

The Presidency

By

Reid Kinkel

During a Christmas Event in 1942, the First Lady commits suicide by jumping off the railing. Now, the niece is on a hunt into the First Lady's dark past to find out why she would do this.

**Virginia "Jules" Prescott** - the heroine niece of President Hyland. Has a cold and vindictive attitude.

**Ruth Herrington** - the skeptical, cynical, and logical friend of Jules. Always insightful, but doesn't follow her emotions or instincts. Plays it safe.

**President Frank Hyland** - hard to interpret. Has a steadfast facade but no integrity. Can be very dark and evil, but also loving and regretful and repentant.

**Martha Hyland** - the first lady, very shallow and deceitful. Involved in a affair with a secret service member. Not loyal but compassionate at the same time.

**Michael Prescott** - very obstinate and vigilant. Not social, has a dry personality. Not a very likable person.

**Carole Prescott** - we love Carole. She's rude, funny, straight forward, and very liberal. She doesn't like politics and tries not to be such a lady.

**Jonathan Wilkinson** - the slick and unrepresentative, corrupt, secret service agent. Fully committed to President Hyland. Has an affair with Martha.

**Kent Riley** - is the town vigilante. Has a respect for Martha and would do anything for her.

COLD OPEN:

INT. PRESCOTT BALLROOM - 1942

'December 25, 1942'

Inside the Prescott house, the family is throwing a Christmas party. All of the neighbors are there, dancing.

INT. PRESCOTT LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

VIRGINIA "JULES" PRESCOTT (16) wears her brunette hair up, and has glasses. She likes to dress nice and conservative.

Jules grabs a record from off a shelf and walks it to the record player. She pulls the arm over and the record plays "I'll never smile again" by Frank Sinatra.

She walks into the ballroom

INT. PRESCOTT BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jules dances to the music. Jules sees her friend Ruth. She walks over to her.

RUTH HERRINGTON (16) is blond and Jules' best friend.

RUTH

"I heard your mother say that  
President Hyland is coming."

JULES

"Uh huh. At eight."

RUTH

"I've never met him before."

JULES

(snarlingly)

"You're not missing much."

Jules smiles feebly and walks away, into the crowd.

EXT. PRESCOTT FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

PRESIDENT FRANK HYLAND (38) has brown hair that is graying. He always wears suits in public.

FIRST LADY or MARTHA HYLAND (34) has long blond hair and is titled "The most beautiful woman in America".

Frank and Martha walk to the house arm locked. She is wearing white gloves and a white dress. The butler opens the door for them and they walk in.

INT. PRESCOTT BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

The music is playing and everyone is dancing.

MICHAEL PRESCOTT (37) is the rich father of Jules. He gave a generous donation to the Hyland campaign.

Michael walks up to Frank.

MICHAEL

"Well if it isn't the guest of  
honor. Merry Christmas."

FRANK

"Ah, Michael."

They hug.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

"How long has it been?"

FRANK

"My wedding, I think."

MARTHA

"Hey Michael."

Michael kisses her arm.

MICHAEL

"Lovely to see you."

MARTHA

"Where's my sister?"

FRANK

"She's over in the kitchen."

MARTHA

"I think I'll go say hi to her. See you Michael."

Martha leaves.

INT. PRESCOTT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Martha walks away and into the kitchen.

CAROLE PRESCOTT (38) is heavier and has dirty blond hair. She has a great sense of humor.

Carole is drinking vodka out of the bottle. Martha grabs it out of her hands and pokes it down the drain.

CAROLE

"Hey, that was good stuff."

MARTHA

"Be a lady for once Carole."

They walk out and into the ballroom.

INT. PRESCOTT BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Martha walks Carole in.

FRANK

"Carole, how do you do?"

(CONTINUED)

CAROLE  
(sarcastically)  
"Lovely."  
(beat)  
"In all do respect, Mr. President,  
what's the delay on ending this  
war?"

FRANK  
"In all do respect, Carole, you try  
being President."

CAROLE  
"A lady President?"

She has a booming laugh.

CAROLE  
(sarcastically)  
"Yeah, the day people walk around  
with music in the palm of their  
hands."

Michael looks annoyed. Carole walks next to him and puts her  
arms around his shoulder.

CAROLE  
"I've really got some work to do.  
Can we save this talk for another  
time?"

MARTHA  
"Of course."

Martha walks off and Carole walks into the kitchen.

INT. PRESCOTT UPSTAIRS BALCONY - PRESENT

Michael stands on the balcony next to Frank and Martha and  
looks over at all of the guests in the ballroom. He taps his  
wine glass with a knife.

MICHAEL  
"Everyone. On behalf of my brother,  
thank you for coming out tonight.  
It is a very special occasion.  
Tonight is his last month in  
office. Frank..."

FRANK  
"I appreciate all of your support,  
especially from my beautiful wife  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FRANK (cont'd)

Martha. As you may know, I am a lame duck. It is sad to say that this is my last month being a president. I want to thank you all for voting and for not impeaching me.."

The crowd laughs along with Frank.

FRANK

"Thank you."

The crowd claps.

MICHAEL

"To Frank."

The crowd holds their wine glasses up.

GROUP

"To Frank!"

Michael and Frank walk down the stairs. The first lady, Martha, walks up to the balcony railing. She stands up and lifts her weight on it, hanging over the side.

The crowd notices her. People begin to freak out.

MARTHA

"Frank. I love you so much. I'm so sorry."

She lets go and falls to the floor. Everyone begins to scream.

INT. PRESCOTT BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

The crowd goes up to her. Frank pushes through and leans by his wife, crying.

In all of the chaos, Jules finds a note on the floor by Martha. She bends down and grabs it.

Julia slips it in her skirt pocket. She walks away from the crowd and into her bedroom.

INT. JULES' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the bedroom, she locks the door behind her and sits at her desk. She grabs the note. In terror she looks at it, her eyes observing every word. She unlocks the top drawer of her desk and places it under some junk. She closes it and locks it, hiding the key under her mattress. Someone knocks on the door and twists the nob.

JULES

"Who is it?"

RUTH

"It's Ruth. Open up."

Jules opens the door.

RUTH

"What's going on? Jules I know what you're going through. My Uncle died of Polio.."

JULES

"Ruth, there's more to the story."

RUTH

"What do you mean?"

Jules looks away.

RUTH

"What is it?"

JULES

"It's about Martha. I found a note."

INT. PRESCOTT BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Martha lay mangled on the floor. Everyone has cleared out around her. Frank is screaming on the receiver, but everything is silent.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. PRESCOTT LIVING ROOM - SIX DAYS LATER

*'New Year's Eve, 1942'*

The fireworks are shooting and everyone sits around the TV screen and watches the ball drop. Jules looks back at the banister.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

7.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESCOTT BALLROOM - CHRISTMAS

Martha falling off in slow-motion.

TV AUDIO (V.O.)  
"Ten..nine..eight.."

Jules finding the note.

TV AUDIO (V.O.)  
"Seven..six.."

Frank screaming into the phone in silence.

TV AUDIO (V.O.)  
"Five..four.."

CUT TO:

INT. PRESCOTT LIVING ROOM - PRESENT

Jules staring wide eyed at the ball dropping.

TV AUDIO  
"Three..two.."

EXT. FOREST - CHRISTMAS EVE

A shovel is shoved into the ground.

TV AUDIO (V.O.)  
"One."

'Christmas Eve, 1942'

A person is digging a hole in the middle of the forest. It's raining outside. We can't see their face, because they are wearing a trench coat and a hat. We pan over the person and see that inside the hole is a dead body.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Martha walks into the bedroom in a shower robe. Her hair is wet.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

"How was your shower?"

MARTHA

"Fine...Frank, I don't think I want to go to this party tomorrow, Frank. Let's have Christmas alone, just us."

FRANK

"Martha we're the guests of honor. Christmas is about family. Your brother-in-law is throwing this for us. The least we could do is show up."

INT. PRESCOTT LIVING ROOM - PRESENT

'New Year's Eve, 1942'

Jules is watching the TV. The dog brings in a newspaper and she pats him on the head.

JULES

"Good Boy, Buddy."

She opens the article.

CLOSE UP: 'FIRST LADY SUICIDE' IN BIG TEXT. SUB TEXT SAYS 'WHY DID SHE DO IT AND WHAT DOES THE PRESIDENT HAVE TO SAY?'

She walks away into her room.

INT. JULES' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

In her bedroom, she pulls out the letter. She dials her phone and calls Ruth.

RUTH (V.O.)

"Jules, what is it?"

JULES

"She was being blackmailed."

RUTH (V.O.)

"What?"

JULES

"I read the suicide letter over and over again. It says that she felt guilty for what she did. Sneak out and come over."

INT. WHITE HOUSE BEDROOM - CHRISTMAS EVE

Martha continues to dry her hair.

FRANK

"The least we could do is show up."

Long pause.

MARTHA

"I guess you're right."

FRANK

"Thank you...you coming to bed?"

MARTHA

"No, I think I'll stay up and read."

Martha walked into the white house library.

INT. WHITE HOUSE LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

In the library, Martha pulls out a typewriter. She fills in a piece of paper. She begins to type.

INT. JULES' BEDROOM - PRESENT

Ruth walk in through the window.

JULES

"Good, you made it."

RUTH

"What is it. Read the whole thing to me."

INT. WHITE HOUSE LIBRARY - CHRISTMAS EVE

Martha Hyland is typing her suicide note.

JULES (V.O.)

"Frank. I have loved you for as long as I have met you, and don't ever forget that. I know I have messed up. I am so guilty for what I did, you can never know about it. You will understand once you look in my jewelry box..."

INT. JULES' BEDROOM - PRESENT

Jules is reading the note to Ruth.

JULES

"...All the answers can be found there. I can't bare to live any longer. This is what they wanted. In all my love, Martha."

RUTH

"I don't think I understand. Who is they?"

JULES

"That's what I am going to find out."

EXT. FOREST - CHRISTMAS EVE

We see the man in the hole while dirt is filling around him.

INT. WHITE HOUSE OFFICE - A MONTH AGO

The same man is standing by the president's door.

'November 1, 1942'

JONATHAN WILKINSON (32) is tall and strong-built. He works for the Secret Service.

He knocks on the door and walks in.

FRANK

"G'Morning Jonathan. Nice to see you around for a change. Mark's gone?"

JONATHAN

"Mark was fired yesterday. Someone caught him stealing and anonymously reported it."

FRANK

"I did. He was searching through my wife's jewelry box. Personally, I never really liked him. Well I'm glad this opened up opportunities for you. I think you will really enjoy the next few months."

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - CHRISTMAS EVE NIGHT

Jonathan Wilkinson lay dead in the dirt. The figured person walks away after the hole is completely covered.

EXTREME WIDE SHOT: THE SITE HAS BEEN MARKED FOR CONSTRUCTION.

INT. WHITE HOUSE OFFICE - A MONTH AGO

Jonathan looks at the president.

JONATHAN

"Thank you Mr. President. I agree, these next few months will be...a journey."

Jonathan gets ready to exit.

FRANK

"Oh and Jonathan...As I've told Mark and all of my associates, I don't like hidden agendas. So don't get any. As of now I own you, and I can dispose of you at my will."

Jonathan doesn't say anything.

FRANK

"You don't believe me? Honestly, I don't know if Mark has ever laid eyes on my wife's jewelry box, but what I do know is I wanted him gone. And look, he is."

JONATHAN

"My agenda is your agenda, sir."

FRANK

"That's good to hear, Jon. Keep it that way.

(then)

One last thing. What do you know about my wife Martha?"

INT. JULES' BEDROOM - PRESENT

Jules opens the letter again. She reads through it very carefully, mumbling. She dials the phone.

(CONTINUED)

JULES

"Ruth, can you do me a favor?"

RUTH (V.O.)

"What kind?"

JULES

"The only way to find out why Martha did this is to look inside that jewelry box."

RUTH (V.O.)

"How are we supposed to do that?"

JULES

"During the funeral. You're going to break in."

She puts down the letter and hangs up the phone.

EXT. FOREST - CHRISTMAS EVE

The hole is completely covered and the person gets into their car and drives away.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car pulls up to the White House gates and they open them for it. We still don't know who is in the car.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Martha walks into the bathroom, dripping. We only see her feet. We hear the shower turn on. Wet clothes are dropped down and picked up with her hands. We still can't see her face. She tosses them in the hamper. She turns off the shower faucet and grabs the robe off the hook.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Martha walks out of the bathroom in her robe.

FRANK

"How was your shower."

Martha has a worried expression.

(CONTINUED)

MARTHA

"Fine."

FRANK

"Are you coming to bed?"

MARTHA

"No, I think I'll stay up and read."

FRANK

"Okay, goodnight."

MARTHA

"Goodnight."

Martha walks into the kitchen.

INT. WHITE HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She breaks down into tears.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - CHRISTMAS EVE

The person is shoveling. We pan around and see Martha digging the whole.

INT. WHITE HOUSE KITCHEN - CHRISTMAS EVE

Martha collects herself and wipes her tears. She walks into the library.

INT. WHITE HOUSE LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

It shows her typing the last sentence in her letter.

'In all my love, Martha.'

CUT TO BLACK: