

"Compelling....This book couldn't be more timely." —Jill Abramson, *New York Times Book Review*

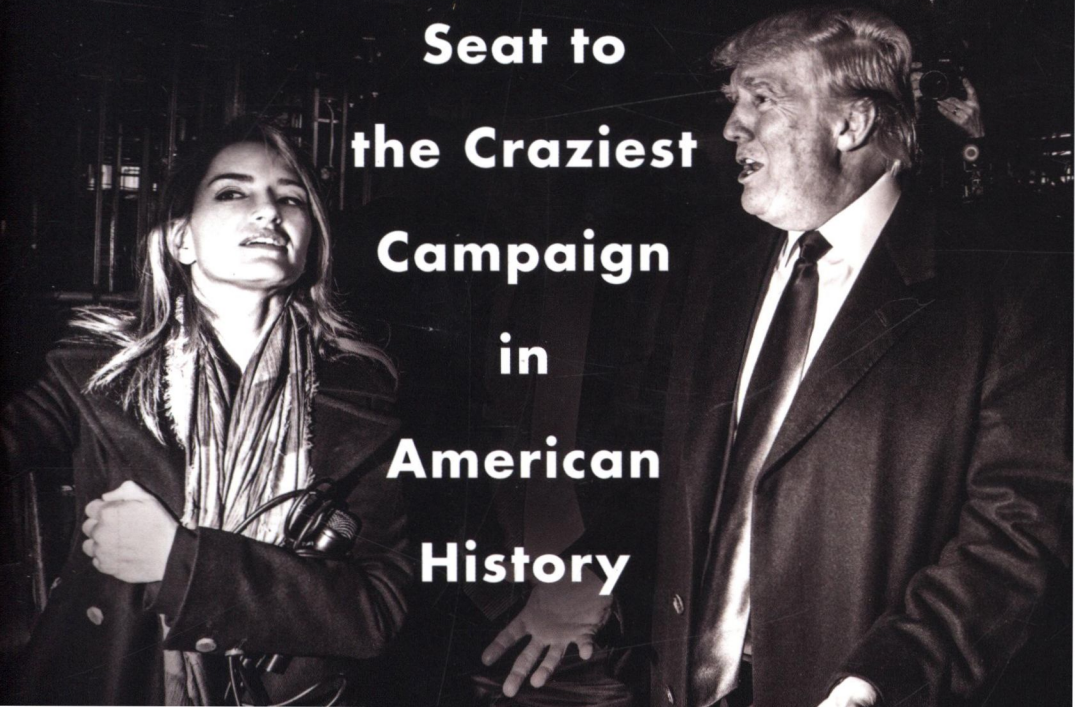
KATY TUR



# Unbelievable



My  
Front-Row  
Seat to  
the Craziest  
Campaign  
in  
American  
History



FROM

# Unbelievable

I'm sitting in an office in 30 Rock, waiting for Donald Trump to call me.

Apparently tweeting that I should be fired, calling me a liar in front of millions of people on national television, and receiving death threats from his followers shortly thereafter was not enough punishment.

He wants to hear me say I'm sorry. He wants to hear those two precious words.

The idea of Donald Trump calling anyone for an apology is a bit rich.

He wants me to grovel.

The phone rings.

"Katy, it's Donald."

He actually sounds a bit friendly, making small talk about his poll numbers. He wants my opinion of Ted Cruz. He wants my opinion of Ben Carson. He is talking to me like we are old friends, and it occurs to me that in his mind maybe we are. At least for the moment. Banter is part of his process.

"Well, I know that you're busy, so let's just get into this," I say. "I know that you have been less than pleased with what you've seen as some unfair reporting."

I remind him that intense scrutiny is what comes with being the front-runner. The American public deserves to know as much about their potential president as they can. Trump listens but he still has complaints about the way I characterized his departure from the stage in Raleigh.

It occurs to me that this is really about image. Trump cannot bear looking weak. His whole pitch to the American people is "strength and stamina." He's the outsider who is willing to say what the others won't, to do what the others are afraid of doing, to fight, for you. He is a man who cannot be intimidated. This obsession with old-fashioned power is why he's so enamored of Vladimir Putin, who rides horses bareback and shirtless.

Suddenly, something seems to click with Trump. I don't know what. But he seems to accept my explanation of my job, to take the scrutiny as a sign of respect. Maybe it was enough for him just to hear that I think he's got a serious shot at the presidency. For whatever reason, he moves on.

"I appreciate what you're saying," he says. "Take care of yourself. . . . Be fair to me, Katy. . . . You and I should be friends."

We hang up.

I did not apologize.

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Unbelievable!



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TO THE CRAZIEST CAMPAIGN  
IN AMERICAN HISTORY

KATY TUR



DEY ST.

*An Imprint of* WILLIAM MORROW



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**UNBELIEVABLE**



*For the love of God*





“I play to people’s fantasies . . . People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular. I call it truthful hyperbole. It’s an innocent form of exaggeration—and a very effective form of promotion.”

—Donald J. Trump, *The Art of the Deal*



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is a true story. It is also my story, which makes it a work of memory. To re-create what happened, I recovered photos, videos, text messages, e-mails, and social media—my own and other people's. I also relied on thousands of pages of reporting—a stack of papers more than a foot high—compiled contemporaneously by my NBC colleagues and me about the Trump campaign. Given that this is a story that unfolded during more than five hundred days, while I was in hotels, airports, TV studios, and more Trump rallies than I can count, I also hired a professional fact-checker. Where I re-create moments, I depended on video, photos, and, where possible, conversations with the people involved. I cross-referenced my own memory with the memories of those who experienced the same moments alongside me. Most important, I took notes. A lot of notes.

Thank you to Donald Trump's friends, business associates, confidants, campaign advisers, staffers, and Republican

Party sources whom I agreed not to name. Thank you to the Trump supporters and protesters who were unfailingly polite to a reporter just looking to understand. Thank you to the Trump supporters and protesters who were anything but polite: you also helped me understand. Thank you to the Trump press corps. Thank you to everyone at NBC, from the interns to the executives. Without you, my reporting, and ultimately this book, would not be possible.

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## PROLOGUE

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### TRUMP VICTORY PARTY

NEW YORK HILTON MIDTOWN

10:59 P.M., Election Day

I'm about to throw up.

I'm standing on the press riser at Donald Trump's New York City Election Night headquarters. Fox News is playing on two big-screen televisions, framing a stage covered with American flags and punctuated by two glass cases, each containing a MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN hat. At the center, there's an empty podium gathering historical significance by the second.

"We also have a big call to make now," says Megyn Kelly, on the screen alongside Bret Baier.

As the clock strikes 11 P.M., the Fox camera pans across the studio to a jumbotron to reveal an oversized yellow check mark next to Donald Trump's grinning portrait and the state of Florida. Trump has just won it, along with all twenty-nine of its electoral votes. The ballroom crowd of

staffers, supersupporters, and volunteers goes absolutely wild. The journalists in the room fall silent.

If the future is a blank sheet of paper, this news rips it in two.

My phone vibrates. And vibrates again. It doesn't stop.

"Holy shit, you called it!" flashes a text from a friend who had been insisting, like nearly all the polls on Planet Earth, that Hillary was a lock. I pick up my phone and check the *New York Times* election forecast. After predicting a Clinton victory for months, it has flipped. Trump has a 95 percent chance of winning the election, it says. Only two and a half hours ago, Hillary Clinton had an 85 percent chance.

*Holy shit. I did call it.*

In the seventeen months before now, I visited more than forty states, filing more than thirty-eight hundred live TV reports. I did all that as the Trump correspondent for NBC News and MSNBC, and I did it with one audience in mind: the American voter. My goal was to explain what Trump believed in and how he would govern if elected. The job came with all the usual hardships of the campaign trail plus a few new ones, such as death threats and a gazillion loops of Elton John's "Tiny Dancer," a staple of Trump's campaign rallies. I am proud of the work I've done but also quite ready for it to be over, thank you very much.

Ali Vitali weaves her way over to me on the crowded riser. She's been NBC's Trump embed since early on, a job that means not only attending virtually every campaign event, but also recording it for posterity. "Katy!" she says,