there was one caveat, delivered to the candidate by Axelrod: Don't make this about you and Bill Clinton; you're running against her, not him.

p. 208 The unflappable Obama was plainly flapped – but he had another arrow in his quiver. Since the plane flight on Sunday night, his campaign had devised another means of piercing Bill Clinton: a "truth squad" compromised of Daschle and a number of Obama's leading South Carolina supporters. Daschle took the lead on the press conference call announcing the effort and made it clear they were going after Bill, not Hillary. "It's not in keeping with the image of a former president," Daschle said of Clinton's behavior.

p. 211-21 For all those reasons and many others, the reaction of Hillaryland was horror. Solis Doyle had been hearing the same analysis from advisers inside and outside the campaign since New Hampshire: they had to stop Bill's spasms. Beyond everything else, they were fueling a damaging argument that the Obama campaign was now making openly. As Greg Craig – a Washington attorney who had known the Clintons since Yale Law School, coordinated Bill's impeachment defense, and now was advising Obama – observed in an interview in that' week's *Newsweek,* "Recent events raise the question, if Hillary's campaign can't control Bill, whether Hillary's White House could."

There was a frantic scramble I n Ballston to lasso Bill. "What's he doing in South Carolina?" Tanden, in a panic, said to Solis Doyle. "Get him out!"

"We've been trying to get him out for days, and he won't leave," Patti said.

Solis Doyle raised the subject with Hillary. He's causing huge agita for us, she said. It's not good.

p. 213 Obama watched the Meltdown of the Clinton campaign with a mixture of shock and amusement. When he was told about Clinton's on-camera implosion, he could only laugh. But his advisers continued to worry that Bill Clinton was pursuing some masterfully nefarious racial strategy: sacrificing South Carolina's black vote in order to transform Obama from a candidate who was black into the black candidate, thereby helping Hillary with white voters in states such as Ohio and Pennsylvania down the road. Michelle Obama was on board with that theory. In the closing days of South Carolina, a scathing fund-raising email went out under her name that accused Bill of "misleading accusations," "disingenuous attacks," and "smear tactics."

p. 213-214 Harpootlian was right: the result the next day was what Axelrod described as "a good, old-fashioned butt-kicking." Obama prevailed by a whooping margin of 55 to 27 percent, while claiming a quarter of the white vote. More stunning, he essentially tied Clinton among Caucasian men and captured more than half of white voters under thirty.

CHAPTER TWELVE: PULLING AWAY AND FALLING APART

p. 219 The day after South Carolina, January 27, Caroline publicly cast her lot with Obama in a Sunday *New York Times* op-ed. The next morning, she stood onstage with her uncle and Obama at American University, in Washington, the site of one of JFK's most famous speeches, as Teddy offered his own endorsement. But Kennedy did more than that. In his distinctive, ringing voice, he vivisected the Clintons and sanctified Obama as his brother's rightful heir.

p. 220 There was much Gore found attractive about Obama – from his stance on the war to the grassrootsy, Web-enabled nature of his campaign – and he could scarcely say the same for the Clintons. His relationship with Hillary had been strained and hostile since their White House years, when she and Gore were, in effect, co-vice presidents, competing for power and influence. (Gore felt he had less of both than Hillary; the Clintons neither

disagreed with his analysis nor cared.) And while time might have quelled Al's and Tipper's resentments toward Bill over l'affaire Lewinsky, impeachment, and their fallout in the 2000 election, the Gores still looked askance at the Clinton marriage, seeing it as an inscrutable codependency that coughed up chaos and melodrama in equal proportion. The idea of a Hill-Bill restoration caused them both to blanch.

p. 221 A few blocks down Massachusetts Avenue from AU, Hillary was holding a meeting at Whitehaven with her advisers. Her bitterness over the bestowal of the Kennedy imprimatur on Obama was chilling and close to the surface. "There was nothing I could do abut this," she told her aides. [The Kennedys] have always hated us, always resented me and Bill as new people who aren't like them."

p. 222 "The snub" was what the tabloids dubbed it, though Obama denied it was any such thing; he was just answering a question from McCaskill, he said. But the truth was that the Obamans had snubbed Hillary well before the speech – by rejecting an invitation from the Clintonites for the candidates to sit together during the address. After the carnage in South Carolina, Hillary's staff saw value in creating "a picture of unity," as one of her aides put it on a conference call. The Obamans preferred the picture of Barack and Teddy joined at the hips.

p. 222 Both campaigns revised their Super Tuesday delegate projections as the poll numbers shifted across the country, the Obamans ramping theirs up, the Clintonites tamping theirs down. Further adjustments were required when Edwards at last quit the race on January 30, done in by his third-place finish in South Carolina. Whom Edwards would endorse, and what he might extract, remained open questions. But what had been a de facto two-horse race since Iowa was now officially possible that he might not only breach Hillary's supposed firewall but reduce her candidacy to ashes.

p. 226 Still crying, she kept rambling – until, out of nowhere, patched in from the road by one of her aides, an unexpected voice piped up.

"Hi, Mom, it's me," Chelsea said. "I'm okay."

The voice of her daughter brought Hillary instantly back to composure. And, almost as quickly, her feelings shifted from upset to outrage. When the call was over, she told Solis Doyle she wanted to pull out of an upcoming debate in Cleveland being sponsored by NBC and MSNBC. More than that, she wanted her supporters to boycott those networks – she wanted retribution. Solis Doyle talked her off the ledge. The NBC brass was apologizing

profusely. Shuster had been suspended indefinitely and was writing her a letter of contrition. When Hillary read it, her reaction was tart. "What a bunch of bullshit," she said.

p. 227 While Patti's departure left Hillary without one of her most fervent loyalists, another had become a deeply troubled asset. Two months earlier, Bill Clinton had been the best-loved Democrat in the country and now maybe the most popular person on the planet besides the Pope. Now, in something like a heartbeat, he'd been transformed into a figure of derision and scorn.

The day after South Carolina, one of Hillary's senior advisers had told her, We have a problem. If you can't control your husband in the campaign, how are you going to control him as president?

"Well, someone will have to talk to him," Hillary said.
"*You* need to talk to him," the adviser replied.
"I can't talk to him," Hillary said.

p. 228 On February 19, Obama won his tenth straight contest, administering a 58-41 drubbing to Clinton in the Wisconsin primary, carrying virtually every demographic group, and opening up a pledged-delegate lead of 159.

p. 229 Clinton took the stage in an open-air plaza in downtown San Antonio wearing a dark pantsuit and a pasted-on smile to disguise the depth of her desperation. Under the pantsuit, she had on an orange top that matched the color of the sign fastened to the lectern in front of her: TEXAS – CLINTON COUNTRY. Hillary thought it was true, but she wasn't sure. She wasn't sure of much anymore.

It was nearly ten o'clock at night on February 29, less than four days before primary day in Texas and Ohio. Clinton was exhausted. But San Antonio always gave her a boost; it was a special place for her and Bill. Thirty-six years earlier, they'd come down her from Yale to work for George McGovern, getting their first taste of national politics. And although everyone was duly dazzled by Bill back then, there were those who saw greatness in Hillary, too. A local organizer named Betsy Wright, who later became an indispensable figure in Bill's rise, told her that she might have what it took to become the nation's first female president.

p. 230 So, despite her fatigue, her bone-weariness, and the aching throat that had turned her voice into a raspy growl, Clinton launched into her spiel with gusto – and then, suddenly, the power failed, killing the lights and the sound system, too. Clinton didn't pause. Standing there in the dark, she just plowed right on through.

What was sustaining her? What *was* she thinking? It was simple. She thought Obama wasn't qualified to be commander in chief. And she thought the Republicans would destroy him in the fall, preying on his inexperience and insubstantiality, prying him open and disemboweling him.

p. 232 Obama with his epic self-confidence, couldn't imagine what the something could be. More than a year into the campaign, he had thwarted the efforts of his rivals to turn him into a parody. He was still Barack Obama. What he never guessed, though was that the gravest threat he'd face – the threat now looming before him – wouldn't be posed by his enemies in the present. It would come instead from an old friend.

P. 235 Beneath Obama's cool exterior, though, he was furious, with his campaign for failing to unearth the Wright tapes before then. Obama had been a member of Trinity for twenty years. He knew Wright could be provocative, even incendiary. And so did much of the political community in Chicago. "This guy is going to be a big problem for Barack," Mayor Daley had warned his brother Bill, even before Obama launched his bid. The *Rolling Stone* story that prompted the downgrading of Wright's role at the announcement in Springfield tossed up another red flag. But the campaign's research department had inexplicably failed to follow up.

p. 239 What Clinton failed to apprehend were the vulnerabilities that many Democrats continued to see in her, a number of which were on vivid display in the run-up to Pennsylvania. Cable was having a field day with a story that had become known as Snipergate. More than once on the trail, Hillary had described a trip she made to Bosnia as First Lady in 1996. In her telling, she arrived under sniper fire, racing across the tarmac with her head down. In late March, video surfaced of her being greeted at Tuzla airport by cheerful extant preconception about the Clinton's dodgy relationship with the truth.

Clinton, it seemed, couldn't catch a break – and then, out of no-where she got one. On April 11, less than two weeks before the primary, the Huffington Post put online audio of Obama speaking at a private fund-raiser in San Francisco. "You go into some of these small towns in Pennsylvania, and like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for twenty-five years and nothing's replaced them," Obama told the group. "So it's not surprising then that [people there] get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations."

p. 241 Obama's "bitter/cling" comments seemed to be a heavenly gift to the Clintons. They billboarded a simple message about Obama that Hillary and Bill already believed was true: that he was, at bottom, a helpless and hopeless elitist. Unlike the Wright story, here was something the Clintons could push – and push it they did, immediately and furiously and with no fear of stumbling over racial trips wires. For the next ten days, Hillary would come at Obama guns blazing, armed with a line that, in the context of her new persona, was so well pitched and perfectly modulated that it almost sounded like poetry.

"Americans need a president that will stand up for them, not a president that looks down on them," she said.

p. 242 No brilliant closing argument would be required. Between "bitter/cling" and Hillary's resurgence on the trail, where her fighter's stance grew even more pronounced and effective, Clinton had Pennsylvania in her pocket. Six days later, she trotted to victory.

p. 243 At seven, the rest of the brain trust arrived in Hyde Park. Attending by phone was Anita Dunn. Everyone could see from Obama's body language that he was tense. Instead of sitting back, relaxed, with this legs crossed as usual, he was hunched over his dining room table, his hands curled into fists, the trademark twinkle absent from his eyes.

Look, Obama said, I have not been my best the last two months. The "bitter" thing was a huge gaffe. I didn't perform well at the debate. My pastor was a big problem. But let's be honest, you guys haven't been your best, either. We're not going to lose the nomination. We've come too far. But we have a bunch of challenging states in front of us, and I don't want to limp across the finish line. I want to finish strong.

p. 246 When Obama did, late that evening in his hotel room, he was stunned. The first Wright eruption had filled him with sadness at the sight of his pastor self-destructing. But the sequel made him angry and indignant. With his race speech, Obama had declined to

throw Wright under the bus. Now Wright appeared to be hell-bent on tossing Obama in front of a runaway train.

p. 247 "Do people really believe that I think that way?" Obama said softly. "Do people really believe that his views are my views? Why would people think that?"

The next six days were brutal for Obama. His poll numbers took a hit in North Carolina and plummeted in Indiana, where the campaign now feared getting clobbered. He was campaigning harder than he ever had before. But Clinton was working just as hard, and was in a groove. At high school gyms, train depots, and fire stations, she turned in performances that were sharp, energetic, and laced through with antic, even madcap, populism – vowing to "go right at OPEC" over high gas prices, attacking Wall Street "money brokers" for their role in causing the recession. Her staff was bedraggled, shriveled; Hillary fairly glowed. "She's finally having fun," said one of her aides.

p. 249 Not a soul believed her. Though Obama had failed to defeat Clinton in Indiana, he'd achieved several greater triumphs. He had beaten expectations. He had reassured the party that he wasn't irreparably damaged goods. And, not least, he had overcome his real nemesis – not Hillary Clinton, but Jeremiah Wright. Around midnight, Tim Russert appeared on

MSNBC and summed up the meaning of Obama's trifecta unequivocally, with a single sentence that caused one set of hearts to flutter and another to stop beating: "We now know who the Democratic nominee is going to be and no one is going to dispute it."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE BITTER END GAME

p. 253 The endorsement was unveiled seventeen hours later in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Edwards enjoyed the experience more than he thought he would. (His attitude on the flight up had been, let's get this over with.) And he didn't come away empty-handed. At a meeting with his donors in New York, Edwards bragged about securing a prime-time speaking slot at the Democratic convention, though for the Obamans, that was a small price to pay. Timed to coincide with the network evening news, the endorsement succeeded not only in stepping on Clinton's West Virginia headlines but in shifting the narrative about Obamas's demographic dilemma.

The Obama campaign found the idea of the "whitey tape" preposterous: But after the Wright fracas, no one was taking any chances. Jarrett was dispatched to raise the topic with Michelle. "Did you ever say anything about 'whitely at Trinity." Jarrett asked.

p. 254 Obama had reason to be concerned about where the Clinton's heads were at. Without a plausible road still open to carry Hillary to the nomination, they seemed to be left with only two options: giving up or going postal. Rahm Emanuel, one of the few people in the world talking to both sides, was counseling Obama to give Hillary space, even as he urged Bill Clinton not to turn the final days of the race into a shooting spree. But Emanuel was blunt with Obama about one thing. Quitting, he said, simply wasn't in the Clintons' bloodstream.

p. 262 A furious scramble ensued. The Clintons had removed the word "endorse"; it was put back I n. The Clintons had deleted many of the references to Obama; they were reinserted. Hillary uttered not a peep of protest, insisting that her goal all along had been to give a speech that was generous and unimpeachable.

p. 263 Axelrod approached Clinton and asked to have a word. They retreated to the rear cabin and huddled. Obama's strategist wanted to make sure there were no hard feelings between them. Afterward, Axelrod was elated with how the talk had gone. It was a really good conversation, he said. But Hillary had a slight different view.

p. 273 The planning for McCain's run had been slowly building for months; this meeting, in a way, was both a culmination and a launch. David talked about operations, everything from budgets to office space to a proposed logo. Weaver presented a strategic overview, discussing the calendar, organization, and McCain's competitors. The field hadn't fully taken shape, but it was looking weak. There was Rudy Giuliani, the former mayor of New York City, whose universal name recognition put him at the top of the national polls, but whose social liberalism would make him a hard sell in an ever-more-conservative Republican Party. There was Mitt Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts, who was handsome, rich, and successful – but unknown across the country and a Mormon, a faith regarded by many Evangelicals and Catholics with suspicion and distrust. The rest were a collection of the anonymous, the toothless, and the marginal. Certainly there was no one on the horizon who possessed the attribute that was making McCain look so good to so many Republicans, even those whose instinctive reaction to him was to balk; he was the only GOP candidate who appeared capable of beating Hillary Clinton, the odds-on favorite for the Democratic nomination.

p. 274 the truth was, McCain had a lot of reasons to dread the start of the race. For all his progress in making himself more acceptable to the Establishment, he knew that winning his parties nomination would be no cakewalk. Conservative activists still distrusted him for his

apostasies on taxes, campaign reform, interrogation techniques, and judges. The religious right would never warm to him. and there were plenty of Establishmentarians who saw his legendary temper as a problem of no small consequence. Some worried his hotheadedness made him unsuited for the Oval Office; others, that he might blow his stack in public and blow up his candidacy. Though he'd been better in recent years at keeping his petulance at bay (or under wraps) , McCain was still prone to outbursts of profanity – sometimes in front of campaign volunteers – that made his advisers wince.

p. 275 McCain had been outspoken in pressing Bush to commit more U.S. forces to Iraq, even as Americans had turned decisively against the war and favored a timetable for withdrawal. His advisers warned him that his stance was damaging him politically, hurting him with voters as well as donors. He didn't care. "You're not gonna get me to change my opinion on Iraq," McCain would say. "Id rather lose the campaign than lose a war."

By later 2006, McCain had vulnerability, and an unexpected one. Suddenly, out of nowhere, his status as a media darling was fading. He was losing the constituency he had proudly, and only half-jokingly, canned "my base."

p. 277 The initial budget devised by Davis was a monster. The fundraising plan called for the campaign to haul in a record $48 million in the first quarter of 2007. That figure was derived largely by looking at the numbers that Bush had racked up in his 2004 campaign – as an incumbent president with the best-oiled cash-accumulating apparatus ever assembled (in the pre-Obama era, that is). Yet nobody seemed to question whether that was an appropriate yardstick.

The split structure of McCainworld was no accident. From the moment the November meeting in Phoenix ended, there were two McCain campaigns, one led by Weaver and one by Davis, two men with a long-standing history of personal enmity. No one could really explain where it had begun, but it was so profound they could barely stand to be in the same room together. Weaver had brought in Nelson partly to keep Davis from being campaign manager. By January, John and Terry were lobbying to have Rick canned.

p. 288 Giulianni's defects, from a conservative point of view, were readily apparent. He was pro-choice, pro-gay rights, pro-gun control. He was thrice married, and had carried on a public affair with wife number three while going through a messy divorce from wife number two. When the latter, Donna Hanover, kicked him out of Gracie Mansion, he cohabited with two gay men. There were pictures all over the Internet of him in drag – face painted in

rouge, head adorned with a blond wig, shoulders draped in a feather boa – from a New York variety show.

And those were just the liabilities that Giuliani brought into the campaign with him. The past six months had exposed more. He had fallen far short of his fund-raising goals. He had failed to master the retail politics rituals of Iowa and New Hampshire, never shedding his swollen entourage or his preference for photo ops over town hall meetings and intimate voter coddling.

p. 289 Judith Nathan had been in the spotlight since 1998, after she and Giuliani collided one night at a cigar bar. The tabloid coverage of her had never been flattering, but once her husband entered the presidential race in early 2007, it turned into a horror show.

First came the story that Judith had actually been married twice – not once, as she had previously suggested – before wedding Rudy in 2003. (JUDI GUILIANI'S SECRET HUSBAND REVEALED.") Two weeks later, she suffered a far worse headline: JUDI'S JOB WITH PUP-KILLER FIRM." Years earlier, it seemed, she had worked for a medical supply firm that, yes, exterminated puppies as part of its sales demonstrations.

p. 291 The Florida primary on January 29 was the fifth contest I n the Republican race. The Giuliani strategy was to do well enough in New Hampshire to allow him to stay alive until the vote in the Sunshine State, then win there and be off and running.

p. 292-293 Giuliani's team so valued their new prize that they proceeded to build their entire fall strategy around it. Their secret plan was to start running TV ads in New Hampshire in November, followed shortly thereafter by a surprise trip to Florida to claim the Crist endorsement. Then a classic fly-around to all the state's major cities, for a series of press conferences and fund-raisers. After that, Crist and Giuliani would travel together to New Hampshire for some joint campaigning. The publicity, money, and show of force that Crist would confer in Florida would so impress the national media and the voters of new Hampshire that the endorsement would have a gigantic spillover effect.

Over the next few months, Giuliani was buoyed by the confidence of having a prepackaged bombshell tucked in his breast pocket. Crist's close friend and top fun-raiser, Harry Sargeant, was helping Giuliani raise money, a heartening sign that the political families were engaged. Even as he began to slip in the polls, Rudy remained serene.

Until, that is, his campaign began hearing the same message over and over from their allies in Florida. No one could quite pin down what it meant, but the message filled Giuliani with unease: There's a problem with Crist.

p. 293-294 But Romney's efforts to get right with the right landed him in trouble. For most of his life, he had been a middle-of-the-road, pro-business pragmatist, unequivocally pro-choice, moderate on tax cuts and immigration. Running against Ted Kennedy for the Senate in 1994, he pledged that he'd do more for gay rights than his opponent. Romney had reversed himself on all of this, which quickly gave rise to charges of hypocrisy and opportunism. Even before he announced his candidacy, a YouTube video began making the rounds that captured him firmly stating his liberalish social views, comically juxtaposing them with his newly adopted arch-conservative stances. From then on, the flip-flopper label was firmly affixed to Mitt's forehead.

p. 295 Worse, Romney had a propensity for stumbling into the wrong kind of headlines. There was the story about how his gardeners were illegal aliens. There was the one about the time that he and his family went on vacation and put their dog in a crate strapped to the roof of their car for the twelve-hour drive. Oh, and also the one about his "lifelong" devotion to hunting, which turned out to mean he'd done it twice. "I'm not a big-game