

A FAVORABLE ALIGNMENT

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Based on True Events

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COLD OPEN

TITLE CARD:

"It must never come out...lie if you have to. If you have to, lie!" -Nancy Reagan

INT. WHITE HOUSE - MID-DAY, OCT 11, 1986.

We see red, high-heeled shoes walking quickly down the carpeted hall of the West Wing of the White House. An 80's cover of "Age of Aquarius / Let The Sun Shine In" begins to play as we pan up to reveal NANCY REAGAN, 65, the First Lady at the height of her powers, directing several White House aides to and fro, doing her bidding. The action surrounding Nancy is in a quiet frenzy.

The camera follows Nancy as she navigates the byzantine hallways of the White House, until she approaches a nondescript side room. Inside, a female aide holds up the receiver of a white landline. The aide moves out of her way as Nancy snatches the handle.

NANCY REAGAN

(to the aide)

You've got her on the line?!

FEMALE AIDE

It's ringing, but she isn't picking up.

NANCY REAGAN

(into receiver)

C'mon, c'mon!

(to the aide)

Get out! Get out!

CUT TO:

We follow the ringing tone across the country - traversing a montage of telephone poles with famous United States landmarks in the background - spanning the Mississippi River, Mount Rushmore, the Grand Canyon, until we see the sun rising over the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California.

INT. PACIFIC HEIGHTS APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

As the dial tone continues to ring, the camera travels up creaky stairs of an old building and into a well-appointed but decidedly gloomy Pacific Heights townhouse.

We see a giant poodle, SAGITARIUS, lying on a beautiful white leather couch with its paws covering its ears to block out the noise of the phone. We reach the other end of the dial tone, an old-fashioned black rotary phone on a mahogany table covered in various astrological charts.

Into the frame walks the figure of JOAN QUIGLEY, 59, staunch Republican and famous Astrologer. We see her from behind, hunched over in silk pajamas, exhausted, and yet with recently manicured azure nail polish and perfectly styled hair. Despite her current state, she never fails to look presentable, even when answering the phone. Joan picks up the receiver.

INTERCUT - D.C. AND SAN FRANCISCO.

NANCY REAGAN

Joan?! Joan is that you? Thank God!

JOAN QUIGLEY

Nancy, it's 6 AM.

NANCY REAGAN

I know, dear, it's early. But you won't believe what's happened!

JOAN

Nancy. It's not just that...

A beat as Joan's voice catches in her throat. She dabs tears out of her eyes with a handkerchief embroidered with star signs.

JOAN (CONT'D)

My mother died yesterday. Call back some other time. I don't feel like talking, Nancy. It can wait.

Before Joan can hang up.

NANCY REAGAN

But Joan, this is important! It can't wait. You must look at something now. It's vitally important for the country.

We pan around to see Joan's face. She's torn between two conflicting emotions. First, a feeling of disgust that the First Lady completely ignored her grief. But there's something else: a certain insatiable hunger surrounding the fact that she is needed at all times, that Nancy Reagan, First Lady of the United States, depends on her absolutely, that she is in Joan's power.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)

Joan. Ronnie and I are the only two people in the country who know this. You will be the third person.

Joan grits her teeth and lets her eyes fall closed, heavy with grief. But when she opens them, we also see that hunger in her eyes. After a beat.

JOAN

Well?

NANCY REAGAN

It's exactly how you foretold it would happen. Gorbachev proposed a secret meeting.

The enormity of this hits Joan. She blinks and sits up straight, reaching for a pen and pencil.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)

What I need to know is - should Ronnie attend the meeting and should it be kept hush-hush?

JOAN

Where?

NANCY REAGAN

Reykjavik.

JOAN

(muttering to herself)

Where on God's earth is Reykjavik.

Nancy is startled as someone walks by her private room, loudly talking. Nancy pulls the phone with her into the shadows in the corner of the room, whispering into the receiver.

NANCY REAGAN

A country called Iceland.

JOAN

(rolling her eyes)

I know what Iceland is, Nancy.

Joan rolls through the pages of an atlas.

JOAN

Now, how does one spell Reykjavik?

INT. ROOM IN WHITE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nancy bursts out of the room, triumphant, and nearly walks into DONALD REGAN, 68, gruff, disciplined, and to-the-point White House Chief of Staff. Without missing a beat, they fall in line together as they walk toward the Oval Office, almost racing one another to get there first.

NANCY REAGAN

Ronnie's got the perfect set-up.
The chart in Reykjavik is
stupendous.

DONALD REGAN

This meeting was supposed to be
secret. You can't just call up...

NANCY

She knows. Besides, she says
everyone will know soon enough.

Donald rubs his forehead in frustration as they both continue. They're walking so fast they're nearly running down the hall.

NANCY REAGAN

She did the charts even though her
mother just passed away.

DONALD REGAN

How Christian of you, Nancy.

NANCY REAGAN

Don't lecture me. I told her this
was of vital importance. She's put
aside her grief to serve her
country.

DONALD REGAN

(grumbling)
I wonder who's serving whom here.

NANCY REAGAN

We *all* serve, Don. Don't forget it.
And she says this meeting *must*
happen.

Another White House aide meekly approaches Donald mid-transit with a sheet of paper. He snatches it and scans it as they continue walking together.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)

It could be a breakthrough. Just what Ronnie needs. You've seen the polls.

DONALD REGAN

It's not enough notice. We cannot agree to a secret meeting with the Soviets based solely on what your "friend" thinks...

Before Donald can finish, Nancy reaches the closed door of the Oval Office first and bursts in without knocking. Sitting at his desk, RONALD REAGAN, 75, aged but still retaining most of his enigmatic charisma. He smiles up at his wife as she sits on the lip of his desk, beaming at her husband. A bowl of red jelly beans on the desk shakes as Nancy sits. The President stares at them slightly, losing focus for a moment, before looking back up at his wife. During that moment, Nancy and Donald share a quick glance. Donald approaches behind Nancy, not trying to get in the way of First Lady and President.

RONALD REAGAN

My Nancy.

Nancy beams back with a genuine smile blossoming on her face, a rare sight these days.

NANCY REAGAN

Ronnie.

She holds his hand while reaching with her other for the sheet of paper Donald's clutching. Exasperated that he is not the one to deliver it, almost refusing to let go, he relents and Nancy pries it free and hands it to her husband, who looks over the details with intensity and purpose.

RONALD REAGAN

I see.
(looking up)
What does Joan say?

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD:

We see B-Roll footage of 1980's Americana, highlights of Reagan administration, overlays of astrological charts and symbols while the 80's remix of "Let the Sun Shine In" plays on.

ACT ONE

TITLE CARD:

6 years earlier.

INT. STUDIO AUDIENCE IN HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA. 1980. MID-DAY.

We're live on the set of "The Merv Griffin show." An applause sign pulses in rhythm with the audience cheering for MERV GRIFFIN, 50, bursting with showmanship and good cheer. He stands up from his desk to thank his crowd of admirers, sits back down, and the room quiets immediately.

MERV GRIFFIN

Our next guest is someone very special!

As Merv continues his introduction, we pan to the wings where a somewhat younger-looking Joan Quigley waits. Her make-up and hair are perfectly coifed, she sports a conservative, navy blue dress with one eccentricity: a necklace of crystal-encrusted koala bears and bees.

MERV GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

So special, I sent her a handwritten 'Thank You' note after her last visit.

We cut back to see Joan's hands trembling slightly. Annoyed at her body's physical responses, she touches each koala and bee trinket on her necklace, counting as she does so, to get out the jitters.

MERV GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome to the stage, world-famous astrologer Joan Quigley!

Joan walks onto the stage to uproarious applause. Her nerves entirely vanish. She almost seems bemused, above it all, as she respectfully shakes Merv's hands and sits bolt upright in a chair across from him.

MERV GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Now, Joan. Last time you were here you predicted something so specific I bet you it wouldn't happen.

JOAN

So you did, Merv.

The audience chuckles.

MERV GRIFFIN

Joan here isn't afraid to give the bad along with the good, are you Joan?

JOAN

(unfazed)

Unlike the hacks, the charlatans, the so-called "pop astrologers" these days, I follow the charts wherever they lead. And yours led to Uranus.

A guy in the audience snorts. There's a confused moment as to whether or not everyone should laugh at the way Joan phrased her sentence. Joan, sensing the moment of ridicule, bristles and sits even straighter.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Uranus, the king-maker or throne-toppler. It unfavorably figures in your chart for the time being, Merv.

Merv smiles widely, loving the anticipation.

MERV GRIFFIN

And you predicted that things would go wrong in my home, didn't you Joan? And, ladies and gentlemen, wouldn't you know it...every electrical appliance in my house went haywire since you last visited!

The audience laughter sign turns on and everyone guffaws. The tension releases. Merv makes a show of throwing his hands up into the air at the absurdity of it all.

MERV GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

My new Sears microwave oven thanks you, Joan.

Joan nods, slyly.

JOAN

But, of course, that wasn't all I was referring to.

A beat, as Merv gulps.

MERV GRIFFIN

Well, it's no secret I'm also getting a divorce.

A beat.

MERV GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

I'm single again Joan. Tell me, do our charts align?

He laughs loudly at his own joke. Joan frowns.

JOAN

Not at all. Your sun sign conjuncts Pluto, the planet of life and death, in exact opposition to my moon conjuncting Venus. The resulting relationship is one best kept firmly at a distance...one of mutual respect, Merv.

Merv smiles with his teeth, but not with his eyes.

MERV GRIFFIN

Well, respectfully, I can't wait to hear your round of predictions for our country...after this commercial break!

Music blasts, the crowd cheers, and the lights fade. Merv sits back, fishes out a cigarette, and lights it. His boisterous personality relents into something more real and gritty.

MERV GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

You're a real piece of work, you know that, Joan? You'll never find a man with that attitude.

JOAN

(unfazed)

I have a man, Merv. Our Lord God, who sees and hears everything, including you patronizing a lady during a commercial break.

Merv inhales and blows out a smoke ring.

MERV GRIFFIN

The ratings go through the roof every time you're on, so who gives a crap, right?

(MORE)

MERV GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

But could you just give some good news to me, sometime? My wife would appreciate it.

JOAN

Ex-wife.

Merv snorts and stubs out his cigarette on an ash tray.

MERV GRIFFIN

By the way, a friend of mine wants your number. Couldn't stop gabbing, gabbing, gabbing about how accurate your birth chart was for me. And she shares my birthday so...

JOAN

Which means nothing, astrologically. Exact time, exact place, exact year - otherwise no two charts are alike.

MERV GRIFFIN

Whatever. But this little birdie, she's nothing less than the Governor's wife.

A beat as Joan takes in the information. She clearly knows who Nancy Reagan is.

MERV GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

I assume I can give her your telephone number?

JOAN

(playing it cool)
Of course, Merv. I get all my best clients from you.

Joan pushes the cigarette tray away from her, wafting the air clean of smoke.

JOAN (CONT'D)

You might want to quit. The 90's aren't looking good for you.

EXTERIOR. A BOAT IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY. LATER THAT MONTH. SUNSET.

We're on-board a large yacht filled to the brim with deep-pocketed Republicans.

It's a fundraiser for the Reagan primary campaign, and everyone's dressed in their casual yacht best, save for Nancy Reagan who wears a gaudy, glittery floor-length ball gown - a look completely out of place. Nancy lectures the crowd from a makeshift podium at the stern of the boat.

NANCY REAGAN

And so, if you are even considering having an abortion, just pretend there is a window inside your tummy, and you can see the adorable little baby inside.

Beat. It's very quiet on the boat. Some audience members plaster smiles on their faces. Some people cough or clink glasses in the back of the crowd, not really paying attention.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)

Thank you all. And...hip-hip-hoorah for my husband - the future President of the United States: Ronald Reagan!

A more youthful Reagan, full of vigor, comes out from behind Nancy, kisses his wife on both cheeks and smiles and waves to the crowd. He points at a mother with a baby on-board and gestures his approval with a wide smile. The crowd lifts to their feet in applause, seemingly forgetting Nancy even spoke just a minute ago. A rush of admirers approach Reagan to shake his hand, as Nancy shrinks into the background. No one pays her any attention except for one figure: Joan Quigley.

JOAN

Well said, Mrs. Reagan.

NANCY REAGAN

(thrilled at being noticed)

Why, thank you, dear! We must advocate for those who cannot yet speak.

Joan nods in agreement.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)

I'm referring, of course, to the unborn.

JOAN

Yes, I surmised.

Nancy looks around to see if anyone else wants to speak with her - but she's all alone with Joan.

NANCY REAGAN
And may I ask your name?

JOAN
I'm Joan Quigley. Lifelong
Republican.

Joan shakes Nancy's hand as a wave of recognition washes over Nancy.

NANCY REAGAN
Wait! You're from Merv's show! I've
watched you time and time again. I
knew you looked familiar!

Nancy vigorously shakes her hand back. Joan smiles,
appreciative.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)
You must forgive me! I've been
meaning to call - Merv gave me your
number. I've wanted to ask for a
reading. I'm such a fan. But the
campaign has just been...

JOAN
Draining, I'm sure.

NANCY REAGAN
Well. It's all so much.

JOAN
Please know I'm always happy to
help you and Governor Reagan.
You both have a bright future
written across the stars.

NANCY REAGAN
Really? He...I mean we do?

JOAN
I hope you don't mind that I looked
up your natal charts.

NANCY REAGAN
Not at all!

Nancy grabs two glasses of champagne from a nearby waiter.
She offers one to Joan.

JOAN
Thank you, but I never imbibe while
the gibbous wanes.

Nancy smiles and nods sympathetically as if she understands, then sips her champagne a bit too quickly.

NANCY REAGAN

Well, we simply must set a date and get to know one another better!

JOAN

That would be lovely.

Joan begins to gather herself to leave, ruffling through her purse for her business card.

NANCY REAGAN

One other thing, if you don't mind?

JOAN

Not at all.

NANCY REAGAN

The last episode I saw you on...Merv asked you how Ronnie would fair in the first debate with Carter.

JOAN

And, I suggested that he ought to be wary of technical difficulties.

NANCY REAGAN

(rushing with excitement)

Yes! Right! And I watched your reading on the show and wouldn't you know it...they checked Ronnie's mic before the debate, and it had been turned far down!

A beat. Joan shows no emotion, but there's perhaps a slight surprise she suppresses at how accurate she was.

JOAN

Someone from the Carter camp?

NANCY REAGAN

Trying to make my Ronnie sound old and frail.

JOAN

Democrats. They'll do anything to stay in power.

NANCY REAGAN

Exactly!

A beat.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)
I told Ronnie what you'd said, but
he just chalked it up as
coincidence.

Joan lightly takes Nancy by both hands and turns her away from the crowd, toward the San Francisco skyline. The sun is setting, colors splashed across the view.

JOAN
Nancy, your husband has greatness
written across his chart. He's an
Aquarian through and through. There
have been four U.S. Presidents with
an Aquarian Sun sign - Lincoln and
F.D.R. were two of them. The birth
chart of the United States itself
has an Aquarian moon, a perfect
match.

Nancy leans in, giving her full attention.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Fate deals the cards, Mrs. Reagan.
But perhaps the right astrologer
could help you and the Governor to
play them.

Nancy nods, in awe.

JOAN (CONT'D)
My business card.

Joan hands over a bejeweled, rhinestone encrusted card.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Enjoy the evening.

As Nancy looks on, Joan saunters over the other side of the boat. The camera pans up to the sky. The stars are just beginning to twinkle in the twilight.

EXT. OUTSIDE JOAN'S TOWNHOUSE IN SAN FRANCISCO. THE NEXT DAY.

A montage of San Francisco and Joan traversing it with her giant poodle Sag over the voice-over. The vibe is early 80's California, over a decade past the Summer of Love, entering a more conservative moment but still with the lingering apocalyptic exhaustion of the Cold War. No one knows what America means anymore.

Joan puts a braided leather leash on Sag, and they walk out the front door and into the streets of San Francisco.

JOAN (V.O.)
Astrology is not magic. It is as
scientific as algebra. As
elementary as the A-B-C's.

We see Joan and her disdain as she walks past strung-out hippies tripping in Haight-Ashbury. Joan continues on and rolls her eyes as she passes a psychic's window.

JOAN (V.O.)
I don't look into crystal balls. I
don't read tea leaves or stick my
finger into the wind.

Joan passes a homeless encampment in the Tenderloin. Sag approaches a sleeping man under a tent and smells him. Joan pets Sag, turns, and waves at a police officer across the street. She jovially gestures for the police man to come take away the homeless man.

JOAN
(to her dog)
Sagittarius, is there a poopie in
your future?

Sag smiles back at Joan and trots onward. Joan flashes a smile as they pass the approaching cop.

EXT. FISHERMAN'S WHARF - MOMENT LATER

Joan checks the time on the giant clocktower at Fisherman's wharf.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Every time has a season, they say.
And so I read time and the stars
and how they relate to us creatures
of God.

Joan compares the clock-time to her own Tiffany watch, and then to the shadow on a sundial beneath a nearby church. She nods, satisfied that everyone is keeping accurate time.

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

JOAN (V.O.)
They come to me, all manner of
humans. They each seek to change
their fate. That I cannot do.

Back in Joan's apartment, we see her giving appointments and readings to an aging business man, to an over-bearing actor, to a mother with two babies in her lap.

JOAN (V.O.)

But a skilled astrologer can soften the landing or augment the lightning in our lives. We can take ordinary good fortune and turn it into something extraordinary.

We see Joan warm up a bit as she reads her gardener, HUGO, 25, good-natured and in awe of his employer.

JOAN (V.O.)

I never meet anyone without first consulting how their charts transit mine on this day, this moment. Even Hugo here, my sweet gardener.

She orates to a rapt Hugo.

JOAN

(out loud)

Uranus is stalking you, dear Hugo. You've got to be careful this month.

Hugo nods at Joan before getting back up and trimming her indoor Bonzai trees.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Not too close Hugo. They should be as shapely as the rings of Saturn.

Hugo smiles at Joan politely and turns away, rolling his eyes.

JOAN (V.O.)

If only he didn't have to bike at dawn to make his other jobs, I wouldn't be so worried.

We cut to Joan going through her phone bill, highlighting long distance calls, writing up, and mailing invoices.

JOAN (V.O.)

And Hugo wasn't the only poor soul Uranus was stalking.

We cut to Joan watching the six o'clock news, showing Ronald Reagan polling lower than Carter. Joan furrows her brow as she sips some ginger tea.

EXT. OUTSIDE JOAN'S APARTMENT

Joan walks down her apartment steps onto the San Francisco streets. She breaths in the fresh Bay Area air, heading out for dinner.

JOAN (V.O.)

And what about me? I thought being
on Merv all those years would bring
me more prestige.

Joan passes by a news-stand, closing shop for the day. On the street lies a discarded San Francisco Chronicle opened to the Entertainment section. A headline reads: "Merv Griffin's Divorce Troubles Escalate."

Joan nods, then suddenly looks up, alarmed.

JOAN

(out loud)

Did I tell Hugo to avoid his
bicycle this month?

(beat)

I must remember.

INT. ZUNI CAFE. MOMENTS LATER.

Joan eats a sumptuous meal alone, picking at her roast chicken. She puts down her fork as a melancholic feeling takes hold.

JOAN (V.O.)

My chart indicates a momentous
future. And yet, though Pluto was
on the horizon and my Gemini moon
was rising into the first house, I
was standing still.

It starts to drizzle outside the window.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION, SACRAMENTO. DAYS LATER.

Nancy Reagan sits glumly, eating raw carrots, on a hair dresser chair in her house as Ronald Reagan's male advisors argue in the background, blaming one another for his poor polling.

Nancy's hairdresser, TIMOTHY, early 40s, playful and unfiltered, a face full of questionably done plastic surgery, works her disheveled hair into something presentable.

TIMOTHY

It's going to fall out if you're stressed like this.

NANCY

They're savaging Ronnie in the polls, Timothy! They're making him look weak...and this compared to that spineless yahoo Carter!

TIMOTHY

Maybe I can hide this bald spot with a combover.

NANCY REAGAN

(gasping)

Bald spot?!

TIMOTHY

Don't shoot the messenger. Ugh, it looks like an egg in a bird's nest.

Nancy sighs and pulls out Joan's business card from her purse, eyeing it thoughtfully.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

(gesturing to the card)

What's this?

NANCY REAGAN

(guarded)

Nothing.

(beat)

Well, an astrologer whom some of my Hollywood friends see now and then.

TIMOTHY

The stars consulting the stars. You know, an astrologer once told me I would do the hair of a great lady.

NANCY REAGAN

Timothy, I'm blushing.

TIMOTHY

(playfully)

You thought I was talking about you?

Nancy slaps Timothy's hands as he curls her hair, laughing for the first time in awhile.

NANCY REAGAN

You're incorrigible. But no one else can do hair in Sacramento, so I suppose you get a pass.

TIMOTHY

Lucky me.

A beat as Timothy continues to work. Nancy plays with the card in her hand, considering it.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

You're quieter than normal.

NANCY REAGAN

(gesturing to other room)

They were so rude to me. Brushed me off as if I don't know what's best.

TIMOTHY

(rolling his eyes)

Men.

NANCY REAGAN

Vultures.

(beat)

And Ronnie's been distant. Late to bed, early to rise...we haven't really talked in months.

TIMOTHY

Enough about the Governor. How are you, Nancy?

NANCY REAGAN

(smiling to herself)

No one ever asks me that.

(beat)

Well, the press paints me as an uppity monster. They make me sound so terrible.

Nancy fishes out a copy of the Sacramento Bee with the headline: "NANCY SAYS THE PRESS IS MEAN."

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)

See?!

TIMOTHY

Who cares what the rabble think?

NANCY REAGAN

I just want them to like me. Why don't people like me?

TIMOTHY
Is that a rhetorical question?

NANCY REAGAN
(giving up)
I'm really a very nice person.

Timothy stops working on her hair and leans in close, framing his face and Nancy's in the mirror.

TIMOTHY
I've known you since you were Nancy Davis, star of such hit films as...

NANCY REAGAN
Oh my gosh, don't you dare bring up "Donovan's Brain!"

TIMOTHY
A horror film about a dead millionaire's brain possessing people?

NANCY REAGAN
(laughing, easing up)
And I had to scream at a brain prop, "I won't submit to your Satanic visions of evil!"

TIMOTHY
You were electric.

They both are laughing so hard they start snorting.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
I would say that you peaked then but...

NANCY REAGAN
Then I met Ronnie.

She sighs.

TIMOTHY
Just don't forget that you need to take care of yourself, that you deserve some love, and that you absolutely need to stop playing with your hair. I'm telling you it's falling out and you will be the first bald First Lady.

Nancy grabs Timmothy's arm and hugs it to her cheek. She smiles up at him, and then he goes back to cutting her hair.

NANCY REAGAN

I appreciate that Timmy. And, we're in the home stretch.

(beat)

Ronnie's got one last chance with this debate. That's it. If he doesn't get this right...

She takes one last look at Joan's business card then nods her head, having made up her mind.

EXT. GOVERNER'S MANSION, SACRAMENTO. AN HOUR LATER.

Nancy Reagan paces back and forth, holding Joan's now crumpled business card, clearly missing most of its rhinestones, in one hand and her phone in the other pressed to her ear, the cord extended as far as it can reach.

She suddenly stops and looks down on her shoe to see she's stepped on a butterfly. Nancy makes a disgusted sound. She uses Joan's business card to scrape the carcass off her sole, just as the Joan picks up on the other end.

INTERCUT: SACRAMENTO AND JOAN'S APARTMENT.

JOAN

Hello?

NANCY REAGAN

Oh Joan! Why it's Nancy.

(beat)

Nancy Reagan.

Joan seems taken aback that Nancy finally called after all.

JOAN

Well, hello Nancy. And, how are things?

NANCY REAGAN

Disastrous, as I'm sure you know.

Nancy forces a nervous laugh. Joan waits patiently on the other end.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)

The fact is Joan, my husband's advisors insist I not call on you. They think that astrology and conservatism don't blend.

JOAN

Of course, I couldn't disagree more.

(MORE)

JOAN (CONT'D)

Some of the greatest Christian prophets were astrologers.

NANCY REAGAN

Yes, I'm sure they were! And...we need your help. Ronnie's challenging Carter to a final debate this October. A chance to reset the narrative.

A beat. Both women on the precipice.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)

I'll pay cash. I can send it through a friend of mine - Genine! She's a Cancer, very trustworthy. Lives in the Sunset. I can wire her the funds and she can pay you directly.

Before Joan can comment, Nancy rushes onward.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)

It must all be secret, of course. But...you'll be helping this country. You'll be helping us!

A beat.

JOAN

Nancy...for this to work, your husband will need to follow my advice to the letter. You can get him - and everyone around him - to do that?

Nancy looks over her shoulder through the window at her husband, holding his head in his hands, surrounded by his staff all begging for his time and attention.

NANCY REAGAN

He will listen to me.

JOAN

Then, it would be a great honor. And in regard to privacy, I accept that no one will know of my work.

(beat)

Call me again in 3 days time. I'll know a date by then.

NANCY REAGAN

Oh, thank you Joan! I'll call you then.

JOAN

Until then.

They both hang up the phone. We see a split-screen of Nancy immediately moving onto other pressing matters, as if everything that transpired was just a blip on her radar, and Joan staring at the phone in disbelief that she's managed to get in bed with the next President of the United States.

ACT TWO

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - 3 DAYS LATER

A montage set to "Starry, Starry Night" by Don McLean.

Joan's mahogany desk is littered with astrological books and natal charts for both Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter. She throws herself into finding the perfect date for the debate. She piles book on top of book, pouring through an endless number of astrological configurations and maps of locations around the United States. She annotates an oversized calendar on her wall as she works but quickly runs out of space, her brain overflowing with possibilities.

She tries a new tactic to organize all the information by booting up an Apple II computer. She struggles to type one letter at a time, punching in coordinates as the computer spits out reams of paper and data. It only adds to the amount of clutter on her desk.

Joan's practically drowning in it all. She tries to find her ginger tea underneath the mess and spills the tea all over her work.

JOAN
For God's sake!

She catches her breath.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Forgive me, Lord.

Joan kneels to do three "Hail Mary's" for using the Lord's name in vain when we hear a knock at the door, followed by someone opening it with keys. "Starry, Starry Night" cuts out as Joan's sister, SUZANNE, 40s, free-spirited liberal, walks in. Joan groans.

JOAN (CONT'D)
You're supposed to call.

Suzanne unceremoniously takes off her sandals and tosses them against the wall.

SUZANNE
I told you I'd be here at 7:00 PM,
and I was bringing sushi.

JOAN
Ugh. Why must we eat sushi?

SUZANNE

Because if you stop trying new things, you get old.

JOAN

I am old. And I like what I like, Suzanne.

Suzanne approaches her sister and helps get to her feet. The two awkwardly stand next to each other, unsure whether to embrace or not. Finally, Suzanne pats Joan two times on the shoulder and goes to the dining table to set-up their takeout dinner.

JOAN (CONT'D)

(grumpy)

Mother says you haven't called in weeks.

(beat)

I'm busier than I've ever been, and I still have time to call her.

Suzanne ignores the question and looks up at Joan.

SUZANNE

You don't look good, Joan.

JOAN

Look *well*, Suzanne.

SUZANNE

(under her breath)

Know-it-all.

JOAN

Excuse me?

Suzanne surveys the disheveled papers and charts.

SUZANNE

What's all this anyway?

JOAN

A new client.

(beat)

A very important client.

SUZANNE

Wowie, wowie, wow. Don't worry, I won't ask whom.

JOAN

Who.

SUZANNE
 (gesturing at dinner)
 Sushi.

Joan and Suzanne sit down at the table. Suzanne goes to town without waiting, relishing the umami flavors. Joan struggles to pick up the chop sticks and use them. She finally reaches for the fish, but thinks otherwise and instead pulls off the fish and just eats the rice underneath. Suzanne rolls her eyes. Neither sister speaks for a minute.

JOAN
 It's the biggest client I've ever had.

SUZANNE
 Joan. We don't need to talk about it.
 (trying her best)
 What else is new with you?

JOAN
 (interrupting)
 It's Nancy Reagan.

Suzanne stops, mid-bite. She puts down her salmon roll and steadies herself by putting her hands on the table.

JOAN (CONT'D)
 She could be First Lady soon!

SUZANNE
 You're doing readings for that witch and her 'charming' cesspool of a husband?!

Joan slams her hands on the table.

JOAN
 I won't hear it! Not when you are in my house!

SUZANNE
 More like your tomb. You should really let more sunlight in here.

JOAN
 Says the woman who lives *with roommates* in a ramshackle apartment in *Oakland!*

SUZANNE
 At least people like being around me.

Suzanne starts to get up to leave.

JOAN

You always see the worst in people!

SUZANNE

No, Joan. I leave that to you and your "readings."

JOAN

You have no idea what this means to me or who they are! What they can do for our country!

SUZANNE

I think I have a *pretty* good idea *what* they are. But do what you want, Joan.

Suzanne wolfs down one last roll and heads for the door. She slips on her sandals and turns back to see her sister, holding a piece of ginger speared on a single chopstick to her mouth as she scowls in disgust.

Suzanne tries one last time.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

Look, I know we disagree on basically everything, but I'm begging you - do not work with people who are that dangerous to our country.

Joan sits upright in her chair, refusing to respond.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

They're not good people, Joan.

Suzanne sighs, knowing she will never get her sister to agree. She opens the door and turns back.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

Nor good actors. Remember Donovan's Brain? Utter garbage.

She slams the door.

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT.

"Starry, Starry Night" resumes, but this time in a minor key. We see Joan bathing in a clawfoot tub, surrounded by a dangerous number of lit candles.

She looks exhausted and despondent. She can't get this wrong, and she can't make up her mind.

The song begins to echo and loop as her eyelids flutter. We shift to Joan's point of view as she stares at her bathroom ceiling, which is covered in glow-in-the-dark stars.

Just as she's about to fall asleep, she gasps and props herself up, staring at the ceiling. The glow-in-the-dark stars begin to twinkle into recognizable constellations and planets. The pieces fall into place. She sees the Grand Trine formed by three celestial bodies approximately 120 degrees apart - the most fortunate configuration of all.

Before she forgets, she stands up and faces her enormous, fogged-up bathroom mirror. Joan uses her fingers to mark the Grand Trine and correlating dates and times. She draws the symbol of the Moon and writes the word "catalyst" above the word "Carter." We hear her voice-over:

JOAN (V.O.)

It was less about helping Reagan than dooming Carter. Virgo and Pisces would make him unable to see the big picture, confused by too much detail.

She writes "Mercury in Virgo" and "Pisces in Uranus" and draws a symbol to show they are directly opposite one another and forming a triangle with the Moon. And finally she scribbles "Rising Sign emphasis" above it all.

JOAN (V.O.)

The moon and the rising sign cresting over Cleveland, Ohio at 9:30 PM would further ensure Carter, astrologically-speaking, would put his foot in his mouth.

She puts on a bath towel and steps back to survey her work. It's all there: the perfect trap to astrologically ensnare President Carter.

JOAN (V.O.)

It would be risky. A big gamble for the biggest stakes. To trap that feckless peanut farmer Carter in his own hubris.

We cut to Joan sitting by her phone, anxiously waiting for Nancy to call. She touches and counts the koala and bees trinkets on her necklace. She continually re-arranges the final chart and a map of the United States splayed out in front of her.

The phone rings. Joan jumps for it.

JOAN
Hello? Nancy?

FEMALE AIDE
Hello, ma'am. Please hold for Mrs.
Reagan.

An interminably long moment as Joan waits with baited breath.

NANCY REAGAN
(speaking out-loud to
someone else)
And make sure to get gardenias! You
know I hate chrysanthemums.

Without missing a beat.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)
(to Joan)
Joan, my dear, how are you....

JOAN
I've got it! 9:30 PM Eastern Time.
Cleveland, Ohio.

A beat.

NANCY REAGAN
(taken aback)
But Joan...that's so late. It's
past many Americans' bedtimes.

JOAN
Nancy, you must trust me. It's the
only way.

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - OCT 28, 1980, 10:00 PM EST.

Joan watches the debate on her ancient black-and-white, barely-used television set. She's wearing a PJ set of the moon & stars, her hair and makeup still fully done. She sits on the very edge of her seat, nails pressed deep into the upholstery. For the first time, in a very long-time, she is actively sweating through her foundation. We follow a drop of sweat as it works its way down her forehead and into her lap as we hear Ronald Reagan and President Carter debate one another. Joan checks her watch, worried that whatever happens will happen after most Americans go to bed. Sag sits next to her on the couch, also watching the television raptly.

And then it happens.

PRESIDENT CARTER (V.O.)

I had a discussion with my daughter the other day to ask what was the most important question facing our nation. She said nuclear weaponry.

The crowd at the debate seems to at first giggle, then groan at Carter's naive, earnest remark about the nation's most dangerous weapons.

Joan leans in further, sensing triumph. Sag licks his lips.

The television camera cuts to Ronald Reagan as he offers his famous question to the American people.

RONALD REAGAN

Folks, let me ask you this. Are you better off now than you were four years ago?

We zoom in on Joan's eyes, the TV reflected in them. Her eyes slowly glimmer and her cheeks rise with a smile of triumph as she realizes she's won. Sag sees the change in her emotions and barks wildly, jumping up and down on the couch. Joan reaches for her ginger tea, and breathes in the vapor with a fulfilled sigh. Sag calms down and rests his head on her lap.

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT. NOV 4, 1980.

We cut to the news reporting that Ronald Reagan has won in a landslide election. Joan watches the report on her TV with genuine happiness and fulfillment.

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING.

The phone rings and Joan rushes to get it. We hear lots of background noise on the other side of the call.

NANCY REAGAN (V.O.)

Joan?! Joan, are you there?

JOAN

Nancy! Oh, congratulations! I'm so glad you called!

NANCY REAGAN (V.O.)

It's a dream come true, Joan! We drove through Los Angeles last night and there were throngs and throngs of well-wishers and onlookers and people cheering...I'm just so happy!

JOAN

And I'm so happy for you. For both
of you!

NANCY REAGAN (V.O.)

Yes, yes! Anyway, I just wanted to
call and say thank you for your
help.

JOAN

It was my pleasure.

A beat. Joan shifts nervously foot-foot, waiting for
something more.

NANCY REAGAN

Anyway, we must prepare for the
inauguration, so I'll have to be
going.

JOAN

Yes, well, I'd love to attend--

NANCY REAGAN

(to someone else)

Someone get Timothy! We have photos
in 10.

(to Joan)

Gotta go! God Bless you, Joan!

Nancy hangs up. Joan stands there on the other end of the
line, shell-shocked that their relationship seems to have
concluded on such a curt note. Her shock turns to confusion
which turns to the beginnings of bitterness as she realizes -
she's been used and discarded.

ACT THREE

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - MARCH, 30. 1981.

A muted, ethereal dial tone rings throughout a montage:

Joan glumly sits at her now organized and clean reading table. We once again see people coming through her door for astrological help. Joan looks bored, eyes glazed over, as she perfunctorily offers readings. The only person who Joan warms up to is her gardener Hugo. We see her scribble the word bicycle, circle it, and draw a cross through it so he knows to not ride it. Between each reading, she looks over again and again to the phone, praying for it to ring. It doesn't.

Late at night, Joan makes Jell-O. She whips up an incredibly detailed gelatin mold and puts it in the fridge.

Joan wakes up having fallen asleep on her couch. She looks over to the phone, but it's not ringing. She trudges to the fridge and removes her beautiful gelatin mold, spoons out one solitary bite, and then drops the rest on the floor for Sag, who swallows it in three bites.

We see more clients shuffling in and out of her apartment, the action speeding up so it's all happening faster and faster.

The dial tone gets louder and more persistent until it finally comes through blazingly clear. Joan snaps to attention, rushes over to the phone and picks it up.

JOAN
(hurriedly)
Nancy?! Is that you?

SUZANNE (V.O.)
Sorry to disappoint. It's your
sister.

Joan groans and slumps to the wall. She massages her forehead.

SUZANNE (V.O.)
Just calling to say I'll be there
in 15.

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

Joan and Suzanne sit on the couch together. Suzanne reluctantly puts her arm around Joan, who slumps back into it, relieved to not have to hold herself up anymore.

SUZANNE

I'm not going to say I told you so.

Joan groans and perhaps laughs a little.

JOAN

You're a Scorpio rising through and through.

SUZANNE

(playing along)
Guilty as charged.

They share a moment of silence.

JOAN

Not even a perfunctory Thank You card. One brief call...then nothing.

A beat.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I had a ballgown picked out. For the inauguration.

Suzanne pats Joan's head.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I would have looked beautiful.

SUZANNE

I think you're beautiful.

JOAN

(scoffs)
I'm wearing plaid.

They both laugh. Suzanne gets up and picks up cups from Joan's table. She spots Ronald Reagan's chart still prominently displayed in the top right corner, underneath a sheet holder.

SUZANNE

Guess you should laminate this or something, right?

Joan gets up and joins her sister, looking it over.

JOAN

I found him a Grand Trine. So rare.
Turned everything around.

SUZANNE

And a Grand Trine is some kind of
toilet paper?

Joan snorts a bit, then composes herself.

JOAN

It's a rare, equilateral confluence
of three celestial bodies. First,
you have to have many planets
visible on the horizon, like this
morning.

Suzanne nods, pretending to be interested.

JOAN (CONT'D)

And then we see how they intersect
with your chart...

Joan trails off as she stares more carefully at Reagan's
chart. And then horror begins to spread across her face.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. No.

SUZANNE

What. What?!

JOAN

It can't be.

Joan starts shuffling madly through her books and charts. She
cross-references Reagan's chart with the recent astrological
surveys she has in front of her. She gets a sheet of paper
and draws the planets configuring above Reagan on this date.
We pan out to see them forming a Grand Trine, but it is
upside-down.

JOAN (CONT'D)

The Grand Trine. But it's inverted!

Joan, now in a full panic, grabs her Rolodex and starts
furiously shuffling through it.

SUZANNE

Joan, you're scaring me. What's
wrong?!

JOAN

She gave me a number. It's
somewhere in here!

SUZANNE

Who?!

JOAN

NANCY! But she always called *me*.
Wait...here it is!

Joan rips the contact card out and rushes to the phone. She inputs a long sequence of numbers into her rotary phone, her nails catching each time on the wheel as she furiously tries to dial. The dial tone rings twice and an operator picks up.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

White House Switch Board. How may I
direct your call?

Joan speaks far too quickly.

JOAN

My name is Joan Quigley. I must
speak with the First Lady!

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Ma'am, the First Lady is addressing
the brave men of the working class
at the AFL-CIO convention right
now.

(beat)

I'm happy to take a message.

JOAN

There's no time! It could happen
any minute!

OPERATOR (V.O.)

(suspicious)

Ms...Quigley? May I ask your
relation to the First Lady?

JOAN

I'm her...I'm an...an old friend,
but listen, something terrible is
about to happen and Nancy **MUST** be
warned!

The operator disconnects the call. The line goes dead.

JOAN (CONT'D)

No! How dare they!

Joan slams down the phone. She paces back and forth. Suzanne tries to offer her a cigarette.

JOAN (CONT'D)
That's a filthy habit, Suzanne!

SUZANNE
Thought it might calm you down...

Suzanne lights up. Joan rushes over and turns on the television. She scrolls through various news programs until it shows President Reagan leaving the Washington Hilton. Hundreds of onlookers cheer him from behind rope banisters.

JOAN
(to the television)
Get away from them! Away!

SUZANNE
Ok, let's go outside, take a walk
or..

JOAN
(interrupting)
He's not safe!

And then we hear it, six gunshots - and see the horrified faces of Suzanne and Joan as they watch Hinkley attempt to assassinate President Reagan on live television.

We cut to black. Silence.

INT. HOSPITAL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - MOMENTS LATER

We hear two EKG "beeps" and see two brief shots of President Reagan being rushed inside the intensive care unit.

INT. HOSPITAL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - MOMENTS LATER

We hear another two EKG "beeps" and see two shots showing the horrified face of Nancy Reagan arriving at the ICU and trying to get answers from the President's doctors and advisors, who won't let her see her husband.

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, SAN FRANCISCO - LATER THAT DAY

The EKG "beeps" now continue again and again but slowly morph into the sound of a dial tone.

The camera comes into focus on the two sisters, Suzanne and Joan, wearing the same outfits, glued to the same television screen, surrounded by up-scale takeout food. Clearly, Joan ordered. They haven't left the apartment since the shooting.

Slowly, almost dreamlike, Joan and Suzanne realize the phone is ringing and pivot to look at it. Joan slowly gets up and reaches for it, then hesitates. She looks back at Suzanne. Suzanne shakes her head no. Joan looks back at the phone.

A beat. Everything hangs in the balance. Joan picks up the phone. Suzanne melts in disappointment.

NANCY REAGAN (V.O.)
(hoarse)
Joan. Is that you?

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM, WASHINGTON, D.C. - MOMENTS LATER

Nancy Reagan sits alone with her husband sleeping in his hospital room. She holds up a landline phone to her ear. Her white dress has blood on it. She's terrified and looks insane, but behind her eyes there's a driving focus to ensure that this will never happen again.

NANCY REAGAN
He's alright. He's going to make it.

INTERCUT BETWEEN D.C. AND SAN FRANCISCO

JOAN
I'm very, very glad to hear it.

Nancy takes a breath.

NANCY REAGAN
They told me you called. The Secret Service. They were alarmed because your call almost immediately preceded the...the...

A beat. Nancy swallows her feelings.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)
I told them it was fine. That you were a friend.

Joan, rigid as a stone, does not say anything. In the background, we see Suzanne start to approach her, gesturing for her to hang up.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)
Joan, I need to know. Could you
have stopped it?

Suzanne is right next to Joan, reaching for the button to
hang up the call.

SUZANNE
Don't.

Joan stops Suzanne moments away from her hanging up. Joan
inhales a ragged breath, then stands taller and faces away.

JOAN
I could have, yes. I tried to.

Nancy sighs with relief - and disappointment.

NANCY REAGAN
I'm so sorry, Joan. I'm sorry I
didn't reach out. I'm sorry I
forgot you...everything happened so
fast.

A beat. Joan says nothing.

NANCY REAGAN (CONT'D)
I need you. We need you. Now and
forever. I can't let this happen
again.

JOAN
Trust once broken does not repair
so easily, Nancy.

Nancy narrows her eyes on the other end. She know what to
say.

NANCY REAGAN
Then do it for your country.

Joan inhales and nods. Suzanne shakes her head no.

JOAN
For our country.

Cut to black.