

OLD MACDONALD SOLVED A CRIME

teleplay by  
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FADE IN:

INT. JOHN SCHMIDT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A party of 25-30 people is winding down. A bartender in one corner, server with trays of food, small buffet in another corner. Some people are in office-type work clothes, others look more dressed up for a party. As they leave, the ones in work clothes take their drinks with them.

A distinguished man, mid-50s, JOHN Schmidt, in an spectacularly understated bespoke suit, chats with a small group, all of whom are similar age and color - lily white. Except SENATOR RANDALL JENNINGS, at least eighty years old, and manages to be both smugly confident and semi-comatose at the same time.

SENATOR JENNINGS

It's time. And it's what the country needs, John.

SCHMIDT

Thanks, Randy. I honestly thought building this network would be enough. We've come a long way in a decade, but the country does need more.

JENNINGS

We're doing our part in the Senate to keep the money flowing to the right places, but we need a president who's got the connections and the smarts to raise the ante.

In the b.g., Schmidt's wife, MARGE, perfectly coiffed and polished if forgettable, sits quietly sipping white wine, observing the conversation. A BLAND WHITE WOMAN who spent too much on her outfit chimes in:

BWW

It's a shame, after all the Christian Broadcasting Company has done to spread the word around the world, that even more is being asked of you, but our Christian values are in danger.

SCHMIDT

(sanctimonious)

Look, it's kind of you to say that, but I'm being called. And we know God doesn't always give us the easy path.

ON MARGE

Watching the group's reactions as she sips her drink.

BACK TO SCENE

SCHMIDT

You know Luke 12:48: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Like Randy says, it's time I set aside my selfish, personal needs to serve.

Another smug guy, slightly younger than Jennings, CONGRESSMAN MIKE HORNSBY, adds his two cents to ensure Schmidt's megadonations keep filling his coffers:

CONGRESSMAN HORNSBY

We need you, John. And you know we've got the backers to get the votes and purge the voters and get this done. You've got the money and the, shall I say, reputation, charisma, track record -- and the campaign manager.

SCHMIDT

-- He'll be chief of staff, too.

CONGRESSMAN HORNSBY

A John-Ted twofer.

SENATOR JENNINGS

The greatest minds in America and one of the greatest teams of the century.

SCHMIDT

One of?

Everyone laughs -- slightly uncomfortably.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)

Mike, you and Randy have set things up beautifully on Capitol Hill, and I thank you. With eight years together, we'll move mountains.

HORNSBY

You've transformed this country and sown the seeds for this movement.

ANOTHER WHITE GUY

Hewlett and Packard? Procter and Gamble?

YET ANOTHER WHITE GUY

(twinkle in his eye)

Ben and Jerry?

Groans all around, ad-libs, "God forbid," etc. Showing there's more to her than meets the eye:

MARGE

(to Schmidt)

Whoever you are, I'm stuck with you, but I don't need to be stuck here. Speaking of stuck, I need to go home and start figuring out new ways to keep my face stuck in an insipid smile.

SCHMIDT

OK. I've got work to do. Tomorrow's a big day -- don't wait up.

MARGE

I'm on it --

As she kisses him good-bye, in another corner of the room, another 50ish man, in well-appointed shirtsleeves and tie, TED SWENSON, sits on a couch with others, nursing drinks. In the b.g., the room slowly empties and Schmidt sends a text on his cell phone.

SWENSON

Yeah, you know, it's time. Perfect timing, really. The business runs itself and I want to have some fun while I'm still young enough to! Ted the Conqueror has conquered enough. I want to sit on the boat, fish, maybe even a wife.

ELAINE SWENSON, one of Ted's ex-wives, sits with him. Brilliant red hair, lots of style and class, too.

There's also a hipness factor to her that's absent in the rest of the crowd.

ELAINE  
Good luck with that, Ted.

SWENSON  
OK, so I blew it with you and --

ELAINE  
-- And Jessica and Jennifer ...

The others in the group smile and look around nervously.

SWENSON  
Touché.

ELAINE  
I always thought you were having fun.

More uncomfortable glances among the group. But the ribbing between Elaine and Ted is good-natured.

ELAINE (CONT'D)  
Especially since that whole family values thing went out the window. Never saw a PA you didn't like.

SWENSON  
So I haven't exactly been a poster child for marital bliss. But this is a new chapter.

ELAINE  
You have kept us all in the style we so richly deserve. And you in Lamborghinis.

SWENSON  
McLarens, Elaine, McLarens.

ELAINE  
Whatever.

SWENSON  
Look, never in a million years did I think the two of us from Bumblewhatchamacallit, Missouri, would take a crazy little idea for bow hunting and turn it into an empire -- energy, technology, media, retail -- unbelievable.

ELAINE

I'll testify to that. When we missed prom because you were out marketing that crazy bow, I never thought -- but that's who you are, Ted. It's hard to believe, but if you mean it, I'm glad you're going to give being a human being a shot.

ANOTHER WOMAN

Ted, you might find out you have other gifts besides being a business genius.

ELAINE

You mean he might find something he enjoys more than eviscerating the competition -- and "dating" production assistants.

SWENSON

(smiling)

Boy, do I miss you, Elaine -- not.

Still not sure, the group chuckles -- and winces.

ELAINE

And on that note, one thing I enjoy is sleep. It's getting late and I've got a plane to catch in the morning.

SWENSON

I thought the christening wasn't until Saturday.

ELAINE

I'm going early to help Jess. She's thrilled that you'll be there, Ted.

SWENSON

Wouldn't miss it! Listen -- let me go with you -- what time?

ELAINE

Really? Ten - I'll make you a reservation. Jess will be over the moon, she really will.

(beat)

This new chapter is looking promising. ... Good night, darling.

She turns to walk over to Schmidt, but Schmidt disengages from his group and glides over to Elaine. Ad-libs as those in Swenson's group say their good-byes, wishing them well, congratulating them, etc., until only Schmidt, Swenson, the BARTENDER and PARTY SERVER remain.

SCHMIDT

(to Bartender and Server)

Go ahead - you can clean up in the morning. It's late and I've got work to do.

SWENSON

You and me both.

As the Bartender and Server get their things and leave, Schmidt goes behind the bar.

SCHMIDT

What can I get you?

SWENSON

Bourbon rocks.

Schmidt prepares them doubles.

SCHMIDT

Ted, I want you to rethink.

SWENSON

Come on, John. We've been over it -- and over it.

SCHMIDT

Look, this is the biggest opportunity we've ever had. This is what we do. An opportunity opens up, we go for it.

SWENSON

I know. Opportunities R Us. But I'm done. We thought we were going to be Jobs and Wozniak, but the first opportunity was bows. Bows in the Appalachians.

SCHMIDT

Then we became Jobs and Wozniak.

SWENSON

No, we outdid those yahoos. And I loved every minute of it.

SCHMIDT

You're not in the least tempted?

SWENSON

What's the point? We own parties in most of the states, we create the messaging and we get it into people's homes with our Christian Broadcasting Company. They believe anything we tell 'em. If you ask me, there's the power right there. I don't want to mess with those government dildos. I don't need it. Besides, with all that, you're a shoe-in. You don't need me.

SCHMIDT

For one thing, it'll be a helluva lot more fun with you.

SWENSON

I'm done, really am. I want to sit back and do nothing but watch the money keep rolling in. What a show.

SCHMIDT

You will never in a million years do that. You and I both know it. It's the Christian stuff, isn't it?

SWENSON

These people are idiots, you and I both know that. If we put the word "Christian" in front of it -- hell, it could be mass murder and they'd go along with it. "Slaughter Jesus-Style." Has a ring to it. Don't get me wrong, I'm fine as long as it's business. But I don't want to tramp around the country pandering to them, reading the Beatitudes and hawking gun rights. Let 'em buy our stuff and watch our network, but I don't want to be around 'em. And I mean all of 'em, our flunkies on the Hill, too. Plus, you get in and we'll have to get some schmucks to run the agencies. Lord God, John. What do you get out of this that we don't already have -- and with a lot less hassle?

SCHMIDT

It's good for business --



SWENSON

And every new war means ka-ching, ka-ching, too. I like it the way we do it now. I see no upside to this presidency deal, and I do see a lot of headaches. Why don't we just buy another president? It's a lot easier. Why does it have to be you?

SCHMIDT

Eliminates the middle man. Gets us in the room, Mr. Opportunity.

SWENSON

I knew it wasn't going to be just a year or so of campaigning.

SCHMIDT

Hear me out. You're a special envoy in charge of everything, basically. We want to do a deal in China? That's your beat -- we say you've got to meet some prime minister for some diplomatic thing, right? But that gets you in the room. Nobody else. Never happened before, But now Trump's done it and we've got a precedent. Nobody knows what we talk about. It's business on the government dime, with government cover, with government open doors, and we build from there.

SWENSON

Seems easier to just call that prime minister. Who do you think we are?

SCHMIDT

With this, you get the political leverage and the legislation, not just the deal.

SWENSON

You just want the trappings. All we've got now is the power -- and the money!

SCHMIDT

We will get what we want. And CBC will tell everybody it's good for them while we're funneling their taxes into our pockets. Talk about ka-ching!

(MORE)

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)

Make 'em scared of some "threat" -- the armaments will sell like crazy. We're already in their houses, with government clout, we can we do the most intimate market research you could ever imagine.

SWENSON

My heart's not in it.

SCHMIDT

You've always been the one who sees the opportunities, but you don't --

SWENSON

The opportunity is me on a beach in Baja.

SCHMIDT

I can't believe it -- on top of everything else, you leave the country, and with all those ignorant brown people? We've always said America First.

SWENSON

Shit, John, you're so full of it. We make our stuff in the cheapest places we can -- and that's not here. And come on. The scary brown hoards thing works great at the cash register, but we both know it's a crock. You know how much our dollars buy in Baja? It's gonna be great. Like I said, opportunity.

SCHMIDT

Sometimes I don't know what you believe in, Ted.

SWENSON

The only color I care about is green. Same as always. You go be president and I'll watch you make me money.

SCHMIDT

(he means it)

I never thought you'd walk away. It's always been us.

(a beat -- he means it)

I don't know if I can do this without you.

SWENSON

I'll keep an eye on the store.

SCHMIDT

I can't believe it and I won't believe it. Until you get on that plane, I won't believe it's over, my friend. Come on, let's call it a night. Some campaign announcement party. I'm depressed.

SWENSON

Yeah, let's go home.

SCHMIDT

But you'll be there tomorrow, right?

SWENSON

Sure, but I'm not saying anything, not to the press, not to anybody.

(beat)

Oh, wait -- I told Elaine I'd go to L.A. with her in the morning to help Jessie with the new baby.

SCHMIDT

Are you fucking kidding me?

SWENSON

Just as well.

SCHMIDT

What does that mean?

SWENSON

Better I'm not there not saying anything than there not saying anything.

SCHMIDT

Fuck you.

(beat)

Are you keeping the Potomac house?

SWENSON

Why not? I may not be a lot of things, but I won't stop being your neighbor.

SCHMIDT

You're a regular Mister Rogers.

He shuts off the lights and they leave.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Schmidt and Swenson walk into the garage, where their cars are parked side by side, John's Hummer, Ted's McLaren.

SCHMIDT  
Follow me, would you? I've been  
having some trouble --

SWENSON  
Why don't you get a normal car,  
John?

SCHMIDT  
(to the guy with the  
McLaren)  
Are you kidding me?

INT. SCHMIDT'S HUMMER IN GARAGE - ON SCHMIDT

Schmidt pulls out a SECOND CELL PHONE and enters a text message. He puts the phone in his lap.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

They go out of the garage, Schmidt first, Ted following.

EXT. POTOMAC ROADS - NIGHT - MOVING SHOT - BOTH CARS

The estate-lined winding roads are pitch dark and unlighted. It's nerve-wracking to watch them take the curves so quickly with only their headlights to guide them.

INT. SCHMIDT'S HUMMER - NIGHT

Schmidt looks in the rearview mirror and sees Ted behind him. He feels for the phone in his lap.

INT. SWENSON'S MCLAREN - NIGHT

Swenson on the phone.

SWENSON  
I'll talk to you in the morning.

INT. SCHMIDT'S HUMMER - NIGHT - HAND ON CELL PHONE

Schmidt clicks a button on his cell phone.

EXT. POTOMAC ROADS - NIGHT

Schmidt speeds up, leaving Ted in the distance.

INT. SWENSON'S MCLAREN - NIGHT - ON SWENSON

seeing Schmidt pull away, he speeds up.

INT. SCHMIDT'S HUMMER - NIGHT - ON SWENSON

hitting the brakes to slow but not enough to leave tire marks.

INT. SWENSON'S MCLAREN - NIGHT - ON SWENSON'S FOOT ON BRAKES

But nothing happens.

EXT. POTOMAC ROADS - NIGHT - ON SWENSON'S MCLAREN

Swenson swerves to avoid Schmidt's Hummer and runs into a tree. The car crumples.

EXT. POTOMAC ROADS - NIGHT - ON SCHMIDT'S HUMMER

The Hummer pulls to the side of the road. Schmidt stops and gets out. He puts his cell phone under the tire and drives over it, smashing it. He then pockets the cell phone, turns around, drives back to the scene.

EXT. POTOMAC ROADS - NIGHT - SCHMIDT'S POV

Schmidt sees the demolished car with Swenson inside.

INT. SCHMIDT'S HUMMER - NIGHT

Schmidt pulls out the cell phone he used at the party and calls 9-1-1.

SCHMIDT  
(anguished)  
Help -- we need an ambulance --

FADE OUT.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. POTOMAC ACCIDENT SCENE - NIGHT

POLICE swarm around the crime scene. Flares and cones are in the road and a POLICEMAN directs traffic around the accident. An ambulance is parked nearby and Swenson's sheet-covered body is being lifted onto a stretcher. Swenson's McLaren is smashed and cut open. The Jaws of Life are nearby. Schmidt is wrapped in a blanket in his car, on the phone.

A Chevy Cameo pickup truck drives up. A man steps out, toothpick in his mouth, plastic travel mug in his hand. This is INSPECTOR MACDONALD, 40s, wearing a JC Penney-type suit and topcoat with work boots. The toothpick is another appendage; it's with him everywhere he goes, keeps his hands and mind occupied. A thermos of coffee is his co-pilot.

MacDonald's truck is his baby; he restored it to its original glory and everything you need to know about him you can see in that truck: passion, precision, perfectionism, obsessiveness, respect for tradition, and refined taste belied by the toothpick.

Tired but intense, focused, MacDonald lumbers over to the car, checks it out while the FORENSICS TEAM conducts its examination. He's definitely -- quietly and confidently -- in charge, giving orders, asking questions. In all interactions, he is humble and respectful. His colleagues' deference to him makes clear both his rank and reputation; more than just respecting him, they admire him.

MACDONALD

(strong Southern accent)

Whatcha got?

FORENSICS WOMAN

Plowed right into the tree. Died instantly.

MACDONALD

Fast?

FORENSICS WOMAN

Not so fast that the guy in the Hummer didn't make it.

MacDonald spots Schmidt, then walks up to a UNIFORMED POLICEMAN standing nearby.

MACDONALD  
 (gesturing toward Schmidt)  
 Who's he?

POLICEMAN  
 Name's John Schmidt, saw the whole  
 thing. Says he's a friend.

MACDONALD  
 Thanks.

MacDonald, still chewing on his toothpick, walks over to Schmidt. He waits as Schmidt talks on the phone.

SCHMIDT  
 Look, we don't know anything more  
 than that, but get it on -- nobody  
 else has it. And tell Holly I'm not  
 talking to anybody else.

He hangs up.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)  
 (to MacDonald)  
 May I help you?

MACDONALD  
 Yes, I understand you witnessed the  
 crash. I just have a few questions.

SCHMIDT  
 And you are?

MACDONALD  
 Oh, I'm so sorry --

He pats around his coat and pulls out his badge.

MACDONALD (CONT'D)  
 Inspector MacDonald, Metropolitan  
 Police.

SCHMIDT  
 This is Maryland. Aren't you DC?

MACDONALD  
 You are so right. Sometimes they  
 call me in --

SCHMIDT  
 OK, it all happened so fast, I  
 can't believe --  
 (beat)  
 He was my best friend.

MACDONALD

Theodore Swenson was your best friend?

SCHMIDT

Yes.

MACDONALD

You're John Schmidt?

Schmidt nods.

MACDONALD (CONT'D)

OK, the light bulb just went on -- middle of the night, you know. You're famous! John Schmidt, John Schmidt of John Schmidt and Ted Swenson? Dang! Christian Broadcasting, Tennessee Football, King's Energy? Oh boy. I'm so sorry, sir. I'll try to make this quick so you can get home and get some sleep -- can we give you a ride?

SCHMIDT

No, thanks -- it's not far.

MACDONALD

It's no trouble, just let us know if you change your mind. I know this is difficult, but it'll only take a little bit -- I'd like to ask you some questions.

SCHMIDT

Certainly.

MACDONALD

What were you two doing out here?

SCHMIDT

This was one of the greatest nights of our lives. I can't believe this. We left the office together.

MACDONALD

Do you always work this late?

SCHMIDT

It's not uncommon, but tonight --  
(can't hide his pride)

(MORE)



SCHMIDT (CONT'D)

We're going to run for president and tonight I made the announcement to my staff and friends. We were going public tomorrow.

MACDONALD

Sorry, sir -- we?

SCHMIDT

He was my campaign manager.

MACDONALD

OK -- was there alcohol, at the party? Please don't take this wrong, but is there any chance Mr. Swenson had too much to drink?

Schmidt implies that Swenson did drink too much.

SCHMIDT

Well, we both enjoyed the celebration ... but no, I can't -- I shouldn't have let him -- I didn't think so. I don't know. It never occurred to me -- we drive home together all the time.

MACDONALD

This is your usual way?

SCHMIDT

Yes. There is no other way.

MACDONALD

You made the curve and he didn't.

SCHMIDT

I don't know. ...

MACDONALD

How long have you lived out here?

SCHMIDT

Thirty years. I was here first. Ted got married a couple years later and when the house next door --

MACDONALD

These are all estates, aren't they?

SCHMIDT

Sure. But Ted bought the house next door. He's stayed there despite two divorces.

MACDONALD

Would you know his next of kin?

Schmidt pulls out his phone.

SCHMIDT

His daughter, Jennifer.

MACDONALD

Do you by any chance have an address for her?

SCHMIDT

Sure. I'll text it to you.

MacDonald pats his pockets and pulls out a small pad and pen.

MACDONALD

If you could, sir, just tell me and I'll write it down.

SCHMIDT

Uh, OK. Jennifer Goldstein, 202-555-1312. 402 G Street, SW, Unit 9.

MACDONALD

Thanks. Like I said, I'm not gonna keep you tonight. Why don't you go home and get some rest?

SCHMIDT

Don't know if that's possible.

MACDONALD

Are you sure we can't take you home?

SCHMIDT

No, I'm fine. Thanks.

MACDONALD

(to Policeman)

Officer, could you follow Mr. Schmidt and make sure he makes it home safely?

Schmidt gives the Policeman the blanket and gets situated in the Hummer.

MACDONALD (CONT'D)

Thank you, sir. I'll be checkin' in with you again. Now you get some shuteye.

SCHMIDT  
Thanks, Inspector.

MacDonald goes back to the crime scene. He knows what he needs to see and does not waste time. He walks back to the road, looks inside the car, is purposeful and does not dawdle, tells people what he needs from them.

EXT. GOLDSTEIN BUILDING - NIGHT

MacDonald drives up, gets out of his truck, goes to the front door and presses the button.

INT. HALLWAY, GOLDSTEIN BUILDING - NIGHT

MacDonald knocks on the door, which is immediately opened by RYAN GOLDSTEIN.

RYAN GOLDSTEIN  
Please come in.

MACDONALD  
Thank you.

INT. GOLDSTEIN APARTMENT -- NIGHT

RYAN GOLDSTEIN, preppy, late twenties, ushers MacDonald into a sleek, modern, obviously very expensive apartment with high ceilings and the finest finishes. The apartment is sparsely furnished, what some people call "elegant," though it seems cold. JENNIFER GOLDSTEIN, twenties, beautifully coiffed and inordinately kind, sits on the couch, in tears.

RYAN GOLDSTEIN  
Inspector MacDonald, this is my wife, Jennifer.

MACDONALD  
Please to meet you, and I'm so sorry to bother you so late.

JENNIFER  
Oh no, Inspector -- MacDonald?  
-- please, sit down.

MACDONALD  
Thank you. Ma'am, it looks like you've received the news.

JENNIFER  
John called.

MACDONALD

I'm glad you could hear it from a friend. How long ago?

JENNIFER

I don't know - Ryan?

RYAN

Twenty minutes maybe.

JENNIFER

He knows that road like the back of his hand.

MacDonald watches her, assessing her state of mind.

MACDONALD

It looks right now like the brakes malfunctioned.

(a beat)

I know this is a difficult time, but I'm wonderin' if I might ask you some questions, since you're the one who's closest to him.

JENNIFER

(exhausted, giving up)

I sure wouldn't call myself that.

MACDONALD

No? I was told you're next of kin.

JENNIFER

Sure, but close -- no. He was close to his business.

RYAN

Jen, are you up to it?

JENNIFER

Yes. I don't know. Could we get you something, Inspector?

MACDONALD

No, thank you. You are awfully kind. I won't take up too much of your time.

(beat)

Did your father have a lot to drink at the party tonight?

JENNIFER

We weren't there.

MACDONALD

Boy -- what? At a presidential announcement?

RYAN

We had other plans. He said it was John's thing.

MACDONALD

I understand he was plannin' on bein' campaign manager.

JENNIFER

Oh, God. I didn't know. I know John's been asking him for a long time. As far as I knew, Daddy was retiring. He bought a place in Mexico and "gone fishin'" was what told everyone.

MacDonald gives her his full, empathetic attention.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Let's be honest -- between the two of them, they did their bit for the GNP. And he didn't want a new career.

MACDONALD

So, he didn't have that kind of ambition.

JENNIFER

He still had plenty of ambition. But he hated politicians. He'd always say they were some of his prized possessions, but he didn't want to hang around with them.

RYAN

Her dad was a lot of things -- and he was called them all -- but he was not a hypocrite. He saw things, and himself, for what they were.

JENNIFER

But he and John were so close. And he cared about friendship.

(beat)

I'm sorry, I can't believe this conversation, I can't believe It.

MACDONALD

I reckon I've taken up enough of your time. Thank you.

RYAN

Inspector, may I just -- why are you asking all this?

MACDONALD

Mr. Swenson was a very important person. We like to make sure we cover our bases, that's all. I surely thank you.

He hands them his card.

MACDONALD (CONT'D)

Call me if you think of anything.

RYAN

(reading the card)

Homicide?

MACDONALD

Like I said, Mr. Swenson was a very important person. It's probably ["probly"] nothin', but we want you to know we'll make sure this gets the attention it deserves.

JENNIFER

(tears flowing again)

Thank you.

INT. CBC STUDIO - DAY

MALE AND FEMALE ANCHORS DAN AND BONNIE -- Aryan, perky, and obsequious -- interview Schmidt on camera. With recognizable DC landmarks in the b.g., the set is a comfy, unsophisticated living room. The massive CBC Bible sits on a coffee table.

BONNIE ANCHOR

(tearful)

I'm sorry.

SCHMIDT

We're all family here.

DAN ANCHOR

Not to put a crass spin on it, but you were going to make a big announcement today. ...

SCHMIDT  
That's for another time.

They look at him expectantly.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)  
I don't think Ted would have wanted  
--

BONNIE ANCHOR  
He always wanted what's best for  
the country, and I know he would  
have wanted you to put that first.

DAN ANCHOR  
Absolutely.

SCHMIDT  
Well, yes, OK, I was going to  
announce today that I'm running for  
president.

Anchors ad-lib "Great," kudos.

BONNIE  
Ted was going to run your campaign.

SCHMIDT  
Everything I've ever accomplished  
in my life was with him.

DAN  
You were a dynamite team.

SCHMIDT  
Since we were kids in Missouri  
["Missourah"] in Bible School, we  
did everything together. This  
network was our crowning glory. I  
guess it kind of came full circle  
from that Bible School classroom.

DAN  
He joked about that.

SCHMIDT  
He was never shy about admitting his  
need for God's love and forgiveness.

They all chuckle.

BONNIE  
What now?

SCHMIDT

This tragedy has only made my  
commitment to this campaign  
stronger. I'm doing it for the  
country and I'm doing it for Ted.  
It's our last dream together, to  
make this country the place it was  
when we were together in Bible  
School, for all of us.

BONNIE

For Ted.

DAN

Yes, for Ted.

SCHMIDT

For Ted.

INT. METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

MacDonald watches the show on TV with LATISHA JACKSON,  
thirties, a heavily tattooed fellow officer of color. Many of  
her tattoos are technology-related.

INT. CBC STUDIO - DAY

Schmidt, Bonnie and Dan are getting up from the interview.  
Schmidt's easy demeanor is replaced by a detached firmness.

SCHMIDT

That was great. You got the tone.

DAN

Our viewers will be there for you.

SCHMIDT

I want a clip of the announcement  
on every hour in our continuing  
coverage of Ted.

BONNIE

You got it.  
(beat)  
For Ted.

SCHMIDT

(slightly absently)  
That's right. For Ted.  
(beat)  
Loop in the Congressional  
condolences, too.



EXT. CBC BUILDING - DAY

An impressive office building with "Christian Broadcasting Company" emblazoned on top and a massive Bible like the one on the coffee table: the iconic CBC logo. MacDonald enters.

INT. CBC BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Shiny, bustling with activity. MacDonald shows his badge to the RECEPTIONIST, a person of color around thirty years old.

RECEPTIONIST

I'll let Mr. Schmidt know you're here.

MACDONALD

Thank you, ma'am.

When she picks up the phone, a tiny American flag and military boots tattoo come into view below her wrist.

RECEPTIONIST

(on the phone)

Inspector MacDonald from Metropolitan Police is here for Mr. Schmidt. ... OK, I'll send him up.

She hangs up and hands him a Visitor badge.

MACDONALD

(putting on the badge)

Can I ask you something? I noticed your tattoo. I was wonderin' -- did you serve?

RECEPTIONIST

(with a very slight edge)

Afghanistan.

MACDONALD

(with the same edge)

When?

RECEPTIONIST

Just got out last year.

MacDonald brightens up like a spotlight, a charm and warmth that engulfs her as he reaches out his hand:

MACDONALD

Gulf War -- way before your time.

She shakes his hand enthusiastically.

MACDONALD (CONT'D)

How ya doin'?

RECEPTIONIST

I'm good. It's an adjustment after five years, but I'm good.

MACDONALD

Man, don't I know it. You got people?

RECEPTIONIST

Yeah, I'm from here, it's all good.

MacDonald pulls out his card. He is sincere; he is not doing this to butter her up so he can get information from her.

MACDONALD

You let me know if you need anything. I tell you, took me a while to get on some kinda path myself when I got out.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes, I do know that.

MACDONALD

We gotta stick together --

RECEPTIONIST

I know that's right.

MACDONALD

Can I ask you somethin'? If you don't mind me sayin', I don't see any sign of mourning around here.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Schmidt said he'd give us time off later. This is news, you know. We got to get it out.

MACDONALD

What do you think of that?

RECEPTIONIST

I know the news doesn't stop.

MACDONALD

Did you know Mr. Swenson?

RECEPTIONIST

He stopped by the desk whenever he was in town. Nice guy.

MACDONALD

You don't say.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Schmidt, now he's always quotin' the Bible and stuff. Mr. Swenson, he didn't take none of that seriously. Shoot, he was married three times, knew lots of the PAs real well, if you know what I mean.

MACDONALD

Well, no, what's a PA?

RECEPTIONIST

Production Assistant -- the young ones who work on the shows.

MACDONALD

Now I get it. Real different, huh?

RECEPTIONIST

Don't get me wrong, real sharp, tough as nails.

MacDonald's phone RINGS. He pats all over to find it:

MACDONALD

I thank you, ma'am.

RECEPTIONIST

He was a real person.

MacDonald walks to a corner of the lobby, fumbling as he answers the phone.

MACDONALD

Yep.

INT. GOLDSTEIN APARTMENT - DAY

Tear-stained, drained Jennifer Goldstein is on the other end.

JENNIFER

Hello, Inspector?

MACDONALD

Hello?

JENNIFER

It's Jennifer Goldstein.

MACDONALD

Oh yes. Hello.

JENNIFER

Inspector, I realized I never answered your question last night about my father having too much to drink. I'm sorry, I wasn't thinking clearly.

MACDONALD

I understand. But you weren't there.

JENNIFER

Inspector, it doesn't matter. Daddy was a drinker, but I never saw him impaired. He loved his cars too much. I wanted you to know that.

MACDONALD

I thank you, so you feel that strongly --

JENNIFER

Yes, yes, I do.

MACDONALD

All right. I do thank you. How are you doin'?

JENNIFER

It's OK, thank you, it's OK.

(beat)

Inspector, I also thought -- you might also check with my mother -- I think she was invited, too. Elaine Swenson. She's in Georgetown. I don't think he was as close with his other exes.

MACDONALD

All right -- now you call anytime. I thank you so very much, thank you.

Pocketing his phone absentmindedly, he continues to the elevator, with one last nod to the Receptionist, who smiles back.

FADE OUT.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. SCHMIDT'S ADMIN'S OFFICE - DAY

MacDonald joins the steady stream of people in and out. CHARLIE, the Security Guard, monitors Schmidt's door. In the b.g., Schmidt works both the phones and the people inside. Cameras are in place and a MAKE-UP ARTIST stands by.

Schmidt's Admin, ASHLEY EDWARDS, a twenty-something whose toughness belies her straight-off-the-farm appearance, tries to stop MacDonald.

EDWARDS

Sir --

MacDonald keeps walking.

EDWARDS (CONT'D)

Charlie?

Charlie grabs MacDonald and shoves him over to Edwards' desk -- and not politely.

EDWARDS (CONT'D)

Thanks.

(a beat)

Sir, Mr. Schmidt is not available.

MACDONALD

I'm so sorry, ma'am, I saw the folks walkin' in --

EDWARDS

I'm assuming you haven't been on another planet and you know we're in the midst of a tragedy here.

MACDONALD

Yes, ma'am, I understand, ma'am, and that's what I'm here about.

He pats his coat, finds and flashes his badge. Edwards looks on her computer screen, examines, then back to MacDonald:

EDWARDS

I would really like to help you, but this is just not the day.

He flashes his badge to Charlie, too. As he pushes past Charlie and goes into Schmidt's office:

MACDONALD

Beg your pardon, ma'am, but this is the day.

INT. SCHMIDT'S OFFICE - DAY

It's a frenzy, which Schmidt orchestrates. A TV across the room shows Senator Jennings speaking, looking sad.

SCHMIDT

(to a Reporter)

No access except you. Send 'em all the clips from this morning.

(to a Producer)

Six o'clock - we'll do it in a few minutes.

(to Another Guy)

Ted got us an exception. We can drill. Get those damned Indians out of there. Tell Ethan to deal --

Seeing MacDonald, he immediately softens.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)

Inspector --

MACDONALD

What an operation you've got here.

SCHMIDT

The irony, Inspector, is that when someone of Ted's stature passes, it becomes a circus. We keep it going for Ted. We'll grieve later.

(a beat)

And I will not indulge myself and let Ted's legacy be diminished.

MACDONALD

I have to say, this is all new to me. I can't believe all the people it takes for you to do -- whatever it is you're doin'.

(beat)

Like I said last night, I'd probably have more questions -- I just have a couple.

SCHMIDT

You know I will do whatever it takes. How can I help?

MACDONALD

Did Mr. Swenson have any enemies?

SCHMIDT

What are you asking?

MACDONALD

Was there anybody --

SCHMIDT

Inspector, what are you saying? His brakes gave out.

MACDONALD

We're not sure that's the case. Our Forensics folks are looking into that, but with a person of Mr. Swenson's stature, we need to cover all the possibilities.

SCHMIDT

I'm not sure I understand.

MACDONALD

We don't, either, at the moment, but it's worth finding out if anybody might have wished him bad.

SCHMIDT

Are you kidding? Take a number. Course they're not the ones who'll vote for me.

(beat)

Now, you must know that. You're a cop! Come on. I wouldn't even know where to start.

(beat)

Look, it was a party. We drank. I don't know anything about cars, but lots of things can go out on them.

A PRODUCER waves at Schmidt, who nods.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)

I've got a piece to do -- is there anything else I can help you with?

MACDONALD

Oh, no sir, you've been very helpful. I do thank you.

Schmidt sits down at his desk. MacDonald goes to the back of the room and watches.

DIRECTOR

Quiet! Ready -- and --

The PERSON WITH THE CLAPPER claps it.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Action!

SCHMIDT

After so many gestures of condolence and kind words about what Ted meant to you, I could not stay silent, even today. That you have taken the time to let us know how Ted touched your lives means the world to us here at CBC.

(beat)

Normally, this would be a day to stay silent, to ask for privacy to be alone with our grief. But your outpouring has encouraged me to do what I know Ted would want. Ted squeezed every bit of life and joy and love and faith out of every day. So he would want me to share our next big venture together: I am announcing my candidacy for president of the United States.

(beat)

As in everything, Ted would have been at the helm of the Faith in America Campaign.

Those in the room cry. MacDonald observes.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)

In this great country of ours, a lot of people have been left behind, forgotten, and we -- Ted and I -- talked about how we could help. Ted and I created nearly four hundred thousand jobs, brought energy independence to so many communities -- and maybe closer to our hearts than anything else -- we give you the real story, the news you can trust based on the values that have kept our country strong. We could rest on our laurels, but that's not what we're about.

(MORE)



SCHMIDT (CONT'D)

"Ask not what your country can do for you," as John Kennedy said.

"Ask what you can do for your country." So even though --

(choking up)

-- Ted -- for the first time in thirty years -- we will still take on this challenge together. He will be at my side, and we will do this together. As I know Ted would have wanted it. Learn more at CBibleC.com. And thank you again for your support at this difficult time.

DIRECTOR

And cut.

SCHMIDT

OK, get it out.

MacDonald walks up to the Director:

MACDONALD

What does he mean "get it out"?

DIRECTOR

We'll package it for social media, the other networks, that sort of thing. Not what we planned, but it's the best we can do under the circumstances.

MACDONALD

What did you have planned?

In the b.g., Schmidt takes off his microphone and comes over.

DIRECTOR

We were going to have a big event in the plaza outside -- celebrity endorsements, stuff like that.

SCHMIDT

Can I help you, Inspector?

MACDONALD

Oh no, this TV stuff is something, it's a different world.

(beat)

I thank you both very much.

SCHMIDT

Any time -- don't hesitate.

INT. TED SWENSON'S OFFICE SUITE - DAY

BRITTANY DAVENPORT, a tearful, young Administrative Assistant, stares vacantly at her computer. In Swenson's office in the b.g., a flurry of DETECTIVES and others work.

MacDonald enters.

MACDONALD

Hello, ma'am, am I in the right place? Is this Ted Swenson's office?

DAVENPORT

(trying to pull herself together)

Yes ...

MACDONALD

I'm Inspector MacDonald from the Metropolitan Police Department.

He flashes his badge.

DAVENPORT

Hello, Inspector. If you're looking for your people, they're inside.

MACDONALD

Thank you, ma'am. I'm wondering if I could ask you a couple questions.

DAVENPORT

(afraid)

Yes, sir.

MACDONALD

I was wondering if you have a speech or agenda -- anything that could help us understand Mr. Swenson's role in today's presidential announcement.

DAVENPORT

Oh, no, sir. Mr. Swenson wasn't participating.

MACDONALD

Pardon me -- ? I thought he was Mr. Schmidt's campaign manager, ma'am.

DAVENPORT

Well ...

MACDONALD  
I'm here to help.

DAVENPORT  
(hesitant, scared)  
Last I heard, yesterday, Mr.  
Swenson was firm with his decision.

MACDONALD  
You say "decision"?

DAVENPORT  
We were preparing for him to  
retire. He'd stay on the board, but  
he said he was ready to move on.

MACDONALD  
Do you know why? Was this public  
knowledge?

DAVENPORT  
He didn't want to overshadow Mr.  
Schmidt. That's why I'm not sure ...

MACDONALD  
But Mr. Schmidt said he was going  
to be campaign manager --

DAVENPORT  
He kept asking, but Mr. Swenson,  
well, he, he -- hates politicians.

MACDONALD  
Any chance he changed his mind  
since yesterday?

DAVENPORT  
Anything's possible, but he left me  
a message late last night that he  
was going to California this  
morning for his grandson's baptism.

MACDONALD  
Today?

DAVENPORT  
Yes, sir.

MACDONALD  
Was this news to you?

DAVENPORT  
Yes, sir.

MACDONALD

Did Mr. Swenson make a lot of last-minute changes in plans?

DAVENPORT

No, sir. He was a creature of habit. That's why he's --  
(choking up)  
He was so easy to work for.

MACDONALD

Do you have the message?

DAVENPORT

Yes, sir.

She pulls out her cell phone and they listen:

SWENSON (V.O.)

Hi Kim - listen, Elaine's making me a reservation for Jessica's christening in the morning. Time to do family values for real, right, and practice this retirement thing. Elaine's going early to help -- and what a concept -- I'm going to help, too. The plane leaves around ten, that's all I know. I'll fill you in in the morning.

MACDONALD

We'll need that recording, ma'am. I thank you, appreciate it.

He goes to leave, then turns around.

MACDONALD (CONT'D)

Did you happen to see how much Mr. Swenson had to drink last night?

DAVENPORT

No, sir. I wasn't there.

MACDONALD

I see. I thank you, ma'am.

EXT. CBC PLAZA - DAY

MacDonald walks into the plaza, which has a stage and sound system and decorations. People are moving out the furnishings. He walks onto the stage, examines the podium, and sees the chairs labeled, "John Schmidt," "Wife Schmidt," "Kids Schmidt." He takes pictures with his phone.

He looks out at the audience. A few seats have labels with the names of celebrities and VIPs. He takes more pictures.

He sits down in one of the folding audience chairs and squints into the morning sun, thinking, playing with his toothpick and humming "Oh Susanna." His phone rings.

MACDONALD  
(into the phone)  
Yep.

INT. METROPOLITAN POLICE GARAGE - DAY

Latisha sits in front a computer board from Swenson's car.

LATISHA  
Someone hacked the transmission.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

MACDONALD  
What?

LATISHA  
They disabled the transmission with a cell phone.

People start coming to take MacDonald's chair and every time he switches to another chair, it seems like they want him to move so they can get that one, too.

LATISHA (CONT'D)  
They figured out how to get into the transmission and they hacked it. It's not easy, but --

MACDONALD  
Any chance it was like your garage door going up by mistake?

LATISHA  
Inspector --

MACDONALD  
Gotcha. No way this wasn't murder?

LATISHA  
No way, no how.

MACDONALD  
What can you tell about the phone?

LATISHA  
We've got it triangulated. We know  
which towers it was close to.

MacDonald waits. Nothing.

MACDONALD  
Is that it?

He stands up as they take his chair yet again.

LATISHA  
It was a disposable phone. We don't  
have an owner or a phone.

MACDONALD  
Canvass that area and see if you  
can find the phone.

LATISHA  
You got it.

MACDONALD  
I thank you, ma'am.

INT. ASHLEY EDWARDS'S OFFICE - DAY

The usual crowd of Lackeys -- the term for everyone in  
Schmidt's world -- surrounds him, buzzes in and out. The  
filming equipment is gone.

As before, MacDonald ambles through, charming smile,  
toothpick, to Edwards's chagrin.

INT. SCHMIDT'S OFFICE - DAY

MacDonald comes in, followed by the frustrated Edwards.

EDWARDS  
I'm sorry, sir --

SCHMIDT  
(ignoring her)  
Inspector MacDonald --

MACDONALD  
Hello, sir, I hope I'm not  
interrupting anything --

He's clearly interrupting a lot, but:

SCHMIDT

Not at all. Long time no see.  
Do you have some news for me?

MACDONALD

Yes, sir. And I wanted to get it to  
you as soon as I could.

(beat)

Could have a few minutes, sir?

SCHMIDT

Everyone? Ashley, could you get me  
a cappuccino? Inspector, can I get  
you anything?

MACDONALD

Oh, no sir, thank you.

The Lackeys file out and Edwards shuts the door. MacDonald  
sits down across from Schmidt's desk.

SCHMIDT

What was the problem? He loved that  
car. He babied that car. But I  
always told him it was too  
temperamental.

MACDONALD

Well, sir, he surely did. That car  
was in beautiful shape. And what a  
car. You know, in this town we've  
got a lot of powerful people, And  
we've got a lot of rich people, but  
not many have a car like that.

A beat. Schmidt waits. Then, polite but eager and irritated:

SCHMIDT

Inspector, what was wrong with the  
car?

MACDONALD

That's the problem. There is no  
problem with the car.

(beat)

Mr. Swenson was sabotaged, that's  
the fact of the matter.

SCHMIDT

Oh my god.

MACDONALD

I'm sorry, sir, but it was murder.

SCHMIDT

What? How? Inspector, our cars are under lock and key all the time. Our people undergo security checks. Ted and I don't kid ourselves. This is a fortress.

MACDONALD

Well, sir, in this day and age, you can do it all by remote control.

Edwards returns with a cappuccino in a CBC cup.

ON COFFEE FROTH WITH CBC LOGO

Perfect, a masterpiece.

BACK TO SCENE

MACDONALD

Well, I'll be. I've never seen anything like this -- is that your logo?

SCHMIDT

Yes.

MACDONALD

That's a work of art! That's a cappuccino? What exactly is a cappuccino?

SCHMIDT

Espresso with steamed milk -- frothy, see?

MACDONALD

I surely do. My goodness. Mr. Coffee and my thermos work good, but I never knew what I was missin'! 7-11 in a pinch, can't go to Dunkin' Donuts -- good coffee, bad for the waistline. But how about that? Almost hate to drink it, don't you?

SCHMIDT

I've gotten over it. You were saying something about a remote control?



MACDONALD  
Yes, sir, your cell phone.

SCHMIDT  
(genuinely frightened, and  
almost hiding it  
completely)  
What? My cell phone?

MACDONALD  
Oh, no, no, no, no. A cell phone.  
You don't even need access to the  
car. You can do it -- they call it  
"hacking" -- remotely, from set-up  
to execution.

Schmidt flops into a chair.

SCHMIDT  
Oh my god.

MACDONALD  
And I want to put this delicately,  
but -- sir, we are concerned about  
your safety. We'd like to examine  
your car and the software in it.

SCHMIDT  
Of course. Anything you need.

MACDONALD  
We'll be requesting copies of the  
phone records here, to see if Mr.  
Swenson might have been in touch  
with the killer.

SCHMIDT  
That's a needle in a haystack.

MACDONALD  
Yes, sir, I know. That's what we  
do.

(beat)  
What I've been wonderin', though,  
do you think it had anything to do  
with your announcement for  
president?

SCHMIDT  
The only ones who knew were our  
closest friends and family. Before  
the party, less than a handful.

MACDONALD

Well, sir, it only takes one.  
Sometimes more, but one'll do it.  
Who knew before last night?

SCHMIDT

Uh, me and Ted, of course, and my  
wife. Ashley and Brittany. Roger  
Alies, our public relations man.  
And anybody who worked with him on  
it, but that's it.

MACDONALD

More than a handful.

SCHMIDT

I guess so.

MacDonald pulls a crumpled piece of paper from his coat.

MACDONALD

Is there anyone you can think of,  
who had the technical knowledge to  
do a thing like this?

SCHMIDT

That would take a brilliant  
creative mind. And not that we  
don't have plenty of them here, but  
that's one in a million, maybe  
more. I have no idea, Inspector.

(beat)

'Course, in our set, they wouldn't  
do it themselves -- that's what  
money's for. We've made lots of  
people very angry. Those tree  
huggers in Houston hate our  
drilling in the Gulf. We've got a  
million of 'em.

MacDonald starts to walk out, then turns.

MACDONALD

On another note, I've heard that  
Mr. Swenson wasn't going to be your  
campaign manager. He was catching a  
plane to California this morning.

SCHMIDT

Look, Inspector, I won't sugar-coat  
it. Ted had to be convinced. He was  
one of the most brilliant -- no,  
the most brilliant -- businessman  
I've ever seen.

(MORE)

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)

He could sniff out an opportunity better than anybody. That's why we were a great team. I had the ideas, he made them happen.

MACDONALD

Running for president was the idea?

SCHMIDT

Exactly. And he was the one who saw that now was the opportunity.

(beat)

Still, it took some convincing. As late as last night he was on the fence. But he finally said yes. He couldn't stand to miss out.

(chokes up)

That was the last conversation we had. He couldn't betray our friendship. He wasn't going to California. We were friends. Elaine had guilted him. He wasn't going to California. He wasn't getting on a plane. We were running for president.

(beat)

I'm glad you're making progress on this, but I have to say it scares the hell out of me that a cell phone can do this kind of thing. I thought we'd done everything we could ... Please keep me apprised -- and come by any time.

MACDONALD

Thank you, sir -- and I appreciate your lettin' me barge in. Oh, could you point me in the direction of Roger Alies?

SCHMIDT

Of course.

He walks MacDonald out.

FADE OUT.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. ROGER ALIES OFFICE - DAY

Ashley ushers MacDonald into the room. PR PEOPLE cluster around a whiteboard, where ROGER ALIES diagrams strategy for Schmidt's candidacy and Swenson's death.

Alies is about the same age and type as Schmidt, and very polished, refined. His office, while corporate, conveys a more cultured inhabitant than that of Schmidt or Swenson.

ALIES

Thank you, Ashley.  
(to the group)  
Will you excuse us?

The PR Group leaves.

ALIES (CONT'D)

I won't be long. Don't wing it if we haven't discussed it. Tweet.  
(to MacDonald)  
It's been crazy. I'm sure you can imagine. I've been expecting you. How can I help you, Inspector?

MACDONALD

Mr. Alies, Mr. Schmidt tells me that you were one of the few people who knew about his announcement before last night.

ALIES

(sarcastic)  
I had to prepare for this morning's nonevent.

MACDONALD

How long have you worked for CBC?

ALIES

Oh, John and Ted and I go back before that, more than twenty years.

MACDONALD

So you've seen a lot of changes.

ALIES

Beyond my wildest dreams, I can assure you.

MACDONALD

Sir, I went outside this mornin', watched 'em dismantle that beautiful stage you had built up there, saw it all get taken down piece by piece.

(beat)

Here's what struck me, and please don't take this wrong, but I wouldn't be doin' my job if I didn't ask -- why did the stage back to the east?

ALIES

I'm sorry?

MACDONALD

Why did the stage back to the east? See, the cameras would be shooting into the sun.

ALIES

Inspector, I'm impressed. Want to join my team? I like how you think.

(beat)

I've never before set up the plaza that way for a morning event. For the very reason you stated. But John asked for it. He said he was tired of the same ol', same ol'. Honestly, it made no sense, if you ask me, but you don't stay in a job as long as I have if you don't know when to keep the boss happy.

MACDONALD

When did he ask for that?

ALIES

I don't know, a couple weeks ago.

MacDonald shows no reaction, listens intently.

ALIES (CONT'D)

It saved us some money. Sun in your eyes, but that's the trade-off.

MACDONALD

Why?

ALIES

It's less labor - this side of the plaza is closer to the entrance.

MACDONALD

You mean the people moving the chairs and the stands --

ALIES

-- That's right, all that takes less time so it doesn't cost us as much.

MACDONALD

You don't say. ... When did you hear about Mr. Swenson's death?

ALIES

John called me last night. We've been going ever since.

MACDONALD

What role did Mr. Swenson have in today's events?

ALIES

He didn't have any role until last night. I thought maybe John decided to make the announcement more low-key -- hence, saving money -- because of that. But at the last minute, Ted agreed.

MACDONALD

How do you know?

ALIES

John texted me from the party.

MACDONALD

That was late, wasn't it? Was that normal? Weren't you there?

ALIES

I took my leave as soon as I could. But like I say, that's how you keep a job like this as long as I have.

(beat)

And it was good news. I don't know how John could function without Ted. I was revamping the program and writing Ted's remarks when he called -- you know, after.

MACDONALD

Two peas in a pod is what I've heard.

ALIES

More like oil and water -- but shake 'em together and they made something delicious. Corny, forgive me, I haven't slept.

MACDONALD

Were you surprised, Mr. Alies, to hear Mr. Swenson wasn't going to run the campaign?

ALIES

Yes, I was. I'd never seen them disagree about a major direction before. Never. Now maybe they did behind closed doors, but when it got to me, they were always on the same page. So I wasn't surprised he'd signed on, either.

MACDONALD

What's next? What do you do now?

ALIES

Inspector, I hate to say this, but sometimes you can't be too cynical. I'm telling you this as a PR person, not as a human being, OK? Ted Swenson's death was about the best thing that could have happened for John's candidacy. We've gotten far more press -- all positive, no tough questions. We don't lead with John running For president, but we sure as hell mention it when we mourn Ted's death.

MACDONALD

Whoa.

ALIES

Now John's on a crusade for Ted.

MACDONALD

You figured all this out since last night?

ALIES

It's my job. And I've kept it --

MACDONALD

-- Keepin' 'em happy. I've gotta tell you, you've sure taught me a lot, it's a whole new world, that's for sure, what you do, Mr. Alies.

ALIES

(handing him his card)  
If there's anything I can do --

MACDONALD

I'll certainly let you know. You've been a big help. I thank you, sir.

EXT. ELAINE SWENSON'S BUILDING - DAY

MacDonald drives up in his truck and the PARKING ATTENDANT takes his keys.

MACDONALD

Be careful with her. She's cherry.

INT. ELAINE SWENSON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Elaine nurses a drink. Her luggage sits by the front door.

ELAINE

Lots of people wanted Ted dead, as I'm sure you've heard --  
(smiling)  
I was one of them a long time ago. Are you sure I can't get you a drink, something? I'm sorry, everyone is off --

MACDONALD

No thank you, ma'am.

ELAINE

I don't know about Ted's life, I honestly don't. We were not in touch.

MACDONALD

But you were flying out together.

ELAINE

You could have knocked me over with a feather.

MacDonald, intent, interested.



ELAINE (CONT'D)

He was on a kick to become a human being or something. Some cockamamie plan to move to Mexico. But he seemed interested in our daughter's baby -- believe me, this was new.

MACDONALD

What made this come up last night?

ELAINE

We were at John's campaign party -- All I can think is that John was going to ask me for money. Otherwise, I don't know why John invited me -- we hadn't spoken in ages. It was mostly their holier-than-thou crowd. I honestly don't know what got into Ted. Squeezing a penny and turning it into two nickels was all he ever cared about. But I'll take it.

MACDONALD

Mrs. Swenson, how long have you known Mr. Swenson?

ELAINE

We were high school sweethearts of a sort. But even back then, he and John were about business. First their bow hunting, then radio.

MACDONALD

Radio? I knew about television.

ELAINE

Not that kind of radio -- tiny police departments that couldn't afford the big suppliers. I truly think if John hadn't found Ted he would have been an engineer or inventor or something.

MACDONALD

You don't say.

ELAINE

Don't let that slick exterior fool you -- there's a genuine tech nerd in there.

(MORE)

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Even as kids, some of the things John would come to Ted with sounded a little offbeat, to put it mildly, but Ted could see how they'd fit into the world and how to make people want it. It was uncanny how they complemented each other.

MACDONALD

Did Mr. Swenson say anything to you about working on Mr. Schmidt's campaign?

ELAINE

You've got to be kidding. Ted --

MACDONALD AND ELAINE (CONT'D)

-- hates politicians.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

I just assumed that John was going to go off and be president and Ted would be doing his own thing, too.

MACDONALD

So you weren't surprised he wasn't going to stick with Mr. Schmidt?

ELAINE

They were in a lot of industries that were government-regulated. That's why we lived here. Ted bellyached about how easy it was to grease the wheels. He really did hate those people -- the elected ones and their appointees, I mean. We respect unsung civil servants like you. God knows you're not doing this for money or prestige.

MACDONALD

No, ma'am.

MacDonald still intent, encouraging her.

ELAINE

I do think John could have asked almost anything of him, but this would have been too much. He loved the business -- they were a fine team, as you know -- if you like piranhas and sharks. But this -- honestly, I don't know what John's thinking myself.

MACDONALD

I thank you, ma'am, and if you think of anyone, anything --

MacDonald goes to let himself out.

ELAINE

Inspector?

He turns.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

It's -- it was a marriage. And the president-thing was a divorce.

MACDONALD

Yes, ma'am. I do thank you for your help.

INT. BEN'S CHILI BOWL - DAY

MacDonald sits at the counter, a half smoke, fries and a sweet tea, toothpick, deep in thought.

Latisha comes in and sits next to him. MacDonald doesn't notice her. The COUNTER SERVER comes up to her.

COUNTER SERVER

What can I get you?

LATISHA

I'll take a veggie half smoke and iced tea.

COUNTER SERVER

Sweet tea?

LATISHA

No, regular, please.

COUNTER SERVER

We don't have regular. Can I get you lemonade?

LATISHA

Just water, please.

Without looking at her, MacDonald takes a swig of his drink.

MACDONALD

You do that every time.

LATISHA

I know.

MACDONALD

The sweet tea's good.

LATISHA

The last thing I need is all that sugar.

He takes a bigger swig to kid her more. While they talk, the Server returns with Latisha's food. MacDonalld eats throughout, and while he eats with gusto, there's a precision and polish that belie his country-boy affect.

MACDONALD

Whatcha got?

LATISHA

Triangulation's not enough --

MACDONALD

And?

LATISHA

We can get a tower dump from the carrier. Records of the devices that were there at that time.

MACDONALD

It's a start. Check CBC headquarters, too.

LATISHA

Hmmm. Yep.

(beat)

Hey Mac, the Mexico house, or should I say compound -- want me to go down there and investigate?

MACDONALD

(twinkle in his eye)

Not right now. I'll let you know.

LATISHA

It was worth a shot.

He puts cash on the counter.

MACDONALD

'S on me.

And he leaves.

EXT. CBC BUILDING PLAZA - DAY

MacDonald walks around the now-back-to-normal space, looks up in the sky, goes into the building.

INT. CBC LOBBY- DAY

The Receptionist waves him through, MacDonald waves back.

INT. ASHLEY EDWARDS'S OFFICE- DAY

MacDonald comes in, she waves him in, defeated.

INT. SCHMIDT'S OFFICE- DAY

Usual lackeys, usual chaos. MacDonald enters.

MACDONALD

Mr. Schmidt --

SCHMIDT

Inspector, my, you are busy. More news?

MACDONALD

Yes, sir, there is, and a couple more questions.

SCHMIDT

(to the Lackeys)

You know the drill.

They all get up and leave. Picking up a fancy bottle of water, Schmidt walks around his desk and offers MacDonald a chair in his sitting area.

MACDONALD

I thank you, sir. I'm plumb wore out and I know you haven't gotten any more sleep than I have, but you're still goin' strong.

SCHMIDT

Working for Ted is keeping me going, Inspector. Have you seen any of our coverage?

MACDONALD

A little bit, but mostly I'm afraid not, sir.

SCHMIDT

Well, how can I help you? How about some coffee?

MACDONALD

No, thank you. I'm full up.

SCHMIDT

What do you have for me?

MACDONALD

We're getting closer on the phone. We'll be able to find all the phone numbers in use at the time of the accident at that location. It's called a "tower dump."

SCHMIDT

That could be a lot of numbers.

MACDONALD

True, but it's a lead.

SCHMIDT

I appreciate it. I'm sure you understand we're very busy here --

MACDONALD

Oh yes, I do. I just need to get these questions out of the way and get out of your hair.

SCHMIDT

(irritated but barely showing it)

Of course.

MACDONALD

Mr. Schmidt, a number of people have told me that Mr. Swenson wasn't going to be your campaign --

SCHMIDT

(interrupting)

-- I was his best friend and partner for thirty years.

MACDONALD

It just seems unusual that so many people would say he didn't want any part of politicians.

SCHMIDT

Like I told you, Ted knew opportunities. He wasn't going to miss this one.

(beat)

Ted would never have abandoned me.

(beat)

I'm getting maudlin -- is that all, Inspector?

MACDONALD

Yes, sir. I thank you, sir.

He leaves and the Lackeys swarm back in.

INT. SCHMIDT MANSION FOYER - NIGHT

The BUTLER brings MacDonald into the foyer.

BUTLER

Inspector, please -- I will let them know you're here.

MACDONALD

I thank you, sir.

The Butler disappears and MacDonald gazes around at the enormity and sumptuous of the foyer -- the mere foyer.

INT. SCHMIDT MANSION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John and Marge Schmidt sit with Roger Alies around a large table filled with food, drink and papers.

BUTLER

Inspector MacDonald.

SCHMIDT

The question now is whether you ever sleep, Inspector.

MACDONALD

You don't want your leads to go cold, sir.

MARGE

It's a pleasure to meet you, Inspector. John has told me so much about you. I've felt left out.

MACDONALD

We're just getting started, ma'am.

ALIES

Hi, Inspector.

MACDONALD

Hello, sir.

(beat)

Mr. Schmidt, I hate to intrude, but I promised I'd keep you up to date.

SCHMIDT

You seem to work at the speed of light, Inspector.

MACDONALD

We do our best. Here's what we found out -- and I have to say, how any case ever got solved before computers is a mystery to me. I don't really mean that, but in certain aspects of these homicides, we would be months going through data, I'm not exaggerating, it would take an army.

SCHMIDT

I understand, Inspector. Go on --

MACDONALD

Talk about the pot calling the kettle black! You know technology. What we found, through the computer, going through last night's phone records -- hundreds of thousands of signals at that tower nearest the accident -- and at your company headquarters, same thing. Only two phones were at both places. Now, one of them was yours, which we knew. But we found another one. It's a prepaid phone. We don't know who owned it, but whoever had that phone was at your company.

They are shocked.

SCHMIDT

What do you suggest we do?

MACDONALD

Let us do our work. We are trying to track it, but I think the phone was probably discarded or destroyed pretty soon after the hack.

(beat)

(MORE)



MACDONALD (CONT'D)

So we want to find out who bought that phone. See, with a prepaid phone you don't have a contract. You pay for enough minutes to do what you need to do, and get rid of it. We mostly see them in drug cases. It's a way to be anonymous.

MARGE

I don't understand.

MACDONALD

You see, ma'am, what we're hoping is that we'll get lucky -- it's a long shot, but maybe we can find out who bought the phone because they paid with a credit card and used their name.

ALIES

So you're looking for a stupid criminal.

MACDONALD

Yep, or very arrogant. That's why I say get lucky. With it being Mr. Swenson, probably a professional was involved. But you never know.

SCHMIDT

This person has been in our building. It could even be someone who works for us.

MACDONALD

The sad thing in homicides is the victim often knows their killer.

MARGE

Is John safe going to the office?

MACDONALD

Mrs. Schmidt, I don't think there's any evidence that this had anything to do with Mr. Schmidt. But we don't know. I would say be very careful. Use a different vehicle, even a rental, especially for the funeral tomorrow -- because you'll be expected. And we're protecting you both as well, you know.

Marge, concerned. Understanding MacDonald's subtext, Schmidt makes a veiled threat:

SCHMIDT

Thank you for coming out,  
Inspector. I must call the Chief  
and let her know what exceptional  
service you've given us.

MACDONALD

(getting his drift)  
That's not necessary, sir, but I  
thank you. Good night.

INT. CELL PHONE DEPARTMENT OF A BIG BOX STORE - DAY

MacDonald and Latisha stand with the STORE MANAGER and TWO CLERKS. MacDonald shows them photos of Schmidt and others, and the Clerks shake their heads.

MACDONALD

(to the Manager)  
I'm going to need you and your  
employees to get dressed up and  
spend some more time with us.

EXT. CATHEDRAL, SWENSON'S FUNERAL - DAY

MOURNERS stream into the cathedral. MacDonald, Latisha, the Store Manager and the Clerks stand to the side, watching. MacDonald's eyes dart back and forth between those entering the cathedral and the Clerk. The Clerks shake their heads.

The stream of Mourners slows to a trickle and an ATTENDANT starts shutting the doors. MacDonald and co. rush in.

INT. CATHEDRAL, SWENSON'S FUNERAL - DAY

The cathedral is filled with elaborate flowers. A closed casket stands behind a large photo of Ted Swenson on an easel. MacDonald, Latisha, the Store Manager and the Clerks stand at the back and scan the crowd.

As Ryan and Jennifer Goldstein, Elaine Swenson, John and Marge Schmidt, and other Family Members file into the front row, one of the Clerks urgently taps MacDonald on the shoulder and whispers. They exit.

EXT. SCHMIDT MANSION - NIGHT

John and Marge Schmidt drive up in their rented Mercedes G-550. MacDonald's truck is parked in front. As the Schmidts get out of their car, MacDonald gets out of his.

SCHMIDT

Inspector, it's been a long day. I appreciate your keeping us in the loop, but can we please take a night off?

MACDONALD

Mr. Schmidt, sir, I think we can get this buttoned up.

The Butler appears at the front door.

MACDONALD (CONT'D)

How about if we go in?

INT. SCHMIDT LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

SCHMIDT

I need a drink. Inspector, Marge?

MARGE

Whatever you're having, dear.

MACDONALD

No, thank you.

As John makes the drinks:

MACDONALD (CONT'D)

You know, you really had me goin'.

SCHMIDT

I'm sorry?

MACDONALD

You had me goin' -- with the phone.

SCHMIDT

I don't follow --

MACDONALD

You plan the campaign launch with the cheapest set-up. And you get double the coverage because it's the day after. The only phones at both your office building and the crime scene were yours, Mr. Swenson's and the trigger device.

MARGE

How dare you.

SCHMIDT

You have a very twisted mind,  
Inspector.

MACDONALD

We never did find the phone -- no  
surprise. Maybe it's in this house.  
We'll look. We've got a warrant.

TWO DETECTIVES appear in the doorway.

MARGE

You have no right.

Coldly pulling out his cell phone and searching his contacts:

SCHMIDT

I'm calling the mayor before they  
destroy our home.

MACDONALD

How to tie you to the phone. I  
thought when we tracked it to the  
place of purchase, it'd be over.  
But nobody there could identify  
you, Mr. Schmidt. And that, boy, it  
was a crackerjack move.

(beat)

When we went to Mr. Swenson's  
service today, I thought maybe, if  
we were lucky, we'd spot somebody  
there. But the store clerk 'bout  
dropped his teeth when he saw Ted's  
picture. Stroke of genius, I have  
to give it to you.

SCHMIDT

I may own a TV network, but you're  
a better storyteller than I am,  
Inspector.

McDonald nods to the Detectives, who escort in Brittany  
Davenport, still in her black funeral outfit, carrying  
papers. Schmidt puts down the phone.

MACDONALD

What are those papers you've got  
there, Ms. Davenport?

BRITTANY

Expense reports for the disposable  
cell phone business proposal.

MACDONALD

Ms. Davenport tells me that Mr. Swenson asked her to keep paper copies of every expense report.

BRITTANY

After Hillary Clinton got hacked, he got nervous.

MACDONALD

But here's what's really interesting. Ms. Davenport?

BRITTANY

Mr. Swenson said you asked him to buy the cell phone himself, with cash. He thought it was weird, but you said he should be a typical customer to understand the full experience.

Schmidt silently sips.

MACDONALD

What I don't understand is why you didn't think about the documentation.

SCHMIDT

I told you I had the ideas and Ted executed. This is what happens when I try to execute, I guess.

MACDONALD

You're going to need to come with us. It's OK, finish your drink.

John sets down his glass. Marge is stunned.

SCHMIDT

Marge, call Marvin.

MACDONALD

I don't know how much good Marvin's going to do you. 'Course you know better than anyone: "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away."

FADE OUT.

THE END