

SCORCHED EARTH

written by

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A BLACK SCREEN.

SOUNDS OF WAR: The rumble of tanks, rapid gun fire, glass breaking, yelling in Pashto, explosions, hissing gas.

Slowly the screen is filled with a thick emission of vapor.

Pull out on the vapor to reveal it is...

INT. MAKE-UP ROOM - DAY

...a fog of hairspray over the coiffing of blonde hair.

SEAN HANNITY (V.O.)
Joining us now, author of six New
York Times best sellers...

CLOSE on the application of lipstick,

MIKA BRZEZINSKI (V.O.)
Conservative commentator, writer,
and syndicated columnist...

Red manicured fingernails scrolling through Twitter,

BILL MAHER (V.O.)
Always controversial and never
afraid to enter the Lion's Den,
here to discuss her new book...

The smoothing of a white pencil skirt over a toned ass,

RACHEL MADDOW (V.O.)
The book is titled...Are you ready
for this? *Aborting America*...

Christian Louboutins stepping onto a linoleum floor.

GLENN BECK (V.O.)
*Aborting America; How Liberals Are
Killing Patriotism.*

We follow the Louboutins down a hallway. CLICK CLICK CLICK.

GLENN BECK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Please welcome Allison Elkins.

JOY BEHAR (V.O.)
Miss Allison Elkins

ANDERSON COOPER (V.O.)
Allison Elkins

The Louboutins step through a swinging door and into the harsh lights of a television studio. The lights fill the screen then burn out to reveal...

INT. MSNBC NEWSROOM - DAY

ALLISON ELKINS, late-30s, conservative commentator, beautiful enough to be belittled for it, sits at a desk, with several political PUNDITS and a HOST in heated fast-paced debate.

HOST

Allison, your book says women---

ALLISON

No. Hold on.

HOST

It says...

ALLISON

What it says---

HOST (CONT'D)

That we should repeal the
19th amendment.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

No, it says that if we repealed the
19th amendment, Republicans would
have won every election since 1950.

PUNDIT 1

Goldwater---

ALLISON

With the exception of Goldwater in
'64, yes, but we'd have won every
other election and if we had
America would be better for it.

An explosion of outrage from other pundits.

PUNDIT 1

Women being denied the vote
would be better for America?

PUNDIT 2

White men, just say it, white
men.

ALLISON

Factually, yes, a white male
electorate would yield a more
conservative America, so yes, a
better America.

PUNDIT 1

Only for white conservatives,
not for Blacks, Latinos,
gays, immigrants...

ALLISON (CONT'D)

(laughing)
Surprise, I'm a white
conservative!

PUNDIT 2

This is the problem, Republicans have been stoking the flames of white nationalism for years, trying to suppress minority voters--

ALLISON

Oh, please, you're a hypocrite.

PUNDIT 2

I'm a hypocrite?

ALLISON

All Democrats are hypocrites when it comes to voter suppression. When Kennedy passed the Immigration and Nationality Act---

Pundit 2 tries to interrupt, but Allison steam rolls him.

PUNDIT 2

Republican-backed voter ID laws have led to two-thirds of all new registrants on a suspended voter lists---

ALLISON (CONT'D)

It was designed to change the demographics of America, grow peasant cultures who would remain poor for generations, remain on government support, and secure a solid block of Democratic voters.

Pundit 2 fumes, Allison "leans in" determined to win.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Liberals act holier than thou about voter-suppression. Meanwhile, 73% of Americans prefer consolidated elections, but Democrats champion off-cycle elections that benefit Democrat-aligned interest groups. You want to talk about voter suppression and manipulating the electorate, fine, but don't tell me Democrats want every voice heard!

Mic. Drop. The Pundits are ready to pounce, but Host cuts in.

HOST

(to Pundit 1)

I know you want to weigh in Tracy, but I have to move on.

(to Allison)

Allison, most Americans are familiar with your family's story.

The screens behind Host project art of Allison's late father and brothers in uniform. Allison looks up at them with pride.

HOST (CONT'D)

Your father, Colonel Thomas Elkins, was killed in Desert Storm.

ALLISON

Yes, when I was twelve.

HOST

A terrible thing for a child. Then your younger brother, Private First Class Matthew Elkins, was fatally shot in Iraq in 2007.

ALLISON

We all felt that the best way to honor our father was to serve our country; my brothers in uniform, my sister and I in the political sphere.

He nods. The screens now show grainy footage: a rescue mission in Eastern Afghanistan. The rumble of tanks, rapid gun fire, glass breaking, yelling in Pashto, explosions.

HOST

That leads us to 2009 when your elder brother, Captain Peter Elkins, was captured by rebel forces in Eastern Afghanistan.

Allison expertly conveys both sadness and stoicism.

HOST (CONT'D)

The entire nation mourned when he was tragically killed during the mission to secure his rescue.

ALLISON

And we'll be forever grateful for the prayers of the American people during our family's darkest days.

The Host's tone changes from empathy to interrogatory. Breaking News banners scroll across the screen.

HOST

Dark days indeed, but perhaps not the darkest. MSNBC has acquired never-before-seen video of high-level Al-Qaeda rebels in Kunar...

Screens change to a low quality video of Arab men in tunics and beards playing cards, smoking, laughing, speaking Pashto.

HOST (CONT'D)
...and among them, it appears,
Captain Peter Elkins.

Video zooms in on CAPT. PETER ELKINS, bearded, in a tunic.

HOST (CONT'D)
This video, dated April 14, 2009,
shows him laughing and speaking in
Pashto with his "captors" only two
days before American forces risked
their lives to save him.

Video freezes on Peter, cameras turn to Allison in shock.

HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Allison, I have to ask, was your
brother a military deserter?

CLOSE on Peter's face caught in mid-laughter.

CLOSE on Allison's face, shock turning to sadness.

HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Do you believe he was feeding
American military intelligence to
our enemies in the Middle East?

CLOSE on Peter's deep green eyes.

CLOSE on Allison's eyes, the same deep green.

HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
How do you respond to this tape?

CLOSER on Allison's eyes, now glossy as she holds back tears.

HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Allison, do you have a comment?

CLOSER on her eyes, they fill the frame.

HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Allison?

A tear begins to fall. She closes her eyes. BLACK.

END TEASER