REDWOOD

VERNON MITCHELL

AUDITION SIDES

Character Overview + Three Audition Scenes

SECTOR 7 FILMS

VERNON MITCHELL

48 | Former Mayor of Baltimore | Candidate for Governor

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Vernon Mitchell is an ambitious politician with big political aspirations. The script describes him as an average-build African-American man, a former Mayor of Baltimore who is now running for Governor, and specifically calls him cold and calculating. He has already lived through years of political pressure and credible death threats, and he carries himself like a man who believes he has been tested by fire.

Vernon is comfortable around power. He has history with Edwin dating back to Cornell, his sister Candice is deeply involved in his life, and his Chief of Staff, Tilly, is the person he relies on when the situation gets dirty or complicated. Vernon understands that politics is not only about what is true - it is also about what people see, what they believe, and what can be controlled.

The cyber attack exposes the crack beneath his public confidence. Hackers gain access to his campaign and personal emails, and Vernon immediately begins calculating what can be contained, what must remain hidden and who can help him. In private, he admits that the emails contain things he is not proud of. In public, he turns the attack into a campaign message and refuses to appear weak.

The key to the role is the split between PUBLIC CONTROL and PRIVATE PRESSURE. Vernon can be polished, persuasive and commanding in front of a crowd, then guarded and deeply concerned when the doors close. He rarely gives people the full truth unless he has no other choice.

WHAT THE AUDITION SHOULD SHOW

- Political authority - Vernon should sound like a man who has spent years speaking to rooms and controlling attention.
- Ambition - he genuinely believes he belongs at the next level and does not apologize for wanting power.
- Public versus private - the campaign face is controlled even when the private man is under pressure.
- Subtext - Vernon often hides what he knows, what he fears and what he is protecting.
- Pressure without collapse - the danger should register, but Vernon keeps calculating the next move.

DO NOT PLAY A GENERIC POLITICIAN. PLAY THE MAN WHO REFUSES TO LET THE ROOM SEE HIM BLEED

SIDE 1 - THE CANDIDATE

SCENE: Vernon is having lunch with Candice, Edwin and Tilly. Edwin warns him that the governor's race will be ruthless. Vernon wants the people closest to him to understand that he has already survived worse.

ACTOR OBJECTIVE: Convince the room that you are ready. Vernon is not asking permission to run. He is establishing that fear will not move him.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: Do not make this a campaign speech. These are people who know Vernon personally. Let the confidence feel earned. When the urgent call arrives later, the challenge becomes keeping that same control.

VERNON

This race won't be easy. He's an incumbent with a war chest. But his popularity's been tanking since November.

CANDICE

That and the fact that he's raised every tax in the state to balance his budget again. People are hurting.

EDWIN

Vanguard will support you cause we believe in you. I know your heart. Since the days of you running the yard as student government president at Cornell. You'll always been a hell raiser. But jumping into this governor's race is different Vern. They're ruthless. They'll eat you alive and spit out the bones.

VERNON

I was a two-term mayor in a war-torn city. Think I don't know. In eight years we got rid of the crack and made neighborhoods a hell of a lot safer. But it came with a price.

Vernon turns to Tilly.

VERNON (CONT'D)

How many years did you serve as my Chief of Staff?

Tilly shows them five fingers.

TILLY

Five.

VERNON
And how many of those years did our office get credible death threats against my life?

Tilly shows five fingers again.

TILLY
Five.

VERNON
I've been through the fire Ed. I'm ready.

EDWIN
He's an incumbent. He's already got some pretty major endorsements.

CANDICE
All Vernon needs is to take the city and at least three major counties and he's got a serious shot.

Tilly's cell phone rings. He walks away to answer it. A moment later he returns, his hand covering the phone, and makes eye contact with Vernon.

TILLY
It's urgent.

VERNON
Excuse me.

Vernon hurries over to Tilly, takes the phone, talks for a few seconds, then returns to the table without sitting. Something has obviously startled him. He tries to hide it.

CANDICE
Vern is everything ok?

VERNON
Everthing's fine. They're freaking out cause they can't find some documents.

He reaches down and kisses Candice on the cheek.

VERNON (CONT'D)
I'll check in later sis.

He looks toward Edwin.

VERNON (CONT'D)
You've always been there. I owe you.

SIDE 2 - THE SECRET

SCENE: Vernon meets Max, a cybersecurity expert at NSA, beside Vernon's SUV overlooking the waterfront. The campaign has been hacked. Max has been digging into who did it and why Vernon was targeted.

ACTOR OBJECTIVE: Get information without giving away more than necessary. Vernon needs Max's help, but even here he is protecting himself.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: The power in this scene is restraint. Vernon is not campaigning. He is talking to someone who can see through the public image. Let the silences and short answers carry the pressure.

MAX

It's been a long time. When we met you were struggling to grab a seat as councilman. Now, you're on your way to becoming governor. That's pretty remarkable.

VERNON

No more remarkable than the work you do protecting our country from threats that people like me never see.

MAX

Locked in a theatre littered with bad actors.

Max chuckles softly. He explains that the hackers are sophisticated, have covered their tracks, may be domestic, and may be connected to a ring targeting other politicians. Then he notes one exception: almost all the other targets were incumbents with huge coffers.

VERNON

What's that?

MAX

Almost all of them have been against incumbents. Politicians with huge coffers. So why you?

VERNON

Your guess is as good as mine.

MAX
How much time did they give you?

VERNON
Five days. Maybe I could try to stall them.

MAX
You said they said they threatened to release emails.

VERNON
Personal and campaign emails.

MAX
You meeting with me. Them black mailing you for a half million. That's some heavy stuff. I suppose you wouldn't mind me asking what the hell is in those emails?

(1 beat...)

VERNON
Things I'm not proud of.

PERFORMANCE TURN:
This last line is the crack in the armor. Do not overplay it. Vernon is not confessing everything. He is admitting just enough to make Max understand that the threat is real.

SIDE 3 - THE PUBLIC FACE

SCENE: At a Redwood fundraiser, Vernon addresses supporters after news breaks that his campaign has suffered a cyber attack. Privately, he knows the situation is much worse than the crowd understands.

ACTOR OBJECTIVE: Take control of the narrative. Vernon needs the room to leave believing that the attack made him stronger, not weaker.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: This is the campaign version of Vernon. He knows how to hold a crowd, but avoid empty political gestures. The words have to feel like survival in real time. Underneath the confidence, Vernon knows secrets could destroy what he has built.

VERNON

As many of you I'm sure has seen on the news our campaign has been victim of a malicious cyber attack. Our donor lists, emails, and other critical data has been compromised. The opposition is hell-bent on seeing this campaign fail, because they know that a win for this campaign is a challenge to the status quo. But believe me when I say this, we will not quit. We will not fold. And we will prevail. This is the people's campaign.

The crowd erupts in cheers.

ACTOR NOTE:

The audience knows Vernon is carrying information the supporters do not. Let that private knowledge sit underneath the public confidence. That contradiction is the scene.

AUDITION REMINDER

Across these three sides, we should see three versions of the same man: the ambitious candidate who believes he has already survived the fire, the private man trying to contain a threat that could expose him, and the public figure who can turn a crisis into a message of strength.

Vernon should never become a cartoon politician. His confidence comes from experience. His calculation comes from understanding consequences. His secrecy comes from knowing that some truths can destroy careers, relationships and everything he has spent years building.

The most important acting choice is CONTROL. When Vernon is frightened, he does not become helpless. He becomes more careful. When he is under pressure, he thinks. When the public is watching, he gives them exactly the version of Vernon Mitchell he wants them to see.

That's Vernon Mitchell. Now show us your version of him.