

COLLEGE REPUBLICANS

by  
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Based on a true story.

December 2009

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EXT. WHITE HOUSE - MORNING

TITLE CARD: AUGUST 1973

INT. OVAL OFFICE - MORNING

President RICHARD M. NIXON sits at his desk, talking on the telephone. A newspaper is spread out before him.

NIXON

Now God damn it, I'm not going to have this. Not on top of everything else. Press. Cocksuckers. They're killing me.

(pause)

Yeah, I know, I know. I'm looking at The Post right now. Who is this kid?

(pause)

He worked for the campaign? For CREEP?

Nixon listens.

NIXON (CONT'D)

(surprised)

Segretti? Really? Fucking Christ. This shit is... Ahh. Fuck.

(pause)

We've got to come down on this. I'd just start right at the top and fire some people. Whatever department it came out of, I'd fire the top guy. And, uh... don't you agree?

Nixon looks at the newspaper closely.

NIXON (CONT'D)

And find this kid Rove. Get the FBI on him, take a statement. That's right, Rove. Karl Rove, "Teacher of Dirty Tricks."

We see a close up of the article Nixon is looking at, with a photo of the young man in question. The headline reads: GOP PROBES OFFICIAL AS TEACHER OF TRICKS.

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The sign outside the building says REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

INT. RNC MEETING ROOM - DAY

A young man enters the room. He is tall and trim with shaggy hair and sideburns. He wears large, thick glasses, and a wide necktie. It is the young man from the newspaper, KARL ROVE, 22.

Entering the room immediately after Rove is an older man in a dark suit, FBI AGENT, 48

FBI AGENT

Have a seat.

Rove sits. The agent sits across from him and takes out a pen and note pad.

Rove's young face is rosy and angelic, but his eyes suggest a hardness. He does not seem nervous.

FBI AGENT (CONT'D)

Mr. Rove, are you aware of the existence of an audiotape recording of your remarks to a seminar of College Republicans in San Diego, the tenth of March, 1972.

ROVE

I'm aware that a recording exists that the Washington Post claims to be my remarks.

FBI AGENT

You recall your remarks as different than was reported by the Post?

ROVE

Yes. I suspect the recording was doctored in some way.

FBI AGENT

Mmmm Hmmm. And when did you first come to know Lee Atwater?

ROVE

That depends on how you define the word, "know."

The FBI Agent subtly rolls his eyes.

FBI AGENT

Why don't you start at the beginning.

Rove pauses for a moment, thinking.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: APRIL 1973, FOUR MONTHS EARLIER

INT. CRNC OFFICE - DAY

Written on the frosted window of the office door is:

COLLEGE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE, JAMES COSTELLO,  
CHAIRMAN.

Rove sits across the desk from JAMES COSTELLO, a handsome  
28 year-old man in a crisp suit.

COSTELLO

Are you sure you want to do this?

ROVE

You said it yourself. I belong in your  
chair.

COSTELLO

Well, I was thinking in '75.

ROVE

I'm thinking now.

Costello smiles.

COSTELLO

You're awfully young to be Chairman,  
Karl. You'll be up against Edgeworth--  
he has seniority, and now Terry Dolan's  
running...

ROVE

I'm the same age as Terry Dolan.

COSTELLO

That's not the point. Dolan's  
Connecticut. He's got money, support,  
connections. He's got delegates. What  
do you have?

ROVE

Dolan is vulnerable. His support is wide  
but not deep. He's out of touch with--

COSTELLO

(interrupts)

Shit, Karl, it's only two years. Why don't you wait it out?

ROVE

Can't do it, Jim. I've got other plans in '75.

COSTELLO

You want it, I get that. And why not? This position launches careers. We are an arm of the Republican. National. Committee.

(pause)

The goddamn RNC Chairman is right across that hall. It's access. A seat at the table: senators, staffers...

ROVE

...the White House.

COSTELLO

If I back you-- if *Chicago* backs you, and you lose...

ROVE

Good thing I don't plan on losing.

Rove's cockiness is trying.

COSTELLO

If you challenge Dolan and lose, you'll be finished. You will not work in Washington for a long, long time.

ROVE

Understood.

COSTELLO

Look, I like you. But you've got to show us something before we go all in on you.

ROVE

I will give you something to see.

COSTELLO

You'll need a campaign manager.

ROVE

I'll need an assistant. I can manage my own campaign.

COSTELLO

Bullshit. You don't know anybody south of Virginia. You need somebody with juice, juice down South. It's the only region still up for grabs, so that's where the fight's going to be.

Costello strokes his chin, thinking.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

I know a kid down in South Carolina. He's a bit rough around the edges, but if anyone can pull this off it's him. And if he puts you in this chair, you need to put him in that one.

ROVE

What's his name?

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS

A passenger train rumbles through the frame.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Karl Rove sits on the train reading a book. It is called THE KING MAKERS, by Leonard Lurie.

TITLE CARD: COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Rove walks out of the station, looking for his ride.

A baby-faced young man, who looks about 16, holds up a sign that says "ROVE".

ROVE

I'm Karl Rove.

YOUNG MAN

Well, I'm Lee Atwater. Great to finally meet you, Karl.

ROVE

You're Lee Atwater?

YOUNG MAN

That's right! I'm gonna make you the next chairman of the College Republicans!

ROVE

You sound a lot older on the phone.

YOUNG MAN

I got a baby face. But I'm old enough to drink and I'm old enough to kick Terry Dolan's ass for ya.

Another young man seems to have overheard the conversation. He becomes agitated.

AGITATED MAN

What did you say?

YOUNG MAN

What's it to you, Mack?

AGITATED MAN

Don't mouth off to me. Terry Dolan's a friend of mine.

Agitated Man, though short in stature, glares at them with the eyes of a killer.

ROVE

Hey, we don't want any trouble here.

YOUNG MAN

Go piss up a flagpole.

Agitated Man lunges at the young man, grabs his shirt, and SLAMS HIM up against a wall.

AGITATED MAN

(in his face)

Don't sass me, boy!

Karl Rove freezes, shocked by the scene.

The attacker punches the young man in the stomach. He crumples to the ground in pain.

Agitated Man turns and points a finger at Rove.

AGITATED MAN (CONT'D)

Get ready, four eyes. Me and you are gonna mix.

Full of fear, Karl Rove faces a fight-or-flight moment.

He drops his bag to the ground and awkwardly raises his fists, in the manner of an old-fashioned boxer.

Their would-be fisticuffs are interrupted by LAUGHTER, coming from the young man on the ground. Agitated Man's demeanor changes immediately. The ruse is blown.

AGITATED MAN (THE REAL ATWATER)  
(CONT'D)

Aw, Roscoe!

YOUNG MAN (ROSCOE)

(laughing)

I'm sorry, Lee, it's too much... "Don't sass me, boy!"

The Young Man laughs some more. Karl Rove glares at Agitated Man, who he now understands is the real LEE ATWATER, 22.

Rove's face is red with anger. He turns and walks away.

ATWATER  
(under his breath)

Shit.

Atwater hustles after Rove, who is already headed back inside the train station.

INT. TRAIN STATION

Rove is at the ticket counter.

ROVE  
One ticket to Washington, D.C.

Atwater catches up to him.

ATWATER  
Karl, Karl! I'm sorry. It was just a little bit of fun.

STATION AGENT  
That'll be \$24.50 please.

ROVE  
(to Agent)  
One moment.

Rove steps aside from the counter and turns to Atwater. He is livid.



ROVE (CONT'D)

Fun? Fun! This is not fun. This is a fight for the future leadership of our Party. I need serious, serious people on my side, not a... redneck jackass. I'm risking my fucking career for this!

ATWATER

What career? You're a gopher at the CRNC.

ROVE

I have significant organizational responsibilities there, thank you very much. Now, I have a train to catch.

ATWATER

You're just gonna go back to DC? Drop out of the race?

ROVE

No, I'm going to go back to DC and I'm going to win. But there's no longer anything for me to do here with you.

ATWATER

You can't win without the South, Karl. And you can't win the South without me.

ROVE

Hardly. I have the support of the Chicago faction and the tacit endorsement of the Chairman. Presuming I split the South--

Atwater abruptly shifts gears, interrupting Rove.

ATWATER

You want to know the truth? That wasn't about fun. Nothing is. That was a test.

ROVE

(skeptical)

A test?

The pint-sized Atwater confronts Rove, the larger man, with an almost feral intensity.

ATWATER

You're damn straight. I had to see what you're made of. You want a fight? I'm a fighter. You want to win? I'm a winner. But are you?

(MORE)

ATWATER (CONT'D)

(pause)

If I'm going to be your corner man  
against Terry Dolan and his bag of  
assholes, it's my head on the block too!

ROVE

And what did you find out from your  
"test?"

ATWATER

You didn't run and I like that. But are  
you gonna do what it takes?-- Whatever it  
takes? Are you gonna go all the way?

ROVE

Absolutely.

ATWATER

Then I'll take you on.

Rove ponders this for a moment.

ROVE

Okay. Let's go.

ATWATER

Alright. How about a do-over?  
I'm Lee Atwater.

ROVE

Karl Rove.

ATWATER

Damn glad to meet you, Karl. It's time  
to get this engine runnin'.

They walk out of the train station together. Rove makes  
a confession to Atwater that trails off as they walk  
away.

ROVE

That was good, turning it around like  
that. You made it a referendum on my  
qualifications instead of yours. I  
wasn't fooled, but other people can be...

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

A rusty, green 1952 Plymouth pulls onto a two-lane road.

INT. CAR

The Young Man from earlier, ROSCOE, 16, is behind the wheel. Rove is in the back, Atwater sits shotgun.

ATWATER

Drop us off at Boog's Garage, right off of Two Notch Road.

ROVE

Are you old enough to drive?

ROSCOE

Yessir, Chairman Rove.

ROVE

"Chairman Rove," I like that.

ATWATER

Roscoe's my personal driver. He also mows Senator Thurmond's lawn.

Rove's legs are a little cramped in the back seat by a large black GUITAR CASE.

ROVE

You play guitar, Roscoe?

ROSCOE

Nosir.

ATWATER

She's mine, Karl. I don't go on any kind of road trip without my Gibson 335.

ROSCOE

Lee's the best blues guitarist in the history of the College Republicans.

ATWATER

Kind of like being the world's tallest midget, I know.

Rove smiles. He seems to be warming up to Lee after all.

EXT. CAR RENTAL SHOP

It is a run-down, backwoods auto-body garage. A large sign says "BOOG'S GARAGE," below it "CAR RENTALS."

INT. CAR RENTAL SHOP

Karl Rove is at the counter.

The counter man has a workshirt with an stitched nametag that reads: BOOG.

Boog is scrutinizing Rove's GULF OIL credit card as if he has never seen one before.

BOOG

Plastic, huh? Gonna have to call this in.

EXT. CAR RENTAL SHOP

Rove and Atwater watch as Boog pulls up in a mustard brown FORD PINTO. The engine sputters and crackles as the car stops in front of them.

ATWATER

I see you've spared no expense, Karl.

Rove ignores the comment.

BOOG

All yours.

ATWATER

Thanks, Cap.

Atwater grabs the keys and throws his bags and guitar case in the back seat.

ROVE

I want to sit down somewhere for a strategy session.

ATWATER

We've got to be in Atlanta by nightfall-- campaign event tonight. We'll talk shop on the way.

The pinto pulls onto the rural 2-lane highway and heads west. They're on their way.

INT. PINTO - DAY

Atwater drives. Rove is looking at Atwater's campaign materials and charts.

ATWATER

It's a blitzkrieg. We hit 6 states in 10 days, and lock up the support of each of the 6 Southern state chairmen. If we come into the convention with all the delegates from the South, the Chicago boys will bring us the rest.

ROVE

It's ambitious. Dolan has strong ties with the Southern leadership. How will we bring them over to our side?

ATWATER

By moving them away from Terry Dolan's side.

Atwater picks up a book and tosses it on Karl Rove's lap.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

The Art of War, by Sun Tzu.

ROVE

Yes, I'm familiar with it.

ATWATER

"All warfare is based on deception. Hold out baits to entice the enemy, feign disorder, and crush him."

ROVE

I find the writings of Machiavelli to be more apt for political warcraft.

ATWATER

Hail to *The Prince*.

ROVE

"In war, discipline can do more than fury."

ATWATER

That's a good one.

ROVE

The element of surprise will be key.

ATWATER

That's the key I'm singing in, baby Karl.

ROVE

Dolan doesn't know about this trip. He doesn't know that his support in the South is about to collapse.

ATWATER

Hell, you could fill Carolina Stadium with things Terry Dolan doesn't know.

ROVE

What about Edgeworth?

ATWATER

He's not a factor. Nobody knows him down here.

ROVE

Edgeworth should not be underestimated. He's got a clear Libertarian message that plays well with Y.A.F. Goldwater kids... He has a very statesman-like quality.

ATWATER

Statesman! Statesman?! Ain't nothing worse than a politico who thinks he's a "statesman."

Rove returns to his notes. Atwater notices the clock.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Shit! It's 5:30 already. We gotta get some drivin' in.

Atwater pops in an 8-TRACK CARTRIDGE into the car stereo. Up-tempo R&B MUSIC fills the car as he stomps on the gas.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

"Speed is the essence of war. Attack where your enemy is not prepared. Appear where you are not expected."

Rove grabs onto the passenger-side hand grip as the Pinto careens down the highway.

EXT. BETA THETA PI HOUSE - NIGHT

TITLE CARD: ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The pinto pulls to a stop across the street from their destination, the Beta Theta Pi Fraternity House.

Rove and Atwater look out at the house. It is a plantation-style mansion, brightly lit, with loud music coming from within.

ROVE

A frat party?

ATWATER

The Beta Theta Pis are like duck on a junebug with the Georgia C.R.

INT. FRAT HOUSE

The scene is crowded, but subdued. Despite the music and alcoholic drinks, an air of upper crust formality hangs over the proceedings.

Atwater hugs a burly young man with a buzz cut, EARL, 21

EARL

Shit, Lee, I didn't think you we're coming in until tomorrow!

ATWATER

You know I can't miss a Beta house mixer. Earl, this is the next Chairman of the CRNC, Karl Rove.

EARL

Pleasure, Karl.

ROVE

Earl.

ATWATER

Let's get some drinks! Friday's my junk day.

EARL

Now, Lee, you behave yourself now. There's some members of the national chapter here and they like things to be a certain way.

ATWATER

Earl... It's me.

Atwater gives Earl a wide grin as he and Rove head into the party. Earl shakes his head.

## ROVE AND ATWATER MINGLE

The occasion is more formal than might be expected. Atwater seems a bit under dressed and receives a few disapproving glances as he makes his way through the crowd. Rove, in his rumpled suit, is passable.

ATWATER

(to no one in particular)

Evening.

Lee and Karl walk past two attractive YOUNG LADIES. Lee spins around to talk to them.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Ladies, this is Karl Rove, the next Chairman of the College Republicans. And I'm Lee Atwater, his five-star general. But you can call me... General.

Young Lady #1 chuckles at his joke.

YOUNG LADY #1

Oh, I heard about that campaign. You're running against Terry!

ROVE

Yes, that's right.

YOUNG LADY #1

Our girlfriend Kate is going with him. What makes you so sure you're going to win?

ATWATER

Better strategy, better ideas. Plus, Karl's a lot smarter than Terry Dolan. Tell her somethin' really smart, Karl.

ROVE

Uh... Did you know... that, uh...

Rove is dumbstruck. Suddenly, he has an idea!

ROVE (CONT'D)

In the '72 presidential election in Georgia, Nixon won 75% of the vote! His highest total of any state. Beat McGovern by 50 points. And bested his own total from '68 by...

He suddenly notices the blank faces looking back at him.



ROVE (CONT'D)  
 ...almost, uh, 45 points.

YOUNG LADY #1  
 That's... fascinating.

Awkward silence.

LATER, AT THE DRINK TABLE

Rove and Atwater are ordering their drinks from an African-American SERVER.

ROVE  
 I'll have a mint julep, please. Hold the Bourbon.

ATWATER  
 You got PBR?

SERVER  
 Yes, sir.

In the distance beyond, Lee notices a young man in a sharp suit and bow tie come out from the door of a closed room. The man has an air of importance, he is JOHN KINNEY, 26.

Atwater directs Rove's attention to him.

ATWATER  
 That's John Kinney, the Georgia Chairman. He's the man we need to see.

They watch as Kinney is followed out of the room by a shorter man in a dark grey pin-striped suit.

ATWATER (CONT'D)  
 And that's... Is that...?

It is TERRY DOLAN, 22, the dark-haired, pale-skinned, beady-eyed rival candidate.

ROVE  
 That's Terry Dolan.

Dolan and Kinney shake hands as they leave the room together, looking very chummy. Rove and Atwater look at each other, as if to say, "Oh, shit."

They start to cross the room toward their adversary. Rove hesitates.

ROVE (CONT'D)  
(low voice)  
What about the element of surprise?

ATWATER  
(low voice)  
We're gonna have to go off book. Follow  
my lead.

INT. FRAT HOUSE HALLWAY

Moments later, they reach Dolan and Kinney. Kinney does not seem pleased to see Atwater.

ATWATER  
John Kinney. How are you doing, sir?

KINNEY  
(condescending)  
Glad you could make it, Lee. Things are  
always so... *entertaining* with you  
around.

ATWATER  
This is the fellow I was telling you  
about... Karl Rove.

Rove and Kinney shake hands.

KINNEY  
Karl.

ROVE  
Good Evening, sir.

KINNEY  
Karl, this is Terry Dolan.

They do not shake hands.

ROVE  
(cold)  
We've met.

DOLAN  
Indeed.

Atwater steps in and offers his hand to Dolan.

ATWATER  
I don't believe I've had the pleasure.

KINNEY

Terry, this is Lee Atwater. Lee's from South Carolina. Some backwater town, I can't remember the name.

Lee ignores Kinney and stares into Dolan's eyes as he shakes his hand.

ATWATER

Damn glad to meet you, Terry. It's an honor, an absolute thrill.

DOLAN

Thanks.

Atwater TIGHTENS HIS GRIP as he continues to shake Dolan's hand exuberantly. Dolan is clearly uncomfortable.

ATWATER

It's gonna be a hell of a campaign, hell of a campaign! I can't wait for the convention. I've got goosebumps!

DOLAN

Uh... I'm sure you do.

KINNEY

Well, gentleman, I might as well break the news now: I'm endorsing Terry for National Chairman.

This is a blow. Rove looks at Atwater, who seems strangely unbothered.

ATWATER

Dang! Really? But we just got here. You haven't even heard Karl's platform.

KINNEY

I've just spent the last hour talking with Terry and I liked what he had to say.

ROVE

Look, Mr. Kinney, I can assure you--

KINNEY

He's got some big ideas about the future of the CR. Fundraising, campus activism. He's got it all laid out in his campaign bible.

DOLAN

John, if we could not discuss that here.  
I would prefer--

ATWATER

Campaign bible? You don't say?

KINNEY

It's a notebook, *this* thick.

Kinney spreads his thumb and index finger.

DOLAN

(snide)

It's thicker than Nixon's head.

ROVE

You have a problem with the President,  
Terry?

DOLAN

Nixon's not a true conservative. He's  
compromised the movement. And every day  
on television he does more damage.

ATWATER

You mean Watergate?

KINNEY

(annoyed)

Yes, Lee.

DOLAN

Goldwater is the way.

ROVE

Goldwater lost by 22.6 percentage points.  
He gave LBJ the greatest popular majority  
in American electoral history. That's  
not "the way."

KINNEY

You have a problem with Goldwater, Rove?  
Most of us think he had the better ideas.

Lee Atwater is losing interest in the conversation.

In the distance, Atwater observes a man in a seersucker  
suit walk out of the room that Dolan and Kinney emerged  
from. He is the tall, tanned, DAPPER MAN.

Through the open door Atwater spies a large, THICK NOTEBOOK on a table inside the meeting room. It has DOLAN '73 written on the spine.

This can only be Dolan's CAMPAIGN BIBLE. Lee's eyes widen. No one else has noticed. The Dapper Man closes the door and walks away.

ROVE

Elections are about issues, not ideas.

KINNEY

I'm not sure I'm with you.

DOLAN

That's because you're with *me*.

Dolan and Kinney laugh at the joke. A hint of anger flashes onto Rove's face.

ROVE

John, you need to think beyond '76. The political alignment of this country is up for grabs. Georgia and the South voted Democrat for the last hundred years. But not anymore.

Atwater sees that no one is paying attention to him and casually slips away from the others.

ROVE (CONT'D)

Our generation-- if we can be pragmatic-- has a chance to build a lasting Republican majority.

Lee quietly opens the door and enters the Dolan/Kinney meeting room.

INT. MEETING ROOM

Atwater quickly and quietly closes the door behind him. The chattering ambiance of the party is silenced.

He briefly inspects his surroundings: it is a large conference room with a round table in the center and scattered furniture throughout.

On the table is Terry Dolan's campaign BIBLE. It is dog-eared and crammed with inserts and other material.

Atwater picks it up and with great anticipation begins to open it.

KATE  
May I help you?

Atwater is beyond startled.

In a soft upholstered chair in the corner sits KATE KING, 21, an attractive young woman in a cocktail dress.

ATWATER  
Oh, hello. Harvey LeRoy Atwater, at your service.

Lee gives her a short bow. Kate lights up a cigarette.

KATE  
So... what are you going to do with that big notebook, Harvey LeRoy?

ATWATER  
Oh, this? I'm... just retrieving it for my friend Terry.

KATE  
I didn't think Terry had any friends.

ATWATER  
In Georgia? Well, we've only met a few--

KATE  
(interrupts)  
I meant anywhere.

ATWATER  
No, we think the world of Terry.

KATE  
Now I know you're lying.

Atwater smiles. He likes this girl.

ATWATER  
I didn't get your name...

KATE  
Kate. Kate King.

ATWATER  
Kate, right... You're Terry's girl.

KATE  
I'm his travelling companion, yes.

ATWATER

Well, a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Unfortunately, I do have to get back to my party.

Atwater, still holding the notebook, turns to leave.

KATE

Uh, I don't think so.

ATWATER

Well... I'm flattered, Ms. King. I mean, you're very beautiful, but just not my type.

Kate smiles at Atwater's brashness, in spite of herself.

KATE

You can go, just leave the book.

ATWATER

What would you do if I just left with it?

KATE

Nothing. But the man outside in the seersucker suit would beat you to a pulp.

ATWATER

Fair enough.

Atwater walks over to Kate and hands her the book.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Before I go... do you have happen to have a cigarette for me?

INT. FRAT HOUSE HALLWAY

The heated political debate continues.

DOLAN

Rockefeller moderates like you are a cancer on the party.

ROVE

I'm not a moderate. I'm a pragmatist.

KINNEY

Oh, give it up, Rove.

ROVE

No, Goldwater had great ideas. The problem is he told people about them. So he wants to use a tactical nuke on North Vietnam? Great.

DOLAN

Limited war is for queers.

ROVE

But you don't tell the voters you're going to do it-- voters who oppose any nuclear first-strike by a margin of eight to one. John, if you--

Rove looks around and sees that John Kinney is no longer with them.

ROVE (CONT'D)

Where did he go?

Dolan looks at Rove and chuckles derisively.

DOLAN

I bet that happens to you a lot, doesn't it?

INT. MEETING ROOM

Atwater is entertaining Kate with a bar trick.

With the tip of his cigarette, Lee burns a small hole in the bottom of the clear plastic wrapper of the cigarette pack. He then drops in an extinguished cigarette butt, trapping it in the plastic. He presents the pack to Kate.

ATWATER

Now. It goes in pretty easy, but can you get it out of that hole?

Kate seems game for a challenge. She takes the pack from him and tries. The cigarette butt bounces overtop the hole repeatedly, but never falls out.

KATE

I suppose you can do it.

Atwater takes the pack and bends it slightly. He then blows forcefully through the newly created gap between the pack and the plastic.



The air escapes through the hole and carries the cigarette butt with it into the air. It is a surprising and amazing sight. Kate applauds.

KATE (CONT'D)

Very nice.

ATWATER

Let's play a game.

KATE

What kind of game?

ATWATER

A liar's game. I'll ask you five questions. All you have to do is get all five *wrong*.

KATE

All *wrong*? I think I can do that.

ATWATER

Of course you can. It's easy. But let's make it a bet. If you get just one right, I get the notebook.

Kate scoffs.

KATE

And if I win?

ATWATER

I'll quit my campaign and endorse Terry.

Kate laughs.

KATE

Why not?

ATWATER

Okay.

Atwater stands up and extends both his hands, beckoning Kate to do the same.

They hold hands and look each other in the eyes.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Here we go... What state are we in?

KATE

Wyoming.

ATWATER  
Who's president of the USA?

KATE  
I am.

Atwater laughs.

ATWATER  
That's good. Here's one... Are you in  
love with Terry Dolan?

Kate thinks about this for a moment.

KATE  
Yes.

ATWATER  
(sly)  
How can I be sure you're lying?

KATE  
You can't.

Atwater raises his eyebrows.

ATWATER  
That's true.

KATE  
Shit.

ATWATER  
Oh, Kate, I thought you would at least  
get to five.

KATE  
What was five?

ATWATER  
I think I'll keep that one in my pocket.

KATE  
Oh, come on.

ATWATER  
All right, I'll ask you... if you promise  
to lie still-- I mean, still lie.

KATE  
I promise.

ATWATER

The question is... Am I going to kiss you?

Kate thinks about this.

KATE

No.

ATWATER

You would have won.

He kisses her.

INT. FRAT HOUSE HALLWAY

Rove spots John Kinney, far on the other side of the room, talking with a young women. Dolan and Rove are alone in the hall together.

DOLAN

You might as well not waste your time with Kinney.

ROVE

Thanks for the tip.

DOLAN

My friends at the Beta Pi national chapter have agreed to finance a renovation of this house-- on my recommendation.

ROVE

Wow, you're such a player, Terry.

DOLAN

If you quit now, I'll let it go and I won't ruin you professionally.

ROVE

You have no idea who you're dealing with.

DOLAN

Hmmm. Karl C. Rove, born Christmas Day 1950. Olympus High School, Salt Lake City class of '69. University of Utah '69-71, didn't finish... Maryland, 1971, didn't finish... should I go on?

ROVE

Congratulations, you can read a transcript.

DOLAN

Father, Louis Rove, walked out on your family, Christmas Day 1969-- your nineteenth birthday, wasn't it?

ROVE

Fuck you, Dolan.

Dolan smiles, satisfied to have gotten under his skin.

DOLAN

Glory is fleeting, but obscurity is forever. Think about it.

Dolan starts to walk away. Rove steps in his path. He points a finger down at Dolan, touching his chest. Rove is significantly taller and more physical.

ROVE

You listen to me, you little fuck. I will put a knife in you. And you will bleed.

The Dapper Man, and another of Dolan's henchman, The MAN IN BLACK, quickly arrive on the scene.

Rove backs off.

DOLAN

Oooh. Talk dirty some more, Karl.

INT. MEETING ROOM

Atwater and Kate are now only semi-clothed as they continue to kiss, deeply and passionately.

A sense of danger hangs pervasively in the air.

KATE

Terry could walk through that door...

More kissing.

KATE (CONT'D)

...any minute.

ATWATER

No, I locked it.

Atwater kisses Kate's ear.

KATE  
When did you lock it?

ATWATER  
When I walked in and saw you out of the  
corner of my eye.

Kate kisses Lee on the mouth aggressively and they fall  
over into a chair together.

They are suddenly INTERRUPTED by a KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

DOLAN (O.S.)  
Kate?

Kate and Lee scramble to put their clothes back on.

KATE  
Just a minute...  
(whispers to Atwater)  
The window.

Atwater trips over the leg of a chair as he hurries to  
the window, causing a loud THUD.

DOLAN (O.S.)  
Is everything alright?

KATE  
Yes.  
(whispers to Atwater)  
Go. Go.

Lee is halfway through the window.

ATWATER  
(whispers)  
The book.

DOLAN (O.S.)  
Open the door, Kate, or I'm going to have  
Roger do it.

ATWATER  
(whispers)  
I'm not leaving without the book.

Kate shoves the book into Atwater's arms, knocking him  
all the way out the window.

Atwater lets out a muffled YELP as he hits the ground.

CRACK!

The Dapper Man BREAKS OPEN the door.

Terry Dolan coolly strides into the room. He notices three things immediately:

ONE: The open window. TWO: Kate's disheveled state.

THREE: The empty table where the book had been.

Dolan glares at Kate furiously. She seems frightened. The Dapper Man closes the door ominously.

INT. FRAT HOUSE

Karl Rove is standing awkwardly near a window, away from the other party guests. Not knowing what to do with himself, he sips his drink and seethes.

Gazing out the window, Rove's eyes widen. He sees Atwater running across the yard, clutching Dolan's large notebook under his arm.

Rove quickly leaves.

EXT. FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

The pinto wheels around the corner and screeches to a halt near the front yard. Atwater hurriedly climbs in.

INT. PINTO - NIGHT

Rove is furious with Atwater.

ROVE

That was a total fucking fiasco.

ATWATER

What are you talking about?

ROVE

We lost Georgia. Dolan knows everything. He's pulling strings. And he's going to be in Gainesville tomorrow.

ATWATER

I stole his campaign bible and made out with his girlfriend. I consider that a smashing success.

ROVE

John Kinney hates your guts, Lee. What the fuck were you thinking we could accomplish there?

ATWATER

Kinney's a prick. I should have told you that. He doesn't matter, we don't need him.

ROVE

He's the state Chairman! What about the plan?

ATWATER

Kinney's about as useless as tits on a boar hog. My man Earl's got just as much juice in the Georgia C.R. as Kinney.

ROVE

You're fucking this up, Lee. Don't sugar-coat it.

ATWATER

You gotta trust me, Karl. This is the best thing that could happen to us.

ROVE

You're insane.

ATWATER

Don't you see? Everything your saying, it's exactly what Terry Dolan thinks.

Atwater holds up his copy of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

This is textbook stuff. Deception. Feigning disorder.

ROVE

We're not *feigning* disorder. This is *actual* disorder.

ATWATER

Speak for yourself.

They are approaching a well-lit service station.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Pull over here. I gotta call Earl back at the Beta house, tell him what happened.

ROVE

Tell him what?

The pinto slows to a stop.

ATWATER

Karl, when word gets around that party that I stole Dolan's girlfriend, you stood up to his bullies, and we got run out of the place... It'll be legendary.

ROVE

It's an embarrassment.

ATWATER

It's a frat house, Karl, not the Utah state legislature. You'll solidify your image as a man's man, fighting against the Yankee interlopers.

ROVE

Hmm.

Rove thinks Atwater might be onto something.

ROVE (CONT'D)

We'll, let's check out Dolan's book. That is a score.

ATWATER

Thank you.

Atwater opens Terry Dolan's campaign bible. Despite its thoroughly worn appearance, all the pages ARE COMPLETELY BLANK.

Rove glares at Atwater.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Well, that's weird.

Rove grabs it from Atwater and looks through it himself.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

It's a fake. She must have switched books on me somehow... the crafty little--

ROVE

No. I don't think so.

Atwater is baffled.



ROVE (CONT'D)

I think Dolan is the fake. I'll bet he just points at the book and never shows people the inside.

ATWATER

Yeah. You might be right.

ROVE

Let's head out to Gainesville tonight, get there before Dolan.

ATWATER

Let's do it. I'll drive. I'm wired.

They pull out of the service station and speed off into the night.

FADE TO:

INT. CAR - DAWN

Rove and Atwater are sound ASLEEP in their seats as the morning light streams into the Pinto. The car is parked on the side of a rural road.

They are suddenly awoken by the TAPPING of a billy club against the driver's side window. It is an irate COUNTY SHERRIF.

COUNTY SHERRIF

You fuckin' hippies can't sleep here!  
Move it on across the county line before  
I run ya in for vagrancy!

INT. DINER - MORNING

Atwater and Rove are having breakfast.

Rove is finishing his bacon and eggs as Atwater is starting into a bowl of cereal.

ROVE

I could really use a shower.

ATWATER

We'll hit my friend Pine-Top's place before the seminar.

ROVE  
 (looking at his notes)  
 The Young Republicans leadership seminar.  
 Do we have a speaking slot there?

ATWATER  
 Nah, we're just hobnobbin'.

Atwater sprinkles sauce on his cereal.

ROVE  
 What are you doing? What is that?

ATWATER  
 Tabasco sauce.

ROVE  
 On corn flakes?

ATWATER  
 I like to spice it up. I drank a whole  
 bottle of Tabasco onetime, on a bet.  
 Think it messed up my taste buds.

ROVE  
 (chuckles)  
 Lee, you might be the dumbest smart  
 person I've ever met.

Atwater smiles.

ATWATER  
 Let me ask you a question...

Atwater takes out a pen and starts drawing something on a  
 napkin. He shows Rove the napkin. On it Lee has made a  
 square made up of NINE POINTS:

. . .  
 . . .  
 . . .

ATWATER (CONT'D)  
 Can you connect each of these dots using  
 four straight lines?

Rove looks at the points and thinks. He takes the pen  
 and draws a straight line across the bottom row, pausing  
 at the last dot.

He then continues his line past the third dot and into the margin, and makes his next line diagonally back toward the box. Rove soon completes the puzzle.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Well, well, well. Nicely done. You know, no candidate I've worked with has gotten that puzzle on the first try. Including Senator Thurmond.

Rove smiles smugly.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

But I can do it with only three lines.

Rove furrows a brow and looks at the puzzle again.

ROVE

(mystified)

Three lines?

ATWATER

(changing subject)

I heard you say last night elections are about issues, not ideas.

ROVE

I didn't think you were listening.

ATWATER

It's not about ideas or issues. It's about emotions.

ROVE

No. Emotions play a role, but it's too varied and random to be significant.

ATWATER

They play the biggest role. Voters ought to feel, not think.

ROVE

Ridiculous. Too hard to control.

ATWATER

You just figure out whatever it is that gets people most riled up, and you hang it around the other guy's neck.

The waitress comes by their table.

WAITRESS

Can I get you fellas anything else?

ROVE

Yes. I'd like one egg please. Raw,  
still in the shell.

The waitress gives Rove a strange look. Rove glances at  
Atwater slyly.

WAITRESS

Okay.

ATWATER

And the check, hon. We gotta truck on  
outta here.

She leaves. Rove continues the conversation.

ROVE

Attacks on the opposition can work, but  
it can easily blow back on the attacker.

ATWATER

I'm not just talking about attacks. I'm  
talking about totally ignoring what an  
election is about, and making it about  
something else.

ROVE

So this election is not about organizing  
the party on campuses...

ATWATER

It's about Terry Dolan being a Yankee  
weasel who wants to come down here and  
set *his* agenda, not the people's.

Rove chuckles.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

They don't have to love you as long as  
they hate the other guy more.

The waitress brings them the check and an egg in the  
shell. Rove is delighted.

ROVE

Okay, here's a question for you: Can you  
make this egg stand on its tip?

ATWATER

(evasive)

This egg?

ROVE

It's a test.

ATWATER

(to imaginary audience)

My opponent will talk about this egg but he refuses to talk about what happened at the CR seminar in San Diego.

ROVE

That's no-- What do you know about that?

Atwater just smiles and picks up the egg.

ATWATER

I'm full as a tick. Let's get out of here.

Lee Atwater smacks the egg down on the table. The shell cracks slightly and flattens, leaving the egg standing on its tip.

FADE TO:

EXT. UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

TITLE CARD: GAINESVILLE, FL.

Karl and Lee pull up in the brown Pinto. A muscular blues instrumental plays on the SOUNDTRACK.

They get out of the car and walk across the parking lot.

They are dressed for success, freshly groomed, briefcases swinging at their sides. Ready to conquer Gainesville.

Rove's hair is still wet from his shower.

They see a BLACK 1970 CADALLAC COUPE DE VILLE pull into the lot. The Dapper Man is behind the wheel.

ROVE

Dolan.

Rove and Atwater hurry into towards the cover of the building and watch their rivals discreetly.

Terry Dolan, Kate, The Dapper Man and the Henchman in Black all step out coolly. Terry Dolan puts on a pair of black sunglasses.

They hurry inside.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Atwater and Rove enter the empty lobby. A sign greets them: KEYNOTE SPEAKER: ROBERT EDGEWORTH, CHAIRMAN OF THE MICHIGAN COLLEGE REPUBLICANS.

Edgeworth's smiling picture is next to the words. Rove does not seem pleased.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

They enter the packed hall, and remain standing in the back of the room.

ROBERT EDGEWORTH is at the podium. He is a tall, thin man with wispy fair hair. He looks significantly older than his 27 years.

Edgeworth's speech is nearing its climax.

EDGEWORTH

We need a national party that reflects the core of our beliefs: That every individual matters. That personal responsibility is vital. That we trust the actions of free men and women, not the dictates of a bureaucracy.

ROVE

(to Atwater)

Damn that's good, I've got to use that sometime.

Atwater draws Rove's attention to Dolan's party, which has just entered the other side of the lecture hall.

Dolan's group now includes an older PORTLY MAN. Rove takes special interest in him.

ROVE (CONT'D)

That's Morton Blackwell.

ATWATER

Who?

ROVE

He's the godfather of the CR. He's was chairman in the 60s.

ATWATER  
 (remembering)  
 Oh yeah, right, and he still hangs  
 around. "The oldest College Republican."

They watch as Blackwell whispers into Dolan's ear. Dolan  
 nods and leaves the room with the DAPPER MAN.

ROVE  
 I didn't know he was backing Dolan.  
 His influence goes to the highest levels.

ATWATER  
 Don't worry about. My buddy Al Dark is  
 here, works for the Governor. One word  
 from him gets us the Florida Chairman.

Rove is skeptical. Their attention turns to the stage.

EDGEWORTH  
 (to audience)  
 It is our beliefs that will carry the  
 day. It is our ideals that will speak to  
 the coming age. Thank you.

The crowd applauds.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

The crowd files out of the lecture hall. Atwater pushes  
 through, Rove follows.

Some Dolan volunteers are handing out LEAFLETS. They  
 seem very organized. Rove takes one.

The leaflets show a stylized photo of Terry Dolan's  
 smiling face under the words: DOLAN: CRNC IN 73. Rove  
 frowns.

Atwater is trying to get the attention of his friend, the  
 consultant ALVIN DARK, 28. Dark is tall and tanned, with  
 an athlete's physique. Dark is a fast talker.

ATWATER  
 Hey, Al! Alvin Dark! It's Lee.

DARK  
 I'm sorry, do I know you?

ATWATER  
 It's Lee. Lee Atwater. South Carolina.

DARK

Oh, Atwater! Right. You look...  
different or something.

ATWATER

This is Karl Rove, he's going to be--

DARK

Rove, you look tighter than a new girdle.

ROVE

Well, I-- I'm not.

Dark laughs obnoxiously.

DARK

I'm just fucking with you.

ATWATER

Alvin, we could sure use...

DARK

I know, I know. This thing is turning  
into a streetfight. You know, fuck  
Dolan. And Blackwell. He's a bastard.  
I'm in with you guys. All the way.

ATWATER

Mighty fine of you, sir.

DARK

Anything you need. Well, almost  
anything. No, one thing. You get one  
favor. You want me to talk to the  
Chairman for you?

ATWATER

We would appreciate it.

DARK

Eh... alright.

ROVE

That's good enough for me.

ATWATER

Good enough to smack your granny.

Atwater notices Kate King walking by behind Dark. She  
makes eye contact with Lee discreetly.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

You fellas excuse me for a minute?



Atwater slips away, leaving Rove and Dark alone. An awkward moment passes.

DARK  
I'm going to leave now.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Kate heads into the ladies' restroom. Atwater follows.

INT. LADIES' ROOM

There is a minor commotion among the several young women in the room at Atwater's appearance. They leave abruptly.

Lee tips an imaginary hat to them as they go.

ATWATER  
Ladies.

He and Kate are alone. They look at each other for a brief moment. Suddenly, they throw themselves into a passionate kiss.

CUT TO:

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

The hall is mostly empty now. Robert Edgeworth is at the podium gathering up his papers. A group of well-wishers are walking away from him toward the exits.

Another approaches. It is Karl Rove.

ROVE  
Great speech, Bob.

Edgeworth recognizes the voice before he turns around.

EDGEWORTH  
How are you, Karl?

ROVE  
Fabulous.

EDGEWORTH  
Good to hear.

Awkward pause.

EDGEWORTH (CONT'D)

I've got to be honest with you, Karl, I was very disappointed to hear you had entered the race.

ROVE

I'm sure you were.

EDGEWORTH

No, not like that. It's just... I have a lot respect for you, your intelligence and potential. And I think you're making a mistake here.

ROVE

And you're wrong.

EDGEWORTH

Maybe, maybe so.

(pause)

I was really hoping to have your support for my candidacy.

Rove laughs.

EDGEWORTH (CONT'D)

I'd have gladly returned the favor and supported you in two years.

ROVE

It wasn't to be.

EDGEWORTH

It's not too late.

ROVE

You're going to lose, Bob

EDGEWORTH

It's certainly possible. But also beside the point.

Rove scoffs at this, but is confused.

EDGEWORTH (CONT'D)

However this turns out, let's remember we're all on the same side. You and I agree on 90% of the issues, the last time I checked.

ROVE

This campaign is about more than issues.

EDGEWORTH

What is it about?

ROVE

It's about... who we are. Who puts the better face on the party.

EDGEWORTH

Ah, the cult of personality. Inescapable in politics, I suppose.

ROVE

It is, after all, a popularity contest.

EDGEWORTH

Are you sure you're that popular?

ROVE

I will be.

Edgeworth picks up a tinge of darkness in Rove's comment.

EDGEWORTH

Be careful, Karl.

Rove smiles.

EDGEWORTH (CONT'D)

Facilis descensus Averni.

ROVE

Pardon?

EDGEWORTH

It's from Virgil. "It is easy to go down into Hell; the gates of dark death stand wide; but to climb back again, into the upper air; that's the real task."

Rove bristles, he seems to feel condescended.

ROVE

Virgil, really?

EDGEWORTH

The poets had some interesting things to say too, Karl-- it's not just the generals and schemers.

ROVE

(irritated)

Believe it or not, I have read Virgil. If you think that you can--

EDGEWORTH  
Relax, Karl, I'm teasing you.

ROVE  
Well, I-- I don't appreciate it.

EDGEWORTH  
I apologize then.

Edgeworth extends his hand. Rove shakes it.

EDGEWORTH (CONT'D)  
Let's just have an honest debate. True  
to our ideals.

ROVE  
You think I'm going to betray our ideals.

EDGEWORTH  
No, I--

Edgeworth stops himself, wary of an argument.

EDGEWORTH (CONT'D)  
The only thing a man can betray is his  
own conscience. It was nice seeing you  
again, Karl.

Edgeworth walks away. Rove feels compelled to get in the  
last word. It comes out as awkward and confrontational.

ROVE  
Yeah. Well, you'll see me again. Real  
soon.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Terry Dolan stands with a group of important-looking  
OLDER GENTLEMAN. The Portly Man --Morton Blackwell--  
introduces them to Terry. Handshakes all around.

Rove walks out of the lecture hall, just in time to  
witness the scene.

He sees that Alvin Dark is with Dolan's group, laughing  
his OBNOXIOUS LAUGH. Rove watches suspiciously as they  
leave the lobby together.

Rove stands alone in the empty lobby. He looks around.

ROVE  
 (calls out)  
 Lee?

EXT. UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

Karl Rove is having a conversation in a phone booth. He seems a bit irate.

ROVE  
 (on phone)  
 Look, Jim. This Atwater kid is a flake. He doesn't know what he's doing. He needs to go back to where he came from.  
 (pause)  
 I disagree.  
 (pause)  
 Please, Jim. I need some help from Chicago. Send me Tom Redstone. Billy the Girl. Anybody.

Rove's face does not like Jim's answer.

ROVE (CONT'D)  
 Well-- I--- I don't know why you still think that.  
 (pause)  
 Fine. If that's the way you feel.  
 (pause)  
 Hello?

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Kate peeks out the Ladies' Room door. The coast is clear.

She and Atwater emerge. She is fixing her clothes. Lee is proudly disheveled.

They start to go their separate ways, but Kate suddenly turns around, heading back to Lee.

KATE  
 I almost forgot...

Lee moves in to kiss her. Kate slaps him away.

KATE (CONT'D)  
 Knock it off.

Kate looks around to make sure nobody is watching them. She hands him a piece of paper with an ADDRESS on it.

KATE (CONT'D)

It's Terry's condo down here where he's staying. You should check it out tonight.

ATWATER

You want me to meet you at Terry's place? Christ, woman, that is bold!

KATE

No, you idiot, I'm not going to be there. You need to spy on him.

ATWATER

Oh. Why? What's, uh...?

Lee realizes she's not going to tell him.

KATE

You never know what you might find.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAINESVILLE STREET - NIGHT

The Pinto is parked on the street outside Dolan's condo. It is the size of a large two-family house. The residential block is crowded with similar structures.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lee and Karl sit in the car. Lee is behind the wheel. They eye the darkened windows of Dolan's condo.

ROVE

Are you sure you can trust this girl?

ATWATER

No.

ROVE

That's comforting.

ATWATER

We got nothing to lose for now.

ROVE

It could be a ruse to distract us.

ATWATER

Nah. I think something's going down.

ROVE

We've been here over an hour.

ATWATER

(dismissive)

Just work on your graphics.

We see that Rove has a notepad in front of him that he's been doodling on. It says: "ROVE '73" in different hand-drawn letter styles.

ROVE

Well, I'm bored. We should do something here. It's time.

ATWATER

(skeptical)

What are you gonna do?

ROVE

I do have some experience with this sort of thing.

ATWATER

Oh, you do?

Rove glares at him.

ROVE

Like, what do you think is in those garbage cans over there?

Rove points at two garbage cans up the driveway beside the building.

ATWATER

I don't know. Garbage?

ROVE

Maybe. Maybe old bills, phone records, receipts. Information.

Lee looks at Karl. Karl looks back at Lee.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Atwater is rooting through the GARBAGE CAN. Rove stands watch a few yards away, peering around the corner of the building.

Atwater picks a rotten GRAPEFRUIT out of the garbage. He makes a face as he handles it.

ATWATER  
 (whispers)  
 Why do I have to do this?

ROVE  
 (whispers)  
 I'm the candidate, I shouldn't get my  
 hands dirty.

Atwater chucks the grapefruit in Rove's direction. It sails past Rove and SPLATTERS.

Dogs bark.

ROVE (CONT'D)  
 Hey!

ATWATER  
 Shhh.

Rove glares at Atwater, who goes back to digging through the garbage.

Atwater pulls out a crumpled paper and inspects it. It is a torn page of a magazine. He starts to unfurl it.

ATWATER (CONT'D)  
 What the hell?

Rove walks over, his interest piqued.

It is a PHOTOGRAPH from a magazine, of a burly, SHIRTLESS MAN, with a mustache and hairy chest.

Atwater unfurls the rest of the image, revealing the man in the picture to be totally nude.

ROVE AND ATWATER  
 Aaahhh!

Atwater drops the picture. Karl and Lee are stunned.

ROVE  
 Good God.

Rove looks in the trash can, there are more crumpled-up gay porn images. Rove picks up a few of them.

ATWATER  
 Eww! Eww. Don't touch that!

ROVE  
 Dolan is a closet case.



ATWATER

He's a fucking fairy is what is he is.

ROVE

Shhhh!

(low voice)

This is unbelievable.

ATWATER

This is fantastic.

ROVE

Can we use this?

ATWATER

Use it? Are you fucking shitting me?

This is a gift from the gods.

CAR HEADLIGHTS suddenly move across the scene. A black car pulls into the driveway, heading towards them.

Lee Atwater shoots like a bullet into the back yard. Rove follows a split second later.

A man jumps out of the car and CHASES AFTER THEM.

CAR MAN

Hey!

Rove and Atwater flee in a mad panic.

Atwater's eyes dart around the backyard. It is enclosed by a CHAIN LINK FENCE. They are trapped!

Rove obliviously runs by Atwater and SMACKS INTO THE FENCE, almost knocking it completely down.

Rove bounces off the fence, staggers, but does not fall.

The fence is now at a 45 degree angle. Atwater climbs it quickly and easily to the other side. Rove follows.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

Two large ROTTWEILERS come after them, barking viciously.

This yard is also fenced in. Rove and Atwater run for the gate as the Rottweilers nip at their heels.

The Car Man is climbing over from his side of the fence.

They reach the gate, open it. They're out!

Rove tries to close the gate behind them, but it is too late. The dogs are upon him.

Atwater RUNS INTO THE STREET. A car screeches to a halt, mere inches from hitting him. Lee freezes.

It is a POLICE CAR. Atwater makes eye contact with the POLICE OFFICER behind the wheel.

A second later, Rove comes running past. He flies down down the street, the two Rottweilers in pursuit.

Atwater runs away from the police car, up the driveway of the house across the street.

The Officer jumps out and chases after Lee.

OFFICER  
Stop right there!

Lee threads a narrow passage between two houses. The Officer follows closely behind.

The Car Man watches them all disappear into the distance and chooses not to follow.

#### DOWN THE STREET

Rove is barely ahead of the Rottweilers. He weaves in and out of the spaces between parked cars, to minimize the animals' speed advantage.

Finally, Rove climbs up the back end of a large car and scrambles up onto the roof. The metal roof lets out a loud CRUNCH as it bends with the impact.

The dogs bark and paw at the sides of the car. Rove is safe, but stranded.

#### ATWATER AND THE POLICE OFFICER

They sprint through the back yards of the block, dodging barbecue grills and patio furniture.

Atwater turns sharply around a blind corner, and ducks underneath a CLOTHESLINE.

The Officer, a taller man, is tagged by the clothesline and falls to the ground onto his back.

Atwater is free and clear.

ROVE ON THE ROOF OF THE CAR

The Rottweilers are barking loudly. A light goes on in the window of the nearest house.

Rove stands up, readies himself, takes two steps, and JUMPS off the roof and over a nearby fence.

He lands with a roll safely in the next yard. There is now a fence between Rove and his canine attackers.

Rove retreats into the back yard of the house. The dogs continue to bark.

FADE TO:

EXT. GAINESVILLE STREET - NIGHT

It is some time later, back on Dolan's block. Rove emerges from some bushes and cautiously approaches the Pinto.

He hurries to the car, trying to stay low and out of sight, and slips in the passenger side door.

INT. PINTO - NIGHT

The car seems to be empty until Lee Atwater pops his head out from the back seat.

ATWATER

It's about time.

ROVE

(startled)

Ah!

ATWATER

I been waiting forever back here.

ROVE

(sarcastic)

So sorry. How rude of me. Can we get the fuck out of here please?

ATWATER

I'm with you, Chairman. We got a big day tomorrow, big day.

Atwater climbs into the driver's seat. Rove is still calming down.

ROVE

What are we going to do... about Dolan?

ATWATER

What are we gonna do? We're gonna strip the bark off the little bastard.

ROVE

I don't know... We don't have any proof.

ATWATER

We don't need to prove anything. We need take a big magic marker and write "queer" right on his forehead.

ROVE

It's not that simple.

ATWATER

You ever met a real homo before, Karl?

Close up of Karl Rove thinking.

INT. HOUSE - KARL'S MEMORY - DAY

It is a sunny summer day, Karl stands outside on the porch and KNOCKS on the edge of the screen door.

ROVE

Hello?

He lets himself in. He looks around for the occupant.

Rove sees a half-closed door to a room with a colored light on inside. He goes over to it. STRANGE MOOD MUSIC can be heard from within.

ROVE (CONT'D)

Dad?

Karl pushes open the door. SHOCK AND HORROR take over his face. We see nothing of the inside of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. PINTO - NIGHT

Rove answers Atwater's question.

ROVE

No. Never.

ATWATER

Yeah, no one has. And when word gets out that Dolan is a dick jockey, they will run from that WASPy motherfucker like he's a black Jew with leprosy.

ROVE

He'll just deny it, and we'll look bad.

ATWATER

If he has to come out and say "I am not a homo," then say hello to Chairman Rove, it's over.

ROVE

The story won't be him. It's going to be us *accusing* him.

Atwater laughs.

ATWATER

Oh, okay. We're not going to accuse him of anything, see. It's just a rumor.

ROVE

Well, that can still be--

ATWATER

(mock outrage)

And our campaign will not be spreading any rumors, I can tell you that.

ROVE

Then who will be?

ATWATER

The Edgeworth campaign, of course.

Atwater smiles.

ROVE

What if it comes back to us?

ATWATER

We play dumb and keep movin'.

EXT. GAINESVILLE STREET - NIGHT

The Pinto drives away into the distance. However, the camera remains on Terry Dolan's street.

We see Terry Dolan walk out of his condo.

But Dolan's condo is actually ACROSS THE STREET from the condo whose garbage Rove and Atwater searched.

FADE TO:

EXT. COLLEGE HOUSE - MORNING

The brown Pinto is parked outside of a small, poorly maintained home.

Lee Atwater stands in the yard, wearing extremely short jogging shorts, doing leg stretches.

INT. COLLEGE HOUSE LIVING ROOM- MORNING

Karl Rove is asleep on a ratty plaid couch. The sound of a door SLAM wakes him up.

Atwater hustles into the room with a spring in his step. He is drinking from a large jar of TANG ORANGE DRINK.

He gulps down the drink. Rove sits up, disheveled.

ATWATER

(re: Tang)

Good stuff.

ROVE

What time is it?

ATWATER

Time to hit the phones.

ROVE

How long have you been up?

ATWATER

Since five. Just can't sit still today. Already did a four mile run.

(yells down hallway)

Hey Pine-Top! Wake the fuck up, we need you!

## MONTAGE SEQUENCE - PHONE CALLS

We see a quick montage of phone calls. Each line of dialogue belongs to different conversation, with untold time passing between each one.

An up-tempo chunk of SOUTHERN FUNK ROCK kicks off with a cowbell intro.

ROVE

Hi, Ron. My name's Sam Smith. I'm calling on behalf of Robert Edgeworth...

ATWATER

You know, he said something really out there about Terry Dolan... I'm just not sure I can believe it.

Atwater has the Dolan campaign flyer in front of him. He has written "QUEER" on Dolan's forehead in the photo.

ROVE

I thought so, especially after this Dolan thing. Oh, uh... forget I said that.

(pause)

Well... okay. But you didn't hear this from me...

ATWATER

Would you like to participate in a poll about the candidates for CRNC chairman?

ROVE

Would you like to participate in a poll?

PINE-TOP, a young man with his hair buzzed into a CREW CUT is on the phone also, reading from a script.

PINE-TOP

Question Three: Would you be more or less likely to support Terry Dolan if you knew he was homo-sexual?

## MONTAGE SEQUENCE - ON THE ROAD

EXT. GAINESVILLE STREET - DAY

The Brown Pinto rolls out of town. Over the images, we hear VOICE OVER of Karl and Lee continuing their calls.

ROVE (V.O.)

I heard he made a pass at the guy...

INT. PINTO - DAY

Lee and Karl bob their heads to the music.

ATWATER (V.O.)  
 You're assistant to the State Chairman?  
 Well, I'll just leave a message...

EXT. RURAL FILLING STATION - DAY

A gas station attendant pumps gas into the Pinto. Lee, still in his jogging outfit, JOGS IN A CIRCLE around the car. Rove watches.

ROVE (V.O.)  
 ...Tell the Chairman I'm 100% sure Terry Dolan is *not* gay. Even if he's heard otherwise.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

ATWATER  
 Earl! It's Lee. I need a favor....

INT. GEORGIA FRAT HOUSE - DAY

We see Lee's friend Earl dialing a rotary phone.

Quick cut to Earl talking on the phone.

EARL  
 Yeah, I don't think John Kinney knows about Terry. What would that say about him if he did?

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

Sign says: WELCOME TO ALABAMA

ROVE (V.O.)  
 Yeah, Gene, I don't know what to think. It's some pretty deviant stuff.

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - NIGHT

The Pinto pulls into a roadside motel.



INT. OFFICE -- MORNING

Close up of the phone ringing. Georgia Chairman John Kinney on the phone.

KINNEY

Well, uh, I can't be certain... who I'm supporting any more...

INT. PINTO - MORNING

Lee is driving, Karl is reading Machiavelli.

INT. TERRY DOLAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Close up of the phone ringing. Dolan on the phone.

DOLAN

What? What the fuck are you talking about?

EXT. RURAL ROAD - MORNING'

The pinto drives very slowly along the road. Rove drives. Lee Atwater is JOGGING alongside the driver's window, talking as he runs.

ROVE

Next we see the Alabama Chairman?

ATWATER

Yeah, but be careful-- he's one of those third eye Jesus freaks. They scare the tar out of me.

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - WASHINGTON, D.C. - MORNING

We hear a phone ringing. The Southern Funk on the soundtrack reaches a percussion interlude (cowbell).

INT. CRNC OFFICE - MORNING

National Chairman Jim Costello is on the phone.

COSTELLO

No. What about Terry Dolan?

INT. EDGEWORTH'S OFFICE - DAY

EDGEWORTH

(on phone)

No. Certainly no one from my campaign.  
Yes, Sam Smith is from my campaign...

EXT. COLLEGE TOWN - DAY

The Pinto passes a sign that says MONTEVALLO, ALABAMA.

INT. ALABAMA CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Karl and Lee are meeting with the Alabama State Chairman, JEFF, 27, and two other men.

ROVE

Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN JEFF

Karl, this my colleague from Liberty University, Reverend Falwell.

ROVE

Reverend.

The Reverend JERRY FALWELL, 40, stocky with a large chin, shakes Karl Rove's hand.

FALWELL

Mr. Rove.

INT. TERRY DOLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

DOLAN

(on phone)

Yeah, hi, it's Terry. I just wanted...  
There's a vicious rumor going around that I'm not a queer-- I mean that I am a queer. That's the rumor, I mean. But I'm not.

INT. EDGEWORTH'S OFFICE - DAY

EDGEWORTH

Gene: I've never heard about it. I've never discussed it with anyone before...  
...Before now, that is.

INT. ALABAMA CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The soundtrack song fades far into the background as Lee and Karl continue their meeting.

CHAIRMAN JEFF

If it's true, it's an outrage. And Robert Edgeworth is the one spreading this around?

ATWATER

That's how I heard about it, Jeff.

FALWELL

Well, he's doing the lord's work. A gay person would just as soon kill you as look at you.

Atwater steals an impish look with Rove.

ROVE

For sure.

ATWATER

And with a handsome gentleman like yourself, Reverend, I'm afraid killing might be his *second* choice.

Rove looks away, trying not to laugh. Reverend Falwell, stone-faced, ponders this.

The Southern funk soundtrack song kicks into high gear again, the MONTAGE continues.

INT. TERRY DOLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

DOLAN

(on phone)

If Edgeworth thinks-- I'm just going to kill him. I will open his fucking skull.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - EVENING

Lee is at a pay phone.

ATWATER

We need more people on this, Earl.

INT. COLLEGE HOUSE - EVENING

RANDOM COLLEGE KID  
(on phone)  
You know they walked in on him...  
(whispers)  
...sucking on some dude's thing.

INT. TERRY DOLAN'S OFFICE - EVENING

Terry Dolan violently POUNDS the phone handset against the receiver, repeatedly.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Atwater's teenage assistant from South Carolina, Roscoe, is on the phone.

ROSCOE  
Terry Dolan tried to grab my balls!

ROSCOE'S MOM  
(in distance)  
Roscoe, Dinner's ready!

EXT. PINTO - EVENING

Montage continues. Sign: MISSISSIPPI WELCOMES YOU

INT. DOLAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Terry Dolan sits behind his desk on the phone, looking very fatigued and disheveled.

DOLAN  
I don't know how I can make this any more clear...  
(irate)  
I am NOT a homo!

END OF MONTAGE.

FADE TO:

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

TITLE: OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

The Pinto pulls into the campus of the UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI. There is a mass PROTEST going on.

The PROTESTERS are not unkempt students, however, but middle-aged middle-class white folks.

BULLHORN MAN

What do we want?

CROWD

FREEDOM!

BULLHORN MAN

When do we want it?

CROWD

NOW!

INT. MISSISSIPPI CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The Mississippi State Chairman, FOSTER, 26, looks out the window high above the protest. Rove and Atwater are sitting in chairs behind him.

FOSTER

School freedom, big issue down here.

ATWATER

It's forced busing, Karl. People don't like the federal government forcing kids to go to schools hundreds of miles away. Ain't that right, Foster?

FOSTER

Damn right.

ROVE

(skeptical)

Hundreds? Really?

FOSTER

And they make them go to nigger schools.

The word "nigger" freezes Rove and Atwater. They look at each other.

FOSTER (CONT'D)

And Nixon supports that. Now, I'm Chairman of the Mississippi College Republicans, but I will not support the national party if they make my nephews go to nigger schools.

Rove is still frozen, unsure of how to proceed. Atwater begins to thaw.

ATWATER

Look, Foster, I'm from South Carolina.

Long pause. Foster nods.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Whatever the views of the national leadership on integra-- on "forced busing"-- you can be sure that Karl here is going to fight for what's right, whether its popular up there or not.

FOSTER

Amen.

ATWATER

Damn right.

FOSTER

So where *do* you stand, Karl?

All eyes on Karl. He seems a little uncomfortable.

ROVE

Well.... I sincerely believe that, uh... well, it's not up to me. States need to decide for themselves.

ATWATER

States' rights.

FOSTER

States' rights!

INT. CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE LOBBY - DAY

Lee is talking on the PHONE at the reception desk.

ATWATER

(on phone)

Okay. I understand.

Atwater's face is eerily blank. He seems stunned.

Rove approaches him. Karl senses the strangeness.

ROVE

What? What is it?

ATWATER  
 Message from Earl...

Atwater still seems in a fog, not entirely present.

ATWATER (CONT'D)  
 ...It's over. Terry Dolan dropped out  
 of the race. We won.

The look at each other a moment, as the news sinks in.

EXT. COLLEGE BUILDING - DAY

Rove and Atwater run down long steps of the building  
 screaming in celebration.

ROVE AND ATWATER  
 Aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

At the bottom of the steps, they grab each other's  
 shoulders and jump up and down together.

INT. MISSISSIPPI FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

The jumping up and down continues, now in a crowded room  
 full of revelers at a Mississippi Fraternity PARTY.

The raucous scene pulses with MUSIC and SHOUTING. Lee  
 Atwater is the center of attention, shotgunning a can of  
 PABST BLUE RIBBON, with the crowd cheering him on.

CROWD  
 Lee! Lee! Lee!

ATWATER  
 Yeaeaeaeaaaa! Who!

Rove downs a shot and makes a face. He sees Atwater  
 talking to a pretty young COLLEGE GIRL.

Karl thinks about going over to his friend, but he slips  
 away and quietly and LEAVES THE ROOM.

INT. MISS. FRAT HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Karl Rove is on the phone with CRNC Chairman Jim  
 Costello. Rove struggles to hear over the loud music in  
 the next room.

ROVE  
Hello? Jim?

INT. COSTELLO APARTMENT - NIGHT

The conversation is intercut between Rove at the Frathouse and Costello at his apartment in Washington.

COSTELLO  
Karl, I have never witnessed such wholesale destruction of someone's character in such a short amount of time.

Pregnant pause.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)  
Very impressive. Was I right about Atwater?

INT. MISS. FRAT HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

ROVE  
It's *my* campaign, Jim. I destroyed Terry Dolan. Lee Atwater is my assistant.

COSTELLO  
(skeptical)  
Well. Just don't forget your promise.

ROVE  
Of course. Lee will be my #2 in Washington.

COSTELLO  
I'm going to talk to Chicago. You'll have our delegates, all of them.

Rove pumps a fist in the air.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)  
Congratulations, Mr. Chairman.

ROVE  
Thank you, sir.

As Rove hangs up the phone, Lee comes busting into the lobby, with two COLLEGE GIRLS, one on each arm.

ATWATER  
C'mon, Karl, night's a wastin.'



ROVE

Where, uh... ?

ATWATER

I cannot leave Mississippi tomorrow  
before we fully experience the almighty  
power of the Delta Blues!

EXT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

Cars surround the establishment, a ramshackle cinderblock building off the side of a rural highway. It has a two-tone peeling paint facade, in grey and sky blue.

A large plain sign says BLUE FRONT CAFE.

An African-American OLD MAN sits in a metal folding chair on the concrete porch.

The Pinto pulls up and parks, followed by another car, a GREEN BUICK. Karl and Lee step out of the Pinto, while, the two girls from the party emerge from the Buick.

Karl is very apprehensive. Lee strides across the gravel parking lot with breezy aplomb.

ATWATER

This joint is bad ass.  
(to Girl #1)  
C'mon, baby doll.

She takes his arm.

INT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

The four young people walk into the rough and tumble blues bar. They are the only white people there.

The all-black crowd takes immediate notice of them as they stand in the entryway.

Rove and the college girls are extremely uncomfortable. Lee hardly notices, his eyes are on the stage.

An old BLUESMAN, 65, sunglasses, is on the stage. He plays a beat-up acoustic guitar and sings in a low moan.

ATWATER

(to Rove)  
That guy's a local legend out here: Blind  
Mississippi McGee.

ROVE

Can we sit down or something?

Atwater walks up to the bar. The crowd's attention has by now moved elsewhere.

ATWATER

Four Buds and four shots of whiskey.

MOMENTS LATER

Atwater downs a shot of whiskey while Karl and the two girls sip on their beers.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

(offering shots)

No?

Atwater downs a second shot.

COLLEGE GIRL 1

I'll have one.

ATWATER

Alright!

(to Rove)

C'mon, Karl, don't let her show you up.

Karl, annoyed, takes the fourth shot in his hand. He and Girl 1 down their shots at the same time.

Girl 1 exhales vigorously.

Rove gags and THROWS UP in his mouth. Spittle runs down the side of his cheek. The others LAUGH at him.

INT. BATHROOM

Rove splashes water over his sweaty face. The sink is incredibly grimy.

In the mirror, Karl is startled by his sudden glimpse of a BLACK PATRON waiting behind him for use of the sink.

ROVE

Ah!

Rove RUNS OUT of the bathroom. The patron washes his hands.

AT THE BAR

Rove sits with Girl 2. Atwater and Girl 1 are nowhere to be seen.

ROVE

(irate)

This is fucking unbelievable. Where did they go?

GIRL 2

I don't know. Outside. To get something.

ROVE

I didn't see anyone out there.

GIRL 2

What, you think I'm lying?

ROVE

Did I say that? No.

They sit in silence, the crowd applauds at BLIND MISSISSIPPI's performance of a slow, sorrowful, classic BLUES SONG. He talks to the crowd.

BLIND MISSISSPPI

Thank ya. Thank ya much. Got a new kid up here. We gonna see what he can do. This is, uh...

They look to the stage. It is Atwater, with his GIBSON 335 guitar. Atwater whispers in the bluesman's ear.

BLIND MISSISSPPI (CONT'D)

...Fat Baby Atwater.

Atwater steps up to the mic. Karl shocked. Girl 2 cheers wildly. The crowd doesn't know what to make of him.

ATWATER

(in "Blues" voice)

'S here's a li'l song by a Mr. B.B. King...

Atwater launches into an electric Blues riff. His chops are immediately evident. Lee is a fantastic guitarist. Blind Mississppi joins in on HARMONICA

The surprising abilities of Atwater and switch to a fun, up-tempo number brings the roadhouse crowd to life.

## VARIOUS CROWD

Wooo! ... Yeah, Fat Baby ... White boy  
can play ...

Lee leans into the mic and starts to sing-- his voice is a little nasally, but has perfect raspy blues attitude. The crowd EXPLODES.

Everyone is having a great time. Everyone except Karl.

Without a word, Girl 2 leaves him at the bar and goes to to sit at Girl 1's table near the front of the stage.

Lee dances across the stage and does the SPLITS.

Karl stews.

## SOME TIME LATER

Lee and Blind Mississippi McGee are now playing a slower number. McGee is doing the vocals now.

Karl is still at the bar alone. A shabbily dressed rail THIN MAN, 55, comes up next to him and orders a drink.

## THIN MAN

I'll have a Maker's, on the rocks. And  
it's on this young gentleman here.

## BARTENDER

You got it.

## ROVE

No. No, I will not be paying for this  
man's drink.

## THIN MAN

Your pal Fat Baby said drinks were on you  
if he got up there.

Bartender looks at Rove.

## ROVE

This old man is talking out of his ass.  
(to Thin Man)  
Take a hike, dirtball.

The Thin Man takes a step toward Rove. He is a smaller man than Rove, but his intensity is a little frightening.

THIN MAN

I'm not sure I heard you. You wanna say that to me again?

Rove points a shaky finger at the Thin Man's chest.

ROVE

Back off, old timer. I don't want any trouble here...

A group of four or five Patrons have gathered around the scene, encircling Rove in a confrontational manner.

PATRON 1

What the hell is this?

PATRON 2

(to Rove)

That's Blue Johnny Slim. Are you fuckin' with Blue Johnny Slim?

Rove is really flustered now. He backs away and clumsily knocks over a CHAIR, hitting another PATRON.

Patron 1, clearly having fun with the situation, CLAPS his hands LOUDLY near the back of Rove's head.

Rove freaks out and RUNS out of the bar. He TRIPS and falls through the threshold of the door onto the porch.

EXT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

Karl is in a full PANIC. He quickly jumps up and continues to RUN.

He reaches the Pinto. The doors are locked. Rove runs away down the empty dirt road. No one follows him, no one has even left the roadhouse.

DOWN THE DIRT ROAD

Well out of sight of the Roadhouse, Karl slows down from his sprint and crumbles into a grassy DITCH on the side of the road.

He curls into a ball. His breathing is heavy. Tears stream down his cheeks.

Gradually, his breathing slows. His eyes close.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRASSY DITCH BESIDE DIRT ROAD - MORNING

Karl wakes up. The bright morning sun hurts his eyes.

EXT. ROADHOUSE - MORNING

Rove walks up to the Roadhouse.

In the light of day, the Roadhouse looks like an abandoned building. The Pinto is the only car outside.

Rove looks inside the windows of the Pinto. It is empty.

Suddenly, a FIST flies out of nowhere and PUNCHES ROVE IN THE FACE. It belongs to a raging Lee Atwater, who has ambushed Rove.

ROVE

Ow!

Rove falls to the ground.

ATWATER

You son-of-a-bitch!

Atwater hits him again, a glancing blow.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

I coulda got laid last night! But you had to fuck it up, you dumbshit.

Atwater continues the attack. Rove defensively grabs onto Atwater and pulls him the ground.

ROVE

You think you're such a fucking bigshot. Well, I'm bigger than you!

They ROLL AROUND in a cloud of DUST, trading blows.

ROVE (CONT'D)

Hillbilly.

ATWATER

Faggot.

Atwater grabs his hair and smears his face in the dirt. Rove throws him off.

ROVE

You can't pull hair! That's against the rules!

Atwater kicks Rove in the midsection.

ATWATER

There's no fucking rules!

Rove catches a kick and twists Atwater's foot. Atwater grimaces in pain.

EXTREME WIDE SHOT

The fight continues on.

FADE TO:

EXT. ROADHOUSE - DAY - SOME TIME LATER

Karl and Lee sit next to each other, against the wall of the roadhouse. They are totally EXHAUSTED.

They both hold wet wads of scrap cloth to their scratched and bruised faces.

Rove looks at Atwater. All the animosity has been drained out of them.

ATWATER

You know... I don't think Blind Mississippi knew I was white.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

An airplane flies through the frame.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

A man sits reading the Washington Post, a story about Watergate. He is smoking a cigarette. We do not see his face.

A STEWARDESS standing at the gate makes an announcement.

STEWARDESS

Now boarding Delta Flight 17 to Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The man abruptly puts down his newspaper, revealing himself to be Terry Dolan. The Dapper Man is with him.

Dolan grabs his bag to board the plane.

DAPPER MAN

You sure about this?

DOLAN

Listen to me carefully: When I am done, he will be lying in a pool of blood.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Karl and Lee are walking down the middle of the dirt road, side-by-side. Lee is carrying a GAS CAN.

The Pinto can be seen far behind them in the distance, pulled off the side of the road.

ATWATER

There's a station a mile or so up. I saw it last night when I was driving around looking for you.

ROVE

Thanks. Thanks for doing that. I'm really... I'm.... I probably shouldn't have ran off like that.

Rove can't quite bring himself to say the word "sorry." Atwater smiles.

ATWATER

Tell me, Karl, why do you want to be Chairman?

ROVE

I want to bring a new energy and new ideas to the...

ATWATER

No, not the bullshit. For real. Where are you trying to go with this?

Rove looks over to Atwater, his tone more serious.



ROVE  
The Presidency.

Atwater laughs.

ATWATER  
I'm not seeing you as... presidential.

ROVE  
No, I don't want to be President. I  
don't think I'm a good candidate,  
personally.

ATWATER  
Thanks for telling me now.

ROVE  
I'm going to be the chief advisor to a  
President. That's where the real power  
is.

ATWATER  
Behind the throne.

ROVE  
Right.

ATWATER  
And the College Republicans is sort of...  
way, way behind the throne.

ROVE  
No, it's a start. Starting now, I plan  
to win. I plan to win state elections,  
national elections, every time out.

ATWATER  
Perfect record.

ROVE  
If you can do that, people are going to  
notice you.

ATWATER  
(mock awe)  
Yeah, wow, that's impressive. I can't  
believe no one's ever thought of that  
before.

ROVE  
Funny.

ATWATER

Here I was planning to lose sometimes and win sometimes. Win *all* the time? Genius!

ROVE

I know *how* I'm going to do it. Don't expect me to tell you though.

ATWATER

Oooh. File that under: "Karl's top secret plan for world domination."

Atwater is really amusing himself now. Rove is annoyed.

ROVE

You wouldn't understand anyway. It's a very complex formula of statistics and demographics.

ATWATER

Secret *formula*. That's even better.

ROVE

Big words, lots of numbers, not your thing.

ATWATER

Just make sure the Russians don't get it.

ROVE

The numbers are there. If you know how to look at them, you can find the people who are going to support your candidate.

ATWATER

Oh, there's a candidate in this plan? It's not just words and numbers?

ROVE

It has to be the right candidate.

ATWATER

I'm with you on that one. Hitch your wagon to a star.

ROVE

No, that's what you *don't* want to do.

ATWATER

Karl, you could start an argument in an empty house.

ROVE

You need to *make* a candidate. Out of nothing. If you can make someone, then you control them. A candidate that makes you can just cut you loose when they don't need you anymore.

ATWATER

Winning every election with totally unskilled candidates. Genius!

ROVE

Some skill would help. And they have to be somewhat wealthy and ambitious. But mostly clueless.

ATWATER

So they depend completely on you.

ROVE

Right.

ATWATER

Well, I guess there's no shortage of clueless rich guys.

ROVE

Exactly. And who among them wouldn't want to be President?

ATWATER

Hmmm.... You'd have to really flatter the candidate, make him think all his ideas are great and he's really smart.

ROVE

That's right.

ATWATER

And you need to pretend to be dumber than you are.

ROVE

You're getting it.

ATWATER

Yeah, it's a great idea. You are pretty smart.

ROVE

Thanks.

Atwater smiles. Rove seems to have no idea that he's being humored in exactly the way that's been described.

Lee and Karl stop walking, as there is a fork in the road. They are unsure which way to go. A faint rumble of THUNDER is heard in the distance.

ATWATER

Hmmm. I don't remember this.

Wide shot: they are at a classic SOUTHERN RURAL CROSSROADS, right out of a Blues ballad.

A cluster of rickety shack-type buildings sits on the corner. Karl and Lee are startled by a voice from the front porch. It is an elderly black woman, MADAME TOUSSANT, 60.

MADAME TOUSSANT

You boys looking for something?

ATWATER

Yeah, is there a filling station around here? Our car--

MADAME TOUSSANT

Don't go that way.

Karl and Lee look at each other.

MADAME TOUSSANT (CONT'D)

The devil's down that path.

ROVE

So we should go the other way?

MADAME TOUSSANT

Devil's down that way too.

Raindrops begin to fall. The sky is about to open.

ATWATER

Well, uh, thanks for all your help.

Wide shot as Karl and Lee hustle down the road.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGEWORTH'S OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Heavy rain falls over a nondescript building.

INT. EDGEWORTH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Robert Edgeworth sits at his desk looking at some papers.

A SHADOWY FIGURE approaches from the hall through the open door.

Edgeworth looks up. It is Terry Dolan.

DOLAN  
Hello, Robert.

EDGEWORTH  
Terry? What are you doing here?

Dolan speaks with an authority that verges on sinister.

DOLAN  
I have a proposition for you.

EDGEWORTH  
(wary)  
Proposition?

Dolan hastily reconsiders his choice of words.

DOLAN  
I mean, uh... a proposal.

Edgeworth starts to say something, but instead just looks at Dolan, mystified.

CUT TO:

EXT. SERVICE STATION PHONE BOOTH - DAY

It is pouring rain. At a random roadside station, Karl Rove is inside a phone booth.

Atwater, in the background, puts gas in the car.

ROVE  
(on phone, annoyed)  
Yeah, Jim Costello. Well, where is he?  
I was supposed to hear from him.  
(pause)  
Just have him call me back. I'll be at  
the University of Arkansas at, uh...

Rove pulls out a crumpled sheet of paper.

ROVE (CONT'D)

... the, uh, student slash faculty meet-  
and-greet. Let me give you the number  
there...

EXT. CAMPUS HOUSE - NIGHT

It's a large mansion house used for campus functions.

INT. CAMPUS HOUSE BAR

Rove and Atwater sit at a bar. Rove seems glum.

Atwater points out a circle of people talking and  
laughing in the next room. Several attractive young  
women are in the group.

ATWATER

We should head over there, I'll introduce  
you to Rex, Arkansas State Chairman.

Atwater points out a young man in the circle with big  
glasses, REX, 25. Rex laughs loudly. He is listening to  
a young bushy-haired PROFESSOR, smoking a cigar with his  
back to the camera.

ROVE

I don't really feel like it.

Atwater scoffs.

ATWATER

It's why we're here, you know.

ROVE

You go over, tell him who I am, and let  
him know I'd like to meet him.

ATWATER

(sarcastic)

Sure. Sure thing.

Atwater does not move.

ROVE

The first thing I want to do when we get  
to Washington: cut funding for the  
Georgia CR.

ATWATER

I don't know... John Kinney's one of your supporters now, Karl. He left Dolan.

ROVE

Well, he wasn't before. He's just trying to ride my coattails. Fucking worm.

ATWATER

We can still use him though.

ROVE

True. But after the convention. He'll learn not to cross me again.

Atwater finishes his drink and heads over to the circle.

ATWATER

I'll go get Rex.

Rove sits, alone.

FADE TO:

SOME TIME LATER

Rove still sits alone. Atwater has fully ingratiated himself into the conversation circle in the next room. He seems to have been there for some time.

Rove looks over at him, raises his eyebrows. Atwater makes eye contact and gestures at Karl to wait a moment.

Rove gets up and leaves.

ROVE ON THE HOUSE PHONE

ROVE

Hi Jim! Good to finally get you on the phone. Where the hell--

COSTELLO (V.O.)

(other end of the phone)

Rove, shut the fuck up and listen.

Rove's face registers an unpleasant expression.

BACK IN THE PARTY ROOM

Atwater continues to mix with Rex's group.

PROFESSOR (O.S.)

And so I said to her, "Where's that water  
comin' from?"

ATWATER

No! No you did not!

Atwater laughs. He likes the Professor.

Rove appears and pulls Atwater aside abruptly. Karl's  
voice quivers as he struggles to keep his composure.

ROVE

It's over. It's fucking over. We're...  
I... we've lost.

ATWATER

(low voice)

What are you talkin' about?

They are interrupted by Rex and the rest of the group,  
who engage Rove, unaware of his fragile state.

REX

Mr. Rove... a pleasure to meet you. I'm  
Rex Wellemeyer.

Rove shakes his hand limply. Rex presents Rove to the  
group.

REX (CONT'D)

This young gentleman is going to be  
National Chairman of the College  
Republicans.

ROVE

No. I'm not. Not now. Not anymore.  
Thanks to... dickheads... like you.

Atwater forces a laugh, attempting to pass the comment  
off as a joke. Rex laughs awkwardly, confused.

PROFESSOR

Yeah, he's a Republican all right.

The group roars with laughter. The Professor is very  
popular. Rex laughs as well.

REX

Karl, you'll have to excuse Professor  
Clinton here-- he's a hopeless liberal.

The young law professor is future President BILL CLINTON.



PROFESSOR (CLINTON)  
Hopeless? I was born in Hope, a little town right down in Hempstead County.

ROVE  
I don't care about your Hopetown, okay?

ATWATER  
Please excuse us for a moment.

Atwater escorts Rove away from the circle.

IN THE NEXT ROOM

Rove, still agitated and emotional, argues with Atwater.

ATWATER  
What the hell's a matter with you?

ROVE  
It's done. It's over. Edgeworth is Chairman.

ATWATER  
Get a fucking grip, Karl!

ROVE  
He's teamed up with Dolan. He's got all Dolan's people now.

ATWATER  
Are you drunk again?

ROVE  
I talked to Costello! Edgeworth has all Terry's Blackwell people and Kinney and everyone else. He has fucking everyone!

ATWATER  
Well, uh... I'll get on the phone, we can get 'em back... I can--

ROVE  
There's not enough time--the, the convention's in two weeks--

ATWATER  
Just calm down.

ROVE  
We don't have the votes!

ATWATER

It's a setback. We're close. It's not a blowout.

Rove is on the verge of tears.

ROVE

No, it's done. I'm quitting the race.

ATWATER

Don't be an idiot. You have the Chicago syndicate, and all the votes they bring.

ROVE

No, I've got nothing. Chicago dropped me.

ATWATER

What?

ROVE

They're sitting it out. They don't want to back a loser. And that's what I am.

Karl turns away from Lee and walks out the door into the summer night.

EXT. CAMPUS HOUSE - NIGHT

Karl is laying down in the grass of the lawn, staring up at the stars. He looks depressed to the point of catatonia.

A waft of cigar smoke enters his field of vision.

It is young Professor Clinton.

PROFESSOR CLINTON

Rough night, huh?

ROVE

Please go away.

PROFESSOR CLINTON

I know. I know how you feel. I've been there. Beat down, tired. Working hard, and not much to show for it.

ROVE

Really, just go.

PROFESSOR CLINTON

You feel pushed around. A victim of the profound and powerful forces that are remaking our world. But I'm not going to lie to you. You are NOT a victim.

ROVE

I'm not?

PROFESSOR CLINTON

No. Because each and every one of us has the power to change our world. The power to learn from our mistakes.

ROVE

Maybe I could have done a few things differently.

PROFESSOR CLINTON

Karl, success is not the measure of a man, but a triumph over those who choose to hold him back.

We see a close up of Rove's face. He is taking Clinton's words to heart. His confidence is coming back to him.

PROFESSOR CLINTON (CONT'D)

There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be fixed by what is right with America. But the most important thing is to never give up. Never quit. Never quit. Never quit.

INT. CAMPUS HOUSE - NIGHT

Rove bursts into the room with authority. Lee is there waiting.

ROVE

I will be the Chairman! I will not let them take this from me!

ATWATER

Alright, I like it. Let's fuckin' do this!

ROVE

Alright! Now, what the fuck are we going to do?

ATWATER

We're going to the convention.

ROVE

Yes! With... no base of support, really.

ATWATER

We'll have Chicago. I talked to Costello-

ROVE

When?

ATWATER

When you were lying on the fucking lawn. He's gonna give us another chance. I told him we'll have the votes, that I have a plan.

ROVE

You have a plan?

ATWATER

No. I lied about that part.

ROVE

Hmmm.

Silence.

ATWATER

Well if we can't get more votes, we'll just have to take theirs away...

ROVE

(thinking)

Take theirs away...?

ATWATER

Maybe we can dig up something on Edgeworth, maybe he...

ROVE

Of course, that's it! We can do that! We'll take theirs away!

ATWATER

Are you makin' fun of me?

ROVE

No, I want to kiss you!

Rove immediately regrets having said that. Lee looks at him strangely. Suddenly the mood is very awkward, the excitement has dissipated.

ATWATER

But you're not, though, right?

ROVE

No.

ATWATER

(subdued)

Alright. Let's do this.

ROVE

Okay. Let's ... go.

They walk out together, a safe distance apart.

FADE TO:

EXT. MARRIOTT HOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY

TITLE CARD: COLLEGE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION 1973

MARRIOTT HOTEL, LAKE OF THE OZARKS, MISSOURI

The mustard brown Pinto slows to a stop at the far edge of the parking lot.

Karl and Lee look out the windshield at the unremarkable, unappealing building, taking it all in.

ATWATER

Kind of a dump, huh?

ROVE

What time does Costello's plane touch down?

ATWATER

2:15. What time is the credentials meeting?

ROVE

7:30.

Rove exhales.

ATWATER

What?

ROVE

You really think we can get away with it?

ATWATER

Well, if you can't run with the big dogs,  
then stay under the porch.

Rove bristles at the remark, and steps on the  
accelerator. Atwater has pushed his buttons.

The Pinto drives across the parking lot towards the  
hotel. A 1970s BLUES-ROCK SONG thunders onto the  
soundtrack.

ARRIVAL MONTAGE SEQUENCE.

The pace is hectic as we jump from scene-to-scene.

INT. MARRIOTT LOBBY - DAY

Rove and Atwater walk hurriedly through the lobby,  
carrying suitcases and stacks of papers.

Earl, from Georgia, is there. Lee calls out to him.

ATWATER

Earl, great to see you. Take this.

Atwater hands him some paperwork without stopping.

EARL

What is it?

ROVE

New credentials-- you've been promoted.

Earl looks at the paper curiously.

INT. MARRIOTT HALLWAY - DAY

We see JEFF, the ALABAMA CHAIRMAN wandering the hall with  
a few ASSOCIATES in toe.

Rove stops to shake his hand, barely.

ROVE

Thanks for sticking with me, Jeff.

JEFF

Rove '73... because Bob Edgeworth is a  
homo-lover.

ATWATER

I like it.

JEFF

Where's the ballroom?

Atwater is already gone down the hall.

ROVE

There isn't one.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Atwater's friend, PINE TOP, stands at a desk.

Atwater enters the room, closes the door behind him, and drops a stack of BLUE FLYERS on the desk.

EXT. MARRIOTT HOTEL

National Chairman James Costello steps out of the back seat of his airport taxi.

He is flanked by two YOUNG MEN in sunglasses: BILLY THE GIRL, chubby with long sideburns, and TOM REDSTONE.

INT. LOBBY

Costello and his group step into the lobby. Atwater's teenage assistant, Roscoe, announces their arrival.

ROSCOE

The Chicago Boys are here!

Rove and Atwater greet them. They talk as they walk.

COSTELLO

Why the hell did I let you put this thing up in the Ozarks?

ROVE

Low turnout, sir, favors the incumbent party. That's us.

COSTELLO

We'll you've certainly got a low turnout.

TOM REDSTONE

Half the delegates are voting by proxy.

ROVE

All the better, we've got a stack of proxies, and absentee voters can't change their minds.

INT. HALLWAY

They walk down towards a meeting room. Rove hastily introduces Costello's associates.

ROVE

Lee, this is Billy the Girl...  
...and this is Tommy Redstone.

Tom Redstone nods at Lee. Lee nods back, an ODD MOMENT passes between them. They know each other.

The group reaches the meeting room and closes the door.

INT. LOBBY

The lobby is becoming more crowded as delegates arrive.

Pine-Top is passing out the BLUE FLYERS to everyone.

INT. HALLWAY

Rove and Billy the Girl are walking down the hall. Rove thumbs through a stack of papers as he walks.

FOSTER, the racist Chairman of Mississippi is walking down the hallway towards them.

Rove starts to greet him, but Foster does not make eye contact and walks right by.

ROVE

Fucking Atwater. I thought he had that guy for us.

BILLY THE GIRL

(speaks in a high voice)

Blackwell got to him for Edgeworth. The treachery runs deep.

ROVE

Put him on the list.



BILLY THE GIRL

Yes, sir.

Billy the girl writes in a notepad as they walk..

ROVE

You're all business, Billy, I like that.  
Where the fuck is Atwater anyway?

INT. LOBBY - FRONT DESK

KATE KING is at the front desk. Atwater approaches her.

ATWATER

Well hello, Miss King.

KATE

(coolly)

Mr. Atwater.

ATWATER

I didn't think Terry was here yet.

KATE

I'm not here for Terry. I'm here  
representing the Wyoming College  
Republicans.

ATWATER

You're Chairman of Wyoming?

KATE

Chairwoman.

EXT. HOTEL

Two black TOWN CARS appear outside the Hotel.

Out of the first car steps Terry Dolan, with the Dapper  
Man, and the Man in Black.

Robert Edgeworth steps out of the other car, along with  
his assistant, the bookish PENNEBAKER.

Dolan looks intense and sharp in a dark tailored suit.  
Edgeworth wears tweed.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

The Edgeworth/Dolan group walks in.

Georgia Chairman JOHN KINNEY and Florida operative ALVIN DARK are there to meet them. Dolan shakes Kinney's hand and introduces Edgeworth. Kinney holds up a blue flyer.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LOBBY

Rove, Atwater, and the Chicago Boys are walking towards the exit when their counterparts come into view.

ROVE

Here we go...

COSTELLO

I'll do the talking.

The rival groups converge. Dolan walks up to Rove, irate, pointing at the BLUE FLYER.

DOLAN

What the hell is this?

ROVE

How should I know?

COSTELLO

Let me see that.

The flyer is a list of bullet points, titled THE CASE AGAINST ROBERT EDGEWORTH. Point one: - ASSOCIATES WITH KNOWN HOMOSEXUALS.

DOLAN

You better lock your fucking door tonight, Rove.

ATWATER

(coughs)

Homo.

EDGEWORTH

Hello, Jim. How have you been?

COSTELLO

I'm well, thanks.

EDGEWORTH

(polite)

So, what the hell is this?

Costello looks over the flyer. Sees point: - RECEIVED ELECTROSHOCK THERAPY AT A MENTAL HOSPITAL IN 1966.

COSTELLO

This is obviously the work of some of  
some rogue delegate. See, they slander  
Karl as well...

A second, much less noticeable heading at the bottom of  
the sheet reads: THE CASE AGAINST KARL ROVE.

ROVE

What? Give me that.

Rove grabs the flyer. He seems genuinely surprised.

ROVE (CONT'D)

(reading)

Pompous windbag...?

A bearded man, LEON MEACH, 33, with wisps of grey,  
approaches them. He has an air of authority.

MEACH

What seems to be the problem, gentlemen?

EDGEWORTH

Leon! Great to see you...

MEACH

Likewise, my good man.

COSTELLO

You were supposed to be here an hour ago.

MEACH

Well maybe if there was an airport within  
a hundred miles of this rathole...

Atwater laughs. Everyone likes Meach.

PINE-TOP (O.S.)

Hey. Let go!

Dolan's two henchmen escort Pine-Top forcefully into the  
scene, one on each arm.

DAPPER MAN

This is the guy.

MEACH

(to Pine-Top)

Have you been distributing these  
broadsides?

PINE-TOP

No way!

The Dapper Man knocks Pine-Top's bag out of his hand. A hundred BLUE FLYERS spill out onto the ground.

MEACH

Mr. Chairman, I move that we have hotel security remove this man and that he be henceforth banned from the convention.

EDGEWORTH

I second the motion.

Costello hesitates, looking at Edgeworth and Meach.

COSTELLO

Granted. Get him the hell out of here.

(beat)

Okay, let's get on with this.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

TITLE CARD: CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE MEETING

Sitting at the head of a large table are the five committee members: Costello, Rex from Arkansas, Meach, Dolan's Man in Black, and Alvin Dark.

Seated around the table are 15-20 other College Republicans. There are not enough seats, the room is crowded.

We see Rove, seated across from the committee members. There is an intimidating amount of research papers and other materials in front of him.

Billy the Girl sits beside Rove, Atwater stands against the wall in the background.

Costello begins the meeting, speaking in the RAPID FIRE pace of an auctioneer.

COSTELLO

I hereby call to order this meeting of the Credentials Committee of the College Republican National Convention

Costello bangs his gavel on the table.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

It is now... 7:40 PM, The floor is open,  
are there any motions on the floor?

HICKS

Mr. Chairman.

COSTELLO

Chairman Hicks, Delaware.

HICKS

I move to commence with confirmation of  
the State Chairs.

Rove looks over toward Billy the Girl and nods.

COSTELLO

Do I have a second?

PENNEBAKER

I second.

COSTELLO

That motion is in order. Those in favor?

A loud CHORUS OF VOICES respond in unison:

VOICES (MAJORITY)

Aye!

Atwater makes eye contact with Tom Redstone, on the other  
side of the room.

Redstone nods and leaves the room. Atwater quietly slips  
out as well.

INT. HOTEL STAIRWELL

Redstone and Atwater meet in the stairwell, careful to  
note that they are alone.

ATWATER

You got it?

Redstone hands Atwater a small duffle bag. Atwater opens  
it. Inside is a reel-to-reel AUDIO TAPE RECORDER.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Nice. You won't regret this, Tom.

TOM REDSTONE

I'll see you in Washington.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

The credentials meeting continues.

COSTELLO

The floor recognizes John Kinney, Georgia State Chairman.

John Kinney stands up. Karl Rove and Billy the Girl exchange a look. Billy nods. Rove raises his hand.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

Candidate Rove, Utah.

ROVE

Point of Information.

COSTELLO

Established.

ROVE

John Kinney is *not* the Georgia State Chairman.

The crowd murmurs with surprise. Kinney is amused.

ROVE (CONT'D)

The real Georgia State Chairman is... my colleague here, Earl Peavy.

Dolan and Edgeworth look at each other, confused. Lee's Georgia friend Earl sits beside Rove, nodding.

Kinney is flustered as he fumbles with his paperwork.

KINNEY

Rove, that's ridiculous. I have--

BILLY THE GIRL

Point of Order.

COSTELLO

Established.

BILLY THE GIRL

All remarks must be directed to the chair.

COSTELLO

Sustained. Direct future remarks to me.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

Fine. Jim, I am the goddamned Chairman of the Georgia CR and I've got the papers that say so.

Rove whispers in Earl's ear. Earl stands up.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

Mr. Peavy, Georgia.

EARL

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to present to the committee a notarized copy of the Constitution of the Georgia CR that clearly identifies me as the current Chairman.

The room erupts.

Costello bangs his gavel, Kinney's voice rises above the din.

KINNEY

That's a load of bunkum. Earl, you sit the hell down.

ROVE

Point of Order! Point of Order!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

The room has calmed down.

At the head of the table, Costello, Meach, and Alvin Dark inspect the Georgia Constitution. Edgeworth hovers nearby, conferring with his assistant, Pennebaker.

Chairman Jeff of Alabama confers quietly with Billy the Girl.

JEFF

What's going on? Is Earl really the Chairman of Georgia?

BILLY THE GIRL

(whispers)

No, but... technically, yes. Over the last few weeks, Karl's people have been quietly launching coups at the local level in the Edgeworth states. If we just get them sworn in today, Karl'll be Chairman by the time it gets sorted out.

They watch as John Kinney pleads with Leon Meach.

BILLY THE GIRL (CONT'D)  
Meach is the swing vote. He's a friend  
of Edgeworth, but mostly impartial.

The committee settles down and prepares to vote.

COSTELLO  
(calls out)  
Committee Members in favor of certifying  
Earl Peavy as Georgia State Chairman,  
please raise their right hand.

At the head of the table, three members raise their  
hands: Costello, Rex, and-- reluctantly-- Meach.

EDGEWORTH  
(outraged)  
Leon!

MEACH  
The documents are legit, Bob.

COSTELLO  
Those opposed?

Alvin Dark and Dolan's Man in Black raise their hands.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)  
By a 3-2 vote the committee hereby  
certifies Earl Peavy, Chairman of  
Georgia.

Costello bangs his gavel. John Kinney is livid.

KINNEY  
What the-- Are you--? God almighty,  
Rove, you are an assface cocksucker!

BILLY THE GIRL  
Point of order!

KINNEY  
I move this committee certify that Karl  
Rove has an ass for a face!

DOLAN  
I second the motion.

COSTELLO  
You're out of order, Kinney.



KINNEY

You all are out of your goddamn mind!

DOLAN

Those is favor of certifying that Karl Rove has an ass for a face?

SCATTERED VOICES

Aye!

ROVE

Point of Order!

Costello pounds his gavel repeatedly.

COSTELLO

Sergeant-at-arms, remove these men!

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY

Atwater knocks on a hotel room door. He knocks again.

Kate King opens the door a crack, remaining behind the security chain.

ATWATER

I just want to say in advance, I've only got time for a quickie.

Kate slams the door. Atwater talks to her through the closed door.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Look, you're mad. I get that.

KATE (O.S.)

I'm sure you get that a lot.

ATWATER

I've come to offer my sincerest apologies.

Kate opens the door a crack.

KATE

Oh, really? For what?

ATWATER

For all the bad shit I've done.

Kate smiles.

KATE

All of it, huh?

ATWATER

The whole shebang. I swear on my momma that I will never call Terry Dolan a homo again.

KATE

It would really be overkill at this point.

Lee smiles.

ATWATER

Let me make it with you-- I mean, make it up to you.

Kate rolls her eyes and shuts the door in his face again.

Atwater almost starts to walk away, but then he hears the sound of Kate unlocking the SECURITY CHAIN.

She opens the door.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

The Credentials Committee meeting rages on.

COSTELLO

By a 3-2 vote, Haywood Spencer is certified as Chairman of Mississippi.

Haywood Spencer shares a celebratory handshake with Rove.

Foster, the former Chairman of Mississippi stands up.

FOSTER

Point of information.

COSTELLO

Granted.

FOSTER

That shit-lickin' bastard hasn't even lived in the state of Mississippi for a fucking red-ass year!

COSTELLO

You're out of order!

FOSTER

No, you're out of order! This whole damn chicken farm is out of order. The goddamned RNC is going to tan your hide over this, Costello

Costello bangs his gavel. The clamor and chaos grow. The committee is pelted with crumpled up credentials papers.

COSTELLO

Order! Order!

Rove smiles and leans back in his chair.

INT. KATE KING'S ROOM

Kate and Lee are in bed together, smoking cigarettes.

ATWATER

Can I ask you something personal?

KATE

Sure.

ATWATER

Who are you voting for?

KATE

(laughs)

Oh, shut up.

ATWATER

I'm serious.

KATE

Well... Edgeworth, of course.

ATWATER

Kate, we need your vote. I told our people to let you keep your credentials, that you would be for Karl.

KATE

Well, I don't like Karl.

ATWATER

Hell, I'm not sure I like him either, but he's my ride.

KATE

No offense, Lee, but I wouldn't vote for Karl to save your life. He doesn't stand for anything.

ATWATER

Oh, that's cold... Don't do it for me then, do it for Terry.

KATE

For Terry?

ATWATER

Yeah, I'm gonna talk to Terry, I'll bring him over to our side.

KATE

How are you gonna do that?

ATWATER

I have something for him... a peace offering.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Much time has passed. The room has thinned out and a general weariness has set in.

EDGEWORTH

I move that this meeting be adjourned and reconvened at a decent hour which would allow a conference call with the head of the RNC, to resolve these disputes.

HICKS

I second the motion.

COSTELLO

Motion granted. Those in favor of adjourning the meeting?

VOICES (MINORITY)

Aye!

COSTELLO

Those opposed?

Rove and his allies shout loudly and forcefully.

VOICES (MAJORITY)

Nay!

COSTELLO

The nays have it, the meeting continues.  
It is 3:45 AM, the floor is open. Do we  
have a motion to put before the floor?

Costello gets hit in the face with a wad of paper.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

Who threw that?!

INT. TERRY DOLAN'S HOTEL ROOM

Atwater sits across a desk from Dolan and The Dapper Man.  
A few other of Dolan's ASSOCIATES are in the room also.

ATWATER

So.

Dolan takes a long drag on a cigarette and says nothing.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

What are you doing here, Terry?

DOLAN

What am *I* doing here?

ATWATER

Yeah, what do you want from the College  
Republicans?

DOLAN

Really, Lee, I could give a fuck about  
the College Republicans.

ATWATER

Is that so?

DOLAN

It's a social club for rich kids to pick  
their noses.

Atwater laughs.

ATWATER

You know, I think me and you could be  
pretty good friends... if circumstances  
were to change.

DOLAN

Is that so?

ATWATER

Maybe. Could I bum a smoke from you?

Dolan nods to the Dapper Man, who gives Lee a cigarette.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Friday's my junk day.

DAPPER MAN

It's Saturday.

ATWATER

Whatever.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATE NIGHT

We see Chairman Jeff of Alabama asleep with his head on the table, a tiny puddle of drool next to his mouth.

Rove slaps him awake. Jeff snaps to attention.

COSTELLO

By a 3-1 vote, the committee confirms the credentials of Jeff Messing, Chairman of Alabama.

Rove applauds. The room has really thinned out. Of the committee, Dolan's Man in Black is passed out.

INT. TERRY DOLAN'S HOTEL ROOM

Dolan points an intense, threatening finger at Atwater.

DOLAN

I know exactly what you and Rove did to me, I understand how you did it, and I recognize... that it was a masterstroke.

ATWATER

(surprised)

Well... thank you.

DOLAN

I want to do what you did on a massive scale. Go negative, with independent groups, outside campaign apparatus. Say whatever we want. But it's going to take money. Lots of it.

Atwater starts rattling off a list.

ATWATER

Racial integration. Abortion. Flag-burning. I do NOT care about these issues-- but a lot of people do.

DOLAN

People are sick of it.

DAPPER MAN

Sick of the hippies.

DOLAN

No better feeling than smashing a bottle over a hippie's head.

ATWATER

There's a storm brewing.

DOLAN

And it's going to rain money.

ATWATER

Edgeworth's not going to do it. He's a boy scout. He's got to go.

DOLAN

Perhaps. But Rove is an insufferable ass.

ATWATER

They're all a bunch of nose-pickers, what's it to you?

DOLAN

I can't allow him to win. And I'd lose credibility with my backers.

ATWATER

Just hear me out... Rove wins, and he goes off to Washington-- with me as his #2 of course-- but he's...

(pause for effect)

...brought down by a scandal!

DOLAN

Scandal?

ATWATER

I happen to have with me an audio tape recording of one Karl C. Rove.

DOLAN

Doing what?

ATWATER

Just imagine... Edgeworth loses tomorrow... Rove loses a month from now-- and you've got a friend at the head of the CRNC

DOLAN

What do you want?

ATWATER

I'd bet my Gibson 335 that you've got a stack of Edgeworth proxies somewhere in this room right now.

Atwater raises his brow. Dolan and the Dapper Man look at each other.

ATWATER (CONT'D)

Ten, twenty absentee votes would swing this race, big time.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATE NIGHT

ROVE

I move to close the session.

BILLY THE GIRL

I second.

COSTELLO

Those in favor?

ROVE AND BILLY THE GIRL

Aye.

Costello looks around the room. Rove and Billy the Girl are the only people left.

COSTELLO

Thank god. It is... Jesus Christ, 5:20 AM! This session is closed.

INT. MARRIOTT HALLWAY - LATE NIGHT

Atwater exits Dolan's room, holding the duffle bag.

He takes a moment to look over his shoulder before continuing down the hall.

He does not see, however, that Edgeworth's assistant Pennebaker is watching him.



INT. KARL ROVE'S ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Atwater enters. Rove and Billy the Girl are having beers, celebrating their success.

ROVE

Lee? Where have you been all night!?

ATWATER

I've been--

ROVE

Doesn't matter... it worked! We did it. All of our people got in, we should be within... what?

BILLY THE GIRL

A couple of votes, either way.

ROVE

Unbelievable. I feel like I could walk on water right now. You want a beer?

Atwater says something very quietly to Rove. Rove glances over toward Billy the Girl.

ROVE (CONT'D)

Billy, could you... excuse us for a moment?

MOMENTS LATER

Rove and Atwater, alone in the room, unzip the duffle bag. Inside is the stack of Edgeworth's proxies.

ROVE (CONT'D)

Oh my god. Edgeworth's proxies. You're amazing. How did you get these?

ATWATER

We don't talk about how we make sausage.

ROVE

It's over. I'm not going to win by a couple votes-- I'm going to destroy him.

ATWATER

I'll have that beer now.

Rove laughs as he tosses Lee a can of Pabst and heads over to the telephone.

ROVE

I've got to make a quick call.

Rove dials a room number.

ROVE (CONT'D)

Hey, it's Karl.

(pause)

It went great tonight. You were fabulous. Fabuloso.

(pause)

Yeah, of course, everything we talked about.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

On the other end of the line, we see the supposedly impartial Leon Meach.

MEACH

(on phone)

I don't want to be appointed to that committee, I want to be the Chair.

INT. KARL ROVE'S ROOM

Rove, hangs up the phone, sees Atwater preparing to leave.

ROVE

Hey, where are you going?

ATWATER

I've got to get these to Pine Top, he's at the Holiday Inn down the road. He's gonna make copies and put your name on them instead of Edgeworth's.

ROVE

Wow. This is really crossing a line from exploiting a loophole to full-on fraud.

ATWATER

You got a problem with it?

ROVE

Nope. That's why I'm bringing you to Washington with me, Fat Baby.

Rove and Atwater clink beer cans.

ATWATER

Fuck em all!

ROVE

Landslide!

Atwater closes the door. Rove is left alone. We hold on him for a moment as he realizes this.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARRIOTT HOTEL - MORNING

TITLE CARD: COLLEGE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION -  
FINAL ROLL CALL

The morning sun shines over the Marriott Hotel.

INT. GREAT CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

This room is much larger than the other conference room. The full delegation is present, about 40-50 College Republicans.

Chairman James Costello presides at the podium.

COSTELLO

Now, according to the rules, we shall proceed to the roll call and the roll call shall continue until we have chosen our next National Chairman. We begin with the state of Alabama. Chairman Jeff Messing, how do you cast your vote?

Chairman Jeff of Alabama stands up.

JEFF

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, the Alabama College Republicans proudly cast our vote for Mr. Karl Rove.

Rove's faction cheers and applauds loudly. Rove sits with a smug grin on his face. He looks to his left, at an empty chair.

INT. MARRIOTT HALLWAY

Lee Atwater is late for the roll call. He hustles toward the great conference room, carrying the duffle bag.

Coming from the other direction is Kate King. She has her hand on the door, about to enter.

ATWATER

You do the right thing in there now,  
Kate.

Kate rolls her eyes at Atwater and heads into the room.

INT. GREAT CONFERENCE ROOM

The roll call continues. Costello speaks from the podium. Atwater sits down in the seat next to Rove.

ROVE

You don't want to miss this.

COSTELLO

Chairman Abate of Arizona is not in attendance and will be voting by proxy. Who presents the proxy? Mr. Edgeworth?

Bob Edgeworth stands up.

EDGEWORTH

Mr. Chairman, it seems the proxy from the Chairman of Arizona has... disappeared.

The crowd murmurs at the surprising news.

COSTELLO

Disappeared?

Edgeworth looks to his left, at Dolan.

EDGEWORTH

Yes, we had it last night, but now, it's gone. They're all gone.

The murmur erupts into a rumbling chaos. Random shouts of accusations and blame punctuate the din.

Costello bangs his gavel.

COSTELLO

Gentleman! Gentleman!

At that moment, Pennebaker walks over to Rove.

PENNEBAKER

Bob would like a private meeting with you.

ROVE

Now?

INT. MEETING ROOM

Edgeworth enters the room. Rove is sitting at the table.

ROVE

Would you like to discuss the terms of your surrender?

Edgeworth sighs.

EDGEWORTH

I just don't understand you, Karl. You're a brilliant kid. We co--

ROVE

I'm not a kid anymore, Bob.

EDGEWORTH

(snaps)

Yes you are a fucking kid. You are an over-sensitive insecure little boy. A man wouldn't need to say that.

Rove is taken aback. He has never seen the usually calm Edgeworth so angry.

EDGEWORTH (CONT'D)

We could've worked together in Washington. We could've been a force. I might have even worked as your #2 after the first year. Did that ever rattle around in your arrogant little head?

ROVE

Bob, shut the fuck up. I'm sick of--

EDGEWORTH

No, you shut the fuck up and listen. You're a cheat. I know you stole the proxies, and you've forged copies.

ROVE

I have no idea what you're referring to.

EDGEWORTH

The sad part is you probably had the votes to win after Credentials. So why cheat?

ROVE  
 (suddenly livid)  
 You're a liar! You have no proof!

EDGEWORTH  
 You know, you're right. I don't have  
 proof.

ROVE  
 You don't?

EDGEWORTH  
 I'm not going to play that game. I don't  
 need to.

Rove is confused.

EDGEWORTH (CONT'D)  
 This is your last chance. Resign and  
 join my ticket. Come work with me in  
 Washington. We can do great things, do  
 it the right way.

Rove laughs.

ROVE  
 What? You think you're just going to  
 march down from your mountaintop with  
 your moralizing and I'm going to feel all  
 shamed and....  
 (fake crying)  
 I'm so sorry, I've been baaad...

EDGEWORTH  
 No, I just wanted to give you a chance.

Rove stands up. He is more determined than ever.

ROVE  
 Well, I've been down that road, Bob. I'm  
 not a sucker, and I'm not a quitter.

EDGEWORTH  
 What are you?

ROVE  
 I was put on this earth to lead this  
 party. It's fourth and goal and I'm  
 putting this fucking ball in the end  
 zone. Good. Night.

Rove starts to leave.

EDGEWORTH

It's not a fucking game, Karl. You can't be a leader by tricking people into voting for you. People have to believe in you and you have to believe in *them*. But they're just a bunch of marks to you. That's not a leader, that's a con man.

Rove has his hand on the open door.

ROVE

(sarcastic)

Wow. Another lecture by Bob Edgeworth, the voice of God. Are you finished?

EDGEWORTH

No. But you are. Costello's agreed to preside over a second roll call, with the real delegates.

ROVE

What? You're bluffing. Costello would never do a second vote.

EDGEWORTH

At the end of the day, we're both going to be elected chairman, and it will be up to the Party elders to decide who is legitimate.

ROVE

Horse shit.

Rove is starting to doubt himself.

EDGEWORTH

And Dolan's going to destroy you in the press. He has a tape recording of you in San Diego discussing dirty campaign tactics. I don't think the Party is going to want to touch you with a ten-foot pole after that.

Rove stands stunned, frozen, holding the open door.

ROVE

A... tape recording?

EDGEWORTH

I've tried hard to talk him out of it, actually.

ROVE

You have?

EDGEWORTH

Well... to be honest, not *that* hard.

Edgeworth walks past him through the open door.

CUT TO:

INT. GREAT CONFERENCE ROOM

Looking a little shell-shocked, Rove sits down in his chair. Atwater notices something is up.

ATWATER

What's going on? What did he say?

Rove, deep in thought, says nothing.

On the other side of the room, the Delaware Chairman stands as the roll call continues.

HICKS

The state of Delaware casts its vote for Robert Edgeworth.

COSTELLO

Thank you, Chairman Hicks. The roll stands at 3 votes for Mr. Edgeworth, 4 votes for Mr. Rove.

ROVE

(to Atwater)

Give him back the proxies.

ATWATER

What? Are you out of your mind? Why?

ROVE

(frazzled)

I don't like it... It, it feels like a setup.

ATWATER

This is it. We'll lose without them.

ROVE

No, it'll be close, but we can still win.

ATWATER

Can?



ROVE

Billy, take them over.

BILLY THE GIRL

Yes, sir.

ATWATER

Billy, you'll do no such thing.

Atwater grabs the duffle bag away from Billy. A brief tug-of-war ensues.

ROVE

Lee!

Atwater relents and Billy takes the bag.

ATWATER

Fuck.

INT. GREAT CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Edgeworth, seated on his side of the room, opens the bag and sees the proxies inside.

He looks up to see Billy the Girl walking away.

Edgeworth looks over to Rove. Rove raises his eyebrows at Edgeworth smugly, as if to say "See how moral I am."

At the front of the great hall, the vote continues. Alvin Dark sits next to the FLORIDA CHAIRMAN.

FLORIDA CHAIRMAN

The Florida College Republicans proudly support Bob Edgeworth for Chairman.

Edgeworth's faction applauds.

FADE TO:

INT. GREAT CONFERENCE ROOM - MUCH LATER

The roll call is winding down. The atmosphere is tense.

Pennebaker hands Costello a sheet of paper at the podium. Costello and Meach pour over it.

COSTELLO

The Chairman of Wisconsin votes via proxy for Mr. Edgeworth.

Atwater glares at Rove.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

It stands dead even. 36 votes for Edgeworth, 36 votes for Mr. Rove.

The crowd receives the result breathlessly.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

The Regional Chairmen have been counted, the report from the proxies has been confirmed-- we have one last state to hear from, and then the roll call shall be concluded.

Rove and Atwater look at each other, very much on edge.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

College Republicans, we shall soon have a new Chairman. I now call the great state of Wyoming. Chairwoman Kate King, how do you vote?

Kate stands up. Atwater gazes intently at her. She does not look at him.

KATE

On behalf of the Wyoming College Republicans, I cast my vote for... Karl Rove.

The room erupts with cheers and applause from Rove's faction.

Rove pumps his fist. Supporters and well-wishers crowd to give him a pat on the back.

Atwater is visibly relieved. He blows a kiss to Kate King, who gives him a sly smile in return.

Costello bangs his gavel.

COSTELLO

Order! Please, settle it down. I have an announcement to make.

The crowd quiets.

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

It's been brought to my attention that the rules state...

(MORE)

COSTELLO (CONT'D)

if a losing candidate wishes to protest the ruling of the credentials committee, he may request a second, provisional roll call from the disputed delegates, to allow party authorities time to verify their credentials.

ATWATER

(to Rove)

What the fuck is he talking about?

ROVE

I can't believe this is for real. They're having a second vote-- the endgame is going to play out at the RNC.

COSTELLO

(to all)

It is a highly unprecedented maneuver. Mr. Edgeworth, do you wish to initiate such a protest?

Bob Edgeworth stands up.

EDGEWORTH

I do, Mr. Chairman.

COSTELLO

(sighs)

Okay, I guess we're going to do this again. The Chair calls on... Provisional Chairman Kinney of Georgia.

ATWATER

(to Rove)

Christ Jesus, by the time this is done, I'm going to wish I never knew you.

CUT TO:

INT. RNC MEETING ROOM - WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

We jump back into the middle of Rove's interview with the FBI AGENT regarding the tape recording.

FBI AGENT

How did you first come to know Lee Atwater?

ROVE

I'm not sure I understand what you mean by that...

FBI AGENT

Alright. Let's just move on. Describe your recollection of your remarks to the San Diego seminar...

FADE TO:

INT. RNC HALLWAY - DAY

Rove and the FBI Agent exchange a cursory handshake and part ways.

Atwater approaches Rove shortly afterward.

ATWATER

How did it go?

ROVE

Fine. I never blinked. They've got nothing.

ATWATER

Well, it's the court of public opinion that matters.

ROVE

No, it's one man's opinion that matters.

INT. RNC CHAIRMAN'S WAITING ROOM

We see a close up shot of a large, imposing door. The door reads: REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE, CHAIRMAN

Rove and Atwater are seated in chairs outside the door.

They seem very small, as if in kindergarten chairs.

Costello walks out of the office.

COSTELLO

Okay, go on in, Karl, the boss wants to see you now.

Rove takes a last look at Atwater. Lee nods. Rove puffs himself up and follows Costello into the Chairman's office.

INT. RNC CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE

Rove sees that Robert Edgeworth is there, seated in a leather chair across from the Chairman's desk.

RNC CHAIRMAN (O.S.)  
Have a seat, son.

ROVE  
Yes, sir.

Rove sits in the empty chair next to Edgeworth and looks at the nameplate on the Chairman's desk.

It reads: GEORGE H. W. BUSH, CHAIRMAN.

Rove looks up at man behind the desk, who will later become the 41st President of the United States.

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH  
So, Karl, I have to tell you... I've been hearing some pretty nasty things about you and what you've been up to. Is there any truth to it?

ROVE  
None whatsoever, sir.

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH  
(skeptical)  
I've heard the tape.

ROVE  
I can assure you, the tape has... probably been doctored.

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH  
Hmm.

Bush sits back in his chair, eying the two young men.

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH (CONT'D)  
Whether that's the case or not... I've reached my decision.

Rove and Edgeworth brace themselves.

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH (CONT'D)  
Bob... the legitimate College Republican National Chairman... is Karl Rove. My ruling is final.

EDGEWORTH

Sir, on what grounds do you base this decision?

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH

I don't have to answer to you, you little weasel. You leaked sensitive information to the Washington Post. If I ever see your face again, you will regret it. Now, get the hell out of my office, and get the hell out of my party!

Edgeworth gets up to leave, stunned. Rove struggles to restrain a smile.

INT. RNC CHAIRMAN'S WAITING ROOM

Rove walks out Bush's office door. Atwater is there waiting, having overheard the whole thing.

They are both ecstatic, but decorum prevents them making any noise outside the Chairman's door.

Rove lifts his fists into the air, quivering. Atwater dances a funny, silent dance of celebration.

The two men embrace, victorious.

Quickly, they back away from each other and reinforce their heterosexual manhood with a calm handshake.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: THREE MONTHS LATER

INT. RNC BUILDING - WASHINGTON, D.C.

Across the hallway from Chairman Bush's office, an open office door reads: COLLEGE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE, KARL ROVE, CHAIRMAN.

Inside the office Rove and Atwater watch a small television set.

On the television is Richard Nixon, giving an infamous press conference.

NIXON  
 (on television)  
 ..because people have got to know whether  
 or not their President is a crook. Well,  
 I am not a crook.

Rove turns off the television.

ROVE  
 Ugh.

ATWATER  
 He's cooked.

An attractive woman in business attire, ANNABELLE, pokes  
 her head in the office.

ANNABELLE  
 Hello, boys.

ATWATER  
 You're looking lovely today, Annabelle.  
 When are you going to let me take you  
 out?

ANNABELLE  
 Why, thank you, Lee. Not anytime soon.  
 The boss wants to see you in his office.

ROVE  
 I'll be right over.

ANNABELLE  
 No, not you. Lee.

Rove is irritated, but unsurprised.

ATWATER  
 Sure thing, baby doll.

Annabelle leaves. Rove pleads with Lee.

ROVE  
 Can you please ask him to look at the  
 demographics reports I've prepared?

ATWATER  
 Well... I'll try, but that's not the kind  
 of stuff we usually talk about.

ROVE  
 What do you talk about?

ATWATER  
You know, life lessons.

Rove rolls his eyes. Atwater heads out of the room.

Rove peeks down the hallway after him.

George Bush is out in the hall as well, walking into his office. Rove watches as he greets Atwater warmly.

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH  
How are you getting on, Lee? Are you  
enjoying the use of my boat?

ATWATER  
Yes, sir. My girl Sally, she can't get  
enough of it... of the boat.

Bush laughs a paternal laugh. Rove approaches them.

ROVE  
Excuse me, sir?

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH  
(sharp)  
Yes?

Rove is startled by the sharpness and decides to avoid the topic he intended to bring up.

ROVE  
Um, is there.. anything I can do for you?

Bush looks at him oddly. Then he remembers something.

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH  
(digging in his pocket)  
Yeah.

He tosses a set of CAR KEYS to Rove, who catches them awkwardly.

RNC CHAIRMAN BUSH (CONT'D)  
Run these down to lobby for me. Talk to  
Annabelle first. Thanks.

Atwater and Bush head into the Chairman's office together, leaving Rove holding the keys.

INT. RNC BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Rove sits on a bench waiting, stewing.



Impatient, he gets up and heads outside.

EXT. RNC BUILDING - DAY

It is a bright, crisp autumn day in Washington, D.C.

Rove looks up and down the street.

Out of the distance, he sees a MYSTERIOUS FIGURE STRIDING TOWARD HIM almost in slow-motion, backlit by the sun.

The figure gets closer, details emerge. It is a young man, 26, wearing blue jeans, cowboy boots, and a leather bomber jacket from the Texas Air National Guard.

It is the young GEORGE W. BUSH.

Young George W. heads toward the door of the building, not noticing Rove.

ROVE

Hey!

George W. looks over to him.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Yeah?

ROVE

Um, you're here to see me.

GEORGE W. BUSH

I am?

ROVE

Yeah, you're George Jr. right?... I didn't--the jacket... I didn't know you were a pilot... That's cool...

George W. looks at Rove strangely as he rambles on.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Who are you?

ROVE

Oh! I-- I'm Karl Rove, I work for your dad, I have the keys for you!

GEORGE W. BUSH

Oh, okay. He's not gonna see me himself, then. Okay.

ROVE

Hey, you're at Harvard Business now,  
right?

GEORGE W. BUSH

Yup.

ROVE

If you ever need any help with anything,  
I know a lot about finance, marketing,  
leadership, strategy--

GEORGE W. BUSH

Woah. Slow down there, Tex. What are  
you, some kinda boy genius or something?  
Heh, heh.

ROVE

No, I--

GEORGE W. BUSH

You got those keys?

ROVE

Of course.

Rove hands George W. the keys, his hand lingering for a  
second too long.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Thanks a bunch. I'll see you around,  
genius.

George W. turns and leaves. Rove takes special notice  
of the back pocket of his jeans, the worn circle mark of  
a tin of chewing tobacco.

Rove watches George W. in awe as he walks away down the  
street, back toward the sun.

ROVE

(to himself)

Wow.

THE END.

END CREDITS CHARACTER NOTES:

KARL ROVE went on to become one of the most successful and controversial political consultants of all time. He is widely viewed as the mastermind of George W. Bush's political career from its earliest days. In the Bush White House he enjoyed power, access, and a role in policy creation that was unheard of for a political strategist.

Accusations of dirty tactics and abuse of power continued to follow Rove throughout his career. He is currently a paid commentator for FOX News.

LEE ATWATER rose quickly through the ranks of Republican politics, becoming an influential operative in the Reagan White House by age 30. As presidential campaign manager for George H. W. Bush in 1988, his aggressive and racially-charged tactics brought Bush from 17 points behind in the polls to a landslide victory in three months. He's been called the "best campaign manager who ever lived."

Atwater died tragically of a brain tumor in 1991, at age 40. On his deathbed, he renounced his ways and wrote letters of apology to all those he felt he had wronged, including Michael Dukakis and convicted murderer Willie Horton.

TERRY DOLAN co-founded the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) in 1975. NCPAC was one of the first big money independent groups that circumvented campaign finance restrictions to launch unaccountable attack ads. In the words of Dolan, "the shriller you are the easier it is to raise funds." NCPAC was a major contributor to the ascendancy of conservative Republicans in the 1980s.

Dolan died of AIDS in 1986.

DR. ROBERT EDGEWORTH became a beloved educator and scholar, an esteemed professor and Chairman of Classical Languages at Louisiana State University. His encyclopedic intellect and love of popular trivia led to successful appearances on games shows such as Jeopardy. He was never active in national politics again.

Dr. Edgeworth passed away in 2004 after a long battle with cancer.