

TERMS

Season One Episode 3

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TERMS SEASON 1 EPISODE 3 - 11/27/2016

1.3.1 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE RESIDENCE

1.3.1

GWEN

Four times.

PIERCE

What?

GWEN

There have been four times in the whole of our marriage that I knew you were keeping something from me. I'm not complaining, that's way better than most.

PIERCE

What are you--

GWEN

And right now.

PIERCE

Gwen...

GWEN

There have been things I didn't know, or couldn't know. But this isn't like that.

PIERCE

I can't talk about certain things, you know that.

GWEN

(calmly)

No. This isn't some national security thing you aren't allowed to mention. This is something you are choosing not to tell me about.

(MORE)

GWEN (CONT'D)

So I think "Why would that be?" Is it something to do with me, with us?

PIERCE

There's nothing--

GWEN

But I know you'd tell me that. To my face. No matter how painful. You proved that.

PIERCE

What are you--

GWEN

Which I appreciated. Back then and now.

So, maybe it's something you don't want me to worry about. Some threat. But any threat to you is a threat to me, and to David. You wouldn't leave him in school if you knew he was in danger.

PIERCE

Gwen...

GWEN

So it must be something you are ashamed of.

MUSIC: Intro Sting

VOICE: Terms

MUSIC: Intro

1.3.2 INT. THE CAGE

1.3.2

SOUND: Cage opens, footsteps, cage closes.

PIERCE

Agent Franks--take a seat. Just one more moment...

SOUND: The white noise hum returns.

PIERCE (CONT'D)

Okay. We're good to go.

Thank you for meeting me, James.

FRANKS

I...absolutely Mr. President. I was not expecting this honor. I--

PIERCE

Before transferring to D.C., you were in the Northern District of Illinois, in Chicago?

FRANKS

Um...Rockford Resident Agency, yes Sir. I worked Boone, Carroll, DeKalb counties, some of--

PIERCE

And you handled the Norvad case-- while it existed.

FRANKS

(beat)

I don't understand... what exactly...

PIERCE (CONT'D)

James, you are not in trouble. You and I are just having an off-the-record chat. A private conversation that neither of us will EVER mention.

And I want you to tell me how the Norvad case went away.

FRANKS

Sir... I don't...

PIERCE

James.

FRANKS

When the first allegations about the Norvad contract came up, I found a few things that sent up red flags...

PIERCE

And then you were moved off the case.

FRANKS

After I discovered, um--

PIERCE

After you discovered that some members of my Cabinet were also implicated. You were told to stop digging and tell your Assistant U.S. Attorney that you'd been pulled off, that resources were needed elsewhere.

FRANKS

How do you--

PIERCE

The order came from my office, James. I wasn't personally involved, but I'm not proud that it happened on my watch. Evidently, it was decided that there wasn't ultimately anything to it, and the negative press would do more damage to a member of my cabinet than it would have made a difference in the election.

FRANKS

But how could anyone know it wouldn't...

PIERCE

James, I am not here to defend the actions of my administration to you. I am asking you for information. I need to know who else you told about the investigation?

FRANKS

When I started looking into it, I contacted Richard Valdez. He's the Assistant U.S. Attorney. Just told him to be ready in case anything panned out. I sent him some of my initial findings, but I think when he found out I wasn't going to be looking into it any further, he had to let it go.

PIERCE

Valdez. And you think he might still have that case file, even if it's been closed?

FRANKS

Oh, it's not closed. It was never opened. It never got enough traction without an investigator.

PIERCE

Chicago office?

FRANKS

Rockford, Sir.

PIERCE

James, two things are going to happen from this point. First, someone from the press is going to become interested in this case. If and when that interest leads anyone to you, you are to be as helpful and forthcoming as you can. That's first. Understood?

FRANKS

... yes, Sir.

PIERCE

The second thing is that, when you tell no one about this meeting, --which I know I can rely on you to do--you go on a very short list of people I can trust.

And those people I do not forget.

FRANKS

You can count on me, Mr. President.

PIERCE

James, I wouldn't have asked you here if I had any doubt.

In fact, I'd like you to meet someone who'll be able to help you, if you need it.

(calls on intercom)

Zach?

ZACH

(on intercom)

Yes, Mr. President.

PIERCE

Can you send Ron in, please?

ZACH

(on intercom)

Yes sir.

SOUND: Cage door opens, Ron enters, door closes.

James, this is Ron Clarkson.

FRANKS

Hello, sir.

RON CLARKSON

Hello, Agent Franks.

PIERCE

Ron, James might call you with questions in the coming weeks. About how to handle some things.

RON CLARKSON

Of course, Sir. Happy to help.

FRANKS

Sir, I--

PIERCE

Thank you, James. I'll get you Ron's contact information. For now, there's nothing more for you to do but be helpful, just as you're being helpful to me now.

1.3.3 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE RESIDENCE

1.3.3

GWEN

I don't know if it's something you've done, or something you are going to do, or something you weren't able to stop--but it's there. And it scares me.

PIERCE

(beat)

Gwen, do you trust me?

GWEN

I do.

PIERCE

And do you believe that I trust you?

GWEN

I hope you do.

PIERCE

Then trust that I am doing what I am doing for the right reasons. And that if I'm not telling you about it, there's a reason for that too.

GWEN

Oliver, I'm not upset that you're not telling me something. I'm worried. For you. Because there's something you're so unsure about that you're afraid to tell me, who has always stood with you no matter what.

You're that unsure about it...but you're going ahead with it anyway.

PIERCE

I'm not unsure about it, I'm just...exploring options.

1.3.4 INT. THE CAGE

1.3.4

RON CLARKSON

The woman is a viper!

PIERCE

A viper who owns one of the largest media outlets in the country.

RON CLARKSON

Which she uses to paint you like a cross between Bill Buckley and Mussolini.

PIERCE.

I appreciate your loyalty. I know she's gone after me.

RON CLARKSON

They've all gone after you. That's not the problem. The problem is her site is just shy of a tabloid. Your daughter fails physics, they write about it. You and your wife spend a weekend apart, they write about it!

She traffics in cheap gossip--

PIERCE

That's not all she does, and you know it.

RON CLARKSON

We can't get into bed with Victoria Pace and her organization, Oliver! We can't--

PIERCE

This isn't clean, Ron. You of all people know that this will not be clean.

1.3.5 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE RESIDENCE

1.3.5

GWEN

Exploring options is something we do together.

PIERCE

Gwen... You are the only person whose opinion matters to me more than mine. I don't know if there is anything to talk about yet.

GWEN

We're a team.

PIERCE

Trust me, I haven't forgotten that.

1.3.6 INT. THE CAGE

1.3.6

(Location: The cage)

SOUND: Door opens and then closes behind Victoria. the Cage closing.

VICTORIA PACE

Mr. President.

PIERCE

Ms. Pace. Thank you for coming.

VICTORIA PACE

Where are we?

PIERCE

Please, sit down.

VICTORIA PACE

Mr. President, you didn't have to summon me here just to scold me. You can always have one of your people do it for you.

PIERCE

Why would I scold you? If not for your site, how would people know what young actors look like now that they're all grown up?

VICTORIA PACE

I just assumed you had read our latest: "Legacy Lacks Laudables."

PIERCE

Ah. Your writers have discovered alliteration.

VICTORIA PACE

Despite the headline, it's a strong article.

(MORE)

VICTORIA PACE (CONT'D)

Well, it's not so much an article as it is a catalog of all your administration's shortcomings.

PIERCE

You never gave us a chance, Victoria.

VICTORIA PACE

Excuse me?

PIERCE

You decided what we were before we ever got here, and you stuck with that no matter what.

VICTORIA PACE

That's not--

PIERCE

Everything we did was what we thought was best for the American people. You're free to disagree with that, of course, but that's not what your people do. They can't be bothered to consider things like the true motive or long-term benefits or potential consequences of a decision. Not when there's a Republican bogeyman in the White House to write about.

VICTORIA PACE

So, you did summon me here just to scold me.

PIERCE

Not at all, Victoria.

SOUND: a switch, then White Noise.

PIERCE (CONT'D)

Everything we say from this point forward is off the record.

(MORE)

PIERCE (CONT'D)

I will deny that this meeting ever took place.

Do you understand?

VICTORIA PACE

Why?

PIERCE

Do you agree?

VICTORIA PACE

(beat)

Oh, I am curious. So, I agree.

PIERCE

I asked you here because I need your help.

VICTORIA PACE

You need my help? I find that hard to believe. Off the record--why am I here?

PIERCE

The work your site did on the Dunwalke campaign impressed me.

VICTORIA PACE

(suspiciously)

It did?

PIERCE

Yes. Beneath the usual bluster, there was truth to be found. Nuance, even. Your people discovered things that I'm sure Dunwalke worked hard to hide.

VICTORIA PACE

Your Party let a menace into the race, Sir.

(MORE)

VICTORIA PACE (CONT'D)

And despite what you might think of us, my people have the country's best interest at heart, too.

We did our duty. It wasn't enough.

PIERCE

I hear things, Ms Pace. I hear nearly everything, as you can imagine. Rumors. Gossip. Facts. Hard to tell them apart sometimes.

VICTORIA PACE

Mr. President?

PIERCE

In all the darkness, two words seem to keep finding the light. "Dunwalke." "Bribery."

VICTORIA PACE

If you're referring to the Norvad case, we heard the same, but nothing came of it.

PIERCE

Hmm.

VICTORIA PACE

"Bribery" gets tossed around with the names of anyone in power. You. Me. The Pope. It doesn't mean it's true.

PIERCE

Do you remember your first house, Victoria?

VICTORIA PACE

Sir?

PIERCE

There's nothing like it. When Gwen and I closed on our first house--barely bigger than an apartment, really--we were so proud. Like our lives had finally started. Do you remember that?

VICTORIA PACE

With all due respect, I was gifted two homes on my wedding day.

PIERCE

The struggles of an heiress. Well, for Gwen and me, the first little house meant everything. We cleaned up, planted a garden, hung drapes. But less than a year after we bought it, we started having problems with plumbing. Pipes rattling and screeching.

Finally, it got to the point where we had to call a plumber. I knew it was gonna cost a fortune, but we had to do whatever we could to take care of our house.

So, the plumber comes over. Looks all around. Finally, he pulls out a hammer and bangs it against one of the pipes. And just like that, the rattling is gone.

He puts the hammer away, turns to me and says "That'll be \$200."

Now, I was more than a little upset. I told him, "I could have done that. I have a hammer."

The plumber said, "A hammer's no good if you don't know where to hit."

VICTORIA PACE

I'm not sure I--

PIERCE

Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Valdez.

United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois

The Rockford office, not Chicago.

VICTORIA PACE

Why are you telling me this? He's been elected. The election's over. What could--

You think there's a chance Dunwalke has done something that could put him out of Office.

PIERCE

What I think, in this case, is irrelevant.

What you find out, however...

VICTORIA PACE

This is payback, isn't it? Lure me here with tawdry little tales. Send me and my staff digging, knowing that if we even get a taste, we'll put it out for the world to see, and then somehow we'll be made to look like fools. Or worse.

The crazy liberal media hellbent on destroying the country. For what? I'm sorry, sir, you have stepped--

PIERCE

Victoria, this isn't payback.

Dunwalke. Bribery.

VICTORIA PACE

(beat)

If you really think that's true,
why not have the DOJ investigate
him?

PIERCE

That would be an abuse of power.

VICTORIA PACE

You're serious about this?

PIERCE

Serious enough to meet you in
a room that most people in this
building don't even know exists.

Go to Illinois.

See what you hit...

Hammer.

1.3.7 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE RESIDENCE

1.3.7

GWEN

I can't help you if you won't let
me. But I can tell you this.

I do trust you. Because I think you
know when something is right and
when it's wrong and when it's too
much in the grey to decide. You
always have. I trust that instinct
in you. It's one of the things I
love.

And I think you should trust it
too. Before you do something you
can't walk back from.

Now come to bed.

MUSIC: Outro