

THE SELECTION

"Pilot"

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Based on the novel by Kiera Cass

3rd Rev. Network Draft  
1/19/12

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## THE SELECTION: An Introduction To Our World

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)

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WEALTHY LADY 3 (CONT'D)

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.

WEALTHY LADY 4

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.

WEALTHY LADY 1

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

WEALTHY LADY 3

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...

AMERICA

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

MAGDA

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...

MAY

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

AMERICA

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!

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CONTINUED:

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)

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GAVRIL (ON TV) (CONT'D)  
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.

GAVRIL (CONT'D)  
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.

PRINCE MAXON (ON TV)  
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.

GAVRIL (ON TV)  
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.

GAVRIL (CONT'D)  
From the Brazilia Province... a  
Three. Miss Carmela del Rios.

Another picture appears...

GAVRIL (CONT'D)  
From the Canadia Province... a Two.  
Miss Fiona Castley!

And another picture...

GAVRIL (CONT'D)  
From the Carolina Province...

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CONTINUED: (3)

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!

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CONTINUED:

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.

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CONTINUED:

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 --

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CONTINUED: (2)

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 --

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CONTINUED:

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--

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CONTINUED: (3)

ASPEN (CONT'D)

There are other things we can do...

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 --

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CONTINUED:

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 --

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CROWD  
America! America! America!

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.

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CONTINUED: (2)

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!

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CONTINUED:

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.

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CONTINUED:

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.

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CONTINUED:

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)

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CONTINUED: (2)

QUEEN AMBERLY (CONT'D)  
well, she suffered quite a fright.  
I'm afraid she's chosen to go home.

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.  
(then)  
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?

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CONTINUED: (3)

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 ILLEÁ, 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)

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CONTINUED:

SYLVAN (CONT'D)

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  
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.

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CONTINUED:

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 TRELIS 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.

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CONTINUED:

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 KNOCK 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.

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CONTINUED:

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)

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CONTINUED: (2)

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

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!

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CONTINUED:

AMERICA  
(whispers, to Fiona)  
Are you okay?

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.

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CONTINUED:

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!

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CONTINUED:

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)

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CONTINUED:

GAIA (CONT'D)

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)

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CONTINUED:

FIONA (CONT'D)

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 Amberly 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.

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CONTINUED: (2)

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!

MYLAN

Proud of you.

GERAD

Send me some sweets!

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CONTINUED:

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.

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CONTINUED:

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.

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CONTINUED:

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.

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CONTINUED:

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.

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CONTINUED:

GAVRIL

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 Gerad gather 'round.

As May opens the box and gleefully discovers the SPARKLING  
STILETTOS, Gerad 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.

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CONTINUED:

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.

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CONTINUED:

MAXON  
Yes, Father.

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