

CREDIBLE

written by  
Steve Meredith

All Rights Reserved  
This screenplay may not be used or  
reproduced without the express  
written permission of the author.

Copyright (c) 2014  
Steve Meredith  
Contact Steve Meredith via email  
at [steve.meredith@live.com](mailto:steve.meredith@live.com)

BLACKOUT - NIGHT

A car's radio is heard, with a newscaster reviewing the day's headlines.

NEWSCASTER:

(O.S.)

Today's attacks mark the first such attacks this large in scope since September 11, 2001. The early death toll in today's attack stands at 600 at this hour, and the number of missing grows by the minute. At roughly 10:30 this morning, five of the largest U.S. shopping malls were bombed simultaneously, as was the Fifth Avenue shopping corridor in New York City.

INT - CAR - CONTINUOUS

A man with salt and pepper hair sits in the backseat of an SUV driven by his security detail. He is well dressed, wearing a suit with a warm top coat. His name is JOHN THOMPSON, and he is the director of the U.S. National Security Agency. He peers out of his windshield.

OUTSIDE

Light snow falls as John's SUV snakes his way through a two lane road surrounded on either side by freshly planted corn fields.

BACK TO SCENE

The newscaster's report continues.

NEWSCASTER:

(Through the radio)

The President called his closest National Security advisors together in a meeting as the day's events unfolded. The meeting was held at an undisclosed location due to heightened security concerns. On Wall Street, trading was suspended when the city was evacuated in response to the attacks, but not before both the DOW and the S&P 500 took a nosedive.

John digs for his cell phone and pulls it out of his pocket. It reads "no service." John sighs heavily and puts it back

in his pocket.

EXT - VACANT FIELD - CONTINUOUS

John's SUV pulls up to the field and stops. John gets out and turns back to his driver.

JOHN:

When I'm done with the meeting,  
the scrambler will most likely be  
turned off, so I'll call you and  
have you come pick me up.

The driver nods, John shuts the door, and the car leaves John behind. John walks towards the middle of the field and stops. He enjoys a moment of silence and peers up at the stars.

A few moments later, footsteps are heard behind him. They are coming from ERIC INGRAM, the Director of National Intelligence, who is approaching John. John turns around to face him.

JOHN:

Hello Eric.

ERIC:

Hi John.

JOHN:

What did you need to discuss?

ERIC:

You fucked this one up, John.  
Jesus Christ, the whole reason I  
have you on the team is to alert  
me to this kind of stuff. I looked  
like an idiot in today's meetings.  
YOU looked like an idiot. Where  
was the intel on this?

JOHN:

Sir, I briefed you on this attack  
almost two years ago. Red flags  
were going up in Afghanistan,  
Pakistan, Turkey, Dubai,  
everywhere-

ERIC:

Everywhere?! Then why didn't we  
seem to know about it.

John pauses. Then he speaks freely.

JOHN:

Eric, you know that because you're my superior you have the power to over rule me, not just in private but in front of the president. On several occasions you dismissed my warnings as not being credible.

ERIC:

You should have been more vocal.

JOHN:

And you should have believed me! Christ, Eric, I had analysts screaming for me to tell you about Raheem Al Shieed. He was making moves back in January of 2013. His monetary intake was off the charts, he was stock piling cash back then, and then six months later, he nearly depletes the entire account, in a series of over 60 transactions over the period of a month. And then what? Silence. And for the next year, Al Shieed plans. And all the while, I'm sending you emails, on a twice monthly, sometimes even weekly basis. Every one of them had the validity of their intel called into question-

ERIC:

No, you don't get to try to pin this on me. Don't act like I don't fucking know what a credible threat is.

JOHN:

Well why don't you enlighten me? What the hell constitutes a credible threat in your mind?

Pause.

ERIC:

You don't like me, do you John?

JOHN:

Don't put words in my mouth, I love my country-

ERIC:

Those aren't the words that I'm putting in your mouth. I'm saying that you don't like the fact that you aren't as influential as I am to the President of the United States.

JOHN:

I don't like the fact that you cut my knees out from under me when we're in the situation room. On several occasions I've voiced my concerns to the President, and with the exception of one or two times, you've undermined my arguments. And then today you have the audacity to look at me in that bunker, and blame me for withholding information from you?

ERIC:

John, your job is to provide me with credible intelligence. If you don't like the fact that I undermine the intelligence that you provide, then maybe you should check the quality of your sources-

JOHN:

The NSA's assets are the world's best. Everyone from whiz kids, to Ivy Leaguers with genius IQ's, to former Navy Seals. And may I remind you that those people are soldiers, just like the ones in camouflage. I've got people so far entrenched in enemy territory that the very act of feeding me intel is a nearly impossible task. But one that they perform flawlessly without questioning their safety, or the value of their lives.

ERIC:

I'm sorry, John, but do you know how many pieces of intel I'm fed on a daily basis? After awhile it starts becoming impossible to discern between what's real and what's not-

JOHN:

Well how do you decide? When the chips are down and the eleventh hour is at hand, how the hell do you decide who to listen to?

Pause. Eric takes a deep breath.

ERIC:

When I receive a piece of intelligence, it has to be run through the proper channels-

JOHN:

Bullshit, Eric-

ERIC:

Bullshit?! You and I both know what it's like to have to testify before closed door Senate and House Intelligence Committes. We'd be crucified if the proper checks and balances weren't utilized.

JOHN:

I'm not talking about checks and balances, Eric. I want to know which agency scrubs the data and lays a fresh piece of intel on your desk. Which agency do you believe?!

ERIC:

I have to deal with the intel on a case by case basis and weigh all of the agencies involved in the intelligence community.

JOHN:

I briefed Homeland Security, via e-mail. Robert Lewis was CC'd on all of the emails that I sent to you, as was Jack Prescott with Central Intelligence. Either all of you are incompetent, or you're undercutting my arguments to my colleagues as well.

ERIC:

John, you really need to watch your tone.

JOHN:

Fuck you, Eric. You put my head in the guillotine today. And I'm going to make sure that I weasel my way out of it before the axe falls.

ERIC:

(sharply)

And how the fuck are you going to do that?

JOHN:

My emails are still on the servers.

ERIC:

(scoffs)

Please. You don't get to my position without knowing how to make a few incendiary emails disappear forever.

Pause. John's face fills with a controlled rage.

JOHN:

And you don't get to my position without knowing how to press the print key first, you prick.

Eric's eyes go wide.

ERIC:

You son of a bitch.

JOHN:

I have multiple copies. One of which is already in the hands of someone very close to the press. If you fire me, they're released, if you try to have me killed, they're released.

Pause. Eric's expression is a mixture of fear and rage.

JOHN:

I expect you to hand the president your resignation at 0800 tomorrow, effective immediately. You're going to take full responsibility for this, and fall on your sword.

John walks past Eric, towards the road. Eric follows.

ERIC:

I have worked for over thirty years in the U.S. intelligence community. I've seen things that you couldn't even imagine, and I've worked harder than anyone to get to where I am now. You do not have the right to destroy my legacy.

JOHN:

(turning back  
towards Eric)

Your legacy? You mean to tell me that the United States just endured the deadliest day on her soil since 9/11, largely in part because you completely ignored the advice of those entrusted to council you; and you're worried about your legacy? I'm sorry Eric, but I don't give a shit if you get a book deal, or your name on any buildings in DC.

John continues to walk toward the road.

JOHN:

(without  
turning around)

You know Eric, I really hope that this failure can be ascribed to your incompetence. Because the alternative would be much worse for you.

ERIC:

Why's that?

JOHN:

(stopping and  
turning around)

Because if anyone finds out that what you did was premeditated in any way. (pause). You could be charged with treason.

ERIC:

Where did you learn to be such an asshole?

JOHN:

From the best in the business.  
You. Now quit jamming the signal  
on my phone so that I can call my  
driver.

John pulls out his cell phone. Eric reluctantly pushes a button on his phone, and John's phone returns to full service.

Fade out.

INT - CAR - THE NEXT DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: Washington, D.C.

John's driver is parked behind the White House, and is listening to a report on the radio.

NEWSCASTER:

As if the effects of yesterday's terrorist attacks weren't enough for the President to handle. Today he returned to the White House, where he conducted additional national security meetings. While the nation's terror alert remains the highest that it's been since 9/11, the Secret Service said in a statement today that they felt that the White House provided excellent protection from future threats. In related news today, Eric Ingram, the Director of National Intelligence resigned from his post, and took full responsibility for the lapse in providing the President with the appropriate intelligence to thwart such an attack. The President tapped John Thompson to serve as the interim director until a replacement can be appointed. Meanwhile, over on Capitol Hill, Chairmen of both the House and Senate Intelligence Committees now have to grapple with whether or not to call Ingram before their committees for a formal investigation. In the coming days, the President plans to visit the sites of yesterday's terrorist attacks.

FADE TO BLACK

ROLL CREDITS

THE END.