

An excerpt from "Warning"
By Alāna Rader

CASS

Oh- I see you're not asking, you're telling a private citizen that they need to put an unknown substance into their body after you basically broke into their room? Not even casually violating my rights. Cool...

SECRET SERVICE

You taking that pill right now is the easy way. Would you prefer the hard way? Because that involves us calling in the White House Physician for an injection.

CASS

tries to back away but is basically cornered in this room, like a caged animal

You've got to be fucking kidding me. An injection? I'm sorry is this Gilead or the United States of America? Last time I checked we were supposed to be a 1st world country.

SECRET SERVICE

(picks up his phone) Yes, Dr. Troy, please.

CASS

(losing her nerve) Wait, no. It's ok. I'll just take the pill. I don't...like needles.

SECRET SERVICE

(into his phone) Ah, false alarm. We're all set.

CASS

(swallowing the pill) Do you promise nothing bad is going to happen to me?

SECRET SERVICE

Of course, miss. You'll be safe down here. We don't want anything bad to happen. We just need you to not be...broadcasting live right now.

CASS

Well, I have been wanting to catch up on my sleep..

SECRET SERVICE

I'll be right outside. No one can enter with out my permission. Try to get some rest.

He exits.

CASS

spits the pill out

This is so fucked. *(she checks her phone again and then goes to the door, knocking)* Wait! I..Is there anyone I can speak with about what's going on?

SECRET SERVICE

We'll alert you when we know more about the situation.

CASS

Right but what exactly is the situation?

SECRET SERVICE

(Coming back into the room) I can't answer anymore questions.

CASS

Look, I'm sorry about before. For cursing and stuff. I was scared..am scared and maybe I overreacted.

SECRET SERVICE

I understand but I honestly can't tell you anything else. Please just try to get some rest. We'll come get you when we know more.

He exits. CASS lays down on a couch.

CASS

Shit... *(she checks her phone again and of course, there's still no signal. Perfect.)*

I should be writing all of this down.

She begins to type in her notes section, a light shift indicates a passage of time. Her phone starts to ring- she picks up, startled.

Cy? Oh my god. Can you hear me?

DAD

Bean? Are you there?

CASS

Dad?! um, yeah I'm here. *(begins to get emotional)*

DAD

Oh good, your Mom and I tried to watch your broadcast but our signal musta cut out. Is everything ok? We can't believe you're at the White House. We are so proud of you, bean.

CASS

(trying not to cry) Thanks, Dad. Yeah it's been pretty crazy. Gotta love technology, right? Everything's....fine. I'm good, Just tired.

DAD

Do you know when your interview is going to air? Your Mom told everyone you're interviewing the President. What's he like?

CASS

Well, um, you know we have different views on that..but..he didn't talk much. I'm not sure when the interview will happen.

DAD

Ok, well shoot us a text. Your Mom got an iphone so she can get texts now.

CASS

Yes, I bought it for her, remember? And, I will. Dad? I just want you to know that...

DAD

Honey, you're breaking up? Can you hear me?

CASS

Dad? Hello?

The connection is lost. She crumbles and finally weeps. Collapsing on a couch, she finally starts to nod off with out the help of the pill. CASSANDRA enters.

CASSANDRA

I was imprisoned much like you,
 this cell, this citadel
 my body
 clinging to Athena
 she could not save
 my virtue
 true,
 what he took.
 they all take,
 you break
 but you're not broken

you must escape
 and speak, let leak,
 the truth, your story.
 You have the power
 if not the glory
 to reach the people
 open their eyes,
 their demise
 is not necessary
 do not tarry....CASS!

She wakes with a start.

CASS

She knew me. Is me? I...what the hell is happening? ooh my head... I need to sleep. I'm probably dehydrated. Is this place what they call the bunker? I don't see any cameras but safe to say they're probably watching. (to the audience) Can you feel that? It's somewhere between gutted and hiding. Like I want to simultaneously rip myself apart and climb inside a cocoon and never come out again. Or.. maybe I want to rip up something else or some one...else. This white hot rage inside of me coupled with grief is like this unwanted visitor under my skin. It..it burns. I'm just so fucking tired.... When I started covering the protests this summer, I had hope. That for the first time in a long time maybe we were going to put out this dumpster fire and rise from the ashes. But at the end of the day, it kind of feels like I'm training for a race that's never going to happen. What are we all running for? or to? It's funny..all I wanted after Northwestern was to be an Anchor. And now, here I am! Careful what you wish for. Not as cushy as I had planned. (winces) I got into this business to tell people's stories, to tell the truth.. which.. is.. pretty laughable in the time of fake news and fact checkers checking every false thing that comes out of his mouth—to what end? I thought I could make a difference. Open people's minds. I just... If he told people that aliens were coming from the sky to take their jobs and steal their children, they'd believe him. And it feels like there's nothing I can do to change their minds. But I..I have to try. There's a reason I didn't get sick. And there's a reason why I'm here. There's a reason why he wanted me to interview him. Granted, his reasons are a bit different from mine. I'm so tired of being doubted and questioned and undermined. Like my ideas don't matter because I'm a woman or because I discovered the story, you need to look into it more. "Maybe Jeff should do this one because of the demographics..you understand, right?" Well, Jeff's on a ventilator now...so I guess you'll have to settle for me.. And I guess I'll just be my own crew.. it's fine. (*inhales and exhales*) Get it together, Cass. This is just noise. I need to report the content. Just stay on task. Do the next right thing. It's not my job to insert my opinion. Just the facts. And a phone charger would also be helpful if I want to livestream down here. Annd maybe some lipstick. (*looking around*) Hello? Can anyone hear me? I'm pretty sure you can't detain a member of the press for livestreaming. That's not a thing and definitely illegal... hello?

From the shadows, she sees a figure emerge.

CASS

Is someone there?