

**T H E   A M E R I C A N   P R E S I D E N T**

Screenplay by Aaron Sorkin

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**FADE IN:**

As the OPENING TTLES ROLL against a series of shots of statues and paintings of former presidents, we HEAR shards of dialogue from various presidential speeches.

**MAIN TITLES END ON**

**EXT. BEAUTIFUL ESTABLISHING SHOT OF THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY**

It's an early November morning, and the sun has just come over this extraordinary building. WE HOLD on this for a moment before we

**CUT TO:**

**INT. A CORRIDOR IN THE RESIDENCE - DAY**

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT presses the button by the private elevator as he talks into his shirt cuff.

**AGENT COOPER**

Liberty's moving.

Another AGENT rounds the corner into the corridor and is followed a step or two later by

**PRESIDENT ANDREW BENJAMIN SHEPHERD.**

SHEPHERD's walking with his personal assistant, JANIE, a shy, professional and incredibly efficient 25-year-old.

**JANIE**

The 10:15 event's been moved inside to the Indian Treaty Room.

**SHEPHERD**

(to Janie)

The 10:15 is American Fisheries?

**JANIE**

Yes, sir. They're giving you a 200-pound halibut.

**SHEPHERD**

Janie, make a note. We need to schedule more events where somebody gives me a really big fish.

JANIE starts to make a note.

**JANIE**

Yes, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

Janie, I was kidding.

**JANIE**

Of course, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

(to the AGENT at the elevator)

Hey, Cooper.

**AGENT COOPER**

'Morning, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD and JANIE enter the elevator. As the doors close...

**JANIE**

Mr. Rothschild asked to have a moment with you this morning.

**SHEPHERD**

Is he upset about the speech last night?

**JANIE**

He seemed concerned.

**SHEPHERD**

Well, it wouldn't be a Monday morning unless Lewis was concerned about something I did Sunday night.

The elevator doors open, revealing LEWIS ROTHSCHILD. At 32, LEWIS is the President's chief domestic policy advisor. It would appear that he averages about two hours sleep a night, though that doesn't seem to slow him down.

**LEWIS**

You skipped the whole paragraph.

**SHEPHERD**

(to Janie)

And Monday morning it is.

LEWIS falls into the pace as the three of them head for the double doors leading to the South Lawn.

**LEWIS**

"American can no longer afford to pretend that they live in a great society"...and then nothing. You dumped the whole handguns paragraph.

**SHEPHERD**

This is a time for prudence, Lewis.

**LEWIS**

That was the kick-ass section.

The three of them are now OUTSIDE and making their way down the COVERED WALKWAY that runs from the East Wing to the West Wing.

**SHEPHERD**

I thought what with being the President and all...

**LEWIS**

Sir, of course I didn't mean to imply--

**SHEPHERD**

I thought you'd be turning cartwheels this morning, Lewis -- 63 percent job approval.

**LEWIS**

That's great news, sir, but...

They walk past a GROUNDKEEPER who's at work at a patch of grass.

**GROUNDKEEPER**

'Morning, Mr. President.

Before he's even completed the last syllable of the greeting, JANIE quickly and quietly said--

**JANIE**

Charlie.

**SHEPHERD**

'Morning, Charlie.

**LEWIS**

Sir, the press is gonna need an explanation.

**SHEPHERD**

For what?

SHEPHERD, LEWIS and JANIE walk through the door being held open by an AGENT. The conversation continues as they make their way through the corridors of

**INT. THE WEST WING - DAY**

They walk quickly down a hallway teeming with STAFFERS, AIDES AND OFFICE WORKERS.

**LEWIS**

Because you dropped the whole kick-ass section, now we've got this thing hanging out there.

**SHEPHERD**

There's a thing hanging out there?

**LEWIS**

"Americans can no longer afford to pretend that they live in a great society." Then ...nothing. No explanation. No context. So now it's just this thing.

**SHEPHERD**

And it's hanging out there?

**LEWIS**

Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD stops at an open doorway, calls to a STAFFER--

**SHEPHERD**

Maria--

**STAFFER (MARIA)**

Good morning, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

Did they tell you I'm gonna need--

**STAFFER (MARIA)**

--overall consumer spending and not just first homes. Yes, sir. We'll have it for you in 15 minutes.

**SHEPHERD**

Thanks.

SHEPHERD moves on. LEWIS and JANIE stay with him.

**LEWIS**

Mr. President, I really feel we need to focus on...

**SHEPHERD**

Lewis, however much coffee you drink in the morning, I want you to reduce it by half.

**LEWIS**

I don't drink coffee.

**SHEPHERD**

Then hit yourself over the head with a baseball bat, would you please?

Another STAFFER crosses their path--

**JANIE**

Happy birthday, Laura.

**SHEPHERD**

Hey, Laura, happy birthday.

**STAFFER (LAURA)**

Thank you, sir.

Once out of earshot--

**SHEPHERD**

(to JANIE)

I should send her some flowers.

**JANIE**

You already did, sir.

And, with that, they walk through a doorway and into

**INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY**

In the OUTER OFFICE, MRS. CHAPIL, the President's secretary, is hard at work on a word processor. She stands as SHEPHERD walks in--

**MRS. CHAPIL**

Good morning, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

How're you, Mrs. Chapil?

**MRS. CHAPIL**

Fine, thank you, sir. Mr. Kodak left the detailed breakdown of the approval poll for you. He seemed to indicate that it was very good news.

**SHEPHERD**

Sixty-three percent of it, at any rate.

And by now they're in the OVAL OFFICE itself. SHEPHERD has gone to his desk and is looking over the various overnight briefing memos that have been left for him. As someone used to doing six things at once, he has no trouble reading, listening, and talking at the same time.

**MRS. CHAPIL**

Lucy called just a moment ago. You forgot to sign her permission slip for her class--

**JANIE**

--the museum trip. I'll go get it.

**SHEPHERD**

(to JANIE)

What time does she get home today?

**JANIE**

Three-twenty.

**SHEPHERD**

How's my afternoon look?

**JANIE**

Very crowded.

**SHEPHERD**

Schedule some time for me at 3:30.

**WOMAN (O.S.)**

Buenos dias, Senor Presidente.

This from ROBIN McCALL, a strikingly tall black woman and the President's press secretary, as she strides into the room.

**SHEPHERD**

Too-tall McCall, how was Mexico?

**ROBIN**

I didn't truly appreciate it until I came back and discovered that America isn't a great society.

**LEWIS**

(to ROBIN)

He dumped a whole section.

**SHEPHERD**

Now there's a thing hanging out there.

**ROBIN**

Not a great society, sir?

**SHEPHERD**

Well, with you out of the country, it wasn't, Robin. Now that you're back, we're great again.

**ROBIN**

There's a press room full of people saying "What did he mean by that?"

**LEWIS**

See?

**SHEPHERD**

(re: a memo he's been looking at)

A.J., did you get one of these?

This is said to A. J. MACINERNEY as he walks through a separate entrance on the left side of the room. In addition to being the President's Chief of Staff and closest advisor, he's the President's closest and oldest friend.

**A. J.**

Is that the letter from Solomon at the GDC?

**SHEPHERD**

It would appear to be a letter from the entire environmental community. These people are outta control.

**A. J.**

I think they're just frustrated, Mr. President.

**ROBIN**

Are they blaming the President for global warming?

**A.J.**

Well, they don't think he caused it, if that's what you mean.

(continuing;  
to SHEPHERD)

Sir, I'm on the phone with these people twice a week. I honestly don't know what they want at this point.

**LEWIS**

What they want is a 20 percent reduction in fossil fuel emissions.

**A.J.**

It won't pass at 20 percent.

**LEWIS**

We haven't really tried.

**A.J.**

Lewis, McSorley, McCluskey and Shane hold too many markers. If we try to push this through and lose, there will be a very loud thud when we hit the ground, and that's not what you want in an election year.

**SHEPHERD**

Talk to the GDC again, A.J. Tell them the President resents the implication that he's turned his back on the environment. Tell them I'll send 455 to the floor. But we're gonna ask for a 10 percent reduction. If they want to pull their support, fine. At 63 percent job approval rating. I don't need their help getting a bill passed. We gotta get going-- where's Leon?

**A.J.**

(to an AIDE)

Would you call Mr. Kodak and tell him the President's--

A.J.'s sentence is cut short by the sound of a head-on pedestrian collision in the outer office--

**MRS. CHAPIL (O.S.)**

Aaagh!

**KODAK (O.S.)**

Sorry! Sorry, my fault.

**A.J.**

(to the AIDE)

Never mind.

LEON KODAK comes into the oval office. The White House pollster is a likable, if clumsy, numbers whiz. He, along with A.J., LEWIS, and ROBIN, are regarded as the President's Starting Team. The people in this room have grown very close over the past few years.

**KODAK**

Excuse me. Good morning, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

You all right?

**KODAK**

They keep moving that big ficus plant.

**A.J.**

We're all here, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

Okay. First, I wanted to say congratulations. Three years ago, we were elected to the White House by one of the narrowest margins in history, and today Kodak tells us 63 percent of registered voters think we're doing a good job.

**KODAK**

Wait a second. You wanted me to poll registered voters?

Everyone LAUGHS... even SHEPHERD smiles...

**SHEPHERD**

But the poll also tells us what we already knew: We don't get this crime bill of ours through Congress and these numbers are gonna be a memory. So, starting today, we're shifting it into gear.

**ROBIN**

Can I tell my morning press gaggle  
that gun control--

**A. J.**

Crime control, Robin. Gun control  
means we're wimps and we're soft on  
crime.

**LEWIS**

Hang on, are we not--

**A. J.**

Lewis--

**LEWIS**

Are we not putting back the handgun  
restrictions?!

**A. J.**

We're leaving 'em out.

**LEWIS**

Sir, we campaigned on this issue.  
Now, I understand we took it out when  
we were in the low forties, but we  
can push it through now.

**SHEPHERD**

After the elections.

**LEWIS**

Sir, we may never have an opportunity  
like this again. Let's take this 63  
percent out for a spin and see what  
it can do.

**SHEPHERD**

We can't take it out for a spin, Lewis.  
We need it to get re-elected. For  
reasons passing understanding, people  
do not relate guns to gun-related crime.

**A. J.**

Robin, you can brief the press this  
afternoon. As of today, the crime  
bill's priority one on the President's  
domestic agenda.

**ROBIN**

Got it.

**A. J.**

Leon, you're gonna run the war room. We're gonna need detailed projections for all the target districts by the end of the week. And, Leon, don't be a nice, sweet guy from Brooklyn. Do what the N.R.A. does.

**KODAK**

Scare the shit out of 'em?

**A.J.**

Yeah.

**KODAK**

I can do that.

**A.J.**

Lewis, we want you to be legislative liaison on this. You're gonna run the show on the hill.

**LEWIS**

Can I just say, to return to the subject for one moment, that it might be easier to fight a war on drugs if we weren't arming drug dealers.

SHEPHERD responds a little too quickly -- we see a spark of a temper.

**SHEPHERD**

Lewis, we've gotta fight the fights we can win.

**LEWIS**

Yes, sir.

**A.J.**

We want to announce the crime bill at the State of the Union, which is 72 days from today. The last nose count put us 18 votes short.

**SHEPHERD**

Eighteen votes in 72 days. Thank you, everyone. Janie, what's next?

**A.J.**

Thank you, Mr. President.

The meeting's over. LEWIS, ROBIN, and KODAK say their "Thank you, Mr. President"'s as they exit.

**JANIE**

Security briefing, sir.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. THE WASHINGTON BUSINESS DISTRICT - DAY**

It's around 10 o'clock the same morning as the capital district,  
in its own way, is showing signs of the approaching Thanksgiving  
and Christmas holidays.

**EXT. A CHROME AND GLASS BUILDING - DAY**

On the seventh floor of the building. A RECEPTIONIST tells us where we are by answering the phone--

**RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)**

Global Defense Council...

**SUSAN (V.O.)**

You wanted to see me?

**LEO (V.O.)**

I just got off the phone with A.J. MacInerney.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LEO SOLOMON'S OFFICE - DAY**

LEO, a white-haired man in his early 60's is meeting with SUSAN SLOAN, a 40'ish lawyer who seems to go out of her way to create an issue where none exists.

**SUSAN**

Did the President read the letter?

**LEO**

The President's pissed as hell,  
Susan. That letter was a stupid move.

**SUSAN**

It was aggressive, and we should stand by every--

**LEO**

This isn't the guy who needed us four years ago, Susan. He's incredibly

popular. He's gonna win re-election in a walk, and he could give a shit what we stand by! If the President passes the most important piece of environmental legislation in history, and does it despite our negative endorsement, our political weight in the future will rank somewhere below the Save the Spotted Owl Society.

(beat)

I'm bringing in some help.

**SUSAN**

We don't need another environmental expert to confirm what every other environmental expert--

**LEO**

Not an environmental expert, a professional political strategist. We're playing hardball with Andrew Shepherd, and we need a heavy bat.

**SUSAN**

Who?

**LEO**

Sydney Ellen Wade.

**SUSAN**

Oh Christ. That woman doesn't know the first thing about the environmental lobby.

**LEO**

She's a closer, Susan. She gets the job done.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY**

SHEPHERD and LEWIS -- working on a speech.

**SHEPHERD**

Try it like this and lose that.

**ROBIN**

(entering)

David Sasser from the Times called and wanted to know what the White

House felt was a great society.

**LEWIS**

What did you tell him?

**ROBIN**

I told him I couldn't speak for the President, but for my money: Bermuda.

**SHEPHERD**

Perfect.

JANIE steps in--

**JANIE**

Mr. President, your cousin Judith's come down with the flu and won't be able to join you Thursday night.

**SHEPHERD**

That's too bad. Remind me to give her a call later.

**JANIE**

Yes, sir.

**ROBIN**

You gonna go stag?

**SHEPHERD**

That's not a problem.

**ROBIN**

No. We've never gone wrong parading you around as the lonely widower.

The words came out casually, but they instantly freeze everyone.

**ROBIN**

(continuing)

My God.

(beat)

I can't believe I said that.

(beat)

Mr. President, that was an incredibly thoughtless remark. I would never dream of insulting you or the memory of your wife.

**SHEPHERD**

That's okay, forget it.

(to JANIE)  
What time is it?

**JANIE**

It's 3:45, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

I'm gonna go over and say hi to Lucy.

**JANIE**

You have the Attorney General at 4:00  
and the trade representative at 4:30.  
Somewhere in there you promised NPR  
five minutes.

**ROBIN**

Mr. President--

**SHEPHERD**

Robin, don't worry about it.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE RESIDENCE - DAY**

We HEAR the sound of a TROMBONE being played--not well--from  
one of the rooms. SHEPHERD comes around and down the corridor.

He walks into--

**INT. LUCY'S ROOM - DAY**

LUCY, Shepherd's 12-year-old daughter, stops playing.

**SHEPHERD**

No, keep going. I liked what you  
were playing? What's it called?

**LUCY**

Scales.

**SHEPHERD**

Well... you play it with gusto!

**LUCY**

Are my lips swollen?

**SHEPHERD**

Are they supposed to be?

**LUCY**

Yeah.

**SHEPHERD**

Then you're doing fine.

**LUCY**

Whatcha got behind your back?

**SHEPHERD**

A little gift.

**LUCY**

Is it a dirt bike?

**SHEPHERD**

Nope.

He hands her an old textbook ...

**LUCY**

Is it a really old seventh-grade textbook of yours that you're gonna make me read cover to cover and discuss at dinner and drive me crazy with?

**SHEPHERD**

I'm not comfortable with the "really old" part, but everything else you said was true.

**LUCY**

(reading the cover)

"Understanding the Constitution."

**SHEPHERD**

Your social studies teacher said your class would be starting on the Constitution this week.

**LUCY**

You talked to Mr. Linder?

**SHEPHERD**

Yes. It's called a Parent-Teacher Conference. Mr. Linder and I were the key player in that discussion. Why don't you like social studies, Luce?

**LUCY**

I like it fine, Dad.

**SHEPHERD**

All your other teachers say you're happy, you're enthusiastic, you've always got your hand up...Mr. Linder says you don't participate unless he calls on you, and even then it's a one-word answer.

**LUCY**

I don't know what to say, Dad. I guess I'm just not...I don't know.

**SHEPHERD**

Luce, take a look at this book. This is exciting stuff. It's about who we are and what we want. Read what it says on the first page.

**LUCY**

(reading)

"Property of Gilmore Junior High School."

**SHEPHERD**

The next page.

**LUCY**

(reading)

"We, the People, of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union..."

**SHEPHERD**

See? Grabs you right off the bat. It's a page-turner.

**LUCY**

I can't wait.

**SHEPHERD**

Good, 'cause it's possible the subject might come up at dinner tonight.

**LUCY**

Do you see it as part of your job to torture me?

**SHEPHERD**

No, it's just one of the perks. See you tonight.

He gives her a kiss on the head and heads out the door.

Behind him, he hears Lucy's rendition of "Hail to the Chief."  
SHEPHERD shoots her a look as we

**CUT TO:**

**INT. CABINET ROOM - NIGHT**

Where SHEPHERD is finishing a meeting with the DEFENSE SECRETARY, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS and a NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR, each of whom is accompanied by at least one DEPUTY or AIDE. A.J. is also present.

**DEFENSE SECRETARY**

The C-STAD hardware's been in place for a month. We've got 22 instructors from the Army Air Defense School waiting to go down and train the Israelis.

**A.J.**

How soon can you deploy them?

**CHAIRMAN**

We can airlift 'em in the morning. They'll have C-STAD operational in 20 days.

**A.J.**

Any security concerns?

**SECURITY ADVISOR**

If anybody wanted to hit it, they'd have hit it by now.

**SHEPHERD**

Okay. Let's move on it. Thank you, gentlemen.

SHEPHERD and A.J. leave the Cabinet Room amidst a volley of "good-bye" 's and "Thank you, Mr. President"'s. They pass MRS. CHAPIL and JANIE.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Have a good evening, Mrs. Chapil.

**MRS. CHAPIL**

You too, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD starts his walk from the West Wing back to the residence.

It is the exact reverse of the path he took to the OVAL OFFICE

in the morning.

**SHEPHERD**

I'll see you in the morning, Janie.

**JANIE**

You will, Mr. President.

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT follows at a distance.

**AGENT #2**

(sotto)

Liberty is moving.

**A. J.**

Leo Solomon brought in a hired gun  
at the GDC.

**SHEPHERD**

It's about time.

**A. J.**

She's a lawyer from Virginia named  
Sydney Ellen Wade. I know this woman  
well. She's had a lot of success  
getting congressmen elected.

**SHEPHERD**

Maybe we should try to steal her.  
Ten percent, A.J. Don't let them  
leave the room till they're clear  
about that.

**A. J.**

You know, if you've got a free second,  
maybe you could stop in and say hello.  
It might smooth the way.

**SHEPHERD**

Mention it to Janie.

**A. J.**

Good.

**SHEPHERD**

Then let's clear this off the table  
and get everybody focused on the  
crime bill. I don't want to win  
this. I want to win it by a couple of  
touchdowns.

**A. J.**

We will, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

Good.

A.J. starts to leave. SHEPHERD stops him.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

**A.J.?**

**A.J.**

Yes?

**SHEPHERD**

Listen, Robin said something to me today that I'm sure she wouldn't have said it if...I mean, she wasn't saying it to me, I realize...

(beat)

Ah, never mind. Have a good night.

**A.J.**

Good night, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

A.J., when we're out of the office and we're alone, you can call me Andy.

**A.J.**

I beg your pardon?

**SHEPHERD**

I mean you were the best man at my wedding, for crying out loud. Call me Andy.

**A.J.**

(laughing off the suggestion)

Whatever you say, Mr. President.

They have reached the south entrance to the White House.

**A.J.**

(continuing)

Have a good night, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

Good night, A.J.

SHEPHERD enters the White House.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT**

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY**

It's early morning of the following day, and the grounds outside are in full swing.

**EXT. THE NORTHWEST EXECUTIVE ENTRANCE - DAY**

In front of the guardhouse, Susan and her new colleague, SYDNEY ELLEN WADE, are being cleared.

**SYDNEY**

(to the GUARD)

Hi, my name's Sydney Ellen Wade.

**SUSAN**

He just needs your driver's license.

SUSAN hands the guard her license.

**SYDNEY**

(handing him her  
license)

I'm from Virginia.

**SUSAN**

He doesn't care.

**SYDNEY**

(to the GUARD)

I'm here for a meeting with Mr.  
MacInerney.

**SUSAN**

He doesn't need to know that.

The GUARD BUZZES her through the gate.

**SYDNEY**

(to the GUARD)

Forgive me, this is my first time at  
the White House. I'm trying to savor  
the Capra-esque quality.

**SUSAN**

He doesn't know what Capra-esque means.

**GUARD**

(to SUSAN)

Yeah, I do. Frank Capra, great American director -- It's a Wonderful Life, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.

(handing SYDNEY and SUSAN their laminated passes)

Sydney Ellen Wade of Virginia. Knock 'em dead.

**SYDNEY**

Thanks.

SYDNEY and SUSAN begin to walk up the path toward the entrance to the West Wing.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY**

A meeting with the EDUCATION SECRETARY, the HUD SECRETARY, several AIDES and LEWIS is breaking up. SHEPHERD is ushering people out.

**SHEPHERD**

The day the government starts subsidizing private schools is the day we give up on public education.

**EDUCATION SECRETARY**

I know the proposal only scratches the surface, but it's the least we can do.

**SHEPHERD**

We're already doing the least we can do, but I can't think of anything better, so we'll go with this for now.

(to HUD SECRETARY)

Jerry, say hello to Linda for me. And if I don't see you again, have a good Thanksgiving.

**HUD SECRETARY**

Thank you, Mr. President.

The room has cleared...JANIE is arranging new papers on the President's desk.

**SHEPHERD**

How're we doing?

**JANIE**

You're running four minutes ahead of schedule.

**SHEPHERD**

Ahead?

**JANIE**

Yes, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

(exited)

Janie, this is unprecedented. I don't know what to do with myself.

**JANIE**

Mr. MacInerney asked me to remind you to pop your head in on--

**SHEPHERD**

The GDC meeting. Right.

**CUT TO:**

INT. A.J.'s OFFICE - DAY

**A. J.**

Your concerns are not falling on deaf ears. The environmental lobby has known no greater ally in the White House than President Shepherd.

**SYDNEY**

Hardly an impressive distinction, A.J.

SUSAN is trying to avert the inevitable--

**SUSAN**

Sydney, we should leave Mr. MacInerney alone now. He's already given us more time than--

**SYDNEY**

Susan, Mr. MacInerney doesn't want us to leave, because Mr. MacInerney's not yet done what he needs to do today.

**SUSAN**

Sir, Ms. Wade's been thrown into the

deep end of the pool on her first day.  
She hasn't even had a chance to read  
the report of the Quebec Conference.

SYDNEY -- whose brain is telling her to slam on the brakes,  
check her swing, smile and leave the building -- decides,  
instead, to hit the gas and swing away. The OTHERS are watching  
this as if they were watching the evolution of a train wreck.

**SYDNEY**

You're right. I haven't read it. If  
someone had asked me yesterday, I'd  
have told them the Quebec Conference  
was made up of six professional hockey  
teams. But what I do know is that it's  
time for the President to run for  
president again. Leon Kodak is as good  
as it gets when it comes to electoral  
strategy, and I'm certain he's told the  
President exactly what I'd tell him:  
Nail down Michigan and California,  
where they make cars and airplanes --  
and burn plenty of fossil fuel. But if  
I had read these eight hundred pages,  
I would have discovered that it's the  
burning of fossil fuels that's been  
mostly responsible for global warming and  
that the 20 percent reduction recommended  
by the GDC is a necessary first step  
toward arresting the catastrophic greenhouse  
effect that has gone unchecked by this  
administration...

**SUSAN**

(to SYDNEY)

It's really time to--

**SYDNEY**

Susan, I promise you, the White House  
Chief of Staff will not let us leave  
here until he's broken the bad news.

No one in the room really understands what's going on...  
except A.J., who would like to take the time to admire  
SYDNEY but, of course, can't.

**A. J.**

(pause)

I'm afraid Sydney's right. Although  
not about Michigan and California.  
The President has asked me to convey  
to you that he's sending his energy

bill to the floor with a call for a reduction of 10 percent.

There's an uncomfortable silence in the room...

**A.J.**

(continuing)

The President is willing to go it alone on this, but he's asking for, and frankly he's expecting, the full support of the GDC.

**SYDNEY**

The President's expecting our full support?

**A.J.**

Yes, he is.

**SYDNEY**

The President's dreamin', A.J.

**SUSAN**

Sydney!

**SYDNEY**

--the President has critically misjudged reality. If he honestly thinks that the environmental community is going to whistle a happy tune while rallying support around this pitifully lame mockery of environmental leadership just because he's a nice guy and he's done better than his predecessors, then your boss is the Chief Executive of Fantasyland.

**VOICE (O.S.)**

Let's take him out back and beat the shit out of him.

SYDNEY's blown out her speakers because she's turned in the direction of the private office entrance to see, live and in person, The President of the United States.

She is frozen. Mortified. If she were capable of thought process, she would be preying for something heavy to fall on her head right now.

**A.J.**

Good morning, Mr. President. How are you today?

**SHEPHERD**

Couldn't be better.

(to the GROUP)

I apologize for the interruption, but A.J. asked me to stop and say hello. You wouldn't be Sydney Ellen Wade, by any chance, would you?

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President, I'm...don't know what to say. I'm speechless.

**SHEPHERD**

All evidence to the contrary.

**SUSAN**

Mr. President, we haven't met. My name is Susan Sloan. I used to work with Congressman Myers. I hope this episode in no way--

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney?

**SYDNEY**

Yes, sir?

**SHEPHERD**

You got a second?

**SYDNEY**

(quietly)

Of course.

SYDNEY gets up to leave. SHEPHERD escorts her out of A.J.'s office and into the hallway.

**SHEPHERD**

I thought maybe we might have a word in private. Someplace a little less intimidating.

(calling)

Janie?

**JANIE**

Yes, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

(to SYDNEY)

This is my personal assistant, Janie Basdin. Janie, would you show Ms.

Wade into the rec room. I'll be there  
in a second.

SHEPHERD enters a doorway off of the hall. SYDNEY continues  
down the hallway.

**JANIE**

(to SYDNEY)

This way...

JANIE leads SYDNEY into...

**INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY**

...where SYDNEY just stands uncomfortably, not knowing  
whether to sit or stand. Waiting. Trying -- the way a jumper  
on a window ledge tries not to look down -- trying not to  
notice things like the JFK Desk, the Seal of the President of  
the United States, the bust of Lincoln...

SHEPHERD strides in--

**SHEPHERD**

Sorry to keep you waiting.

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President--

**SHEPHERD**

Is it okay if I call you Sydney?

**SYDNEY**

Of course. Mr. President--

**SHEPHERD**

Have you ever been in the Oval Office?

**SYDNEY**

I've just been on the regular tour.  
It didn't include...

**SHEPHERD**

I hear it's pretty good.

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President, what you saw in there  
was nothing more than vanity run amok.  
I was showing off for a colleague who  
doesn't think very much of me. It'd  
be a real injustice for you to hold the  
GDC accountable for my behavior today.

On top of which, I'm monumentally sorry for having insulted you like that.

**SHEPHERD**

Are you under the impression that I'm mad at you?

**SYDNEY**

(pause)

Well...

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney, seldom does a day go by that I'm not burned in effigy.

**SYDNEY**

Not by a professional political operative standing 30 feet from the Oval Office.

**SHEPHERD**

No, I'll give you that.

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President--

**SHEPHERD**

Did you know that when the City Planners sat down to design Washington, D.C., their intention was to build a city that would intimidate and humble foreign heads of state? It's true.

**SYDNEY**

I didn't know that.

**SHEPHERD**

The White House has the single greatest home court advantage in the modern world.

**SYDNEY**

Learned that one the hard way.

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney, this bill is important to me.

**SYDNEY**

Yes, sir, I'll convey your message.

**SHEPHERD**

But you don't believe me?

**SYDNEY**

The GDC is asking for 20 percent, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

It's not gonna pass at 20 percent.  
It's a long shot at 10.

**SYDNEY**

How do you know that until you put  
the full weight of the White House  
behind--

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney, at 20 percent, we are 34 votes  
shy in the House. It can't be done.  
But I tell you what. I'll make you a  
deal with you. If you can get 24  
votes, I'll get you the last 10.

**SYDNEY**

Twenty-four votes?

**SHEPHERD**

If you can swing 24 votes by the  
State of the Union, I'll promise you  
full White House support.

**SYDNEY**

Do I have your word on that, sir?

**SHEPHERD**

Absolutely. Listen, are you hungry?  
I skipped breakfast. You wanna have  
some coffee? A donut or something?

**SYDNEY**

Sir, I'm a little intimidated by my  
surroundings, and yes, I've gotten  
off to a rocky and somewhat stilted  
beginning, but don't let that  
diminish the weight of my message:  
The GDC has been at every president  
for the last decade and a half that  
global warming is a calamity, the  
effects of which will be second only  
to nuclear war. The best scientists  
in the world have given you every  
reason to take the GDC seriously.  
But I'm gonna give you one more. If

you don't live up to the deal you  
just made, come New Hampshire, we're  
gonna go shopping for a new candidate.

SYDNEY heads for the door--

**SHEPHERD**

You can't do that, Sydney.

**SYDNEY**

With all due respect, Mr. President,  
who's gonna stop me?

**SHEPHERD**

Well, if you go through that door,  
the United States Secret Service.  
That's my private office.

(pointing)

You need to go out that way.

**SYDNEY**

(beat)

Ah.

SYDNEY, with as much dignity as she can muster, leaves the  
Oval Office. SHEPHERD muses about what has just transpired.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE BILLIARD ROOM - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD has converted one of the rooms on the second floor  
residence. His expert shot demonstrates that playing pool is  
something he does almost as well as being President. A.J.  
stands to the side with his pool cue.

**A. J.**

McSorley, McCluskey and Shane know  
we're making our move on the crime  
bill. They're circling the wagons on  
the assault weapons.

**SHEPHERD**

Should I meet with them?

**A. J.**

Let Lewis take a pass at them first.

**SHEPHERD**

Fine. 2 in the side.

SHEPHERD sends the two-ball flying into the corner pocket.

**A.J.**

Nice shot, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

Nice shot, Mr. President? You won't call me by my name when we're playing pool.

A.J. assesses the table.

**A.J.**

I will not do it playing pool, I will not do it in a school, I do not like green eggs and ham, I do not like them Sam I am.

**SHEPHERD**

At ease, A.J., and get away from the pocket. 9 in the corner.

SHEPHERD makes the shot.

**A.J.**

Leo Solomon phoned. He said he was thrilled with the deal you made this morning.

SHEPHERD lifts his cue for a moment...trying to think it there was something he was supposed to tell A.J.

**SHEPHERD**

I forgot to tell you.

**A.J.**

It's a waste of time.

**SHEPHERD**

Not our time. GDC makes a big push for the votes, and when they come up short, we move in with the softer bill, to get passed, we're everybody's hero. 3 in the side.

**A.J.**

Also, Sydney Wade called.

SHEPHERD, a hair too excited by this news, misses by a mile.

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney Wade?

**A. J.**

(beat)

She wanted to apologize one more time  
for her behavior. 3 in the side.

**SHEPHERD**

Did she say anything about me?

**A. J.**

(beat)

Sydney Wade?

**SHEPHERD**

When she called.

**A. J.**

Did she say anything about you?  
13 in the corner.

**SHEPHERD**

No, it's just that we had a nice  
couple of minutes together. She  
threatened me and I patronized her  
and we didn't have anything to eat,  
but I thought there was a connection.

A.J. is staring at him in disbelief.

**SHEPHERD**

She didn't say anything about me?

**A. J.**

(quietly)

Well, no, but I could pass her a note  
before study hall and--

**SHEPHERD**

Tell me this: Hypothetically, what  
would happen--

**A. J.**

I feel a nightmare coming on. 1 in  
the corner.

He misses the shot.

**SHEPHERD**

--if I called Sydney and asked her  
to be my date at the State Dinner  
Thursday night?

**A. J.**

You're not serious.

**SHEPHERD**

Don't I sound serious?

**A. J.**

The President can't just go out on a date.

**SHEPHERD**

Why not? Jefferson did. Wilson did.

**A. J.**

You're not--

**SHEPHERD**

Wilson was widowed during his first term. He meets a woman named Edith Gault. He dated her, courted her, married her, and somewhere in there managed to form the League of Nations.

**A. J.**

Mr. President, this is an election year. If you're looking for female companionship, we can make arrangements that'll insure total privacy and--

**SHEPHERD**

I don't want you to get me a girl, A.J. What is this, Vegas?

**A. J.**

No, sir, this is the White House.

**SHEPHERD**

And I'm talking about something that in no way is at conflict with my oath of office. I'm a single adult, and I met a woman that I'd like to see again socially. How's that different from what Wilson did?

**A. J.**

The difference is he didn't have to be the president on television. You've said it a million times: If there were a television set in every living room 60 years ago, this country does not elect a man in a wheelchair.

**SHEPHERD**

What are you saying?

**A. J.**

We'll take a hit.

**SHEPHERD**

How big?

**A. J.**

I don't know. Five points. Maybe more.

**SHEPHERD**

Five points we're standing here talking about?!

**A. J.**

It could be more.

**SHEPHERD**

I drop five points when Wisconsin doesn't make it to the Rose Bowl. 5 in the corner.

**A. J.**

Do you want me to have Kodak put together some numbers so we know what we're talking about?

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah.

(beat)

No. No. I don't want to check a polling sample to see if this is okay, like I'm asking permission to stay out an hour past curfew. This isn't the business of the American people.

**A. J.**

Mr. President, the American people have a funny way of deciding on their own what is and what is not their business.

**SHEPHERD**

I like her, A.J.

(pause)

Stop being my chief of staff for one minute.

**A.J.**

(beat)

Give her a call.

**SHEPHERD**

(calling out)

Janie!

(to A.J.)

She didn't say anything about me?

**A.J.**

She said you're taller than she  
thought you'd be.

**SHEPHERD**

That's something.

JANIE enters--

**JANIE**

Yes, sir?

**SHEPHERD**

I need you to track down a phone  
number.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. A RESIDENTIAL STREET IN GEORGETOWN - NIGHT**

Lined with red-brick, three-story walk-ups.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

A few suitcases and two or three moving cartons serve as  
evidence that SYDNEY's staying with her sister BETH  
temporarily.

BETH, still in hospital scrubs from a 12-hour shift, opens a  
bottle of wine while SYDNEY, in a bathrobe and wet hair,  
tries to get off the phone.

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

Richard...Richard, it wasn't funny.  
I acted like a college freshman at a  
protest rally.

**BETH**

Tell him the part about walking out

the wrong door.

**SYDNEY**

Oh God, I forgot about that.

(back into phone)

No, Richard...Richard, I don't want to hear your Andrew Shepherd imitation...

**BETH**

I wanna hear it.

**SYDNEY**

I'm hanging up now, Richard...  
Tonight? I was gonna go to bed early  
and wake up when there's a new  
president.

She hangs up.

**SYDNEY**

(continuing)

The President must think I'm a third-rate jerk.

**BETH**

If he thinks you're a jerk, I'm sure he thinks you're a first-rate jerk.

**SYDNEY**

I'll tell you one thing, boy. I regrouped, you gotta gimme that. I pulled it together at the end. I stood in the middle of the Oval Office and I made it very clear that from now on, he who doesn't take the GDC seriously does so at his peril!

**BETH**

And then you walked out the wrong door.

**SYDNEY**

Are you gonna be throwing that back at me the rest of my life?

**BETH**

That's my current plan, yes.

The TELEPHONE RINGS...

**SYDNEY**

That's gonna be Leo Solomon. He said

he'd call at nine.

SYDNEY picks up the phone--

**SYDNEY**

(continuing;  
into phone)

Hello?

**SHEPHERD**

Uh, hi, is this Sydney?

SYDNEY doesn't recognize the voice--

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

Leo?

**PHONE VOICE**

No, this is Andrew Shepherd.

SYDNEY looks at BETH and rolls her eyes, then explains to her--

**SYDNEY**

Andrew Shepherd.

(back in the phone)

You're hilarious, Richard. You're a regular riot.

And we CROSS-CUT between SYDNEY and SHEPHERD.

**SHEPHERD**

Uhh...this isn't Richard, it's Andrew Shepherd.

**SYDNEY**

Oh, really. Well, I'm so glad you called, because I forgot to tell you today what a nice ass you have. I'm also impressed that you were able to get my phone number, considering I don't have a phone. Good night, Richard.

SYDNEY hangs up the phone.

**INT. SHEPHERD'S PRIVATE OFFICE/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

as SHEPHERD, undaunted, dials the number again.

**SHEPHERD**

(under his breath)

This used to be easier.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

as the PHONE RINGS.

**SYDNEY**

I don't believe this.

**BETH**

You want me to deal with him?

**SYDNEY**

No way. I may choke in front of  
Shepherd, but Richard Reynolds I  
can handle.

She picks up the phone.

**SYDNEY**

(continuing)

Hello?

And we begin CROSS-CUTTING again between the two.

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney?

**SYDNEY**

Are you learning-impaired?!

**SHEPHERD**

Listen, do me a favor. Hang up the  
phone.

**SYDNEY**

(beat)

What?

**SHEPHERD**

Hang up the phone. Then dial 456-1414.  
When you get the White House operator,  
give her your name and tell her you  
want to speak to the President.

SHEPHERD hangs up.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

SYDNEY's still holding the phone and seems a little confused...an emotion which is about to be replaced by horror as the unbelievable into the reality.

**SYDNEY**

(to herself)

This isn't happening to me.

She dials.

**BETH**

What's going on?

**SYDNEY**

(to herself)

It's not possible I did this twice in one day.

The OPERATOR answers.

**OPERATOR**

(filtered)

Good evening, the White House.

SYDNEY swallows.

**OPERATOR**

(continuing; filtered)

Hello?

**SYDNEY**

(quietly)

My name's Sydney Ellen Wade. I'd like to--

**OPERATOR (O.S.)**

(filtered)

The President's expecting your call, ma'am. I'll put you right through.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHEPHERD'S PRIVATE OFFICE/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

He's just opened a bottle of beer when the phone rings. He picks up the phone--

**SHEPHERD**

Hello.

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President, I'm sure there's an appropriate thing to say at this moment. Probably some formal apology for the nice-ass remark would be in order. I just don't quite know how to word it.

**SHEPHERD**

It's my fault. I shouldn't have called you at home. Should I call you at the office tomorrow?

**SYDNEY**

No, sir, of course not. I mean -- yes, you can call me anytime you want -- this is fine. Right now is fine. When I said "of course not," I meant that...You know what? The hell with it -- I'm moving to another country.

**SHEPHERD**

(smiling)

What did you mean when you said you don't have a phone.

**SYDNEY**

I just moved to Washington over the weekend, and my apartment isn't ready yet. This is my sister's apartment. Come to think of it, how did you get this number?

**SHEPHERD**

(beat)

How did I get the number. That's a reasonable question. I don't know. Probably the FBI.

**SYDNEY**

(trying to pretend  
it's just another  
guy on the phone)

The FBI. Sure. 'Cause i-if you want to find someone and you're the president, that's who you would call.

**SHEPHERD**

You know who else is good at that?

**SYDNEY**

The C.I.A.?

**SHEPHERD**

Well, yeah, but I was thinking of the Internal Revenue Service. They have computer files that...Well...I should stop stalling. As I'm sure you know, the French have elected themselves a new president, and we're having a formal state dinner at the White House, and I was wondering -- and you're under no obligation at all -- but I thought it might be fun... I was wondering if you maybe wanted to go...with me, and uh... there it is. That's why I was calling.

There's a long silence on the phone.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Sydney? Sydney, Congress doesn't take this long to--

**SYDNEY**

The President has asked me to join him in representing our country. I'm honored. I'm equal to the task. And I won't let you down, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

(beat)

Sydney, this is just a dinner. We're not gonna be doing espionage or anything.

**SYDNEY**

No. Of course. I'm a little...uh...what do I do? I, I mean, where do I go? Should I meet you? Will you...

**SHEPHERD**

I'm gonna have a very nice woman named Marsha Bridgeport call you. She's the White House Social Director, and she'll help you with anything you want. Now when she calls you and tells you her name is Marsha Bridgeport, it'll help if you give her the benefit of the doubt.

**SYDNEY**

Of course.

**SHEPHERD**

I'll see you Thursday night.

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President, thank you for asking me. Really. This is a first for me.

**SHEPHERD**

Me too.

They hang up.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - DAY**

**INT. THE CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY**

A large conference room at OEOB has been converted for the use of a half-dozen STAFFERS as well as ten or twelve interns, some of them high school age. A sign on a corkboard reads, "17 Votes in 69 Days."

The two numbers are written on two separate pads of paper so that the top sheets can be torn off to reveal the following numbers in descending order.

There is also a bulletin board that lists every member of the House of Representatives and is divided up into five columns: FOR, LEANING TOWARDS, UNDECIDED, LEANING AGAINST, and AGAINST.

**KODAK**

Who's on Indiana?

(raising his voice)

Excuse me. New people, I can't remember your names. Raise your hand if you're on Indiana.

Two INTERNS raise their hands--

**KODAK**

(continuing)

Put your hands down -- you're on Illinois.

LEWIS comes in.

**LEWIS**

We've got Jarrett.

**KODAK**

What?

**LEWIS**

George Jarrett. He's ours. Solid  
"yes."

**KODAK**

I don't believe it.

(to an INTERN)

You. New guy. "Jarrett, Democrat,  
Minnesota." Slide his name on over  
to "for."

(to Lewis)

We just had his name laminated under  
"Undecided." How'd you get the fence  
pole out of his butt?

**LEWIS**

I wish I could take credit. He just  
said, "Lewis, I support the President  
a hundred percent ." Not the bill,  
the President.

**LEWIS**

We're gonna win this in a walk. It's  
like a kissing booth at a carnival.  
Give us a vote, get a photo-op with  
number 63.

LEWIS reaches to the tote board and pulls the "17" off,  
revealing "16."

**LEWIS**

We should have gone after the  
handguns.

**KODAK**

We gotta do one thing at a time.

**LEWIS**

We don't have time to do one thing at  
a time.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY**

A GDC conference room that SYDNEY, her assistant, DAVID, and  
two INTERNS have made into their 72-day headquarters. A  
similar tote board reads "23 Votes in 69 Days."

The two interns are marking spreadsheets. DAVID is on one

phone, SYDNEY is on another.

**DAVID**

(into phone)

Carol, it's David in Sydney Wade's office. I want to confirm her lunch with the Congressman.

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

We could do with a little party leadership, Mike. Is the Majority Whip takin' a break? Congress is in session, right, I'm not wrong about that?

LISA, another intern, is hanging up a phone in the background and crossing to the corkboard.

**LISA**

I just got off with Luther Simons. Brock's on board.

**SYDNEY**

Terrific!

She rips the "23" off, making it "22." SYDNEY reaches for her coffee and knocks over a cup of pencils. In righting the pencils, she knocks over her coffee.

**DAVID**

You're awfully jumpy today. What do you have -- a big date tonight?

With that, a big pile of papers is sent flying off the desk.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT**

It's a beautiful night. The White House, lit up and shimmering in its golden glow, would appear now to be exactly what the poet was looking at when he described The Shining City on a Hill.

Limousines, several of which fly the flag of foreign diplomats, pull up one by one, their doors opened by white-gloved MARINES.

White lights from television cameras mix with the fireworks of flashbulbs from the print media.

**INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT**

tie The GUESTS -- of whom there are a couple hundred -- in black and evening gowns, are entering the receiving area.

All this happening, of course, under the eye of the SECRET SERVICE AGENTS, both American and French, who are strategically placed throughout.

The light from a TV camera comes on as a reporter begins a quick stand-up interview with ROBERT RUMSON, a handsome man in his late forties.

**REPORTER (LLOYD)**

(to the camera)

I'm standing here with Senate Minority Leader Robert Rumson, just one of the many guests arriving at what, for a few hours at least, is a non-partisan White House. Senator, the latest public opinion survey shows the President with approval ratings that would make him all but unbeatable, come next November. Is there a Republican who can mount a serious challenge, and are you that candidate?

**RUMSON**

Lloyd, it's a long time till next November. Right now, I'm just looking forward to a pleasant evening.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Lucy is standing behind her father, tying his bow tie.

**SHEPHERD**

That's a little tight, Luce.

**LUCY**

It's supposed to be tight. It's supposed to make you look regal.

**SHEPHERD**

Is it supposed to cut off the blood flow to my face?

**LUCY**

All done.

He looks in the mirror.

**SHEPHERD**

Not bad. Where did you learn how to do this?

**LUCY**

Social studies.

**SHEPHERD**

Very funny.

(smiles)

Really, where did you learn?

**LUCY**

I don't know...I just guess...

**SHEPHERD**

Sweetie, did Mom teach you how to do this?

**LUCY**

Yeah.

**SHEPHERD**

(pause)

Lucy, is this okay with you? My having dinner with a woman?

**LUCY**

It's totally okay.

**SHEPHERD**

Are you sure? Because if you want to talk about it...

**LUCY**

Dad, it's cool. Go for it.

**SHEPHERD**

You know, I'm a little nervous.

**LUCY**

You'll be fine. Just be yourself.

**SHEPHERD**

Be myself.

**LUCY**

And compliment her shoes.

**SHEPHERD**

Her shoes?

**LUCY**

Girls like that.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. EAST WING ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

Dressed in formal, but not festive, clothes and holding, as always, her notepad, JANIE waits by the door.

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT sits alone behind a small desk.

The door opens and SYDNEY walks in. She's, needless to say, stunning.

**JANIE**

Miss Wade? The President wants you to join him upstairs in the residence. May I show you the way?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SITTING HALL/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

This formal reception area is filled with special GUESTS. As SYDNEY walks in, A.J. goes to her immediately.

**A. J.**

Sydney, come on in. You look beautiful.

**SYDNEY**

Thank you. I have no idea what I'm doing here.

**A. J.**

I promise you there's no hidden agenda.

SHEPHERD approaches SYDNEY.

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney. Andrew Shepherd. We spoke on the phone.

**SYDNEY**

Yes, sir. I remember.

ESTHER, MACINERNERY, A.J.'S wife, joins them.

**A.J.**

You know my wife, Esther.

**SYDNEY**

Sure. It's nice to see you again.

**ESTHER**

(affectionately)

Sydney, the President told me about how you two met. I think it's priceless.

**SYDNEY**

I don't know what happened. One minute I was calling him a mockery of an environmental leader. The next minute I had a date.

**ESTHER**

Men like being insulted by women. It makes them feel loved. Don't ask me why.

**A.J.**

Sydney, when you meet the French President, don't make him feel too loved, all right? We just signed a new trade agreement.

**SYDNEY**

Got it.

The French President, D'ASTIER, and his WIFE approach.

**SHEPHERD**

(to D'Astier)

Mr. President, would allow me to introduce Sydney Ellen Wade of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Sydney, this is President Rene-Jean D'Astier and his wife Monique Danielle D'Astier of France.

**SYDNEY**

An honor to meet you both.

**JANIE**

Mr. President, I'm sorry to interrupt. The receiving line is in

place.

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney, it sounds like our table's ready.

SHEPHERD's guests make their way out of the residence, leaving SHEPHERD with SYDNEY and the FRENCH PRESIDENT and **MDME. D'ASTIER.**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are walking down the staircase that leads to the red-carpeted hall through which the President enters the East Room.

The GROUP escorting the President gives them wide berth so that the two of them can have some privacy.

**SHEPHERD**

Once we hit the bottom of the stairs, I gotta do a thing. You'll be escorted...

**SYDNEY**

They took me through it.

After a slight pause--

**SYDNEY**

(continuing)

Do you do this often, sir?

**SHEPHERD**

(beat)

This is, actually, only our second State Dinner. The first was for the Emperor of Japan, who died shortly after that, so we stopped having them for a while, just in case.

**SYDNEY**

I meant do you go out on...do you-- often--do you--

**SHEPHERD**

Do I date a lot?

**SYDNEY**

Well, yeah.

**SHEPHERD**

No. How 'bout you?

**SYDNEY**

Me? Lately, I seem to be going out on a lot of first dates.

**SHEPHERD**

Then you're experienced at this.

**SYDNEY**

Oh yeah, you can ask me anything.

**SHEPHERD**

How are we doing so far?

**SYDNEY**

It's hard to say at this point. So far it's just your typical first date stuff.

And all of a sudden an INCREDIBLE SOUND from inside the East Room--

--The Marine Corps Brass and Percussion Ensemble plays four ruffles and flourishes.

**SHEPHERD**

Damn. And I wanted to find a way to be different from the other guys.

A BOOMING VOICE over the P.A. announces--

**VOICE (O.S.)**

Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

And now -- the whole walk timing out with incredible precision

--

**SHEPHERD**

By the way, nice shoes.

--SHEPHERD walks into the hall as the Brass and Percussion Ensemble plays HAIL TO THE CHIEF.

The 180 GUESTS come to their feet and applaud long and loud.

The GROUP following the President catches up to the spot where SYDNEY has stopped walking. They all join in the applause. We can see in SYDNEY's face that she's been quite

swept up.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. EAST ROOM - NIGHT**

The room is beautifully appointed, with the Marine Corps Dance Band playing dinner music -- and the SECRET SERVICE strategically positioned.

**CUT TO:**

**AT SHEPHERD'S TABLE**

STEWARDS are clearing away the main course and refilling wine glasses.

In addition to the two main couples, and ESTHER MacINERNEY and TWO OTHER COUPLES are seated at the President's table.

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President, the President and Mrs. D'Astier look bored. They're not talking to anybody.

**SHEPHERD**

They're hammered. Esther, do you speak French?

**ESTHER**

Latin.

**SHEPHERD**

I thought you spoke French.

**ESTHER**

No, Latin.

**SHEPHERD**

Great, next time Julius Caesar comes to town, you're our gal. Sydney, I don't suppose that you speak any--

**SYDNEY**

(taking over--  
to D'Astier)

Monsieur le President, nous sommes tous habilles, nous avons ce merveilleux orchestre, une piece magnifique...comment se fait-il que les invites ne dansent pas?

**SHEPHERD**

(proudly to A.J. and  
Esther)

That's my date.

**D'ASTIER**

Je ne connais pas la tradition en  
Amerique, mais dans mon pays, si les  
invites de Louis XVI et Marie  
Antoinette avaient ose danser devant  
le roi et la reine, ils auraient  
perdu la tete.

**SYDNEY**

Really?

**MADAME D'ASTIER**

Absolument.

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney, you didn't dissolve the NATO  
treaty, did you?

**SYDNEY**

I just said that we're sitting in this  
beautiful room, listening to the music  
of this wonderful orchestra, and I  
wondered why nobody was dancing.

**D'ASTIER**

And I informed Ms. Wade that in my  
country, a guest at the palace of  
Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette would  
soon find their head in a guillotine  
if they made the impertinent gesture  
of dancing without so much as a  
by-your-leave from the King and the Queen.

**A. J.**

I'll bet no one accused Louis of  
being soft on crime.

**SYDNEY**

There's a lesson there, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

More beheadings at the White House?

**A. J.**

Bob Rumson would embrace it.

**SHEPHERD**

I'm sure he would, but I have a better idea.

SHEPHERD stands, holds out his hand to SYDNEY.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Would you like to dance?

**SYDNEY**

Uh, yeah, I guess. I mean, yes, sir, I'd love to.

SHEPHERD and SYDNEY move to the dance floor, accompanied by the appreciative "oooh's" and "ahh's" of the GUESTS.

The dance band begins, and SYDNEY and SHEPHERD dance...

...beautifully.

**CUT TO:**

**THE GUESTS**

each and every one of them, have stopped all conversation and are fixating on this captivating sight. As we go around the room, we can observe the subtle reactions of, at first, various anonymous GUESTS, then

**CUT TO:**

**A. J. AND ESTHER MACINERNEY,**

holding hands smiling as they watch their old friend, and we

**CUT TO:**

**RUMSON'S TABLE**

where the Minority Leader's game face can barely conceal the gears that have slowly begun to turn in his head, as we

**CUT TO:**

**SHEPHERD AND SYDNEY DANCING**

**SYDNEY**

I don't know how you do it.

**SHEPHERD**

Arthur Murray. Six lessons.

**SYDNEY**

That's not what I mean. Two hundred pairs of eyes are focused on you right now, with two questions: "Who's this girl, and why's our president dancing with her?"

**SHEPHERD**

First of all, the 200 pairs of eyes aren't focused on me. They're focused on you. And the answers are "Sydney Ellen Wade" and "Because she said 'yes.'"

**LEWIS AND ROBIN**

looking on from the back of the room.

**LEWIS**

They make a nice couple.

**ROBIN**

Lovely.

**LEWIS**

We've got troubles.

**ROBIN**

Huge.

As PEOPLE start onto dance floor, we

**CUT TO:**

**INT. A BLACK LIMOUSINE - NIGHT**

as it pulls away from the White House and into the night. In the back, SYDNEY slips a shoe off and rubs her foot.

She smiles, then turns around to look out the back window as the White House slips out of view.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - MORNING**

**SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY IN THE LIFE**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. OUTER OFFICE OF THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY**

MRS. CHAPIL and JANIE are at their respective desks as SHEPHERD walks in.

**SHEPHERD**

Good morning, Mrs. Chapil.

**MRS. CHAPIL**

Good morning, Mr. President. Mr. Rothschild and Miss McCall are in the office, sir. They said they needed to speak with you before scheduling.

**SHEPHERD**

Fine. Janie, can you get me the number of a local florist?

**JANIE**

I'll take care of it, sir. Where do you want them sent?

**SHEPHERD**

I want to do it myself. I just need the phone number.

**JANIE**

I don't understand.

**SHEPHERD**

I want the phone number of a florist.

**JANIE**

You just want the phone number?

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah.

**JANIE**

(beat)

I don't understand, sir, is there--

**SHEPHERD**

I want to send some flowers, Janie. I want to do it myself. I don't want to staff it out, and I don't want to issue an Executive Order. I just want a phone number.

**JANIE**

I'll get it for you right away, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

Thank you.

He heads into the office.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY**

where LEWIS and ROBIN are waiting anxiously.

**ROBIN**

Mr. President, we need five minutes  
before scheduling if you can spare it.

**SHEPHERD**

(to Robin)

I just need two minutes to make a  
call and I'll be right with you.

JANIE enters and hands SHEPHERD a piece of paper.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Thank you, Janie.

She exits.

**LEWIS**

Who are we calling, sir?

**SHEPHERD**

I'm calling the Organization of the  
United Brotherhood of It's-None-of-  
Your-Damn-Business, Lewis. I'll be  
with you in a minute.

**LEWIS**

Yes, sir.

LEWIS and ROBIN exit the Oval Office. SHEPHERD picks up the  
phone.

**SHEPHERD**

(to the OPERATOR)

Yeah, good morning. How do I get an  
outside line? Really? That's simple.  
Thank you.

SHEPHERD dials the phone number JANIE's given him.

**CUT TO:**

LEWIS and ROBIN

hovering near the outer office.

**LEWIS**

Janie?

**JANIE**

Yes?

**LEWIS**

What's the President doing?

**JANIE**

I'm sorry, I'm really not at liberty to say.

**CUT TO:**

**SHEPHERD ON THE PHONE**

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

Tell me something. What is the state flower of Virginia?

**CUT TO:**

**THE OUTER OFFICE**

**ROBIN**

Does this have something to do with Sydney Wade?

**JANIE**

I'm really not at liberty to say.

**CUT TO:**

**SHEPHERD AT HIS DESK**

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

Is there someone else there who might know?

(beat)

No, I'm not trying to give you a hard time, I was--hold on please.

**THE OUTER OFFICE**

SHEPHERD'S VOICE comes through on INTERCOM.

**SHEPHERD (O.S.)**

(through intercom)

Janie, what's the state flower of Virginia?

**JANIE**

(turning to MRS.

**CHAPIL)**

Mrs. Chapil. State flower of Virginia.

**MRS. CHAPIL**

The dogwood.

**CUT TO:**

**SHEPHERD AT HIS DESK**

**JANIE (O.S.)**

(through intercom)

The dogwood, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

(to JANIE)

Thank you.

(into phone)

It's the dogwood.

(pause)

What? Hold on please.

(to JANIE, through intercom)

Janie, the dogwood is a tree, not a flower.

**CUT TO:**

**THE OUTER OFFICE**

LEON KODAK walks by.

**KODAK**

It's a tree and a flower.

**JANIE**

Are you sure?

**KODAK**

Yes. What's going on?

**CUT TO:**

**OVAL OFFICE**

**JANIE (O.S.)**

(through intercom)  
Sir, it's a tree and a flower.

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)  
The dogwood is both a tree and a flower. I'd like a dozen, please. Really? No dogwoods? How 'bout roses? Simple. Classic. Two dozen roses.

**CUT TO:**

**THE OUTER OFFICE**

**LEWIS**

Janie, I'm the President senior domestic policy advisor. It's important that I have a full understanding of--

**SHEPHERD (O.S.)**

Janie! Do you have any idea where my credit cards might be?

**CUT TO:**

**SHEPHERD AT HIS DESK**

**JANIE**

They're in storage in Wisconsin with the rest of your personal items.

**SHEPHERD**

Ah.  
(into phone)  
Listen, what might be better is if you just bill me for the flowers. I'm sure it'll be okay with your boss. Well, I don't know if you recognize my voice, but this is the President.  
(beat)  
The United States.  
(they've hung up)  
Hello, hello...

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LEO SOLOMON'S OFFICE - DAY**

SYDNEY enters.

**SYDNEY**

Leo, you wanted to see me?

**LEO**

So there I was, thinking maybe I should give Sydney a call. She's new in town, doesn't know many people...

LEO produces a copy of the morning paper, which has a photo of SHEPHERD and SYDNEY dancing.

**SYDNEY**

Leo--

**LEO**

Then I picked up the Times--

**SYDNEY**

It was crazy. He called me at home.

**LEO**

What's going on?

**SYDNEY**

Nothing. It was innocent. His cousin got the flu at the last minute.

**LEO**

Did you sleep with him?

**SYDNEY**

What?

**LEO**

Did you sleep--

**SYDNEY**

That's none of your business, Leo.

**LEO**

Yeah, it is, Sydney.

**SYDNEY**

You wanna tell me how my personal life in any way--

**LEO**

Because when it's the President, it's not personal. Sydney, I hired your reputation. I hired a pit bull, not a prom queen.

**SYDNEY**

That's unfair.

**LEO**

It's incredibly unfair. But you've spent a lot of time over the year telling me the trouble with the environmental lobby is that we don't understand the fundamental truth that politics is perception. This is a bad time to develop ignorance.

**SYDNEY**

You're making way too much of this.

**LEO**

Am I? This is your time, Sydney. You're sitting at the grown-ups' table. You have a chance to get everything you want -- run a national campaign, be a major player inside the party. But this relationship had better go all the way, because with the leader of the free world there is no halfway. Politics is perception, and if things don't work out, the amount of time it'll take you to go from being a hired gun to a cocktail party joke can be clocked with an egg timer.

There's a quick knock at the door -- Leo's SECRETARY steps in with a strange-looking package.

**SYDNEY**

Leo, there is no relationship. It was one night. It's done.

**LEO'S SECRETARY**

Mr. Solomon, this was just delivered by White House messenger. It's marked "Perishable."

**LEO**

The White House has sent me something

perishable?

**LEO'S SECRETARY**

It's for Ms. Wade.

**LEO**

Here we go...

SYDNEY begins unwrapping the package.

**SYDNEY**

Relax, Leo. I'm sure it's just a formality.

**LEO'S SECRETARY**

(exited)

It's from him.

**LEO**

Of course it's from him.

**SYDNEY**

So he had some staff flunky send me a fruit basket.

**LEO'S SECRETARY**

He wrote the note himself.

**SYDNEY**

I'm sure he didn't take the time to--

**LEO'S SECRETARY**

The messenger said he was waiting in the Oval Office for ten minutes while the President wrote the card.

**SYDNEY**

Okay, listen, so he--

(to LEO'S SECRETARY)

--it took him ten minutes to write a card?!

**LEO'S SECRETARY**

Apparently he went through several drafts.

SYDNEY can't stifle her laugh -- she sees what the gift is.

**LEO**

What is it...what is it?

**SYDNEY**

A ham.

**LEO**

(beat)

A ham?

**SYDNEY**

He sent me a Virginia ham.

**LEO'S SECRETARY**

Dig it, Ms. Wade. You're the  
President's girlfriend.

SYDNEY's smile fades away...she looks at LEO.

**LEO**

There's never an egg timer around  
when you need one.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. THE NORTHWEST EXECUTIVE ENTRANCE - DAY**

as the white-gloved MARINE snaps the door open for SYDNEY,  
and we

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY**

SHEPHERD is conferring with LEWIS and ROBIN.

**ROBIN**

Sir, they're gonna be pressing today  
about whether the White House is  
prepared to soften the assault  
weapons section of the crime bill.

**LEWIS**

There is no need to entertain that  
at this point.

**ROBIN**

How do you want me to handle the  
Sydney issue?

**SHEPHERD**

The Sydney issue?

**LEWIS**

We should have a consensus on how the  
White House is going to handle it.

**SHEPHERD**

I sure hope the Sydney issue refers in some way to a problem we're having with Australia, because if it's anything else...

JANIE pokes her head in.

**JANIE**

Mr. President, Ms. Wade is here to see you.

**SHEPHERD**

Tell her she can come right in. I'm finished here.

**JANIE**

Yes, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

(to LEWIS and ROBIN)

There is no Sydney issue.

SYDNEY enters, crossing paths with LEWIS and ROBIN. They exchange pleasantries.

**SYDNEY**

(to SHEPHERD)

Thanks for seeing me on such short notice.

**SHEPHERD**

No problem. Did you get the ham?

**SYDNEY**

I got the ham, yes. Thank you very much.

**SHEPHERD**

I wanted to send you flowers, but there seem to be some kinks in the system. I'm really glad you stopped by. I had such a good time last night.

**SYDNEY**

So did I. It's just that...

JANIE enters.

**JANIE**

They're 45 seconds away, sir.

During the following, JANIE will go to the desk, pick up two briefing books and stick them in a briefcase and gather up his things -- all without interrupting the conversation a beat.

**SHEPHERD**

I'm delivering a luncheon speech at the Governor's Conference this morning. I'm sorry to--

**SYDNEY**

No, no, that's fine. I just stopped by to...

**SHEPHERD**

Are you free for dinner tomorrow night?

**SYDNEY**

Dinner?

**SHEPHERD**

Casual. In the Residence. Without the United Nations. My daughter'll be with us, so it may seem like the United--

**SYDNEY**

I'd love to meet Lucy, but...

An AIDE has slipped in and hands SHEPHERD a note.

**SHEPHERD**

(reading to himself  
as he talks SYDNEY)  
She's gonna like you.  
(calling to the AIDE)  
Excuse me -- Jeff!

**SYDNEY**

Actually, I have some concerns that--

The AIDE (JEFF) steps back in--

**JEFF**

Yes, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

(reading the note)  
I can't do this.

**JEFF**

Which? Robbins or Stackhouse?

**SHEPHERD**

Either one. I have to be in and out.

**JEFF**

Sir, Governor Stackhouse said he just needed 10 minutes. I think he wants to talk about the assault weapons.

**SHEPHERD**

Stackhouse wants to talk about grazing rights. Trust me.

**JEFF**

Got it.

And he's gone.

**SHEPHERD**

(to Sydney)

Sorry. You have concerns.

**SYDNEY**

Yes. Not many. A few. One. I have one concern.

**SHEPHERD**

Does it having anything to do with one of us being the President?

**SYDNEY**

You like to make jokes about this, but--

**SHEPHERD**

I am not mocking you, honest. I'm just a guy asking a girl over for a meal.

And, as if from out of nowhere, a LOUD CLAAAMMERING, like the sound of a jackhammer against cement, comes from somewhere outside -- growing louder and closer --

**SYDNEY**

What's that?

**SHEPHERD**

My ride's here.

And, sure enough, coming into view outside the windows of the Oval Office, is MARINE-1, the President's helicopter. JANIE

comes back in and helps him on with his coat and scarf.

**SYDNEY**

Leo Solomon has serious concerns about my exploring a social, you know, scenario, with the President of the United States.

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah, well, when you put it that way, it doesn't sound that great to me either.

**SYDNEY**

It's just not--

**SHEPHERD**

Have dinner with Lucy and me. It's meat loaf night -- how presidential can it be?

As SHEPHERD rushes out...

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Seven-thirty.

SYDNEY now stands alone in the OVAL OFFICE, trying to figure out what just happened.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - SOUTH LAWN - DAY**

Marine 1 lifting off the south lawn. TILT DOWN off night sky to reveal

**EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SITTING HALL/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

A room designed more for comfort than for show, with its overstuffed couches.

Lucy enters.

**LUCY**

Are you Ms. Wade?

**SYDNEY**

(standing up, smiling)  
Sydney.

**LUCY**

Lucy Shepherd.

**SYDNEY**

Nice to meet you.

**LUCY**

My dad told me to tell you he's on the phone with his dentist and that I should behave myself and entertain you till he gets here.

**SYDNEY**

Your father's on the phone with his dentist?

**LUCY**

No. He told me to tell you he's on the phone with his dentist. He wants you to think he's a regular guy.

**SYDNEY**

Who is he on the phone with?

**LUCY**

The Prime Minister of Israel.

**SYDNEY**

They're probably not discussing his teeth.

**LUCY**

No. They're talking about that abbreviation I can never remember.

**SYDNEY**

**C-STAD?**

**LUCY**

Yeah.

**SYDNEY**

Capricorn Surface To Air Defense.

**LUCY**

Right.

SHEPHERD enters.

**SHEPHERD**

Let meat loaf night begin.

**SYDNEY**

Everything all right with your teeth?

**SHEPHERD**

My teeth?

**SYDNEY**

The dentist.

**SHEPHERD**

Oh, right. I've got a cavity in my upper bicuspid region.

**SYDNEY**

You've got a short-range weapons system outside Tel Aviv.

**SHEPHERD**

(to LUCY)

You turned on me.

**LUCY**

Can we eat?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. A POSE HOUSE IN CHEVY CHASE - NIGHT**

Two dozen limos and town cars line this suburban Maryland street, their drivers waiting patiently.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE HOUSE IN CHEVY CHASE - NIGHT**

A cocktail party is underway. This is a fat cat fundraiser for the Republicans.

**RUMSON (V.O.)**

You're over-thinking this.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE LIBRARY - NIGHT**

The look and feel of old money. Rumson is holding court with a half-dozen political insiders. Some smoke cigars; others sip their drinks.

**RUMSON**

(continuing)

Voters aren't interested in how to achieve economic growth, and they don't want to hear our plans to strengthen foreign policy.

**STAFFER #1**

So it comes down to character.

**STAFFER #2**

The press like him, Senator. The networks, the newspapers, they're--

**RUMSON**

Reporters like him. Networks and newspapers like ratings and circulation. For all the bitching we do about liberal bias in the press when it comes down to a character debate...

**STAFFER #3**

The press is an unwitting accomplice.

**CARL**

Bob, the character debate didn't work out for us.

**RUMSON**

Because it couldn't. Our polling told us that attacking his character less than a year after he'd lost his wife was gonna be a turn-off and was gonna make people feel sorry for him. We couldn't run the campaign we wanted because the opponent was a widower.

**CARL**

He's still a widower. Time's passed, but--

**RUMSON**

(to the rest)

You'll have to forgive my friend. He's been on a hunting trip and cut off from the world.

**CARL**

What's going on?

And four STAFFERS grab whatever newspaper is closest to their

hand and toss them to CARL.

**RUMSON**

The President's got a girlfriend.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. PRIVATE OFFICE/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

LUCY, SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are finishing up a game of Scrabble.

**SYDNEY**

(to LUCY)

Your dad says you're studying the  
Constitutional Convention.

**SHEPHERD**

She's not having any fun, though.

**LUCY**

Dad--

**SYDNEY**

You're not having fun?

**LUCY**

(to herself)

This is a nightmare. This is a  
social studies nightmare.

**SHEPHERD**

They're doing a mock Congress. Each  
kid is playing one of the original  
delegates, and they debate the  
Amendments. Now what's not fun about  
that?

LUCY gets up from the table and kisses her father.

**LUCY**

G'night, Dad.

**SHEPHERD**

G'night, sweetheart.

**LUCY**

It was nice meeting you, Mrs.--

**SYDNEY**

Sydney.

**LUCY**

It was nice meeting you, Sydney.

**SYDNEY**

Thank you. It was nice meeting you.

**SHEPHERD**

Sleep well, honey. I love you.

**LUCY**

I love you, too.

LUCY leaves. SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are alone now.

**SYDNEY**

She's wonderful.

**SHEPHERD**

She's her mother.

**SYDNEY**

She's you.

After a pause...

**SHEPHERD**

Would you like the 25-cent tour?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE EAST WING - NIGHT**

This is the "museum" area of the White House, the part you see when you take the official tour. Only a few lights are lit, and while the SECRET SERVICE AGENTS give SHEPHERD plenty of breathing room when he's in the residence, we'll still catch a glimpse of one of them rounding a corner in the distance or checking a doorway ahead.

**SYDNEY**

I thought C-STAD wasn't gonna be operational until January.

**SHEPHERD**

It was ready ahead of schedule. We've just been waiting for the personnel.

**SYDNEY**

The Israelis?

**SHEPHERD**

No, our guys. We've sent a team of Army instructors to train the Israelis.

SYDNEY and SHEPHERD enter the:

**INT. THE CHINA ROOM - NIGHT**

Named for its beautiful glass display cases featuring full place settings of the official White House china and silverware from every administration since Jackson.

**SHEPHERD:**

(remembering)

I think this is the dish room.

**SYDNEY**

It's not the dish--

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah, it is. It's the room with all the dishes.

**SYDNEY**

It's the China Room.

**SHEPHERD**

I'm more of a West Wing President. If you're curious about the mansion, there's probably a book you can get--

**SYDNEY**

There're about seven-thousand books. I'll get one for you.

SYDNEY's been walking slowly around the room, looking at the display cases, and as she gets near one of the large windows, she takes another step which drapes her in a shaft of incredibly flattering moonlight.

The vision isn't lost on SHEPHERD. They stare at each other for a moment.

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney.

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President -- have you ever noticed how similar the Van Buren flatware is to the Buchanan flatware?

**SHEPHERD**

Do you think there will ever come a time when you can stand in a room with me and not think of me as the President?

**SYDNEY**

This isn't a state of mind. You are the President. And when I'm in a room with you, oval or any other shape, I'm always gonna be a lobbyist, and you'll always be the President.

**SHEPHERD**

I got news for you, Sydney. As a lobbyist, you would never be alone in a room with the President.

This last statement is not lost on SYDNEY.

He moves toward her until they are both bathed in the moonlight. He puts his arms around her.

**SYDNEY**

You think this is a good idea?

**SHEPHERD**

Probably not.

They lean in to kiss each other. They barely make contact when...

**AGENT #3 (O.S.)**

Mr. President...

An AGENT is standing in the doorway -- SHEPHERD and SYDNEY break apart.

**AGENT #3**

We have a secure call from the sit-room.

SHEPHERD knows what that means.

**SHEPHERD**

Excuse me.

He moves out the door and into the corridor.

SYDNEY, knowing something's wrong, instinctively moves to follow him and be with him, but the AGENT hasn't moved from

the doorway, so--

**AGENT #3**

Sorry, ma'am.

**SYDNEY**

(beat)

No...of course.

SHEPHERD comes back in.

**SHEPHERD**

Listen--

**SYDNEY**

Is anything wrong?

**SHEPHERD**

I'm sorry, we're going to have to cut our evening short. The Libyans have just bombed C-STAD. I'll try to call you tomorrow.

(to the AGENT)

Can you show Ms. Wade out.

SHEPHERD exits.

SYDNEY, alone for a second in the dish room, is finally approached by a SECRET SERVICE AGENT, who starts to escort her out.

**CHAIRMAN (V.O.)**

The response scenario's in place...

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE SITUATION ROOM - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD, A.J., the SECRETARY OF STATE, the SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, and about a dozen or so Pentagon, Security Council, and Joint Chiefs OFFICIALS are doing exactly what they're trained for.

**CHAIRMAN**

(continuing)

...The F-18's are fired up on the Kimitz and the Kitty Hawk. They're just waiting for your attack order, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

And we're gonna hit Libyan

Intelligence Headquarters?

**MAN**

The N.S.A. confirmed they're the ones who planned the bombing.

**A. J.**

What's the estimate?

**GENERAL**

We'll level the building.

**SHEPHERD**

Libyan I.H.Q's in the middle of downtown Tripoli -- are we gonna hit anything else?

**GENERAL**

Only if we miss.

**SHEPHERD**

Are we gonna miss?

**GENERAL**

No, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

How many people work in that building?

**CHAIRMAN**

We've been all through--

**SHEPHERD**

How many people work in the damn building?

**DEPUTY**

I've got those number here. There are three shifts, so it--

**SHEPHERD**

The fewest. What shift puts the fewest people in the building? The night shift, right?

**DEPUTY**

By far. Mostly custodial staff and a few--

**SHEPHERD**

What time does the night crew go on?

**DEPUTY**

They're on now, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

**A.J.?**

**A.J.**

It's immediate, it's decisive, it's low risk, and it's a proportional response.

**SHEPHERD**

Someday somebody's going to have to explain to me the virtue of a proportional response.

There's a SILENCE. SHEPHERD gets up and starts to head out the door.

**CHAIRMAN**

Mr. President?

**SHEPHERD**

Attack.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD is with A.J., LEWIS, ROBIN, KODAK and a couple of AIDES, all of whom look as though they've been called out of their homes in the middle of the night.

**A.J.**

Robin, as soon as our planes have cleared Libyan airspace, you can call the press. I don't know when we'll have the full B.D.A.--

**LEWIS**

General Rork says around O-Eight Hundred.

**ROBIN**

Sir, what do you think about a national address?

**SHEPHERD**

The last thing I want to do is put the Lybians center stage.

**KODAK**

I think it's a great idea, sir. You know Rumson's gonna be talking about your lack of military service.

**SHEPHERD**

This isn't about Rumson. What I did tonight was not about political gain.

**KODAK**

But it can be, sir. What you did tonight was very presidential.

**SHEPHERD**

Leon, somewhere in Libyan right now there's a janitor working the night shift at the Libyan Intelligence Headquarters. He's going about his job 'cause he has no idea that in about an hour he's gonna die in a massive explosion. He's just going about his job 'cause he has no idea that an hour ago I gave an order to have him killed. You just saw me do the least presidential thing I do.

**KODAK**

yes, sir.

**PRESS (V.O.)**

Mr. President...Mr. President!

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY**

SHEPHERD is at the podium taking questions. He's flanked by his PENTAGON STAFF. A.J. and LEWIS stand to the side. ROBIN stands out of the way.

**SALLY**

Is there anything at all about the C-STAD weapons system that could have been mistaken by Libyan Intelligence as offensive rather than defensive?

**SHEPHERD**

No. We did everything but show them the blueprints. The hardware was sitting in a airplane hangar for a month. They didn't hit it until the

American personnel got there. Leslie.

**LESLIE**

Sir, there's an unconfirmed report that you were with Sydney Wade when you learned of the attack. Can you comment?

**A. J.**

(sotto to ROBIN)

Get him off.

**SHEPHERD**

Yes, we'd just finished dinner.

**ROBIN**

Last question.

**MARK**

Sir, would you care to comment on the status of your relationship?

**SHEPHERD**

We don't have a relationship. We just had dinner.

**CAROL**

Can you tell us if she spent the night at the White House or did--

**SHEPHERD**

Folks, a lot of people got killed last night. Let's try to keep our eyes on the ball, okay?

SHEPHERD is herded out of the briefing room amidst a chorus of "Mr. President" 's.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE WHITE HOUSE CORRIDOR - DAY**

SHEPHERD walks away from the briefing room with ROBIN. JANIE joins him.

**ROBIN**

That was my fault, sir. We should have prepped you for that.

**SHEPHERD**

There's nothing that needs prepping. A.J., let's meet with the leadership after we meet with the Security

Council.

**ROBIN**

"Newsweek" is begging for ten minutes today. Any ten minutes you got.

**SHEPHERD**

Nobody gets ten minutes today.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. SHEPHERD'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD sits at his desk, is on the phone. A TELEVISION NEWSCAST is doing a report on Congressional reaction to the events of the day. ROB RUMSON is talking.

**SHEPHERD**

Lewis, tell the speaker to wait. I want to talk to him. No, I'll be right down.

**RUMSON**

...Last night, the price of his liberal programs was raised to include the blood of 22 American soldiers.

He hangs up. On the TV, we see a quick sound bite from RUMSON.

**RUMSON**

...Mr. Shepherd's read a lot of books, but you didn't need a Harvard degree to see this comin' a mile down the road.

**SHEPHERD**

I went to Stanford, you blowhole.

**RUMSON**

The fat that our Commander-in-Chief has not served one day in uniform--

SHEPHERD clicks off the TV and then stares at

**A SLIP OF PAPER THAT SAYS "SYDNEY"**

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

**BETH (V.O.)**

This box just says "Miscellaneous."  
Is this bedroom miscellaneous or  
kitchen miscellaneous?

**INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

SYDNEY and BETH have been getting SYDNEY moved in. BETH is holding a carton.

**BETH**

Sydney?

**SYDNEY**

Why did I have to kiss him?

**BETH**

You kissed him?

**SYDNEY**

Yeah.

**BETH**

You didn't' tell me that.

**SYDNEY**

I kissed him.

**BETH**

Where?

**SYDNEY**

On the mouth.

**BETH**

(exasperated)

Where in the White House?!

**SYDNEY**

In the dish room.

**BETH**

The dish room?

**SYDNEY**

The China Room.

**BETH**

Then what happened?

**SYDNEY**

He had to go and attack Libya.

**BETH**

It's always something.

**SYDNEY**

I've gotta nip this in the bud. This has catastrophe written all over it.

**BETH**

In what language?! Sydney, this man is the leader of the free world. He's brilliant, he's funny, he's handsome, and he's an above-average dancer. Isn't it possible our standards are just a tad high?

The PHONE RINGS--

SYDNEY freezes.

The PHONE RINGS again.

**BETH**

(continuing)

Answer the phone.

**SYDNEY**

It's him.

**BETH**

Answer the phone.

**SYDNEY**

He's gonna ask me to come over there.

**BETH**

Answer the phone.

**SYDNEY**

I don't want to go over there.

**BETH**

Answer the phone.

**SYDNEY**

All right. But I'm gonna end it on the phone. I'm not gonna go over there.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD opens his door, revealing SYDNEY. Agent COOPER is letting her in.

**SYDNEY**

I just came over here to tell you why I can't see you anymore.

**SHEPHERD**

(to COOPER)

Thanks, Coop.

SHEPHERD closes the door.

**SYDNEY**

Look, I know you've had a tough day.

**SHEPHERD**

Not as tough as some. You want a drink? Lemme take your coat.

But SYDNEY doesn't take her coat off.

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President, this isn't gonna work.

**SHEPHERD**

Sure it will. You button the top button, and it doesn't fall off the hanger.

**SYDNEY**

That's not what I...

**SHEPHERD**

I didn't think so. Listen...

**SYDNEY**

I've really enjoyed the time we've spent together, but this has catastrophe written all over it. Please, Mr. President, don't pursue me outside the political arena.

**SHEPHERD**

Well, I have no intention of pursuing you inside the political arena, so that leaves everything out, and that's unacceptable to me.

**SYDNEY**

If I were on your staff, I would tell you that the absolute worst thing you can do coming into an election year is to open yourself up to character attacks, and the fastest way to do that is to prance around like the playboy of the Western world.

**SHEPHERD**

Let's clear up a couple of things.  
Number 1: I seldom prance.  
Number 2: I have no intention of engaging in a character debate, and  
Number 3: You're not on my staff.

**SYDNEY**

Yes, of course, but if you'll follow the immutable--

**SHEPHERD**

Why is that, by the way?

**SYDNEY**

Why's that?

**SHEPHERD**

Why aren't you on my staff?

**SYDNEY**

You can't afford me.

**SHEPHERD**

How much do you make?

**SYDNEY**

More than you do, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

The name's Andy. How much money do you make?

**SYDNEY**

What the hell does it matter how much money I--

**SHEPHERD**

You would raise your voice to the President?

**SYDNEY**

I'm only thinking about the health

of your Presidency. You think this morning's press conference was the end of it? Bob Rumson's gotta be drooling over this.

**SHEPHERD**

Are you attracted to me?

**SYDNEY**

I beg your pardon?

**SHEPHERD**

I asked if--

**SYDNEY**

(of course she is)

That's not the issue--

**SHEPHERD**

Well, I tell you what. Let's make it the issue. Let's try something new, 'cause I know that most couples, when they're first getting together, are inclined to slam on the brakes because they're concerned about Bob Rumson's drool.

**SYDNEY**

You're not most people.

**SHEPHERD**

You know what your problem is?

**SYDNEY**

What's my problem?

**SHEPHERD**

Sex and nervousness.

**SYDNEY**

Sex and nervousness is my problem.

**SHEPHERD**

Yes. Last night when we were looking at the different place settings in the dish room, I realized that those place settings were provided by the First Ladies. And I'll bet none of those First Ladies were nervous about having sex with their President husbands. And you know why?

**SYDNEY**

No, but I'm sure you'll explain it to me.

**SHEPHERD**

I will. Because they weren't presidents when they met them. Not the case here.

**SYDNEY**

Ahhhhhh.

**SHEPHERD**

You see what I'm getting at?

**SYDNEY**

Yes. May I use your bathroom for a moment?

**SHEPHERD**

Sure. It's right through there.

**SYDNEY**

I want to freshen up.

**SHEPHERD**

As you pass through, you'll see a large closet on your left. And if you feel comfortable, hang up your coat, and when you come back I'll have fixed up a drink, we'll sit on the couch, and I will explain to you my plan.

**SYDNEY**

You have a plan? Don't make me wait. You're on a roll.

SYDNEY disappears into the BATHROOM/DRESSING ROOM area. SHEPHERD keeps talking as he goes to the bar and makes a couple of drinks.

**SHEPHERD**

(speaking up)

Okay. You're attracted to me, but the idea of physical intimacy is uncomfortable because you only know me as the President. It's not always gonna be that way, and the reason I know that is because there was a moment last night when you were with

me and not the President, and I know what a big step that was for you. So, Sydney, I'm in no rush. Here's my plan: We're gonna slow down. When you're comfortable, that's when it'll happen.

SYDNEY comes back into the room...she's wearing one of SHEPHERD's dress shirts and nothing else. She walks toward him.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Perhaps I didn't properly explain the fundamentals of the "Slow Down" plan.

**SYDNEY**

You explained it great.

She moves closer to him.

**SHEPHERD**

(pause)

Are you nervous?

**SYDNEY**

No.

**SHEPHERD**

Good. My nervousness exists on several levels. Number 1 -- and this is in no particular order -- I haven't done this in a pretty long time. Number 2: Any expectations you might have, due to the fact that I'm, you know...

**SYDNEY**

The most powerful man in the world?

**SHEPHERD**

Exactly, thank you. Just so you remember that's a political distinction that comes with the office. I mean, if Eisenhower were here instead of me he'd be dead by now. And number three...

**SYDNEY**

(gently)

Andy...

They're both standing, facing each other...

They gently kiss. They just stay with it until it becomes easier and better and exactly what they want.

**RUMSON (V.O.)**

Does New Hampshire want traditional American values back in the White House?

**CROWD**

Yes!!

**CUT TO:**

**INT. AN ELKS LODGE - NIGHT**

A crowd of 300 or so is being whipped into a frenzy. Rumson's bringing it home under a campaign banner proclaiming: THE PRIDE IS BACK -- BOB RUMSON.

**RUMSON**

Does New Hampshire want the pride back?

The CROWD goes nuts upon hearing Rumson's signature phrase--

**CROWD**

Yeah!!!!!!!

**RUMSON**

My name is Bob Rumson. And I'm running for President.

And as the CROWD loses its mind, we

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAWN**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - MORNING**

It is very early, and SHEPHERD is still asleep. As we PULL BACK, WE REVEAL that he is alone in his bed. The PHONE RINGS.

SHEPHERD picks it up--

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

Yeah...put him through.

(listens)  
Lewis, it is 5:00 a.m. You gotta  
get yourself a life, man.  
(listens)  
Yeah...all right.

He hangs up the phone and looks around the room, only to notice SYDNEY is tiptoeing around in the dim light, trying to quietly dress herself and gather up her things. SHEPHERD watches this odd spectacle for a moment before he says--

**SHEPHERD**  
(continuing)  
Sydney?

SYDNEY turns around.

**SYDNEY**  
Hi.

**SHEPHERD**  
What are you doing?

**SYDNEY**  
I wanted to leave the building before  
the press corps got here.

**SHEPHERD**  
I have those same thoughts every day  
of my life. Say, you know Lewis  
Rothschild, don't you? Well, he's...

**SYDNEY**  
Sure. Boy, Lewis'd go nuts if he  
knew I'd spent the night.

There's a KNOCK on the door.

**SHEPHERD**  
...on his way up.

**SYDNEY**  
What?

**SHEPHERD**  
Come on in, Lewis.

LEWIS comes in--

**LEWIS**  
'Morning, Mr. President. Hi, Sydney.

**SYDNEY**

Hi, Lewis. Well, Mr. President,  
thank you for taking the time to go  
over those fossil fuel numbers. I'll  
just get my coat, and be on my way.

SHEPHERD laughs at SYDNEY's purposely lame try--

**SHEPHERD**

(to LEWIS)  
What's the situation?

**LEWIS**

They're camped out at every exit.

**SYDNEY**

Who? Who's camped out?

**LEWIS**

The press.

**SYDNEY**

The press is camped out?

**LEWIS**

You shoulda taken a cab, Sydney.

**SYDNEY**

They know my car?!

ROBIN enters.

**ROBIN**

Good morning, Mr. President. Hi,  
Sydney. I came over as soon as Lewis  
called.

**SHEPHERD**

Thank God.

**ROBIN**

I think the important thing is not  
to make it look like we're panicking.

**SHEPHERD**

See, and I think the important thing  
is actually not to be panicking.

A.J. KNOCKS on the open door and walks in.

**A. J.**

Good morning, Mr. President. Good

morning, Ms. Wade. I see everyone's getting an early start today.

**LEWIS**

How do we exit Sydney from the building and what do we say to the press at that point?

**ROBIN**

We need a diversion.

**SYDNEY**

A diversion.

**ROBIN**

You understand that by diversion I'm not saying we set the White House on fire.

**SHEPHERD**

No, please, let's do.

**LEWIS**

Can I state very clearly that I can't be party to anything illegal.

**A. J.**

Good for you, Lewis.

**LEWIS**

Say what you want, but it's always the guy in my job that ends up doing eighteen months in Danbury Minimum Security Prison.

**SHEPHERD**

Rest easy, Lewis. We're not creating a diversion.

**ROBIN**

No diversion.

**SHEPHERD**

(to SYDNEY)

We'll have somebody take you home.

**A. J.**

Esther's over in my office. She's got the station wagon outside.

SHEPHERD regards A.J. for a moment...clearly the man planned ahead.

**LEWIS**

Okay. Good. Now, the press statement.

**SHEPHERD**

(to SYDNEY)

Sydney, when you leave here, you're gonna run into reporters and photographers. Your picture's gonna be taken every day, and you're gonna be asked questions every day. Answer them, don't answer them -- it's entirely up to you. The White House has no official position except to say "no comment."

**ROBIN**

No comment?

**SHEPHERD**

The White House doesn't comment on the President's personal life.

**LEWIS**

We can't just leave it at that, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

I tell you what, Lewis, we just did.

**LEWIS**

But, sir...

**A. J.**

(the meeting's over)

Thank you, Mr. President.

LEWIS, ROBIN and A.J. say their "Thank you, Mr. President"'s on the way out ...

**A. J.**

(continuing)

Sydney. Esther'll be in my office. You take your time.

**SYDNEY**

Thanks, A.J.

A.J. leaves...

**SHEPHERD**

I'm sorry about all this. We'll do

it better next time.

**SYDNEY**

I'm no expert, but I thought we did it pretty good this time.

**SHEPHERD**

No, I mean...

**SYDNEY**

I know. I had a good time.

**SHEPHERD**

Me, too. I'll call you. I'll be in Panama, but I'll call you.

**SYDNEY**

I'd like that.

SYDNEY gives him a good-bye kiss...

**SYDNEY**

(continuing)

Bye.

She exits the bedroom.

**SHEPHERD**

All right...okay...this is good.

**CUT TO:**

**A SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY/NIGHT**

AS we move through a series of quick DISSOLVES, all M.O.S., we HEAR in VOICE-OVER the sounds of American's electronic media -- network news, news magazines, gossip shows, talk radio, political round tables, etc. -- dissecting the "Girlfriend Factor."

**INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY**

SYDNEY and the TEAM are in full gear. Lisa rips off another vote on the tote board, making it "14 Votes in 51 Days."

**REPORTER #1**

Sydney Ellen Wade, the political strategist who accompanied President Shepherd to last week's state dinner, reportedly spent the night at the White House as a guest of--

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY**

The tote board reads "8 Votes in 45 Days." KODAK is pointing to a spot on an electoral map to emphasize a point to a young **INTERN.**

**REPORTER #2**

The President returned from Panama this evening after a three-day tour through Central America. His first order of business: An intimate supper with Sydney Wade at a romantic Georgetown bistro.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. BISTRO - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are sharing what seems to be an intimate candlelit dinner. We PULL BACK TO REVEAL a restaurant packed with SECRET SERVICE, and PRESS outside police barricades, shooting through the windows of the restaurant.

**REPORTER #3**

Conservative and religious family organizations are starting to smell blood in the water as--

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Lucy is giving a little trombone recital for SHEPHERD and SYDNEY. SYDNEY cheers madly at the end of the piece, giving Lucy a big hug for her effort.

**RADIO GUY (V.O.)**

All right, caller, you're on the air.

**CALLER (V.O.)**

Dan, what about Lucy Shepherd? Is anyone concerned about this little girl? Can we now finally have a serious debate about family values?

**EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY**

SYDNEY exits her apartment and is once again hounded by the press.

**SCHLOCK TALK SHOW HOST (V.O.)**

We're gonna take a commercial break.  
When we come back, we're gonna meet  
a junior high school classmate of  
Sydney Wade's, who says--

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, CITY HALL - DAY**

Rumson's getting the pride back into a couple of hundred  
innocent bystanders.

**SHOWBIZ REPORTER (V.O.)**

...Showbiz Weekly was in Hollywood  
for the star-studded gala. Also on  
tonight's program: Day 15 of the  
Sydney Watch. Is the world's most  
eligible bachelor off the market?

**EXT. GDC BUILDING - NIGHT**

SYDNEY exits the building and is mobbed by the press.

**JOHN McLAUGHLIN TYPE (V.O.)**

Political polling analyst Ed Earl,  
with the President's job approval  
taking an eight-point dip from his  
personal best of 63 percent three  
weeks ago, should the White House be  
concerned that the Girlfriend Factor  
has left Shepherd vulnerable to the  
kinds of character questions he was  
able to avoid three years ago?

**ED EARL (V.O.)**

Well, if they're not concerned, they  
sure oughta be.

**RADIO GUY**

**INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY**

ROBIN is hearing a question she's been asked 88 times  
already. She keeps her cool as best she can and merely  
shrugs her shoulders and shakes her head "no."

**JOHN McLAUGHLIN TYPE (V.O.)**

Columnist Cynthia Skyler, how much  
will this new wrinkle affect his

ability to put together a win on his  
crime bill?

**EXT. MANCHESTER RAMADA - NIGHT**

Establishing shot of the Ramada.

**EXT. A SUITE AT THE MANCHESTER RAMADA - NIGHT**

Rumson and his STAFF are buzzing about amid room service  
tables and late-night take-out as STU enters the room with  
a manila envelope in his hand.

**RUMSON**

(into phone)

I agree a hundred and ten percent,  
Mrs. Harper. That's why I'm up here  
in the dead of winter talkin' about  
it with you folks.

Rumson is signaling for an AIDE to take over his phone call.

**RUMSON**

(continuing;  
into phone)

That's very generous of you, ma'am,  
and I'm gonna take that money off  
your hands right now.

He hands off the phone--

**RUMSON**

(continuing)

What do you got for me, Stu?

**STU**

Call me Santa Claus, Senator.

Several TOP AIDES join this slightly confidential conversation.

**STU**

(continuing)

She's got an FBI file.

**RUMSON**

Shit, Stu, my mother's got an FBI  
file.

RUMSON starts to walk away when STU pulls an 8 \$B!\_ (J10 photo  
from  
the manila folder.

**STU**

I've got art.

RUMSON comes back. STU hands him the photo.

**STU**

It's a demonstration outside the Department of Commerce. The picture's old, and a lot of the faces are obscured by the smoke, but this is Sydney right there in front.

**RUMSON**

(staring at the photo)

Oh man...tell me the smoke is coming from what it looks like it's coming from.

**STU**

Yes, sir -- it's burning flag.

RUMSON gives it one last look, passes it back to STU, and turns back to his phone.

**RUMSON**

(singing softly)

"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas..."

**CUT TO:**

**INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY**

A few more young INTERNS have been added, and most are hard at work on the phones -- ("\_\_\_ from the Global Defense Council. We're encouraging voters in your area to phone or write your Congressman regarding...etc.")

The tote board now reads "11 Votes in 42 Days." David is supervising things while SYDNEY is trying to lose her patience on the phone.

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

I understand, Congressman...Of course you need to deliberate. I know the fact that there isn't any heavy industry in your district doesn't make this decision any easier. But we met three weeks ago, and at the end of that meeting you said that you were leaning our way

but that you wanted to sleep on it.  
Since I haven't heard from you since  
then, the only conclusion I can  
reach is that you haven't slept in  
21 days.

**DAVID**

(to SYDNEY)

Ask him about his position on  
stateboard for Hawaii.

SYDNEY wads up some paper and flings it at David to shut him  
up.

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

Harry, think like a father for a  
second. Wouldn't you like your  
kids to be able to take a deep  
breath when they're 30? Thank you.  
You're doing the right thing.

She hangs up.

**SYDNEY**

(continuing;  
announcing)

Tote board's heavy.

The room CHEERS, knows what this means. DAVID rips off the  
11, revealing 10.

**DAVID**

How's this?

**SYDNEY**

That's better!

Everyone gets back to work as SYDNEY and DAVID speak among  
themselves.

**DAVID**

Hey, Syd, I saw on your schedule  
you're gonna meet with McSorley,  
McCluskey and Shane.

**SYDNEY**

Yeah, the Motown Three said they'd  
give me 30 minutes next week.

**DAVID**

Sydney, these are people who represent people who make cars for a living.

**SYDNEY**

Yeah.

**DAVID**

Cars, you understand, run on gasoline.

**SYDNEY**

Hey, I know it's a long shot, but if I can get one of them, it'll be a huge payoff in visibility.

**DAVID**

Well, if we're gonna try, we should do some prep work. You wanna order in?

**SYDNEY**

I can't work tonight. I'm having dinner at the White House. We can start early tomorrow.

**DAVID**

Okay. I'm having lunch at the Kremlin, so we'll have to, you know, start real early...

**SYDNEY**

(exciting)

Good night, David.

**DAVID**

...in order for me to catch the morning plane to Moscow.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. THE WEST WING - DUSK**

The President's motorcade sits in its formation, engines running, waiting for its passenger.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DUSK**

JANIE and a couple of AIDES are in a familiar routine, doing their last-minute scrambling to get the President out the door so that he doesn't fall behind his usual "45-minutes-

behind-schedule" schedule. SHEPHERD is on the phone at his desk.

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

Douglas, does the N.R.A. have videotapes of you playing golf with Satan? We've already softened the assault weapons. We're leaving the SKS, the mini 14, and about 250 other types on the street. I mean, how much pull can one lobby--

JANIE catches SHEPHERD's eye and makes a subtle gesture to her wristwatch.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing;  
into phone)

--Yeah, look, we're gonna continue this tomorrow. I'm late for the party fund-raiser. I'll be sure and put in a good word for you, by the way.

(listens)

Okay.

He hangs up.

**JANIE**

You're incredibly late.

They head to door as A.J. enters from the other side of the office.

**A.J.**

Mr. President. I just got off the phone with the Federal Mediator in St. Louis. Management just walked away from the table. The baggage handlers, pilots and flight attendants are getting set to walk in 48 hours.

**SHEPHERD**

I studied under a Nobel-Prize-Winning economist. You know what he taught me?

**A.J.**

Don't have a airline strike at Christmas?

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah. I'm going to St. Louis.

**A.J.**

You can leave straight from the fundraiser. Janie, get him outta here.

**SECRET AGENT #4**

(sotto)

Liberty's moving.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. THE WEST WING - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD is getting into the limo when LEWIS and ROBIN hurry out to catch him.

**ROBIN**

(calling)

Sir...

**JANIE**

He's incredibly late.

**SHEPHERD**

(to LEWIS and ROBIN)

Hop in. We'll talk in the car.

As they do they're told, and the motorcade gets on its way.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHEPHERD'S CAR - CONTINUOUS**

**LEWIS**

We've got a small problem.

**ROBIN**

(meant for LEWIS)

It could've been a small problem.  
It's now at the very least a medium-sized--

**LEWIS**

Robin sees it as a problem. I see it as an opportunity.

**ROBIN**

It could've been an opportunity

if we'd caught it...

**LEWIS**

We caught it.

**ROBIN**

At 5:45. Five-forty-five doesn't do me any good, Lewis. Five-forty-five, network news is in makeup.

**LEWIS**

You've got 14 people working for you. Did any of them--

**SHEPHERD**

Guys, do I have to be here for this meeting?

**LEWIS**

I'm sorry, sir. It's the evening news. It was buried as the third story--

**ROBIN**

--It's got a bullet.

**LEWIS**

Sydney was at a protest rally where they burned a flag.

**SHEPHERD**

(pause)

Today?

**LEWIS**

About 13 years ago.

**ROBIN**

Outside the Department of Commerce. Anti-apartheid.

**SHEPHERD**

Let me see if I've got this: The third story on the news tonight was that someone I didn't know 13 years ago, when I wasn't President, participated in a demonstration where no laws were being broken in protest of something that so many people were against it doesn't exist anymore?

(beat)

Just out of curiosity, what was the

fourth story?

**LEWIS**

See, I think it's important, when we deal with it, that we--

**SHEPHERD**

Don't deal with it.

**LEWIS**

Excuse me?

**SHEPHERD**

They're trying to get us to swing at a pitch in the dirt. No one ever wins these fights. It'll go away.

**LEWIS**

I'm not sure that's the wisest--

**SHEPHERD**

Aw...hell!

**ROBIN**

See, it's already distracting you. Why don't you let A.J. and Lewis--

**SHEPHERD**

No, you reminded me, I'm supposed to have dinner with Sydney tonight.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

SYDNEY and BETH stand in front of a full-length mirror. SYDNEY's holding a dress to herself to check it out.

**SYDNEY**

It's terrific, Beth. I love it.

**BETH**

I can't believe I'm loaning you clothes. I thought you owned every piece of clothing there was.

**SYDNEY**

Work clothes. I always have dinner at the White House wearing a suit. I thought a dress would be nice.

**BETH**

Go ahead, try it on. I brought earrings, too.

The PHONE RINGS. SYDNEY answers it--

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

Hello...

(listens)

I'm just trying on dresses. How do you feel about leather?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHEPHERD'S CAR - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD's on the phone to SYDNEY.

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

I feel terrible, but I have to cancel our date tonight.

**SYDNEY**

Another woman?

**SHEPHERD**

No, I've gotta go to St. Louis and avert a massive airline strike.

**SYDNEY**

Boys, if I had a nickel for every time I heard that one.

**SHEPHERD**

Thanks for understanding. I'll call you tonight

SHEPHERD hangs up the phone.

**SHEPHERD**

Boy, I hate doing that. She was trying on dresses.

**LEWIS**

I tell any girl I'm going out with to assume that all plans are soft until she receives confirmation 30 minutes beforehand.

**ROBIN**

And they find this romantic?

**LEWIS**

Well, I say it with a great deal of charm.

SHEPHERD sees something out the window and gets excited.

**SHEPHERD**

Look! Look! There it is! Carmen's House of Flowers! We gotta stop.

**LEWIS**

What?

**SHEPHERD**

I gotta get her flowers.

**LEWIS**

Here?!

**ROBIN**

Now?!

**SHEPHERD**

I broke our date. This is what men do.

**ROBIN**

It's not what men do. I know no men who do that.

**SHEPHERD**

Coop, I'm gonna hop out at that flower shop.

**AGENT COOPER**

You're gonna hop out, sir?

**LEWIS**

No, he's not hopping. Sir, no hopping. Stay in the car. I'll get the flowers.

**SHEPHERD**

Then it's not personal.

**LEWIS**

Let the agents do a security sweep. We don't know who's in there.

**SHEPHERD**

You think there's a florist who's

planning an assassination on the  
off-chance that I'd be stopping by?

**LEWIS**

It's possible.

SHEPHERD hops out of the car. AGENT COOPER trails after him.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF FLOWER SHOP - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD's sudden decision sets off a chain reaction of  
Secret Service activity to accommodate the change of plans.

**INT. CARMEN'S HOUSE OF FLOWERS - NIGHT**

A high school GIRL is behind the counter, talking to a friend  
on the phone. Her back is to the door when SHEPHERD walks in  
with a couple of SECRET SERVICE AGENTS scrambling to keep up.  
SHEPHERD begins surveying the various flowers that are behind  
the glass.

**GIRL**

(into phone)

At the basketball game...

**SHEPHERD**

Excuse me--

**GIRL**

No, at the game. I'm telling you,  
Kiki wasn't even there.

**SHEPHERD**

Excuse me--

**GIRL**

(to Shepherd)

I will be right with you.

The GIRL notices, and the receiver falls from her hand as  
she stares in disbelief.

**SHEPHERD**

(to the GIRL)

Hey, I don't know if you're the  
one I talked to on the phone...  
Virginia, dogwood, the President  
...any of it ring a--

And apparently it does, because the GIRL faints and falls to

the floor.

**SHEPHERD**

Same girl. She remembers me.

**AGENT COOPER**

She'll be fine.

**RUMSON (V.O.)**

Yes, and I'm glad to see ol'

Andy's got himself a girl.

APPLAUSE and appreciative LAUGHTER from a CROWD as we

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MEMPHIS GRAND HYATT - NIGHT**

RUMSON is speaking to a black-tie fund-raiser for the  
**REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE.**

**RUMSON**

(continuing)

Never mind she's the hired gun of  
an ultra-liberal political action  
committee.

The crowd's getting into it--

**RUMSON**

(continuing)

Never mind that the President takes  
the Fifth anytime a reporter has the  
temerity to ask a question about a  
woman in a position to exert enormous  
influence over a huge range of issues.

A wave building--

**RUMSON**

(continuing)

Never mind that this woman's idea of  
how to unwind at the end of a tough  
day is by getting together with her  
ACLU pals and setting American flags  
on fire...

**CUT TO:**

**INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE/ST. LOUISE HILTON - NIGHT**

The RUMSON FAMILY glows from a TELEVISION in the corner. LEWIS and ROBIN react to the news highlight reel of that day's screw-up.

**ROBIN**

(to herself)

No reaction from the White House.

SHEPHERD's off in a corner, talking on the phone. The Presidential Suite has been turned into the St. Louis Oval Office for the night as STAFFERS zigzag around room service tables during the late-night preparations.

**INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

What do Lewis and Robin think?

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

Brutus and Cassius? They want me to get into the character debate and mix it up.

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

Lewis and Robin are very smart.

**SHEPHERD**

(to LEWIS and ROBIN)

Sydney says you guys are really stupid.

**SYDNEY**

(shouting through  
the phone)

I didn't say that!

**SHEPHERD**

(to LEWIS and ROBIN)

She's questioning your loyalty.

**LEWIS**

Hell, I question it all the time.

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

Wait a second, here comes my favorite part.

He's referring to RUMSON on the TV.

**RUMSON (V.O.)**

My name is Bob Rumson, and I'm running for President.

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

It's a good thing he cleared that up, 'cause the crowd was gettin' ready to buy some AMWAY products.

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

His number are climbing.

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

Sydney, his number have nowhere to go but up.

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

What about yours?

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

We're fine. We'll be back up in the 60's once I get the votes for the crime bill.

(beat; into phone)

Say, what're you doing this weekend?

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

I've got some work I was gonna bring home. Why?

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

The negotiations are going pretty well here. It looks like the nation's going to keep on flying. Lucy's sleeping over at a friend's house Saturday night.

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

What'd you have in mind?

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

Have you ever been to Camp David?

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

Camp David? Sure. I used to go there all the time, but then they changed chefs and...

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

It's sass, right? You're sassing me.

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

Yes.

**SHEPHERD**

(into phone)

I'll have a car pick you up Saturday morning.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAMP DAVID - DAY**

Scattered STAFF and MARINE PERSONNEL hold their hats to their heads against the wind that MARINE-1 kicks up as it touches down on the helicopter pad.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS**

SYDNEY, nose pressed against the window, is drinking it in. SHEPHERD is finishing up a crossword puzzle.

**SYDNEY**

Do you ever get used to helicopters dropping you off at your front door?

**SHEPHERD**

How many "e"s in "kaleidoscope"?

**SYDNEY**

I guess you do.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are lounging in front of a fireplace, having hot cups of something alcoholic. SYDNEY is reading a

book. SHEPHERD is running through satellite TV channels, searching for something.

**SYDNEY**

Oh good God.

**SHEPHERD**

What?

**SYDNEY**

I'm looking at your college transcripts. This isn't human. Nobody gets this many "A's." You were like a Stepford student.

**SHEPHERD**

Are you still reading that ridiculous biography?

**SYDNEY**

Actually I finished Andrew Shepherd: Road to the White House. Now I'm onto Shepherd: The Early Years.

**SHEPHERD**

Seven-trillion-dollar communications system at my disposal, you'd think I'd be able to find out if the Packers won.

**SYDNEY**

(re the book)

Oh, Andy...C-minus in Women's Studies?

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah...that course wasn't about what I thought it was gonna be about.

SHEPHERD has landed on a news station.

**NEWS ANCHOR #1**

(on T.V.)

...for his routine physical exam. Doctors at Bethesda Naval Hospital pronounced President Shepherd in excellent health.

**SHEPHERD**

Who cares? Let's see some scores.

**NEWS ANCHOR #2**

(on T.V.)

While the President spent the day at Camp David, G.O.P. presidential hopeful Robert Rumson continued his attacks on President Shepherd's character. During the Saturday morning news program Capitol Review with Kenneth Michaels, Senator Rumson suggested that GDC political director Sydney Ellen Wade, whose personal relationship with the President has been causing the White House headaches over the past two months, may have traded sexual favors for key votes in the Virginia State Legislature while lobbying for the Virginia Teachers Association.

The NEWS PROGRAM goes to the segment showing RUMSON and MICHAELS on that morning's show. SHEPHERD and SYDNEY sit and watch...knowing they're about to take a punch...powerless to stop it...

**MICHAELS**

(on T.V.)

Wait a minute, Senator--

**RUMSON**

(on T.V.)

I'm not saying--

**MICHAELS**

(on T.V.)

--'cause that's a heck of an accusation to make, and--

**RUMSON**

(on T.V.)

I'm not making an acc-- let me be very clear. I'm not making an accusation. I am saying when we hear one thing, we dismiss it. We hear two, we dismiss it. But when several, several well-respected members and former members of the Virginia State House--

**MICHAELS**

(on T.V.)

Can you give us names?

**RUMSON**

(on T.V.)

--each of their own accord, comes to me and expresses concern over the woman standing next to -- I don't even know, do we call her the First Mistress? When several--

**SYDNEY**

My God. He's making this up as he goes along.

**SHEPHERD**

I'm so sorry about this, Sydney.

**SYDNEY**

Oh, man. My father heard that.

SHEPHERD clicks off the T.V.

**SHEPHERD**

You gotta tell him to turn a deaf ear.

**SYDNEY**

My father doesn't have a deaf ear. He hears fine out of both. So do I. So does my sister, so do my friends. You're the only one who seems to--

**SHEPHERD**

Sydney, I can't challenge the school bully to a fight just because he picked on my girlfriend.

**SYDNEY**

I'm not asking you to. I can take care of myself. This isn't about me. How can you keep quiet? How do you have patience for people who claim they love America but clearly can't stand Americans?

**SHEPHERD**

I have one more election left, Sydney. I don't have the luxury of losing my patience.

**SYDNEY**

I want to say something, but I'm gonna fumble it a little bit, so I'd just like you to wait till I'm done before you respond. I'm in love with you. I'm certain of it. And I want to be with you more than anything. But

maybe things would be better for you  
if I disappeared for a while.

**SHEPHERD**

Things will be better when I pass a  
crime bill. And Sydney, if you  
disappeared, I'd find you.

He goes to kiss her, she responds.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. SOUTH LAWN - NIGHT**

The official White House Christmas Tree is glimmering for the  
**TOURISTS.**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

An informal Christmas party is underway with maybe 20 GUESTS,  
some of them familiar faces.

SHEPHERD and a GREEN-BLAZERED MAN

**GREEN BLAZERED MAN (GILL)**

Mr. President, militant women are out  
to destroy college football in this  
country.

**SHEPHERD**

Is that a fact?

**GREEN BLAZERED MAN (GILL)**

Have you been following this  
situation down in Atlanta? These  
women want parity for girls'  
softball, field hockey, volleyball...

**SHEPHERD**

If I'm not mistaken, Gill, I think  
the courts ruled on Title 9 about 20  
years ago.

**GREEN BLAZERED MAN (GILL)**

Yes sir, but now I'm saying these  
women want that law enforced.

**SHEPHERD**

Well, it's a world gone mad, Gill.

LEWIS, KODAK and ROBIN stand huddled with cups of eggnog...

**KODAK**

The country has mood swings.

**LEWIS**

Mood swings? Nineteen post-graduate degrees in mathematics and you explain going from a 63 to a 46 percent approval rating in 5 weeks on mood swings?

**KODAK**

Well, I could explain it better, but I'd need charts and graphs and an easel.

**ROBIN**

Fellas, we haven't slept in three years. Can't we forget work for one night and take this moment to enjoy each other as friends? It's Christmas.

**LEWIS**

(pause)

It's Christmas?

**KODAK**

Yeah, you didn't get the memo?

**AT THE BUFFET TABLE**

**KID #1**

'Cause your father's President, does he automatically get to be on money?

**LUCY**

I honestly don't know.

**KID #2**

I think only if he's a really good President.

A.J. spots SYDNEY as she walks through the doorway and comes over to her. She seems a bit agitated.

**A.J.**

Hey, Sydney, Merry Christmas.

**SYDNEY**

Merry Christmas, A.J.

**A. J.**

Where you been?

**SYDNEY**

I got stuck on DePont Circle. I can never remember which lane I'm supposed to take. Then I got cut off by this idiot cab driver who starts screaming at me like it's my fault.

**A. J.**

Syd, relax. It's Christmas.

SHEPHERD joins them.

**SHEPHERD**

Hi, Syd. Get stuck on DuPont Circle again?

**SYDNEY**

It's not funny. I hate that place. Can't you declare it a Federal Disaster Area or something?

**SHEPHERD**

I'll look into it.

**A. J.**

What were you doing up on the Hill, anyway?

**SYDNEY**

Ahhh...I had a terrible meeting today. Totally lost my cool with McSorley, McCluskey and Shane.

**SHEPHERD**

You went to see the Motown Three?

**SYDNEY**

I pitched 'em the hill.

**A. J.**

(beat)

On its merits?

**SHEPHERD**

The woman knows no fear. She'd lobby the Carolinas to the American Lung Association.

**SYDNEY**

It was a disaster.

**A.J.**

You're in good company. I sat with 'em a week ago. They told me there was nothing on the President's domestic agenda they were more committed to defeating than the crime bill.

**SYDNEY**

Well, congratulations, fellas, you're outta the cellar. McSorley told me the only thing on the President's domestic agenda they were more committed to defeating than the crime bill was the fossil fuel package.

This catches SHEPHERD and A.J. by surprise--like accidentally drawing to an inside straight.

**A.J.**

You're kidding, right?

SYDNEY isn't aware she's said anything of particular consequence.

**SYDNEY**

No, I'm not kidding. It's funny that he used the same words.

A.J. and SHEPHERD are trying to study the situation without giving anything away.

**A.J.**

Yeah...

**SHEPHERD**

I don't think the Pep Boys know too many words.

**SYDNEY**

I'm gonna get a drink and shake this off. When I come back, I'll have Christmas spirit.

**SHEPHERD**

(beat)

Okay.

**SYDNEY**

Is something wrong?

**SHEPHERD**

No, I was...I was thinking about--  
nothing.

**SYDNEY**

I'll be back in a minute.

She goes off.

**A.J.**

Did what I think just happened, just  
happen? Did the GDC's political  
director just tell the President and  
the White House Chief of Staff that  
there are three votes on the crime  
bill that can be bought by stickin'  
the fossil fuel package in a drawer.

**SHEPHERD**

No, the GDC's political director  
didn't tell us anything. Sydney Wade  
told her boyfriend and her  
boyfriend's best friend that she had  
a lousy day.

**A.J.**

It doesn't change the facts, Mr.  
President. If Sydney gets her 24  
votes and we're three short, there's  
some maneuvering to be done.

**SHEPHERD**

I made a promise, A.J.

**A.J.**

You made a deal, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

I made it with Sydney.

**A.J.**

You made it with the GDC.

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah, well, this is all academic  
anyway. We're not going to need  
those votes.

**A.J.**

If your approval rating drops any

more, things are gonna get tight.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. A WASHINGTON WATERING HOLE - NIGHT**

LEWIS sits with a Congressman's aide.

**LEWIS**

I'm hearing rumors that your boss  
is wavering on the crime bill.

**AIDE**

You can't believe rumors, Lewis,  
you know this town.

**LEWIS**

That's what I wanted to hear.

**AIDE**

I'll tell you, though. My boss is  
starting to waver on the crime bill.

**INT. A POSE WASHINGTON RESTAURANT - DAY**

A lunchtime crowd is doing business over white wine, oysters  
and cobb salads. SYDNEY, a CONGRESSMAN, and his LEGISLATIVE  
AIDE are going at it.

**CONGRESSMAN (PENNYBAKER)**

Sydney, everybody cares about the  
environment during a phone survey.  
On election day, nobody gives a  
damn. That's, that's why you have  
a job.

**SYDNEY**

Congressman Pennybaker, on election  
day, people give a damn about what I  
tell them to give a damn about. And  
that's why I have a job.

(offering the bread  
basket)

Did you want another roll?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY**

DAVID is on the phone--

**DAVID**

(to the INTERNS)

She got Pennybaker.

**VOICE**

All right! Good job!

DAVID rips off the top sheet of the tote board, which now reads "5 Votes in 14 Days."

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**CONGRESSMAN MILLMAN'S OFFICE - DAY**

MILLMAN is walking on a treadmill while LEWIS stands by.

**LEWIS**

Congressman, it was our understanding that we had your support.

**MILLMAN**

Hey, look, I like your boy. Always have. But for God's sake, kid, does the woman have to spend the night?

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY**

INTERNS photocopying, clipping, stamping, crunching numbers, drinking coffee...DAVID is on an extension, listening to SYDNEY's final pitch over the phone.

The tote board reads: "3 Votes in 5 Days."

**SYDNEY**

(into phone)

We've got the full backing of the White House, Katherine.

(listens)

Yes, at 20 percent. Three more votes and the President sends it to the Hill.

(listens)

Katie, 10 years from now any cars with an internal combustion engine is gonna be considered a collector's item. Come on board, we'll make your Volvo a classic.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. ROOSEVELT ROOM - DAY**

LEWIS and KODAK, each with an AIDE, have been meeting with two CONGRESSMEN and their AIDES.

**LEWIS**

Congressman, the assault weapons are gone.

**KODAK**

The bill is priced to move, see.

**CONGRESSMAN**

The bill isn't the issue, fellas. I'm facing a serious challenge in November, and the President's coattails aren't what they used to be.

**KODAK**

The President's coattail's are gonna have room for you, Congressman, you leave that to us.

**AIDE**

We left that to you people, Leon, and the President's in a free-fall.

**KODAK**

I wouldn't say he's in a free--

**CONGRESSMAN**

I just can't give you my vote.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. A.J.'S OFFICE - DAY**

LEWIS and KODAK stand in front of A.J.'s desk.

**LEWIS**

The well is drying up. The President's gotta make a move or we're gonna die fast and quiet.

**KODAK**

What if I do a new poll? We give him detailed public opinion.

**LEWIS**

And we put Sydney in the new model?

A.J. hesitates.

**LEWIS**

(continuing)

A.J., it's meaningless unless we ask him about Sydney.

**A.J.**

Fine. Do it.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

The street's been temporarily closed to traffic, and SECRET SERVICE AGENTS man the sidewalk. The PRESS and ONLOOKERS form a small crowd, kept well at bay by police barricades.

**INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are finishing up dinner.

**SHEPHERD**

This was delicious. Thank you. Is there any left?

**SYDNEY**

(taking his bowl)

Tons. I didn't think you liked it.

**SHEPHERD**

Are you kidding me, of course I did. But actually it's not for me. The agent who checked the food thought it was delicious, and I sort of told him I'd bring him some if there was any left.

**SYDNEY**

So you didn't like it.

**SHEPHERD**

No, I loved it.

**SYDNEY**

You're lying.

**SHEPHERD**

No, I'm not.

**SYDNEY**

You are. I can tell when you're holding something back. You do a thing with your face.

SYDNEY pops a bottle of port and pours two glasses.

**SHEPHERD**

When have you seen me do a thing with my face?

**SYDNEY**

Two days before I met you. You gave a speech for the Daughters of the American Revolution. I was there.

**SHEPHERD**

You were?

**SYDNEY**

You remember the speech?

**SHEPHERD**

Vaguely.

**SYDNEY**

"American can no longer afford to pretend that they live in a great society."

**SHEPHERD**

Ah.

**SYDNEY**

There was supposed to be something else after that, wasn't there?

**SHEPHERD**

How did you know?

**SYDNEY**

I told you. The face.

SYDNEY hands him a glass. They clink glasses and sip.

**SHEPHERD**

Wow...what's the occasion?

**SYDNEY**

You're looking at a lady who's two

votes shy of the promised land.

**SHEPHERD**

Two votes?

**SYDNEY**

I got Pennybaker. That got me Cass and Zimmer.

**SHEPHERD**

(beat)

That's great, Sydney. I mean it. That's great work.

**SYDNEY**

Well, I'm not there yet.

**SHEPHERD**

Look, no matter what happens, you have every right to be proud of yourself.

**SYDNEY**

I'll be proud when I see you sign the bill.

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah, well...

**SYDNEY**

Andy.

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah?

**SYDNEY**

You're doing that thing with your face.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - DAY - EAST**

A light rain is falling.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY**

KODAK sits at his desk staring at a computer printout. LEWIS is nearing the end of a phone conversation that isn't going well. He's pacing around with the phone...desperate and intense.

The tote board reads: "1 Vote in 2 Days." ROBIN enters.

**ROBIN**

(to KODAK)

How're the numbers?

**KODAK**

Bad.

**ROBIN**

How bad?

**KODAK**

Forty-one. Character across the board.

**ROBIN**

Who is Lewis on with?

**KODAK**

Jarrett. He's trying to keep his finger in the dam.

**LEWIS**

(into phone)

You're supposed to be a United States Congressman, for the love of Christ.

ROBIN and KODAK appear in the doorway, sensing a surprise development. LEWIS is losing it on the phone.

**LEWIS**

(continuing; listens)

But you're not gonna stay at 41.  
The numbers are gonna be go back up.

(listens)

But they're gonna go back up.

(listens)

George...

(listens)

Congressman...

(listens)

Congressman Jarrett...

(listens)

George, it's crunch time. It's personal. This is one of those moments. It's just you and the President. Now that's it gonna be?

LEWIS looks over at ROBIN and KODAK ...his face telling the

story.

**LEWIS**

(continuing)

Yeah.

(listens)

Yeah.

(listens)

Hey, George? Can I tell you something? We're gonna win this thing. We're gonna get the votes and we're gonna win. And after we do, I mean that very night, I'm gonna go to Sam & Harry's, I'm gonna order a big steak, and I'm gonna make a list of everybody who tried to fuck us this week.

ROBIN and KODAK are trying to get their friend from setting fire to a bridge out of pure frustration.

**ROBIN**

(a whispered shout)

Lewis!

**LEWIS**

(into phone)

Vote your conscience, you chicken-shit, lame-ass--

LEWIS hangs up the phone. He takes a deep breath, slumps down in the nearest chair, and looks up at ROBIN and KODAK.

There's a long silence before LEWIS says--

**LEWIS**

(continuing)

We lost Jarrett.

**KODAK**

(beat)

I hope so. 'Cause, you know, if that was an "undecided," then we need to work on our people skills.

LEWIS picks up the phone and punches in a few numbers. Even before that line starts ringing, he picks up another phone and punches in a different set of numbers.

**LEWIS**

(into the first phone)

Karen, it's Lewis. Could you hunt

down Congressman Quincy for me. I  
need to talk to him right way.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY**

SHEPHERD stands in front A.J., LEWIS, ROBIN, and KODAK.  
JANIE is somewhere in the background.

**A.J.**

We lost Quincy, too.

**SHEPHERD**

Did he give a reason?

**LEWIS**

He thinks your numbers aren't likely  
to rebound.

**KODAK**

We're three votes down again, sir.

There's a pause before ...

**KODAK**

(continuing)

Mr. President, as of this morning,  
Sydney only needed one more vote.  
The Motown Three have gotta be  
scared blind. I don't think there'll  
be a better opportunity.

**ROBIN**

The press is expecting an  
announcement on the crime bill by  
the Sate of the Union.

**KODAK**

If you agree to stick 455 in a drawer  
until after the elections, they'll  
give you the three votes.

**ROBIN**

(beat)

And we declare victory, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

We said as a last resort.

**KODAK**

We're there, sir. The State of the

Union is 48 hours away.

**SHEPHERD**

No. Come on. There's gotta be three votes someplace else.

**KODAK**

There isn't.

**SHEPHERD**

Bullshit, Leon. There's gotta be somebody we haven't--

**KODAK**

There isn't, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

Storch.

**KODAK**

I beg your pardon?

**SHEPHERD**

What about Storch?

**A. J.**

Mr. President--

**KODAK**

Storch is a "no."

**SHEPHERD**

Wagner.

**KODAK**

No.

**SHEPHERD**

Sobel.

**KODAK**

No.

**SHEPHERD**

Clark.

**KODAK**

No.

**SHEPHERD**

Not that Clark, the one from Indiana.

**KODAK**

(pause)

That one too, sir.

SHEPHERD is stopped.

**A. J.**

Mr. President, I think we have to do it.

**SHEPHERD**

She is one vote away, A.J. It's important legislation that for the first time has a legitimate chance.

I think she deserves every possible opportunity to--

**LEWIS**

She? You meant "it," didn't you, sir? You meant the "important legislation" deserves every opportunity.

**A. J.**

Lewis, shut up.

There's a horrible silence in the room. SHEPHERD has locked eyes with LEWIS.

**SHEPHERD**

You got something to say to me?

**LEWIS**

Respectfully, sir. I think we should examine the new poll for more than its value as a box score.

**SHEPHERD**

Examine what? They don't like that I'm going out with Sydney.

**LEWIS**

It's not that simple, sir. I think this poll helps bring a murky problem into specific relief.

**SHEPHERD**

Whose problem we talking about, Lewis? Yours? You worried about your job? This poll isn't talking about my Presidency. This poll is

talking about my life. Two hundred and sixty-four million people have decided--

**LEWIS**

Mr. President, two hundred and sixty-four million people don't give a damn about your life. They give a damn about their own.

**A.J.**

All right, that's enough.

**LEWIS**

Mr. President, you've raised a daughter almost entirely on your own, and she's terrific. What does it say to you that in the last seven weeks, 59 percent of this country has begun to question your family values?

**A.J.**

The President doesn't answer to you, Lewis.

**LEWIS**

Oh yes, he does, A.J. I'm a citizen, this is my president, and in this country it is not only permissible to question our leaders, it is our responsibility. But you already know that, Mr. President, because you have a deeper love of this country than any man I've ever known, and I want to know what it says to you that in the past seven weeks 59 percent of Americans have begun to question your patriotism?

**SHEPHERD**

Look, if people want to listen to Bob Rumson--

**LEWIS**

They don't have a choice! Rob Rumson's the only one doing the talking. People want leadership. And in the absence of genuine leadership, they will listen to anyone who steps up to the microphone. They want leadership, Mr. President. They're so thirsty

for it, they'll crawl through the desert toward a mirage, and when they discover there's no water, they'll drink the sand.

**SHEPHERD**

(evenly)

Lewis, we've had Presidents who were beloved, who couldn't find a coherent sentence with two hands and a flashlight. People don't drink the sand, 'cause they're thirsty, Lewis. They drink it 'cause they don't know the difference.

The room is slightly stunned by what their President has just said.

SHEPHERD picks up the polling data and heads to the door...

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing; on his way out)

Make the deal.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY**

SYDNEY, SUSAN, DAVID, INTERNS and STAFFERS are having a little office celebration. Champagne flows from paper cups. Streamers and balloons adorn the tote board, which reads 0 Votes in 1 Day.

SUSAN, maybe a little drunk, has concerned SYDNEY.

**SUSAN**

I want to go on the record and apologize for my attitude toward you since your arrival.

**SYDNEY**

I didn't notice. Was there an attitude?

A PHONE RINGS, and one of the staffers takes it. SYDNEY tries to rejoin the party, but--

**SUSAN**

I think I have a lot of pent-up hostility.

**SYDNEY**

Well--

**SUSAN**

I wonder who I can blame it on.

**SYDNEY**

I'm not really qualified to--

**SUSAN**

'Cause I've been blaming it on my mother and my ex-husband, and that hasn't been working.

**DAVID**

(approaching SYDNEY)

Leo needs to see you.

**SYDNEY**

Tell him to get over here. It's a party.

**DAVID**

He needs to see you in his office.

**SYDNEY**

It can't wait?

**DAVID**

He just got off the phone with MacInerney. There's been a development.

SYDNEY holds for a moment...then heads out the door and we

**CUT TO:**

**INT. A CORRIDOR IN THE RESIDENCE - LATE AFTERNOON**

TROMBONE MUSIC comes from LUCY's bedroom as SHEPHERD rounds the corner.

**INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - LATER AFTERNOON**

SHEPHERD pops his head in.

**SHEPHERD**

Sounds good.

**LUCY**

It's progressive.

**SHEPHERD**

I'll say.

**LUCY**

Hey, Dad, what's wrong with Sydney?  
You guys have a fight?

**SHEPHERD**

(beat)  
What do you mean?

**LUCY**

She seemed pretty--

**SHEPHERD**

You saw her?

**LUCY**

She's here.

**SHEPHERD**

Where?

**LUCY**

In your room. Why is she mad?

**SHEPHERD**

Don't worry about it.

**LUCY**

Were you a dork?

**SHEPHERD**

Practice your music.

**LUCY**

If you were a dork, you should say  
you're sorry. Girls like that.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

SYDNEY is going through the closet in search of something.  
The door opens, and SHEPHERD steps in, perhaps a little  
tentatively. He doesn't see SYDNEY at first.

**SHEPHERD**

(calling out)  
Syd?

SYDNEY comes out.

**SYDNEY**

Have you seen a gray cableknit sweater?

**SHEPHERD**

A grey...sweater? No. I called you at the office, but...

**SYDNEY**

It's Beth's. I wore it here one time, and I didn't want to leave it.

**SHEPHERD**

Where were you going?

SYDNEY continues her search.

**SYDNEY**

I'm going home, and then I'm going to Hartford.

**SHEPHERD**

Connecticut?

**SYDNEY**

Yes. Do you know if it was sent with your dry cleaning by any--

**SHEPHERD**

What's in Connecticut?

**SYDNEY**

Richard Reynolds' campaign. He may be able to get me a job.

**SHEPHERD**

When did you decide to get a new job?

**SYDNEY**

Not long after Leo Solomon fired me from my old one. Beth's gonna kill me. She loves that--

**SHEPHERD**

Why did he fire you?

**SYDNEY**

Total failure to achieve any of the objectives for which I was hired. I told him he was being unreasonable.

After all, I did get to dance with the President and ride in Air Force One a couple of times. But you know those prickly environmentalists. It's always gonna be something with them. If it's not clean air, then it's clean water. Like it isn't good enough that I'm on the cover of People Magazine.

**SHEPHERD**

I'll call him.

**SYDNEY**

You'll call him? You mean you'll call him yourself? Personally? It'll come from the President? That's a great idea. I think you should call Leo and make a deal. He hires me back for, say, 72 days. I go around scaring the hell out of Congress, making them think that the President's about to drive through a very damaging and costly bill. They'll believe me, right, 'cause I'm the President's Friday Night Girl. Now I don't know if you can dip into this well twice, especially since I've lost all credibility in politics, but you never know, I might just be able to pull it off again. I might be able to give you just the leverage you need to pass some ground-breaking piece of crime legislation -- like a mandatory three-day waiting period before a five-year-old can buy an Uzi. Fuck the sweater -- she'll have to learn to live with disappointment.

She starts to exit

**SHEPHERD**

What do you think went on here today?

She stops.

**SYDNEY**

I know exactly what went on here today. I got screwed. You saw the poll, you needed the crime bill, you couldn't get it on your own, so I got screwed.

**SHEPHERD**

The environment got screwed. Nothing happened to you today, Sydney. Governing is choosing. Governing is prioritizing. I've made no secret of the fact that the crime bill was my top priority.

**SYDNEY**

Well then, congratulations. It's only taken you three years to put together crime prevention legislation that has no hope of preventing crime.

SYDNEY heads out the door--

**SHEPHERD**

(stopping)

Sydney. Please. I don't want to lose you over this.

**SYDNEY**

Mr. President, you got bigger problems than losing me. You just lost my vote.

And SYDNEY is out the door...

...we HOLD on SHEPHERD, looking like a man who's taken a lot of punches to the heads...

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE POOL ROOM - NIGHT**

A rack of billiard balls explodes from the break.

**A. J.**

Hartfort? What's in Hartford?

**SHEPHERD**

Richard Reynolds' district office. She's thinking of running his campaign. Four in the corner.

SHEPHERD gets down over the ball--

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Hartford. The insurance capital of

the world. Have a good time, Syd.

SHEPHERD smacks the ball, BULL'S-EYE.

**A.J.**

Listen. I'm gonna have Janie clear your schedule for the weekend. You need to get some rest.

**SHEPHERD**

You handling me, A.J.?

**A.J.**

No, sir.

**SHEPHERD**

Good. 14 in the side.

SHEPHERD gets down over the ball...

**SMACK!!!**

...but instead of the cue hitting the ball, it's A.J.'s palms slamming the cue against the table.

**A.J.**

But I sure as hell will if you don't start gettin' your head outta your ass.

**SHEPHERD**

Excuse me.

**A.J.**

Lewis is right. Go after this guy.

**SHEPHERD**

Has he lied?!

**A.J.**

What?

**SHEPHERD**

Has Rumson lied in the last seven weeks?

**A.J.**

Has he lied?

**SHEPHERD**

Other than not knowing the difference between Harvard and Stanford, has he said something that isn't true? Am

I not a Commander-in-Chief who's never served in the military? Am I not opposed to a Constitutional amendment banning flag burning? Am I not an unmarried father who was sharing a bed with a liberal lobbyist down the hall from my twelve-year-old daughter?

**A. J.**

And you think you're wrong?

**SHEPHERD**

I don't think you win elections by telling 59 percent of the people that they are.

**A. J.**

We fight the fights we can win.

**SHEPHERD**

Don't--

**A. J.**

You fight the fights that need fighting!

**SHEPHERD**

Is the view pretty good from the cheap seats, A.J.?

**A. J.**

I beg your pardon.

**SHEPHERD**

It occurs to me that in 25 years I've never seen your name on a ballot. Why have you always been standing a pace behind me?

**A. J.**

Because if I hadn't been, you'd be the most popular history professor at the University of Wisconsin.

**SHEPHERD**

Fuck you.

SHEPHERD's tossed his cue stick and is heading out...

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Have Lewis put the final drafts of the State of the Union and the Crime Bill announcement on my desk in the morning.

**A.J.**

Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD gets to the doorway...stops...turns around...

**SHEPHERD**

If Mary hadn't died...would we have won three years ago?

**A.J.**

Would we have won?

**SHEPHERD**

If we'd had to go through a character debate three years ago, would we have won?

**A.J.**

I don't know. But I would've liked that campaign. If my friend Andy Shepherd had shown up, I would have liked that campaign.

SHEPHERD looks away...nods absently...

**SHEPHERD**

(pause)

Yeah.

SHEPHERD exits, leaving A.J. alone as we

**CUT TO:**

**INT. WHITE HOUSE CORRIDOR - NIGHT**

A series of shots showing SHEPHERD walking down the corridor to the dish room, then walking down a long corridor which contains a series of paintings of various presidents. Then sitting alone in the Oval Office, lost in thought...

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. RESIDENCE DINING ROOM - EARLY MORNING**

SHEPHERD and LUCY are eating breakfast in silence, neither of them very happy, each with their own problems. A nearby T.V. MONITOR glows with the live coverage of ROBIN's morning press

briefing.

Finally...

**SHEPHERD**

You're not hungry?

**LUCY**

This is oatmeal.

**SHEPHERD**

Yeah.

**LUCY**

We never have oatmeal.

**SHEPHERD**

It's good for you.

**LUCY**

I'm from Wisconsin. I need food.

**SHEPHERD**

You're not from Wisconsin. I'm from  
Wisconsin. You've lived in  
Washington your whole life.

He glances toward the T.V. screen. ROBIN's standing up there doing what she's been told: "No comment...No, this President is not participating in character debates..." He mutes the volume.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

How are you doing in your  
Constitutional debates?

**LUCY**

We're done.

**SHEPHERD**

You're done?

**LUCY**

We ratified it last week.

**SHEPHERD**

Oh...well...that's good. Why didn't  
you tell me?

**LUCY**

It's not a big deal, Dad.

**SHEPHERD**

Okay, I give up. I don't care why you're not happy in social studies. I care about why you're not talking to me about why you're not happy in social studies.

**LUCY**

Dad, I'm perfectly--

**SHEPHERD**

You're not perfectly happy. You don't think I know when something's bothering you?

**LUCY**

Damnit, Dad!

**SHEPHERD**

Hey!

**LUCY**

You know--

**SHEPHERD**

Talk to me.

**LUCY**

Look--

LUCY winds herself up. It would appear she's about to burst. She's about to say the hardest thing she's ever had to say in her life--

**LUCY**

(continuing)

--sometimes when you talk, you say things I disagree with.

SHEPHERD is stunned and totally confused...

**SHEPHERD**

Almost every time I talk, I say things you disagree with.

**LUCY**

I mean politically.

**SHEPHERD**

(pause)

Politically?

**LUCY**

Yes.

**SHEPHERD**

(pause)

What do you mean?

It just starts spilling out in a stream--

**LUCY**

Yes. Okay. Yes. Sometimes, I mean, I'm not sure. You know a lot more than I do -- but still, I have these feelings, and I don't think they're wrong. Like, okay, for instance, I'm not so sure it's all right to burn a flag. I mean, it really bothers a lot of people, and I don't know why you think it's okay. I hear Senator Rumson talk, and some of the things he says sounds right to me, and I think, "God, am I like Bob Rumson?! I mean, Dad thinks he's a jerk. Dad hates this guy! Why am I agreeing with him" And then I think, "Well, maybe I'm not really like Bob Rumson, but maybe I'm not like Dad either." But the point is I'm the President's kid, and people pay attention to what I say, and if I say something different from what you say, it'll be embarrassing for you. So I can't just get up in social studies class and say whatever I want.

SHEPHERD is silent...totally blown away...he had absolutely no idea...

He stands up slowly and moves toward her...LUCY doesn't know what's coming...

**SHEPHERD**

(quietly)

Stand up please.

LUCY gets up slowly...

She's never seen her father like this...

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

I want you to pay very close  
attention to what happens now.

SHEPHERD kneels down, cups her daughter's face in his hands,  
and gently kisses her forehead. He pulls her to him and  
holds her in a tight embrace...

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

In your lifetime, you will never  
embarrass me. It could never happen.  
You're not the President's daughter,  
Lucy, you're mine.  
And no one's gonna vote me out of  
that job. You're my daughter, and  
everything else is a distant second.

(more)

School is for you, Lucy. You say  
what you want. The only thing you  
have to do to make me happy is  
come home at the end of the day.

LUCY squeezes her dad tight...they hold the embrace for a  
long moment.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

One more thing. I don't dislike  
Senator Rumson because of his  
political views. And even if you  
voted for everything he would vote  
for, that wouldn't make you like him.  
There's a fundamental difference  
between you and the Bob Rumsons of  
the world.

**LUCY**

What's that?

**SHEPHERD**

The difference is that he says he  
loves America. Saying you love  
America is easy. What takes  
character -- and this is what you  
have--

SHEPHERD trails off, realizing he's about to quote Sydney...

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

What takes character is loving  
Americans.

(beat)

And now it's as if SHEPHERD is waking himself up from the longest trip of his life...

...he looks over at the T.V. monitor..."No comment"...  
"No, I don't know how many other ways I can say it. The White House isn't getting involved in..."

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Luce, I gotta go.

**LUCY**

Dad, is everything all right?

**SHEPHERD**

Everything's fine. I'm just a little late for work.

He heads for the door, shouting out as he goes--

**SHEPHERD**

Somebody get my daughter some food!  
The girl's from Wisconsin, for cryin'  
out loud!

And he's gone as we...

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - EARLY MORNING**

ROBIN is on her last drops of energy and patience.

**REPORTER #4**

Robin, will the President ever respond to Senator Rumson's question about being a member of the American Civil Liberties Union?

But instead of hands going up, the PRESS CORPS suddenly stands. ROBIN turns to see SHEPHERD stride in and step up to the podium.

**SHEPHERD**

Yes, he will. 'Morning.

**ROBIN**

Good morning, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD takes the podium. There's a palpable BUZZ in the

room as video operators adjust their equipment, etc. People starts to stand.

**SHEPHERD**

That's all right, you can keep your seats. For the last couple of months, Senator Rumson has suggested that being president of this country was, to a certain extent, about character...

**ANGLE - ROBIN**

who's picked up the receiver from a wall phone and punches in four numbers.

She turns in to the wall to shield her conversation from the rest of the room.

**ROBIN**

(into phone)

Lewis...call A.J. and come on down here...I don't know, but something's happening.

**SHEPHERD**

...and although I have not been willing to engage in his attacks on me, I've been here three years and three days, and I can tell you without hesitation: Being President of this country is entirely about character.

LEWIS enters with A.J. and KODAK.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

For the record: Yes, I am a card-carrying member of the A.C.L.U. But the more important question is why aren't you, Bob? This is an organization whose sole purpose is to defend the Bill of Rights, so it naturally begs the questions.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Why would a senator, his party's most powerful spokesman and a candidate for president, choose to reject upholding the Constitution? If you

can answer that question, then, folks, you're smarter than I am, because I didn't understand it until a couple of minutes ago. Everybody knows American isn't easy. America is advanced citizenship.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

You gotta want it bad, 'cause it's gonna put up a fight. It's gonna say, "You want free speech? Let's see you acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil, who's standing center stage and advocating, at the top of his lungs, that which you would spend a lifetime opposing at the top of yours. You want to claim this land as the land of the free, then the symbol of your country can't just be a flag; the symbol also has to be one of its citizens exercising his right to burn that flag in protest." Show me that, defend that, celebrate that in your classrooms. Then you can stand up and sing about the land of the free. I've known Bob Rumson for years. I've been operating under the assumption that the reason Bob devotes so much time and energy to shouting at the rain was that he simply didn't get it. Well, I was wrong.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Bob's problem isn't that he doesn't get it. Bob's problem is that he can't sell it. Nobody has ever won an election by talking about what I was just talking about.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

This is a country made up of people with hard jobs that they're terrified of losing. The roots of freedom are of little or no interest to them at the moment. We are a nation afraid to go out at night. We're a society that has assigned low priority to education and has looked the other way while our public schools have

been decimated. We have serious problems to solve, and we need serious men to solve them. And whatever your particular problem is, friend, I promise you, Bob Rumson is not the least bit interested in solving it. He is interested in two things and two things only: Making you afraid of it and telling you who's to blame for it. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how you win elections. You gather a group of middle-aged, middle-class, middle-income voters who remember with longing an easier time, and you talk to them about family and American values and personal character. Then you have an old photo of the President's girlfriend. You scream about patriotism and you tell them she's to blame for their lot in life, you go on television and you call her a whore. Sydney Ellen Wade has done nothing to you, Bob. She has done nothing but put herself through law school, prosecute criminals for five years, represent the interests of public school teachers for two years, and lobby for the safety of our natural resources.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

You want a character debate? Fine, but you better stick with me, 'cause Sydney Ellen Wade is way out of your league. I've loved two women in my life. I lost one to cancer, and I lost the other 'cause I was so busy keeping my job I forgot to do my job. Well that ends right now.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Tomorrow morning the White House is sending a bill to Congress for its consideration. It's White House Resolution 455, an energy bill requiring a 20 percent reduction of the emission of fossil fuels over the next ten years. It is by far the most aggressive stride ever taken in

the fight to reverse the effects of global warming. The other piece of legislation is the crime bill. As of today it no longer exists. I'm throwing it out. I'm throwing it out and writing a law that makes sense. You cannot address crime prevention without getting rid of assault weapons and handguns.

I consider them a threat to national security, and I will go door to door if I have to, but I'm gonna convince Americans that I'm right, and I'm gonna get the guns. We've got serious problems, and we need serious men, and if you want to talk about character, Bob, you'd better come at me with more than a burning flag and a membership card. If you want to talk about character and American values, fine. Just tell me where and when, and I'll show up. This is a time for serious men, Bob, and your fifteen minutes are up. My name's Andrew Shepherd, and I am the President.

SHEPHERD exits the press room, leaving a stunned room in his wake.

The MURMURS begin from the PRESS CORPS. They're talking among themselves, confirming that they just saw what they just saw. ROBIN steps to the podium.

**ROBIN**

Any questions?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. HALLWAY - WEST WING - DAY**

A.J. and LEWIS are following after the President.

**A.J.**

Well, you don't see that every day of the week.

**LEWIS**

He's got the whole White House Press Corps asking each other how to spell "erudite."

**A.J.**

Lewis, call the printer.

**LEWIS**

I know. Gotta rewrite the State of the Union.

**A.J.**

Every word, Lewis. It's a whole new ball game. You've got 35 minutes.

**LEWIS**

Oh, good. I thought I was gonna be rushed.

LEWIS goes off in one direction. A.J. heads towards the Oval Office.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY**

SHEPHERD is on the phone.

**SHEPHERD**

I don't want the limo. I don't want an escort.

A.J. enters.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

I want a plain, ordinary, non-bullet-proof automobile. Someone around here must have a Chevy I can borrow. Well, find one and meet me outside the West Wing entrance in five minutes.

**A.J.**

Where are you going?

**SHEPHERD**

I'm going to her house. I'm gonna stand at her front door till she lets me in. And I'm not leaving till I get her back.

**A.J.**

How're you gonna do that?

**SHEPHERD**

I haven't worked that out yet. But

I'm sure groveling will be involved.

**A.J.**

You're just gonna drive over?

**SHEPHERD**

I'm the Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful army in the world. You don't think I can drive ten blocks?

**SYDNEY**

Just stay away from DuPont Circle. I hear it's murder this time of day.

SHEPHERD doesn't need to turn around to know who's standing in the doorway, but of course he does anyway.

**SYDNEY**

Hi, A.J.

**A.J.**

It's nice to see you, Ms. Wade. If anybody needs me, I'll be in the Roosevelt Room, giving Lewis oxygen.

A.J. exits.

**SYDNEY**

I heard your speech. I was in my car, and it just kind of steered its way over here.

**SHEPHERD**

I'm glad.

SYDNEY and SHEPHERD just gaze at each other for a moment and smile. SYDNEY starts toward him.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Sydney, I didn't decide to send 455 to the floor to get you back.

**SYDNEY**

I didn't come back 'cause you decided to send 455 to the floor.

They move to kiss. It doesn't last very long because...

**LEWIS**

(entering)

Mr. President, I thought you might

want to look at this. I moved Social Security up front. Hello, Sydney.

JANIE enters--

**JANIE**

Mr. President, Leventhal at Treasury wants two minutes. Hello, Sydney.

MRS. CHAPIL enters--

**MRS. CHAPIL**

Mr. President -- Excuse me, Miss Wade -- Miss McCall is on her way over.

**SHEPHERD**

(to SYDNEY)

I've got some things to do.

**SYDNEY**

Yes, you do.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. THE CAPITOL - NIGHT**

It's lit up and glowing on this cold, clear night.

**ANCHOR (V.O.)**

We're only a moment or two away from the arrival of President Shepherd and his State of the Union address. Lloyd, you've served on the staffs of several past administrations, what kind of last-minute activity is the President engaged in right now?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. A VIP ROOM - NIGHT**

It's off the main corridor, and it's being used as a green room for SHEPHERD and his group -- LEWIS, KODAK, A.J., JANIE, and various AIDES and STAFFERS. People are buzzing around in a last-minute flurry. SHEPHERD is fumbling with his cuff links.

**SHEPHERD**

I'm having a cuff links crisis.

LUCY takes his sleeves.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing; to LUCY)  
I think they've locked.

**LUCY**

Hold still.

ROBIN steps in.

**ROBIN**

Mr. President, they're waiting for you.

**LUCY**

All done.

**SHEPHERD**

Lewis.

**LEWIS**

Sir.

**SHEPHERD**

Things have been a little rough between us lately.

**LEWIS**

I know sir, I'm sorry.

**SHEPHERD**

Don't stop what you're doing.

**LEWIS**

That's kind of you, sir, but I realize I've been a little insensitive about some personal...

**SHEPHERD**

No, you were right. Two hundred and sixty-four million people don't give a damn about my life.

**LEWIS**

Just so you know I've never been one of them, Mr. President.

**ROBIN**

This way, people. Let's go.

**SHEPHERD**

(to LEWIS)

See you after.

The PEOPLE in the room start to gather their things and exit, ROBIN handling any and all last-minute "Mr. President"'s as she herds people out the door.

LUCY walks past SHEPHERD. She holds SHEPHERD's old tattered textbook and has it opened to a specific page...

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

Whatcha got there, Luce?

**LUCY**

Article 2, Section 3, of the U.S. Constitution. Executive Powers.

(reading)

"He shall, from time to time, give to the Congress information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient."

**A. J.**

Sounds right up your alley.

SHEPHERD looks at his old friend and extends his hand for a deeply-felt handshake. A.J. grasps SHEPHERD's hand and then pulls him into a strong embrace.

A.J. whispers a shout into SHEPHERD's ear--

**A. J.**

(continuing)

Give 'em hell, Andy.

A.J. pulls away, leaving SHEPHERD to enjoy the moment without having to speak--

**A. J.**

(continuing)

You've got 30 seconds, Mr. President.

**SHEPHERD**

Thank you.

(to LUCY)

I'll see you afterward. I want a critique.

The room clears out...revealing SYDNEY, dressed like the

First Lady she's soon to be, sitting against the window sill.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

There's been something I've been trying to give you since our first date. I tried a bunch of times, but somehow I've always managed to trip over my job.

(beat)

Anyay...

SHEPHERD has picked his black canvas gym bag with the gold Presidential seal.

He reaches in the bag and pulls out a bouquet of flowers.

**SHEPHERD**

(continuing)

These are for you.

**SYDNEY**

They're beautiful.

JANIE pokes her head in.

**JANIE**

Mr. President?

**SHEPHERD**

Gotta go.

**SYDNEY**

Should I stay here?

**SHEPHERD**

No, walk with me.

They exit into a hallway lined with Congressional STAFFERS, SECRET SERVICE, CAPITOL SECURITY, WHITE HOUSE STAFF, and, most prominently, A.J., LEWIS, ROBIN, JANIE and KODAK.

SYDNEY is still clutching her flowers as they near the double doors to the House Chamber--

**SYDNEY**

How'd you finally do it?

**SHEPHERD**

(raising his voice  
above the cheering)

Do what?

**SYDNEY**

Manage to give a woman flowers and  
be President at the same time.

**SHEPHERD**

Well...it turns out I've got a rose  
garden.

SYDNEY is stopped in her tracks as--

--the doors to the Chamber fly open--

**DOORKEEPER**

Mr. Speaker!!!...THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
**UNITED STATES!!!**

The CHAMBER leaps to its feet in a thunderous ovation,  
shouts of "Bravo!" from the gallery...

At the back, LEWIS and ROBIN and KODAK are trying to maintain  
their professional cool, but it's a moment impossible not to  
get caught up in...SYDNEY is clutching her flowers with both  
hands...SHEPHERD is making his way down the aisle, shaking  
hands and receiving congratulations and good wishes, and we

**FADE OUT.**

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