

1600 PENN

Pilot

"Putting Out Fires"

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CHARACTERS

The Gilchrists



President Dale Gilchrist: Confident, heroic ex-Marine. Believes we each create our own destiny. Craves competition.



First Lady Emily Nash Gilchrist: Street-smart and honest to a fault. Working-class roots. Eager to win over her step kids.



Skip: Enthusiastic, gregarious, clumsy 24-year-old son. Assumes the best about people. Seeks his father's approval.



Becca: 22-year-old overachiever and perfectionist who puts a ton of pressure on herself. Helped raise her siblings.



Xander: Half of a pair of 13-year-old twins. A sensitive, scrawny, pipsqueak philosopher, rebelling against authority.



Marigold: The other half. Direct and tough - but with the soul of a poet. She's secretly in love with one of her classmates.

The Staff



Marshall Malloy: Savvy, loyal Press Secretary and Dale's surrogate son. Flummoxed by Emily and befuddled by Skip.



Esmeralda: The maid who's been this family's confidante forever, but is comically idle now that they're in the White House.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

An American flag, lit from below, waves majestically.

SKIP (O.S.)
This is a day of destiny.

REVEAL: SKIP GILCHRIST, disheveled, standing in front of a massive heap of FIREWORKS on the lawn of a frat house.

SKIP (CONT'D)
The day we stand up against our tormentors.

A gaggle of NERDY MISFITS watches.

SKIP (CONT'D)
They think they're so cool because of the cool things they do and say.

MISFIT #1
And their hair!

SKIP
But we have taken enough harassment from these guys.

MISFIT #1
Their hair looks so effortless.

SKIP
They trashed our house. They mocked us all over campus. One of them stole Mike's girlfriend.

MIKE
I still love her.

SKIP
Mike still loves her. (BEAT) But now we exact our revenge.

Skip and the misfits scamper behind a fence. They whisper.

MISFIT #2
Wait, so what're we doing exactly?

SKIP
OK so we set off this fireworks display on their lawn. Koosh! It scares the crap out of them. They run outside. We sneak in and grab their treasured mascot.

Skip lights the fuse.

SKIP (CONT'D)
This is such a good plan.

A firework launches and goes right through a window. BOOM!
Inside, a fire ignites instantly. Skip runs toward the house.

SKIP (CONT'D)
Gather water! The prank has gone
wrong!

The LACROSSE PLAYERS come streaming out, groggy and furious
as their house burns behind them.

SKIP (CONT'D)
Is everyone out? This is a serious
situation!

The bewilderment of the lacrosse players quickly turns into
rage. They attack the misfits.

A small crowd gathers, one dude filming on his CELL PHONE.

Skip is tackled. As a lacrosse player brings his arm back to
hit him... out of nowhere, a HAND grabs the player's WRIST.

REVEAL: a team of SECRET SERVICE AGENTS, moving through the
brawl, pulling guys apart, holding lacrosse players down.

Two agents roughly toss Skip in the back of an SUV.

SKIP (CONT'D)
College, am I right? What a crazy
time in our lives.

AGENT
(INTO HIS WRIST) Meatball is in the
oven.

END OF COLD OPEN

TITLE SEQUENCE: You might expect flags and orchestral music.
Instead we hear a rock song and meet the Gilchrists through
FAMILY PHOTOS and HOME MOVIES: Skip, Becca, and the twins as
toddlers; Dale shaking hands and winning local elections; and
more recent footage of Emily marrying Dale as the children
watch. It's a montage of the family growing up as Dale rises
in politics. And it all comes together when he is sworn in as
President with his whole family standing behind him.

ACT ONEINT. SITUATION ROOM - MORNING

CLOSE ON: The strong jaw and steel eyes of the Commander in Chief, PRESIDENT DALE GILCHRIST, at the head of the table.

DALE

These kinds of tough calls are why we're in the big boy chairs.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Generals, admirals, and national security staff, all looking uncomfortable and confused.

DALE (CONT'D)

But all I've heard is mealy-mouthed non-answers. Enough. I want clear, actionable recommendations. Do I need to remind you why we're here?

Dale gestures toward the big screen. All turn. Instead of footage of a terrorist cell, we see GRAINY CELL PHONE VIDEO of Skip running from a lacrosse player.

SKIP (ON SCREEN)

Stop chasing me! The fire is our common enemy right now!

The video ends. The advisors turn back toward Dale.

DALE

(PLAINTIVELY) Seriously guys. What do I do? You're all parents. Help me out. Stanley, what would you and Gary do if this were Lin Bao?

REVEAL: a GAY ADMIRAL.

STANLEY

Drone strike?

Dale is not amused. One GENERAL whispers to another...

GENERAL

Drone strike every time this family messes up? We'll run out of drones.

EXT. IOWA DINER - NEWS FOOTAGE

EMILY NASH GILCHRIST exits a restaurant hand-in-hand with Dale. They wave and mingle with the crowd. Emily approaches a MOTHER and DAUGHTER in identical "DALE WON'T FAIL" T-SHIRTS.

EMILY

Adorable! You guys get along well?

TEENAGE DAUGHTER

She's like my best friend.

EMILY

(LAUGHING) Wow. What's your secret?
My step daughter totally hates me!

The image FREEZES. REVEAL: we are watching this clip from...

INT. RESIDENCE - SITTING AREA

Emily, in a UNLV tank top, is being styled for the day as she simultaneously practices for a big interview.

EMILY

OK. Major gaffe. In my defense, it was six months ago. And I think I've gotten a little better about not just blurting out the first thing that pops into my head.

MARSHALL MALLOY, the young White House Press Secretary, sits flanked by two even younger female aides.

MARSHALL

Nice. You might also want to add that you didn't actually mean it. And then move right into your talking points.

BEVERLY, Emily's friend and make-up artist, applies mascara.

BEVERLY

Pfft, talking points. People love Emily because she's real.

EMILY

I was real. Then this happened.

A snooty STYLIST drapes three outfits over Emily's tank top. The two female aides point at one. The stylist disappears as quickly as she appeared.

MARSHALL

Love real. As long as what's real is what's in the talking points. Let's try. (AS INTERVIEWER) So how do you like being First Lady? Far cry from your days as a bartender.

EMILY

Actually, I prefer barflies to congressmen. Both'll grab your ass, but only one'll do it while cutting children's health care.

MARSHALL

Did you just blurt out the first thing that popped into your head?

EMILY

Yes. Sorry. I'll do better. (BEAT) Being First Lady is an incredible opportunity. Though sometimes I miss being able to go out and grab a slice of pizza!

MARSHALL

Boom. Right on the money.

BEVERLY

Uh, may I remind you professional political types about something?

Beverly whips out an US WEEKLY with Emily on the cover, under a headline that reads, "HONEST EMILY: AMERICAN CINDERELLA."

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

Give the people what they want!

MARSHALL

Love the instinct. But maybe people also want a First Lady who isn't in a public feud with her step daughter. That's why we're doing this interview -- to put the rumors of discord behind you and focus on the initiative you and Becca are starting. Together. As a team.

This lands with Emily. She wants to make this work.

EMILY

How's this? It's time to help more young girls succeed in math and science. That's why we're launching "Let's Multiply!" And Becca is the perfect co-chair. Along with running a tutoring center for underprivileged kids, and speaking like *seven* languages, Becca just graduated summa cum laude with a degree in mathematics.

MARSHALL

Which I suppose is why she's too busy to join us. (TO AGENT) Do we know where Becca is?

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

(INTO HIS WRIST) Location on Miss Perfect?

INT. RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - SAME TIME

BECCA is beautiful, impeccably dressed... and on the toilet. She takes a deep breath and examines a PREGNANCY TEST. On it, there's a PLUS SIGN. She sighs and sets it on the counter, next to NINE OTHER POSITIVE TEST STICKS.

BECCA

10 for 10. Another flawless performance by Becca Gilchrist.

INT. OVAL OFFICE

AN ASSISTANT opens the door. Skip enters reverentially.

ASSISTANT

Your father should be in shortly.

Skip eyes the majestic desk.

INT. WEST WING HALLWAY - OUTSIDE THE SITUATION ROOM

Dale finds Emily, now fully styled, waiting for him.

EMILY

POTUS.

DALE

FLOTUS.

Emily laughs. They kiss.

EMILY

(LIKE A SPOKESMAN) Trouble urinating? Four out of five urologists recommend FLOTUS.

Dale laughs. They turn and walk. Staffers follow.

DALE

Thanks for helping me with Skip.

EMILY

I don't know how much help I'll be.

DALE

What do you mean?

EMILY

I'm not their mother, Dale. I've been in their lives for, what, four years? The twins can smell the fear on me. And you know how Becca feels. The whole world does.

DALE

But Skip adores you.

EMILY

Skip adores everyone. He's a golden retriever.

DALE

A golden retriever that can't stop pulling his ass across the carpet. I don't know what to do with him.

EMILY

Maybe he can be a cautionary tale? Record some kind of PSA?

DALE

See? That's way better than anything the Joint Chiefs came up with. Marshall?

Marshall appears from out of nowhere and falls into stride.

DALE (CONT'D)

Let's have Skip record a fire safety PSA. Set it up.

MARSHALL

Great idea, sir.

DALE

Not me. Emily. What else?

MARSHALL

Today is all South America all the time. The leaders arrive in an hour. Then a friendly game of open-press racquetball with De Soto.

DALE

Good. I want a vote on my trade deal by early afternoon. (TO EMILY) I know the twins can be intimidating...

EMILY

You know what it is? I just want to connect with them so badly. I get nervous. Then I just say too much.

DALE

No such thing as too much of you. Right Marshall?

Marshall bites his tongue, nods, and heads off.

INT. OVAL OFFICE

Skip now sits in THE PRESIDENT'S CHAIR.

SKIP

(AS DALE) Son, I'm disappointed in you about this fire. But deep down, I know that you are awesome. That is why I have appointed you Chief Astronaut. (AS HIMSELF) Oh, dad, I can't accept it. (AS DALE) You must. For the country. And for these ladies. (TO IMAGINARY GIRL) Oh hello, I'm Skip. Do you like movies about time travel? You do?

Skip laughs and coquettishly places his elbow on the desk.

SKIP (CONT'D)

Tell me more about you. Have you always been Asian?

Dale and Emily enter. Skip jumps up to greet them.

SKIP (CONT'D)

Dad!

Skip, who clearly worships his father, goes in for a hug. Dale sticks out his hand. Skip doesn't take the handshake as a slight, but as a silent, meaningful moment between two men.

DALE

Never sit in my chair.

SKIP

You got it. (TO EMILY) Momily!

EMILY

Aw, Skip. (HUGS HIM) Nothing fazes you. Not even the things that should.

SKIP

I know, right?

Dale gestures toward the couch. Skip hops over the back of it, FALLS, gets up, sits and focuses intensely on his father.

DALE

Skip, I think it's time for you to come home from school.

SKIP

But I have a term to complete! I'm the social chair of my fraternity.

DALE

At the university you've been attending for seven years.

SKIP

No one brings the same level of experience as I do.

DALE

You're welcome to go back. You just have to pay for it yourself.

A long beat.

SKIP

And I'm assuming there's a room for me here?

There's a knock. Dale's assistant pokes her head in.

ASSISTANT

Sir, the twins are outside.

DALE

What? Why aren't they at school?

XANDER and MARIGOLD enter.

XANDER

Because it's a fascist institution.

DALE

It's a Quaker school.

Skip bounds over and TACKLES the twins to the floor. He wrestles them like they're little kids. The twins squirm.

SKIP
How's my revolutionary soldier?

XANDER
I'm fine. Let go!

SKIP
He's fine! And how's my sister with the hard candy shell and soft gooey center?

Marigold flips Skip and PINS him easily.

MARIGOLD
Who you calling soft?

DALE
Guys. Couches.

They scurry to their places.

DALE (CONT'D)
Marigold. What happened?

MARIGOLD
We got suspended for forging your signature on our report cards.

Skip GASPS dramatically.

INT. RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM

Becca exits the bathroom in a cold sweat. She's about to head off, but notices ESMERALDA watching soaps on the couch.

BECCA
Hey Esmeralda. Question for you.

An USHER delivers an elaborate breakfast for Esmeralda.

ESMERALDA
Is there a bun in the oven?

BECCA
(ALARMED) Why would you ask such a weird question? That's a really weird question to ask someone.

ESMERALDA

I'm asking him. I ordered a cinnamon bun. Show me a person who doesn't like their cinnamon buns warm, I show you a serial killer.

The usher heads off. Esmeralda spears some sausage.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

What did you want to ask me?

BECCA

Um, OK. If you had a secret you needed to tell someone, who in this family would you talk to about it?

ESMERALDA

I will die with the secret.

BECCA

What if you need to tell them because they'll find out anyway?

ESMERALDA

How will they find out? Dead men do not tell tales.

BECCA

What are you talking about?

ESMERALDA

What are you talking about with the leading questions?

BECCA

Will you just answer, please? Who in my family would you trust?

ESMERALDA

Let's see. Your father, he has the nuclear launch codes. That means he can be trusted, but also that he has a lot on his plate. Xander is rebellious, but weak. Marigold is strong like her father, but she is a romantic - and romantics can be broken.

BECCA

Wow. Incisive. What about Skip?

ESMERALDA

He cannot be trusted with matches, let alone secrets. (THEN) Emily?

BECCA

Maybe if I wanted advice on how to marry for money.

Becca heads off as the usher delivers the cinnamon bun.

ESMERALDA

Harsh. (TO THE BUN) I trust you, bun. But you cannot trust me.

INT. OVAL OFFICE

Dale is fed up.

DALE

Let me ask again. Marigold, why did you, a straight-A student, suddenly have a failing report card?

MARIGOLD

(DEFIANT) Maybe I'm stupid now.

DALE

(TO XANDER) What about you? Your report card was excellent. Why'd you hide it from us, Alexander?

XANDER

It was civil disobedience. I want to be taught, not graded like meat.

BECCA (O.S.)

That's no excuse for forgery.

REVEAL: Becca in the doorway. Skip rushes over and gives her a big hug, lifting her off the ground.

SKIP

I am so happy my sister is here!
(HE SWINGS HER SIDE-TO-SIDE) This. Meeting. Has been. Such. A. Bummer.

BECCA

I love you but I might throw up.

Skip puts Becca down as Dale waves her over. On her way, she tousles the twins' hair and says to Emily...

BECCA (CONT'D)

Sorry I missed interview prep.

EMILY

(TENSE) You're so polished anyway.
I think the prep was more for me.

Dale, sensing tension, gets between his wife and daughter.

DALE

Becca's setting an example. She's not forging or burning anything. She's responsible. As a result, she's got her whole life ahead of her. Nothing's holding her back.

BECCA

Dad, I don't deserve--

SKIP

Yes you do. You're a wonder!

DALE

Skip, you're recording a fire safety PSA. In the Red Room. Now.

Skip salutes and hustles out. Dale turns to the twins.

DALE (CONT'D)

Alexander, Marigold. I'm at a loss.

An awkward pause. Emily decides to reach out with this...

EMILY

When I was thirteen I stole a bunny from a pet shop because I was going to be a magician. So... I get it.

Dale and the twins stare blankly. Becca rolls her eyes.

BECCA

Just go to your rooms. Oh, and Xander, I found that old Easter candy under your bed so don't bother looking for it.

XANDER

It's like you don't even care about habeas corpus sometimes.

The twins exit, leaving Dale between Emily and Becca.

EMILY

(MORTIFIED) Ugh. The bunny story. At least I stopped short of telling them I accidentally killed it.

BECCA

There's that maternal instinct.

DALE

Alright, let's give Emily a break.
(TO EMILY) Sweetheart, you're so close to getting them to open up to you. You just need to relax, find a way to get in your wheelhouse.

Emily gets an idea. She gives Dale a kiss (prompting an eye roll from Becca) and exits with new confidence.

BECCA

Dad. I need to talk to you.

Marshall enters.

MARSHALL

Mr. President, the South American leaders are gathering outside. You only have a few minutes before De Soto arrives.

DALE

Thanks, Marshall. Sorry, Becca, today is... actually it's just like every other day. Can we talk later?

Marshall and Dale exit, leaving Becca alone with her secret.

INT. RED ROOM

Skip squirms in a regal chair. There's a sign behind him that says "FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE SAFETY!" Marshall enters.

SKIP

Marshmallow! I'm a little nervous.

MARSHALL

All you have to do is read.

SKIP

No. I want to do more. I'm going to make my dad proud, Marshall Mathers. I'm going to make love to the audience. And I don't mean in a dirty way. I mean the intimate lovemaking of longtime partners. Not when the bed has gone cold but--

MARSHALL

Skip! It's just 30 seconds of text.

EXT. SOUTH LAWN

The president schmoozes with South American leaders.

COLOMBIAN

Mr. President, many of us would support your trade agreement, but we are under terrific pressure from Brazil to vote against you.

DALE

Yeah, De Soto has a little bit of an ax to grind with me.

PANAMANIAN

(KNOWINGLY) Ah, the G20 incident...

INT. BRAZIL JAI ALAI COURT - FLASHBACK

Dale, in full JAI ALAI GEAR, whips the pelota. It ricochets off the wall and nails the Brazilian president square in the sternum. He gasps for air.

DALE

America wins! 200-year streak!

Flash bulbs. The crowd murmurs in various languages.

EXT. SOUTH LAWN - WHERE WE LEFT OFF

DALE

It was regrettable. And I'm sorry De Soto has made this personal. But this deal is good for all of us.

COLOMBIAN

We know that. But you can't count on those dim-witted Panamanians.

PANAMANIAN

Excuse me, Jose? Can't hear you over the sound of cocaine flowing into my country through the mesh jersey you call a border fence.

The two men get in each other's faces, then freeze and turn as a MOTORCADE with BRAZILIAN FLAGS approaches ominously.

INT. RED ROOM

Skip is starting to sweat. Marshall is frustrated.

MARSHALL

Skip. Please. You can do this.

SKIP

I've said the word 'fire' so many times, it just sounds weird to me now. FAHyer. FOWer? FAHherrr--

MARSHALL

Just pretend the camera isn't here.

SKIP

OK. I'll do that. See, Marshall, that's helpful.

Skip begins recording the message. Except he doesn't look at or near the camera, and his head drifts around the room.

SKIP (CONT'D)

Hi there. I'm Skip Gilchrist, and I have a message for you about fire safety. Recently, I--

MARSHALL

You have to look at the camera!

SKIP

You said pretend it wasn't there!

MARSHALL

Know it's there, but pretend it's not there. There, but not there.

SKIP

Marshall, you sound like a crazy person.

Skip takes off his suit jacket and tosses it behind him. It lands on a LAMP. He rolls up his sleeves.

MARSHALL

Believe it or not, Skip, this is not my only task today.

SKIP

In that we could not be more different. My calendar is wide open. What are you doing for lunch?

EXT. SOUTH LAWN

The arrival ceremony begins: marching bands, honor guard, a crowd. The leaders shake hands with Dale. Finally, ENRIQUE DE SOTO OF BRAZIL approaches - macho, pompous, hirsute.

INT. RESIDENCE - SAME TIME

Skip, sweat-soaked, is recording his message at long last.

SKIP

That's why my message is... let's fight fire with fire *safety*.

MARSHALL

Finally.

SKIP

I think we got it!

WHOOSH! His jacket goes up in flames. The fire spreads to the CHAIR and the FIRE SAFETY sign. He rips down a tapestry and tries to snuff out the fire, but the tapestry catches too.

EXT. SOUTH LAWN - SAME TIME

President De Soto throws his arm forward for a handshake...

DALE

Welcome to the United States.

DE SOTO

I just hope to avoid bodily injury.

DALE

We'll keep you out of harm's way.

...AS A FLAMING CHAIR FLIES THROUGH THE SECOND FLOOR WINDOW.

One by one, every leader is TACKLED by their security detail. Dale ends up at the bottom of a dog pile with De Soto.

DE SOTO

Maybe try a little bit harder?

Skip, in the window, surveys the havoc below.

SKIP

Sorry!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. WEST WING - DAY

CLOSE ON: news footage of the flaming chair, the presidents being tackled, and Skip in the window.

CHRIS MATTHEWS

Less than four months into a Gilchrist administration, and it's pandemonium! When he swore an oath to protect the country against all enemies foreign and domestic, I didn't realize he meant his *son*!

REVEAL: Marshall watching this on MSNBC.

MARSHALL

Today is the Skipocalypse.

As Marshall exits, we stay on the TV, and watch as MSNBC goes LIVE to the White House Briefing Room. We then realize where Marshall was going: he appears on screen, walking up to the podium as reporters shout questions about Skip.

EXT. SOUTH LAWN

Dale, in a track suit, walks with purpose. Skip attempts to keep pace. As always, Dale is trailed by agents and staff.

SKIP

OK, first of all, I'm crazy sorry. The frat house fire, I own that. Real boner move. We talked about that earlier. This second fire though: it's a freak thing. If anything, it was because I was trying *too hard* to do what you asked. I'm not blaming you, but--

DALE

Skip.

SKIP

Yes. Shifting into listening mode. You have the conch.

DALE

Of course, accidents happen. They just always seem to happen to you. Even when you were a little boy--

SKIP

Trampolines are a hazard, I don't care who you are.

Dale stops and faces his son.

DALE

Look, do you know why I decided you should move here?

SKIP

So I'm surrounded by agents and staff who can keep an eye on me?

DALE

Absolutely. But also, maybe this can be a new phase in your life. A chance to become a doer of things, rather than a man to whom things are done. To be the lion, not the gazelle. To be a man - a man, Skip.

SKIP

Oh my god. I love you so much.

Dale signals the staff to keep walking so they can be alone.

DALE

Look, you and I are different.

SKIP

You're very neat and I'm very messy.

DALE

I mean that I'm not as expressive as you. In a lot of ways, you're more like your mother.

This lands with Skip.

DALE (CONT'D)

I see her in you. She had a spark - a way with people I've never had. You have it too. And it kills me to think you might squander that gift.

SKIP

(MOVED) I have a spark.

DALE

All I ask is that you use that spark for something other than setting things on fire.

INT. RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Emily throws a dish towel over her shoulder, bartender-like. She winks at Esmeralda, who doesn't get it, and calls out...

EMILY

Xander, Marigold! Can you please
join me in the kitchen?

The twins enter with trepidation. Emily invites them to take the two seats next to Esmeralda at her makeshift bar.

EMILY (CONT'D)

OK guys, belly up.

MARIGOLD

(ASIDE) I thought we were punished.

XANDER

(ASIDE) This must be part of it.

EMILY

So what can I get ya?

Sensing an opportunity, Xander and Marigold share a look.

EXT. RACQUETBALL COURT

The racquetball court sits atop the basketball court of the previous president. REPORTERS stand in a nearby press area. Dale stretches. Marshall appears at his side.

MARSHALL

Sir, you good with the game plan?

DALE

De Soto's ass is chapped because I
whipped him on his turf. So I let
him whip me on mine. Hatchet
buried.

MARSHALL

But our plan depends on you losing.
Badly. In front of the whole world.

DALE

I can do that. Even though I'd
rather send the son of a bitch home
with a racket halfway down his
Panama Canal. (THEN) Enrique!

Dale and De Soto shake hands. Through a plastered smile...

DE SOTO

I'm about to do to you what China did to your manufacturing sector.

They get into position. De Soto serves. Dale clumsily misses.

DALE

You got lucky on that one, Enrique.

DE SOTO

Luck is for Americans. I am going to treat you like you treated your indigenous peoples.

Skip sidles into the staff area on the opposite side of the court. He watches with concern as Dale serves and FAULTS.

SKIP

(MEANINGFULLY) He needs... a spark.

INT. RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Emily ties an APRON around her waist as she mixes ingredients for an elaborate chocolate beverage.

ESMERALDA

You know you have staff that can help you do this now?

Esmeralda extends a wine glass. An USHER appears, refills it.

EMILY

No need. This is my wheelhouse.

She expertly flips a martini shaker filled with ice and milk.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(TO TWINS) As a bartender, part of my job was listening to people without judging them. So Marigold, whatever's happening with your grades; and Xander, why you decided to hide *good* grades from us...

Emily strains two frothy, chocolate drinks from the shaker into fancy soda glasses, dropping a cherry in each.

EMILY (CONT'D)

...I just want you to know you can talk to me about it.

Stonewalling, Marigold opens a MOTOCROSS MAGAZINE. Xander opens a copy of the book "LETTERS TO A YOUNG CONTRARIAN."

EMILY (CONT'D)

No? I get it. I kept some secrets from my parents growing up. One time Beverly and I hopped a fence at the Hoover Dam and got caught... (OFF THEIR STARES) telling a story that can wait until you're older.

Marigold shares a conspiratorial glance with Xander.

MARIGOLD

Can you make us grilled cheeses?

EMILY

(ENCOURAGED) Yes! I can do that.

EXT. RACQUETBALL COURT

OOF! Dale dives for a ball while letting the racket fly out of his hands. Another point for De Soto.

SKIP

Come on, dad! Be the lion, not the (PRONOUNCED LIKE BUNDCHEN) Gisele!

Dale looks up at his son.

DALE

(MOUTHED) What are you doing?

SKIP

(LOUD AND PROUD) I'm using my spark! Based on our conversation!

DE SOTO

Is your serve, *Gisele*.

Dale fumes. Meanwhile, Skip rallies the crowd of staffers.

SKIP

My dad didn't fight his way across Iraq in Desert Storm to lose a battle on our soil. Let's cheer him on! Dale. Won't. Fail. Come on!

A few join in.

SKIP AND STAFF

Dale won't fail! Dale won't fail!

Dale is dripping with sweat. He looks at the score board: 12-3. The chants grow louder. He cracks. Dale smashes the ball, which whizzes past De Soto, who can't get a racket on it.

DE SOTO

Maybe we have a match after all.

Becca approaches. She spots Skip who's cheering wildly. She takes a deep breath and sidles up next to him.

BECCA

Hey, can I talk to you a second?

SKIP

Sure but so you know, I'm in the middle of a historic bonding moment between dad and me.

BECCA

Huh. I may be on the verge of one of those myself. What happened?

SKIP

Dad gave me a huge backhanded compliment.

One the court, Dale wins another point.

SKIP (CONT'D)

(SHOUTING) POTUS! POTUS!

The crowd joins in. Becca stares. From her POV the crowd seems to be saying...

CROWD

FETUS! FETUS!

Becca blinks her eyes and shakes her head. The crowd's chant returns to normal. As Becca hurries off, she says...

BECCA

I'll talk to you later when I'm not totally insane. Hoping that's soon!

INT. RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Emily cooks as Xander and Marigold wait expectantly.

EMILY

Grilled cheeses are almost ready.

MARIGOLD

Thanks, Emily. This is... cool.

Becca enters. She grabs Esmeralda's wine, considers downing it, but hands it back. She then surveys the scene.

BECCA

What's this?

EMILY

We're having a chat. Right now, I'm doing most of the talking, but that could change at any moment.

Becca grabs Xander's milkshake and dumps it in the sink.

BECCA

Xander is hyperstimulated by sugar. Marigold has a wheat sensitivity.

Her moment with the twins ruined, Emily seethes.

EMILY

OK. I'm... I'm gonna take a minute.

Emily exits. Becca plops down next to the twins, bumping Marigold's Motocross Magazine. It slips, exposing what Marigold was actually reading: THE POEMS OF EMILY BRONTE.

BECCA

What do you got there?

MARIGOLD

Nothing. It's embarrassing.

BECCA

Is it nothing or is it embarrassing?

ANGLE ON: The kitchen door. Emily appears in time to hear...

XANDER

(TO MARIGOLD) I'm not going to say anything. I promised. But you can tell Becca. It's Becca.

MARGIOLD

(BEAT) I'm in love. It's awful. Who can study when they feel like this?

BECCA

And Xander, you were just covering for her? Being a bro?

XANDER

I also profoundly disagree with the school's conformist grading system.

BECCA

But mainly covering for her?

XANDER

Yeah.

Hurt that the twins confided in Becca not her, Emily steels herself, reenters, and directs her anger at the sandwiches.

EMILY

Look, I'm not an idiot. I know you say they can't have this stuff--

BECCA

Because they're allergic.

EMILY

Allergic? They sneak junk food whenever you're not looking. And yet they've survived!

BECCA

No thanks to you. They're not another bunny for you to kill.

MARIGOLD

You killed that bunny?

EMILY

It was an accident!

Emily flips the grilled cheeses onto plates. She then whips off her APRON and tosses it behind her... onto the LIT STOVE.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Look, Becca, I appreciate how much you did for your brother and your sister after your mom died--

BECCA

I'm not discussing this with you.

EMILY

That's OK. But you have to accept that I'm here. And I'm going to be here. You guys can let me in. You can get close to me. No harm will come to you!

WHOOSH!!! The apron catches fire, sending flames up the wall. An ALARM blares. Secret Service rush in, spraying FOAM.

Esmeralda holds up a magazine to block the splattering fire retardant. She casually sips wine behind it.

ESMERALDA

It's so hard to relax here.

EXT. RACQUETBALL COURT

The staffers are now in a frenzy. The score: 14-14. It's Dale's serve. Marshall gestures frantically for the president's attention. Dale walks to the edge of the court.

MARSHALL

Mr. President? The plan?

DALE

There's just so much patriotic chanting. It's intoxicating.

MARSHALL

That's OK, sir. All you have to do is lose this point. He'll be happy, he'll stop blocking the deal, and we can forget this ever happened.

Dale nods and jogs back to the center of the court. Meanwhile, Skip tries leading the crowd in a WAVE. Only it looks lame in a crowd of a dozen or so onlookers.

DE SOTO

That son of yours. What an idiot.

Dale's eyes narrow. Fuck it. He SMASHES a serve that strikes De Soto in the sternum (just like in the jai alai flashback). De Soto crumples. The crowd roars. Marshall lowers his head.

SKIP

Dad, we did it! You and me! We're doers of things!

Dale crosses to Marshall, realizing the mistake he's made.

DALE

Maybe we can find a place where Skip can learn to be a doer of things, without being such a... ruiner of things.

INT. WHITE HOUSE MAILROOM

Marshall opens the creaky door into the sad, dingy mailroom. THREE NERDY MISFITS all turn and stare at the First Son.

MARSHALL

Skip, welcome to your new post.

SKIP

I can't believe this. (THEN)
I work at the White House!

Skip hugs one nerd and turns to the others.

SKIP (CONT'D)

Hi! I'm Dale Standridge Gilchrist, Junior. But everyone calls me Skip. Some say it's because my father's talents "skipped" a generation. I say it's because skipping may *look* stupid, but it's really just a more optimistic kind of walking.

MARSHALL

Skip.

Marshall waves him over. Skip SKIPS toward him.

SKIP

Yes, Marshupial?

MARSHALL

I don't want to burst your bubble, but I kind of wonder if that's even possible. This job isn't a reward.

SKIP

What do you mean? My dad asked me to use my spark for good. That's exactly what I did at the game.

MARSHALL

No. We had a plan. The president was trying to lose that game to get De Soto to support his trade deal. But you didn't know that.

SKIP

I did not know that.

MARSHALL

Your father is putting you here to keep you from doing more damage.

SKIP

Not because he was proud of me?

MARSHALL

Yeah, this is where the president puts all the people he's proud of.

Skip surveys the misfits. One picks his nose and looks at it.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. BRIEFING ROOM - EVENING

Marshall briefs the press.

MARSHALL

Oh. One more thing. (QUIETLY)
There's been another fire.

REPORTER #1

We already know about the second
fire. South Lawn. We were there.

MARSHALL

No. There's been... a third fire.

Reporters shout new questions. Marshall checks his watch.

INT. RESIDENCE - SITTING AREA

Lights. Cameras. Emily and Becca sit side-by-side. Behind them is a poster for their math initiative: "LET'S MULTIPLY!" SAVANNAH GUTHRIE's Nightly News interview is about to begin.

SAVANNAH

We're live in 15 seconds guys.

Beverly swoops in with powder.

BEVERLY

(LOUDLY) You gals need a touch up!
(QUIETLY) You two look like you're
going to murder each other. Smiles.

She exits the room as Becca and Emily force big TV grins.

INT. MAILROOM

Skip, wounded by Marshall's comments, slouches in a cubicle. The misfits stare at him with a mix of awe and curiosity. STACY (Asian, true believer in public service) approaches.

STACY

Hey, forget what Marshall said. Who
cares why you're here? What matters
is what you do here. And you can
really make a difference.

Skip considers this as Stacy signals the others. One by one, nerdy staffers place packages in Skip's mail cart.

Skip stands, inspired. He pushes his now full mail cart... toward destiny.

INT. RESIDENCE - SITTING AREA

We return to the interview already in progress.

BECCA

Girls are no less talented or capable than boys when it comes to math and science.

EMILY

Yet fewer than 20 percent of engineering students are female. Together, we can multiply the ranks of women in technical fields.

SAVANNAH

So, why'd you two team up for this particular endeavor?

Awkward pause. Emily makes a decision.

EMILY

Actually, there was a story that touched us both. We heard about a math class that lost its teacher.

Becca looks at Emily. What the hell is she talking about?

EMILY (CONT'D)

What happened was, a very talented student-teacher stepped up and taught the class for a while. But then the school found a sub.

Becca gets it. But she doesn't like it.

BECCA

Unfortunately, the sub had no clue how to handle the class.

EMILY

The sub probably felt she could do a good job if she wasn't constantly undermined by the student-teacher.

BECCA

Maybe the student-teacher felt the sub took the job for all the wrong reasons.

EMILY

Is the wrong reason love?

Quizzical stares from Savannah and her crew.

EMILY (CONT'D)

...of math and science?

SAVANNAH

So a lot of strong feelings here that ostensibly are about math and science. Back to you Brian.

BECCA

(TO SAVANNAH) Excuse us.

Becca leads Emily into a SIDE ROOM.

BECCA (CONT'D)

That was a thinly veiled metaphor! How many times are you going to air our dirty laundry on national TV?

EMILY

I don't care. At least we're finally talking about this.

ANGLE ON: Savannah and the production crew hearing every word on Emily and Becca's OPEN MICROPHONES.

BECCA (O.S.)

You want to talk? Let's talk!

SAVANNAH

(PRESSING HER EARPIECE) Hey guys, I think I have something here.

Savannah directs the cameraman to film Emily and Becca through a crack in the side room door.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - SAME TIME

Reporters pepper Marshall with questions about the third fire. An aide whispers in his ear. His eyes go wide. Marshall calmly excuses himself and, once out of view, starts to RUN.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - SAME TIME

Dale's assistant barges in and flips on the TV.

ASSISTANT

Sir, you need to see this.

INT. RESIDENCE - SAME TIME

Emily and Becca argue in hushed tones, unaware of their mics.

EMILY

Becca, you're 22! You deserve a chance to be a girl. To go to parties, to mess up a little.

BECCA

What if I did that, huh? What if one time I actually did that? Let loose and made a mistake.

EMILY

It would be healthy.

BECCA

Oh I don't think so...

EMILY

I do. You don't have to be a mother right now.

BECCA

(TEARING UP) I'm pregnant.

ANGLE ON: Savannah and her production crew, mouths agape, with the now ironic "LET'S MULTIPLY" sign right behind them.

EMILY

Are you... sure?

BECCA

I peed on a lot of sticks.

EMILY

Do I ask who the father is?

ANGLE ON: A BURLY BOOM GUY, eyes filled with tears.

BURLY BOOM GUY

Dear lord yes! Who's the father!?

Marshall bursts in. He flings open the side door. Seeing him, Emily and Becca look with horror at the mics on their lapels.

INT. ROOSEVELT ROOM

Bickering South American leaders sit at the conference table.

ARGENTINIAN

In Argentina we have a saying: The best part of Panama is a hundred-year-old hole in the ground.

PANAMANIAN

Hey, Alonzo, aren't there Nazis you should be hiding?

Door opens. All heads turn. It's Skip with his mail cart.

SKIP

Uh, are any of you (RE: ENVELOPE) ...the National Security Advisor?

COLOMBIAN

(ICY PAUSE, THEN) Skip Gilchrist. You threw a flaming chair at our colleague, the leader of Brazil, President Enrique Hernando Feliz Navidad De Soto.

SKIP

I know, and I just want to say--

DOMINICAN

Nice work! Drink with us!

The room cheers. The Dominican slams a bottle of TEQUILA on the table. Skip eyes the bottle and his mail cart, torn.

INT. OVAL OFFICE

Becca nervously approaches Dale, her eyes filled with tears.

BECCA

Dad, I'm so sorry. I... I messed up. I never mess up. I try so hard to be per--

Dale pulls Becca into a hug, surprising her.

DALE

Shh. You're still perfect.

He wipes away her tears. She smiles.

BECCA

I just never want to let you down.

DALE

Are you kidding? Skip has that market cornered.

INT. ROOSEVELT ROOM

SLAM! Empty SHOT GLASSES hit the formal conference table.

SKIP

... And you know what? I'm glad my father smashed the ball into that guy's sternum, even if it (QUOTE FINGERS) "ruined everything." Because De Soto? He's a *bully*.

PERUVIAN

Friends, Skip is right. He *is* a bully. I'm only voting no on this trade deal because De Soto's threatening to sever economic ties.

PARAGUAYAN

You too? He's got us over a barrel like a bunch of Ecuadorians.

ECUADORIAN

Hey! (THEN) Us too. He's been leaving me the worst voicemails.

SKIP

But you've taken enough harassment from this guy.

BALD SALVADORIAN

His hair looks so effortless.

SKIP

He's threatened your economies. Turned you against each other.

PERUVIAN

He stole Miguel's mistress.

ECUADORIAN

I still love her.

SKIP

Miguel still loves her. (BEAT) But now you can stand up to him.

COLUMBIAN

If we vote yes together, he can't cut ties with all of us. That would hurt his economy most of all!

SKIP

This is such a good plan.

INT. WEST WING - HALLWAY

Dale and De Soto meet at the door to the Roosevelt Room.

DE SOTO

I have the votes. Your trade deal
will crumble like your nation's
aging infrastructure.

INT. ROOSEVELT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Skip and the leaders stand as Dale and De Soto enter. Dale gives Skip a look that says, "What the hell are you doing here?" Skip's expression says, "Please don't kill me."

COLOMBIAN

Mr. President, we're ready to vote.

Everyone sits back down. Dale walks around the table behind Skip. De Soto walks to the opposite side.

DE SOTO

This should be pleasurable.

PERUVIAN

All in favor?

One by one, each hand goes up. De Soto is shocked.

DE SOTO

How did this happen?

PANAMANIAN

You divided us. Skip united us. And
that just had a better feel to it.

Skip smiles. De Soto storms out. Miguel calls after him...

MIGUEL

FYI, your mistress has herpes!

The leaders cheer. Dale puts both hands on Skip's shoulders.

SKIP

Sorry, I'm in your seat again.

DALE

No, it's OK. Stay.

Skip beams.

INT. RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Emily, Becca, Esmeralda and the twins survey the damage. Skip and Dale enter. A chunk of wall falls, splattering foam.

DALE

Maybe we should go out for dinner.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR / EXT. ROSE GARDEN - INTERCUT

MUSIC rises as the First Family of the United States eats pizza in a hole-in-the-wall restaurant in the nation's capital. Intercut with this tableau is Dale's speech from the Rose Garden, where he's flanked by South American leaders.

DALE

None of us is perfect. None of us can move through this life without making mistakes. We give in to pride. We stir up old feuds. And sometimes we just screw up.

Skip knocks over Marigold's soda. Becca cleans it up.

DALE (CONT'D)

And allies, like any family, have differences. But what matters is that we strive to give each other a chance. The benefit of the doubt.

Emily refills Marigold's soda from a pitcher and whispers...

EMILY

So. What's his name?

Marigold takes a hard look at Emily and decides to share.

MARIGOLD

(BIG SMILE) Jessica.

Emily takes this in for a moment. Then she smiles too.

DALE (V.O.)

If we can do that -- if we can see the best in one another -- then we're going to be just fine.

Through the pizza parlor window it looks like an ordinary family dinner, until we PULL BACK TO REVEAL: lights flashing, cordoned off streets, and Secret Service directing traffic. And we're reminded that this family is anything but normal.

END OF ACT THREE

TAGINT. RESIDENCE - LATER THAT NIGHT

We move from bedroom to bedroom as members of the family watch TV and react to the jokes of late night comics.

Skip, eating popcorn, laughs along with the Tonight Show:

JAY LENO (ON TV)
Skip Gilchrist. Boy. That apple
fell far from the tree, huh? And
then caused a forest fire.

Becca manages a smile as she catches this on Late Night:

JIMMY FALLON (ON TV)
Becca Gilchrist is launching a
program to promote math education.
I was gonna ask where she got the
idea, but then I realized: she's
been seeing plus signs everywhere.

Dale and Emily watch the Daily Show in bed...

JON STEWART (ON TV)
...and you hit him in the sternum?
Come on, dude, Brazil is an ally!
Though on the bright side, the
Pentagon has scheduled a friendly
game of badminton between President
Gilchrist and the Ayatollah.

...until they turn it off to make out.

And finally, we return to Skip, still loving Leno:

JAY LENO (ON TV)
So it turns out, after the big frat
house fire, Skip Gilchrist is
moving home to the White House. And
on behalf of all late night
comedians, we thank him for that.

Skip whispers happily...

SKIP
You're welcome.

*