

THE BODY POLITIC

by
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Pilot

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DAVID
At least, tell me what the hell her
letter said so I can understand.

She stares, wishes she could, doesn't...

HOPE
I'm sorry.

DAVID
No, you're not.

HOPE
David --

DAVID
This big mystery of yours is just
an excuse, isn't it?

HOPE
That's not true.

He studies her face, not sure what to believe...

DAVID
Then tell me when you're
coming back.

Again, all she does is stare. Clearly, she doesn't know.
Tears in both of their eyes now. Finally...

DAVID (CONT'D)
I'm not gonna wait forever

HOPE
I'm not asking you to.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS - MICHIGAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN

We find Hope in a window near the back of the bus. It merges
onto the open freeway, pointing east into the rising sun.

INT. BUS - DRIVING

Hope reads a letter, nervously fingering her medallion, the
urn riding next to her. This is the start of a long journey.

HOPE'S MOM (V.O.)
You know how I always told you that
no one ever really knows anyone?
That everyone has a secret?
Well... this is mine.

INT. D.C. BUS STATION RESTROOM - DAY

Cosmetics are spread everywhere. Now dressed in a suit, Hope stares into the mirror. The girl staring back is a stranger.

EXT. BUS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

She steps from the restroom. The sight of THE CAPITOL DOME rising above the city in the distance stops her cold.

EXT. UNITED STATES CAPITOL BUILDING - THE STEPS - LATER

Hope stares up at the massive dome. She's come all this way, but finds herself suddenly frozen. Intimidated.

Then something up above steals her attention:

A TV NEWS CREW converges on the middle-aged, politically handsome SENATOR JACK ADAMSON (D-FL), and his very sexy, smartly tailored legislative aide, JESSICA SHARP, 29.

They're moving fast, late for something. Still, the Senator can't resist CNN's DANA BASH...

DANA BASH
Senator Adamson? Excuse me.

JESSICA
(low)
She'll ask about the foreclosure freeze. Just keep moving. Her husband's name is John. One son.

DANA BASH
Sir, my republican sources say they'll hold up your nomination as attorney general if you keep pushing the foreclosure freeze.

ADAMSON
I'd suggest your republican sources check the score board, Dana. Cynical politics like that cost them the White House and put them out in the cold.

DANA BASH
You're not worried about a filibuster then? After all, the democrats only have 59 votes.

ADAMSON
What I'm worried about is people losing their homes.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)
 (then; with a smile)
 My best to John, and your son.

Dana wants to follow up, but before she can...

JESSICA
 The Senator's late.

With that, they stride off. Hope watches. Seeing Jessica in action makes her feel even more out of place than before.

She looks back to the dome, summoning her courage, finally starting to climb.

INT. ADAMSON'S LIMO - BACK SEAT - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica's eyes are on her Blackberry. Adamson's are on her thighs.

ADAMSON
 She's right, you know? One more seat and we could've told them to stick their filibuster where the sun don't shine.

JESSICA
 I think you just did that, sir.

Sensing his eyes on her legs, she crosses them, which, of course, only reveals more of her thighs. The garters come as a surprise. She never looks up from the Blackberry...

JESSICA (CONT'D)
 Until you're confirmed, you really should try to be more... political.

ADAMSON
 Stop worrying. You'll get your office at Justice. The republicans couldn't stop my confirmation now, even if they wanted to.
 (then)
 Are those the garters I gave you?

She finally looks over, smiling slightly, then...

JESSICA
 I do have others, Senator. And I'm not worried about my office, I'm worried about yours.

The Senator slides closer. Jessica's smile widens.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
 What are you doing?

He runs his hand along her calf. She removes it.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
I told you... I'm seeing someone.

ADAMSON
And I'm married.

JESSICA
Good point. Last time.

With that, she closes the partition on their insouciant DRIVER. They kiss. Hands tear at clothes. And...

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Hope reaches the front of the long line, steps through the metal detector. BEEP.

CAPITOL POLICEMAN
Jewelry, keys, cell phone.

She removes the medallion from her neck, dropping it into a bowl, before trying again. This time, there's no beep.

INT. DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BLDG. - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Hope stands before a large oak door, gazing at the placard:

SEN. ROBERT WEBSTER -- (R) MICHIGAN

She's working up the nerve to go inside, when she hears:

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Tell him you like baseball.

She spins to see CHARLIE MORRIS, 27, a very enthusiastic reporter, waiting behind her. He smiles.

HOPE
I hate baseball.

CHARLIE
No one hates baseball.

HOPE
What are we talking about here?

CHARLIE
Your job with Senator Webster.
(off her confusion)
You wanna get hired, you gotta impress Sperlock. Chief of staff. Huge Tigers fan.

HOPE

How did you know I was --

He points to the resume in her hand. She LAUGHS at herself.

HOPE (CONT'D)

Right.

CHARLIE

Charlie Morris. Washington Post.

He offers his hand. She shakes it...

HOPE

Hope Foster... Intern wannabe.

With a smile, he holds open the door. She finally has no choice but to step inside. And...

INT. ADAMSON'S LIMO - MOVING - SAME TIME

Post-coitus. Jessica and Adamson pull themselves together.

ADAMSON

So do you love him?

The question stops her. Just for a moment. Then...

JESSICA

I'd have to have a heart for that.

ADAMSON

Careful, kiddo. He's a player now.
The West Wing ain't the senate.

She looks out the window to hide the fact that she's already thought of this...

JESSICA

Trust me. It's handled. Now let's
go over your testimony before we --

He suddenly leans into her. Smiling, she looks over. The vacant stare surprises her. She pushes him upright...

JESSICA (CONT'D)

... Senator?

He falls limply into the seat. She shakes him...

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Jack!

Still nothing. It's bad and she knows it...

JESSICA (CONT'D)
 ... Oh God no.

She scrambles to the partition, BANGS on it...

JESSICA (CONT'D)
 Vince!! Help!!

The partition slides. The driver, VINCE, looks back, instantly registering the crisis.

Jessica stares with growing horror at the Senator, as Vince pulls to the curb, jumps out and rushes for the back door.

In seconds, he's inside, checking for breath, a pulse. Finding neither, he throws his phone to Jessica...

VINCE
 Call 911!

He starts CPR. Quickly realizes it's no use. He pulls back, looks at her. Shakes his head. Jessica can't believe it. She lets out an involuntary SOB, then pulls it together...

JESSICA
 ... Oh God. I can't be here.

She hands back the phone.

VINCE
 What? Why not? You're his aide.

JESSICA
 You know goddamn well why not!
 When they examine him, they'll
 know what we were doing.

With that, she wipes her lipstick off Adamson's cheek.

EXT. STREET CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica stands there, badly shaken, as the limo races away.

INT. SEN. WEBSTER'S OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - SAME TIME

Charlie and Hope wait. STAFFERS, on computers, ignore them.

CHARLIE
 So how republican are you?

HOPE
 What?

CHARLIE
Evangelical. Fiscal conservative.
Neocon. All of the above.

HOPE
Is that really what passes for
small talk around here?

CHARLIE
I could ask what you majored in.

HOPE
Right. Because that's much better.

CHARLIE
So what did you major in?

She looks at him, sees that he really wants to know.

HOPE
Mixology.

CHARLIE
Bartending? Is that a doctorate
program, or...

Makes her smiles. Which makes him smile.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Seriously. All the hiring is on
the other side of the aisle. The
republicans who didn't lose are
bailing out, cashing in. Your
timing's all wrong.

HOPE
Story of my life.

There's truth in it. Charlie's curious, but before he can
press Senator Webster's over-caffeinated chief of staff,
JIM SPERLOCK, 40, bursts from his office, headset on.

SPERLOCK
(to his assistant)
Quick, Zeke. The Lincoln quote we
used at West Point. What was it?

The doughy ZEKE scrambles to a computer.

SPERLOCK (CONT'D)
(tapping his headset)
New York Times! New York Times!

HOPE
(low, to Charlie)
I know this. I just watched that
speech on YouTube.

CHARLIE

Jim!

Sperlock looks to Charlie. Charlie looks to Hope.
Hope takes a deep breath, then...

HOPE

'Nearly all men can stand
adversity, but if you want to test
a man's character, give him power.'

All eyes are on Hope, as Sperlock repeats the quote into his
headset. Charlie is impressed. Zeke hates her already.

Sperlock hangs up, then steps toward them. Both stand.

SPERLOCK

Don't tell me you're with this guy.
(holding out a hand)
Jim Sperlock.

HOPE

Hope Foster. Actually, no...
I'm here about a staff position.

She hands him her resume. He doesn't look at it...

SPERLOCK

And they said there weren't any
republicans left under 30.
(then)
Zeke, are we hiring?

Zeke, still stung, shakes his head...

ZEKE

No, sir. Our waiting list has a
waiting list.

CHARLIE

You're gonna listen to Zeke?
This girl bartended her way through
school. That's real world
experience. How many of these
Facebook Activists can say that?
(as heads turn)
No offense, guys.

Before Sperlock can respond, his Blackberry CHIMES.
Charlie's plays T-PAIN. The JAMES BOND THEME comes from
somewhere in the office. Then MOZART. RING TONE madness.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Turn on CNN.

SPERLOCK

Turn on Fox!

Zeke turns on the tv: stock footage of Adamson on the stump.

SHEPARD SMITH (ON TV)
 Florida Democratic Senator Adamson,
 the President's nominee for
 attorney general suffered a massive
 coronary, and was pronounced dead
 only minutes ago at...

SPERLOCK
 (to Zeke)
 Get me the boss! Now!

Hope looks to Charlie, sees him pull out a tape recorder.

INT. RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Jessica stops outside the door to Adamson's office. The tv
 inside is audible. Here, it's CNN:

WOLF BLITZER (O.S.)
 Because Senator Adamson was riding
 alone in the back of the limousine,
 it's unclear how long he was...

Jessica takes a deep breath before striding through the door.

INT. SEN. ADAMSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The stunned STAFF is gathered around the tv. Some turn.

JESSICA
 I just heard. What do we know?

She's looking around at the tear-lined cheeks when her
 Blackberry BUZZES. She checks it:

From Evans, Lucky: 'Just saw the news. You okay?'

Suddenly, A WEEPY STAFFER turns to face her...

WEEPY STAFFER
 ... Jess, what do we do?

JESSICA
 We take care of each other.
 That's what he would've wanted.

Then, without pause, she thumbs a response on her Blackberry:

'I NEED A JOB!'

INT. WEBSTER'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Eyes are still on the tv. Zeke turns sharply to Sperlock...

ZEKE

I have Senator Webster.

Sperlock moves for his office, as he takes the call...

SPERLOCK (INTO PHONE)

Hey, boss. You watching this?

He leaves the office door open. Charlie angles closer.

SPERLOCK (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

Sir, I know he was a friend, and I'm sorry for your loss, but this means Justice is open again. They'll go back to their short list. If the president reaches across the aisle this time, do we still wanna take his hand?

Sperlock moves the phone from his ear to save his hearing. Before the Senator can finish shouting, Sperlock's Blackberry DINGS. He checks it. Again, the name 'Lucky Evans' appears.

SPERLOCK (CONT'D)

You're right. I'm a cold bastard, but they're already calling. What do we say?

He listens for another moment, then answers the Blackberry...

SPERLOCK (CONT'D)

The answer's yes.

He hangs up, frozen for a moment, before pumping his fist.

That's when he sees Charlie and Hope watching through the doorway. Hope struggles to keep up. Charlie is riveted.

Sperlock smiles, as he approaches, takes the recorder from Charlie, pops out the tape, then tosses back the recorder...

SPERLOCK (CONT'D)

Off the record.

(then; to Hope)

Stick around, barkeep. We may have something for you after all.

Before Hope can respond, the door SLAMS. She looks to Charlie, shocked that she may have just gotten a job.

CHARLIE

Timing is everything

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. DIRKSEN BASEMENT - CAFETERIA - DAY - ONE HOUR LATER

The subterranean hall BUZZES with the events of the day. Hope waits in a pick-up line, feeling out of place, nervous.

WOMAN BEHIND COUNTER
Senator Webster!

She steps up, takes a box filled with lunches and hurries off. Charlie falls into stride...

CHARLIE
So aren't you gonna thank me?

HOPE
Thank you. I now work for free.

CHARLIE
Intern today, staffer tomorrow.
Who knows, if they like you, maybe
they'll take you to Justice.

HOPE
Justice?

He looks at her, realizes she's not being coy.

CHARLIE
What do you think that phone call
was about? I'm betting it was
Lucky Evans. Man, getting Webster
would be his masterpiece.

He looks over, sees Hope's confusion...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You have no idea what I'm talking
about, do you?

HOPE
Yes, I do. Lucky Evans. The
President's adviser. He's cute.

CHARLIE
Cute? He's a killer. Or was until
he took this job. I'm talking
about what he's doing. You don't
think it's brilliant?

She walks a little faster. Charlie hurries to keep up...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Hey, slow down. I have a question.

HOPE

Yes, I have a boyfriend.

CHARLIE

Wrong question, but nice ego.
Besides, I don't date my sources.

It stops her.

HOPE

I'm not your source.

CHARLIE

I was kinda hoping you would be.
(then)
Sperlock put everything off the
record. You could put it back on.

She's walking again. So is he.

HOPE

An hour ago, you helped me get a
job, now you want me lose it?

CHARLIE

Trust me. You'll be protected.
I'll call you an unnamed staffer.

She steps into a waiting elevator, pushes a button.

HOPE

I'm not a staffer. I'm an intern.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Charlie follows. Doors close.

CHARLIE

Please, Hope. This could be my big
break. The new President reaches
across to the republicans to fill a
huge job in his cabinet. Webster's
seat gets filled by the democratic
governor of Michigan, putting the
dems at sixty, and a filibuster
proof super-majority. It's genius.

HOPE

I don't know. I really don't think
I should get involved.

CHARLIE

Come on, I help you, you help me.
That's the way the game is played.

Before she can respond, the doors open, revealing a striking, young naval officer. Meet BEN MCGRATH, 27. Without the uniform, he'd be a heartbreaker. With it, it's unfair.

BEN
Don't say a word.

CHARLIE
I guess you're not done playing dress up, after all.

BEN
(looking to Hope)
You think anyone would care if I killed a reporter?

Hope's smile is a bit too wide. Charlie notices this...

CHARLIE
Hope Foster, Ben McGrath. Ben works for Senator Buckley. During the primaries he was her military credentials. Now, he's an errand boy. That's what happens when you pick the wrong horse.
(looking back to Ben)
Hope's got a boyfriend.

BEN
That true? Or were you just trying to let our boy down easy?

HOPE
It's a long story.

He holds her stare. She looks away...

HOPE (CONT'D)
So how do you two know each other?

CHARLIE
He lives in my building.

BEN
He lives in mine.
(then; to Charlie)
Too bad about Adamson, huh?
Jessica must be freaked. How long you think until she's asking Buckley for a job?

CHARLIE
Why Buckley?

BEN
Who else they gonna give Justice to?

Charlie and Hope exchange a knowing glance.

BEN (CONT'D)
What?

CHARLIE
Nothing.

Before Ben can press, the elevator stops, doors open.
Hope steps out, turning to Charlie before he can follow...

HOPE
Thanks, I can take it from here.

CHARLIE
You never answered my question.

HOPE
The answer's "no".

The doors slide closed. Ben LAUGHS.

CHARLIE
Shut up. It's not what you think.

BEN
It's cool, bro. If you like her,
I'll leave her alone.

CHARLIE
Leave her alone? You saw her.
She didn't even recognize you.

BEN
You like her.

The elevator stops at the next floor, and Ben strides out.

INT. 4TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CHARLIE
(following)
How could I like her? She's been
here five minutes. Another one of
these kids who woke up one morning
and thought it would be fun to
change the world.

BEN
Wait a second. Isn't that what we
think, too?

CHARLIE
Yes, but we've thought it for a
while. Besides, she has a
boyfriend.

BEN
Should never stop you.
(then)
Why you following me?

CHARLIE
Freedom of the press.

Ben shakes his head, as they angle through a door marked:

*SENATE COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING & URBAN AFFAIRS
ELLEN J. BUCKLEY (D-CA) -- CHAIRMAN*

INT. COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A hearing is underway. At the witness table, a working class family, THE LUNDS, is being questioned by the FULL COMMITTEE. Behind them, the gallery is full of families just like them.

We dip in to the testimony as Ben and Charlie head quietly for the group of STAFFERS gathered near an anteroom door:

SEN. SHAY
While I appreciate you all making the trip, and I understand why the President would want to have you here today, I would be remiss if I didn't ask why it is you think the government should be bailing you out of a loan you entered into knowingly and willingly.

Ben and Charlie reach the staffers, stopping on either side of RUBY COOKE, 27, pink suit. Despite the seriousness of the hearing, she's perky. Just can't help it. They WHISPER...

RUBY
Nice uni.

BEN
Yours, too.

MR. SHAY
(continuing)
Why not me? I have a mortgage.
Should the government help me?

RUBY
Either of you talk to Jessica yet?
She must be devastated.

Before either of the boys can respond, JACK LUND, the man with his family at the witness table suddenly stands.

A HUSH falls over the room, as he struggles with what he's about to say. It looks like he might sit back down. Instead, he finds strength in the faces of his kids, then...

JACK LUND

Don't compare yourself to me, Senator. No disrespect, but something tells me, if you got into trouble, the bank might make an exception. Banks don't make exceptions for people like us. We're not asking for charity. None of us are. We just need a pause. A time out. We'll get the money. We'll figure out a way to scrape by. We always have before. We just don't wanna lose our home.

His voice trails off in emotion, as he takes his seat. His wife squeezes his hand under the table. For a moment, it's dead quiet, then...

MR. SHAY

I see that my time is up.
Thank you, Mr. Lund, for your testimony... Madam Chairman?

He looks back to the chairman's seat. It's empty. Eyes go to the anteroom. Charlie leans in to Ruby...

CHARLIE

Where is Buckley anyway?

RUBY

In with Mullin.

CHARLIE

What did the Maverick from Memphis do to piss her off, this time?

Before Ruby can respond, a staffer opens the anteroom door in time for this:

SENATOR BUCKLEY (O.S.)

You're a democrat, goddammit!
Act like one for a change!

The chamber quiets. A moment later, the handsome SENATOR MULLIN strides out, managing a smile.

The tough-as-nails SEN. ELLEN BUCKLEY follows close behind.

BUCKLEY

(low)
No wonder the only place we lost was the south.

Mullin's smile dies. He whispers back, without stopping...

MULLIN
We lost the south when we lost
God, Ellen.

BUCKLEY
This might come as a surprise to
you, Mark, but God doesn't vote.

With that, they split. He continues out of the chamber with Ruby on his heels, as Buckley retakes her seat on the dais, already wearing her most compassionate expression...

BUCKLEY (CONT'D)
Sorry about that. We lost one of
our most cherished friends and
colleagues today. Where were we?

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Mullin moves heatedly, a worried Ruby just behind. She manages to mind her own business for another few steps...

RUBY
Sir, if you don't mind me asking,
what was that about back there?

MULLIN
(after a beat)
The President's going with Webster
for Attorney General.

Ruby nods, beginning to understand...

RUBY
I take it Buckley thinks she'd be a
better choice?

Mullin smiles. Clearly, he likes being around Ruby.

RUBY (CONT'D)
I don't see why she'd be mad at you
for that. Unless...
(as it hits her)
You're endorsing him, aren't you?

MULLIN
The White House wants me to.

RUBY
They're smart. You're a democrat.
He's a republican. Your
endorsement gives both sides cover.

MULLIN

She won't be a scheduler for long,
ladies and gentlemen.

Ruby beams, thrilled by her mentor's approval, then...

RUBY

Oh my gosh. Wait a second.
Webster's from Michigan. The
governor's a democrat. He'll
appoint a democrat to fill the
seat. We'll get to 60. We'll be
filibuster-proof. Why wouldn't
Buckley be happy about that?

MULLIN

Because Buckley wouldn't be the
Attorney General.

INT. JESSICA'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Jessica is feeding things into a shredder: A holiday card
signed 'Love Jack'; A note on the Senator's letterhead.

Her assistant, the high-strung, perfectly tailored MILES, 25,
pokes his head in. Before he can get a word out --

JESSICA

Miles, I'm sure on the campaign
trail everybody just barged into
each other's offices, and it was
like "totally fun", but this is a
real job now. You will knock or
you will die. Is that clear?

Miles nods. Jessica starts to close the door, when she sees
the STAFF behind him huddled around a computer.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

What's going on?

MILES

That's what I wanted to tell you.
Check out the Huffington Post.

JESSICA

What for?

MILES

The Senator wasn't alone.

Fear flashes in her eyes, but just for a moment...

JESSICA

What are you talking about?

MILES

There was a girl.

She heads calmly for her computer, letting her deepening fear surface, as she types in the web address...

JESSICA

Arianna's as bad as Drudge. If the driver says he was alone, then --

The HUFFINGTON POST pops up. The headline is bad:

'WHO IS LADY X?'

The photograph is worse: A time-stamped, traffic camera shot of A WOMAN'S LEGS climbing from the Senator's limo.

MILES

Who do you think she is?

Jessica shakes her head, struggling for composure. And...

INT. WEBSTER'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Hope stands at her new desk, forcing smiles, as the JUNIOR STAFFERS step up, dumping stacks of unwanted constituent mail, before taking their lunches. Zeke is last...

ZEKE

We should probably talk.

Before she can ask why, her cell phone RINGS: 'DAVID.'

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Got something better to do?

HOPE

(hitting 'ignore')

No. Sorry.

Suddenly, Sperlock bursts from his office...

SPERLOCK

Battle stations, people! He's in the building.

Everyone rushes back to their desks. Hope tidies herself.

SPERLOCK (CONT'D)

Zeke, coffee.

Zeke nods, waits for Sperlock to disappear again, then...

ZEKE

Hope, coffee.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Hope's making coffee, craning to see into the office, excited to get her first look at her new boss.

Finally, the outer door opens and SENATOR ROBERT WEBSTER strides in. Late 50's. Even his walk is charismatic.

That's about all Hope sees before Zeke fills the doorway...

ZEKE
Star-struck much?

She turns back to the coffee-maker. Zeke studies her for a moment, before stepping the rest of the way inside...

ZEKE (CONT'D)
You really wanted this job, huh?

She looks back, as he holds up the papers in his hands.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Bad enough to lie on your
background check?

She reaches for it, but he pulls it away...

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Something you wanna tell me, Hope?

Hope swallows. This could be bad. And...

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. WEBSTER'S OFFICE - KITCHENETTE - RIGHT WHERE WE LEFT OFF

Hope stares at Zeke, her mind racing...

HOPE

I don't know what you mean.

ZEKE

Oh, I think you do. But before I show this to anyone, I thought I'd give you a chance to explain.

Hope's nervous, looks like she's about to confess to something, when Sperlock strides in...

SPERLOCK

Zeke? My coffee?
(off Hope's expression)
What's going on?

Hope looks to Zeke for mercy. Instead, he hands Sperlock the papers.

ZEKE

Something came up on Hope's background check. Seems she didn't really graduate from Michigan State after all.

That stops her. She looks relieved, but swallows it quickly.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

She still owes them 2000 dollars.

HOPE

For parking tickets. I finished all my course work, but --

Sperlock holds up a hand, cutting her off, as he scans the document. Zeke smirks in anticipation of the firing.

SPERLOCK

Guess we'll have to give her a paying job then, huh, Zeke?

Zeke's face falls. Hope tries not to smile.

SPERLOCK (CONT'D)

And if I don't have a cup of coffee in my hand in thirty seconds, the job she gets will be yours.

EXT. CLEVELAND PARK - NIGHT

Colonial mansions. Massive oaks. Well tended yards.

Ruby climbs from her Prius with its 'VOTE CHANGE' sticker and stares at the perfect house, then hurries up the long drive.

EXT. SENATOR MULLINS' HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ruby RINGS the bell. FOOTSTEPS rush to the door.

MARTHA MULLIN pulls it open. She's had some help to stay this gorgeous at 50. The drink in her hand is not her first.

MARTHA
You're late, sugar.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Martha hustles Ruby into the grand center hall.

RUBY
Sorry, Mrs. Mullin. Today was --

MARTHA
I know all about it. Now go on.
The doctor's already here.

RUBY
Yes, ma'am.

Ruby starts up the stairs, catching a glimpse of the Senator in his study. He sees her, too, mouths "thank you."

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Ruby sits on the edge of the tub, staring disapprovingly at her reflection in the mirror, when Martha slips in...

MARTHA
Sorry, the doctor wouldn't shut up.

Ruby forces a smile, pointing to the urine cup on the vanity.

MARTHA (CONT'D)
You're an angel.
(then; taking the sample)
Three months down. Nine to go.

She looks back, smiles, doesn't leave. Killing time...

MARTHA (CONT'D)
 Could've been worse, right? The
 judge could've been a republican.

Ruby forces another smile. Martha checks her look in the mirror, primps, decides that enough time has passed for her to have filled the cup, then...

MARTHA (CONT'D)
 Gimme five minutes to get the
 doctor gone, then you can get back
 to feeding the poor.

With that, she breezes out. Ruby shakes her head. And...

INT. FOYER - 5 MINUTES LATER

Ruby moves down the stairs alone. The house is quiet save for VOICES from the senator's study. She stops to listen. Can't quite make it out. Wants to move closer.

Instead, she thinks better of it, and continues for the front door, when she hears...

MULLIN (O.S.)
 Ruby, is that you? Come here.

INT. MULLIN'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Ruby steps into the shadowy man cave, as Mullin stubs out a cigarette. He's bathed in the glow of the flat screen tv.

On it, C-SPAN is paused. We recognize the earlier hearing. Jack Lund stands, right hand up, taking the oath.

RUBY
 Does Mrs. Mullin know you're
 smoking again, sir?

MULLIN
 I lie to her about that. She lies
 to me about the pills.

RUBY
 Doesn't she smell it on you?

MULLIN
 She'd have to get close for that.

Ruby's pulse quickens. Mullin's eyes linger on her a moment too long. He knows this, changes the subject...

MULLIN (CONT'D)
 Can I ask you something, Ruby?

RUBY
Of course, sir. Anything.

MULLIN
You think Bobby Webster would make
a good Attorney General?

She hesitates, surprised both by the question, and by the fact that he seems to genuinely care what she thinks...

RUBY
Yes. I do.

MULLIN
Better than Buckley?

RUBY
(taking another beat)
Party aside? Much better, yes.
He's compassionate. He's decent.
He's brilliant.

Mullin agrees, but after a moment shakes his head in dismay.

MULLIN
I envy your generation, Ruby.
Change is so easy for you.
Unfortunately, my generation isn't
going down without a fight.

Ruby looks confused, but before she can respond...

MULLIN (CONT'D)
I'm not endorsing Webster.

Ruby is confused, tries to hide her disappointment

MULLIN (CONT'D)
If I do, then Buckley will kill the
foreclosure freeze.

RUBY
... What? She wouldn't do that.
It's a democratic bill. For God's
sake, people will lose their homes.

He nods. There's nothing she can say that he hasn't thought about a hundred times. Finally...

MULLIN
Look on the bright side. If she's
running the Justice Department,
she's not in the senate.
(then)
Good night, Ruby.

With that, he pushes play on the remote. BUCKLEY'S VOICE is heard administering the oath...

BUCKLEY'S VOICE (ON TV)
...so help you God?

JACK LUND (ON TV)
I do.

BUCKLEY'S VOICE (ON TV)
Have a seat, please. Tell us who you are.

JACK LUND (ON TV)
Jack Lund. I'm a machinist. We live in Pittsburgh. At least we do for the next two months.

Ruby just stands there, watching the senator watch the tv.

JACK LUND (ON TV) (CONT'D)
Once we get foreclosed, we'll be moving in with my wife's mother down in Scranton.

Mullin shakes his head, genuinely moved by the pride swallowing display. Ruby wishes she could comfort him, instead, she heads for the door. And...

EXT. BROWNSTONE - CAPITOL HILL - LATER THAT NIGHT

A converted townhouse in an area that was a crime zone, before getting bought up by Gen-X and rented out to Gen-Y.

The neighborhood's one constant, like a beacon in the night, is the incandescent Capitol dome.

INT. JESSICA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON an original Warhol of Ted Kennedy.

We find Jessica on the sofa below, barely covered, her foot in the lap of the handsome and equally naked LUCKY EVANS, 40. He massages her feet. The tv news is on without sound.

JESSICA
... God, that feels good. I usually don't go this far so soon.

LUCKY
Me neither. I usually draw the line at sex.

Their eyes meet. She's falling hard. Scares her to death. That's when something on the tv steals her attention:

Adamson on the Capitol steps with Dana Bash earlier today.
Jessica at his side.

JESSICA
Change this, Lucky.

Instead, he turns up the volume.

ADAMSON (ON TV)
...Cynical politics like that cost
them the White House and put them
out in the cold.

LUCKY
That would've lost him a few votes
for confirmation.

Jessica nods sadly.

ANDERSON COOPER (ON TV)
That was the three term senator's
last public statement. He was 51.

Lucky turns it off. Jessica swallows her emotion...

JESSICA
What the hell am I gonna do now?

LUCKY
We got seven freshmen staffing up.

JESSICA
A freshman? I had an attorney
general. A man who could've been
president.

LUCKY
When? In 8 years?

JESSICA
He could've been president this
year. He's sure as hell more
qualified than your guy.

LUCKY
They didn't think so in Iowa.

She smacks him playfully in the arm.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
I'm just saying, if you want I
could make a call.

JESSICA
Oh, you're cocky.

Her hand disappears under the blanket as she says it.
Lucky writhes slightly from her touch.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Mm hmm. Must be all the good press
you're getting, 'boy wonder.'

LUCKY
You ain't seen nothing yet.

JESSICA
Meaning what?

Before Lucky can respond, there's a KNOCK at the door.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Go away.

RUBY (O.S.)
It's Ruby. I really need to talk.

JESSICA
Later. I've got my hands full.

RUBY (O.S.)
Please, Jess. Something happened
between Mullin and Buckley and I'm
not sure how to handle it.

Lucky's expression changes. He's curious. Jessica sees it.

JESSICA
Be right there, Ruby.

But here eyes stay on Lucky. Her mind races...

JESSICA (CONT'D)
You're going with Webster for AG.

LUCKY
(a weak attempt at denial)
What? What are you --

JESSICA
Shut up. Buckley deserves the job.
If she's pissed at Mullin, that
means the little traitor's
endorsing across the aisle.
Webster was the only republican on
the short list. Tell me I'm right.

LUCKY
See what she wants.

INT. LANDING - OUTSIDE JESSICA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ruby smiles as Jessica, now in her robe, opens the door.

RUBY
Sorry to bother you. I know it's
been a rough day, but --

JESSICA
Thanks. So what's your drama?

Ruby takes a moment to find the right words, then...

RUBY
Okay. What would you do if a
senator was getting blackmailed by
another senator not to do something
they thought was in the best
interest of the people.

INT. JESSICA'S LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Lucky is sitting up, listening closely.

JESSICA
First of all, grow up. It's not
blackmail, it's governing.
Second of all, what the hell are
you talking about?

Ruby says nothing, still not sure how much to tell her.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Let me save us some time, okay?
Because Mullin's a goddamn traitor
he wants to endorse Webster for AG.
Buckley wants the job, she deserves
it, so she's holding a gun to
Mullin's pretty little head.

All Ruby can do is stare, beyond impressed that she knew.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
What's in the gun, Ruby?

RUBY
What?

JESSICA
It's a metaphor, honey.

RUBY
Oh. Right. Of course.
(then)
The foreclosure freeze.

It hangs there. Just for a moment. Jessica is impressed.

JESSICA

Damn. Buckley's an animal. Unless you wanna get eaten, I'd advise you to leave it the hell alone.

RUBY

Is that what you would do?

JESSICA

I know what I wouldn't do.

RUBY

What?

JESSICA

I wouldn't fall in love with the married man I was working for.

Ruby can't keep the shock from her expression.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

And we're gonna have to work on that poker-face.

With that, she closes the door. The sound of ANOTHER DOOR CLOSING turns her around.

Lucky's gone. Momentarily stung, Jessica hurries across the room, into the kitchen, and out the back door.

INT. BACK STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

She emerges onto the service stairs, just as Lucky reaches the door at the bottom...

JESSICA

Where the hell do you think you're going?

He stops, looks up at her, as she descends...

LUCKY

Sorry, babe. Politics never sleeps.

JESSICA

That bill is Mullin's signature accomplishment. You're never gonna get him to change his mind.

LUCKY

I don't change minds. I get people to realize what's in their own best interest.

Jessica grins. That's the sexiest thing he's said all night.

Lucky pushes through the door, smiling. Jessica watches him go, about to head back upstairs, when she spots a limo parked on the street, Adamson's driver, Vince, behind the wheel.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica slips through the shadows toward the limo. If she's concerned, it doesn't show. Window slides. Vince smiles...

VINCE
Nice robe, Lady X.

JESSICA
What are you doing here, Vince?

VINCE
(after a beat)
They want a name.

JESSICA
It'll pass. Right now, we have to think about the Senator's legacy.

VINCE
I'm getting pressured, Jessica.

It hangs there. She knows what this is really about...

JESSICA
What's the bidding at, Vince?

Vince looks away, clearly conflicted about this.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Oh come on. I'm a big girl.
How much to say it was a hooker?

He looks back, shaking his head slightly, then...

VINCE
Fifty.

JESSICA
Fifty thousand? In case you forgot, I don't have a job.

VINCE
Neither do I.

With that, he drives off. Jessica just stands there, the weight of her situation finally showing in her face, as WE RISE ABOVE HER, all the way up to...

EXT. BROWNSTONE ROOFTOP - SAME SHOT

Killer view. A crescent moon over the beaming Capitol dome. Charlie and Ben sit with their housemate Miles, whom we recognize as Jessica's assistant.

Tie loosened from a long day on the Hill, Miles reads the "roommate wanted" ad he's composing on his laptop...

MILES

Busy Hill staffer, passionate about the environment, seeks non-smoker, to share two bedroom on the Hill.

CHARLIE

Dude, there's a thousand new kids like you on the Hill for every vacant apartment. DC's the new Wall Street. Be specific. Who do we want to live with?

BEN

How 'bout a redhead to go with the blonde and the brunette?

CHARLIE

How 'bout a republican to balance out you liberal elites?

MILES

You mean, as opposed to the media elites like you?

There's a beat. Charlie is surprised Miles has it in him. Ben holds out his fist...

BEN

So it begins.

CHARLIE

Better a media elite than a walking photo-op.

Ruby emerges from the rooftop door, unseen until...

RUBY

That's not fair. Ben can't help it if the camera loves him.

BEN

Oh, go pee in a cup.

That stops Ruby in her tracks. Tears spring to her eyes.

CHARLIE

What the hell does that mean?

BEN

Just a figure of speech.

With that, he looks at her, subtly apologetic.

RUBY

It's okay. Long day, that's all.

Still, Charlie's curious about the exchange. Fortunately for Ruby, that's when T-PAIN blasts. Charlie checks his Blackberry. What he sees, knocks him back to his chair.

CHARLIE

... Oh my God. My blog just got picked up by the dead tree team. I'm getting my first front page!

The others WHOOP, genuinely happy for him. Ben pulls him back to his feet, hugs him. So does Ruby. Because Miles is the new guy, he settles for a high-five. Then...

BEN

Wait. So what's the story?

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Hope stares out the window at the Capitol dome. TV NEWS plays in the background. A RINGING on the line, then:

DAVID'S VOICE (OUTGOING MESSAGE)

Hey. You've reached David and Hope. Please leave a message.

The familiar sound of his voice makes her smile...

HOPE

Hey. It's me. Where you at so late? Out with the guys, or trying to get lucky...

(the idea makes her sad)

Anyway... Sorry I couldn't talk today. Things are crazy. I got a job on Capitol Hill, can you believe it? The people are actually pretty cool. Well, most of them...

A photo of WEBSTER on the news steals her attention...

HOPE (CONT'D)

Anyway, I'm rambling now. Miss you. Bye.

She hangs up, instantly turning up the volume...

MSNBC ANCHOR

...According to an article on WashingtonPost.com, Michigan Senator Robert Webster will be the President's choice to replace Senator Adamson as his nominee for attorney general. If true, this will have major political ramifications. The story, written by the Post's Charlie Morris, is attributed to an unnamed congressional staffer...

Hope's jaw drops. Shock spins first into fear, before giving way to anger. And...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. SENATE DINING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Opulent. Crowded with SENATORS and their GUESTS.
Conversation is WHISPERED. The sound of deals being made.

Mullin is being escorted to a table in the back, when Lucky
excuses himself from another table, and stands to meet him...

LUCKY
Hello, Senator.

MULLIN
Mr. Evans.

LUCKY
(lowering his voice)
We still a go on Webster?

Mullin simply stares, torn.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
If you think there's someone better
for the job --

MULLIN
It's not that.

Mullin's eyes find Buckley watching across the room.
Lucky follows his gaze, then...

LUCKY
Don't worry about her. You just do
what you think is right. Trust me.
Your bill's gonna sail.

MULLIN
How do you know?

LUCKY
It's my job to know.

MULLIN
That's cute. But I'm gonna need
more than that. This bill is
important.

LUCKY
Yes, it is. Which is why you're
gonna have to trust me when I tell
you she's not gonna do anything to
stop it. Do you trust me?

A look passes between them. Clearly, Lucky knows something
that Mullin doesn't. Finally, Mullin nods.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Good. Then enjoy your breakfast.

With a smile, he moves back to his table, and sits back down. Mullin hesitates a moment, before continuing to his.

All the while, Buckley looks on. And...

INT. CAPITOL BASEMENT - CUPS COFFEE SHOP - SAME TIME

Talk about upstairs/downstairs. The subterranean coffee shop is a beehive of sleep deprived STAFFERS.

We find Charlie in line behind Ben, Miles and Ruby. Each is pre-caffeinated, and reading the paper, when Hope appears from the front, carrying coffee and a paper of her own.

Charlie sees her, blocks her path, touches the brand new security pass dangling from a chain around her neck...

CHARLIE

Look at you. I was wondering if you survived your first day.

Hope moves around him without a word. He grabs her arm...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Hope, wait --

She rounds on him, SLAPPING her paper into his chest...

HOPE

Nice scoop. You're a bastard.

It gets stares. The paper drops, as Charlie leads her aside, and lowers his voice...

CHARLIE

You weren't my source.

HOPE

Didn't stop you though, did it?

CHARLIE

Slow down. Just listen.

HOPE

No, you listen! I may not know how the game is played, but I do know right from wrong.

CHARLIE

You don't understand --

HOPE
Thanks for helping me get the job,
Charlie. Have a nice life.

With that, she marches off. Charlie wants to go after her, but before he can, Ben has his elbow...

BEN
Whoa. Trust me. Let her go.

The others fall in around them...

RUBY
What'd you do to that girl?

CHARLIE
Nothing.

BEN
He likes her.

CHARLIE
Shut up, Ben.

That's when Miles sees that Hope's newspaper has fallen open to the classifieds. Apartment ads have been circled. He picks it up, wheels turning. The others see it, too.

MILES
What do you guys think?

BEN
She's not a redhead, but --

Ruby smacks his arm. All of them now watch Hope as she continues down the endless hallway.

ANGLE ON HOPE -

as she comes to a security checkpoint. Still angry, she holds her pass up to the CAPITOL POLICEMAN, before stepping through the metal detector.

BEEP!

She removes the medallion, drops it in the bowl.

POLICEMAN
(impressed)
Hey, a Navy cross. You a war hero,
or something?

HOPE
Me? No... It was my father's.

She steps through again, takes back the medal.

HOPE (CONT'D)
First official day.

POLICEMAN
Then do your father proud.

Hope smiles, letting sadness show as she walks off. And...

INT. WEBSTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Hope's "making clips", combing through periodicals looking for any mention of Webster, and clipping the articles.

She's cutting out Charlie's article from today, jaw clenched, when suddenly there's Sperlock addressing the group...

SPERLOCK
Today's a good day. I'm in no mood
for witch hunts.
(eyes on Hope)
But the next time an unauthorized
leak comes from this office, I'll
fire every last one of you just to
make sure I get the right one.
Is that clear?

Nods all around. Sperlock strides back into his office and SLAMS the door. Hope finally remembers to breathe. And...

INT. SENATE CAFETERIA - DAY

Hope steps from the register, cheeseburger and fries on a tray, looking for an empty table. There are none.

She spots Zeke and her OFFICE MATES. Although they know she's there, they never look away from the tv.

Just when she's starting to feel like an outsider in high school, there's Ben. Sitting with Ruby, he waves her over.

BEN
It's Hope, right? This is Ruby.

HOPE
Hi. Yes. Sorry you had to witness
that little scene this morning.

RUBY
Not a problem. You get used to
conflict around here.

Hope sits, digs into her burger. Ben digs into her fries.

BEN
Fries for the table. Nice.

Hope looks to Ruby, follows her stare to another table, catches Miles gesturing at her.

HOPE
Wasn't that guy with you at the coffee shop this morning?

RUBY
Miles, yeah. He's great. Total neat freak. But in a good way.

Hope catches Miles gesturing at her again...

HOPE
What does he want?

BEN
He wants to know if you've had any luck finding a place yet.

HOPE
How does he know I'm looking?

BEN
You dropped your newspaper after you assaulted Charlie. We kept it as evidence.

Hope smiles. Ben smiles back. Ruby takes note.

HOPE
Actually, I just started. It's insane. One number I called. The landlord asked for three months plus security. I'm thinking it must be pretty nice, right? I get there. It's in the projects.

BEN
So did you take it?

HOPE
I'm on the waiting list.

Ruby LAUGHS, likes her already.

BEN
Should we tell her, Ruby?

HOPE
Tell me what?

RUBY
Miles has an extra bedroom for rent. It's in our building.

For a moment, Hope looks excited, then she looks to Ben...

HOPE

Wait a second. If you live there,
that means Charlie does, too.

Before Ben can respond, it's RING TONE madness again.
Everyone is checking Blackberries, Ruby and Ben, too...

RUBY

... Oh my God. He's doing it.
How could no one tell me?!

With that, she bolts for the door. Ben and Hope are the only
two people in the room not on the move.

HOPE

So I guess I need your address.

BEN

Thought you'd never ask.

HOPE

To see the apartment, wise ass.

He smiles, knew what she meant, jots it down. As she takes
it and rises, a PAGE delivering mail drops a letter in front
of Ben. Hope glances at the envelope.

HOPE (CONT'D)

Or should I call you, First
Lieutenant Wiseass?

BEN

Just call me.

She tries to hide her smile as she walks off, leaving Ben to
open the envelope. His face falls. A single, typed phrase:

'TELL THE TRUTH. OR I WILL.'

EXT. CAPITOL STEPS - SAME TIME

Mullin stands at a bank of microphones with Senator Webster.
He's mid-statement when we arrive...

MULLIN

Although we may sit on different
sides of the political aisle, my
good friend from Michigan will be a
fantastic attorney general.

APPLAUSE from the CROWD. Jessica and Lucky at the center.

JESSICA

So what did you have on the
little weasel?

LUCKY

I know it's hard to believe, but
sometimes people do the right
things for the right reasons.

That's when Webster steps to the mic. Lucky joins in the
APPLAUSE for a moment, then looks back to Jessica...

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Still wanna work at Justice?

JESSICA

For Webster? Sure. Right after my
sex change.

Lucky LAUGHS, understands her completely...

LUCKY

This is a real offer, Jess.
Who cares if he's a republican?

JESSICA

I care. Lucky, I'm a partisan.
I don't reach across the aisle.
I don't compromise my beliefs.
I fight. I win or I lose. And
when I win, I don't delude myself
into believing that everything's
gonna change.

LUCKY

You think the two million people
that packed that mall for our
inauguration are delusional?

JESSICA

I think it's a honeymoon, Lucky.
Everyone loves a honeymoon.
Unfortunately, once the oaths are
taken, and the marriage starts, the
only ones left screwing each other
are the partisans.

LUCKY

It's different this time, Jess.
It just is. The job's open until
the end of the day.

With that, he walks off. Jessica watches him go, surprised
by how deeply he believes. And..

INT. ROTUNDA - SAME TIME

As the press conference breaks up, Webster and Mullin head
inside, Sperlock and Ruby trailing behind.

The sight of Senator Buckley watching at a window, waiting to pounce stops her. Jessica emerges at her side...

JESSICA
Oh, this should be good.

Ruby gives her a look, as the three senators come together with forced smiles. Buckley never looks at Mullin...

BUCKLEY
Hello, Bobby.

WEBSTER
Ellen. We gonna have some fun at my confirmation hearing?

BUCKLEY
Don't quit your day job just yet.

Webster smiles for real this time, then...

WEBSTER
I'm gonna miss you, Ellen.
(then; to Mullin)
Thanks again, Mark. Don't forget about Saturday.

MULLIN
Martha's looking forward to it.

A handshake, and Webster walks off, taking Sperlock with him. Mullin and Buckley stand there. She still won't look at him.

BUCKLEY
Saturday?

MULLIN
A party for his wife's charity.

BUCKLEY
My invitation must've gotten lost.

Mullin smiles slightly. Buckley finally looks at him...

BUCKLEY (CONT'D)
Your foreclosure bill will be dead by Monday, I hope you know that.

With that, she puts an arm around him, posing for gawking TOURISTS, before striding off. Mullin hesitates, then moves in the other direction. Jessica looks to stricken Ruby...

JESSICA
What are you waiting for?

Ruby hurries after Mullin. Jessica moves after Buckley.

INT. HALL OF STATUES - CONTINUOUS

Jessica waits for Buckley to sign an autograph, then falls in stride as she continues toward the cloakroom...

JESSICA
Senator Buckley, hi, Jessica Sharp,
legislative director for --

BUCKLEY
Adamson. I know. I'm sorry.

JESSICA
Yes. Awful. Senator, I hope this
isn't too presumptuous of me, but
I'd really like to join your team.

BUCKLEY
You're asking me for a job?

JESSICA
Yes, ma'am, I think you're an
inspiration. After Iowa, when
Senator Adamson dropped out, I did
everything but get down on my knees
and beg him to endorse you--

BUCKLEY
So that's what you do on your
knees.

JESSICA
Excuse me?

Buckley suddenly stops just short of the cloakroom door.

BUCKLEY
Do you think I'm stupid, Jessica?

JESSICA
No, ma'am. I think you're --

BUCKLEY
Ellie Adamson is my friend.

Jessica pales, knows where this is going...

JESSICA
With all due respect, Senator --

BUCKLEY
Don't you dare talk to me about
respect. Ellie devoted her life to
that man. She gave him three
beautiful kids. Perhaps you know
them. They're about your age.

They're starting to draw stares. Jessica's dying inside.

BUCKLEY (CONT'D)

So I'm just asking... do you think I'm stupid? Because you must, if you think for one second that I would hire a woman like you. Women like you are the reason there's a glass ceiling for women like me. Now, please excuse me...

With that, she steps into the cloakroom, leaving Jessica reeling. Just before the tears come, she reigns it in. Suddenly, there's a new resolve in her face. A decision.

She whips out her Blackberry, and types to Lucky:

"You're right. It's different this time. Call Webster."

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. THE BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Hope's taxi rolls to a stop across the street. She stares out the window at the place she may soon call home.

EXT. THE BROWNSTONE - FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

She buzzes Ben's apartment. No answer. She tries again. A window opens above her. It's Charlie.

HOPE
(to herself)
Great.

CHARLIE
Hey. What are you doing here?

HOPE
I came to see the apartment.
I'll come back later.

CHARLIE
No. Wait.

Charlie disappears. Hope shakes her head, considers leaving. Before she can decide, the door opens and there he is.

HOPE
This was a mistake.

She starts back down the steps. Charlie follows...

CHARLIE
I know you're mad, but you're not
the only person who works in that
office, you know?

It stops her. She looks back...

HOPE
Someone else talked to you?

CHARLIE
I can't tell you that, but, yes...
Now do you want to see the
apartment, or not?

She stares a moment, still not sure what to think. And...

INT. JESSICA'S APARTMENT/INT. LUCKY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Jessica pours a big glass of wine, phone to her ear.

JESSICA

I'm not nervous. But you try
having a job interview at a
cocktail party.

We INTERCUT Lucky on the other end. At his desk, he pours
over a file labeled with a single word: "BUCKLEY."

LUCKY

Relax. Webster's gonna love you.

JESSICA

So what did Sperlock say? Did he
start foaming at the mouth?

Lucky doesn't respond. Something in the file stops him.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

That bad, huh?

LUCKY

What? No. Sorry. Just reading
some opposition research.

JESSICA

I didn't know we still did that in
the new world.

LUCKY

Sometimes I really hate my job.

JESSICA

Ooh. Sounds juicy.

Just then, the door bell RINGS.

INT. 3RD FLOOR LANDING - SAME TIME

Charlie stands on the landing with Hope. Jessica opens the
door. Hope recognizes her from her arrival at the Capitol.

JESSICA

I'm on the phone. What?

CHARLIE

Jess, this is Hope Foster.
Miles isn't here to show her the
apartment, so --

JESSICA

That's because he's out getting my
dry cleaning.

Annoyed, she looks to Hope for the first time...

CHARLIE
Can she see yours? It's the same
layout.

JESSICA
Democrat or republican?

HOPE
Republican.

JESSICA
Good. You'd be the only one in the
house. We lost two in November.
Evangelical or neocon?

HOPE
Neither. Moderate.

Jessica looks her up and down for another moment, then...

JESSICA
You'll pay your rent to Miles.
You're his problem.
(looking to Charlie)
She's cute. I don't see this
ending well for you.

With that, she SLAMS the door on them.

CHARLIE
I think she liked you.

Hope takes a moment to recover, then looks over at him...

HOPE
You're not gonna believe this,
but she's the first person I saw on
the Hill.

CHARLIE
You're kidding?

HOPE
No. Right before I met you. I was
standing at the steps, afraid to go
up, already thinking I'd made this
huge mistake coming here, when I
see this gorgeous, perfectly put
together woman escorting a senator
as if she was his boss.

CHARLIE
That's Jessica.
(struck by a thought)
Wait a second. That must've been
right before Adamson died. Were
they coming in or going out?

HOPE
I don't know. Why?

CHARLIE
But they were together?
You're sure about that?

Hope nods, wondering about his sudden intensity. Before she can ask, he RINGS the bell again...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
This'll just take a second.

Jessica yanks open the door...

JESSICA
I'm busy, Charlie.

CHARLIE
She just needs to see the layout.
It's the same as downstairs.

With that, he steps right past her, into the apartment.

JESSICA
(into the phone)
Call you right back.
(then; to Hope)
Make it fast.

INT. JESSICA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Hope follows them in. Charlie points to another door...

CHARLIE
That would be your room through
there. This one has a better view.

Hope looks to Jessica for permission. Jessica gestures for her to go ahead. Charlie waits until Hope is gone, then...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'm doing a follow-up on Adamson.

JESSICA
How nice for you.

CHARLIE
Any ideas on Lady X?

That stops her. Just for a moment...

JESSICA
I heard the photo was a fake.

CHARLIE

I heard that, too. Still, I was thinking I'd give the driver a call. You have his number?

Jessica looks at him. The vulnerability in her face surprises the hell out of Charlie.

JESSICA

If I ask you to drop it, will you?

CHARLIE

That depends on why you're asking me to drop it.

JESSICA

I'm worried about his legacy.

Charlie stares, doesn't believe her. She knows it...

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'd owe you one, Charlie.

CHARLIE

A big one.

She nods. The deal hangs there in the air between them for a moment, before Hope steps back into the room...

HOPE

It's really great. Thank you.

CHARLIE

Hope's working for Webster.

JESSICA

(suddenly interested)
Really? Any sense in the office how far left he's willing to move to get confirmed?

Hope looks lost.

CHARLIE

Yesterday, was her first day.

JESSICA

Oh. Well, don't worry, honey, brains and boobs are a rare combination in this town.

(opening the door)

Show her the roofdeck. That's the deal closer.

Hope leaves. Charlie notices the BLANK WALL above the sofa.

CHARLIE
Hey, what happened to Teddy?

JESSICA
Sold it. Unemployment's expensive.

EXT. ROOFDECK - MOMENTS LATER

Hope follows Charlie from the stairwell door.

CHARLIE
Careful. Don't let it close,
it locks from the inside.

Hope moves to the railing, taking in the monuments.

HOPE
Wow.

CHARLIE
I know. Every time I forget,
I come up here.

HOPE
Forget what?

CHARLIE
What a cool country this is.
(then; off her smile)
Corny, right?

HOPE
No... nice.

CHARLIE
The last few years, I've had to
come up here a lot.
(then, remembering she's a
republican)
No offense.

HOPE
None taken.

He sees that she means it, makes him wonder...

CHARLIE
So what's your issue anyway?

HOPE
My issue?

CHARLIE
Your reason for coming here.
(then)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 You did come here for a reason,
 didn't you?

She stares at him for a moment, then...

HOPE
 World peace.
 (before he can press)
 What's your reason?

CHARLIE
 Lies. Getting lied into a war.
 Now I try to shine a light on the
 liars.

HOPE
 You must be busy.

Charlie LAUGHS, nods.

HOPE (CONT'D)
 What about the rest of the house?

CHARLIE
 An issue buffet. Miles won't shut
 up about global warming. Ruby
 wants to end poverty, preferably
 without using her trust fund to do
 it. And believe it or not,
 Jessica was the youngest ever chief
 counsel for the National
 Organization of Women. Of course,
 that was when she was still human.

HOPE
 What about Ben? What's his issue?

CHARLIE
 Ben's issue is Ben.

Their eyes meet. Looks like he wants to kiss her.
 She senses it, doesn't want to hurt his feelings.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Would it be weird if I kissed you,
 right now?

HOPE
 Maybe. But only cuz I'm gonna take
 the apartment, so --

That's when Miles rushes from the doorway, out of breath.

MILES
 Sorry, I'm late. I got stuck at
 the office.

CHARLIE
We heard. Hangers, no starch.

MILES
(a little embarrassed)
If you want I could show you the --

CHARLIE
Don't sweat it. I closed the deal.

MILES
Really? You're gonna take it?
That's great!

Before Hope can respond, the sound of an ENGINE comes from below, and they all look down to see Ben rolling up on his motorcycle. He's greeting Ruby, who's just back from a jog.

CHARLIE
Hey! We gotta new housemate!

RUBY
Awesome! We'll be right up!

She bounds up the front steps. Hope's eyes linger on Ben, as he unstraps the case of beer from the back of his bike.

Charlie notices this, but manages a smile as Hope looks back over at him. This might be trouble.

EXT. ROOFTOP - MINUTES LATER

Everyone is seated now on the mismatched lawn furniture, waiting for Ben to finish passing out the beer.

RUBY
Hurry up. I wanna make a toast.

CHARLIE
Promise it won't include the
word "change?"

RUBY
(to Hope)
He pretends he's not as excited as
the rest of us.
(then, re: the beer)
Anyone got an opener?

No one does. Ben stands to get one. Hope follows to her feet.

HOPE
Wait.

She steps toward him, reaches for his belt, and, to everyone's disbelief, actually unbuckles it. Before they know what she's doing, she uses the buckle to open the beer.

Reactions run the gamut.

MILES
Where'd you learn to do that?

HOPE
Too much time behind a bar.

CHARLIE
(handing his beer to Hope)
In some offices around here that's better than a law degree.

She moves Charlie's bottle to Ben's waist...

HOPE
You mind?

BEN
Not at all.

This time, when she pops the cap, beer sprays all over Ben's pants and shirt. All but Ben find this hysterical...

HOPE
Oh God! I'm sorry!

BEN
(to Charlie)
You shook it up, didn't you?

Charlie nods, pleased with himself.

BEN (CONT'D)
Nice. Real nice.

As the LAUGHTER continues, we rise above, losing them amid the monuments.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DUSK

BANG! A 21 gun salute, as Adamson's coffin descends.

A sea of MOURNERS circle the grave. With each rifle shot THE ANGLE CHANGES.

BANG! Lucky stands at the front of the circle, a small folder tucked discreetly under his arm.

BANG! Ben stands near Senator Buckley. Rigid. Saluting. Emotions clearly stirred by this military funeral.

BANG! Jessica stands with the rest of Adamson's staff. Vince locks eyes with her: 'Well?' She pats her purse.

BANG! Like the rest of the veterans in attendance, Webster is saluting. He stands between his WIFE and Sperlock.

BANG! Ruby stands beside Mullin, whose hand inadvertently touches hers, neither withdraws, as the coffin disappears into the ground. And...

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

The service is over. Limos are being loaded.

As Buckley heads for hers, Lucky splits from the crowd, and falls in stride. He holds the opposition research file. Buckley sees it, and is instantly suspicious.

LUCKY

Senator. My condolences. I know you and Senator Adamson were close.

BUCKLEY

We were on the Harvard law review together. He went to congress, and I became a prosecutor in federal court. You know, Mr. Evans, I won more government corruption cases in those seven years than have been won since. I was tough.

(then; looking over)

He'd have wanted me to be attorney general in his place.

Lucky says nothing, keeps walking. Buckley waits for more. Her eyes go to the file. We sense that Lucky is struggling with using whatever's inside. Buckley senses it, too...

BUCKLEY (CONT'D)

What are you waiting for?

LUCKY

Ma'am?

BUCKLEY

This is when you tell me what
you've got on me, hoping it keeps
me inside the tent pissing out,
instead of the other way around.

(then; eyes on the file)

Question is, how good's your hand?

Lucky stares, weighing the choice for another moment, before
slipping the file into the trash can beside them, then...

LUCKY

I'm sure you'll do what's right for
the country, Senator.

BUCKLEY

I'll do what I think is right, yes.

LUCKY

I hope that includes not killing
the foreclosure freeze.

BUCKLEY

Senator Mullin made his choice.

LUCKY

Senator Mullin chose to follow his
conscience. You should try it.

There's a flash of rage in Buckley. She controls it...

BUCKLEY

Just because a President decides to
change the rules, doesn't mean that
everyone else will play by them. I
hope he knows that. We're both
democrats. That's one thing. But
if he thinks the Republicans are
gonna stop shooting --

LUCKY

Someone's gotta stop shooting
first, Senator.

BUCKLEY

You stop shooting and you get shot.

LUCKY

I respect you, Senator. You may
not know this, but I'm still
registered to vote in California.
Something I've done for you in
every election you've ever run in.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
I even made signs for your first
campaign.

Buckley simply stares, knows the big punch is coming.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
With or without you, we will change
this country. You wanna play games
with the foreclosure freeze? Even
if it means families will lose
their homes? Just because you're
Ellen Buckley, goddamn it? Just
because you think you deserve to be
attorney general?

It hangs there. Lucky knows he's gotten to her...

LUCKY (CONT'D)
That's why you didn't get the job,
Senator. It's also why, in two
years, I won't be voting for you.

With that, he walks off, leaving Buckley alone amid the
endless gravestones.

Then she remembers something, looks around to make sure no
one's watching, and reaches into the trash can to pull out
the file.

INT. MILES AND HOPE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Charlie is helping Hope carry her mattress into her new
bedroom, when the phone RINGS. They stop.

HOPE
My first call! Oh my God!

Her enthusiasm is contagious.

CHARLIE
You gonna get it?

She stands there for another moment, then rushes into the
bedroom for the phone.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'll go for the next load.

With that, he walks out grinning, excited she's moving in.

INT. STAIRWELL - MINUTES LATER

Charlie struggles to get a box up the stairs.

INT. MILES AND HOPE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

CHARLIE

Last one. Where do you --

That's when Hope breezes through the door in a little black dress, heels in her hand, clearly in a hurry...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

... Wow. You look... wow.

HOPE

Yeah? That was Zeke. The whole staff's invited to a party at the Senator's house. I gotta go. Sorry.

Just like that, she's gone. Charlie takes a beat, then...

CHARLIE

You're welcome.

He sets the box down, when the phone RINGS again. He looks into the hall, but she's already gone. The machine BEEPS...

DAVID (ON THE MACHINE)

It's David. You there? Pick up.

Charlie can't resist listening, moves closer.

DAVID (ON THE MACHINE) (CONT'D)

Okay, look. Some guy called from Senator Webster's office asking questions about you and your mom. What the hell's going on? You in trouble? God, I hate that I can't take care of you there!

(a heavy SIGH; then)

You know what, screw it. I should just get on a plane.

Beat. Beat. CLICK. Charlie's mind races. Against better instincts, he looks at the caller ID, jots down the number.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Hope pauses to pull on her shoes. A cab waits.

BEN (O.S.)

I didn't know we had a date.

She sees him coming up the sidewalk in his uniform. His eyes wander down her dress.

HOPE

You wish. Webster's party.

She moves down the steps, passing him on her way to the cab.

BEN
Hope, I might not ask again.

HOPE
I didn't hear you ask the
first time.

Ben just stands there, watching her go. Only once she's in the backseat, and driving away does she let herself smile.

INT. WEBSTER'S HOUSE - FOYER - DUSK

POP! Champagne flows. The black tie party is in full swing.

Zeke works the door, guest list in hand. He smiles at Hope as she makes her way up the steps. She smiles back...

HOPE
Thanks for calling, Zeke.
Very cool of you.

ZEKE
You clean up nice, Foster. That
dress'll go great with your apron.

Her face falls. She should've known.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
We're short a server. Use the
kitchen entrance, okay?

INT. WEBSTER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Hope carries a tray of hors d'oeuvres through the elegant crowd. The apron now hides the dress.

She comes to Jessica and Lucky chatting conspiratorially.

HOPE
Jessica. Hey.

Jessica considers her for a moment, then simply places her empty glass on the tray and leads Lucky toward Webster.

Hope watches, curious, as Lucky introduces the Senator to Jessica. The charm offensive is clear, even from here.

Sperlock appears beside Hope. He's watching them, too...

SPERLOCK
Thanks for helping out.

HOPE

No problem, sir.

(then; re: Jessica)

If you don't mind me asking...
isn't she a democrat?

SPERLOCK

Yep. Kinda like inviting the fox
into the henhouse, isn't it?

With that, he moves to join the conversation.

As Hope angles closer, Zeke appears, an unopened bottle of
Dom in each hand. He sets them on the tray, then...

ZEKE

Too many empty glasses. Go.

Hope forces a smile, then moves to ditch the tray. As she
passes the group around Webster, WE STAY BEHIND.

WEBSTER

It's a big change, Jessica.
You'll be making lots of enemies.

JESSICA

That makes two of us, sir.

There's a beat, as Sperlock and Lucky wait to see how the
Senator will react. When he smiles, only Lucky is relieved

WEBSTER

Think they'll trust us eventually

JESSICA

Absolutely. In the meantime,
we can tap their phones.

That's when the RING TONE chorus begins. There's a BUZZ in
the room, as the news spreads. Sperlock turns to Lucky.

SPERLOCK

Best laid plans, huh?

WEBSTER

What's happening?

JESSICA

(looking at Lucky)
Politics.

SPERLOCK

Looks like the democrats won't get
to 60 after all.

WEBSTER

The Governor named a republican?
Can he do that before I've stepped
down?

LUCKY

It's not your seat, sir, it's
Adamson's.
(gesturing to the TV)
Would you mind?

Webster turns on the TV, already tuned to CNN. The entire room goes silent, gathers to watch a press conference:

A MAN and a WOMAN pose for pictures at a podium. She's the democratic Governor of Florida. He's about to become their republican senator. If he looks straight out of central casting, that's because he is.

JESSICA

Oh my God. Lance Mann?

SPERLOCK

(to Lucky)
What did you do to piss her off?

LUCKY

She's being investigated. The
President won't drop it.

That's when the Governor fields an unheard question...

GOVERNOR MITCHELL

That's ridiculous. Lance Mann is more than an actor, he's an icon. And while I realize the expectation was for me to appoint a democrat to fill Senator Adamson's seat, it's in the spirit of bipartisanship sweeping this nation thanks to our President, that I offered him the role of a lifetime, and he accepted.

Jessica looks to Lucky, knows he's dying inside.

Jessica wants to go comfort him, but doesn't. Instead, she looks back to her new boss, Webster...

JESSICA

How come all the action heroes are republicans?

Nervous LAUGHTER. As the press conference continues, Jessica's eyes return to Lucky. And...

INT. WEBSTER'S HOUSE - BACK HALLWAY - LATER

Hope emerges from the kitchen with two more bottles of champagne, nearly back to the party, when she hears:

BILLY WEBSTER (O.S.)
Hey, can I get one of those?

She turns, sees the relentlessly cute BILLY WEBSTER, 17, standing in the doorway of his father's study. Obviously drunk, he likes what he sees...

BILLY
Well, hello. I'm Billy.
Lose the apron, and come hang.

He gestures over his shoulder to the PACK OF TEENAGERS visible on the lawn beyond the study's French doors.

HOPE
Aren't you like 17?

BILLY
18 next month. I'll be legal.

He reaches for a bottle. She pulls it back...

HOPE
Not to drink, you won't.

BILLY
Oh, man, you're not one of my dad's narcs, are you?

HOPE
Go outside and play, Billy.

BILLY
You sure? Last chance.

Hope LAUGHS, shaking her head. Billy backs into the study, grabbing a crystal decanter of whiskey, as he struts outside to join his FRIENDS.

Hope's about to return to the party, when something on the wall in the study steals her attention.

INT. WEBSTER'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

A photograph of A YOUNG WEBSTER in the cockpit of a Vietnam era fighter jet draws her inside.

She smiles at the striking young soldier, then, realizing where she is, spins to hurry back out.

This time, the frame that stops her sits on a shelf.

In it, Webster's military medals and ribbons are on display.

She picks up the frame. There's AN EMPTY SPACE IN THE SHAPE OF A CROSS where one of the medals should be.

Her eyes FILL, as she pulls her father's medallion from her shirt, and holds it up to the empty space.

It fits perfectly.

Suddenly, the PARTY NOISE gets louder. Someone's coming.

Hope puts the frame down, and hurries back to the door.

She checks the hallway, eyes widening, when she sees Webster slipping from the party. For the moment, his back is turned.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hope seizes the opening, and steps out, remembering to tuck the medallion back into her shirt, just as the Senator turns.

WEBSTER

You wouldn't happen to have seen my son? 17. Dark hair. Dangerous look in his eyes.

Hope's heart is in her throat, finally she manages...

HOPE

Um... No, sir. I... haven't.

He looks more closely now, recognizes her...

WEBSTER

You work in my office.

HOPE

Yes, sir. I started this week.

His eyes look her up and down.

WEBSTER

You hoping to come with us to Justice?

HOPE

Yes, sir. Hoping. Absolutely.

WEBSTER

Why?

Hope stares, doesn't have an answer, mentally kicks herself. Webster smiles warmly...

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
 It's alright. You can get back
 to me.
 (holding out his hand)
 Thanks for your hard work...

HOPE
 Hope. Hope Foster.

It's all she can do not to cry, as she takes her father's
 hand for the first time.

WEBSTER
 Hope. Beautiful name.

With that, he heads for his study, looking back to the
 practically trembling Hope...

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
 If anyone asks, you didn't see me.

HOPE
 Yes, sir.

WEBSTER
 (with a wink)
 I hope I can trust you.

She forces a smile. He moves into his study, closes the
 door, and she's alone. As she stands there, we hear her
 mother's voice...

HOPE'S MOM (V.O.)
 We met during his first campaign.
 I was a volunteer. He was married.
 He never knew I was pregnant, or
 where I went after he won...

INT. BROWNSTONE - HOPE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Just home from the party, Hope stands at a dresser, opens a
 drawer. In it, we see the urn holding her mother's ashes.

She removes her father's medal, and sets it beside the urn.

HOPE'S MOM (V.O.)
 ...I never wanted to hurt him.
 He had the potential for so much
 good. I wonder if he still does?

Suddenly, there's a KNOCK, and she turns, surprised to see
 Miles watching her from the doorway. He holds up a beer...

MILES
 C'mon. We're all up on the roof.

EXT. ROOFDECK - NIGHT

Storm clouds gather over the Hill, as the housemates unwind.

Jessica sits removed from the others, reading People Are Idiots and I Can Prove It!

Hope sits with Charlie and Miles. Each going over their next day's work.

Ruby sits on the roof, beaming as she carefully cuts out a front page story from the Post. The headline:

FORECLOSURE FREEZE PASSES SENATE

Beneath is a photo of Buckley, Mullin and a few OTHER SENATORS smiling proudly, shaking hands with the Lunds.

Just when we're wondering about Ben, he steps from the door.

His eyes go to Hope, and hers to him. She's excited to see him, and doesn't hide it.

HOPE'S MOM (V.O.)
 ...After all, sweet girl, do people
 ever really change?

That's when BEN'S SCANTILY CLAD DATE appears in the door behind him. Hope's face falls.

HOPE'S MOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...I guess that's something you'll
 have to find out for yourself.

Suddenly, the sky opens, and it starts to rain.

Everyone rushes for the door, but Ben's date has let it close. Ben tries to stop it, but he's too late. They're locked out.

Jessica is furious, her paper work ruined. Charlie tucks his laptop under his shirt.

They're all YELLING at each other, when Hope starts to LAUGH. She throws her hands out, and looks to the sky.

For a moment, they look at her like she's crazy. Then Charlie's LAUGHING, too. Ben notices this and smiles.

Finally, it's only Jessica left POUNDING on the door. And..

FADE OUT.

THE END