

Ali in Wonderland

by

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Based on the book Ali in Wonderland

Doozer Productions
Studio Draft 12.20.12

INT. NONDESCRIPT OFFICIAL-LOOKING ROOM -- DAY

ALI, (late-twenties, irreverent, impulsive, slightly outrageous but always endearing -- a younger, much prettier, Ali Wentworth) is handcuffed to a table while FOUR SCARY, CIA-TYPE MEN are yelling questions at her. In QUICK CUTS everyone is talking at once -- it's clear Ali is in big trouble. CIA men shout unintelligible questions at her; we see quick cuts of her answering:

ALI

It's not what you think. Of course I love America./Listen guys, I was just... /A "cell?" I'm not part of a cell. Speaking of, can I have my iPhone back? That beep means I have a message.

(then, having had enough)

If anyone screams another question at me I'm going to cry! And no one wants that, because when I cry really hard it affects my reflux and I vomit. Which is why I never see sad movies or opera!

FREEZE FRAME on that moment, which will be some UNFLATTERING SHOT OF ALI, SHOWING THE WHITES OF HER EYES, FACE PUSHED INTO A DOUBLE CHIN, SPITTLE DOWN HER MOUTH.

ALI (V.O.)

Wait. I can explain.

INT. GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE -- BEDROOM -- DAY

Ali, wearing a sexy little cocktail dress, is surrounded by boxes, as if in the middle of unpacking. There is a blow-up mattress on the floor. STANLEY, their miniature dachshund, is gnawing on the handle of a blow dryer. Ali is rummaging through one of the boxes.

ALI (V.O.)

We had just sort of moved from LA to Washington, DC, yesterday. The city I was born and raised in.

ALI

Honey, have you seen my black shoes, the ones I can't walk in?

SAM, (late-twenties, handsome, ethnic, reserved, a young George Clooney) half-dressed in a nice shirt and boxers, is also looking through a box for something.

SAM

The one with the blood stains? No. Have you seen my cufflinks?

ALI
 Small box, by the window. Marked
 "Christmas decorations."

SAM
 Because...?

ALI
 They're silver balls. And silver balls
 remind me of Christmas.

SAM
 Right, makes total sense.

Sam walks over to box. He begins to take out items that
 have absolutely nothing to do with Christmas.

ALI (V.O.)
*That's my husband, Sam. We sort of moved
 here because Sam got a big job as the
 Chief of Staff for the Secretary of
 Defense. It always makes me laugh. These
 big important people being called
 "Secretaries." And like any good wife, I
 was extremely supportive of the move.*

SMASH CUT:

INT. SUSHI RESTAURANT -- DAY

Ali pushes her plate of food aside vehemently.

ALI
 No fucking way!

CUT TO:

EXT. HIKING TRAIL -- DAY

Ali is furiously walking ahead of Sam, holding a stick.

ALI
 If you mention DC again, I will stab you
 to death with this stick and push you off
 this cliff. And no one will know.
 (mock-scared)
 Has anyone seen my husband? I can't find
 him!

CUT TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES HOME -- DAY

Sam is in front of a locked bathroom door. After a few last SOBS, Ali walks out of the bathroom, her make-up smeared down her face. She takes a deep breath.

ALI

Okay, we can talk about it. But I am going to keep crying and vomiting while we talk.

SAM

Fun -- look, I know how much you hate Washington.

ALI

A bunch of good old boys scrambling for power while pretending they care about the little people? No, I love it there.

SAM

Can you just give it a month? If you're miserable and hate it there after that -- we'll pack up our things and leave. I promise.

AL

Really? So we just "sort of" move there for one month? And if I say so, we go?

SAM

(with a smile)

Yes. But you really have to try. Not like with the Atkins. Or Bikram. Or Pizza Making. Or cutting out sugar. Or not using my razor. Or reading the New Yorker.

ALI

Okay, fine.

(Ali sighs; beat)

But by the way? Those articles never end.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE -- PRESENT DAY

ALI (V.O.)

First of all, in LA, I was performing with the hottest Improv company around. Where people would go on to star in TV shows, films, Saturday Night Live.

Ali finds something in the box.

ALI

Oh my God!

ANGLE ON Sam, looking for his cufflinks, turning around to look at what Ali is talking about. ANGLE BACK ON Ali putting on a blonde wig.

ALI (V.O.)

My career was just taking off.

ALI

(in a bad Russian accent)

Hi, Mr. Sam, my name is Sonya. You want for cleaning lady?

Sam looks at his watch. Clearly this is not a new "bit." She touches his tie, flirty.

SAM

Ali, my new aide's coming by any minute...

ALI

Not problem. For extra 4 rubles, he can watch.

(dropping accent)

Okay, but just speak a little Russian, for me, please?

SAM

(Saying something in Russian, before he can finish:)

ALI

God, you're smart.

Ali jumps on him.

CUT TO:

Ali and Sam are crashing against a wall, kissing.

ALI (VO) (CONT'D)

Ow! That kinda hurt. Anyway, I loved our life in LA. We had friends, a home, a backyard. Life was like a boxed wine commercial.

CUTAWAY OF:

EXT. TERRACE -- NIGHT

As if straight out of a Tommy Hilfiger ad, this is Ali's overblown memory of what her life was like: Sam and Ali with 8 FRIENDS, clinking wine glasses, overlooking the ocean in their backyard. Sam is barbecuing. Everyone is laughing a little bit too loudly and energetically. Ali happily picks a lemon off her tree, cuts it, and just squirts the juice in their drinks.

ALI (V.O.)

*...We even had lemon trees. Lemon trees!
I mean come on!*

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE -- NIGHT

Ali and Sam post-sex, on the mattress in their bedroom. Stanley is lying near them.

SAM

I just don't understand why he barks every time we have sex.

ALI (V.O.)

But there was even a bigger reason I left DC when I was 18, vowing never to come back.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Yoo-hoo! Ali? Are you there?

ALI

(bolting up)

Mom! Didn't we lock the door? How did she get in?

SAM

Locks don't stop her!

They both jump up and start dressing. Ali calls out:

ALI

We'll be right down!

SAM

What are you doing? Now she's going to come up here! Remember our wedding night? Thank goodness she still thinks that was a back massager.

CLOMPING is heard. Sam points to the dachshund.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm going to grab Stanley and go out the window. You're on your own.

ALI

I totally understand.

Ali begins to leave.

SAM

Um, sweetheart?

ALI

What?

Sam points to Ali's blonde wig still on her head. Ali throws it off and darts out.

INT. GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE -- NIGHT

Ali is walking down the stairs to her living room. BOOTSIE, (60s, stylish, one hundred percent intimidating. Think Blythe Danner with some Nancy Pelosi thrown in.) is waiting at the foot of the stairs. As Ali walks down, she looks at her mother who is looking up at her impatiently. As she slowly walks down the steps...

ALI (V.O.)

My mother, Bootsie Walker. Born and raised in Washington. She plays tennis with members of the Supreme Court, eats hors d'oeuvres for dinner and has never peed in the shower. I had a very specific childhood.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY

An EIGHT-YEAR OLD ALI is in a pretty dress, sitting at a formal dining room table, eating her salad course.

BOOTSIE

Ali, why would you use a fish fork to eat your salad? What if we were at Colin Powell's house? Are you trying to make me sad?

ALI (V.O.)

But I'm older now, so she says things like...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE -- DAY

Ali has now reached the bottom step. Bootsie gives Ali a once over, then stares at her dress.

BOOTSIE

You're not wearing that to the party tonight are you? You look like a Puerto Rican hooker. Maybe you could have gotten away with that during the Clinton administration, but not now.

ALI

A pretty hooker?

Suddenly, we see Bootsie's whole face light up.

BOOTSIE

Sam!

REVERSE to Sam walking down the stairs.

ALI (V.O.)

But my mother loves Sam. It takes all her will power not to throw her panties at him every time he walks into a room.

BOOTSIE

(almost coquettishly)

Well, well, well, there's my golden boy. Are you ready for tonight? Everyone is just dying to meet my brilliant son-in-law.

SAM

Oh. I thought it was just a small dinner party for the Secretary's wife's new book.

BOOTSIE

Oh, please, "Marriage Wars: Hiding Emotional Weapons of Mass Destruction." Who the hell needs that. They're going to see you. People have been calling me all day to make sure I let them meet you tonight.

(giggling)

You'd think you and I just got engaged, the way they're acting!

ALI

(under her breath)

And that's not weird at all.

(trying to usher her out)

(MORE)

ALI (CONT'D)

Mom... we'll see you at the party, we have so much unpacking...

BOOTSIE

Just wanted to make sure you had settled in. Can't a mother do that?

(looking Ali up and down)

Seriously, that better be a nightgown.

Just then, the doorbell rings. Stanley the dachshund starts barking. Bootsie glares at Stanley -- he immediately stops. Bootsie takes it upon herself to open the door. Revealed on the other side is JONATHAN (21, nervous, deeply likable, too skinny, any ethnicity).

BOOTSIE (CONT'D)

Sorry, we don't want to buy any candy bars so you can buy a new high school gym. Nobody cares.

She slams the door on his face.

SAM

No. I think that's my aide. I was told he'd be stopping by.

(Sam opens the door.)

Jonathan?

JONATHAN

Yes. Hi. I'm Jonathan. Your aide. I'd like to officially welcome you to Washington. Hi. I'm Jonathan.

SAM

You said that.

JONATHAN

Right. I brought you the briefing books for the Deputies meeting on Monday. I've highlighted the topics on the agenda.

SAM

Wow, thank you. Come in. Please. This is Ali, my wife.

Jonathan, flustered, can't make eye contact.

ALI

(accent)

Hi, Jonathan. I'm Puerto Rican. This is my mother, Bootsie Walker.

JONATHAN

Hello, Bootsie.
 (off her death glare)
 Mrs. Walker?
 (more glaring)
 Your Highness?

BOOTSIE

(to Ali)
 You need to go change.
 (to Jonathan)
 You're very skinny. Are you dying? Or
 just very poor?

JONATHAN

Just poor, I hope. These jobs don't pay
 much, and I have these student loans... I
 don't eat very often.

BOOTSIE

That's enough.

ALI

(whispering to Sam)
 Sam, can we keep him? I'll feed him and
 walk him. He can sleep on the bed.

BOOTSIE

(to Ali)
 Tonight is one of the most important
 nights of Sam's career. Really, go
 change. You're in Washington now.

As Ali takes that in:

ALI (V.O.)

*And now we're at the root of my entire
 problem. Born and raised in DC -- but I
 have no clue how to behave here. Never
 did. And I don't think I ever will.*

Bootsie hands Jonathan the keys.

BOOTSIE

It's the only American car on the block.

ALI

Mom, he's not getting your car for you.

BOOTSIE

(unfazed)
 Okay, then! See you tonight.

Bootsie leaves.

JONATHAN

Right. So anyway, here are the briefings. Also, what kind of beverages do you like? There's a small budget for your mini-fridge so just let me know, Sprite, Coke, Sunkist, orange juice, seltzer, beer...

SAM

Whoa, whoa. Jonathan. Three years ago, I was you. It's okay. What do you like to drink?

JONATHAN

Fanta and if I were to get crazy, Amstel Light?

SAM

So let's go with that.

Ali watches, smiling. As Jonathan exits:

ALI (V.O.)

Oh, right! I forgot to tell you the most important thing about Sam. He's the greatest guy you'll ever meet.

After Jonathan leaves:

ALI

(looking down at herself)
I think my mom might be right. In LA, I could wear this to a funeral. And I have. Several. But here... maybe it's a little too whorey.

SAM

Um. Aren't all your dresses a little whorey? I mean, not that that's a bad thing...

ALI

(frustrated)
Yes! That's the prob...
(a thought)
Wait! The box marked "Kitchen Things."
(She goes to that box and pulls out a VERY conservative dress.)
Remember? This was when I played Laura Bush in the Laura Bush-Tipper Gore Iron Chef sketch.

SAM

Please don't make me have sex with you in that. I mean, I will but...
No, I will.

ALI

(looking at it)
This will be perfect.

EXT. DC STREET -- NIGHT

Ali and Sam are walking down the street. Ali is wearing her Laura Bush dress. She looks ridiculous and also unfortunately appropriate.

ALI

(as Laura Bush)
George Jr., I'll always regret making Literacy my platform as First Lady. I should have gotten weed legalized. God, I need a cigarette. Do you hate Jenna as much as I do?

SAM

Okay, get it all out now, say your dirty words, make your funny faces.

Ali does just that: doing a few impersonations, letting out a string of curses, and distorting her body in a variety of ways.

ALI

Okay, I'm ready to be the perfect Washington wife.

SAM

Really? Are you sure?

ALI

(stopping)
Honey, I'm a character actress. If there's one thing I can do, it's play a role.

Sam is about to ring the doorbell.

SAM

Wow, I'm nervous. This is kind of big time.

ALI

Oh, please. You know you're going to be the smartest person in the room.

SAM
(smiling)
That's true, I forgot.

ALI
(holding his hand)
I love you.

SAM
I love you, too.

As if jumping off a cliff together, they take a deep breath. Sam rings the doorbell.

INT. SECRETARY'S HOME -- DAY

Sam and Ali have now walked in to this very intimate, but fancy party. They look around to a sea of intimidating GROWN UPS, all in pinstripe suits and Ann Taylor. Bootsie greets them immediately.

BOOTSIE
There you are! Sam, how handsome you look! And Ali.

ALI
(in "character")
Hello, mother.

Bootsie looks Ali up and down. Ali begins to sweat.

BOOTSIE
Good for you, sweetheart.

Sam and Ali breathe a collective sigh of relief.

BOOTSIE (CONT'D)
Now let's go meet 30 of the most important people in the entire world.

Bootsie takes Sam's arm to lead him in. Ali, as she tries to keep up, almost trips. She recovers.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SECRETARY'S HOME -- NIGHT

Bootsie is ushering Sam around the room. Ali follows behind.

BOOTSIE

Now, Sam, I know you're new at all this,
so just a few tips.

Bootsie picks up a glass of champagne from a passing waiter. As Ali reaches at the tray, the waiter passes her by.

ALI (V.O.)

*And here we see Bootsie in her most
favorite of roles: DC insider.*

BOOTSIE

Never bring up politics unless someone
more powerful starts first. Don't talk
about anything emotional or personal, and
if all else fails, talk about a pet.
Everyone loves talking about their pets.

SAM

Pets. Okay.

BOOTSIE

Oh good, first things first -- Mr.
Secretary! Elaine!

Bootsie bounds off. Trailing behind, Ali whispers to Sam:

ALI

Mr. Secretary. It just sounds funny!

SAM

I can't breathe.

The SECRETARY GERALD MILLER (60s, white, very intimidating -- think a younger Brian Dennehy, but even scarier) and his wife, ELAINE MILLER (60s, white, very proper, coiffed) approach.

SECRETARY MILLER

Bootsie, you're looking splendid as
usual! Sam -- tonight's a big night for
you. I trust Bootsie is helping you make
the rounds?

SAM
 (uncomfortable)
 Yes, sir. She is, thank you, sir.

Ali has been just standing there, as if invisible. She clears her throat.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Oh, this is my wife, Ali.

SECRETARY MILLER
 Nice to meet you, Ali.

ALI
 (very Stepford wife)
 So nice to meet you. Your house is beautiful. I'm a fan of embroidered foxhunts.

Sam looks at Ali strangely.

ELAINE MILLER
 Oh, aren't you adorable!
 (spotting someone)
 Alright, now you have to meet Senator Wright from Arkansas. Senator!

SENATOR WRIGHT approaches. He is an intimidating, white, elder statesman. However, the minute he opens his mouth, he screams gay, gay, gay.

ELAINE MILLER (CONT'D)
 This is Sam Kafantaris and his wife, Ali.

SENATOR WRIGHT
 (so effeminate; shaking Sam's hand)
 Sam, so good to meet you. Heard amazing things about you.

ALI (V.O.)
Finally! A gay! My people!

SENATOR WRIGHT
 Ali - you have to meet my wife.
 (gesturing her over)
 Edie!

EDIE (60's, sophisticated), comes over. Senator Wright wraps his arm around Edie's waist. They awkwardly smooch:

ALI (V.O.)

*Wow. I only have to put on a funny dress
for a night. Some poor souls have to
pretend 24/7.*

As they walk away:

BOOTSIE

Oh, there's Sylvia Martin, editor of the
Washington Times.

(out of the side of her
mouth)

Bobby Kennedy's mistress. Just wave.

Bootsie continues to usher Ali and Sam around, waving at
people and providing commentary:

BOOTSIE (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

He's not important. He's very important,
That one over there? Today important, by
Tuesday, radioactive - don't ask me why I
can't tell.

(whispering; sing-songy)

Ecstasy parties... Oh! The Kuwaiti
Ambassador and his wife. Jamillah
Abulhasan and Ambassador Hamid Abulhasan.
Very important. They throw the best
parties.

(whispering)

Shrimp from the Red Sea. As big as your
fist. Oil money. Go, meet her, Ali. Time
to make friends besides me.

ALI (V.O.)

We're friends?

BOOTSIE

(pushing Ali away)

Divide and conquer, divide and conquer!

As Ali walks away, she sees a waiter with a tray of
champagne. She reaches for a glass but is again ignored.

ALI (V.O.)

*Yeah, right, like somewhere in this sea
of taffeta, I'm going to find my bestie.*

Ali walks over to JAMILLAH and HAMID. Jamillah (thirties,
glamorous, intimidating) is in full formal Middle Eastern
attire. Hamid is also in a headdress and robes.

ALI

Hello, I'm married to the Secretary's new
Chief of Staff, Sam Kafantaris...?

JAMILLAH

(thick mid-eastern accent)
To introduce yourself by who you are
married to. Very Washington. You are...?

ALI

Ali.

JAMILLAH

Jamillah.

ALI

(nervous beat)
I like your... outfit.

JAMILLAH

(looking her up and down; not
returning the compliment)
Yes.

Jamillah just stares at Ali.

ALI

(beat; nervous)
Do you watch Homeland? I'm totally
obsessed. I don't even know why I just
said that. I'm going to get a drink.

Jamillah turns back around.

ALI (CONT'D)

(as she walks away; sotto)
Good stuff.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRETARY'S HOME -- NIGHT

Sam is now outside getting away from it. Suddenly
Jonathan appears, carrying a flashlight.

SAM

(surprised)
Oh. Hi. Jonathan. I didn't know you would
be...

JONATHAN

(nervously)
Secretary Miller asked me to work the
party.

SAM

That's an honor. What are you doing?

JONATHAN

Overseeing the valets.

SAM

Oh. Not such a big honor.

(beat)

I'm not actually, you know, used to these kind of things.

JONATHAN

You're nervous? I wouldn't imagine someone like you - nervous. You're like a celebrity already. Right out of law school, plucked to work at the Mayor's office. Who knows where you could go -- maybe like, all the way, you know what I mean? But one wrong move and BAM, you're out on the street. One Congressman -- spanked the wrong school girl, now he's a manager of a Jack in the Box in Albuquerque.

SAM

Thanks for the pep talk.

Just then, Ali walks out, seeing Sam but not Jonathan.

ALI

Well, that's a room full of farts of perfume.

(Sam chuckles.)

Smartest man I know and the word "fart" still kills him.

(seeing Jonathan)

Well, hello, Jonathan. I stole some snacks. Want a cheese puff?

Ali opens a linen napkin, shows them to him.

JONATHAN

(nervous)

Okay, leaving now.

Jonathan leaves. Ali looks at Sam; a beat:

ALI

What's the matter?

SAM

Nothing. I'm just... I'm so not the smartest person in the room. I just met

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

the EPA guy in charge of global gas emissions. His job is to literally save the world.

ALI

(sincerely)

Honey. I know these people, I grew up with these people. You're better than these people. Plus cuter and with integrity. You're going to crush it here.

Ali puts her arms around Sam and kisses him.

SAM

Thank you.

(beat)

You know what -- you can cut the "Perfect DC Wife" thing. It's kinda freaking me out.

ALI

Really?

SAM

Yeah. If I'm going to really try and do this, I want my real wife by my side, not my fake one.

ALI

Alright, then. Let's go!

INT. SECRETARY'S HOME -- NIGHT -- AN HOUR LATER

Everyone is now at dinner enjoying themselves. Ali and Sam, seated next to the Secretary and his wife, however, look as tense as if they were playing high-stakes poker. Bootsie, seated at another table, steals a glance at them. A new SENATOR is now speaking.

SENATOR ROBERTS

Gerald, you've got to get this Pakistan thing under control. Why have you been so soft on the Prime Minister?

SECRETARY MILLER

Actually, I think I'll let Sam take this one. Sam, why do you think I'm being so soft on Pakistan?

Suddenly, all eyes are on Sam.

SAM

Well, first of all, I'm sorry you think that he's been so soft, Senator. But my
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

guess is that the Secretary's had to tone down the public criticism of the Prime Minister because he's probably working on a back channel to shut down the Haqqani network. You'd agree that it's worth looking a little soft in order to defeat terrorism, right?

There is a pause. Then, the Secretary lets out a guffaw.

SECRETARY MILLER

(slapping Sam on the back)

Nicely done, Sam, nicely done.

Ali beams. To the person sitting to her right:

ALI

The one that just killed it? *That's my husband.* Yep. Married him.

WAITERS have now come to the table to fill water glasses.

ELAINE MILLER

Now tell me the truth, Ali, this is a big change for you two, moving from LA. How do you think Sam is going to like living here?

ALI

Oh, I think Sam will fit in perfectly in DC. He loves picking up men in bathrooms and three-ways with interns.

Everyone at the table stares at Ali, stone-faced.

ALI (V.O.)

Yep. DC. Not my audience.

ALI

He loves to golf. He told me he's playing with the Secretary at the Army Navy Country Club on Saturday. He's really looking forward to it. But watch out, Secretary, he's pretty good!

(everyone goes deathly silent)

What? It was just a joke. He stinks. Even if he was good, he'd let you win, I mean, you're his boss.

SAM

(ashen)

That's a security breach. No one is ever

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
 supposed to know the Secretary's
 whereabouts in advance.

Ali looks at the waiters. And everyone else at the table -
 - who are all staring at her.

ALI
 I'm so sorry. It was just golfing, I had
 no idea. I didn't say you were bombing
 North Korea.
 (beat; suddenly nervous)
 You're not. Bombing North Korea, are you?

Sam looks at Ali, his eyes pleading her to shut up.

ALI (V.O.)
Pets! Mom said Pets!

ALI
 (blurting out)
 I have a dachshund named Stanley! He
 barks when the doorbell rings.

The Secretary looks at Ali, with great import.

SECRETARY MILLER
 Come with me.

ALI
 (whispering to Sam)
 If you never see me again, please know I
 loved you. And don't remarry.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ali is walking down a long, ominous-looking hallway with
 Secretary Miller.

ALI (V.O.)
*So when the Secretary of Defense tells
 you to "come with him," there's really
 nothing much you can do but follow.*

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

The Secretary and Ali walk into the kitchen -- where two
 miniature dachshunds, wearing ridiculous matching dog
 sweaters, are sitting in a little bed.

SECRETARY MILLER
 (in a high voice like a
 little girl)
 Hey Sparkles. Ruffles. Come here. Come
 here.

SPARKLES and RUFFLES his two dachshunds, jump up and run to him. He then fawns all over them, sing-songy:

SECRETARY MILLER (CONT'D)

That's right. Who's the good girls, who's the good girls? Daddy's got a treat.

The Secretary puts a treat in his mouth, picks them up and let's them eat the treat out of his mouth.

ALI (V.O.)

Yes, I was watching one of the most powerful men in the world get tongued by his pet dachshunds. I decided to try and make a good impression, for Sam.

ALI

I can't believe we're both dachshund lovers. Do you know that poem about Dachshunds by EB White?

The Secretary looks up at Ali.

SECRETARY MILLER

Why no, I don't.

ALI

Oh, it's wonderful.
 "The Dachshund's affectionate,
 He wants to wed with you:
 Lie down to sleep,
 And he's in bed with you.
 Sit in a chair,
 He's there.
 Depart,
 You break his heart"

SECRETARY MILLER

(tear in his eye)
 That's just beautiful.

Ali beams.

CUT TO:

INT. ALI AND SAM'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

At home, Ali is prancing around the kitchen. Sam is getting a glass of water. Stanley is chewing a squeaky toy.

ALI

I saved it! How awesome am I?

SAM

Awesome, honey.

ALI

You're saying "awesome" and yet I'm hearing "Not that crazy about you right now."

SAM

It's nothing.

Ali gives him a "just say it" look.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's just that, what if he didn't have dachshunds? We might have been escorted out for a Security Breach.

(gently)

No. Look. I've been thinking. Remember when I said I wanted my real wife with me wherever I go?

ALI

Like it was only three hours ago...

SAM

Well, I do want my real wife with me, 99 percent of the time. I do.

(beat; hesitant)

But maybe when we're out at these kind of things, work things, you could dial it back just a little. Until I get on solid ground. Could you try?

ALI (V.O.)

Ah! That word again! Well, I did promise him I'd try. Besides, I saw him at that table. He was perfect. Smart, strong, charming. He belongs here.

ALI

Okay.

(whispering)

But I was still awesome tonight, right?

SAM

Killed it.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE -- DAY

Ali is at a bookstore perusing the aisles. She is wearing sweats and Uggs. She picks something out.

ALI (V.O.)

So, to show how much I was "trying", the next morning I did what Bootsie had trained me to do ever since I was 10 years old. To find the most thoughtful thank you gift for my hosts. And I had the perfect idea. A bound copy of EB White's Poems.

Ali then looks around and sneaks to another section titled "Relationship."

ALI (V.O.)

And -- a little something for Sam as well.

She picks out the book "The New Joy of Sex." AND WE TIME CUT TO:

Ali is at checkout, reading The New Joy of Sex.

ALI

Yep, yep, yep, done it, done it.
(ripping page out; to clerk)
It's okay, I'm buying it. I just don't want my husband to see this one. I don't have any friends that would do that with us.

CUT TO:

INT. GATED MANSION -- DAY

Ali has gotten out of her car, right at the gate of the estate of the Secretary of Defense. There are TWO GARDENERS working on the lawn and a GUY washing a car.

ALI (V.O.)

Now, I've never hand-delivered a gift to the Secretary of Defense before, but I didn't feel like doing it in Uggs and sweatpants. And I had gone to Whole Foods and there was ice cream melting in my car. I just wanted to get in and out.

Ali thinks, then throws the package over the fence. THE GARDENERS AND CAR WASHER IMMEDIATELY THROW DOWN THEIR TOOLS AND PULL OUT GUNS. THEY GRAB ALI AND START SHOUTING THINGS LIKE:

MEN

Don't move/Down on the ground! Down on the ground!/Hands where we can see you/Move quickly/Come with us!

ALI

My husband is Sam Kafantaris, Chief of
Staff to the Secretary of Defense!

A car out of nowhere pulls up to the gate. One of the men
places his hand on her head and push her into the car. As
her face freezes in another incredibly unflattering
grimace:

ALI (V.O.)

Which brings me back to where we began.

INT. NONDESCRIPT OFFICIAL-LOOKING ROOM -- DAY

Exactly like the scene from the beginning, men screaming
at Ali as she is handcuffed to a table, visibly
distressed:

ALI

Are you happy now? I need another sick
bag and some mouth wash!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. NONDESCRIPT OFFICIAL-LOOKING ROOM -- DAY

Sam enters. He shakes the hands of all the CIA men. He is clearly mortified. He takes Ali by the arm and escorts her out.

INT. NONDESCRIPT OFFICIAL-LOOKING HALLWAY -- DAY

They walk in silence. Eventually, Sam begins to talk, very calmly.

SAM

So this is your way of dialing it back?

ALI

Listen. It was a book of EB White poems. About dachshunds. We had this moment... I didn't want to ring the bell! I'm wearing Uggs! They're like foreskin for feet! What's the big deal...?

SAM

You threw an unauthorized package over the gate of the Secretary of Defense, while we're at war.

ALI

Wait, we're at war?

SAM

(knowing she's joking)
Ali. Not now.

EXT. BUILDING -- DAY

They are walking in a parking lot.

ALI

Does the Secretary know?

SAM

If an unidentified package was tossed over an American's gate in Syria, he would know about it. So -- his own home? Yes, he knows. Now I have to go back and find out if I have a job.

ALI

They can't fire you for this.

SAM

It's my first day, Ali. I'm sure people have gotten fired for much less.

ALI

Would it be so bad if you did?

SAM

Ali...

ALI

What? Would it be so bad if we just went back to LA? We had a great life. We had lemon trees. Lemon trees! We didn't live under a microscope with people telling us how to dress or how to act. I made jokes, people laughed. We had friends. You know I am never going to make friends here. Ever.

SAM

Ali. You promised to try. You said you'd give it a month.

ALI

I gave it two days and I almost got sent to Guantanamo. Face it, I don't fit in here! And I never will!

SAM

Well, maybe I do. Because I really care about this. This could be what my whole life has been leading up to. Can you blame me that I don't want to walk away from that right now?

ALI

But while your whole life has been leading up to this, mine has been obliterated. There's no balance.

SAM

(taking a breath; looking at his watch)

Fine. I have a meeting with the Secretary at 5. If he doesn't fire me then, I'll quit.

ALI

(flustered)

What -- wait. You will?

SAM

I really want to do this. But -- if you're going to be miserable. It's not worth it.

ALI (V.O.)

Somehow that didn't feel as good as I thought it would.

Sam exits. As Ali watches him go, she dials her phone.

ALI (V.O.)

So here I was. Alone, humiliated, guilty. Who doesn't need their mommy at a time like this?

ALI

(on phone)

Hey mom, can I come over?

BOOTSIE

Of course, kitten.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BOOTSIE'S HOUSE -- LATE AFTERNOON

In a perfectly-appointed parlor, Bootsie paces.

BOOTSIE

Are you insane? You threw an unauthorized package over the gate of the Secretary of Defense, while we're at war?! Who does that? You've got to tell him you're pregnant.

ALI

The Secretary of Defense?

BOOTSIE

No. Sam. We can't lose him, Ali!

ALI (V.O.)

And, my mother's reaction, once again, disappoints me. Shocker.

OFF OF Ali's defeated expression:

INT. CAR -- DAY

Ali is driving in a car. She is obviously very depressed.

ALI (V.O.)

*Some people go to shrinks, some people
turn to booze. When I hit rock bottom...
I go to the Outlets.*

Ali's car swerves into a parking lot. There is a big sign that says "Outlet Center."

EXT. OUTLET STORE -- DAY

Ali enters an outlet store. A muzak version of "Living On a Prayer" comes on.

ALI (V.O.)

*I like going to Outlet Malls the same
reason I like spending hours walking
along the beach looking for shells.*

INT. LOEHMANN'S -- DAY

We see Ali looking through the racks of clothes.

ALI (V.O.)

*I forget all about my problems as I get
engrossed in the task at hand: finding a
designer dress for a dollar. And often,
while combing through the piles of
acrylic and polyester...*

She picks something out.

INT. LOEHMANN'S COMMUNAL DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

Ali is now trying on the dress, in a large communal dressing room with other WOMEN.

ALI (V.O.)

...I will find a treasure.

It doesn't fit and Ali begins to wrestle with it, taking out all her frustration on this poor dress. She rips it. Ali suddenly sinks to the floor -- she has officially come undone. The women around her sort of move away a bit.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I think we met the other night.

Ali turns around and sees Jamillah, the Kuwaiti Ambassador's wife.

JAMILLAH

I'm Jamillah. The Kuwaiti Ambassador's wife. I look different naked.

Ali begins to cry. She speaks between sobs.

ALI

Sorry, it's the dress, I couldn't get the zipper. And the Secretary of Defense, I was just trying to be... I don't want to live here!

(beat; stops crying)

You have a hot body by the way.

This makes Ali cry even harder. Jamillah comes over, and puts her arm around Ali.

JAMILLAH

You just moved to DC?

ALI

Sort of.

JAMILLAH

Come, we get Cinnabons.

PULL OUT to get a full view of Ali and Jamillah, in their underwear, standing in the middle of a large dressing room, with Jamillah's arm around a sad Ali.

ALI

But. We're getting dressed first, right..?

EXT. CINNABON -- DAY

Ali and Jamillah are sitting outside at a table, eating Cinnabons while Ali vents. Jamillah is also smoking as other patrons shoot her dirty looks.

ALI

...I've never fit in here. When kids were making models of the Washington Monument, I was listening to Rodney Dangerfield albums. When I was eight years old, I locked Hillary Clinton in my kitchen while I acted out the entire film, Silence of the Lambs.

(as Hannibal Lecter)

"Well, Hillary, have the lambs stopped screaming?"

As someone from another table waves the smoke away from them:

JAMILLAH

My God, you'd think smoking outside was illegal.

ALI

It is.

(back to herself)

Anyway, now Sam is saying we can go, but can we really go? Really? With Sam always wondering, what if?

(taking a bite of her
Cinnabon)

What do you do when what's the absolutely greatest thing for your husband is the absolutely worst thing for yourself?

JAMILLAH

Ali, it's okay I call you Ali? When I first came here, I knew nobody, I knew nothing. I missed my country. In Kuwait -- shrimp as big as your fist.

ALI

Yes, I've heard.

JAMILLAH

They can eat birds.

ALI

That's not true.

JAMILLAH

Helicopters with espresso machines. Have you been to a camel race before? Edge of your seat. Here, the idea of fun is to stay up all night and watch C-SPAN And I met no one who I could consider a real friend. Someone I could trust.

ALI

I get it.

JAMILLAH

But I am madly in love with my husband. And I knew I had to try harder at this, then anything I have ever done in my entire life. Have you really tried?

ALI

Sort of.

Jamillah's cellphone rings. She picks it up. In Arabic:

JAMILLAH

Something in Arabic.

JAMILLAH (CONT'D)

(hangs up phone)

I knew, sure I would have to wear certain clothes, do certain things, but I could not ever let that change who I was, at my core.

Jamillah's cellphone rings. She picks it up.

JAMILLAH (CONT'D)

Je ne pense que le femme c'est nou pas!

(hanging up; back to Ali)

If I let DC change who I am, then I will have lost everything. And I will be no use to myself, and no use to my husband.

ALI

But it never works out very well here -- me being myself.

JAMILLAH

Doesn't matter. It's the only choice you have. That is, if you stay.

A Manager walks over.

MANAGER

Excuse me, Miss. There's no smoking here.

JAMILLAH

(matter of factly)

I have diplomatic immunity.

The Manager leaves, confused.

JAMILLAH (CONT'D)

Ali, for me it all comes down to one thing: Can you put your partner's happiness above your own? Not forever, but for awhile. It seems for you American couples -- not many can do this. But to me, this is when marriage gets very interesting.

ALI

(looking at her watch)

Sam is meeting with the Secretary in two hours.

JAMILLAH

So there is time.

ALI

You're right.
 (Ali stands up)
 How can I ever thank you?

JAMILLAH

Well, I've never tried sushi and I have
 no one to talk about sex with.

ALI

I'm your girl. Shoe department, 1:00,
 next Saturday?

Jamillah smiles and nods. Ali darts off.

CUT TO:

EXT. PENTAGON -- DAY

Ali is walking quickly towards the Pentagon.

ALI (V.O.)

*I couldn't stop thinking about how
 willing Sam was to go back to LA for me.
 He hated the idea, but he would have done
 it. For me.*

EXT. WASHINGTON, DC STREET -- DAY

Ali is in an office with Jonathan.

ALI

(holding a pizza box)
 Jonathan. A whole pizza. Extra cheese.
 Just tell me where the Secretary is.

JONATHAN

You know, I'm not allowed to.

ALI

Tell me or I will talk to you about my
 lady parts.

OFF Jonathan's tortured expression:

INT. PRIVATE HEALTH CLUB -- DAY

A man is doing laps in a small pool. CLOSE-up we see that
 it's Secretary Miller. There are other people around,
 also swimming in the pool. Ali slips out from the ladies'
 locker room. She sees the Secretary swimming.

ALI (V.O.)

So -- If I am going to be myself in this town, there's only one way I know how to go.

Ali slips into the pool in the lane next to him. When he finally stops she pretends she has stopped swimming as well.

ALI

(mock-panicked)

Excuse me, weren't you in my synchronized swimming class. You borrowed my bathing cap? The one with the flowers?

Ali does a synchronized swimming move. The Secretary stops where he is. He smiles, amused.

SECRETARY MILLER

Hello, Ali.

ALI

Hi. I just wanted to say I am so sorry about what happened this morning. I was just trying to impress you by giving you this gift. But there was ice cream melting in my... Look, I just want you to know that you couldn't ask for a more honorable, loyal, brilliant person to work for you, than Sam. And I don't want anything I did to jeopardize that.

SECRETARY MILLER

Well. I appreciate your position.

ALI (V.O.)

If there was one thing I knew -- it was when I was losing my audience.

Ali notices a sign that says "Please shower before swimming."

ALI

(pointing to sign)

Let me ask you. Do you really shower before you get in the pool or do you cheat like the rest of us?

The Secretary looks at Ali. There is a pause. Did she just cross the line -- again? No, Secretary Miller laughs.

ALI (V.O.)

Finally, my first big laugh in DC.

SECRETARY MILLER

Don't you worry. It was an honest mistake. Everything's okay.

ALI

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

He is about to start swimming again. He turns around.

SECRETARY MILLER

And no. Sometimes I don't shower before.

ALI

Well, I pee in here, so what do I care?

INT. TOWNHOUSE -- DAY

Ali and Sam are at their house, Ali has popped open a bottle of champagne. She is pouring two glasses.

ALI

And then he said "no -- sometimes I don't shower before."

SAM

No way! You got him to admit that?

ALI

Uh-huh! Now will you say I'm awesome?

Sam laughs.

SAM

You're awesome!

She sits down next to him on their sofa.

SAM (CONT'D)

So. Are we sort of still staying?

ALI

Yes. We sort of still are.

SAM

(getting up off the sofa)
That's what I thought -- so, to thank you, I got you a little gift.

Sam presents Ali with a tiny lemon tree.

ALI

A lemon tree! Honey...!

Ali hugs and kisses him.

ALI (CONT'D)

Thank you, baby.

(remembering)

Oh my gosh! I have a little present for you!

Ali naughtily hands Sam a wrapped present. He opens it. He looks confused.

SAM

A book of EB White Poems? Don't we have this?

Ali thinks, then looks very alarmed.

INT. SECRETARY'S HOME -- NIGHT

The Secretary is opening the present that was half-opened by the CIA. It's *The New Joy of Sex*. He looks creepily pleased.

ALI (V.O.)

Oh crap.

THE END