteria of a retirement
home. Jamila is off to the side watching intently.

NEXT: Martin is sitting in a circle in a high school civics
class leading the discussion. Jamila is with the teacher in
the back of the room.

NEXT: Martin is speaking at Dayton Women's Club. Jamila is
going around the tables helping serve tea, while observing.

NEXT: Martin is addressing an elderly group of war veterans
in the rec room of the local VA Hospital. He is personable
and sincere. Everyone is attentive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

I find it inspiring to be able to speak to you today. Because my talk is about peace. And I know there is no one who appreciates the need for ending the scourge of war and pointless bloody conflicts, than men like yourselves, men who have put their lives on the line, men who have been in the trenches, men who know first hand the horrors of the battlefield.

LATER: Martin is talking one-on-one as people approach him. Jamila is standing within earshot, not so much watching him as watching how people react to Martin. Again, Martin is very amicable and pleasant. He has great people skills.

OLDER LADY

That was a wonderful talk, young man. So you're running for Board of Education?

MARTIN

I wish I were. Education opens all the doors. No. Actually, I'm running for United States Congress.

OLDER LADY

Well, isn't that something. Good luck to you now! I know last time I voted for that ... that ... what's his name?

MARTIN

Matt Gardner? Congressman Gardner?

OLDER LADY

That's it. What a handsome man. He has such a nice family. Don't you think?

INT: CAR — NIGHT

JAMILA is in the passenger seat as MARTIN pulls away from VA Hospital.

JAMILA

You're good, Martin. Really good.

MARTIN

But?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA

But. Hmm. People like you. They like you a lot. But you're only reaching their minds, not their hearts.

MARTIN

And?

JAMILA

We'll work on it.

MARTIN

What?

JAMILA

Everything.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / CONFERENCE ROOM — NIGHT

Martin's entire team is there. We enter mid-discussion.

BILL

It's become a beauty contest.

MARTIN

Are you saying I'm not beautiful?

PHYLLIS

Cute maybe. Like a baby penguin. But people buy candidates the way they buy hair products and cold remedies. It's all high-budget advertising.

LINCOLN

Very high budget. It's become imagery without content.

BOB

It's definitely knee-jerk. I doubt if 90% of the voters could even tell you what Gardner stands for.

MARTIN

Yet it's so obvious. All you have to do is look at his voting record.

IMOGENE

No one looks. They just see the pretty pictures. And with the money Gardner's got behind him, they'll get to see a lot of pretty pictures. He'll own the airways.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

There's no way to fight this.

JAMILA

I think there is. In fact ... I know there is.

Everyone is rather amused by her bluntness.

MULTIPLE QUICK CUTS:

Jamilia hands out copies of a candidate pledge and debating begins. We see frustration, confusion, epiphanies, laughter, head holding, hand wringing, confrontation, celebration, the whole gamut of a passionate exchange of ideas. Jamila is in the lead but everyone has something to say.

Finally, the discussion begs only a final resolution.

JAMILA

So what's it going to be?

LINCOLN

It's both brilliant and frightening. But what have we got to lose?

BILL

Maybe it is time to fight fire with fire.

PHYLLIS

You know I respect everyone here. We all have a say.

MARTIN

Jamila's right. It's class warfare. I say yes. Let's do it!

JAMILA

There's one last thing. And judging from your popularity over at U of D with the students, Lincoln, I think you can make this happen.

INT: STUDIO APARTMENT — NIGHT

MARTIN dials the phone.

MARTIN

Hey. Hope I didn't wake you. Quite a meeting, eh? So what do you think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHYLLIS (V.O.)
Jamila? She's seems like a nice girl.

MARTIN
Come on, Phyllis. I know you too well.
Out with it.

PHYLLIS (V.O.)
Okay, she's either a bargain with the
Devil or a blessing directly from the
Lord on high. I can't decide.

MARTIN
I think this is what we've been
looking for.

PHYLLIS (V.O.)
I think she's what you've been
looking for.

Martin gets defensive. He's been outed.

MARTIN
What? Are you saying ... hold on,
Phyllis. You know--

PHYLLIS (V.O.)
Martin, I wasn't born yesterday.

EXT: CAMPUS GROUNDS / UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON — DAY

As Lincoln walks to his next class, it's obvious he is very popular. Students smile, wave and come up to talk to him.

INT: LECTURE HALL — DAY

LINCOLN is addressing over forty students.

LINCOLN
We've talked about participatory
democracy. Often you've complained
that it's not easy to get involved.
Well, here it is. Your chance to do
something and make a difference.
Are you in?

Big rousing 'YES!' goes up from the students. Class ends and they flock to the front and start grabbing printed material.

EXT: RESIDENTIAL STREET — DAY

Volunteer, a COLLEGE STUDENT, stops an ELDERLY LADY.

COLLEGE STUDENT
Ma'am, I've got a petition--

ELDERLY LADY
I'm sorry. I don't sign petitions.

COLLEGE STUDENT
It's to protect Social Security.

ELDERLY LADY
Hmm. If they slash it anymore, next time you see me, I'll be pushing all my possessions in a shopping cart. Let me see that.

Elderly lady looks it over and signs. Camera pulls back and in a panorama shot, we see many students with clipboards fanning out through the neighborhood.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / FRONT AREA — DAY

PHYLLIS, MARTIN and BILL are looking through campaign literature and posters.

PHYLLIS
This is still our campaign. Ideas might sound awesome in a university seminar. That doesn't mean they work in the real world.

MARTIN
Awesome? Are you watching Jersey Shore?

Bill picks out a poster. It features Martin gazing out over hundreds of graves at Arlington National Cemetery.

BILL
I like this. It's such a powerful statement. But as I was saying, what have we got to lose with Jamila's strategy?

MARTIN
I suppose like with anything, there are risks. It hasn't been tried before. But that's actually a plus. They won't see it coming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHYLLIS

I'm keeping an open mind. We can go with it for now. But if gets too far out, we pull the plug. There's too much at stake.

MARTIN

That's for sure. We don't want to lose the 1,441 votes I got last time.

EXT: SUBURBAN MEMORIAL DAY STREET FAIR — DAY

MARTIN and JAMILA are among the exhibits and food booths with three volunteers wearing campaign t-shirts. They are making a pathetic effort to get people walking by to take campaign literature. They're mostly being ignored.

JAMILA

You don't do anything. Lincoln's teams do the petitions. Then one month before election day, there's what we call the October surprise.

MARTIN

We're going to bomb North Korea?

JAMILA

No. We're going to drop a bomb on Gardner! Don't waste time thinking about it right now, Martin. We've got an awful lot of work to do. Let's focus on that.

MARTIN

And what's that?

INT: SUBURBAN SHOPPING DISTRICT CAFE — CONTINUOUS

MARTIN and JAMILA are eating lunch.

JAMILA

Your image.

MARTIN

Image is everything.

JAMILA

For starters, that beard makes you look like a janitor at a community college.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

It's not a beard. It's a goatee.

JAMILA

What was Lenin's? A goatee?

MARTIN

John Lennon?

JAMILA

You can't take chances with facial hair. Unless you're George Clooney.

MARTIN

Can I borrow your Lady Schick?

JAMILA

Do you own a decent tie? One that you didn't pick up at a yard sale? Something other than the one with the seagulls?

MARTIN

My ex-girlfriend loved that tie.

JAMILA

If she's your ex-girlfriend, there's no better reason to put it in the memorabilia trunk with the box of snowflake contact lenses she left behind, and the baggie of her toenail clippings.

MARTIN

How do you know about those?

EXT: SUBURBAN SHOPPING DISTRICT SIDEWALK — CONTINUOUS

Walking and talking.

MARTIN

And by the way. What makes you the big expert here? You haven't even finished your degree. Where's your impressive record of victory laps?

JAMILA

I don't have any. But I do have something which is sorely lacking around here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

What's that?

JAMILA

Common sense. Martin, let me put it to you straight. We need each other. I need you because nobody around here, despite all their liberal chic open-mindedness and egalitarian yada yada, is going to take seriously some 22-year-old niggah chick--

MARTIN

Just stop right there! That's not--

JAMILA

Hear me out. I need you because if you can see the merit of my ideas, these other sheeple here will go along with the program. And you need me because if something doesn't change dramatically, I have better odds of winning the Kentucky Derby with my pet goat than you do winning this election.

MARTIN

I appreciate your vote of confidence.

JAMILA

I'm telling it like it is. I like you, Martin. I think you would be a phenomenal congressman. I really mean that. You stand for the right things and I know you always fight for what you believe in. But from what I'm seeing, you'll never get that chance.

MARTIN

Alright, I'll just sit here and lick my wounds, while you think of new ways to shred my self-esteem.

JAMILA

If you can't handle the heat, stay out of the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

Well, I can handle a little heat.
But I'm allergic to having starter
cables attached to my genitals.

JAMILA

That comes later. Right after we
staple jellyfish in your armpits.

MARTIN

Look, Jamila. I'm not trying to be
difficult. I'm in or I wouldn't be
here talking to you.

JAMILA

(coquettishly)

Yes, you would. You look like a dog
waiting for a bone.

MULTIPLE SHOTS:

INT/EXT: SUBURBAN SHOPPING DISTRICT - DAY

OPENING: Martin is in a barber shop getting a shave, then
Jamila is guiding the barber in cutting his hair.

NEXT: They are in front of a clothing store discussing what
they see in the window. Jamila drags him in.

NEXT: They are in a shoe store and there are dozens of shoe
boxes piled near him as he tries on another pair of shoes.
Jamila stands back deciding.

NEXT: They are in a department store, looking at ties.
Martin finds one with seagulls, they laugh, she chooses
something different.

INT: STORE FRONT OFFICE / CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone is there, seated casually, chatting. JAMILA pokes
her head in the door, big smile.

JAMILA

Ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to
present to you the next congressman,
3rd District of the great state of
Ohio, Mr. Martin Truth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Martin steps in, hair combed, clean-shaven, dress shirt open at the collar, sports jacket. He looks great.

MARTIN

If I'm elected, a pea in every pot, pot in every pipe, a pipe in every room filling the air with optimism and patchouli-scented angels. Free coin laundries, full coverage for cosmetic surgery and vasectomies. Switzerland will become our 51st state. All of this just on my first day in office.

INT: NEWSROOM STUDIO SET / WKEF-TV FOX 45 - NIGHT

SHANNON SIMS hosts political news with JACK ATHERTON.

SHANNON SIMS

I'm here with our own political news analyst, who cut his teeth on local politics almost three decades ago. There's no one who understands it better than JACK ATHERTON. So, Jack, again we have an important, high-profile race for U.S. Congress.

JACK ATHERTON

Of course, as a five-term incumbent, Republican Congressman Matt Gardner is the overwhelming favorite to win. And for good reason. He's been excellent for our district, he's ex-military, patriotic to the core, he's been solid and unwavering in his dedication to bringing defense contracts and jobs into the area. People know Matt and like him.

SHANNON SIMS

Now, running against him now for the third time is the Democratic challenger, Chris Castiglia.

INSERT: Still photos and video footage of Castiglia on the campaign trail. He looks ridiculously affable and giddy.

JACK ATHERTON

I know Chris Castiglia well. He is one of the most personable men in public life. He's served as a state

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK ATHERTON cont.
representative for three terms and has a very solid reputation. The problem with Chris is that he tries a little too hard to please. He's not a scrapper, which puts him at an enormous disadvantage with an aggressive campaigner like Gardner. But even more to the point, Chris is too willing to agree with anyone who bends his ear. He's basically left-center but he changes his mind so often that sometimes he's to the right of Gardner, sometime's he's to the left of the lunatic fringe. He's so all over the map, I think he tends to confuse, if not alienate, most voters, even his supporters.

SHANNON SIMS
Speaking of the lunatic fringe, we'd fail our journalistic responsibility if we didn't mention the two minor party candidates running against Congressman Gardner as well.

JACK ATHERTON
Right. I can sum them up in two words. Irredeemable and irrelevant. Peter Potts is the self-declared Libertarian candidate. He funds and manages his own campaign. His views are so bizarre, it's hard to even put a label on them ...

INSERT: Still photos and video footage of Potts on the campaign trail. He's dressed as a cowboy. Close-ups depict him as deranged but harmless.

JACK ATHERTON cont.
... This is his fourth try for this congressional seat. The simple truth is, he's made so many blunders over the years, no one takes him seriously anymore. He does provide some comic relief, I will say that.

SHANNON SIMS
And what about the Green Party guy ... uh, Martin Truth?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK ATHERTON

He's the irrelevant. What can I say? The fellow is bright, articulate, engaging. He certainly has some excellent ideas.

SHANNON SIMS

But?

INSERT: Only still photos of Martin on the campaign trail. They are mostly old photos when he looked like a geek.

JACK ATHERTON

But no one notices and no one cares. He's bucking a strong head wind. Over the past 25 or 30 years, America has been migrating to the right. So here is this firebrand for the environment, peace, love, whatever, championing a point of view which would have been radical in the 60s. I wish him well. He seems like a sincere, passionate, decent individual. But I doubt if he'll even show up in the final tally.

SHANNON SIMS

One final question. The first televised debate is coming up in less than a month. There are rumors that Phyllis Wagner, who's head of the local Green Party chapter, is putting up quite a fuss, insisting her candidate be allowed to debate Gardner and Castiglia.

JACK ATHERTON

Personally, I would love for Martin Truth to be included. He'd add some excitement to what will likely be a very bland and predictable exchange. But I don't see it happening. It's an unwritten rule. No minor party candidates allowed. So it'll be a snooze fest. If you do watch it, folks, drink a lot of coffee.

SHANNON SIMS

Alright. You've heard it right here on Fox 45, where you always get it first from the best.

INT: COFFEE HOUSE / 'SOLID GROUNDS' — DAY

MARTIN and JAMILA are at a table. Bill comes and goes, doing his thing to keep his customers happy. Jamila is working on a laptop.

JAMILA

You've got to be kidding. This is your website? This is so boring I'd rather watch sand crabs sleep on the beach.

MARTIN

What's wrong with it?

JAMILA

Martin. You're a fascinating guy. You say all the right things. You're intelligent. Funny. Maybe I'd go as far as to say that you're charming. Your website looks like a government page for Singapore, only not that exciting. It's about as entertaining as the ingredients label on a package of frozen waffles.

MARTIN

Entertaining? Why should it be entertaining? It's not World of Warcraft or Game of Thrones. People don't come to my site looking for a good time.

JAMILA

That's for sure. Look at the stat counter. How many visitors?

MARTIN

Hmm. 391 ... not too shabby.

JAMILA

How long has this been up?

MARTIN

Uh ... I'm not exactly ...

BILL

Three years.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / FRONT AREA — DAY

MARTIN and JAMILA enter rather urgently, engaged in heavy conversation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

Just so it doesn't end up looking like a Ken doll fan site.

JAMILA

That would be an improvement. You could lock up the Barbie vote.

PHYLLIS coming from her office in back meets them halfway.

PHYLLIS

Hi! I was just going to call you. Free tomorrow afternoon?

INT: STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

MARTIN is on the phone.

MARTIN

You coming along?

JAMILA (V.O.)

I think I'll pass on this one.

INT: HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Martin is one of three judges for a kiddie beauty contest. There's a banner which says 'Sparkle Girls Beauty Pageant'. Various shots of four and five year old contestants in the midst of the talent competition. Martin is trying to smile.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / FRONT AREA - DAY

MARTIN enters. Phyllis and Jamila are waiting for him with big shit eating grins.

MARTIN

Laugh all you want. But I found it very inspiring. Every one of those little girls was for world peace.

CROSS FADE:

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / FRONT AREA - DAY

CLOSE-UP: Computer monitor with the new Martin Truth For Congress web site. Pointing and clicking, scrolling menus. It looks great, flashy and contemporary, but with class.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PULL-BACK: It's MARTIN in Phyllis's office at the computer.

MARTIN
This looks phenomenal. You guys did
a great job.

JAMILA comes in.

JAMILA
Now it's your turn.

MARTIN
What? My hair looks simply marvelous.
And I no longer look like a Bolshevik.

JAMILA
Let's make it a working dinner. How
about Saturday night, 7:30 pm. Does
that work for you?

Martin tries to hide his anticipation. Is she asking him out
for a date?

INT: FANCY ITALIAN RESTAURANT — NIGHT

JAMILA has finished eating. MARTIN has barely touched his
meal. He seems content just looking at her. She notices his
romantic dreaminess and it annoys her.

JAMILA
Hey! We've got some work to do.

MARTIN
You never let up, do you?

JAMILA
Martin, I like you. You have the
right ideas. But I still probably
wouldn't vote for you.

MARTIN
That's crazy.

JAMILA
Martin. You're boring.

MARTIN
Really? Boring? Hmm. Let me think.
What should I say to that? I know.
Fuck you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA

Now that's more passion than I've seen out of you since I dragged myself into this doomed enterprise you call a campaign!

MARTIN

Jamila, you're a pit bull. Is it just me? Or do you completely piss off everybody?

JAMILA

I'm actually keeping it low key. You should see me when I get wound up.

MARTIN

I think I give off an image of responsibility. Control. Concern. Caring. Intelligence.

JAMILA

That's great for a veterinarian. I'd take my cat to you.

MARTIN

I had a cat when I was a kid. It got run over by a truck. Her name was Pop Tart.

JAMILA

Alright! Now that's infinitely more interesting than anything in your campaign literature.

MARTIN

I can't use that in my campaign. A lot of people hate cats. I'd lose the dog lover vote.

JAMILA

I feel like I'm talking to a third grader. Martin! Wake up! This is show business.

MARTIN

Oh, I see. You want me to become a carnival hawker like those other bozos. I thought you liked the way I handle myself in public. What do you want? Should I dress up as Captain Jack Sparrow?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA

At least you wouldn't be boring.

MARTIN

Show business, eh? When did the hugely important enterprise of running the most powerful country in the world become American Idol?

JAMILA

I can't give you an exact date. But it is what it is. Listen to me. No one expects you to dance like a Rockette. I just want you to come across.

MARTIN

You want to turn me into a clown.

JAMILA

No, Martin. My point is simple. Television changed everything. It's just what happened. It started with Kennedy. Then it kept mutating. Now politics is a sitcom.

MARTIN

How about we get a beer?

JAMILA

Don't change the subject! Are you down with this or not?

MARTIN

I'm fed up with failure. As long as you promise I won't have to do Sammy Davis, Jr.'s greatest hits.

JAMILA

You might have to do some Jim Carrey. You already seem to have 'Dumb and Dumber' down pat.

MARTIN

Do I have to take this abuse?

JAMILA

You're in politics. It's the first line in the job description.

Martin starts getting testy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

You know, it's all so easy for you. You sit there like you're playing with a department store mannikin, trying on new clothes, changing hair styles. Do you know what this feels like?

JAMILA

I know what it feels like to pout. Poor baby!

MARTIN

You're unbelievable! You really enjoy this, don't you?

Jamila breaks out in a fit of laughter, then appears to be embarrassed by her outburst.

JAMILA

Evidence to the contrary, no, I don't enjoy this. I mean, I don't like humiliating ... or ... emasculating you.

MARTIN

Emasculating! Perfect word.

JAMILA

Just work with me, okay? All I'm saying is, there's this side of you which quite honestly is wonderful. But it doesn't play well. It makes you an easy target. If anyone even bothers to target you in the first place.

MARTIN

See! You just have to twist the knife, don't you?

JAMILA

It's very simple. You've got to counter the perception that you're some stuffy academic. That you're a bookish wimp.

MARTIN

I am a bookish wimp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA

Martin, what did Bill Clinton say? In today's world, people will go with strong and wrong any day over weak and right.

MARTIN

How about we make me strong and right?

JAMILA

We've definitely had way too much of strong and wrong.

MARTIN

Tyranny is always better organized than freedom.

JAMILA

Who's that?

MARTIN

Jay Z.

JAMILA

You're a dork.

MARTIN

Charles Peguy, French poet.

JAMILA

I overheard Phyllis say something about your step-father being an ex-military guy. Maybe we could do something with that. This is a military town. Martin Truth, self-made man cut from the sinews of a high ranking warrior.

MARTIN

Jamila. My step-father murdered my mother. He shot her in the face.

JAMILA

I'm sorry. That's really fucked up!

MARTIN

You don't have to remind me.

JAMILA

Then give me something. Give the niggah girl something to work with, Martin Truth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Martin at first just stares at her, then unleashes on her.

MARTIN

You want something? I'll give you something. You love to throw around that ... you love saying niggah this and niggah that. You just love to see how uncomfortable it makes people. Okay. Let's talk about some of your niggah friends. How about Martin Luther King? How about Malcolm X? Or Jesse Jackson?

JAMILA

What's your point?

MARTIN

Would you be sitting here telling Martin Luther King he needed to buff up his image a bit for prime-time TV?

Martin starts doing a lousy imitation of a whiny black girl.

MARTIN cont.

Now Dr. King, we're really not getting through to the southern rednecks. You need to maybe work a little hillbilly into your persona. Maybe a cowboy hat and a nice suede leather vest with some fringe would do the trick. And you, Malcolm. I just don't know where to start. You're so goddamn brainy and articulate. A lot of people resent having that know-it-all shit-eating solemnity shoved in their faces. For starters, that taqiyah has got to go. Makes you look like some camel jockey. Ahab the Arab, sheik of the burning ghetto. Honestly, Malcolm? I don't see why you don't just go with a fro, bro'. It works for Sly Stone. He sells records like they was honey-chitlins and black-eyed bean dip.

Jamila stares at Martin. Then she nods.

JAMILA

Okay. Got it. You've said what you had to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

No. I've got more. Where's this coming from anyway? Is this something you only reserve for us pitiful white folk? Or maybe you just like toying with a bookish wimp like me? You didn't answer my question. Would you really be pulling this crap with Malcolm X and Dr. King? Maybe you've got no respect for anyone. Even those good old black legends couldn't cut it in Jamila's world.

JAMILA

This isn't my world, any more than it's your world. Are you finished with your incoherent rant?

MARTIN

No! I'm just getting warmed up.

JAMILA

Martin! You are so difficult. And so out of touch. This is simple. You want people to vote for you. People don't vote for someone they don't understand. Or don't like. Or don't notice. This is a big nasty indifferent world. You've got to meet people halfway. You've got to give them a Martin Truth they can identify with, appreciate, learn to trust, feel they know. It's about laying a foundation.

He starts shouting. People at other tables turn and stare.

MARTIN

I HAVE A FOUNDATION! IT'S CALLED ... MY PRINCIPLES. MY IDEAS. MY IDEALS. WHAT I STAND FOR. MY VISION FOR THE COUNTRY I LOVE. IF THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH--

JAMILA

ALRIGHT! Alright! It's good enough, Martin! Yes! Yes, I think it's good enough ... I really do.

She's crying and can't look at him, stands up to go to the restroom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA cont.
I'll be right back.

Martin watches her as she crosses the restaurant to go to the ladies room.

DISSOLVE TO:

Jamila returning. She has fresh makeup, is composed. She sits down and reaches across the table and takes Martin's hands in hers.

JAMILA
Can we go?

Martin looks confused. But they get ready to leave.

INT: CAR - NIGHT

JAMILA and MARTIN are driving but not talking. The radio plays softly in the background. Jamila turns it off.

JAMILA
What's my last name?

MARTIN
Your last name? Parks. Jamila Parks.
Did I win something?

JAMILA
Do you know who my great aunt is?

MARTIN
Aretha Franklin? Department of Parks
and Recreation? I don't know. Who?

JAMILA
Rosa Parks.

MARTIN
(visibly embarrassed)
I'm sorry ... I ... sometimes my
sense of humor--

JAMILA
She was a great lady, Martin.
Greater than people will ever know.
I spent a great deal of time with
her before she passed away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

You are so lucky. What an--

JAMILA

What people don't know is that at the end of her life, there were things she was very bitter about. See, everything she did, starting with the day back in 1955 when she refused to give up her seat to that white person and got arrested, bore a deep message that resonated with thousands of black folks. But what was the end result? Now they live with a different set of chains. Racism is illegal. But in fact, it's more virulent than ever.

MARTIN

But that's not her fault. How could she be bitter? What she did was courageous and noble. That one act inspired a whole movement.

JAMILA

Just look at the big picture, Martin. Allegedly America is the beacon of democracy throughout the world. But what's the reality? We support some of the most vicious and autocratic tyrants around, as long as suck up to us. We preach democracy but prop up dictators, as long as they buy our weapons or keep shipping us oil.

MARTIN

What's this got to do with your great aunt?

JAMILA

Everything. It's all the same game. I should say the gaming of reality. My great-aunt would be more appalled now than ever. She knows what it's like to be trivialized, iconized, marginalized. To be used. But what happened to her was innocent child's

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA cont.

play compared to what's going on now. Guys like Karl Rove, these vicious phony citizens groups like the Swift Boaters and Special Operations Opsec Education Fund and, of course, this whole Tea Party thing. She couldn't have imagined any of this stuff. She was a woman of ideas, principles, and most of all ideals.

EXT: HOUSE — NIGHT — CONTINUOUS

Martin is walking Jamila up to the house she's staying in.

JAMILA cont.

Rosa Parks, God bless that amazing lady, got sick of being used as part of a storybook version of history, where everything gets turned into a Hollywood script. Everyone shouts for joy in the big climactic final scene, the orchestra fires up, the sky fills with fireworks, the hero is hoisted on the shoulders of the crowd, and they all dance off into the sunset. Problem solved. They lived happily ever after.

MARTIN

That's just human nature. People need that.

JAMILA

But nothing gets done. Nothing changes. America is a very sick country. Papering it over with happy talk and emoticon smilies is not the answer. It's what you said about having a foundation. That struck a big thunderous chord. You're right. That's what I used to believe. If we forget that, we're just end up like everyone else, puppets on a stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

We didn't make the rules. But they're the rules.

JAMILA

Well, maybe it's time to change the rules.

MARTIN

I hope so. It sure can't go on like this. Politics has become a game show. It's who's up and who's down, who the winners are and the losers. All the pundits talk about is which side a candidate parts his hair on, whether he smoked weed with his fraternity brothers in college, or whether Donald Trump is going to invite him for lunch.

JAMILA

So that's it, Martin. No more pretty pictures and fairy tales. We can't fight nonsense with more nonsense, or lies with more lies.

They reach the porch. Jamila gets out her key.

JAMILA cont.

You, Martin Truth, are not boring. I'm sorry I said that. Just be yourself and give 'em hell. Wake them up. Speak your mind loud and clear. And we'll stand behind you. That's all we can do.

MARTIN

Can I grow my goatee back?

JAMILA

Sorry. The goatee is non-negotiable.

MARTIN

How about snowflake contacts?

JAMILA

Way too gay for this district.

Martin looks like he might try to kiss her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

I really--

JAMILA

Good night, Martin.

She slips inside and closes the door.

EXT: RETIREMENT VILLAGE — DAY

KATIE is a roving reporter from WDTN TV 2 News and is standing in front of a convalescent facility. A number of retirees are being taken back to their apartments in wheel chairs or just hobbling along on their own.

KATIE

We're at the Theresa Pierce Home For Senior Citizens, where candidates for the 3rd District congressional seat have just addressed the elderly residents here. Oh, here comes Chris Castiglia, the Democratic challenger.

CHRIS CASTIGLIA wanders her way, smiling, being his typical affable self. He is thoroughly enjoying the occasion but is congenial to the point of being daffy.

KATIE cont.

Mr. Castiglia, how are you?

CHRIS CASTIGLIA

Why, I couldn't be better. This is a lovely place and the people here are just marvelous.

KATIE

There's a lot of controversy around the balancing the federal budget, Social Security and Medicare. Since this directly impacts the very people you've just been meeting with, what's your official position on federal benefits for retirees?

CHRIS CASTIGLIA

You look into the eyes of these older folks. My god, it makes me wish I was 70 and living here. What terrific people! They've given their whole lives, working hard, raising families, giving it their very best.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS CASTIGLIA cont.

I say it's the least we can do to make their golden years as cheerful and comfortable as we can.

KATIE

But you've also have publicly stated that you thought these programs were insolvent and bankrupting the nation.

CHRIS CASTIGLIA

Did you see what happened after our speeches tonight? All of the folks in there joined together and sang 'Row Row Row Your Boat'. Isn't that what makes America great? We all have to do a little rowing, do our part. It's like a family. One night you get to choose the movie, next night it's my turn. I know we can work this whole budget thing out just fine. We just need to stop bickering and keep on rowing.

KATIE

What is your favorite movie, Chris?

CHRIS CASTIGLIA

Wow! That's a tough one. I have to say, I really like Mr. Bean.

KATIE

Thanks so much. Good luck with the campaign! Ladies and gentlemen, that was the Democratic challenger, Chris Castiglia.

CASTIGLIA moves on, GARDNER sees her, breaks out in a big grin, comes right over, gives her a peck on the cheek.

KATIE

(extremely excited)

Alright! It's Congressman Gardner!

MATT GARDNER

Katie Ussen! How's my favorite reporter today?

KATIE

Great! Always a delight to see you. So what was your message today for the senior citizens?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT GARDNER

Such wonderful people. I just love the old folks, Katie. My own mom? She just turned 79.

(starts to tear up)

What a great woman. She worked so incredibly hard bringing me up, teaching me the right values, giving me what I need to serve my community, my country.

KATIE

One very upset lady in there asked you something about green energy. What was that all about?

MATT GARDNER

I don't know what her problem was. But a while ago there was this pork barrel bill for funding all sorts of whacko ideas and I voted against it. Maybe--

KATIE

The one for funding alternative energy research and development. That wasn't a good thing in your estimation?

MATT GARDNER

Thomas Edison, a true American, one of the greatest inventors in history, eh? Did he come pleading for an allowance from his rich Uncle Sam? I don't think so. My youngest kid loves her hula hoop. Did this clever little toy require a Department of Energy grant? That's all I have to say about it.

KATIE

Well, glad to see someone's guarding the piggy bank there in Washington.

She puts her hand on his shoulder. He gives her a side hug.

MATT GARDNER

Thanks, Katie. You take care now.

KATIE

Ladies and gentlemen, our current and I think it's safe to say, our next congressman, from the great state of Ohio, Matt Gardner. Yay!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She giggles. He grins, moves on. Now PETER POTTS walks up. He's very proper, dressed in a suit and a bolo tie, has a crazed look lurking behind his unblinking eyes. Oddly, he talks like a hillbilly sheriff. He's wearing his campaign button on his lapel.

KATIE cont.

And here, TV 2 news viewers, is the Libertarian Party candidate, Peter Potts. Good evening, sir.

PETER POTTS

Hello, Miss Reporter. I think I know you. Aren't you Rachel Maddow?

KATIE

A lot of people make that mistake. The same ones who think that Moses looks like Santa Claus. I see your button has your distinctive campaign slogan, 'Peter Potts, the One Man Political Posse'. What exactly does that mean?

PETER POTTS

What's a posse? I'll tell ya. It's guys that get the job done! They see evil, they track it down, and bring it in tied up and ready for trial. Now I go it alone because I don't want to compromise my morals. There's work to be done. I don't have time for a bunch of excuses. This country's in big trouble. There's evil all around. And I hate to say it, but you got a lot of people inside this country too, who are destroying the greatest nation in history. I'm gonna track 'em down and bring 'em in.

KATIE

Nice. Very man-up. Now it's reported that you're for returning the country to the gold standard. Is this true?

PETER POTTS

I see you don't have dollar bills hanging from your ears.

KATIE

Interesting point. Okay. Thanks from WDTN TV 2 News and our viewers. Bye.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Potts doesn't appreciate being rudely dismissed but turns and walks away. Martin can now be seen in the background.

KATIE cont.
How about that, eh Chuck?

INSERT: Inset of CHUCK in the television studio.

CHUCK
I'm online ordering a do-it-yourself home lobotomy kit as we speak.

KATIE
Oh! Look over there. It's the Green Party candidate, Martin Truth.

CHUCK
Well, unfortunately we're out of time. Thanks, Katie. I might just add that the most recent poll showed an impressive lead for Congressman Gardner, with a little over 73% of voters saying they'll be supporting his bid as a sixth-term incumbent.

EXT: VFW HALL — NIGHT

MARTIN and JAMILA pulling into parking lot of a VFW Hall.

INT: AUTOMOBILE — NIGHT

MARTIN
The AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary. That's who's putting this on.

JAMILA
They knit bulletproof quilts?

MARTIN
They make crucifixes out of depleted uranium artillery shells.

INT: VFW HALL — NIGHT

The place is packed. There are a lot of older vets with their wives. Also a rough looking contingent from a local militia, dressed for battle, a few with assault weapons and hand guns. Crowd looks bored. Most are fidgeting, wandering about. MARTIN is just finishing his prepared remarks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

... and while I'm certainly for a strong defense, I don't think that necessarily equates to a bigger military. A smart, healthy, educated America, clean air and water, good schools, beautiful communities where we can spend quality time with our families, people with secure jobs that pay well, these prove to be a stronger bulwark against threats to the American Way than more missiles and fighter planes or young soldiers getting shot at in countries we can barely find on a map.

There is a smattering of applause.

MARTIN cont.

Okay. Thank you! I always wondered what one hand clapping would sound like. So now I'm happy to take some questions. Anyone? Yes? Over there. The gentleman in the uniform.

A few snorting chuckles, since most of them are in uniform. PINKERTON is in his late 60s, has a chest full of medals and ribbons.

PINKERTON

Retired Lt. Colonel Morton Pinkerton here. Served in 'Nam fresh out of high school and retired from active service right after Desert Storm.

MARTIN

What's your question, Lt. Colonel Pinkerton?

PINKERTON

I just wanna set the record straight. We've got a serious problem in this country. There's a lot of ugliness out there. Fanatics. These Muslamic jee-hay-dees want to take this country down by blowing it up. As far as I am concerned, the only place for them is in the ground, with six feet of dirt piled on top.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

I see. Now have you personally seen any of these terrorists lately, here in the Dayton area?

PINKERTON

Well, ain't that the kicker now? These slimy bastards are stealthier than a ground mole, so you see them every day and you don't even know you're looking at them.

MARTIN

Alright. That's certainly something to keep in mind. Next. Over there, the man in the camouflage jacket and cowboy hat.

COWBOY SOLDIER

I suppose you and your tree-hugging friends want to create more handouts for the leeches that are turning this country into one big soup line. I say we take all these welfare queens and Freddie freeloaders off of unemployment and social security and put the money to good use. If they don't like it, ship 'em off to Cuba or North Korea. Or just line 'em up in front of a firing squad. Give me a goddamn gun and I'll take care of the suckers!

Martin smiles. There are a few nods of approval but mainly boos and catcalls from several members of the audience.

MARTIN

I'm fairly certain He's not here tonight but I think Jesus might take issue with that approach. Yes? The lady in back.

LADY

So you are with the Green Party. That means you're into all that environment stuff?

MARTIN

Right, ma'am. It has nothing to do with being Irish.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LADY

So you think the world is getting hotter and now you want to spend billions of dollars on ... on stuff about that. The government is very broke right now. So how can you say we should spend all this money we don't have?

MARTIN

Well, it's not just about money. It's literally about survival and not being reduced to being hunters and gatherers again. But if you want to just talk about money, doing something about climate change now will down the road actually save trillions of dollars.

LADY

Mr. Trust, we--

MARTIN

It's Truth, ma'am. Martin Truth.

LADY

Well, whatever. Mr. Truth, then. We don't know for sure what's going on with the planet. I'll have you know that I have to defrost my freezer now twice a week. It used to be maybe twice a month at the most.

MARTIN

I see. Well, that's sure a pain in the butt. Frankly, it's possible that climate change might be responsible for that. If you want to talk about it after I take a few more questions, I'll meet you in the back of the room and explain the science behind it.

CLOSE-UP: Jamila rolls her eyes and tries not to laugh.

INT: AUTOMOBILE — NIGHT

MARTIN and JAMILA are pulling away from VFW Hall.

JAMILA

Not exactly your crowd.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

I think I lost them at 'good evening'.

JAMILA

Shit. We need to do something, Martin. This sucks big time.

MARTIN

I hate defrosting my fridge.

INT: STUDIO APARTMENT – NIGHT

MARTIN is on the phone with PHYLLIS.

PHYLLIS (V.O.)

Martin, stop torturing yourself. I see the way you look at her.

MARTIN

Is it that obvious?

PHYLLIS (V.O.)

Everybody knows.

MARTIN

But isn't it unprofessional?

PHYLLIS (V.O.)

Look. You're not her teacher, or her boss. We're all adults. We just work together. It's okay.

INT: AUTOMOBILE – DAY

MARTIN is driving. He and JAMILA are on their way to a park for a campaign speech.

JAMILA

I really should've stayed at the office. The only reason I'm coming is Phyllis said there'll be some decent barbecue.

MARTIN

Do you know how many revolutions have started as simple picnics in the park? Why, today could turn American politics on its head!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA

Right.

Martin puts on some R&B music to set the mood.

MARTIN

So I've been thinking. Even though we work together all of the time ...

Jamila looks at him suspiciously.

MARTIN cont.

... I don't really know much about you. Your family. Your boyfriend. Do you have a boyfriend?

JAMILA

Martin. I know where this is going. You want me to come over to the other side.

MARTIN

Listen, Jamila, I don't see it that way. Not at all. I think I'm pretty color blind. So what if you're black and I'm white. In fact, I'm kind of surprised--

Jamila starts laughing.

JAMILA

That's not what I meant. Black and white isn't the issue.

MARTIN

Well then, what is?

JAMILA

Martin ... I'm a lesbian.

Martin momentarily is rendered speechless.

MARTIN

You can't be serious.

JAMILA

Did George Foreman name all his kids George for nothing? Of course I'm serious. And here's a fact, little known outside of Africa. 'Jamila' is Swahili for lesbian. Or more accurately 'lover of labia'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN

Really?

Now Jamila really breaks out in hysterical laughter. When she regains her composure, she pinches his cheek.

JAMILA

Don't look like you put poison in the peach pie. It's alright. Really! Now let's go and turn American politics on its head!

EXT: GARDEN STATION PARK / DAYTON — DAY

MARTIN is on a small shoddy stage addressing a handful of inattentive people. Children are noisily running around. There is a band doing a sound check close by. JAMILA is gnawing on some fried chicken at the side of the stage.

MARTIN

It's our country. It's our democracy. And we all should have a say. It's people just like you who--

Suddenly a DERANGED MAN dressed in Michigan militia camo starts yelling and fires two shots from a handgun.

DERANGED MAN

Time to rid this sorry fuckin' world of one more fascist, socialist, pinko, cocksucking piece of shit! I'm gonna kill every last one of you evil motherfuckers!

People scramble for cover. Shots miss Martin and he's fine. But Jamila gets a flesh wound in her shoulder. Cops come running and surround deranged man.

INT: AMBULANCE — DAY

MARTIN is with JAMILA while a paramedic monitors her.

MARTIN

Do I need to start bringing an Uzi to my campaign appearances now?

JAMILA

(smiling)

To shoot yourself in the foot before you put it in your mouth?

CROSS FADE:

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / FRONT AREA — DAY

CLOSE-UP: Television monitor showing TV REPORTER covering the shooting. MARTIN is in the ER room next to Jamila as a doctor applies a bandage to her arm.

TV REPORTER (O.C.)

Do you have any idea what provoked this attempt on your life?

MARTIN

We've been trying something new in my congressional campaign. It hasn't been seen in national politics in quite some time. It's called honesty. We tell it like it is. Unfortunately, as one of my most dedicated campaign workers here will tell you ...

Jamila looks into the camera and gives her most charming, if somewhat pained smile.

MARTIN cont.

... sometimes you have to take a bullet for what you believe in.

PULL-BACK: It's JAMILA, PHYLLIS and MARTIN watching.

JAMILA

Oh my god! Brilliant! You can't buy publicity like that.

PHYLLIS

You're lucky to be alive, young lady.

Phone rings. Phyllis runs to get it.

CUT TO: Puffed-up MEDIA EXEC in his office on the phone.

MEDIA EXEC

Okay. You got your wish. I just got word from the committee. Your guy's in the goddamn debate.

PHYLLIS (V.O.)

You won't regret it.

MEDIA EXEC

I already do.
(slamming the phone down)
Obnoxious bitch!

BACK TO: Storefront office front area. Martin and Jamila are bantering. It's all good fun.

MARTIN
So how much did you pay this guy?

JAMILA
Not a damn dime. He was supposed to shoot you, not me.

MARTIN
I knew it! I had this feeling. You're working for Gardner, aren't you?

JAMILA
Have you been reading my email? I suppose you found out he's leaving his wife for me.

Phyllis runs back in all excited.

PHYLLIS
You're not going to believe this. Martin, you're in the debate!

JAMILA
See! Nothing like a smoking barrel to stir things ups and get the ball rolling.

CROSS FADE:

INT: TELEVISION STUDIO / DEBATE FORMAT — NIGHT

There are four podiums, CHRIS CASTIGLIA, MATT GARDNER, PETER POTTS and MARTIN standing behind them. JANA COLLIER is the moderator. We join mid-debate.

MATT GARDNER
I can see why Mr. Truth likes to hug trees. They're so gentle and kind. They don't fly planes into buildings and kill innocent people.

MARTIN
And I can see why Mr. Gardner likes to hug his friends in the defense industry. They fill his campaign coffers with millions of dollars so that he can sponsor more worthless defense systems.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT GARDNER

Maybe you missed it because you were playing sitar in a park somewhere, but we were ruthlessly attacked on September 11, 2001. Those Islamic jihadists were declaring war on the greatest country in the world. They were declaring war on our freedoms. They were declaring war on our democratic system of government. They were declaring war on the American Way!

CROSS FADE:

MARTIN

You're an ex-military man. You say you're an expert on defense. How did that missile defense system to guard against an attack from North Korea work out? You know. The one on the East Coast pointing in the wrong direction?

MATT GARDNER

Amateurs like you make me laugh. The enemies of America don't have to do very much when know-nothings like you are doing their work for them. The missile defense system you are referring to wasn't facing the wrong way. It was facing up. That's where missiles come from. Or maybe you thought they burrowed through the ground like prairie dogs.

MARTIN

What about nuclear weaponry? Why does America have over 800 tons of pure bomb-grade uranium stockpiled? Why are we on such a war footing, when the rest of the world seems more preoccupied with stealing our jobs instead of stealing our flag?

MATT GARDNER

Do you know why the voters of this district have sent me to the venerated halls of the U.S. Congress ten years in a row now? It's because they know that Matt Gardner doesn't negotiate with terrorists. They know Matt Gardner stands strong in the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT GARDNER cont.

face of barbaric threats to the good people of this nation. Why, I love peace as much as any man. But I won't sacrifice my wife and children or any of the good people of this great nation under God, to some naïve belief that if we just play tambourines and give peace a chance, all the bad people will go away.

CROSS FADE:

CHRIS CASTIGLIA

This sort of sticks-and-stones approach is exactly why we have so much gridlock in government now. There's way too much acrimony in politics. Yelling achieves nothing. We all want the same things.

PETER POTTS

Acrimony macaroni. If someone is in pain, they yell. And this country's in pain. It started when Richard Nixon cut off America's balls by taking us off the gold standard. Well, I'm here to sew 'em back on.

MARTIN

Civility has its place. But what's civil about hurting America's most vulnerable citizens? The poor, the unemployed, the sick. Mr. Gardner consistently votes against programs to help those most in need. One glaring example is Social Security. Republicans like the esteemed Mr. Gardner talk about needing to reduce the national debt. But Social Security doesn't add one single dollar to the national debt. Social Security is a self-sustaining trust and its monies are by law intentionally sequestered from the ongoing spending of the government for its other functions. It is a completely separate fund and has no place in the debate about reducing the national debt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT GARDNER

I have no problem answering that, if you'll let me, Jana.

JANA COLLIER

Well ... it's not your turn ... um. Whatever. Okay. I think the public deserves to hear your rebuttal.

MATT GARDNER

Thanks, Jana. Mr. Truth here seems very confused. This fund and that fund. He's like a kid who can't figure out which cookie jar he hid his marijuana in. We owe it to our elderly, our retired citizens who've worked hard all their lives and now just want to relax and enjoy their golden years, we owe these good people the security of a decent pension check every month. You know something? My own mother gets a social security check every month. I know how important it is to her.

MARTIN

Your mother's on Social Security?

MATT GARDNER

(becoming tearful)

Yes. She's 79 years old, God bless her.

MARTIN

You reported that last year you earned over \$1.8 million. And your mother's on Social Security?

Lots of groans and murmuring from the studio audience. Gardner looks likes he's going to blow a fuse.

JANA COLLIER

Okay, gentlemen. Enough. We'll now hear your closing remarks. And we're really short on time, so I'm asking you to be brief. Mr. Potts, you may go first.

PETER POTTS

I call myself the One-Man Political Posse for good reason. There's a lot of you bad guys out there ruining

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER POTTS cont.

this country. So if you're tuned in, I'm putting you on notice. I'm comin' to get you. I'll track you down and string you up. God bless our great nation. Amen.

CHRIS CASTIGLIA

We are one people. We are one nation. We're all children of a higher power, regardless of what you choose to call it. My beliefs are simple. Respect others and work together for a better world. That's exactly what I will do if I'm elected to this office.

MARTIN

There's a party going on in America but most of us aren't invited. The wealthy are getting wealthier but for the rest of us, you know the story. We're losing our jobs or have jobs that don't pay enough to live on, our houses are being foreclosed on, we can't afford to send our kids to college, on and on. My message here is straightforward. I want to see this country back on its feet. I want to see all of us enjoy the benefits of living in the richest country in the world. And I don't think we need a few privileged elite to decide what kind of America this should be. The American people are smart. They know what they want. But they don't get it, do they? 75% want the wars ended and our young soldiers back home safe and sound. The wars keep going. We want to earn a decent wage. Yet we make the same wage as we did forty--

JANA COLLIER

(authoritatively)

Your time is up, Mr. Truth.

MARTIN

But I'm not finished.

JANA COLLIER

I'm afraid you are. Or do I have to get the grappling hook. Finally, we now hear from five-term incumbent, Congressman Matt Gardner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT GARDNER

We all do our part here in our little corner of the American Dream. Each of you makes his or her contribution. I have always done everything in my power to make life here in the 3rd District safe, secure, enjoyable, prosperous, for you and your loved ones. It's not always easy. I've had to fight against ignorant and poorly-informed naysayers, men who've never been in a uniform ...

(looks at Martin)

... as I fight against America's bloodthirsty adversaries who are determined to ...

CROSS FADE:

Martin is looking down at his watch, as Gardner drones on.

... I've brought good jobs to this district so that right here in Dayton we play a vital role in defending our nation. The unmanned drones that are critical in securing our borders, the lethally armed drones targeting and killing terrorists in hostile lands overseas, both are developed right here in our home town, at Wright-Patterson AFB. I stand for a strong, proud America. I stand strong and proud before you today, and thank Almighty God I live in the greatest nation in the world. Thank God for America! Thank God for our brave men and women in uniform. Thank God for each and every one of you!

Studio audience erupts in patriotic cheering.

MARTIN

(under his breath)

Thank God he didn't exceed his allotted time.

JANA COLLIER

Okay. That's it. I want to thank the participants. I also want to thank our audience here in the studio and all of you out there in the television viewing audience. Thanks and good night!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CUT TO: Rear of the studio. People are filing out, milling about. Jamila, Bill, Lincoln, Imogene, Bob, and Phyllis are talking, excited, pleased.

CLOSE-UP: Jamila as she looks to the stage area.

JAMILA POV: Martin is standing toe-to-toe with Matt Gardner. Martin says something. Gardner looks pissed, like he wants to kill Martin.

CUT BACK TO: Rear of the studio. Martin strolls back, joins them. Everyone comes over to congratulate him. Finally ...

CLOSE-UP of Martin and Jamila ...

JAMILA

Hey, Martin. At the end there. I saw you talking to Gardner. He didn't look too happy. What was that about?

MARTIN

(laughing)

I just said, 'You're going down, sucker!' He seemed to take offense.

JAMILA

Oh my God! I'm surprised he didn't deck you. So. Do you believe it?

MARTIN

No. But it sure felt good saying it!

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / PHYLLIS'S OFFICE - DAY

MARTIN and JAMILA are there. PHYLLIS is on the phone. We only hear her side of the conversation.

PHYLLIS

I see. What was the reason? (Pause) Well, that's too bad. Let me know if you reconsider. (Pause) It's your loss. Have a wonderful day.

Hangs up, turns to Martin.

PHYLLIS cont.

You won't be appearing in the final two debates.

MARTIN

But my leprosy isn't contagious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA
Assholes.

INT: CONTROL ROOM — DAY

It's the flight control room at Wright-Patterson AFB, with scientists and military types looking very concerned. DRONE PILOT is frantic.

DRONE PILOT
Shit. We've lost it.

EXT: SKIES OVER DAYTON — DAY

Unmanned drone is flying erratically.

INT: CONTROL ROOM — DAY

FLIGHT SAFETY
Are we getting nav data?

PROJECT MANAGER
Nothing's getting in or out. It's locked up.

COMMANDER
I say we shoot the fucker down.
Where's this flying turd right now?

DRONE PILOT
It's out in farm country right now.
But it's got enough fuel to keep going for another eleven hours.

EXT: SKIES OVER DAYTON — DAY

Drone makes 180 degree turn.

EXT: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL — DAY

It's recess. Kids hear bell, run back into school. Little Jessica Meyers suddenly turns around and heads back out. Her backpack is next to the monkey bars.

EXT: SKIES OVER DAYTON — DAY

Drone dips, then climbs into a stall. Its engines cut and it starts plunging to earth, quickly accelerating.

EXT: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL — DAY

Jessica Meyers grabs her backpack, then looks up just as the diving drone crashes and explodes. She is consumed in a ball of flames.

INT: WHITE HOUSE PRESS BRIEFING ROOM — DAY

It's packed with reporters. PRESIDENT is solemn.

PRESIDENT

While it in no way mitigates the enormous grief we are now feeling as a people, nor justifies the loss of an innocent life in this deplorable, heartbreaking incident, let us all understand that this sadly is the price we must pay in the ongoing War on Terror. It's a war we didn't want. A war we didn't choose. But a war we will win. We owe it to ourselves. We owe it to little Jessica Meyers.

EXT: CITY STREET / GARDNER'S CAMPAIGN OFFICE — DAY

Congressman MATT GARDNER is tearful as he addresses a group of reporters.

MATT GARDNER

I feel as though I've lost one of my own daughters. So young, so innocent. A horrifying tragedy in our ongoing battle against ruthless fanatics who spare no one, even precious little girls like Jessica Meyers, as they seek to destroy America.

EXT: CEMETERY — DAY

Mourners attend burial of little Jessica. Martin is there, a respectful distance in back. He is mortified and angry.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / PHYLLIS'S OFFICE — DAY

PHYLLIS, MARTIN, Bill and Jamila looking intent.

PHYLLIS

Are you sure?

MARTIN

Yes. I have to do this.

INT: GARAGE – NIGHT

BOB has a crude photo studio set up in his garage. He's making final adjustments of lights and boom mic, then gets behind a video camera. Bill and Jamila are there to help. MARTIN is ready to film an editorial statement.

BOB

All set, Martin. We're rolling.

MARTIN

I am sad and insulted that the President would use the horrible and tragic events surrounding the death of little Jessica Meyers to promote a lie to the American people. The President said that Jessica was a victim of the War on Terror. This is simply not true. She was a victim of the war on us. Yes, us. American citizens. The drone that crashed was a domestic reconnaissance plane, to be flown over America. In straight talk, this drone is for spying on you and I. Such a drone is illegal and should have never been built, much less flown on that fateful day. Jessica Meyers did not have to die. Jessica Meyers should not have died. Little Jessica Meyers was killed by military madness. We deserve better. May her precious and innocent soul rest in peace.

Martin steps off stage. Bob hugs him.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / PHYLLIS'S OFFICE – DAY

HELEN finishes up on the computer. MARTIN and PHYLLIS watch.

PHYLLIS

That's it?

HELEN

Every major media organization in the country. Plus over 300 political websites, online news aggregators. You name it. They got it.

MARTIN

Huffington Post?

HELEN

Even the BBC and Al Jazeera.

MULTIPLE SHOTS:

INT/EXT: NEWS BROADCASTS AND INTERVIEWS — DAY/NIGHT

OPENING: CNN TALKING HEAD interviewing SENATOR.

CNN TALKING HEAD

But what about this drone? You're on the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee.

SENATOR

I've got one thing to say: To call the President of the United States a liar smacks of treason.

NEXT: It's the weekly news program, the McLaughlin Group.

JOHN McLAUGHLIN

Issue 1: Is the government spying on Americans?

PAT BUCHANAN

This is precisely why there will never be a viable third party in our country. They always attract the lunatics, the crazy conspiracy nuts who'll say anything to get attention.

NEXT: CIA DIRECTOR on BILL O'REILLY show.

BILL O'REILLY

This Benedict Arnold's video is all over the internet and on world news sites. Now you got guy's like Hassan Rouhani and Vladimir Putin mocking us for having a police state.

CIA DIRECTOR

It's seditious at its core. But even more incriminating, this young man may have violated strict laws which restrict dissemination of classified material, whether his claim is true or not. And I'm not saying it is, mind you.

NEXT: Congressman MATT GARDNER getting into his car.

MATT GARDNER

This is just more blather from a hippie nobody who knows nothing about defense technology. And for him to politicize this little girl's death is appalling. Truth's just an ignorant punk. They should lock him up and throw away the key.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / CONFERENCE ROOM — NIGHT

Entire core campaign committee is there: MARTIN, PHYLLIS, LINCOLN, BILL, BOB, IMOGENE, JAMILA.

PHYLLIS
We're getting killed.

MARTIN
Maybe not the smart thing. But it was the right thing.

JAMILA
It's not what the pundits and political puppets say. It's what the people say.

LINCOLN
And that we won't know until election day.

JAMILA
How are the petitions coming, Lincoln?

LINCOLN
My kids are still on a roll. It's turning out better than expected.

IMOGENE
We've got some good news and some bad news. Bob and I have been fired.

BOB
Actually, suspended. They're trying to fire us. But it won't happen. Our management, God help them, are rabidly right wing. Republican to the core. Sure, they knew we were passing around petitions all along but never said a word. They really couldn't. Someone must have gotten to them. Anyway, we'll be fine.

IMOGENE
The good news is before we were shown the door, we collected over 5000 signatures. And mind you, these are people who usually shy away from petitions or anything political.

LINCOLN
5000! That's excellent!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB

The folks we see are all in big trouble. Poor, sick, disabled, out of work, out of luck. If they have a job, it's minimum wage. In terms of health care, Medicare is typically all they've got. So that's a really big item.

IMOGENE

A lot of them have boys in the war zones. They want them home.

PHYLLIS

So we have all these signatures. And we have the pledges. I'm still not seeing how it's made a bit of difference.

JAMILA

It hasn't. Not yet. But it will.

MARTIN

Except numbnuts Gardner isn't going to sign the pledges. He may be an asshole but he's a shrewd asshole.

JAMILA

I don't expect him to. But when he refuses, he faces a shit storm of voter backlash. Courtesy of us.

PHYLLIS

The media will never run with this.

MARTIN

That's for sure. They'll stick to stories about hot dog eating contests and crippled roller bladers trying to make it an Olympic event.

BILL

Or the usual blood-and-guts at six with freeway decapitations and exploding barbecue pits.

JAMILA

You're right. But there are other ways to get people's attention.

MARTIN

You're not going to have a Buddhist monk set himself on fire, are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA

Wow! Martin. What a great idea! Why didn't I think of that? Is there a Buddhist monastery in Dayton?

MARTIN

Yeah, it's right between the Yeti encampment and the crashed UFO.

JAMILA

It's all about timing. So let's get ready. In two weeks, it's the October surprise. Have you got a handle on this, Lincoln?

LINCOLN

We've found the perfect occasion. And I've got the perfect guy.

EXT: SPORTS ARENA — DAY

A few thousand MATT GARDNER supporters are gathered for a rally. Up at the front of the crowd are his young hard-core campaign volunteers. Gardner is seated at the back of a huge stage with several other VIPs, with his plastic grin soaking up the adulation. The MC, who looks like the road manager of a Dixieland band is off to one side, waiting for the current speaker to finish her remarks.

GARY is at the other side of the stage, laying low, waiting for his chance to jump in. He's early 20s, funny, charming, fearless, unflappable — a real showman.

ROOSTER LADY looks like a big chicken and is stage center at the mic. We join her as she finishes gushing about Gardner.

ROOSTER LADY

... such a wonderful family man, the true embodiment of Christian values in our troubled times. Matt Gardner for Congress!

There is polite applause as she waddles over to Gardner to perhaps lay an egg and get a hug. Before the MC gets a chance to head back over to the microphone, Gary leaps on the stage and takes charge. He nods and smiles at MC who looks confused and starts hastily checking his list of speakers. Gary waves at crowd, totally in command.

GARY

Alright! It's so great to be here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARY cont.

(winking at MC)

Hey! You're doing a great job here today. I'll just introduce myself. I'm Gary Tamblin from the Committee on Public Policy Preferences. We go by CPPP to make it simple. My god! This is so fantastic! Is everyone having a good time?

They're not but Gary's enthusiasm is so contagious they give a big cheer.

GARY cont.

Over the past three months, we have canvassed the entire Ohio 3rd Congressional District. We wanted to know how the voters felt about certain key issues. Let me tell you, Congressman Gardner, distinguished guests, and all of you who have been working so hard on this campaign, we found bucket loads of enthusiasm out there. As we went door to door, people weren't too busy. No! They didn't brush us off. Not at all. In fact, they welcomed the opportunity to speak out, to sign on the dotted line, so to speak, and to be heard. What a great country! What a great state this is! Ohio! Yes!

Crowd yells and cheers. Gary turns and directs remarks at Gardner. The congressman's plastic grin looks increasingly forced, unsure of what's coming.

GARY cont.

We at CPPP know you, sir, will be proud to be part of our effort to restore true representative democracy to our great nation.

(to crowd)

Now what I have here are two separate items. We have petitions and I have pledges. I couldn't carry all of the petitions with me because there were so many. Can you believe it? We got 90,636 signatures. How about that?

Crowd yells and cheers.

GARY cont.

But what I do have with me is these.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gary holds up four pledges. He takes the mic, turns around and starts walking toward Gardner. MC has figured out that Gary is not supposed to be there but doesn't know what to do. He scrambles around looking for help.

GARY cont.

Wow! Congressman Gardner, this is such a rare treat. Being here on the same stage with you.

(to crowd)

Let's hear it for Congressman Matt Gardner! Yeah!

Crowd yells and cheers. Gardiner eyes Gary warily, stands up as Gary approaches. Now they are toe-to-toe.

GARY cont.

So, Congressman Gardner, ladies and gentlemen, I have here four pledges here which reflect the overwhelming majority of opinion here in our district. There's one on bringing home our troops from Afghanistan ...

(big roar from audience)

... another for making the wealthy in this country pay their fair share in taxes ...

(another big roar)

This one is for raising the federal minimum wage, which I'm sure would help a lot of folks here tonight ...

(huge roar)

And lastly, this pledge is on Social Security and Medicare, two of the most successful government programs in our history. Most people say they don't want our wonderful Congress messing with them. That's it!

Gary waves the pledges in the air and the crowd cheers like the home team had just scored the winning touchdown. Gary then sticks the microphone in Gardner's face, stands there with a taunting grin. MC suddenly comes rushing up with a rent-a-cop in tow. Gardner leans away from the mic and says something to MC. He and the security guard back away but stand close by in case they are needed.

MATT GARDNER

So young man. What did you say your name was?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARY

Gary Tamblin, Congressman ... sir.

MATT GARDNER

I can see you're passionate about this. I admire that. And whatever it is you've got in your hands probably represents a lot of hard work.

GARY

Yes, sir. You're absolutely correct, Congressman Gardner. Why, gathering 90,636 signatures on the petitions alone involved hundreds of volunteers and several thousand person-hours.

MATT GARDNER

Person-hours. Not man-hours. That's good. I like that.

GARY

It's politically correct, sir.

MATT GARDNER

I'll tell you what, my boy. I promise to look these over and if they're in order and are as laudable as you claim they are, I'll be happy to sign them.

Gardner waves to the audience. They respond with a booming yell of approval. Gary gets right in Gardner's face.

GARY

You have 24 hours.

Gardner's expression quickly changes. He is indignant.

MATT GARDNER

Excuse me! What did you just say?

GARY

Congressman Gardner ... sir. I said you have 24 hours.

Gardner becomes enraged.

MATT GARDNER

You are giving me an ultimatum? Just who in the hell do you are?

Gary points theatrically at his watch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARY
24 hours. Starting right now. Have
a nice day.

Gary walks away like a conquering hero.

INT: LINCOLN'S CAMPUS OFFICE — DAY

LINCOLN is on the phone in his private office.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
Congressman Matt Gardner For A
Strong America.

LINCOLN
Is Mr. Gardner available?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
Congressman Gardner is in a meeting.
Can someone else help you?

LINCOLN
I've been calling for three days
now. All I'm asking for here is
some basic courtesy.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
What does this concern?

LINCOLN
This is the CPPP, a grass-roots
citizens organization. Three days
ago we presented Mr. Gardner with
some time-sensitive documents for
his signature. We're still waiting
to hear back from him.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
One moment please.

Lincoln is shocked when Gardner himself comes on the line.

MATT GARDNER (V.O.)
Is this about the pledges?

LINCOLN
Yes, Congressman Gardner, it is.

MATT GARDNER (V.O.)
You need an answer? Here's my
answer. GO FUCK YOURSELF!

Click! Gardner hangs up.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / PHYLLIS'S OFFICE - DAY

PHYLLIS, MARTIN and JAMILA are looking at LINCOLN with rapt attention.

PHYLLIS

No! He didn't!

MARTIN

He really said that?

LINCOLN

Yes, quote unquote.

JAMILA

Yes! Perfect! This is great!

MULTIPLE SHOTS:

EXT/INT: DAYTON, OHIO - DAY/NIGHT

Demonstrations spread across the city and are increasingly covered by the press.

OPENING: Gardner is speaking to a crowd. Protesters make a loud fuss. They carry signs: 'Raise the minimum wage!', 'Why won't you sign the pledges?', 'End the war!', 'Fair taxes on the rich' 'America declares bankruptcy so Matt Gardner can buy another \$2,000,000 home'.

NEXT: Old people posed in front of a nursing home wearing t-shirts that say 'I am \$12,000 below the poverty line. Please protect Social Security. Sign the pledge!'

NEXT: Demonstrators are marching on a sidewalk dressed in skeleton costumes, pulling a cart full of what looks like bodies in large black plastic bags. They're carrying signs: 'No more soldiers in body bags', 'Sign the pledge to bring the troops home!'

NEXT: People of all ages in wheel chairs, on crutches, with bandages and prosthetic limbs, standing in a cemetery. 'Cut Medicare and this will be our new home. Sign the pledge!'

NEXT: There's an old beat-up Cadillac with 'Congressman Gardner won't sign the pledges' painted on the side and a sign next to it: '\$1 buys you a swing.' A man standing on top of the car gives it a good hit with a sledgehammer.

NEXT: MATT GARDNER trying to get into his car is being harassed by several reporters. He's at the end of a tirade.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT GARDNER

... the Republic for which it stands,
one Nation under God, indivisible,
with liberty and justice for all. You
wanted a pledge. THERE'S YOUR PLEDGE!

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / FRONT AREA - DAY

Front area of office is full of volunteers on the phone.

VOLUNTEER #1

They're actually contracts. And
Martin Truth is the only candidate
to sign all four.

WIFE ON PHONE (V.O.)

My husband is on his third tour of
duty in Afghanistan. We want him
home.

CROSSFADE:

VOLUNTEER #2

You're so right, sir. No one can
live on \$7.25 an hour. Congressman
Gardner always votes against raising
it. And now he's refusing to sign
the pledge.

CROSSFADE:

MAN ON PHONE (V.O.)

Without Medicare I'd be dead. I'm a
cancer survivor, you know. So what's
your guy's name?

VOLUNTEER #3

That's Martin Truth, sir. And he's
signed a legally binding pledge to
protect both Medicare and Social
Security.

CROSSFADE:

VOLUNTEER #4

Martin Truth just wants the wealthy
to pay their fair share, that's all.
Congressman Gardner keeps voting to
cut school lunches, education, all
sorts of things for poor people.

WOMAN ON PHONE (V.O.)

What's happened to this country? The
Bible says we should be compassionate
and kind, especially to people in
need.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / CONFERENCE ROOM – NIGHT

Everybody is there. Behind PHYLLIS is a television set and a DVD player.

PHYLLIS

Okay, one week to go and the attack dogs are out. I recorded these last night. They're on every station.

She hits play and we see three made-for-TV smear ads.

FIRST AD: Sponsored by PAC Family Counts, it contrasts the solid family life of Gardner and the wild orgiastic single life of his Green Party opponent. It's a video collage of Gardner at home with his family, in the yard playing with his four kids, at a picnic in the neighborhood, coaching a little league team, juxtaposed with incriminating clips of pole dancers in a strip club, tattooed motorcyclists, wild youths passing a joint and partying at a rock concert, even hookers strutting around in front of an adult book store. Martin tellingly is not in any of the incriminating clips.

SECOND AD: Sponsored by Americans For Drug Free Politics, takes the viewer on a tour through an opium den, using stock black and white film footage from a half century ago. The mellow voice of the narrator drones on rhetorically: "When Martin Truth says he loves America, is he seeing the same America as you and I? When Martin Truth talks about the American Dream, is this the same American Dream you and I have? Or does his dream begin and end here? Is Martin Truth telling you the whole truth? When Martin Truth and his buddies on the lunatic fringe talk about smoke and mirrors, you might want to ask what they've been smoking?"

THIRD AD: Very short ad featuring the photo of him and Phyllis being put into the back of a squad car when their bake sale was shut down. Captioned 'Parking tickets? No dog leash? We'd like to know.'

MARTIN

Lovely.

BOB

Predictable.

JAMILA

They're animals.

PHYLLIS

Have they no shame?

LINCOLN

I think it's time to get tough.

EXT: CITY STREET / GARDNER'S CAMPAIGN OFFICE — DAY

Six young volunteers are picketing across the street from the headquarters of Gardner. They are all wearing t-shirts which say 'Matt Gardner, Lapdog for the Rich and Powerful'. Each also carries a protest sign accusing him of refusing to sign the pledges, e.g. 'Matt Gardner refuses to sign pledge for fair taxes on the wealthy', 'Matt Gardner refuses to sign pledge protecting Social Security'. One GIRL PROTESTER has a sign which says ...

Gardner's perfect record in Congress:
More body bags for dead soldiers
More tax breaks for the rich
Destroy Social Security
Destroy Medicare
Keep us poor

MATT GARDNER pulls up, parks in his reserved space in front of his office, gets out, notices the protesters. As he keys in on the last sign, he slams car door and bolts across the street. He spins the girl around and starts yelling at her.

MATT GARDNER
How dare you? This is slander!

GIRL PROTESTER
The Congressional Record doesn't lie, sir. Perhaps your memory is slipping. Shall I give you a quick refresher course as to your voting record on these issues?

MATT GARDNER
Why you little bitch! You've got a lot of nerve.

Gardner grabs her sign and starts beating her with it. The other protesters come to her aid, pulling her away as she shields herself from the blows. A police squad car gives a blast of its siren and pulls up. Two OFFICERS jump out. Gardner immediately calms down.

OFFICER #1
Just what's the problem here? Oh ...
Congressman Gardner. Good day.

MATT GARDNER
These protesters attacked me. I was just--

OFFICER #2
Okay. Put down your signs. Nobody move. You're all under arrest.

Two more squad cars pull up. Protesters are hauled away.

INT: NEWSROOM STUDIO SET / "WHIO-TV: NEW CENTER 7" - NIGHT

LETITIA PERRY is reporting.

LETITIA PERRY

Congressman Matt Gardner is claiming that yesterday he was assaulted by protesters in front of his campaign office. Six students from U of D were arrested and are being held.

CUT TO: MATT GARDNER speaking on camera.

MATT GARDNER

They just flipped out as soon as I came over to talk to them. I mean, I have military training. I could have taken them all out. But I don't immediately resort to violence just because someone attacks me.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

So what happens now?

MATT GARDNER

I think I'll let 'em sit in the clink for a couple days. They should think about this and maybe that'll calm 'em down a bit. Then I'll drop charges. I'm not a spiteful person.

BACK TO: Newsroom studio set.

LETITIA PERRY

During the incident, apparently one of the protesters videoed the entire altercation on his iPhone. The video was posted later that evening on the internet. It appears that things didn't quite go the way Congressman Gardner alleges.

INSERT: Video of Gardner attacking Girl Protester.

LETITIA PERRY cont.

The police report that hundreds of calls have been pouring in from irate citizens demanding that the arrested students be immediately released. Many are also calling for Gardner himself to be arrested and charged with assault. We were not able to reach Mr. Gardner for comment.

CROSS FADE:

INT: HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM – DAY

MARTIN with JAMILA at a high school environmental science fair, looking at an exhibit, talking to the young man and young lady who designed it. Suddenly, there is a commotion. ASIAN GIRL, early 20s and very pregnant, comes around the corner leading several local reporters over to Martin.

ASIAN GIRL

There he is! That's the bastard who did this.

(playing to reporters)

He took me for a weekend at a beautiful luxury hotel in Chicago. He was quite the charmer, a real playboy type. He kept telling me how he had been waiting his whole life for a girl like me. We made love like it was our honeymoon. After we got back here, I never heard from him again. What kind of man acts like this? That's what I want to know. A sex-addicted womanizer, that's who!

(to Martin)

You son-of-a-bitch! How dare you treat me this way. What about your baby? Are you going to just walk away from your baby?

She lunges for Martin. Chaos ensues. A couple teachers pull Asian Girl off Martin. She then runs out crying pursued by reporters. Martin is speechless. The two students Martin was talking to back away from him. The reporters return, start firing questions at him. Martin is obviously humiliated. He and Jamila leave.

CLOSE-UP: Martin and Jamila are pushing their way past the reporters who taking photos and badgering him.

JAMILA

So, this is a new side of Martin Truth. Love ambassador to Asia.

MARTIN

She told me she was Yoko Ono's niece. I just wanted to send Yoko some of my haiku.

JAMILA

If you don't win this election, you can always host your own reality show. You ca call it Love 'em and Leave 'em, Baby.

INT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / CONFERENCE ROOM — NIGHT

Phyllis, Lincoln and Martin are looking at some papers.

JAMILA (O.C.)

Hey, Martin! You better come and look at this. A new installment of the soap opera.

FRONT AREA

Volunteers are busy on the phones but all have stopped to watch. TV is tuned to a local news station.

PHYLLIS and MARTIN enter. Martin looks at the TV and gasps in disbelief.

PHYLLIS

Is that who I--

MARTIN

It's my ex. I haven't talked to her since ... since she left.

CUT TO: NEWSROOM STUDIO SET / "WKEF-TV FOX 45" — NIGHT

CHELBY KOSTO is doing special report, ALISON at her side.

CHELBY KOSTO

Last night, we showed you some bizarre and dramatic footage of a very young, very pregnant young girl accosting Martin Truth, Green Party candidate for U.S. Congress, at a local science fair. She accused him of being the father of her unborn baby. Well, in a WKEF-TV Fox 45 exclusive, we have for you tonight a whole different twist on that story. Here with me is Alison Baker. Thanks for coming. What can you tell us, Alison?

ALISON

I was Martin's fiancé back then, at the time of the alleged affair. I can assure you that Martin did nothing of the kind. He is the most loyal, dependable, trustworthy person I have ever met. We had been together nearly ten years and the guy never looked at another woman. He sure wasn't out of town for a whole weekend. I think I would have noticed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHELBY KOSTO

So you're saying Mr. Truth is not the father.

ALISON

I'm saying that this is just a cheap political stunt to discredit a good person. If every politician were as moral as Martin Truth, this country wouldn't be in the mess it's in.

CHELBY

Have you talked to Martin Truth recently?

ALISON

No I haven't. I decided to end my relationship with Martin for personal reasons and haven't spoken to him since. But I can say this. It's truly disgusting to see this kind of malicious attack. There is no more honest, no more dedicated, no more kind, selfless and giving individual than he is. He would be a great congressman. The voters of this district should know that and see this kind of sick stunt for precisely what it is: An attempt to slander the only person who is qualified and worthy of the job.

BACK TO: Storefront office front area.

MARTIN looks like he's been spun around seventy times and launched into low earth orbit. He, PHYLLIS, LINCOLN and JAMILA go back to the conference room and plop down.

CONFERENCE ROOM

MARTIN

What a roller coaster ride.

PHYLLIS

I need a good night's sleep.

JAMILA

This has to be the craziest campaign in recorded history.

LINCOLN

Hopefully this stunt has exhausted their arsenal of dirty tricks.

INT: HOME / LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Phone is ringing in PHYLLIS's home. It's very late and she drags herself out of bed to answer it.

PHYLLIS

Hello. (Pause) It WHAT?

INT: TELEVISION STUDIO / "WDTN TV 2 NEWS" – DAY (MORNING)

PAM ELLIOT

The campaign headquarters for Green Party congressional candidate, Martin Truth, burned to the ground late last night. We have from an unnamed source that authorities are looking into the possibility of arson.

EXT: STOREFRONT OFFICE / STREET – DAY

PHYLLIS and BILL are standing there looking at the charred ruins of the office.

PHYLLIS

Thank god I backed everything up. At least we've still got the voter call sheets.

BILL

It's not ideal. But you can use my coffee shop. We'll make it work.

They look down the street and there are college students walking toward them, with Lincoln in the lead. Then cars and motor bikes start pulling up. Volunteers young and old are coming from everywhere. They're all holding up cell phones.

MULTIPLE SHOTS:

INT/EXT: VARIOUS LOCATIONS – DAY/NIGHT

OPENING: Young volunteers on cell phones in Solid Grounds jabbering away about voting for Martin.

NEXT: Students at the U of D student union café on iPads and laptops typing away.

NEXT: Guy sitting in back of a handball court with a call sheet, dialing cell phone.

NEXT: Girl making French fries at a fast food joint, at the same time she's on her cell phone talking about Martin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEXT: Guy in a campus groundskeepers uniform trimming hedges talks on a cell phone with dangly mic hanging in his face.

NEXT: EVELYN at her desk in Future Perfect on the phone.

EVELYN

That's right, honey. Martin Truth.
For congress. I know him personally.
He's such a nice boy.

EXT: COFFEE HOUSE / 'SOLID GROUNDS' - NIGHT

MARTIN is walking to Solid Grounds. On the sidewalk coming toward him is WALKING VOLUNTEER talking on his cell phone.

WALKING VOLUNTEER

Martin Truth is what this country
needs. Honesty, courage, conviction
(noticing Martin) ... alright! You
won't believe this, but here he is
in person. Walking right toward me.

He hands the phone to Martin.

MARTIN

Hello. (Pause) Yes it is. (Pause
looking at volunteer) I'd say so.
Most definitely. (Pause) Thank you!
(handing phone back) She said she'll
vote for me, if you're half as cute
as you sound on the phone.

INT: COFFEE HOUSE / 'SOLID GROUNDS' - NIGHT

It's productive chaos. The place is jammed with people on computers and phones. Bill is running around delivering coffee. Jamila, Lincoln, Bob, Imogene, Helen and PHYLLIS keeping it all moving. Martin twists through the bodies.

PHYLLIS

The last big push. Can you believe
this?

DISSOLVE:

LATER: Everyone is gone except MARTIN, limp in a bean bag chair, and JAMILA slumped at a table sipping herbal tea.

MARTIN

Well, Jamila. We did it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA
We did something.

MARTIN
Why do I feel so empty?

JAMILA
Fatigue? Lack of closure? Makes sense. The cards aren't all on the table yet.

MARTIN
No. It's ... I mean ... it's that even if I win it'll be a Pyrrhic victory. Look around you. Look at this country. It's never been this messy, so strewn with corruption.

JAMILA
You wild-eyed optimist.

They sit in silence for a bit. Then as if both are obeying the same silent command they get up and walk out.

EXT: COFFEE HOUSE / 'SOLID GROUNDS' - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Martin locks up, they start to go to their cars, but turn back to one another.

JAMILA
Yes, Martin Truth?

MARTIN
Thanks, Jamila Parks.

CROSS-FADE WITH TITLE: 'Election Day'

INT: COFFEE HOUSE / 'SOLID GROUNDS' - DAY

The place is still a mess. MARTIN walks in on PHYLLIS and BILL, who are having coffee and muffins.

BILL
Did you vote already?

MARTIN
Yeah. I wrote in Justin Bieber. Sharp kid. Listen, I can't handle sitting around here all day while the returns dribble in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHYLLIS

No problem, Martin. Take some time for yourself. You've worked very hard.

MARTIN

We all have.

EXT: CITY PARK — DAY

Martin strolls lost in reflection.

INT: FAMILY RESTAURANT — DAY

Martin eats lunch, reads Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States".

INT: DAYTON ART INSTITUTE — DAY

Martin sits looking at Edward Hopper's "High Noon".

EXT: RIVERS EDGE PARK, DAYTON — DAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

Martin is bundled up against the cold as the sun goes down. He takes a photo of out of the book he's carrying. It's the picture of him as a young boy with his mother.

INT: TELEVISION STUDIO / "WBNS TV 10 Columbus, OH" — NIGHT

JERRY REVISH and co-anchor THERESE are reporting election results.

JERRY REVISH

Well, here's a shocker. We've got a final on that very contentious, topsy-turvy, nearly impossible to predict race for U.S. Congress, 3rd Congressional District. With 97% of the precincts reporting, there is a winner. Are you ready for this? In a contest that has resulted in record voter turnout, Martin Truth has been declared the victor.

Tally appears in side panel. Martin Truth (GRN) 119,897 votes, Matt Gardner (R) 108,113 votes, Chris Castiglia (D) 63,887 votes, Peter Potts (LIB) 2,110.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY REVISH cont.

You'll recall that Martin Truth is running on the Green Party ticket. We're looking for an acceptance speech by Mr. Truth, live from his campaign headquarters, if our roving reporter can find it. How about that, Therese? Big surprise there.

THERESE

If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Truth is the first Green Party candidate to ever be elected to national office.

JERRY REVISH

First ever.

THERESE

By the way, isn't he the guy that got shot at?

JERRY REVISH

He is indeed. Maybe that's what you need to get elected these days, eh?

THERESE

Maybe that's what I need to do to get a raise around here.

JERRY REVISH

Whatever spins your chamber. You wanna borrow my gun?

THERESE

Thanks. I have my own right here in my purse.

EXT/INT: COFFEE HOUSE / 'SOLID GROUNDS' - NIGHT

MARTIN arrives. It's a mob scene and party that spills into the street. Martin enters, shaking hands, smiling, waving. He gets up on a chair holding a sheath of papers over his head.

MARTIN

Here are my signed pledges. I'm off to Washington DC! The people have spoken. This is your victory. Thanks to all of you for all your hard work and for believing in me.

Everyone goes crazy celebrating. Martin hugs Phyllis, Bill, Helen, Bob, Imogene, Lincoln. Jamila stands off to the side.

EXT: MARTIN'S HOUSE — NIGHT

MARTIN is putting key in door to enter. JAMILA pulls up in her car, joins him on the porch.

JAMILA
So Mr. Congressman, got any beer in your refrigerator?

MARTIN
Are you inviting yourself in?

He turns to open the door. She gives his arm a sharp tug and when he turns, she kisses him passionately.

INT: MARTIN'S HOUSE — NIGHT

JAMILA is backing MARTIN up into the living room, removing his coat, unbuttoning his shirt.

MARTIN
I thought you were a lesbian.

JAMILA
You converted me. You're such a hunk, I don't like women any more.

MARTIN
Alright. What's the game?

JAMILA
Do you want to talk or get on with this? I've been watching you stare at my body now for seven months. I don't think you were guessing my height and weight.

BEDROOM LATER

They've done making love and are lying in bed all dreamy.

MARTIN
So tell me. When did this start?

JAMILA
From the first time I met you, I felt it. I thought I was being silly. School girl crush.

MARTIN
You're serious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMILA

We had a professional relationship, Martin. I don't believe in mixing business and pleasure. So, you know ... I said what I said.

MARTIN

I guess I didn't hide it very well. I mean my feelings.

JAMILA

I could tell you were attracted to me. Not like most guys either. It wasn't the slicky meat kind of attraction.

MARTIN

Slicky meat? Jamila, you are one-of-a-kind.

JAMILA

I hope so.

She cuddles up even closer to him. Suddenly Martin breaks out laughing.

MARTIN

Oh my god! You're something else! 'Jamila' means 'lover of labia'. Isn't that what you said?

JAMILA

Swahili is difficult. That's a ... well a very loose translation. I took some liberties.

MARTIN

Do you know what 'Martin' means? Taking some liberties, of course.

She picks up the covers and peeks down at his crotch. Seeing he's ready again, she smiles.

JAMILA

If I'm not mistaken, it means 'seize the moment'.

Martin rolls over on top of her.

MARTIN

Hear ye! Hear ye!

JAMILA

Congress is in session.

CUT TO BLACK / FADE UP AMERICAN FLAG – ROLL CREDITS

Intersperse interviews with people who voted for Martin.

VOTER #1 (Elderly lady)
He's a nice young man. I got tired of all the talk about cutting Social Security. He'll do the right thing.

VOTER #2 (Executive male)
That pledges thing worked for me. I'd like to think we can trust these politicians. But they'll say anything to get elected. Now we have it in writing.

VOTER #3 (Housewife)
Sure. He's just one man. But it's a start. At least we have one person who will listen to the people.

VOTER #4 (Female nurse)
I see it everyday. Health care costs are bankrupting the country. Solving problems starts with straight talk. I feel good about Martin Truth.

VOTER #5 (Black military man)
Truth is my kind of congressman. No bullshit. Thinks for himself. He's strong. Best of all, he's not just another rich white guy.

VOTER #6 (Farmer)
He had a lot of guts to say it. But he was right. Why the hell are they building them damn drones to spy on law abiding American citizens?

VOTER #7 (Fast food clerk)
He cares about the little guy. And there sure are a lot of little guys in this country. I'm one of them.

VOTER #8 (Radical student)
The rich have had it too good. It's time they paid their fair share and help to get this country back on its feet. Screw them! Hit 'em with a 99% tax rate. Or more!

SPORTS BAR BABE
He's a decent human being. How do I know? I just do.

THE END.