

MasterMind

by
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FADE IN:

INT. CAPITAL BUILDING - ASSEMBLY CHAMBER - DAY

ON A MAN'S EXPENSIVE WRISTWATCH: 8:55 A.M.

The watch belongs to U.S. Congressman JOHN ALDER, 52, dressed in a designer suit. He fidgets at his desk. His face pale -- covered in cold sweat. He loosens his tie.

Surrounded by other Congress members seated in the room, he nervously wipes his brow with a handkerchief as he tries to focus on a Congressman giving a speech at the podium.

He glances at his watch again: 8:58 A.M.

His eyes widen. His hands tremble. He's about ready to explode. He abruptly stands up and dashes for the door.

A CONGRESSWOMAN leans over and whispers to another.

CONGRESSWOMAN

Where does he think he's going? We
still have to vote.

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - EXIT - DAY

The Congressman bursts out onto the steps. He looks up at a large clock tower. The hands hit 9:00 o'clock.

SUDDENLY -- he falls to his knees. Grabs his chest and keels over. DEAD. A PEDESTRIAN runs to his aid.

PEDESTRIAN

Someone call nine-one-one!

A shrill BEEPING TONE mixed with a radio stuck between two frequencies BLASTS out.

INT. GLORIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

ON THE SHRILL BEEPING RADIO ALARM CLOCK: 9:00 A.M

Various pieces of men's and women's clothing are scattered across the floor.

Two figures lie on their backs in bed. GLORIA LANGFORD, 45, obviously well kept and HUNTER REED, 34, a fit, polished man hungry to climb the political ladder.

The alarm doesn't stir them. Gloria casually reaches over and presses a button on the clock that stops the hair-raising BEEPING and adjusts the radio dial.

Hunter reaches for his cell phone. As the radio fades, it's replaced by the SOUNDS of a busy office...

INT. PARTY'S HEADQUARTERS - DAY

People mill around. SHERRY, 50's, attractive, efficient, straight-laced assistant types on her computer.

Her desk is organized with the usual paraphernalia along with an old dog-eared copy of "THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING."

She cradles the phone between her chin and shoulder.

SHERRY

No. I expect Mr. Reed any time now.
Can I take a message?

JENNIFER (V.O.)

Yes. This is Jennifer at Secretary Unlimited.

SHERRY

Can I tell him what this is in regards to?

JENNIFER (V.O.)

No. He knows. Thank you.

CLICK.

SHERRY

(to herself)
I'll bet he does.

Sherry punches in another line on the phone.

SHERRY

Good morning, Mr. Reed's office.

INT. GLORIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Hunter has the morning paper in one hand and his cell in the other. He skims through the paper's headlines while he talks on the phone.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED

HUNTER

Sherry. It's me. Any messages?

SHERRY

A Jennifer with Secretary Unlimited.

HUNTER

(nervous)

Oh. Oh yeah, I'll take care of that.
Anything else?

SHERRY

The Senator called from New York.
He'll be in this afternoon. He wants
to see you right away. I tried
calling your home but there was no
answer. He's going to stop at his
house to see his wife before he comes
into the office.

HUNTER

Right. See you in an hour.

He hangs up the phone.

HUNTER

That bitch. You can bet if he knows,
she's the one who told him.

GLORIA

He knows. I can tell by the way
he's been acting.

Hunter's attention is taken away by the headline about
Congressman Adler.

HUNTER

Look at this. Congressman Adler
dies of a heart attack on the steps
of the Capitol Building.

GLORIA

Not one of my favorite people. He
was in everybody's pocket. He's
corrupt as hell.

Hunter raises his eye brows. Tosses the paper aside.
Refocuses back on their conversation.

HUNTER

The only thing I can hope for is
that he's not going to want to risk
a scandal until after the election.
You realize when your husband puts
the word out on me... I'll be through
with politics in this state.

Gloria stares at the ceiling.

GLORIA

You're right.

HUNTER

Thanks a lot.

GLORIA

No, I mean he's not going to risk a scandal. There's something we can do. It's so simple... so obvious. Suppose Jordan didn't run for re-election? Who would they get to replace him?

HUNTER

Fat chance.

GLORIA

They'd pick you. They'd have to. Loyal party member. Senator Jordan Langford's right-hand man.

HUNTER

I may be able to take his bed when he's out of town, but I doubt I can take his seat so easily. Why wouldn't he run?

Deadpan to the ceiling.

GLORIA

Because. I'd like to see him... dead.

Hunter turns to look at her as the shrill BEEPING ALARM goes off again.

INT. PARTY'S HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Hunter enters. He passes Sherry at her desk. Goes straight into his office. She follows behind with a stack of mail.

SHERRY

How are you this morning, Mr. Reed?

HUNTER

Fine.

She sets the mail on his desk.

SHERRY

How's Mrs. Langford?

Hunter shoots her a stern look as he grabs a stack of paperwork.

HUNTER

File these.

She grabs the stack and on her way out the door...

SHERRY

(smugly)

Don't forget your appointment with
the Senator this afternoon.

Hunter throws her a hard look as she closes the door. He sits at his desk. Flips through the mail. He stops at a RED ENVELOPE. A hand-written address on the outside.

He leans back in his chair -- smells it like perfume and opens it. He reads the letter out loud to himself...

HUNTER

Dear Mr. Hunter Reed. I will be
contacting you at your office today
as it is imperative that we talk.
Sincerely, Special Agent, Edwin
Godfrey.

A concerned look crosses his face.

HUNTER

Special Agent? This can't be good.

EXT. STATELY HOME - DAY

SENATOR JORDAN LANGFORD, 60's, silver-haired, distinguished, high-principled, storms out his front door...

SENATOR LANGFORD

I've been faithful to you and this
is how you repay me!

Gloria, silent, appears at the threshold. She watches Langford get in his car and drive away. She slowly closes the door.

INT. HUNTER'S OFFICE - LATER

Hunter sits behind his desk busy with paperwork. Sherry pokes her head in.

SHERRY

The Senator wants to see you now.

Hunter looks up and locks eyes with her. She gives a little smirk as she struts away.

HUNTER

(under his breath)
Can't wait to get rid of her.

EXT. LANGFORD'S OFFICE - DAY

From outside the window, Senator Langford sits at his desk. Spotted along the walls are various public service awards and honors with a nicely framed portrait of Gloria.

Hunter strides through the door. At first their conversation looks calm and businesslike, but gradually it turns into a highly animated rage.

SENATOR LANGFORD

You know I wasn't involved in that!

HUNTER

Yes, but no one else does. Remember, I made you. I can break you.

Hunter stomps out of the office. Langford SLAMS the door.

INT. HALLWAY

Hunter stalks down the corridor. When he reaches his office, he notices something...

INT. HUNTER'S OFFICE

Hunter enters with caution. The desk chair is turned with its back towards him.

As it swivels around, EDWIN GODFREY appears. An elderly, ivory-haired, frail man with a kindhearted face. Dressed in a vested suit.

EDWIN

Oh, I'm sorry. Did I startle you?
Hunter Reed, I presume?

HUNTER

Yes. Where's my assistant?

EDWIN

She went out for coffee, said she'd be right back. I'm Special Agent, Edwin Godfrey.

HUNTER

FBI or CIA?

EDWIN

FBI. Retired. I assumed you received my letter?

HUNTER

Yes. What's this about?

EDWIN

This won't take long. I promise.

He gets up and takes a seat across from Hunter.

EDWIN

By the way, I enjoyed your speech the other night. The one about Senator Langford. I must say, you'd make a pretty good politician yourself.

HUNTER

Well thank you. What can I do for you Mr...

EDWIN

Godfrey. Edwin Godfrey. The subject I want to discuss is rather private so I'll just...

Edwin gets up and gently closes the door.

INT. PARTY'S HEADQUARTERS - LATER

Sherry can be heard typing at her computer as Hunter's office door suddenly opens and Edwin emerges.

EDWIN

The Task Force is now engaged. Goodbye, Mr. Reed. Oh, Sherry it was a pleasure talking with you. Goodbye and thank you.

Edwin leaves as Hunter calls out.

HUNTER (O.S.)

Sherry! Get Langford on the line.

SHERRY

I'm afraid he's gone. He was meeting with the Board of Education this afternoon.

INT. HUNTER'S OFFICE

Hunter grabs his coat and briefcase. Deep in thought, hurries out.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HUNTER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Large and sparsely decorated. Hunter sits alone on the couch with a drink in his hand.

He goes to the large floor to ceiling window. A picturesque view of the White House stands before him. He gazes at the monumental structure. Lost in his thoughts.

Hunter snaps back into the moment. Opens his briefcase and takes out the Red Envelope.

FLASHBACK - INT. HUNTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Edwin sits with perfect posture as he speaks.

EDWIN

...The Task Force was created by Mr. J. Edgar Hoover himself back in the early sixties. It's based on a principle that a single thought is energy and... if you take two or more minds and bring their thought energies together on one specific thought you can create a super conscious power. We call it the Mastermind.

HUNTER

Mastermind? Okaaay. So what?

EDWIN

What it boils down to Mr. Reed is the Mastermind Task Force believes that it is possible to eliminate a human being by a collective mind group.

HUNTER

(lowers his voice)

Have you talked with Gloria Langford?

EDWIN

I've been in contact with her. You see, the Task Force's main objective is to generate a collective, focused mind energy to eliminate a target by having the target choose to eliminate oneself.

HUNTER

Target? You mean a person?

Edwin nods.

HUNTER

You are kidding? Right?

EDWIN

Let me ask you a question. Have you personally ever craved the death of someone?

HUNTER

(chuckles)

Do ex-wives count?

EDWIN

I'm not joking. Have you ever had a real, deep down belief for the demise of someone?

Hunter leans back in his chair.

HUNTER

Well yeah, I guess. Sure. But, it was only a passing thought.

EDWIN

What if there were thousands just like yourself focused on that same thought?

Hunter leans forward with a condescending grin.

HUNTER

(sarcastic)

Wait a minute. Are you a hit man for the Republican Party?

EDWIN

If you're not going to take me in earnest, Mr. Reed...

Edwin stands up. Grabs his overcoat.

EDWIN

...then I'll be on my way.

HUNTER

No. No. Please sit. I'm sorry. But this sounds so --

EDWIN

-- Unbelievable? If I may, I would like to give you a little history...

LATER

Edwin stands at a bookshelf -- admires a framed photo of Hunter and the Senator at a fund-raiser.

EDWIN

...so Mr. Hoover proposed they do an experiment on a known Communist. The Mastermind Task Force went to this man and boldly announced their purpose.

Edwin grabs the framed photo. Studies it.

EDWIN

They promised him that at three P.M. every day they would be focusing all their mind power on his death, until he could no longer stop the chain of events that would make him either commit suicide or die in a timely accident.

HUNTER

That's pretty farfetched isn't it?

Edwin sets the photo on the desk facing Hunter as he takes his seat.

EDWIN

The man died in a boating accident six weeks later. Farfetched? Maybe. But Mr. Hoover and his team tried it again. This time with the help of a larger group within the Bureau. Not only did he get the same outcome but in a shorter period of time.

HUNTER

Interesting.

Edwin leans back.

EDWIN

That sir, was just the beginning. Now, fifty years later the Task Force has grown to over five hundred thousand members and counting.

Edwin opens his briefcase. Pulls out an Ipad. A folded NEWSPAPER falls out from the briefcase.

EDWIN

Since the early sixty's, over thirty-seven hundred targets have been identified. Twenty-nine hundred are no longer with us.

He hands the Ipad to Hunter.

EDWIN

Take a look at the list, Mr. Reed.
You may recognize some of the names.

Hunter scrolls through the pages, wide-eyed.

EDWIN

Coincidence? I think not.

Hunter picks up the folded newspaper. Glances at the headline. It's the story about Congressman Alder from the opening scene.

HUNTER

Don't tell me you had something to do with this?

A crafty smile creeps over Edwin's face. He takes the newspaper and stuffs it back in his briefcase.

EDWIN

Do you find my invitation enticing?

Hunter hands the Ipad back to Edwin.

HUNTER

There must be a catch. There's always a catch in government. What do you want?

EDWIN

There's no catch, Mr. Reed. Our mission is simple. To weed out the corrupt.

Hunter stares at the picture of him and Senator Langford at the fund raiser.

HUNTER

What did Mrs. Langford have to say?

INT. HUNTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - (BACK TO PRESENT)

Hunter sets his drink on the nightstand -- lies back on the bed. Unable to relax, he picks up the phone.

INT. GLORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gloria enters. Tosses her purse on the bed. On the vanity table beside her are several papers including a Red Envelope. The PHONE RINGS.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED

GLORIA

Hello.

HUNTER

Is he there?

GLORIA

No. He has a speech at the University. Then he was going back to the office.

HUNTER

Meet me at the office as quick as you can.

GLORIA

Okay, but why?

HUNTER

I'll tell you when you get there.

INT. HUNTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hunter clicks off his cell. Goes to the dresser. Pulls out an unseen object from the top drawer and slides it into his coat pocket.

EXT. PARTY'S HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

A steady downpour. Gloria rushes up to the office doors just as Senator Langford is coming out. They stand -- talk for a second. Then go back inside.

After a moment their figures can be seen silhouetted in an upstairs window.

Hunter's car pulls up to the curb.

INT. HUNTER'S BMW - NIGHT

Hunter glances up to the window and sees Senator Langford and Gloria inside.

MOMENTS LATER -- Gloria appears from the door. Frantic. She spots Hunter's car and rushes to it. She gets in, breathing hard. Red faced with anger.

GLORIA

That bastard slapped me! He's filing for divorce and for me to get out. Me! No... no he's not going to do that to me!

HUNTER

Okay. Okay. Try to settle down.
Here he comes.

Senator Langford heads out the door. It's difficult to see him once he gets away from the lights.

Hunter starts the car without the headlights and slowly rolls forward.

Senator Langford abruptly stops in the middle of the street, as if he's forgotten something. He disappears in the darkness.

Hunter squints hard through the rain-covered windshield. He reaches for the headlight switch. Gloria squirms, still burning with anger.

GLORIA

That son-of-a...

As the headlights turn on, Langford strolls back for the door.

FLASHBACK - INT. HUNTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Hunter drifts over to the window, contemplates.

HUNTER

...and the person has to know all this? The existence and success of the Task Force?

EDWIN

Unequivocally.

HUNTER

And if the person doesn't want to believe?

EDWIN

Mr. Reed, even if the target doesn't believe in the beginning... the seed has been planted. The target will be thinking about it from time to time. I assure you, sooner or later it will catch up. Trust me.

HUNTER

Hmm... You do have a point. It would really start to get under your skin.

Edwin does a self-assured nod. Hunter flashes a knowing grin. His mind already thinking ahead.

HUNTER
Is that it?

Edwin takes out his cellphone from his coat pocket.

EDWIN
You have touched on a crucial point.
The most crucial point as a matter
of fact. The target must be informed.

Edwin sends a tweet, "@Mastermind #HunterReed" on his
cellphone. Slides it back in his coat pocket and stands.

EDWIN
Your demise has begun as of right
now.

HUNTER
What? Wait. I don't understand.

Edwin takes his coat. Opens the door.

EDWIN
The Task Force is now engaged.
Goodbye, Mr. Reed.

A cold flash races down Hunter's spine.

INT. HUNTER'S BMW - NIGHT - (BACK TO PRESENT)

Hunter reaches into his coat pocket and REVEALS A PISTOL
he took from his dresser earlier.

But before he can say or do anything -- Gloria, enraged,
reaches over with her foot and STOMPS down on the GAS PEDAL.

GLORIA
I'll show him!

The car LURCHES forward! Forces Hunter back in his seat!
He grabs the wheel with the gun still in his hand -- HAMMERS
the brakes with his foot and JERKS the wheel hard left!

Hunter finally gets Gloria's foot off the gas pedal as the
BMW races at breakneck speed!

A wave of terror fills their faces! Headlights FLASH! A
HORN BLARES as the car slides and spins out of control...

FADE TO WHITE

SUDDENLY -- the sound of a METAL-CRUNCHING fatal crash!

The screen fades to black.

SUPER: *Six months later*

A group of people can be heard singing, "HAPPY BIRTHDAY."

INT. SHERRY'S OFFICE - DAY

A well-dressed WOMAN, Hunter's replacement, bursts out of Hunter's office carrying a large candlelit cake. She joins the group of men and women singing "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" to Sherry.

Senator Langford joins them. They finish the song with a round of CHEERS.

MALE CO-WORKER

C'mon, Sherry. Blow out the candles.

Sherry takes a deep breath and blows out the candles. The group CLAPS.

MOMENTS LATER

A FEMALE CO-WORKER comes up. She holds a letter in her hand.

FEMALE CO-WORKER

I'd like to stick around for cake
but I've got to get this in the mail.
Have you got an envelope handy?

SHERRY

Sure do.

Sherry goes to her desk drawer and pulls a white envelope. The Co-worker grabs it -- leans in and whispers.

FEMALE CO-WORKER

Well? What'd ya wish for?

AT THAT MOMENT -- Senator Langford steps forward.

SENATOR LANGFORD

Since we're all here for this happy
occasion. I want you all to be the
first to know, that I plan to run
for the presidency.

Everyone CHEERS and CLAPS. They go up to the Senator to congratulate him.

As Sherry moves away from her desk, the open drawer reveals RED ENVELOPES.

A SNEAKY SMILE creeps across Sherry's face as she struts over and gives a big hug to... Senator Langford.

FADE OUT.