

The Last Ship

by Reid Carter

Act One: "A Most Necessary Proposal"

SUPER: Washington, D.C.

SUPER: Before.

MR. PRESIDENT

(over black)

There may be a temptation to think  
of today as the beginning of the  
end of our democracy.

Fade in.

INT. WHITE HOUSE GREEN ROOM - DAY

A busy green room anticipating a big speech. Stylists and advisors buzz around a large suited man sitting in front of a mirror. We see a sliver of his face reflected in the mirror.

The President speaks again with just a hint of a southern drawl.

MR. PRESIDENT

There are those who would look at  
this moment as the first day of a  
long night. But I promise you,  
that day is not today. I know more  
than anyone how unpreced--  
unprecedented. Un-pre-ce-den-ted.  
How unprecedented.

Reverse shot to fully reveal:

PRESIDENT ORRIN WALLACE: early 50s, white, heavy-set and carries it like authority is directly related to body size. No nerves on his face, just exhaustion at the English language.

A MAKE-UP SMOCK protrudes from Wallace's open collar, wet at the edges from pooling sweat. A female staffer attempts to apply powder to stem the drip.

Wallace pays her little mind. He raises his notecard higher and squints.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

How unprecedented this change will  
be. Through this widely popular  
amendment, with the support of  
Congress and the American public,  
I am confident that I can lead us  
into a brighter, better--brighter  
better? Is that right?

WOODY  
 (off-screen)  
 That is right, Mr. President.

Wallace tries to turn his head towards Woody's voice, but the staffer pulls his face forward.

WALLACE  
 Did I write this?

WOODY  
 (off-screen)  
 You read it.

WALLACE  
 Well did I write it?

WOODY  
 (off-screen)  
 When was the last time you wrote  
 one of your speeches?

Wallace turns his head. The Powder Woman reaches for him and he smacks her hand away. Powder spills on her blazer and she withdraws, aghast.

Wallace barely registers her.

WOODY (CONT'D)  
 (off-screen)  
 And I don't mean edits or lines  
 here or there, I mean the full  
 speech.

WALLACE  
 It hasn't been that long, Woody, I  
 am a good writer.

WOODY  
 (off-screen)  
 Well.

WALLACE  
 I'm an acceptable writer.

WOODY  
 (off-screen)  
 And that's why we pay for  
 good writers.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Wallace mid walk-and-talk down a hallway--a *West Wing* reference wouldn't be out of place. With him is WOODY MONROE, early 50s, a journalist's eye in a politician's suit, perpetually looks like he could use a drink. Just behind them a pair of secret service agents keep pace.

Wallace flicks through his notecards.

WOODY

I can take those, you won't need--

WALLACE

After that bullshit last year when the prompter fritzed--where was that, Florida?

In the hallway behind him an ASSISTANT rounds the corner, three ties draped over his arm. He runs to catch up.

WOODY

Ohio.

WALLACE

Of course it was fucking Ohio. I'm keeping my fucking cards.

He slips them into his jacket pocket as the assistant catches them. Woody stops to view the ties, Wallace continues walking without missing a beat. We stay on Wallace, and Woody shrinks in the distance.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I'm not getting caught ad-libbing again in front of the world, I've made enough of a public ass of myself for a lifetime thank you very much.

Woody selects a tie--red with blue stripes, a gesture at unity--and jogs to catch up. He tosses the tie to Wallace, who doesn't even glance at it before throwing it around his neck.

WALLACE

Why is the speech garbage?

WOODY

It's not garbage.

WALLACE

You want me to believe you don't know what garbage is?

WOODY

It's not garbage because it's what they need to hear.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

The room stuffed with reporters ahead of a press conference, all gathered in front of a center stand of microphones and lights.

Towards the back of the crowd is EILIS SANDOVAL, late 20s, short and bitter, permanent bags under her eyes. She tests her pen on her notepad, then checks her watch.

A REPORTER next to Eilis--an old head, been around the block a few times and then some--nudges her.

PRESS CORP REPORTER

You know what this is?

EILIS

Why would I?

PRESS CORP REPORTER

You usually do. So do you?

EILIS

I have a hunch.

PRESS CORP REPORTER

So what is it?

EILIS

The end of the republic, more or less.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Woody adjusts Wallace's tie.

WOODY

Go for presidential if you can manage it, but I'll settle for coherent.

WALLACE

I was planning on tweezing my nose hairs mid-speech, but if you think that's not refined enough--

WOODY

(ignoring him)

Don't dawdle, don't try to milk the speech for drama, just get in and out and open up for questions.

WALLACE

Woody Monroe, I talked you into taking this job, I can talk some reporters into giving up the foundations of their democracy for a few years.

Woody tries to restrain a smirk, fails.

WOODY

That's not funny.

WALLACE

Well, it's not a very funny day.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

They file in--Woody and the secret service agents first, followed by Wallace. Wallace walks to the podium.

WALLACE

Thank you all for coming today on such short notice.

He pauses. Woody narrows his eyes.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

As you all well know, less than six years remain until the Clemmons Meteor strikes the surface of our planet. I don't need to review with you what the outcome of that impact will be.

Wallace pauses again, lets the implication settle over the room.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

We, alongside our allies in the international community, continue to have our best scientists working tirelessly to save our planet. The launch of the second American Ark remains on schedule for January 2013.

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I offer my sincerest thanks to the American people for continuing to entrust me and my administration with planning for the future of our species.

Some journalists in the crowd scribble notes. Eilis remains still, pen between her teeth, taking the speech in.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

The greatest challenge ever to greet the human race is rapidly approaching. This is not the time for upheavals or political infighting. For the good of the country, we must do everything in our power to ensure that, for the next six years, our work continues uninterrupted.

PRESS CORP REPORTER

(whispering)

Holy shit he pushed it through.

EILIS

Shh.

WALLACE

It is with humbleness and gratitude that I am pleased to announce that in due course Congress will propose a constitutional amendment, suspending the presidential term limits imposed by the 22nd Amendment until our crisis has passed.

The crowd bustles, Eilis remains still, a silent witness. Wallace surveys the crowd, like a school teacher

WALLACE

Presidential term limits have performed a vital function in our fair nation for more than 60 years. The gravity of this request is not lost on me, my administration, or the legislators responsible for this most necessary proposal. The amendment, following its passing by the House and the Senate, will then pass to the states for ratification.

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)

As always, and as it should, the fate of our nation rests with the American public.

A beat.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

There may be a temptation to think of today as the beginning of the end of our democracy. There are those who would look at this moment as the first day of a long night. But I promise you, that day is not today. Through this widely popular amendment, with the support of Congress and the American public, I am confident that I can lead us into a brighter, better--

Cut to black.

After a beat:

SUPER: WASHINGTON, D.C.

SUPER: NOW

The supers fade.

Over black:

NPR ANNOUNCER

From NPR News in Washington, I'm Santana LeCroix. Protests continue this afternoon across the nation, following reports of the U.S. Government's so-called "Selective Survival" campaign--

More news announcements come, one after the other, each layering over the last to create an increasing wave of sound. Announcements like--

LOCAL NEWSCASTER

Questions as to who knew what, and when, with some saying this harkens back to government sponsored eugenics--

And we mix in less objective voices--



## TALKING HEAD

We've known the end was nigh for more than a decade now, and each and every day we dragged our feet cost us literally thousands of lives. And now this?--

As each new voice enters the jumble it becomes less and less distinguishable--they become fragments of audio clips, mixing and mashing until they're no longer words. They become a CHANT. The newscasters a rumble beneath an angry, near insurmountable ROAR.

One voice overcomes it, a woman, NAYA NSIER, powerful, assured in her delivery--

## NAYA

They have tried to divide us for generations. But if this is the end, let it be the end of a united humanity! We may have lived apart, but we will die--

CUT TO:

INT. NAYA'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Smash cut to NAYA NSEIR, late 20s, willing to punch you if you comment on her looks.

We see her from behind, legs crossed sitting on the floor in front of a crummy TV. She's wearing a bathrobe. A news flash across the screen.

## PBS ANNOUNCER

...early reports say the campaign examines such criteria as skin color, sexual orientation, and physical disability. Preparations for the launch of the final ship confirmed to depart the planet prior to the upcoming apocalypse were set to begin at the end of the week, but in the face of these troubling reports, some experts are questioning whether that timetable remains viable.

Naya sips from a mug of steaming tea as the announcer continues. Her phone buzzes. She glances at it--hesitates--and she picks up. She speaks with firmness.

PBS ANNOUNCER

(continued)

We go now to PBS  
Washington  
Correspondent  
Gisele Rousseau,  
live from the  
Washington  
Monument. Gisele?

NAYA

Yes? Eric. No,  
I'm watching. I  
see it.

GISELE ROUSSEAU

(quietly, as  
background  
noise)

I'm here in front  
of the National  
Mall, where just  
five years ago in  
what until last  
night had been  
the most  
memorable moment  
of his  
presidency,  
President Wallace  
delivered a  
stirring address  
to the country--

NAYA

(continued)  
Shut up, Eric.  
Deep breath,  
don't panic.  
(Beat.) Ok? I  
need you to call  
everyone for me.

GISELE ROUSSEAU

(continued)

--pledging the  
remainder of his  
time on Earth to,  
quote, "the  
sacred cause of  
American life."

NAYA

No, not actually  
everyone,  
fuckhead. Call  
the officers. My  
place, 9  
o'clock--scratch  
that. As soon as  
they can.

GISELE ROUSSEAU

(continued)  
 And he followed  
 through on that  
 pledge, saving  
 more than 12,000  
 Americans with  
 the launch of  
 Genesis I and  
 Genesis II. But  
 in the face of  
 recent  
 developments, the  
 President finds  
 himself under  
 siege.

NAYA

Then--Eric, take  
 a deep breath.  
 Drink some coffee  
 or something, go  
 for a walk, pet  
 your cat, jerk  
 off. Whatever you  
 need. I need you  
 ready to work by  
 9, we have shit  
 to do.

She clicks her phone off and drops it.

GISELE ROUSSEAU

(continued)  
 From enemies, from the American  
 people, and even from those he had  
 considered his friends.

Naya picks up her mug and downs the remainder. As she swallows  
 we pull around, revealing her face.

Eyes red, the remains of tear streaks on her face. Aside from  
 the salt tracks, her face is hard, jaw clenched. She's pissed.

CUT TO:

INT. SWANKY D.C. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Off Naya's scowl and onto the orgasming face of a slightly  
 pudgy FEMALE JOHN, 40s, flushed and intense, brow scrunched in  
 pure ecstasy. She's trying to hold in her pleasure--and  
 gloriously failing. The camera holds on her face for a beat  
 before rotating 180 degrees--she's actually upside down, head  
 hanging off the edge of the bed.

Tilt up to reveal her upper body, fingers grasping at the  
 sheets, hanging on for dear life. Above her, arms wrapped  
 around her legs and threatening to pound her onto the floor is  
 SIMON, early 20s, thin and blonde but wishes he wasn't. He  
 slows his pace, switching gears from rough to smooth,  
 eliciting a loud groan--he's good at this.

A toilet flushes off-screen. Simon pulls out, dragging the  
 woman back onto the bed. She drops her legs to the side with a  
 sigh.

MALE JOHN  
(off-screen)  
Please, don't let me interrupt.

SIMON  
I think your wife could use  
the break.

The female john laughs between heavy breaths. Her husband climbs onto the bed. Simon grabs the back of his head, pulling him into a passionate kiss. When Simon releases, the male john laughs.

MALE JOHN  
You are something special.

Simon smirks. He pushes the johns head down between his wife's legs, then positions himself behind the man. He grabs the male john's ass with both hands and squeezes.

SIMON  
You get what you pay for.

The male john laughs. Simon drops down. He shoves his face between the man's asscheeks, and the laughs turn into moans. The female john's moans begin as well as we pull away from them. In the corner, a phone sticks out of the pocket of a pair of jeans.

The phone buzzes and lights up--CALL FROM: FUCKING ERIC.

Later. The male john passed out on the hotel bed. His wife, naked, peeks out the drapes as the sun starts to rise.

INT. SWANKY D.C. HOTEL, BATHROOM - DAY

Simon stands at a bathroom mirror. He takes a swig of the courtesy mouthwash, swishes it between his cheeks, spits. He dips down and drinks from the faucet.

INT. SWANKY D.C. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Simon pulls his jeans over a tight, colorful pair of underwear. The wife stands naked on the other side of the room.

FEMALE JOHN  
Time to settle up, I suppose.

SIMON  
Usually I have to remind people.

FEMALE JOHN

Just trying to show  
my...appreciation.

She pulls a comically thick wad of \$100s from her bag, bound by paper strips from the bank. She pauses, turns the bundle over in her hand, then pulls out a second, identically thick stack.

SIMON

That's--

FEMALE JOHN

(interrupting)  
More than appropriate.

SIMON

(finishing)  
--way too much.

The wife crosses the room.

FEMALE JOHN

\$3,000 for the night, as agreed.  
With a bonus for...

She reaches Simon and pulls him into a passionate kiss. He hesitates, eyes wide open, nearly pulls away, but manages to hold his ground. After a few moments she releases him and licks her lips.

FEMALE JOHN

For that.

She holds out the money. Simon forces a smile and takes it. She turns her back on him and picks up a pair of panties from the ground.

FEMALE JOHN

Besides, there's no use saving it.  
You can't take a fortune to Hell.

EXT. SWANKY D.C. HOTEL ENTRANCE - DAY

Simon, now fully dressed in a crumpled button down and jeans, lights a cigarette as he exits the hotel. He pauses to check his pockets--keys, check--wallet, check--phone--

He pulls it out. The missed call still sits on the screen: MISSED CALL, FUCKING ERIC. He squints at it, confused. After a moment, he pockets the phone, call unreturned.

Super: 8:30

The block is mostly empty--too empty for a Monday rush hour. Simon starts to walk down the street. He passes an old, scratched and graffittied billboard bearing a large, ark-like spaceship. The caption reads:

"Nothing Lasts Forever...Except Humanity."

"Register Today for Your Chance to Live On."

Simon pays the billboard no mind. He continues on.

END OF ACT ONE.