The year is 2312. The United States is no longer the United States as we know it. After a devastating Fourth World War against China, the U.S. has joined with Canada and Central and South America to become Illeá -- a giant nation divided into thirty-five provinces and ruled by a monarchy.

With the previous governments annihilated and society in shambles, the monarchy has instituted a rigid caste system to make order out of chaos. The population is divided into eight castes, each known by its number. At the top are the Ones, who are the King and the Queen, and the rest of the Royal Family. At the bottom are the Eights, who consist of the mentally ill, the homeless, and felons. The vast majority of the population lies in between.

Your caste determines what jobs you can hold and your status in society. Much like in India today, every person is born into a caste, and to climb from a lower to a higher caste is almost impossible.

As in THE HUNGER GAMES, this future is harsh but lush. With a smaller population and a general deceleration of progress, there's less pollution and environmental degradation. In Illeá, the grass is greener, the sky is bluer, and the water is cleaner.

Technology exists, but access is restricted to the upper castes.

Even several generations after the war, the majority of Illeáns are content to give up freedom for peace.

But there are those who reject the caste system; who reject the authority of the monarchy; who want freedom at any price. Nomadic warriors, these Rebels have devoted their lives to the cause of Freedom. In order to destabilize the monarchy, the Rebels plot to disrupt an Illeán tradition that dates back nearly two hundred years...

When an Illeán Prince comes of age, every young woman in the country between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, regardless of caste, is invited to enter a lottery. One lucky girl from each of the thirty-five provinces is chosen by the palace, supposedly at random, to vie for the Prince's hand.

This is called The Selection.
ACT ONE

EXT. ILLEÁ - CAROLINA PROVINCE - DAY

We find ourselves soaring over lush green fields where deer and wild horses roam. A CHYRON reads: Autumn.

AMERICA (V.O.)
Long ago, this land was divided into many countries. The United States, Canada, Mexico... many others.

On the CHYRON, a year now fades up: Autumn, 2312.

We cross a wide, rushing RIVER...

EXT. ILLEÁ - CAROLINA PROVINCE - MILLVILLE - DAY

...to discover a small town. A mix of rich and poor, horse and buggies and bicycles coexist with ELECTRIC POD CARS.

AMERICA (V.O.)
The history books say that in the late 21st Century, the nations of the East brought war against the nations of the West. Countless millions died...

We travel into...

EXT. MILLVILLE - WEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

...a WALLED ENCLAVE, where mansion after mansion boast sprawling lawns and abundant gardens. These mansions look like mansions of today -- except the roofs have perfectly integrated solar technology.

AMERICA (V.O.)
Finally, to defeat the East, the countries of the West banded together to form one great country: Illeá.

We close in on...

EXT. WEALTHY HOME - DAY

...an elegant garden party. On the manicured lawn of an enormous CLASSICAL MANSION, uniformed SERVERS weave through a well-dressed crowd of wealthy Illeáns. In the background, we hear a beautiful SONG...
AMERICA (V.O.)
With society in shambles, the new
monarchy instituted a rigid caste
system to make order out of chaos.
There are eight castes. At the top
are the Ones -- the Royal Family.
At the bottom are the Eights,
social outcasts and criminals.
(beat)
I am a Five, a member of the artist
caste.  And my name... is America.

Off to one side, FIND the source of the singing: AMERICA
SINGER, 22, red hair flaming down her back. America has the
voice of an angel, and the mien of a goddess. She stands
with her sister, MAY, 20, who plays the violin while America
sings. Their mother, MAGDA, accompanies on a grand piano.

May, while pretty, is no competition for America. And though
Magda was once beautiful, time has taken a toll. America,
May, and Magda’s clothes are a stark contrast to those of the
wealthy ladies surrounding them -- the colors are duller, the
fabric coarser, the style more homemade than high fashion.

In front of America, stands a CLUSTER OF WEALTHY LADIES, who
eye an enormous TELE-SET in the corner of the garden. At the
moment, the only thing on the screen is THE ROYAL EMBLEM.

WEALTHY LADY 1
(munching on a canapé)
How long until the announcement?
I’m too nervous to eat!

WEALTHY LADY 2
The Selection is just the most
romantic way for the Prince to find
a bride!
(moons)
Think of it! Every young woman in
Illeá enters her name in a lottery,
then one lucky girl from each
province is chosen to move to the
Palace and be courted by the
Prince... Imagine having your name
drawn, knowing it was random
chance, or maybe even fate...

WEALTHY LADY 3
(amused)
Sometimes I forget that you’re a
Three, Meredith.
(MORE)
It’s common knowledge among we Two’s that the so-called lottery is just to appease the lower castes. There’s nothing random about it.

Why do you think Hardy and Ashlyn are throwing this party? Because they’re confident that Jasmine will be the choice from the Carolina province.

The ladies all turn to look at JASMINE GRANTHAM, 19, beautiful in a fragile way. She stands across the party with her PARENTS, the hosts of the party.

Jasmine is the clear choice. Best family, best connections.

Best nose job.

FIND America, who rolls her eyes at a concerned-looking May as they finish a song. As the ladies continue to gossip...

Let’s take a break. I can’t listen to them for another second.

You girls go ahead. I don’t want to risk them docking our pay.

As Magda continues to play, America and May walk past a BUFFET replete with everything from a WHOLE PIG to a CAVIAR BAR. As May longingly eyes a CHOCOLATE STRAWBERRY TREE...

They’re not right, are they? I have just as good a chance of being selected as any girl in the province?

Why do you even want to be in The Selection? It’s an antiquated tradition. And the Prince... he’s so stiff and smug.

America and May enter...
INT. WEALTHY HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

... a bustling kitchen, where SERVERS load trays with elaborate food and drink for the guests outside.

    MAY
    He’s the Prince. Someday, I’d be queen. People would adore me, just like they do Queen Amberly.

In one corner of the kitchen, the food laid out for the help is a stark contrast to that for the guests. As America takes a cloth from her pocket and wraps a meager sandwich for later, her eyes find a HANDSOME YOUNG MAN, a huge bag of ice on his shoulder, as he crosses the kitchen. His clothes are ragged, but his bearing is strong. As he exits --

    AMERICA
    What about love, May?

    MAY
    (rolls her eyes)
    Anyway, what do you know? You didn’t even enter The Selection.

    AMERICA
    Exactly. Because you can’t find true love by lottery.

As America slips the sandwich in her pocket --

    SERVER
    You can’t take that. That food is for eating here.

    MAY
    Don’t speak to my sister that way. You may be all dressed up, but you’re still a Six.

    AMERICA
    May!
    (to the server)
    Please. It’s for my little brother. He’s ill.

The Server glares at May, then walks away.

    AMERICA (CONT’D)
    That waiter can’t help that he was born to the servant caste!
MAY
And I can’t help that I was born to the artist caste. One caste above him.

America pulls May outside --

EXT. WEALTHY HOME - CONTINUOUS

-- to a corner away from both the guests and the help.

AMERICA
The caste you’re born into determines your trade, not your value as a person. How would you feel if you’d been born an Eight -- a social outcast? Not because you’re not smart. Not because you’re a bad person. Just because you had the bad luck to be born into the lowest of the low.

MAY
All I know is, unless I get into The Selection, I’ll be stuck as a Five. Struggling forever.

As May heads off, the young man America was watching moments ago walks over, now carrying FIREWOOD. This young man is ASPEN LEGER, 25. A Six, Aspen is strong, smart, and bears the burden of supporting his entire family.

ASPEN
Everything okay, miss?

AMERICA
My sister and I don’t share the same view of the world.

ASPEN
She’s young. She’ll learn. (beat) Your voice is magical.

AMERICA
Thank you. Do you have a request?

ASPEN
(smiles)
I do, but I’ll save it for tonight.

They risk a quick look, one filled with love...
AMERICA
Tonight, then.

Aspen walks away, leaving America beaming. Suddenly, the TELE-SET in the corner comes to life with the SOUND OF BLARING TRUMPETS. A murmur runs through the crowd. It’s time! “THE CAPITOL REPORT” fades up over the Royal Emblem. The guests gather around the Host family. America joins her mother and May. Within moments, the Royal Family appears on screen, seated in SLEEK THRONES: dignified KING CLARKSON, late 40′s; refined and beautiful QUEEN AMBERLY, 40′s; and PRINCE MAXON, 25, handsome, and regal.

As May clutches America’s hand, host GAVRIL FEDAYE walks onto the screen. Gavril is the Illeán Ryan Seacrest -- trim, bright-eyed, smooth-voiced.

GAVRIL (ON TV)
Welcome to this special edition of The Capitol Report! As always, I am your host, Gavril Fedaye, and it is my privilege to introduce... your king! His Royal Highness, King Clarkson of Illeá.

The King rises; the party guests clap as if he can hear them.

KING CLARKSON (ON TV)
Greetings, good citizens. Before we turn to The Selection, let us observe a moment of silence in honor of our Illeán troops, ensuring our safety across the nation and around the world.

The King bows his head. Everyone follows suit. A long beat. Then, as the King sits --

GAVRIL (ON TV)
Thank you, Your Highness.

(beat)
What a thrill this is. Once a generation, every young lady in Illeá of marriageable age, regardless of caste, is invited to enter a lottery. One young lady from each of Illeá’s thirty-five provinces is chosen to come to the Palace and vie for the Prince’s hand. This is The Selection!

(the crowd cheers, then)

(MORE)
Every queen since 2135 has been chosen from among the common populace, including our beloved Queen Amberly!

The party guests clap and cheer for Queen Amberly, who waves.

And now her son, Prince Maxon, is searching for his wife; for the girl who will, one day, be our queen. It’s so romantic, I can hardly stand it. Prince Maxon? A few words?

Gavril turns to Prince Maxon, who rises.

Just this: Among the young women whose names we are about to hear... I feel confident that I will find a bride as exceptional as my mother.

The Prince sits. Gavril steps up once again. May smiles at America. This is it! At the center of the crowd, Jasmine stands confidently with her parents.

The following names were drawn at random earlier today. And now it is my pleasure to announce... our Selection candidates! From the Alberta Province... a Two. Miss Ana Crane!

A picture of a PRETTY YOUNG WOMAN appears on the screen.

From the Brazilia Province... a Three. Miss Carmela del Rios.

Another picture appears...

From the Canadia Province... a Two. Miss Fiona Castley!

And another picture...

From the Carolina Province...
The crowd holds its collective breath. May’s grip on America’s hand tightens.

GAVRIL (CONT’D)
... a Five.

The crowd gasps collectively. A Five? Jasmine dissolves in tears. May’s eyes light up with hope.

GAVRIL (CONT’D)
Miss America Singer!

America can’t believe her ears -- or her eyes. Her picture is on the tele-set screen. Gavril Fedaye just said her name.

AMERICA
No!

As America looks around desperately for Aspen, one head turns her way... then another... then another, as the party guests recognize her from her picture on the tele-set. May stares at her, hurt.

MAY
How could you?

AMERICA
I didn’t. It’s... a mistake.

OFF America, stunned and horrified --

SMASH CUT TO:

THE SELECTION

FADE UP:

EXT. MILLVILLE - SINGER HOUSE - DAY

A furious America, with May and Magda in her wake, storms up to the Singer house, a small, two-story bungalow. Like the other houses on the street, the Singer home is half-cobbled together from recycled wood and siding. A small WINDMILL turns in the backyard. Rusting SOLAR PANELS adorn the roof.

This neighborhood of Fives and Sixes bears little resemblance to the Two side of town. Most homes have vegetable gardens, some have small livestock. There are many more bikes than cars -- and the few cars we see have been pieced together from found parts.

AMERICA
Just admit it, Mother! You’re so desperate to caste-climb, you put my name in the lottery!
MAGDA
I most certainly did not!

MAY
How do we know you didn’t do it yourself?

America throws open the front door --

INT. SINGER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

-- and blows into the living room. She’s immediately TACKLED by GERAD SINGER, 8, nerdy-adorable, a bit sickly.

GERAD
America’s gonna be a Princess!

America disentangles herself as May and Magda enter.

AMERICA
Hush, Gerad. I’ll be no such thing.

A blend of old and new, the home has both a wood-burning stove and a generator. The downstairs has just two rooms -- a living area (where Gerad sleeps at night) and a kitchen.

America’s father, MYLAN, 40’s, enters. His right arm, the hand twisted and gnarled, hangs uselessly at his side.

AMERICA (CONT’D)
Papa, I’m not going to the Palace --

MYLAN
America --

AMERICA
Mother knew how I felt. She never should have submitted my name --

MYLAN
She didn’t. I did.

Everyone stares at Mylan, shocked. As America absorbs this punch to the gut, Magda turns to May.

MAGDA
May, take your brother to the market. Use the rest of this month’s rations to get ingredients for a cake. The neighbors will want to celebrate.
GERAD

Yes!

May gives America one last glare. As May and Gerad exit, America faces off with her father.

AMERICA

Why?

MYLAN

I have two daughters. I wanted our family to have two chances...

AMERICA

(realizes)

Girls who participate in The Selection get a stipend. You’re selling me.

This is killing Mylan. But he has no choice.

MYLAN

How many winter nights have you kids gone to bed hungry?

MAGDA

If your father were still able to work, things would be different --

AMERICA

(to Mylan)

You can’t play the violin anymore because of them! Because of what they did!

MYLAN

A couple overzealous soldiers hurt me. Not the Royal family.

AMERICA

They accused you of being a Rebel. They beat you for no reason.

MAGDA

What happened to your father was awful. But it wasn’t the King’s fault. The monarchy protects us. Never forget that.

America appeals to her father --
AMERICA
But I don’t believe in The Selection. It’s antiquated. It’s sexist. You taught me to hold on to my beliefs, no matter what.

MYLAN
The world we live in... Sometimes, we have to make compromises.

MAGDA
America, think. Even if you just make it to the final six girls, to The Elite, you’ll become a Two. We all will. You know how that would change our lives.

America needs her parents to understand this --

AMERICA
I’m sorry -- but no. I’d do anything for you... for May and Gerad... But not this. Never this.

AS America heads up the stairs, leaving her stricken parents--

INT. SINGER HOUSE - AMERICA’S ROOM - NIGHT

The middle of the night. A sparsely furnished room, which America shares with May. As May sleeps soundly, FIND America wide-awake... waiting.

A beat, then America crawls out of bed. She pulls a JAR OF COINS out from a hiding place under her bed, then gingerly OPENS THE WINDOW. AS America CLIMBS OUT THE WINDOW --

EXT. SINGER HOUSE - NIGHT

America, the jar of coins in hand, shimmies down a LATTICE, drops to the ground. Under a WAXING MOON, America crosses the lush, overgrown backyard. She reaches an enormous RED PINE TREE, begins to CLIMB a makeshift ladder --

INT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

America emerges into a LARGE WOODEN TREE HOUSE. She looks around, finds Aspen, who waits for her in their secret love nest in the sky. America has been dying to tell him --

AMERICA
Aspen, you have to believe me. I didn’t enter my name --
ASPEN
I know --

AMERICA
I would never --

Aspen takes America’s hand, pulls her up and into the Tree House, crushing her against him. They kiss, their passion all the more intense because it’s forbidden. After several moments, Aspen begins to pull away --

AMERICA (CONT’D)
Don’t stop.

Aspen kisses her again. It’s as if they’re trying to devour each other. Finally, Aspen forces himself to push her away --

ASPEN
America, we can’t.

They both know what he’s saying. They can’t have sex.

AMERICA
(defiant)
Why not?

ASPEN
You know why not. Because we’re not married -- if we were caught, we’d both be put in jail. And because purity is a requirement for The Selection --

AMERICA
I’m not going. I’m staying right here in Carolina. With you.

ASPEN
America, I’m a Six. A servant --

AMERICA
Those numbers don’t mean anything, Aspen. Not if we don’t let them.

ASPEN
Moving into the Palace... meeting the Royal Family... becoming famous... Do you have any idea what it would mean for you? For your family? Even this town?
AMERICA
I refuse to parade around in a
bunch of ridiculous gowns,
competing for some arrogant prince.

ASPEN
(can’t help smiling)
I feel sorry for the poor man when
he crosses you.

AMERICA
I’m not going to date Prince Maxon.
How can I, when I’m going to marry
you.

ASPEN
You know that’s what I want.

America holds out the jar of coins.

AMERICA
We promised each other. We stood
under the moon, and we promised
that when we save enough of these --

enough to pay the fine for marrying
someone outside of one’s caste --

we’ll be wed.

(beat)
I love you, Aspen.

ASPEN
And I love you.

America smiles, relieved that the matter is settled. Aspen
pulls a COIN from his pocket, drops it in the jar.

ASPEN (CONT’D)
Sing for me.

AMERICA
I don’t want to sing. Not tonight.

Heat radiates from America. And from Aspen. She begins to
undress.

ASPEN
America...

As America’s nightdress falls to the floor, Aspen can’t take
it anymore. He kisses America’s face, her neck, breath
ragged, then--
AS Aspen’s lips continue to travel the length of America’s body and he melts out of frame...

INT. SINGER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The next morning. America and May move around the Kitchen, preparing a meager morning meal as Gerad draws at the table. There’s tense silence between the sisters. May BANGS a POT --

AMERICA
Go ahead, May. Yell, scream...

A beat. May bangs another pot, turns to America --

MAY
They picked one Five in the whole country! You have the chance to get out of this town, out of this life, and you’re throwing it away.

As May turns away from America, the back door opens. Magda enters, arms loaded with bags.

GERAD
Mama, what is all that?

MAGDA
(beaming)
I... I couldn’t believe it... The shopkeepers all knew who I was -- that I’m America’s mother. They kept giving me things --

GERAD
(looking into a bag)
Steak! And more sugar!

MAY
The special treatment won’t last once they hear America’s refusing to go.

MAGDA
Your sister will do the right thing. She always does.

(then)
And America’s not the only young person leaving town. I heard the Fletcher girl is marrying another Four from Orleans.

(MORE)
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CONTINUED:

MAGDA (CONT'D)
And the son of that Six family, the Legers, joined the Army.

America freezes. Her heart stops.

AMERICA
Which son?

MAGDA
The oldest, I think. I don’t know his name...

OFF America, trying to hide her panic --

EXT. BAD NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A depressing street lined with decaying, dilapidated houses. AS America makes her way past STRAY DOGS and STRAY CHILDREN --

EXT. ASPEN’S HOUSE - DAY

ON ASPEN’S BACK, shirtless, as he CHOPS WOOD behind the tiny house he shares with his mother and siblings.

AMERICA (O.S.)
Tell me it’s not true.

Aspen turns to America, REVEALING a fresh BRAND on his chest. It’s the ROYAL EMBLEM, the symbol of the Illeán Army.

ASPEN
I was going to tell you tonight. I leave for basic training on Friday.

AMERICA
(stares, horrified)
But soldiers aren’t allowed to have wives. Or even girlfriends --

ASPEN
America --

AMERICA
No. NO! NO!

She runs at him, beating at his chest.

ASPEN
(holds her away)
It’s for the best, America. I’ll earn enough to send money home... And when I get out in ten years, I’ll be a Two.
AMERICA
(heartbroken and furious)
You won’t get out. Soldiers die, Aspen. In the jungle... or on a glacier... There are battles going on all over the world. And what about the Rebels? Every day we hear about more uprisings --

ASPEN
I know all that. But if we got married, you’d become a Six... and I realized I love you too much for that.

AMERICA
So you’re going to get yourself killed?

Aspen just looks at her. If that’s what it takes, then yes.

AMERICA (CONT’D)
I hate you for this.

ASPEN
We could never hate each other.
(then)
I’ll think of you whenever I look at the moon. I hope sometimes you think of me too. But you have to let me go, America. It’s over.

OFF America, her life smashed into tiny pieces --

INT. SINGER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

ON MAGDA AND MYLAN, sitting nervously on their slightly tattered sofa, dressed in their Sunday best.

SYLVAN (O.S.)
Will Lady America be home soon?

REVEAL SYLVAN SANTOS, 30’s, gay, wearing a perfectly tailored jacket adorned with the ROYAL EMBLEM, sitting opposite Magda and Mylan. Sylvan is a close advisor to the Queen and an expert in all things related to Royal etiquette.

MAGDA
Any minute -- oh, here she is!

The front door opens. America enters. Sylvan stands --
SYLVAN
Lady America. I’m Sylvan Santos, etiquette expert and Advisor to the Queen. The Royal Family has sent me to welcome you and to assist you as you prepare for your travels.

A beat. America’s dreams have been shattered, but she can still make her family’s come true. America CURTSIES.

AMERICA
I’m very happy to meet you.
(dying inside)
When do we leave?

As Mylan and Magda look on, relieved, OFF America, her fate sealed --

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. SINGER HOUSE - AMERICA’S ROOM - DAY

America, all light gone from her eyes, stands at her bedroom window in a beautiful BRAND NEW, BLUE TRAVEL SUIT. She stares at the tree house, thinking of Aspen. Her bag is packed on the bed.

MAGDA (O.S.)
America! The car’s here! We have to go.

A beat. And then America closes her bag, picks it up, and starts for the door. At the last moment, she runs back to her bed, reaches beneath to retrieve the JAR OF COINS -- the coins she hoped would provide a future with Aspen. AS America puts the jar in her bag, and exits...

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

America stares out the car window. Across from her, Sylvan consults a THIN HANDHELD TABLET. America’s family sits around her. Magda is caught up in her excitement.

MAGDA
Just remember, be polite. And every thought you have doesn’t need to be voiced to the world.

Sylvan glances at America, who stifles a sigh. Outside, the town seems oddly deserted. A SECURITY ESCORT flanks the limo -- one car behind, one car in front. Other than that, there are no signs of life.

GERAD
Papa, where did everyone go?

As the car turns a final corner, Gerad’s question is answered. The ENTIRE TOWN of Millville, a thousand people strong, waits at the train station. Many carry signs: “QUEEN AMERICA!”; “MAKE US PROUD”; “FROM FIVE TO QUEEN!” For the first time, America begins to understand what her participation in The Selection means -- not just to her town, but to the people of the lower castes.

The car stops, and Sylvan opens the door. Overwhelmed, America exits the car. The townspeople erupt in CHEERS...

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

America and her family are immediately engulfed by the crowd, which begins to CHANT --
Guards surround the Singer family and Sylvan and guide them toward the TRAIN STATION. Built of heavy stone, the Millville train station is at least four hundred years old... but on the tracks behind it sits a SLEEK HIGH-SPEED TRAIN, the Royal Emblem emblazoned on every car. A cadre of more ROYAL GUARDS lines the platform along the train.

As America moves through the crowd, an OLDER WOMAN pushes through the Guards and grabs America’s hand.

OLDER WOMAN
It’s up to you to show ‘em! Show ‘em we lower castes are as good as the rest!

AMERICA
I -- I’ll try.

The Guards move America and her family ONTO THE TRAIN PLATFORM. Now above the fray, America looks down at the townspeople. Her people. Moved, she steps forward. The crowd quiets. Sylvan watches, intrigued.

AMERICA (CONT’D)
I just want to say... I will miss you all. As the only Five taking part in The Selection, I know you’re counting on me. I truly hope to make you proud.

The crowd ERUPTS, even louder than before. Sylvan raises an eyebrow. Perhaps this Five has potential...

SYLVAN
It’s time.

America hugs her mother, kisses Gerad. She turns to May, who pulls her into a hug.

MAY
I still hate you. But I want to hear every tiny detail.

AMERICA
I promise.

Finally, America looks to her father, whose conflicting emotions are all over his face -- pride, regret, hope, shame. She hugs him, wordlessly. Manages a smile.
Sylvan guides her to the steps of the train, where America turns to look back at the crowd, her family, her town.

At the back of the crowd, she catches a glimpse of Aspen! Her heart skips. She wants to run to him. But then the crowd shifts, and he’s gone.

SYLVAN
Lady America.

A beat. Her heart broken all over again, America steps onto the train... and into an unknown future.

INT. ROYAL TRAIN - AMERICA’S CAR - DAY

Sylvan shows America into her car -- it’s part elegant bedroom, part comfortable living room.

SYLVAN
Should you need me, my car is to the right. The dining room is to the left.

And then Sylvan is gone. The train starts to move. America watches as the crowd, then the town, recedes into the distance. Just as America is about to dissolve into tears...

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Lady America?

America turns to find a sweet-faced blonde at her door.

AMERICA
Oh! You’re...

ASHLEY
Ashley Brouillette. New England Province!

ASHLEY, a Three, is beautiful, genuine, and naive, a veritable bundle of nervous energy and excitement.

ASHLEY (CONT’D)
They picked me up first. We’re the only girls on the whole train! Can you believe we’re going to be at the Palace in two days?!

AMERICA
I... really can’t.

Ashley grabs America’s hand, guides her to the seating area.
ASHLEY
Oh, you’re so beautiful! And that hair! The Prince won’t even see me next to you! How can you look so calm? I swear, I’m about to bounce out of my skin!

OFF America, bemused, as Ashley chatters away...

INT. ROYAL TRAIN - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

America and Ashley now sit in comfy chairs around a formal dining table. The lush scenery has evolved into the flat FARMLANDS of the Great Plains. At the other end of the dining car, Sylvan eats his dinner, accompanied by his ever-present tablet. A LIVERIED WAITER delivers a salad to America and Ashley. A SECOND WAITER pours wine.

ASHLEY
Ooo, I love beaujolais!
(off America’s blank look)
I’m sorry! The wine. It’s a beaujolais. I must sound like a such an upper caste snob.

AMERICA
Not at all. I’m glad you told me. I suppose I’m at a distinct disadvantage, being the only Five.

ASHLEY
Oh, no! You’re lucky!

AMERICA
How so?

ASHLEY
At least at first, the other girls will assume you’re not a threat.

AMERICA
A threat...?

ASHLEY
The competition is going to be vicious! My mother heard stories about the last Selection. Lies, blackmail, threats...
(beat)
Don’t you see? We’re enemies! Every girl wants to be the one to marry the Prince!
America can’t help liking this girl.

**AMERICA**
Lady Ashley, there will be no lying, blackmailing or threatening from me. I promise --

SLAM! With no warning, the girls are THROWN TO THE GROUND as the train SQUEALS TO A SUDDEN STOP. Chaos erupts. Ashley SCREAMS as GUARDS run past through the dining car.

**SYLVAN**
(to the Guards)
What’s happening?

**GUARD 1**
(running by)
Rebels, sir!

Sylvan springs into action.

**SYLVAN**
Ladies, follow me. There’s a secure car this way.

America pulls a terrified Ashley to her feet and holds her hand as they run after Sylvan...

**INT. TRAIN - LOUNGE CAR - NIGHT**

Sylvan leads them through the Lounge Car as GUNFIRE erupts behind them --

**SYLVAN**
We’re almost there. One more car --

A bullet ZINGS past Sylvan’s shoulder, shattering a window.

**SYLVAN (CONT’D)**
Get down!

They hit the floor. Ashley huddles in a ball, whimpering.

**ASHLEY**
I wanna go home, I wanna go home...

**AMERICA**
Just think about meeting the Prince. He’ll think you’re so brave!

There’s MORE GUNFIRE. This time from the car in front of them. They’re surrounded.
Through the glass door, America sees a GUARD GO DOWN. His GUN skids across the floor. If America can just get the door open, she can almost reach it. She edges her way forward --

SYLVAN
Where are you going? The Guards will come --

America ignores him. Keeping her head down, she pushes open the door and reaches for the gun. At the other end of the car, one Rebel, WALTON SUVI, 20’s, a circular SNAKE TATTOO on his arm, shouts as he trades fire with more Royal Guards --

WALTON
Join or die!

The Rebels are advancing. America grabs the gun, starts back to Sylvan and Ashley.

AMERICA
Stay down. They’re coming --

America’s words are cut off as a GAS CANISTER COMES FLYING THROUGH THE WINDOW! America tries to reach Ashley, but can’t see her through the fog of gas. AS America passes out...

INT. PALACE - AMERICA’S ROOM - DAY

BLACK. And then a blur of light and color.

GIRL’S VOICE (V.O.)
She’s waking! Go! Fetch the --

More BLACK. Then another blur of light. America moans.

GIRL’S VOICE (V.O.)
Mum?

America opens her eyes. CLOSE ON LUCY, 19, fresh-faced, worried.

LUCY
Are you alright?

AMERICA
Where am I?

America blinks. Oh! She’s in the most luxuriously appointed room she’s ever seen. The huge bed is covered in down and silk. The vast windows boast a view of mountains and a blue ocean. Bowls of fruit and sweets sit on every available surface. Lucy, in a MAID’S UNIFORM, hovers over her.
LUCY
You’re in your room, mum. At the Palace. I’m Lucy, your maid.

AMERICA
My...? But... what happened?

QUEEN AMBERLY (O.S.)
I believe I can explain.

Lucy instantly falls into a bow. America can hardly trust her own eyes. Entering her room, walking toward her bed, a crown upon her head, is QUEEN AMBERLY -- even more beautiful in person than she was on TV. America tries to stand --

AMERICA
Your Highness --

QUEEN AMBERLY
No, no dear! No need for any formal nonsense. Not after what you’ve been through.

The Queen settles America back into bed, turns to Lucy.

QUEEN AMBERLY (CONT’D)
Water, please.
(then, to America)
How are you feeling?

AMERICA
A little... funny. Confused.
(putting pieces together)
There were Rebels...

Lucy hands the water to the Queen, who gives it to America.

QUEEN AMBERLY
(to Lucy)
You may leave us.

As Lucy quietly exits, America’s memories start to come back--

AMERICA
Ashley! And Sylvan --

QUEEN AMBERLY
They’re fine. You took the brunt of the gas, I’m afraid. As we speak, Sylvan is downstairs, hard at work with the other candidates. (beat) And Ashley...
(MORE)
AMERICA
She so wanted to meet the Prince...

QUEEN AMBERLY
(gently)
If you wished to go home as well, we would all understand.

A beat. Then --

AMERICA
I can’t. I mean, I don’t want to.

The Queen gives America an approving smile.

QUEEN AMBERLY
It’s going to be such fun getting to know you. Sylvan says you were quite the heroine on the train.

AMERICA
(blushes)
Not really.

QUEEN AMBERLY
America, the Rebels attacked your train because they want to shatter the joy and unity that The Selection brings to our nation. They had the same goals twenty-six years ago, when I was in your place. Only now they’re even more aggressive.

AMERICA
What did you do?

QUEEN AMBERLY
We did the only thing we could. We carried on.

(toward that end, Ashley has agreed to tell no one about the attack on the train. I am hoping that you’ll be willing to do the same?

Something about that doesn’t sit right with America.

AMERICA
Isn’t that like lying?
QUEEN AMBERLY
(bristles)
Being Queen is never simple. It is
a constant practice of balancing
one’s personal feelings with what
is best for the nation.

America considers.

QUEEN AMBERLY (CONT’D)
If you agree, the other candidates
will be told that your train
suffered a malfunction, which
delayed your arrival. And that
Ashley has chosen to stay home and
tend to her sick father.
  (then)
Also, I instructed Sylvan to
increase your family’s weekly
stipend.
  (smiles)
Hazard pay.

OFF America, feeling the pressure, as the Queen exits...

INT. PALACE - GRAND SALON - DAY

A massive, ornate room. At one end, a raised platform bears
a huge MURAL OF ILLEÀ, overlaid with the ROYAL EMBLEM, and
three (currently empty) THRONES for the King, Queen, and
Prince. At the other end, Sylvan addresses the thirty-three
Selection candidates (America will make it thirty-four), who
are seated around several round tables.

SYLVAN
If you read your packets, you know
that Prince Maxon can choose to
send you home at any time for any
reason. He’ll be making his first
cut after The Capitol Report
tomorrow night.

More than one girl’s hand covers her heart in despair at the
thought of going home. TINY LEE, 22, petite, a Three, raises
her hand --

TINY
How many will he send home?

SYLVAN
That’s at his whim. I imagine not
more than one or two.
  (then)

(MORE)
Meantime, your first state dinner,
in honor of the Ambassador of the
European Alliance, is in sixteen
days. Those who are still here
will be a direct reflection of what
I have taught you. If you fail, I
fail. And we shall not fail.

(then)
So... who can tell me the
Ambassador’s name?

At the front table, CELESTE NEWSOME raises her hand. A 24-
year-old Two, Celeste is smart, beautiful, and conniving
beneath a friendly facade.

CELESTE
Sir Edmund Willen. He’s a liberal
with centrist tendencies.

SYLVAN
Very nice.

A murmur hums through the group as America enters the room.
She tries to ignore it as she searches for a seat. Most of
the candidates eye her with a range of suspicion and
chilliness. But one girl, FIONA, quietly waves her over.

FIONA
Here! By me!

FIONA CASTLEY is a 23-year-old Two. Fiona is graceful,
intelligent, and charming.

SYLVAN
As a liberal, where would he stand
on the European financial crisis?

As America sits, several hands go up, including Celeste’s and
Fiona’s. Sylvan points to Fiona.

FIONA
On financial matters, he’s
surprisingly conservative. I was
lucky enough to meet him last year
in Paris.

Celeste fumes.

SYLVAN
Moving on to the primary exports
from the European Alliance...

As Sylvan continues his lesson, Fiona whispers to America.
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CONTINUED: (2)

FIONA
We heard something happened with your train?

This is America’s moment of truth. She thinks of her family and that weekly stipend. Then --

AMERICA
Yes. It... suffered a malfunction.

FIONA
Well, at least you made it here. Sylvan just announced that poor Ashley Brouillette had to go home to take care of her father.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. REBEL CAMP - TENT - DAY

REVEAL ASHLEY, her MOUTH TAPED SHUT, her clothes filthy, BOUND to a chair in a bare-bones military-style tent. TWO ARMED REBEL GUARDS stand watch. Ashley is not safe at home.

The tent door opens, and COMMANDER GAIA WOODS, 28, gorgeous, enters. Raised outside of Illeán society by her single father to be a fierce soldier, Gaia is now the leader of the Rebels. Her second-in-command, Lieutenant Walton Suvi (who we saw during the train attack) follows. Gaia stops in front of Ashley. She RIPS off the tape --

ASHLEY
Please, you have to let me go! My father will pay whatever you want --

GAIA
Quiet.

Ashley shuts her mouth. Tears run down her cheeks.

GAIA (CONT'D)
I am Commander Gaia Woods, leader of the Northwest Rebel Army.

ASHLEY
Just name your ransom --

Gaia holds up her hand. Ashley shuts up again.

GAIA
No one here wants your money. We have but one desire.

(MORE)
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CONTINUED:

GAIA (CONT'D)
(beat)
To bring the King to his knees.

OFF Ashley, terrified --

EXT. PALACE - NIGHT

Night falls. To establish.

INT. PALACE - AMERICA’S ROOM - NIGHT

Now in an elegant nightgown, America stands at her bedroom windows. It seems like a million years since she left home. She misses everyone... but Aspen most of all. America searches the sky, but the moon is nowhere in sight.

America turns from the window, grabs her robe from the bed.

AMERICA
I’m going for a walk.

Lucy stops organizing America’s closet -- which is loaded with NEW CLOTHES -- and frowns.

LUCY
It’s not allowed, mum --

But America is already out the door...

INT. PALACE - NIGHT

America wanders the Palace halls... until she turns a corner and finds herself on a long walkway overlooking the gardens. Exactly what she’s been looking for. She goes down some stairs, heads straight for the garden doors...

But the doors are blocked by two ROYAL GUARDS. A beat, and then America walks forward. Maybe if she acts like she belongs there...? But the Guards cross their bayonets --

CORPORAL
No candidates are allowed outside.
King’s orders.

AMERICA
I won’t be long --

CORPORAL
No exceptions. Please return to your room.

America puts on a disappointed face, but there’s a determination in her eyes as she turns away from the guards.
Instead of going back to her room, America heads back up the stairs to the long walkway overlooking the gardens.

Now out of sight of the Guards, America finds a TRELLIS that leads down to the garden. Without a second thought, America throws her legs over the side, and in seconds she’s climbing down into...

EXT. PALACE - GARDENS - NIGHT

America’s feet touch ground once again... but this time, she’s in the Palace Garden. Almost immediately she spies the moon. It’s obscured by a hedge, so she walks forward, eyes on the sky, searching for a clear view.

America is so intent on her quest for the moon, that she doesn’t hear the King and Prince Maxon walking along the same path until she is almost upon them.

KING CLARKSON
... tomorrow you meet the girls for the first time.

America gasps, quickly slips into a gap in a large hedge.

PRINCE MAXON
The young women. Yes.

KING CLARKSON
Just remember. The Selection is about more than who you want to take to bed.

As America tries to disappear deeper into the hedge, she STEPS ON A TWIG. Snap! She holds her breath...

PRINCE MAXON
I’m well aware of that, Father. It’s about finding a wife, a partner --

Neither the King or the Prince seems to have heard her.

KING CLARKSON
It’s about more than that. Maxon, you must give up any romantic notions of love.

PRINCE MAXON
You married Mother for love.
KING CLARKSON
Times have changed. The challenges we face are far greater.

PRINCE MAXON
You expect me to marry for political expedience.

KING CLARKSON
There are girls here from powerful, connected families. The right alliance would give us access to resources that could help quell the Rebels.

(beat)
I’m saying this now because I don’t want you to get hurt, Son.

A beat. And then the King pats Prince Maxon on the shoulder and walks away. America is barely breathing, desperate to make her escape. But Prince Maxon stays where he is until the King is out of sight. Then --

PRINCE MAXON
Whoever you are, show yourself.

America panics. She makes a break for the trellis. But she only gets a few steps before an imperious voice commands --

PRINCE MAXON (CONT’D)
I am Prince Maxon of Illeá. Lady America, you will stop and bow.

OFF America, caught...

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

EXT. PALACE - GARDENS - NIGHT

Moments later. America and Prince Maxon stand face to face, Ruler and subject. America BOWS --

AMERICA
Your Majesty. Forgive me. I didn’t mean to spy.

MAXON
Yet you were crouching in the bushes.

AMERICA
To hide. Not to spy.

MAXON
The Guards have orders to keep The Selected within palace walls at night.

AMERICA
I... climbed down a lattice. I wanted to see the moon. It reminds me of home.

A beat as Prince Maxon processes this.

MAXON
Aside from the fact that such a flagrant violation of the rules is grounds for dismissal... you could have been shot.

America’s hackles go up. She looks him in the eye.

AMERICA
You’re going to kick me out?

MAXON
Perhaps.
(off America)
Lady America, you obviously have a problem. Explain.

AMERICA
I’d rather not.

MAXON
Tell me the truth, and I’ll consider not sending you home.
A tense beat.

**AMERICA**

It’s just that... we’re all supposed to be so thrilled to be given the opportunity to compete for your affection like cats in an alley fight, but it’s a --

America stops herself.

**MAXON**

It’s a -- what?

**AMERICA**

(beat, then)

It’s kind of a farce. Who picks a mate by drawing a name out of a hat?

**MAXON**

You know so much about love?

Maxon’s superior tone gets under America’s skin.

**AMERICA**

I know about life. I didn’t grow up in a gilded cage.

A beat. Prince Maxon regards America coolly. Then --

**MAXON**

We know what you think of me. Let me tell you what I think of you.

(off America)

You are a willful, unappreciative yokel who has no idea what it means to live in this Palace.

(then)

And you clearly don’t have a romantic bone in your body.

America is taken aback at the Prince’s dressing down.

**MAXON (CONT’D)**

I’ll leave you to your moon. The Guards won’t stop you again.

As Prince Maxon walks away, we’re OFF America, having blown it with the future King of Illeá...
EXT. PALACE - DAY

A beautiful new day. To establish...

INT. PALACE - AMERICA’S ROOM - DAY

PAN ACROSS AMERICA’s BED, which is covered with BEAUTIFUL DISCARDED GOWNS. FIND AMERICA, wearing a pretty but plain green dress. Lucy frets as she pins America’s hair --

    LUCY
    Are you sure you want to wear that dress, mum? It’s so... simple.

    AMERICA
    It’s the only one that doesn’t make me feel like a stuffed goose. And, Lucy, please stop calling me “mum.”

    LUCY
    But it’s only proper --

    AMERICA
    I’m from one of the lower castes, just like you. And I don’t plan to forget it.

    LUCY
    (smiles shyly)
    Yes, mum. Lady America.

There’s a KNOCK on the door, and Fiona pops her head in.

    FIONA
    C’mon. We’re finally going to meet the man himself.

As America heads for the door --

    FIONA (CONT’D)
    What do you think he’ll be like?

America considers. Then --

    AMERICA
    Tall.

As America and Fiona head down the hall --

    GUARD (PRELAP)
    (a trumpet sounds, then)
    All hail. Prince Maxon of Illeá! Long live the Prince!
INT. PALACE - GRAND SALON - DAY

America and Fiona sit with the thirty-two other girls. As all eyes go to the back of the room, TWO GUARDS open a GOLD DOOR. As everyone rises, Fiona whispers to America --

FIONA
Smile, America. This is supposed to be fun.

Prince Maxon, wearing the FORMAL UNIFORM of the Royal Army, enters, followed by Sylvan. The room is abuzz with excitement. As the girls BOW in unison --

MAXON
Ladies, I am Prince Maxon of Illeá. We begin this process as strangers, but I have no doubt we will all be fast friends.

Prince Maxon’s gazes lands on America. He gives her an almost imperceptible nod. America nods back. Across the room, FIND CELESTE, who notices this subtle exchange.

MAXON (CONT’D)
Tonight on The Capitol Report, Gavril will introduce you to your public. Until then, it’s just us.

SYLVAN
This morning, each of you will meet individually with Prince Maxon.

A murmur goes through the crowd.

PRINCE MAXON
As you wait your turns, please enjoy my first gift to you.

Suddenly, ROYAL STAFFERS pour through the doors, carrying hundreds of boxes of DESIGNER SHOES. Every girl’s dream. Except America’s. She couldn’t care less. Tiny squeals --

TINY
SHOES!

Tiny lunges for a box. Sylvan gives Tiny a look, then --

SYLVAN
Lady Fiona, we’ll begin the introductions with you.

As Fiona follows Sylvan, OFF America, feeling very alone --
INT. PALACE - GRAND SALON - “SHOE BOUTIQUE” - A BIT LATER

One corner of the Grand Salon has been transformed into a luxurious shoe boutique. Soft carpet, plush benches, champagne, caviar, and hundreds of fabulous pairs of shoes.

As America examines a pair of PINK PLATFORMS, Tiny tries on some SIX INCH FEATHERED HEELS --

TINY
This must be so exciting for you.
Do Fives go to actual shoe stores, or do you cobble them at home?

America gives Tiny a look.

AMERICA
We usually just go barefoot.

As Tiny reacts, America eyes a pair of EXQUISITE SPARKLING STILETTOS. She picks them up in a size 6 1/2. Celeste, towering in OSTRICH SKIN HEELS, pauses in front of America.

CELESTE
(re: stilettos)
Those don’t seem like your style.

Celeste assesses America from head to toe --

CELESTE (CONT’D)
Brilliant dress choice, by the way.
(off America)
That sack makes you stand out from the crowd.

AMERICA
I’m wearing this dress because I like it.

CELESTE
Of course you are.

Clearly, she doesn’t believe America. Tiny stares at America. Suspicious. Sylvan approaches --

SYLVAN
Lady America. It’s time.

Sylvan escorts America across the room...
INT. PALACE - GRAND SALON - SEATING AREA - CONTINUOUS

An elegant seating area, partially obscured from the rest of the Grand Salon by beautiful PRIVACY SCREENS. Sylvan and America stop in front of Prince Maxon, who stands waiting.

SYLVAN
Prince Maxon, allow me to introduce
Lady America Singer of Carolina.

Prince Maxon kisses her hand, acts as if they’ve never met.

MAXON
Lady America. A pleasure.

AMERICA
Your Highness. I’m honored.

A charged beat. As Sylvan leaves, America and Prince Maxon sit. He immediately drops the pretense.

MAXON
How was the rest of your evening?

America hesitates. Her family needs that stipend.

AMERICA
Prince Maxon, I apologize for my behavior in the garden. I was insulting and disrespectful to you and the Royal Family. I’m ashamed.

PRINCE MAXON
Apology accepted. Is that all?

AMERICA
Uh... aren’t we supposed to talk?

PRINCE MAXON
I don’t think that’s necessary.

He stands. America’s heart sinks.

AMERICA
But... you’re not being fair. You made me tell you --

PRINCE MAXON
Lady America. Good day.

America is crushed. So much for the stipend. She’s blown it for her entire family. AS America walks away...
INT. PALACE - GRAND SALON - MAIN AREA

America heads for the exit to escape, Fiona approaches --

FIONA
Isn’t Maxon wonderful? He made me feel so comfortable -- what’s wrong?

AMERICA
I think I’m going home.

FIONA
I’m sure it wasn’t that bad. You’ll just have to charm him on The Capitol Report tonight.

OFF America --

INT. PALACE - AMERICA’S ROOM - DAY

ON THE SPARKLING STILETTOS, nestled in tissue paper.

LUCY (O.S.)
These will never fit you, mum. I mean -- Lady America.

FIND AMERICA writing a NOTE at her vanity table.

AMERICA
They’re not for me. They’re for my sister, May. Can you send them?

There’s a KNOC on the door. As Lucy picks up the shoes, America goes to the door. Opens it to FIND CELESTE.

CELESTE
I was rude. I’m sorry. Do you hate me?

AMERICA
I don’t know you.

CELESTE
(smiles)
I’d like to change that.

EXT. PALACE - PARAPET - DAY

OVER A BREATHTAKING VIEW OF PACIFICA, Illeá’s capitol city --

AMERICA (O.S.)
It’s beautiful.
FIND CELESTE AND AMERICA, strolling along a walkway that circles the perimeter of the Palace roof. ARMED GUARDS are stationed at regular intervals.

CELESTE
And humbling. Looking at the city, I’m reminded what a heavy responsibility it is to be Queen.

AMERICA
I’m sure whoever the Prince chooses will rise to the occasion.

CELESTE
You seem to know him well.

AMERICA
No, not at all.

CELESTE
Lady America, the palace is a very small place. Guards and maids talk. I know all about your late night rendezvous in the garden with the Prince. Frankly, I wish I’d thought of it.

AMERICA
It wasn’t planned. Anyway, I’m pretty sure he’s sending me home.

CELESTE
Is that what you want?

AMERICA
No, I want... I need to stay.

CELESTE
Oh yes. Your father is unable to work, isn’t he? In addition to whatever feelings you may have for the Prince, I’m sure the stipend means quite a lot to your family.

AMERICA
How did you know about my father?

CELESTE
It’s important to know the competition.

(beat)
It’s also important to have allies. Perhaps... if we work together...

(MORE)
CELESTE (CONT'D)
we can make sure Prince Maxon sends
the right girls home.

AMERICA
I don’t understand.

CELESTE
We can’t leave a decision this
important to a man. With a little
strategy, we can ensure that you
and I make it to the final six. To
the Elite.

America is horrified by what Celeste is suggesting.

AMERICA
I won’t undermine any girl here,
Celeste. Not even you.

A beat. Celeste drops the friendly facade --

CELESTE
I misjudged you. It won’t happen
again.
(beat)
See you at The Capitol Report.

Celeste leaves. OFF America, having made her first enemy --

END OF ACT THREE
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ACT FOUR

INT. PALACE - THE CAPITOL REPORT SET - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The thirty-four members of The Selection are loosely lined up backstage at The Capitol Report. MAKE-UP ARTISTS and PRODUCTION CREW MEMBERS scurry back and forth. FIND AMERICA, wearing a GORGEOUS GOWN. She stands with Fiona as a TECH mikes them. Sylvan calls out --

SYLVAN
Attention, ladies! The Capitol Report is about to air live. Do not embarrass me.

AMERICA
(to Fiona, nervous)
How many people will be watching?

FIONA
Just pretend the camera’s not there. That’s what my media coach told me.

America raises an eyebrow. Media coach? A few girls over in the line, they hear Tiny Lee exclaim --

TINY
Oh, Celeste. She’s precious!

America and Fiona look over to see Celeste holding up a PHOTO of a THREE-YEAR-OLD GIRL. Celeste turns to them --

CELESTE
My niece. Isn’t she something?

FIONA
(pales)
Where did you get that?

CELESTE
I brought it from home. So I’d never forget what’s important.
(hands Fiona the photo)
Here. You have it.

America studies Fiona and Celeste. What’s going on? From the wings, she sees Gavril take his place on stage --

GAVRIL
Hello, Illeá! Welcome to The Capitol Report! Tonight I give you... the ladies of The Selection!
Fiona just shakes her head, stares at the photo.

SYLVAN
(to all)
You’re on! Go, go, go!

AS the thirty-four girls file onto the set --

INT. SINGER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ON A LARGE BRAND NEW TELE-SET -- King Clarkson, Queen Amberly, and Prince Maxon sit on their thrones as the thirty-four girls of The Selection take their seats.

GERAD (O.S.)
I see her! I see America!

GO WIDE to find Mylon, Magda, May, and Gerad gathered around the tele-set to watch The Capitol Report. Popcorn abounds.

MAGDA
Oh! She’s beautiful.

GAVRIL (ON TV)
Let’s go to the man of the hour. Prince, prepare to spill your guts!

OFF America’s family, entranced --

INT. PALACE - THE CAPITOL REPORT SET -- CONTINUOUS

Everyone watches as Gavril puts Prince Maxon in the hot seat.

GAVRIL
Prince Maxon, who among the ladies stands out so far?

MAXON
I would have to say... Lady America Singer of Carolina has made quite a first impression.

Immediately, a SPOTLIGHT shines on America. She blushes.

MAXON (CONT’D)
She’s so excited to be part of the grand tradition of The Selection... This is truly her dream come true.
America glances at Prince Maxon. Is he... teasing her?

GAVRIL
Ah... Lady America, how wonderful that you’re living your dream.

AMERICA
I... ah --

GAVRIL
Don’t be shy. You’re among friends. Millions of them.

America decides she can give as good as she gets.

AMERICA
Well, in that case... I’ll say this experience would mean nothing without Prince Maxon... He’s so modest, so unassuming --

PRINCE MAXON
You flatter me.

America and Prince Maxon lock eyes.

AMERICA
(serious now)
But I think his best quality... is his forgiving heart.

America and the Prince are having a moment. AS they stare at each other --

INT. ROYAL ARMY OUTPOST - MESS HALL - CONTINUOUS

A rowdy group of THIRTY SOLDIERS watch The Capitol Report. Among them, FIND ASPEN, his head shaved, wearing Royal Army fatigues. His gaze is intense as he watches America.

SOLDIER
Hey, Leger, you know the hottie from Carolina?

ASPEN
Never seen her before.

Gavril looks into the camera.

GAVRIL (ON TV)
Looks like we have a frontrunner!

OFF Aspen, his heart breaking all over again --
INT. PALACE - THE CAPITOL REPORT SET -- CONTINUOUS

As Gavril turns to Celeste, America exhales, relieved her time on camera is done. She tries to catch Fiona’s eye. But Fiona stares off, looking miserable.

GAVRIL
Lady Celeste, what’s your favorite thing about The Selection?

The SPOTLIGHT shines on Celeste. She’s cool as a cucumber.

CELESTE
Aside from the Prince?
(everyone laughs)
Bonding with the girls. Sharing secrets. One secret especially --

Suddenly, Fiona STANDS.

FIONA
Mr. Fedaye. I need to say something.

The SPOTLIGHT swings to Fiona. Everyone stares.

GAVRIL
Yes, Lady Fiona?

FIONA
I -- I... I’m leaving.

GAVRIL
Excuse me, dear? I didn’t follow.

FIONA
I’m leaving The Selection. I’m quitting. I want to go home.

Fiona flees the stage. Everyone gasps, horrified. America wishes she could follow Fiona. Queen Amberly speaks up --

QUEEN AMBERLY
Please, everyone... Don’t judge Fiona harshly. Unless you’ve been through this process, you can’t know what it’s like.

GAVRIL
The Prince hasn’t even made a first cut and this is the second girl to go!
QUEEN AMBERLY
That’s true. Unfortunately, Ashley Brouillette had to care for her ailing father.

GAVRIL
Such a sacrifice! Ashley, if you’re watching...

INT. REBEL CAMP - TENT - NIGHT

Gaia watches The Capitol Report with Lieutenant Walton Suvi. Bound and gagged in the corner, Ashley watches, terrified.

GAVRIL (ON TV)
... we love you!

Furious, Walton slams the ancient, rabbit-eared television to the ground.

WALTON
Your brilliant plan has failed.
The Royals quashed the girl’s abduction -- it’s like it never happened!

GAIA
It will come out. A girl of her standing can’t just... disappear.

WALTON
We have to force the issue.
(off Gaia)
We kill the girl. Leave her body in Pax Square in the middle of the capitol. Let’s see the Palace ignore that.

Ashley’s eyes are wild with fear.

GAIA
I won’t use our prisoner for sloppy instant gratification, Lieutenant Suvi.

WALTON
We need to send a message.

GAIA
And give the Palace the opportunity to demonize us? No.

(MORE)
If we want to abolish the caste system and topple the monarchy, we have to win the hearts of the people.
(beat)
There’s a smarter way to use this girl.

WALTON
And what is that?

A beat, then --

GAIA
I’m working on it. Now get out.

The tension between the two Rebels is palpable. As Walton exits, OFF Gaia, deep in thought --

INT. PALACE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

America knocks on Fiona’s door.

FIONA (O.S.)
Go away.

AMERICA
Fiona, please. It’s me.

A beat. The door opens a crack, revealing a tearful Fiona.

AMERICA (CONT’D)
Are you alright?

Fiona shakes her head, no.

AMERICA (CONT’D)
(gently)
The picture Celeste showed us... who was it, really?

A beat, then Fiona nods --

FIONA
My daughter. Melania.

America stares at Fiona, shocked.

FIONA (CONT’D)
She’s three years old. I was eighteen... my parents nearly disowned me.
(MORE)
Instead, they arranged for one of our maids to raise Melania as her own. No one was supposed to know.

(beat)
Buying one’s way out of trouble.
One of the perks of being a Two.

AMERICA
Oh, Fiona, I’m so sorry.
(beat)
How did Celeste find out?

FIONA
I have no idea. But if she told the Prince... I’d be kicked out of The Selection, publicly shamed, maybe even prosecuted.

AMERICA
That’s blackmail. She can’t --

FIONA
Yes, she can. And she did.
(beat)
Trust no one, America. In here, there’s no such thing as a friend.

OFF America, daunted --

END OF ACT FOUR
ACT FIVE

INT. CELESTE’S ROOM - NIGHT

Celeste breezes into her room, smug with victory. She smiles to herself as she heads to her tea service. Then --

CELESTE
(annoyed)
Annaleigh, this tea is ice cold --

QUEEN AMBERLY (O.S.)
Your maid has been dismissed for the evening.

Celeste spins, stunned to find Queen Amberley in her room.

CELESTE
Your highness, I’m honored...

Then Celeste sees that the Queen is holding a BLACK FILE FOLDER. Shit. Celeste’s eyes shoot to her desk. The drawer is open, and inside we see several similar files -- thirty-four, to be exact. One for every Selection candidate.

QUEEN AMBERLY
You’ve got a juicy morsel on every girl here. Your researchers are very thorough.
(beat)
Almost as thorough as mine... you stupid, presumptuous chit.

CELESTE
Your highness --

The Queen closes in on Celeste, her voice calm, but cutting.

QUEEN AMBERLY
Did you really think that I don’t know every single fact and rumor about every Selection candidate to walk through my doors?

The Queen tosses the file on Celeste’s bed. Photos of Fiona and her daughter spill out.

QUEEN AMBERLY (CONT’D)
That I didn’t know about Fiona’s indiscretion? That perhaps there were practical reasons for her presence here?
CELESTE
Practical...?
(realizes)
Her father. He owns the largest iron ore conglomerate in the Kingdom.
(scrambling)
Your highness, I made a mistake. I would never want to --

QUEEN AMBERLY
(sighs)
Hush, child. Sit.
(Celeste sits)
Fiona would have gone home when the time was right. But you... you’ve made quite a mess of things.
(beat)
And I had such high hopes for you.

CELESTE
You... did?

QUEEN AMBERLY
You possess many of the qualities I hope for in my son’s bride.
Intelligence, beauty --

CELESTE
(gets it)
And it probably doesn’t hurt that my mother’s family has strong ties in the Northern Provinces?

QUEEN AMBERLY
I see we understand each other.
(then)
Should you have any more clever ideas, you will clear them with me. And never forget. Whatever you think you know... I know far more.

CELESTE
(really?)
Did you know about your son’s midnight assignation with the Five?

A beat. The Queen’s impressed. But --

QUEEN AMBERLY
Heed this warning: anything you or I might do to come between them will just make him want her more.
CELESTE
Something has to be done --

QUEEN AMBERLY
Calm yourself, dear.
(smiles)
Leave America Singer to me.

EXT. PALACE - GARDENS - NIGHT

FIND America, upset about Fiona, walking the Gardens, looking at THE MOON.

MAXON (O.S.)
You were good tonight.

America turns to FIND MAXON.

MAXON (CONT’D)
The public will love you.

AMERICA
I’m not looking for their love.

MAXON
You don’t seem to be looking for mine either. And yet... I find myself thinking of you. Often.

A beat. America doesn’t know how to respond.

AMERICA
Fiona shouldn’t have gone home tonight.

MAXON
Tonight, tomorrow... next month. All but one will go eventually.

AMERICA
But maybe she was the one. You don’t know how these girls act when you’re not around --

MAXON
Except you. I trust you, America, to be your true self. Always. Whether I like it or not.
(then)
Too bad you’re in love with another.

Blood rushes to America’s face. Her heart pounds.
AMERICA
I’m not --
(can’t lie)
How did you know?

MAXON
You weren’t gazing at the moon to
pine after the family dog.
(beat)
Tell me about him.

AMERICA
(beat, then)
We were going to get married. But
he’s a Six, and... it doesn’t
matter. It’s over.

MAXON
So you came here to lick your
wounds.

AMERICA
I came to help my family.

Maxon takes a step closer to America. Intimate.

MAXON
You hadn’t even met me when you
fell in love with him.
(gets even closer)
Perhaps you simply didn’t know what
you were missing.

With that, Maxon takes America’s face between his hands,
kisses her -- gently, then passionately. For a moment, she
responds. There’s no denying the electricity between them.
Then America pulls away, confused --

AMERICA
Stop.

Maxon drops his hands to his sides. Respectful --

MAXON
Your loyalty is admirable.
(beat)
Of course, if I have no hope of
winning your love... I have no
choice but to send you home.

Maxon leaves. OFF America, what has she done?
EXT. PALACE - NIGHT TO DAY
To establish. The next day.

INT. PALACE - AMERICA’S ROOM - DAY
CLOSE ON America’s whole family, looking right at the camera.

MAGDA
You sounded so smart and composed!

AMERICA
I didn’t feel composed.

REVERSE TO FIND that we’re in America’s room. She’s sitting at her desk and talking with her family via tele-com.

MAY
Mer, the Prince couldn’t take his eyes off you! He has a crush!

MAGDA
The whole town’s talking about it.

AMERICA
Listen. I have to tell you something...

This is the hardest thing America’s ever had to do. Her parents, her whole family, are going to be crushed.

MYLAN
We’re just... we’re so thankful, honey. The pantry’s full for the first time in --

MAGDA
Years! And I took Gerad to the doctor, and didn’t have to worry one bit about paying for medicine.

America’s never seen her family so happy. She can’t go home. Not now. But what is she going to do?

AMERICA
I have to go. But... I’ll see you soon.

MAGDA/MAY
We love you! Proud of you.

GERAD
Send me some sweets!
America hangs up. OFF America, coming up with a plan --

INT. PALACE - GRAND SALON - DAY

America enters, a new determination in her step. Sylvan consults with the Royal Chef. Otherwise, the room is empty.

AMERICA
I need to see the Prince.

SYLVAN
(to the chef)
Her Highness will enjoy the duck.

He waits for the chef to exit, then turns to America.

SYLVAN (CONT’D)
That’s not how this works.

AMERICA
It’s important.

SYLVAN
If the Prince wants to speak with you, he’ll summon you.

America takes a step closer. Sylvan raises an eyebrow.

AMERICA
Sylvan, I’m going to talk to someone. I can talk to the Prince... or I can talk to the other girls. Perhaps about what really happened on the train?

A long beat. Then--

SYLVAN
I’ll see what I can do.

INT. PALACE - PORTRAIT GALLERY - NIGHT

The Royal portrait gallery. Two hundred years of family paintings line the walls. America stands before a painting of Prince Maxon.

MAXON (O.S.)
I’m better-looking in person.

America turns to find the Prince approaching. Suddenly, she’s nervous.
MAXON (CONT’D)
A joke. Not a very good one.

AMERICA
You’re... here.

MAXON
That was the point in summoning me, was it not?

AMERICA
I suppose it was.

A beat.

MAXON
So... why am I here?

America pushes her nerves aside, and plows ahead.

AMERICA
I want to propose a deal.

OFF America, gathering her courage --

END OF ACT FIVE
ACT SIX

INT. PALACE - PORTRAIT GALLERY - NIGHT

America and Maxon walk through the gallery.

AMERICA
You need an inside man.

MAXON
Are we planning a bank robbery?

AMERICA
I mean... you need someone to be your eyes and ears among the girls. Someone who’ll tell you what they’re really like, not just what they’re like in front of you.

MAXON
And you want to be that person.

AMERICA
All you have to do... is let me stay.

MAXON
Even though you have no feelings for me and never will, because of your moon fellow.

AMERICA
Yes.

MAXON
You offer this service solely for the sake of your family, then?

AMERICA
That’s right.

Maxon paces for a moment. America can barely breathe. Then--

MAXON
You will maintain the highest level of behavior and studiousness. You will be a stellar Selection candidate. You will tell no one of this agreement.

AMERICA
No one.
MAXON
In return, I will ensure that you become one of The Elite, the final six.

AMERICA
But... will your father allow that?

MAXON
He may not like it, but I assure you, all decisions regarding The Selection are mine, and mine alone.

AMERICA
Maxon, thank you.

MAXON
Prince Maxon.
(beat)
Good night, Lady America.

Maxon gives America a slight bow. And then he turns and exits. OFF America --

EXT. ND PACIFICA STREET - NIGHT

Rebel Leader Gaia Woods, nondescript in the clothes of a Six, walks down a half-empty street, avoids eye contact with any PASSERSBY. She stops in front of a GENERAL STORE. Enters --

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Gaia cruises the aisles. When she’s made sure there are no customers, she says to the MAN behind the cash register --

GAIA
I’ve traveled three days. Can you spare a loaf of salt bread?

MAN
You’ll find it in the back.

Gaia nods, heads back into --

INT. GENERAL STORE - STOCKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shelves of canned food, paper goods, etc. Gaia enters, looks around. At first, the room appears empty. Then -- Sylvan Santos steps out.

GAIA
Sylvan. You made it.
SYLVAN
Commander, it’s been a long time. Your men gave me quite a scare on the train.

GAIA
They knew to watch out for you.

Gaia and Sylvan embrace. We realize -- trusted Royal etiquette expert Sylvan Santos is a REBEL SPY.

SYLVAN
I hope this is worth the wait --

Sylvan hands Gaia a CARDBOARD TUBE. She pulls out a SHEAF OF PAPERS, unrolls them, and stares in awe.

SYLVAN (CONT’D)
Blueprints. For the entire Palace.

GAIA
We’ve been trying to get these for years. The one time we thought we’d succeeded... they led to a trap.

SYLVAN
These are the real thing. I assure you.

(then)
Don’t tell me what you’re planning. It’s better I know nothing.

Gaia nods, then --

GAIA
There will be bloodshed.

SYLVAN
Nothing great has ever happened without it.

GAIA
I won’t forget this.

As Gaia leaves, OFF Sylvan, his life on the line --

BEGIN MUSIC MONTAGE:

INT. PALACE - THE CAPITOL REPORT ROOM - NIGHT

Gavril stands somberly before the cameras.
Every joyful occasion must hold some sadness. Tonight, at this very moment, Prince Maxon is making eight young women very sad indeed. The young women the Prince has chosen to send home after only three days in the Palace are... (beat) Helena Howard. Kimberlin Dayani. Amy Lamberti. Lesley Nye.

INT. PALACE - GRAND SALON - NIGHT

With Sylvan by his side, Maxon breaks the news (MOS) in person to the eight girls who are going home -- among them, Tiny, who breaks down. As Maxon comforts her...

GAVRIL (V.O.) Cedar Tramble, Nichelle Carnes, Tiny Lee, and Daisy Romano. Twenty-five candidates remain. But for how long?

OFF the crying girls --

INT. PALACE - AMERICA’S ROOM - NIGHT

America enters her room to find her entire wardrobe laid out on her bed. Suitcases are scattered everywhere.

AMERICA What’s going on?

Lucy emerges from the closet, arms loaded.

LUCY Prince’s orders.

INT. SINGER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

May answers the front door to FIND a PALACE COURIER, who hands her a LARGE BOX. May brings the box inside as Mylan, Magda, and G erad gather ‘round.

As May opens the box and gleefully discovers the SPARKLING STILETTOS, G erad digs into a BOX OF CHOCOLATES, and Magda and Mylan get teary over a NOTE from America. OFF this bliss...

INT. PALACE - CELESTE’S ROOM - NIGHT

Celeste sits at her dressing table, deep in thought, as her maid, ANNALEIGH, (20’s, plain) works her hair into a twist.
CELESTE
Annaleigh...? How well do you
know Lady America’s maid?

ANNALEIGH
Only by sight, mum.

CELESTE
Perhaps... you and she should
become better friends.

ANNALEIGH
(beat, then)
If you like, mum.

OFF Celeste, unable to stop her plotting...

INT. PALACE - WAR ROOM - NIGHT

The King and Queen sit with Maxon and several ADVISORS.

KING CLARKSON
After the attack on the Royal
Train, the Rebels are just going to
get bolder.

MAXON
If they’re smart, they’ll use
Ashley Brouillette.

KING CLARKSON
Please, Maxon. We all know that
poor girl is long dead.

MAXON
You’ve convinced her family of that
and paid them off to keep silent --
but we don’t know it’s true.

QUEEN AMBERLY
Your father has many years of
experience with Rebel tactics.

MAXON
Yes, but Rebel tactics change all
the time. We should be prepared on
every front --

KING CLARKSON
Maxon. I remind you, you’re here
to observe. To learn.

A beat. Maxon clenches his jaw.
INT. REBEL CAMP - GAIA’S TENT - NIGHT

Gaia pores over the stolen blueprints of the palace. Ashley lies on a pallet of blankets in the corner, asleep. Walton enters, a COHORT OF REBELS behind him.

WALTON
We’ve been talking. We all agree. If you don’t want to take action, I will. This is a revolution.

Walton advances. He grabs Ashley, who SCREAMS as he hauls her to her feet.

WALTON (CONT’D)
Death is necessary. The girl dies.

Gaia walks toward him.

GAIA
I’ve been thinking, too. And you’re right.

WHOOSH! In a flash, Gaia unholsters her GUN, SHOOTS WALTON between the eyes. He crumples to the ground. Ashley dissolves in sobs.

GAIA (CONT’D)
Death is necessary.

Gaia addresses the assembled Rebels, eyes cold.

GAIA (CONT’D)
If anyone else has a problem with me, speak up now.

The Rebels exchange glances. No one speaks up.

GAIA (CONT’D)
Good.

Gaia hauls Ashley to her feet.

GAIA (CONT’D)
In that case, let’s talk about how we’re going to use this fine young lady to storm the palace.

OFF Gaia, and a trembling Ashley --
INT. PALACE - AMERICA’S NEW ROOM - NIGHT

America follows Lucy into her new room. It’s even more beautiful than the one before-- and has a balcony.

LUCY
The Prince must like you, mum.

America walks onto the balcony. Above her, the FULL MOON shines, bright and huge. This is why the Prince gave her this room. It’s his gift.

As America gazes at the faraway moon, PAN DOWN the walls of the Palace, and around a bend to FIND...

EXT. PALACE - NIGHT

The Queen, who walks with COLONEL RUSH of the Royal Guard. They review a line of new Royal Guardsmen.

COLONEL RUSH
You ask for extra troops, your highness, you got ‘em. The newest members of the Royal Guard. The best of the best.

The Queen stands before the soldiers.

QUEEN AMBERLY
We live in troubled times. Thanks to your presence here at the palace...

The Queen looks at several soldiers in turn as she speaks.

QUEEN AMBERLY (CONT’D)
I feel confident that no subversive forces will be allowed to interfere with The Selection....

The Queen’s eyes land on yet another soldier... it’s ASPEN! The Queen reads the name stitched on his uniform, and smiles. She looks him in the eye.

QUEEN AMBERLY (CONT’D)
Your presence here will make all the difference. Welcome.

A beat, then the Queen moves on with the Colonel. OFF Aspen, his eyes drifting up toward the Palace...

END OF SHOW