

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

C.J. CREGG, White House Press Secretary, leans against the podium. She's friendly and confident and in a good mood. Unlike most, this particular day has been rather worry-free, for her, anyway.

C.J.

One last reminder: tomorrow the surviving astronauts of the Apollo program will be visiting the White House to discuss preparations for the events celebrating the 40th anniversary of man first walking on the moon, which occurred on July 20, 1969 as part of the Apollo 11 mission, in case you were wondering. They'll be meeting with Toby Ziegler and myself and will then visit briefly with the President.

She notices a reporter's hand is raised.

C.J. (CONT'D)

Yeah? Chris?

CHRIS

Is it safe to assume there will be photos?

C.J.

Well, it wouldn't be much of a photo-op if there weren't, now would it?

The press pool laugh.

C.J. (CONT'D)

Lastly, I know in these trying economic times you and your news directors are all worried about the financial viability of your various newspapers and broadcasts. I'd like to help you out by going and digging up some real news to give you tomorrow, so if there are no further questions...

(pauses for the
slightest of moments)

That's a full lid. Thank you, and I'll see you at tomorrow morning's briefing.

She shuts her portfolio and exits the podium.

CUT TO:

INT. WEST WING HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

C.J. is quickly walking to her office, obviously pleased with herself. A reporter rushes to catch up with her. It's DANNY CONCANNON from the Washington Post, with whom C.J. shares an intense mutual attraction.

DANNY

C.J., wait up!

C.J.

Can't, Danny. It's the middle of the week and I might get out of here before today turns into tomorrow. Minor miracles like this cannot go unappreciated.

DANNY

Yeah. I'm sure they can't.

C.J.

I'm serious, Danny. You should go home, or better yet...

DANNY

Better what?

C.J.

Nothing.

DANNY

Listen. You were good in there.

C.J.

I know.

DANNY

So, let me ask you something.

C.J.

I told you. I can't. Minor miracles. Remember? Besides, that's why I take questions.

They arrive at C.J.'S OFFICE. She goes around her desk, sits in her chair, and feeds her goldfish, Gail, which Danny gave her, incidentally.

DANNY

C.J., I'm a Pulitzer winner...

C.J.
 (interrupting)
 I know. I'm impressed.

DANNY
 (continuing)
 And for that reason, there's just
 some questions I'd rather not ask in
 front of the rest of the corps.

C.J.
 (intrigued)
 Like...

DANNY
 (uncharacteristically
 insecure)
 Like... does the White House have
 concrete evidence of life on other
 planets that they've been hiding for
 decades and knowledge of current
 extraterrestrial visitations that
 could be threatening the national
 security of the United States?

C.J. looks at Danny dumfounded. Danny smiles back at her sheepishly.

C.J.
 This is a joke, right? I've actually
 had a good day and you and Billy
 have decided to see if you can't
 ruin it with a joke.

DANNY
 I'm not joking. In a recent speech,
 former astronaut Edgar Mitchell said,
 quote:
 (consults his notes)
 "It is now time to put away this
 embargo of truth about the alien
 presence."

C.J.
 Aliens, Danny? Come on!

DANNY
 He went on to say, "I call upon our
 government to open up and become a
 part of this planetary community
 that is now trying to take our proper
 role as a spacefaring civilization.
 We are being visited."

Danny looks up from his notes at C.J. who simply stares back at him for a moment.

C.J.
 (exasperated)
 Where did he give the speech?

DANNY
 Gaithersburg, Maryland.

C.J.
 I mean to whom.

DANNY
 A conference of UFOlogists.

C.J.
 UFOlogists?

DANNY
 Yeah.

C.J.
 They'd be experts in UFOlogy?

DANNY
 Yeah.

C.J.
 Doesn't the -logy suffix mean "the
 study of?"

DANNY
 Yeah.

C.J.
 How can there be experts in a field
 that is supposed to be studying
 something that they themselves can't
 even prove exists?

DANNY
 I don't know. Maybe that's their
 point.

C.J. smirks at Danny.

C.J.
 Danny, you don't have to make
 something up just so you can come
 back here and talk to me.

DANNY
 I know.

C.J.
 Danny...

DANNY

Look, I'm not writing the story. I don't have to. It's already out there. I'm just giving you a heads up.

C.J.

This is ridiculous.

DANNY

It's going to be a thing, C.J.

C.J.

It's absolutely not.

DANNY

It is.

C.J.

How can you say that?

DANNY

(indicating his notes)

Because a celebrated astronaut said this.

C.J.

Former astronaut.

DANNY

What?

C.J.

You said he was a former astronaut.

DANNY

Right. Former.

C.J.

And you just now said he's celebrated.

DANNY

The man walked on the moon, C.J.

C.J.

(slowly realizing the
relevance)

Edgar Mitchell walked on the moon?

DANNY

Yeah.

C.J.

(not wanting to hear
the answer)

What mission?

DANNY
Apollo 14.

C.J.
(to no one in
particular)
This is going to be a thing.

DANNY
Yeah.

C.J.
So much for minor miracles.

DANNY
Yeah.

C.J.
Carol!

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. BULLPEN OUTSIDE JOSH'S OFFICE - LATER

C.J. enters with her face buried in a thick file. She nearly runs over DONNA MOSS, Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff.

C.J.
(startled)
Oh! Donna. I'm sorry. I didn't see you there.

DONNA
It's okay. No need for me to start being noticed around here now.

C.J.
(indicating Josh's
office door, which
is closed)
Is he in?

From within the office comes the ranting of JOSH LYMAN, Deputy White House Chief of Staff.

JOSH (O.S.)

(yelling)

Those middling, small-minded, redneck,
right-wing, pork-bellied hacks!!

DONNA

Yes. He's in. I thought you were
leaving.

C.J.

I was, but it turns out while miracles
don't exist, aliens might.

DONNA

Oh.

Suddenly, the door to Josh's office swings open and he emerges with a lone sheet of paper in his hand. His shirt is wrinkled. His tie is loosened. His hair is wild. He is furious and looks around scanning the room for someone on whom he can release his wrath.

JOSH

Donna!

DONNA

Here.

Donna stands as Josh approaches. While he gives her orders she straightens his tie and hands him a fresh cup of coffee.

JOSH

I want you to call the offices of Representatives Bachus, Harper and Young and tell them that Josh Lyman wants to see them tonight! Tell them that Josh Lyman says they can take the White House to task for TARP all they want, but it was their boy who got us in this mess in the first place! Tell them that Josh Lyman isn't going to let some unholy trinity of right-wing, religious conservatism hold the world's most influential economy hostage while they grandstand for their hillbilly constituents, that Josh Lyman is going to see to it personally that their entire agendas never see the inside of a committee hearing if a vote doesn't happen by the end of the week!

DONNA

(teasingly flirting)

Ooh. Who is this Josh Lyman? He sounds so powerful and authoritative.

JOSH
 (calming down)
 Just get them here. You can leave
 out all the other stuff. I'll tell
 them myself.

Josh turns to go back into his office.

DONNA
 Josh...

JOSH
 Yeah?

DONNA
 Change your shirt before they get
 here. That one's starting to smell.

JOSH
 Yeah.

DONNA
 And maybe lose the whole third person
 thing.

JOSH
 Yeah.

DONNA
 And Josh...

JOSH
 What?

DONNA
 (indicating C.J.)
 C.J.'s here to see you.

JOSH
 (noticing C.J. for
 the first time)
 Right. Hey. Come on in.

C.J. follow Josh into his office. He sips his coffee and
 begins loosening his tie again.

C.J.
 Hillbilly constituents?

JOSH
 Yeah. I know. "Backwoods" might be
 more appropriate considering the
 states they represent. What you
 got?

C.J.
 What do you know about Aliens?

JOSH
Someone at INS say something stupid
again?

C.J.
No, I mean... space aliens.

JOSH
Space aliens?

C.J.
Yeah. How familiar are you with
them?

JOSH
I saw Star Wars a couple of times
when I was a kid.

C.J.
I'm serious.

JOSH
No you're not.

C.J.
I am. I'm getting questions.

JOSH
From whom?

C.J.
Danny.

JOSH
Danny? He's yanking your chain.

C.J.
He's not. The story's already out
there.

JOSH
What is?

C.J.
Edgar Mitchell, a former Apollo
astronaut, is claiming that we're
not only hiding the existence of
aliens but recent visits by them.

JOSH
(sarcastically)
To the White House?

C.J.
No. To Earth. Be serious.

JOSH
It's hard, C.J.

She stares him down.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Okay. You said this is out there.

C.J.
Yeah.

JOSH
This is being carried by reputable news sources, not some blogger from Alabama or something?

C.J.
That's right.

JOSH
Who?

C.J.
Fox News has it today and the Washington Times had it yesterday.

JOSH
I said "reputable," C.J.

C.J.
This is going to be a thing, Josh.

JOSH
(sighs)
Okay. What do you want to do?

C.J.
I've got some ideas, but I want to take it to Leo.

Josh looks at C.J. for a moment. He resigns himself to it, and consults his watch.

JOSH
Okay. We haven't pissed him off in a couple of hours. Let's go.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICES - MOMENTS LATER

SAM SEABORN, Deputy White House Communications Director, sits diligently typing away on his laptop. His concentration is repeatedly interrupted by a steady stream of thumps against his office wall. He looks up from his screen towards the window that looks in to the office of his boss, TOBY ZIEGLER, White House Communications Director.

A red rubber ball bounces loudly off of the glass. Sam knows he's being beckoned. He gets up from his desks and walks around into Toby's office.

SAM
We're back at this again?

TOBY
(curtly, as if he
knows of any other
way to be)
Did you see it?

SAM
Yes, and I thought it was fine.

TOBY
Fine?

SAM
Yeah. It was good.

TOBY
Well, was it fine or was it good?

SAM
(carefully choosing
his words)
I thought it was really very fine
and good.

TOBY
It's amazing you're a speechwriter.

SAM
My skills astound even me.

TOBY
He flubbed the tenth paragraph.

SAM
He didn't flub it.

TOBY
His mind wasn't in it.

SAM
Admittedly, there are a few other
things going on that require his
attention.

Toby gets out of his chair and begins pacing.

TOBY
He was speaking to the environmental
lobby on Earth Day of all days and
(MORE)

TOBY (CONT'D)

instead of "reduce, reuse, recycle," he said, "these are the days to admonish the whole of living souls to abate our squander, to bestow fresh efficiency upon that which has been habitually omitted for far too long and to recover, reclaim and reprocess what might be salvaged from the remnants of the protraction of modern progress."

SAM

He improvised.

TOBY

He turned a sound byte into a Chekhov monologue.

SAM

Sounds more like Ibsen to me.

TOBY

He used three other words with the prefix re-!

SAM

At least he demonstrated a good vocabulary.

TOBY

I don't know what we're doing anymore. It use to be the case of Dr. Jeckyll and Uncle Fluffy, but now, if it's not Uncle Fluffy, it's the Amazing Menialogos, Thesaurus in Chief.

SAM

I thought it was fine.

Toby stops in his tracks and cuts his eyes at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

Good. I thought it was good.

Toby rears back to throw the ball at Sam when their conversation is interrupted by NANCY, one of their assistants.

NANCY

I'm sorry, Toby, Sam.

SAM

Oh, thank God.

NANCY

Leo wants you in his office right away.

Sam looks at Toby who throws his rubber ball at the T.V.

CUT TO:

INT. LEO'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

LEO MCGARRY, White House Chief of Staff, stands behind his desk reading a number of highly important reports and briefs simultaneously. Josh and C.J. stand before him, waiting patiently. Leo looks up from his reading and yells for his assistant.

LEO

Margaret!

MARGARET, Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, quickly enters. She's an odd, bird-like woman.

LEO (CONT'D)

I thought I told you to get Toby and Sam over here.

MARGARET

You did.

Toby and Sam walk in behind Margaret.

SAM

Here we are.

MARGARET

And I did.

LEO

Thank you, Margaret.

Margaret exits closing the door behind her. Toby now begins pacing in Leo's office.

TOBY

Did you see it?

LEO

Yeah.

TOBY

He flubbed the tenth paragraph.

JOSH

I thought it was fine.

Sam signals Josh to shut up while Toby looks like he could kill his friend.

LEO

Any good news?

SAM

We're recommending the President now be known as Thesaurus in Chief.

LEO

Yeah. I don't think that's going to happen.

Toby has finally stopped pacing.

TOBY

(to C.J.)

I thought you were going home.

C.J.

I was. Until...

TOBY

Until what?

JOSH

The Washington Times and Fox News are reporting that an Apollo astronaut has confirmed the existence of extraterrestrial life and is accusing the U.S. government of a massive conspiracy to cover up and withhold this information from the public at large.

TOBY

Which astronaut?

C.J.

Edgar Dean Mitchell of Apollo 14.

SAM

Is he credible?

JOSH

Aside from his belief in UFO's?

C.J.

Well, he was a Navy test pilot, holds a Doctor of Science in Aeronautics and Astronautics along with four honorary doctorates from Carnegie Mellon, New Mexico State, University of Akron and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He serves as the chairman of the advisory board for the Institute for Cooperation in Space and has published multiple times including a book on the dyadic model of reality.

SAM

So, yes.

TOBY

He's credible, and he'll be in the White House tomorrow to meet with C.J. and me.

C.J.

Not to mention the President.

JOSH

That's not going to happen anymore.

LEO

Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

JOSH

Leo, you can't let some nut shake hands with the President and pose for pictures.

LEO

He's not some nut, Josh. He's a decorated pilot and a national hero. Show a little respect.

Josh looks both shamed and flabbergasted at the same time. The room sits silent for a moment.

SAM

Well, did we.

TOBY

Did we what?

SAM

Did we cover up the existence of extraterrestrial life?

TOBY

(chuckling)
Of course not.

He looks around the room at all the other faces and grows a little more serious.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Right?

(waits for a response
that doesn't come)

Leo. Right?

LEO

Of course not. We didn't cover anything up.

Everyone begins to show their relief, until...

LEO (CONT'D)

That doesn't mean that someone else didn't.

JOSH

You've got to be kidding me.

LEO

I'm just saying we don't know and we need to find out.

TOBY

What do you want us to do?

LEO

Okay. Toby, I want you to find out absolutely everything you can about Edgar Mitchell. You're going to run into some classified info above your clearance but go as far as you can. C.J., I want to know what ever anyone else knows and is reporting and where they're getting their information.

C.J.

No problem.

LEO

Josh, coordinate with NASA, CIA, NSA, and the Joint Chiefs. Get them all in a room and get them talking. Then tell me what you find out.

JOSH

Leo...

LEO

It's good that you're skeptical, Josh. Just don't show your disdain too much.

JOSH

Okay, but we need some way to find out exactly what was said at this meeting.

SAM

I might can help out there.

LEO

How?

SAM

I can talk to Bob Engler.

LEO

Who?

JOSH

You know, Sam's guy from Big Block of Cheese Day.

C.J.

Wasn't this the guy trying to report a weather balloon in Hawaii as possible first contact with an alien species?

SAM

Yes.

TOBY

Don't forget he also wanted permission to tour Fort Knox to see if we were hiding a flying saucer there.

SAM

That's true, too, but he's legit and sincere and if there's something to this, he'll know it.

LEO

Whatever. Talk to the space guy. Now, listen up, all of you. We've got real problems right now that I don't need to lay out for you. Let's see if we can't keep everyone's focus on addressing the issues on this planet before we start worrying about those on another. Okay?

Everyone simply stands looking at Leo.

LEO (CONT'D)

Go. Go on. Do your jobs.

Everyone begins to leave with their various assignments.

LEO (CONT'D)

Margaret!

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

PRESIDENT JOSIAH BARTLETT stands behind the Resolute Desk. He is signing various documents being presented to him by CHARLIE YOUNG, his body man.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

What I don't understand, Charlie, is this: even if Global Warming is a myth, if there's no hole in the ozone and greenhouse gases are the stuff of legend, though a few hundred Nobel Prize winners agree that's not the case, and I know a thing or two about Nobel Prize winners, but even if those things were the case, what's the issue with encouraging people around the globe to take better care of our planet? What is the harm there? Why do so many of our colleagues from across the aisle take such issue with it? Explain that to me.

CHARLIE

I really can't, sir.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

Be sure to let me know when you can. I'd really like to stick it to them.

CHARLIE

Yes, sir. I will.

President Bartlett finishes signing the papers.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

What's next?

CHARLIE

Just some phone calls.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

All right. Let's do those from the residence.

CHARLIE

Yes, sir. I'll have them forwarded up. Will there be anything else, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

No. That's all. Thank you, Charlie.

Charlie exits to the outer office while Leo enters from the opposite side through the door leading to his own office.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT (CONT'D)

Ah, Leo.

LEO

Good evening, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

Leo, I'm hearing rumors that two real wars and threats from North Korea and Iran aren't enough anymore, that now we're considering being invaded by little green men from Mars.

LEO

We're not sure what color they are or from what planet they come, sir, but we're looking into it.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

(sarcastically)

I trust we're not taking this threat lightly.

LEO

No, sir. Our best minds are on it.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

Well, this should put them in a good mood tomorrow.

LEO

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

All kidding aside, Leo, did you ever in your life consider for just a moment that you might one day be standing in this room discussing, however unlikely, the existence of life on other planets and gauging what threat that life might pose to ours?

LEO

No, sir. But let's not worry about it too much. There's plenty else going on to keep us entertained.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

That may be so, but let's just make sure we don't have some new Orson Welles creating his own War of the Worlds.

LEO

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT

What else?

LEO
Nothing you need to be concerned
with tonight, sir.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT
What about Bachus, Harper and Young?

LEO
Josh is taking care of it.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT
I don't particularly care for TARP
either, you know, but I'm a world-
class economist, and I can't even
tell you what's going to happen next.

LEO
We'll figure it out.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT
It's all about the unknown.

LEO
Yes, sir. It is.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT
"Everyone's quick to blame the alien."

LEO
Sir?

PRESIDENT BARTLETT
Aeschylus. Greek playwright. Father
of the tragedy. Just seems fitting.

LEO
Yes sir.

PRESIDENT BARTLETT
Well... good night, Leo.

LEO
Good night, Mr. President.

President Bartlett exits the Oval Office and heads toward
the residence. Leo watches him go. He's worried.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE