

THE INNER CIRCLE

"Pilot"

Written by

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ACT ONE

OVER BLACK WE HEAR--

BRYCE O/S

"Are you in a relationship?"

ANDREW O/S

I'm in politics. Half the job is building relationships.

INT. POLICY -- NIGHT

SMASH INTO: The most popular bar on the U Street Corridor. Crowded with political PLAYERS and SPECTATORS. All young, good-looking, stylish. All here to see and be seen. Welcome to The Nation's Capital in 2011, where raw intelligence and proximity to power are the top rungs on the social ladder.

BRYCE O/S

The other half?

ANDREW O/S

Repairing them.

ANDREW PIERCE, 29, handsome, effortlessly charming, is at the bar sipping his second scotch. Sitting next to him is BRYCE JOHNSON, 28, her horn-rimmed glasses accentuate inquisitive eyes. She's reading questions off her reporter's note pad.

BRYCE

"What do you do for fun?"

ANDREW

I mess with reporters. Dodge questions, give outlandish answers.

BRYCE

You're on-the-record, you know. I could print these smart ass answers if I wanted to...

ANDREW

You won't.  
(off her friendly smile)  
What are you doing here?

BRYCE

You were named one of our "50 Most Beautiful". Basically I'm here because of your abs.

ANDREW

I mean what are you doing here?  
Still writing puff pieces? You're  
too good for The Style Ghetto...

She shrugs. They look up at the FLAT SCREENS behind the bar which are all showing THE LIVE NEWS FEED: Of Congress voting on a historic piece of legislation.

ANCHOR O/S

*...an eighteen month campaign, a  
brutal legislative battle... it  
wasn't easy, wasn't always pretty,  
but he got it done... what a night  
for The President...*

BRYCE

The President gonna say anything  
interesting in his speech tonight?

ANDREW

What makes you think I'd know that?

BRYCE

You wrote it.

ANDREW

I knew there was something I forgot  
to do today.

(off her unamused look)

"We did what we came here to do...  
The Bill reigns in the excesses and  
abuses of an industry... it does  
something no legislation has done  
in a hundred years..." The usual.

BRYCE

He's not gonna address any of the  
criticisms? Even the valid ones?

ANDREW

(smile fades. shrugs.)

It's a victory lap.

BRYCE

(knows he's holding back)

Andrew? Something you wanna say?

He considers her for a beat. His smile returns.

ANDREW

You're too good for Style.

She considers pushing him. Instead, she gets up to go.

BRYCE

You're such a tease. You never give me anything that's worth anything.

ANDREW

The day I give you a quote to bring to your boss is the day I stop doing my job.

**INT. THE WEST WING -- NIGHT**

A cluttered office. That Live News Feed on a small TV in the background. The volume is down. SAMANTHA "SAM" WHITMAN, 29, high energy, pretty without trying, is straightening up the office while talking on the phone. We notice The Presidential Seal on the MEMOS and BINDERS that she's organizing.

SAM

...so we'll see The Ambassador at three? Great. Again, I'm so sorry for the delay. Entirely my fault.

She hangs up the phone. Makes a note in her Planner. A moment later her boss, White House Senior Adviser MICHAEL KLINE, a youthful 42, fiercely intelligent, enters the office in a hurry. Michael is always in a hurry.

MICHAEL

I can't find my glasses...

SAM

How much money do we owe China?  
Like as a country?

MICHAEL

900 billion, give or take. Why?

SAM

I'm just curious how much our country would have to owe another country for The President's Senior Adviser to remember running into their ambassador at the Kennedy Center last month...

(off his concerned look)

It's fine. They're not gonna call our debt. He's coming in tomorrow.

Michael notices the News Feed over Sam's shoulder. He turns up the volume. They watch together as the 'Yea' count hits 216. The Bill has passed. We hear CHEERS from other offices.

MICHAEL

I need you to get the rest of The Junior Staff here. The President is throwing a little party at his place, he wants everyone there.

The look on Sam's face tells us this is a once-in-a-lifetime invite. She stares, there's no way she heard that right.

SAM

When you say 'his place'? You mean the residence? Like The White House residence? That residence?

He nods. Sam grows a smile. As Michael hurries off, Sam whips out her Blackberry and starts typing out an e-mail.

**INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS -- NIGHT**

PETER BROOKS, 28 but looks barely out of puberty, is alone in the basement stacks. RESEARCH TEXTS lie open all around him. He's typing up a MEMO on a Mac Book at a feverish pace. An old lady LIBRARIAN approaches. Hands him a slip of paper.

LIBRARIAN

Looks like we don't have this in hard copy anymore. Another casualty of the 'Digital Conversion'...

PETER

(exasperated)

Who makes these decisions, Alice? No books. No libraries. You're putting yourselves out of business.

LIBRARIAN

It's a sign of the times. Everyone wants everything fast, easy. Hard work is an antiquated notion.

PETER

We wonder why our kids are falling behind the rest of the world...

HARPER O/S

Come on, Pete, who has time to read an actual book, when you're busy telling all your friends what you just did or are about to do?

Peter finds HARPER HAWLEY, 24, a cute EMO girl, smiling at him with an ARMFUL OF BOOKS. Peter behaves around her the way nervous guys behave around cute girls they have crushes on.

PETER

Harper. Hey. What are you doing?

HARPER

Andrew checked these out when he was writing The Inaugural Address. They're ready to issue a warrant.

Peter laughs a little too hard. It's awkward.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Anyway. I don't want to bother you. Just wanted to say hi.

PETER

OK. Well? "Hi"...

Harper smiles to herself as she walks off. Peter sighs.

LIBRARIAN

You should ask that girl out. It's obvious she likes you.

PETER

No. No. I can't. We work together. She's my best friend's assistant. It would be... untoward. Just not-- you really think she likes me?

The Librarian smiles as she walks away. Peter's Blackberry buzzes. He reads Sam's e-mail. Gets that same look that she had. He shuts his Mac Book and hurries out of the library.

**EXT. ROOFTOP BAR AT THE W HOTEL -- NIGHT**

A soon-to-be iconic hotel bar. Rivals anything you'd find in New York City, only this place has The White House and The Washington Monument framed in its floor-to-ceiling windows.

NIKKI ARGO, 28, looks like a model because she was a model, is suffering through a blind date with an arrogant DOCTOR who loves the sound of his own voice.

DOCTOR

...I'm an ear, nose and throat doctor, you're a spin doctor. It's just what you do. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it.

He think he's being cute. She doesn't. Nikki finishes her martini. Holds up the empty glass to a passing WAITER.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

But I'll tell you what I told  
"Lizzy" when she called to set us  
up, all the people want is straight  
talk. We can handle hard truth, we  
don't need to be handled.

His sanctimonious smirk is the last straw.

NIKKI

You want straight talk? OK. This is  
the first and last date we'll go  
on. We won't ever be anything more  
than people who avoid each other at  
parties. Not because you're a bad  
guy, because you're "that" guy. The  
sad thing about guys like you isn't  
that you're redundant, it's that  
you all think you're unique.

The Doctor is speechless. Nikki's Blackberry buzzes. She  
reads an e-mail. Gets that same look Sam and Peter had.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I have to go. Also, when  
you name drop The First Lady, call  
her by her full name. She hasn't  
gone by "Lizzy" since grade school.

**INT. POLICY -- NIGHT**

Andrew poses for a cell phone picture with a drunk college-  
aged DEMOCRAT. He doesn't notice THE GORGEOUS GIRL stealing  
glances at him from across the bar, but we do.

COLLEGE DEMOCRAT

...top of my class, President of  
the Georgetown Democrats, I've  
volunteered on four different  
congressional campaigns. What's the  
secret, man? How do I become you?

ANDREW

(considers for a beat)  
I drink a lot of scotch.

The guy's FRIEND takes their picture. Andrew shakes both  
their hands. They walk off. He turns back to his scotch. A  
moment later Andrew's Blackberry buzzes. He reads Sam's e-  
mail. His expression doesn't change at all. He deletes it.

A Channel Five NEWS CREW enters the bar and starts setting up for one of those gimmicky "real people react to history" live reports for the late local news.

Andrew notices the platinum blonde REPORTER. Time to go. He downs his drink, throws down cash, gets up to leave.

GORGEOUS GIRL  
So, I know who you are...

He finds The Gorgeous Girl taking the empty seat beside him.

GORGEOUS GIRL (CONT'D)  
And I know why you're leaving. What I don't know is why you're drinking all alone on a night like tonight. Shouldn't you be out celebrating?

ANDREW  
You a reporter?

GORGEOUS GIRL  
I'm just a girl trying to start a conversation with a cute boy in a bar. How am I doin'?

She smiles at him the way a groupie smiles at a rock star.

**INT. THE WHITE HOUSE -- NIGHT**

The Yellow Oval Room. Where a late night celebration is being held for THE WEST WING STAFF. Lots of smiles and champagne.

White House Chief of Staff VINCENT FEIG, 45, larger-than-life, runs on adrenaline and caffeine, is holding court by the bar. An unlit cigar in his teeth, martini in hand. PEOPLE keep coming up to shake his hand and congratulate him.

Peter wanders around, taking it all in. He approaches the bar where Feig is holding court.

PETER  
Can I get a ginger ale please?

FEIG  
(overheard that)  
No, no, no. What are you pregnant?  
(holds up his martini to  
the BARTENDER)  
Do this again.

PETER

No. But, the thing is, I don't really drink that much and I don't want to get drunk in The White House. Seems kind of disrespectful.

FEIG

You know someone once characterized US-Soviet relations under Roosevelt as the "four martinis and lets have an agreement" era...

Feig puts the fresh martini in Peter's hand with a smile.

FEIG (CONT'D)

We don't disrespect our forefathers by drinking, we honor them.

Communications Director GALE SULLIVAN, 42 and motherly, perpetually calm, has found the only TV in the residence.

Gale is watching an interview with SENATOR CAROLINE WALLACE, 45 and pretty, the GOP minority leader, much more shrewd than her "regular southern gal" affect would lead you to believe.

SENATOR WALLACE

*... "something this important should be bipartisan", those are his words, not mine. He invited me to prom then left me standin' on the porch with my hair done...*

Nikki comes in with champagne. Gives a glass to Gale.

GALE

She's good.

NIKKI

Please. She's a faux populist trafficking in faux provincialism.

GALE

You're right. She's really good.  
(sips her champagne)  
You know she's coming in tomorrow? I want you in the meeting. No matter what comes out of it, we're gonna have to run an all out media blitz to support our position, you're gonna head up that campaign.

NIKKI

(smiles)  
Really?

GALE

We don't have to do the whole "I'm counting on you... you won't let me down" thing. Right?

NIKKI

I'll start laying the groundwork with my people tonight.

Peter and Feig are still at the bar. Peter's martini glass is empty. His cheeks are flushed and he's talking the way drunk people talk about the things they're really passionate about.

PETER

...yes, we'll take some heat from the environmental lobby, but the printed word is an endangered species. It really is. It should be afforded some protections. Right?

Feig just stares at him for a beat. Turns to the bartender.

FEIG

Get him a ginger ale.

Feig walks away. Sam approaches Peter. She looks concerned.

SAM

Hey, I can't find Andrew...  
(notices his flushed cheeks, glassy eyes)  
Are you drunk?

PETER

No. I'm honoring our forefathers.

Nikki walks over. Still glowing from her talk with Gale.

NIKKI

Guess who's in The Wallace Meeting?

SAM

Have you talked to Andrew?

NIKKI

No. Just guess.

SAM

Senator Wallace?  
(off Nikki's annoyed look)  
That's great. You've earned it. But he's not here and he's not answering his phone.

NIKKI  
Did you try Harper?

PETER  
(a little slurred)  
I saw Harper at the library. She  
smelled really good.  
(hears himself)  
Yeah. I'm drunk.

SAM  
She hasn't heard from him. It's  
weird. He always answers his phone.

NIKKI  
I think it's adorable that you  
still keep tabs on him. Kind of  
sad, but adorable.

Sam gives her a look. Nikki smiles.

PETER  
He'll be here. There's no way he'd  
miss this. What could possibly be  
more important?

**INT. POLICY -- BATHROOM**

A sleek, club-style bathroom that looks like it was designed  
for people to have sex in. And that's exactly what Andrew and  
The Gorgeous Girl appear on their way to doing. He has her up  
pressed against the mirror. They kiss hungrily, drunkenly.

GORGEOUS GIRL  
(undoes his belt)  
You never answered my question  
before. Why aren't you celebrating?

ANDREW  
(takes off her shirt)  
This isn't celebrating?

GORGEOUS GIRL  
It's a historic legislative  
achievement. You should be proud.

ANDREW  
Really? This is your dirty talk?

GORGEOUS GIRL  
(unhooking her bra)  
I find it stimulating. Don't judge.

ANDREW

You wearing a mic or something?

GORGEOUS GIRL

Think you would've found it by now.

(rips open his shirt)

What's wrong with The Bill?

ANDREW

There's nothing wrong with The Bill, there's just not enough right with it. It is as good as the system would allow it to be and that isn't nearly good enough...

(off her sexy smile)

Stimulated?

They pick up where they left off as we hear

MICHAEL O/S

You know people have been comparing tonight to election night...

**INT. THE WHITE HOUSE -- NIGHT**

The Staff has gathered around Michael who is making a toast.

MICHAEL

...for me, there's no comparison. Elections are about making promises. Tonight we kept one. We couldn't have done it without you. Any of it. Tonight is your night.

Michael raises his glass in Sam's direction. She smiles.

**INT. POLICY -- NIGHT**

Andrew and The Girl make their way through the crowd. PEOPLE whisper as they pass. They reach the bar. Andrew looks up at the TV where that interview with Senator Wallace is on:

SENATOR WALLACE

*...this isn't about an imperfect piece of legislation, this is about a President who was supposed to be different...*

The drunk College Democrats boo loudly. Andrew and The Girl don't. The Channel Five REPORTER starts her live report.

*SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)*  
*...a President who was supposed to transcend the petty arguments that are suffocating our democracy...*

The Girl notices The Blonde Reporter moving through the bar in Andrew's direction.

GORGEOUS GIRL  
 Andrew. You gotta go. Seriously.

But Andrew doesn't move. Wallace has his full attention.

*SENATOR WALLACE*  
*...a President who was supposed to make reason and compromise politically viable again... no, he didn't 'cause our problems, but, he gave us hope we could solve them. Tonight he took it away....*

The Reporter is only a few steps away.

GORGEOUS GIRL  
Andrew?!

The Girl takes Andrew's hand and pulls him toward the exit, but it's too late. The camera floodlight hits him, before he can even take a step. Andrew's got a MICROPHONE in his face and he's live on Channel Five.

REPORTER  
 ...celebrating with supporters, Andrew Pierce, tell me how did it feel to see that 216th vote cast?

ANDREW  
 (after an awkward beat)  
 It was great... you know this Bill reigns in excesses and abuses. It's a hundred years in the making... it's history... it feels great.

REPORTER  
 Well let me be the first to say congratulations on doing what you came here to do.

The Gorgeous Girl breathes a sigh of relief as The Reporter starts to throw it back to her anchor.

All Andrew has to do is stay quiet for another seconds. Instead, he leans over and interrupts The Reporter.

ANDREW

This isn't what we came here to do.

**INT. THE WHITE HOUSE -- NIGHT**

Sam is out on The Truman Balcony overlooking The South Lawn on her Blackberry. She's leaving Andrew yet another message.

SAM

It's me. Again. Where are you?

Sam hangs up and heads back inside. As she walks through The Yellow Oval Room we notice less people there, the ones that are there aren't smiling anymore. Something is going on.

Sam finds everyone gathered around the only TV watching a cable news network that's just picked up a breaking story. The headline reads: **SPEECHWRITER GOES OFF SCRIPT**

Sam walks up beside Nikki and Peter who watch in stunned silence as grainy footage of Andrew in the bar comes on. We pick up where we left off with the Channel Five Reporter throwing it back to the news desk. Andrew interrupts her:

ANDREW

*...this isn't what we came here to do. They can boo Wallace all they want, they haven't read The Bill, she has and she's right. It could have been better, it should have been. We got a win tonight. That's all. But we didn't come here to win, we came to lead. We were supposed to change the game... we let the game change us. We failed.*

The last two words set off a murmur in the room. People take out their Blackberrys. The party is over. Sam looks ashen. Nikki looks pissed. Peter is still smiling drunkenly.

PETER

Found Andrew.

All three of them look up from the TV and find Vincent Feig, Michael Kline and Gale Sullivan - The President's Inner Circle - all staring at them. And they don't look happy.

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWOINT. THE TOWNHOUSE -- EARLY MORNING

A stately red-brick row house where Sam, Nikki, Peter and Andrew all live together. "The Real World" by way of DuPont Circle. It's the kind of place everyone dreams of living in their 20's. Their BEER PONG TABLE is covered in memos bearing The Presidential Seal.

It's still dark when we find Sam in just an oversized tee shirt walking through the hallway. She passes Nikki asleep in her well-decorated room, designer clothes in the closets. She passes Peter snoring on top of an IKEA bed that he never quite finished putting together. Eventually she reaches--

INT. ANDREW'S ROOM -- EARLY MORNING

His bed hasn't been slept in. Sam's not surprised. She picks up a PHOTO: Of Election Night - Peter is dumping champagne all over Nikki, Andrew has his arm around Sam's waist. Never seen brighter faces or bigger smiles. Sam's eyes tell us that this photo was taken a long time ago.

*MORNING ANCHOR O/S*

*...Andrew Pierce is one of the youngest people to ever hold the title of Director of Speechwriting for The White House...*

INT. GORGEOUS GIRL'S BEDROOM -- EARLY MORNING

A CABLE NEWS MORNING SHOW on a small TV. The headline at the bottom of the screen reads: "THE INTERVIEW"

*MORNING ANCHOR*

*...rumors are swirling this morning that he will be one of the youngest to lose that title...*

Andrew buttons his shirt while watching the TV. The Girl lies naked in bed. The sheets cover what needs to be covered.

*GORGEOUS GIRL*

*I know I'm probably gonna be in the minority on this, but, I thought it was brave...*

Andrew checks his Blackberry - hundreds of e-mails, dozens of voice mails. We see the regret in his eyes.

ANDREW

It was a lot of things but it wasn't brave. It was a mistake. Pretty much everything I did last night was a mistake.

That came out harsher than he intended.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't mean...

GORGEOUS GIRL

It's OK. I get it. If you ever wanna get drunk and go on live television again, look me up.

**INT. THE TOWNHOUSE -- SUNRISE**

That CABLE NEWS MORNING SHOW is on TV on the kitchen counter. Sam, Nikki, and Peter watch together. All dressed for the day. Sam is already on her second cup of coffee. Nikki taps away at her Blackberry. Peter eats a bowl of fruit loops.

PETER

I don't get what the big deal is. All he did was speak his mind.

NIKKI

He speaks for the President. Last night, he spoke disrespectfully, critically and drunk. You don't see a problem there?

PETER

He wasn't *that* drunk.

NIKKI

Yeah. That doesn't make it better. That makes it worse.

PETER

(after a beat)

You don't really think they'll fire him, do you?

NIKKI

We'll be lucky if we all don't get fired just for knowing him.

(off his concerned look)

Don't worry. They're not gonna get the chance to fire him because I'm gonna murder him.

PETER

What do you think, Sam?

SAM

I think none of us would have jobs without him. Including The President. That should count for something.

NIKKI

Well it doesn't. Look, Andrew's brilliant and we couldn't have won without him. Yes, in the past, his antics have been amusing. Everyone loves a bad boy. Especially, Sam...

Peter laughs. Sam gives him a hard look. He stops laughing.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

But this isn't shirtless, keg stand pictures online. This was too far. Even for him.

SAM

Quiet. Both of you. He's on...

Sam turns up the TV volume as the handsome and charismatic LEN FOSTER, 39, appears live VIA Satellite from his DC offices. Peter stops eating. Nikki puts down her Blackberry.

MORNING ANCHOR

*...joining us now "The Ultimate Insider" and founding editor of PoiticalCapitol.com, Len Foster... Len, what was your reaction when you saw "The Interview"?*

FOSTER

*Shock. I mean Andrew Pierce has been one of the last guys in the room with The President before every major address, he's very much a part of The Inner Circle...*

Nikki, Sam and Peter hang on Foster's every word. They're all so focused on him that they don't notice Andrew coming home.

FOSTER (CONT'D)

*...nevertheless, my sources inside The White House are telling me that The President will ask Andrew to resign before the end of the day...*

The room deflates. Sam turns off the TV. It gets quiet.

ANDREW

Well it was a pleasure working with you all.

They all turn and see him standing there. Andrew and Sam exchange a look that says a lot, but neither says anything.

NIKKI

What were you thinking?

ANDREW

The same things I usually do. The problem appears to have been saying them out loud on television.

He smiles. No one else does. Andrew sits. Looks at Nikki.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

How bad do you think this will be for 'him'? Big picture.

NIKKI

You stepped on the news cycle for his most significant legislative accomplishment two months before an election. You're the wunderkind... you know exactly how bad this is.

ANDREW

Isn't it your job to make things sound better than they really are?

NIKKI

Straight talk. It's my new thing.

Nikki gets up and walks out. Peter stands to follow her.

PETER

Well you totally screwed me. I was gonna ask Harper to have a drink tonight. I saw her at the library yesterday and there were... well, maybe not sparks, but...

ANDREW

You can still ask her.

PETER

Not with her boss's head on a chopping block. It'll seem crass... like picking somebody up in a hospital waiting room.

Andrew smiles for the first time all day. Peter gives him a reassuring pat on the back on his way out of the kitchen. Andrew and Sam look at each other, a lot of history here.

SAM

That was stupid. Epicly stupid.  
Just a special kind of stupid.

ANDREW

I know.

SAM

You pretty much gave him no choice  
but to fire you.

ANDREW

I know.

SAM

So? How do we give him a choice?

ANDREW

I don't know.

Sam starts packing back and forth. They both think it through for a beat.

SAM

It's all about Michael. If we can  
convince him to keep you on, he can  
convince The President.

ANDREW

He needs a narrative, something he  
can sell publicly.

SAM

"Team of Rivals"?...  
(as if writing the press  
release)  
The President has a well-documented  
desire to surround himself with  
people willing to challenge him, he  
welcomes other points of view...

ANDREW

Make it a teachable moment.

SAM

Show that people can disagree  
without being disagreeable, even  
inside The White House.

For the first time all morning there is hope in Sam's eyes.

ANDREW  
You think Michael will buy it?

SAM  
If I'm selling it.

CUT TO:

Peter and Nikki on their way out the front door. Peter glances back at Sam and Andrew. He can't hear what they're saying, but their body language says it all.

PETER  
(wistfully)  
Man, they're good together...

NIKKI  
They were.

**INT. STUDIO APARTMENT -- MORNING**

Bryce is in bed watching that Morning Show where the Channel Five Reporter from "The Interview" is being interviewed. Her GIRLFRIEND comes out of the bathroom wearing a sexy nightie.

GIRLFRIEND  
You promised no work today.

BRYCE  
This isn't work. This is masochism.

GIRLFRIEND  
It's all I want for my birthday.

The Girlfriend turns off the TV and climbs into bed. They start kissing. Things start to heat up. Bryce's phone rings. She moves to answer it. Her girlfriend just gives her a look.

BRYCE  
It's Foster. I have to.

**INT. POLITICAL CAPITOL OFFICES -- MORNING**

Modern day 'reporter pit'. The office is swarming with eager young REPORTERS filing and chasing stories. Len Foster moves among his minions. He's on the phone with Bryce while checking a Blackberry. We'll intercut their conversation.

FOSTER

You know I don't have a problem with you being a mouthpiece for young Democratic DC, as long as you say what they're going to say before they tell the entire world.

BRYCE

I asked him, he held the party line, what was I supposed to do?

FOSTER

Ask a follow up. That's your job.

BRYCE

My job is to write puff pieces...

FOSTER

You know why you're still in Style? Because after missing a story last night, you're not at your desk right now looking for the next one.

He hangs up on her. Bryce stands there staring at her phone for a beat. She sighs. Then starts getting dressed.

GIRLFRIEND

You're not going in...

Bryce pulls on her jeans, a wrinkled shirt.

GIRLFRIEND (CONT'D)

If you go into that office, don't even bother coming home... it's me or him. I'm serious.

BRYCE

(finishes getting ready)  
I'll make it up to you.

Bryce heads out. Leaves her Girlfriend sitting there fuming.

**INT. KLINE HOME -- MORNING**

A well-appointed Tudor. Michael Kline is at the kitchen table scribbling notes in a leather-bound JOURNAL. His nine-year-old TWIN DAUGHTERS sit across from him eating cereal. Sam finishes making Michael's coffee. Walks it over.

SAM

...we should own it. Keep Andrew in the fold.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

It's what LBJ would tell us to do:  
"...better to have him inside the  
tent peeing out, then outside the  
tent peeing in."

The twins giggle. Michael just looks at Sam: "nice"

SAM (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Michael takes a sip of the coffee. Makes a face.

MICHAEL

What's in this?

SAM

One percent. You're on a diet. Deal  
with it. We can't just fire him...

MICHAEL

Nothing's been decided yet.

Good enough for Sam. DEANNA KLINE, Michael's wife, early forties but still a stunner, comes into the kitchen.

DEANNA

Girls go get your bags, Mommy's  
later than usual.

(after the twins leave the  
room)

You've got Jessie's conference  
covered this afternoon. Right?

Michael and Sam share a look. Deanna knows that look.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Right.

SAM

I'll just be...

Sam goes to wait outside. Michael and Deanna speak quietly.

MICHAEL

Things come up. This is the job.

DEANNA

The job is why I never ask.

Deanna walks out without another word. Michael follows a moment later. We see that he's left his journal on the table.

**INT. CHIEF OF STAFF'S OFFICE -- MORNING**

The nerve center for The White House. Run with military precision. ASSISTANTS take calls, roll calls. Everyone hustles. At the center of it all is Vincent Feig. He's barking into the phone when Peter approaches.

FEIG

Brooks. Get in here. Shut the door.

Peter does as told. He sits down. Feig doesn't.

FEIG (CONT'D)

Look, I'll make this quick. Recent events have clarified the need for a staff shake-up around here. Your department is one of the target areas for streamlining...

PETER

(his heart sinking)

Oh. I see. Is this about what happened last night?

Before Feig can respond, Peter starts talking very fast.

PETER (CONT'D)

Can I just say that, yes, Andrew is one of my best friends, and my loyalty will always be to him. Yes, I did know he wasn't happy with The Bill. But I didn't know he would do something so reckless. Had I had any clue something like that could happen. I would've warned you.

FEIG

(just stares at him)

Are you still feeling that martini?

Peter realizes he's made a miscalculation.

FEIG (CONT'D)

Your department has too many worker bees, I need a queen... you'll have a team of analysts that will report to you and you'll report to me. OK?

(Off Peter's blank look)

I'm promoting you, Brooks. This is the part where you say 'Thanks, Vince. You won't regret it'

Peter still can't find any words.

FEIG (CONT'D)

How about you just nod so I know  
you're not having a stroke?

Peter manages to nod. Feig's phone rings.

FEIG (CONT'D)

I need a Briefing Book put together  
on Green Energy incentives. Make it  
comprehensive. Get it on my desk by  
the end of the day.

**INT. COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR'S OFFICE -- MORNING**

The eyes and ears of The White House. Several TVs tuned to  
the major news networks - CNN, Bloomberg, etc. Gale Sullivan  
is just wrapping up her morning meeting with the PRESS  
SECRETARY as Nikki walks into her office.

NIKKI

I just did the background briefing  
for The Wallace Meeting and it left  
me with kind of a stupid question.

GALE

You don't ask stupid questions.

NIKKI

Why are we even having The Wallace  
Meeting?

GALE

So it's gonna be one of those days.  
(matter-of-fact)  
We need a bipartisan bill. It's  
what the voters want. Senator  
Wallace says she wants one too.

NIKKI

She doesn't. She's only saying that  
to score points for the midterms.

GALE

Maybe. But once she comes to the  
table today, *if* we play it right in  
the press, the polls won't let her  
walk away. Likely Voters want us to  
work together.

It takes Nikki all of two second to connect the dots.

NIKKI

So? You're setting her up?

GALE

Not necessarily. There's a chance she'll work with us because it's the right thing to do.

NIKKI

(smiles)

You're totally setting her up.

GALE

We need Republican support on this. One way or the other. If she won't work with us willingly, it'll be up to you to force her hand.

**INT. THE WEST WING -- MORNING**

Andrew passes through metal detectors. Takes his walk of shame through The West Wing. STAFFERS avoid eye contact. He reaches his office where Harper, his longtime assistant, can't hide the concern in her voice.

HARPER

How are you?

ANDREW

I'd be better if you weren't using the same tone people use at wakes.

He heads into his office. Finds an expensive BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE on his desk. He reads the CARD off the bottle.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

"There's only one right move for them to make, come see me after they make it. At The W." --Monty

HARPER

The body's not even cold and he's already hitting on the widow.

ANDREW

You gotta give him style points.

Harper's phone rings. She goes out to answer. A moment later Peter comes in on the verge of a panic attack.

PETER

I can't manage people. I'm not the guy in charge. I'm not even the guy behind the guy, I'm the guy behind 'the guy behind the guy' ... that's my niche, he took my niche!

ANDREW

OK. Calm down. First of all: What?

Harper comes back in. Sees Peter. Smiles.

HARPER

Hey you. Congrats on the promotion.

PETER

Oh. Hi. Yeah. Thanks.

ANDREW

He's a little nervous about losing his niche.

PETER

I'm not nervous. Who said nervous?

ANDREW

Anybody can be in charge. It's all about confidence. You don't have to know what you're doing, they just have to think you do.

HARPER

Yeah, whenever you ask for a report or something, just ask the same way you would ask a girl on a date... you've asked girls on dates, right?

PETER

Yes. Once. In seventh grade. We saw "Jumanji". Her mom drove.

HARPER

OK...  
(has an idea)  
Ask me out.

PETER

What?

HARPER

As an exercise. Unleash the confident leader inside.

ANDREW

Yeah, I don't think this is...

HARPER

This is the muscle he's gonna be using. We need to warm it up.

Peter clears his throat. He tries to sound confident, ends up sounding like a bad soap actor trying to sound confident:

PETER

We should date. You and me. How would you like to...

(hears himself)

I'm gonna get fired.

Peter looks even more nervous.

ANDREW

On our first day together, I took Harper to lunch at some restaurant I could hardly afford, and I told her I didn't know what I was doing anymore than she did, so we were gonna have to figure this place out together. You remember that?

(she does)

Just be honest. Level with them.

You'll be fine.

Peter looks a little less nervous. Sam appears in the door.

SAM

They're ready for you.

**INT. SENIOR ADVISER'S OFFICE -- MORNING**

Michael Kline's Office. The closest to The Oval. Feels more like a Professor's study. Sam leads Andrew into the room where Michael, Gale and Feig are waiting. They sit. A beat.

ANDREW

So? How was everyone's evening?

FEIG

I swear to God if you try to joke your way out of this...

ANDREW

What do you want? A pound of flesh?

(looks at Michael)

I screwed up. I'm sorry.

SAM

Personally I think cutting Andrew loose sends the wrong message.

FEIG

As much as it pains me to admit,  
and as much as I'd like to cause  
Andrew physical pain, I agree. If  
we're still supposed to be the post-  
partisan grownups, we gotta eat it.

GALE

Obviously you'll have to do damage  
control, print, TV. Sober this  
time. We make it a teachable  
moment. Move on.

Sam smiles. Michael doesn't.

MICHAEL

The President wants to keep Andrew,  
but, he wants to use this as an  
opportunity to change tact...

Gale and Feig share a look. Sam's smile fades a little as  
Michael looks at Andrew.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You'll do press, but you'll come  
out swinging: "We failed" because  
the other side made a political  
calculation to say no to everything  
we proposed. Country be damned.  
(off Andrew's look)  
We're done trying to change the  
game, we're playing to win.

ANDREW

What? No. Wait. Come on, Michael.  
In the beginning. Iowa. What did we  
say? "How can you love your  
country, if you hate the other half  
of it?" If this President can't  
bridge the divide, if he can't fix  
the system, then...

MICHAEL

No one can.

ANDREW

He can't sink to their level.

MICHAEL

He has tried harder than...

ANDREW

Trying is not enough.

MICHAEL

(explodes)

It's not enough to have one reasonable person reaching across the aisle, you need someone on the other side willing to take his hand. And he doesn't have that.

Silence. Andrew and Michael stare each other down. Finally:

ANDREW

I meant what I said. I won't lie.

MICHAEL

You can either accept The President's new direction or he'll accept your resignation.

**INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE -- MORNING**

Andrew packs his things in a CARDBOARD BOX. Sam comes in.

SAM

Do what they're asking. Swallow your pride. Save your job. God knows you've done it before.

ANDREW

Well I don't want to do it anymore. Is that so insane? To not want to do things like go on TV and lie?

SAM

How did this job go from being "the most important thing any of us will ever do", to being a job that you can just walk away from?

ANDREW

It's not the job I signed up for. Not anymore.

She takes a breath. Watches him pack his box for a moment.

SAM

So? What are you gonna do?

ANDREW

I don't know. I just lost the job a half hour ago. Probably the DNC, maybe the private sector. It'd be nice to make a little money.

SAM

Oh yeah. Totally. You could probably get your own cable news show out of all this. At least a book deal. Cash in, baby. Get paid.

ANDREW

Not everyone is as fortunate as you, Sammy.

(off her cold stare)

It's not a character flaw. It's just a fact. You're basically royalty, Sam. You never have to worry about 'getting paid'. For God sakes your father was...

SAM

This isn't about my father. And it isn't about me. It's about you. This is what you do. When things don't turn out exactly the way you want them to, you find a reason to walk away... you'd rather chase an ideal than deal with reality.

ANDREW

(after a beat)

Don't make this about you and me.

SAM

I wasn't talking about you and me.

(she was)

Why? Do you see a pattern?

Andrew knows better than to say anything to that.

SAM (CONT'D)

What do you want out of life, Andrew? You want to write poetry? Travel Europe with a backpack?

ANDREW

I know what I don't want.

He's being sincere but she thinks he's being a smart ass.

SAM

Fine. Give up. Run away. Go find yourself. Write your book. Do whatever you want. I'm done caring.

She slams the door. Leaves him alone packing up his box.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. PENTHOUSE AT THE W HOTEL -- DAY

The most expensive suite in the hotel has been turned upside down. The remnants of a party. Top-shelf bottles on tables.

MONTGOMERY "MONTY" KNOX, 30, handsome, is pacing around the suite on a wireless earpiece wearing only a hotel bathrobe. A small staff of BROKER types attends to several computers.

The door is propped open. Andrew walks into the room.

MONTY

...these companies are gonna keep making money as long as people keep getting sick. Let everyone else run scared. We're holding...

(sees Andrew. Smiles big.)

I gotta go. There he is!

Monty runs over. Wraps Andrew in a big hug.

ANDREW

The champagne was a classy touch.

MONTY

You probably need something a little stronger, huh?

Monty starts looking through those top-shelf bottles.

ANDREW

It's ten in the morning, Monty.

MONTY

Never stopped you before.

(to his staff)

Sophomore Year. Marketing 351 final. This guy gets hot on the craps table at Foxwoods the night before. We end up staying 'til 10 in the morning. Get into class halfway through the test, can't see straight. He still aced it.

ANDREW

What are you doing here?

MONTY

You fell down last night, I'm here to pick you up.

ANDREW

(knows what he means)  
I can't work for you. You're not even wearing a shirt. And since when do you have offices in Washington?

MONTY

Since Washington started trading stocks.  
(that got his attention)  
This fund wouldn't be here without you. We built the model together.

ANDREW

It was theoretical for me.

MONTY

Which is why my name will always be first when they write about us.  
(off Andrew's smile)  
I want to leave my mark on history. I know you do too, that's why you came here, that's why everyone comes here. But, face it, the only time anybody remembers any staffer's name in this town is when they're getting indicted...

ANDREW

That's not fair to the people who have affairs.  
(beat)  
What's this about? You're not here out of loyalty, you want something.

Monty smiles. Loving that he knows him so well.

MONTY

You know how much money the government spent last year? About \$1.4 trillion. Discretionary. Line items in the billions. And whose 'discretion' are we talking about? You have a unique insight into the CEO of the single largest economic driver in the world.

ANDREW

You want me to tell you where I think the government is going, so you can get there first?

Monty smiles. He knows he's got Andrew on the hook.

MONTY

This is our chance to build something special, you and me. Like it was always supposed to be. Like it would've been if you hadn't followed that girl to that speech.  
(can't help himself)  
How is Sammy by the way?

ANDREW

I'm not really her favorite person right now.

MONTY

I'm still her least favorite person though, right?

They share a smile. Andrew considers it all for a beat.

ANDREW

I have a DNC lunch meeting already set, so, I can't say yes yet.

MONTY

Take the day. I'm having a thing at the bar tonight. Say yes there.

**INT. KOMI RESTAURANT -- DAY**

A foodie Mecca. Impossible to get a reservation. Price fixed menu. The place is crowded, busy, loud. Peter and his TEAM OF ANALYSTS are sitting together. Everyone looks confused. STACY KRISTOL, 31, smarter than most but thinks she's smarter than everyone, looks more annoyed than anything.

ANALYST #1

How'd you get us in here? Isn't there like a 6 month waiting list?

PETER

Well I wanted our first team lunch to be special, so I pulled some strings. Before I forget, if anyone asks, The President is considering having his birthday dinner here.

They all look a little less confused.

PETER (CONT'D)

Look I'm gonna be honest with you guys, I don't know what I'm doing.  
(off the confused looks)  
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)  
 So we all have to figure it out.  
 Together. As a team.

ANALYST #1  
 How are we supposed to figure out  
 your job?

PETER  
 What I'm trying to say is, I'm not  
 qualified to do this, I didn't even  
 want the job, I only took it 'cause  
 I thought I was getting fired.

A murmur of unrest. Peter can feel himself losing them.  
 Honesty isn't working. He shifts to projecting confidence:

PETER (CONT'D)  
 It doesn't matter how I got the  
 job. I have it. I'm in charge.  
 (he has them for a moment)  
 There are too many worker bees in  
 this department. We need a queen.

And he's lost them. The offended Analysts all get up and head  
 for the door, mumbling to each other under their breath.

PETER (CONT'D)  
 Wait, no. Listen we need to put  
 together a Briefing Book on short  
 and long term incentives...

Too late. They're gone. The only person who stays behind is  
 Stacy Kristol. Peter assumes it's because she wants to help.

PETER (CONT'D)  
 Thanks for staying, Stacy. On this  
 Book, if you take the long term, I  
 can handle the short term...

STACY  
 Yeah I'm not gonna do that. I just  
 wanted to let you know that when  
 you fall on your face. I'll be here  
 to take your job.

Stacy walks out. Leaving Peter all alone when the HEAD CHEF  
 personally delivers the first course.

**INT. 'POLITICAL CAPITOL' OFFICES -- DAY**

Bryce is on the phone in her cubicle. She looks stressed.

BRYCE  
How was the blind date?

**INT. THE WEST WING -- DAY**

Nikki is reviewing her notes for The Wallace Meeting, while on the phone with Bryce. We'll intercut their conversation.

NIKKI  
I told him he was redundant.

BRYCE  
Nice. What'd "she" think of that?

NIKKI  
I've managed to avoid her today.  
Only six years to go. So what's up?

BRYCE  
I need a story. Something to get me  
out of the dog house. You got  
anything? Can I swing by?

NIKKI  
Yeah. But not now. I've got The  
Wallace Meeting.

BRYCE  
You're in that? Look at you, big  
time.

NIKKI  
Come by for lunch. We'll find you  
something.

BRYCE  
(hesitant)  
It can't just be talking points to  
reformat. It's gotta be exclusive.

NIKKI  
Anything I give to you, I won't  
give to anyone else. I promise.

BRYCE  
You're the best. I wish you liked  
the girls.

NIKKI  
Me too. Is there like a procedure I  
can have? Or a pill I can take?

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

We come in as the last MAN on The President's SECRET SERVICE DETAIL is heading out. Michael is the last man in the room, he's reviewing a draft of a SPEECH with a red pen. Several lines are crossed out, he's scribbling notes in the margins.

Sam walks in as Michael sets aside the speech with a sigh.

SAM

How's the speech coming along?

MICHAEL

I'm starting to remember why we put up with Andrew for so long

They share a smile. Sam notices all that red ink.

SAM

What about the ideas you sketched out at breakfast?

MICHAEL

They're still at breakfast.

SAM

I'll go over at lunch.

MICHAEL

They weren't any good anyway, don't worry about it.

SAM

Don't be ridiculous. I'll get...

MICHAEL

I said don't worry about it.

Sam is startled by his tone. He gets up and gathers himself.

SAM

Senator Wallace is in The Roosevelt Room.

**INT. EMPTY OFFICE -- DAY**

Peter walks in. He's surprised to find Harper there. She's organizing desk supplies and rearranging furniture.

PETER

Oh. Hi. Sorry. Feig told me this was my new office?

HARPER

It is.

(just keeps organizing)  
That exercise we did this morning  
got me thinking, about you and me.

PETER

It did?

HARPER

Yeah. I mean we've known each other  
for so long, we're complements, it  
just makes sense. I've been waiting  
for you to come ask me officially  
all day, I got tired of waiting.

He thinks she's talking about them dating.

PETER

Wow. I didn't know you felt that  
way. I would've made a move.

HARPER

You should have.

PETER

I was actually planning to. But  
with Andrew...

HARPER

He would want us to be together.

He smiles. Can't believe this is happening.

HARPER (CONT'D)

So? Are we doing this?

PETER

Yeah. Sure.

HARPER

Great. I already ran it by Feig,  
but you should talk to him.

PETER

What now?

HARPER

I'll be your assistant, but I still  
officially work for him, so...

PETER

(realizing what he's done)  
My... assistant.

HARPER

We're gonna be great together.

Peter sighs. Shakes his head. What else could go wrong?

**INT. SENIOR ADVISER'S OFFICE -- DAY**

Sam returns to her desk just as an INTERN leaves a box of Andrew's files for Michael to review. The expensive bottle of champagne is conspicuous. Sam picks up the bottle. She finds the note. Her eyes narrow as she reads it. Sam grabs her purse. Walks over to one of Feig's ASSISTANTS.

SAM

I have to run over to Michael's,  
can you cover my desk?

**INT. THE ROOSEVELT ROOM -- DAY**

The most austere meeting room in The West Wing. Portraits of FDR and Teddy hang on opposite walls. Senator Caroline Wallace and her GOP ASSOCIATES sit across from Michael, Gale, and Feig. Nikki hands out BINDERS (that contain memos, stats, etc.) to Wallace and her people. She sits beside Gale. Starts diligently taking notes. Her eyes never leave The Senator.

MICHAEL

...if you'll introduce a Reform  
Bill, we'll support it. This is one  
of those issues where we can find  
common ground for the common good.

Wallace smiles to herself. Nikki and Gale both catch it.

GALE

Do you disagree, Senator?

SENATOR WALLACE

No. We have consensus. We've had  
consensus. That's not the issue.  
The issue is it's in your interest  
to compromise before the election,  
it's in mine not to. Am I wrong?

FEIG

Honestly, Caroline. I think you're  
pissed about being shut out on the  
last one, so you're gonna take it  
out on this one.

SENATOR WALLACE  
Honestly, Vincent. If y'all hadn't  
screwed up the politics so bad on  
the last one, we wouldn't even be  
talking about this one.

No one denies this.

SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)  
We can work together on this. We  
should. But not before November.

Nikki makes no effort to mask her contempt.

FEIG  
We don't need you, we have the  
votes, we're in the majority...

SENATOR WALLACE  
For now. And if you didn't need me,  
I wouldn't be here.

Nikki can feel the tables turning. Looks at Gale.

SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)  
Why should I help you out after you  
just shut me out?

NIKKI  
Because it's the right thing to do.

Everyone turns and looks at her. Wallace smiles pleasantly.

SENATOR WALLACE  
It's real easy to talk about  
bipartisanship, when y'all are the  
only ones who benefit from it.

MICHAEL  
You really gonna put the politics  
before the policy?

SENATOR WALLACE  
You really gonna lecture me about  
it after you just did it?

And that's that. Michael smiles ever so slightly.

MICHAEL  
Always good to see you, Caroline.

**EXT. PENTHOUSE AT THE W HOTEL -- DAY**

Monty reviews property listings with his REAL ESTATE AGENT.

MONTY

...no, I don't need five bathrooms,  
but I like the location. Offer two  
million, see what they say.

The Real Estate Agent heads out to the balcony to make the call. We hear several loud knocks at the door. Monty's ASSISTANT answers it. Sam walks in. Monty sees her. Smiles.

MONTY (CONT'D)

Sammy. I was wondering how long it  
would take you to come find me.

SAM

How much did you offer this time?

MONTY

More than I needed to. You look  
great. Did you change your hair?

SAM

When are you gonna give this up?  
He's never coming to work for you.  
He's not like you.

MONTY

Everyone is like me, most people  
just won't admit it. And if you  
really believed he'd never work for  
me, you wouldn't be here.

SAM

You haven't changed since college.

MONTY

Neither have you. Only I mean that  
as a compliment.  
(that almost got a smile)  
He's coming by tonight. You should  
too. It'll be like old times.

SAM

I'll pass.

MONTY

He says you're pissed at him. You  
shouldn't be. He didn't quit you,  
he quit a job.

That landed with her. She looks away.

MONTY (CONT'D)

He's never going to be the guy you think he is, Sammy.

SAM

He's already so much more than the guy you think he is.

**INT. THE WEST WING -- DAY**

Nikki and Bryce are having lunch together in Nikki's office. Bryce has her reporter's note pad open. Nikki's eyes keep darting to her TV where cable news is running clips of Senator Wallace answering reporter's questions at the press stakeout following the meeting.

*SENATOR WALLACE*

*...they'll try to pressure me to deal hastily, but the voters know this is too important to rush...*

BRYCE

What about Andrew? Any word on where he's gonna land?

Nikki's eyes are on the TV. She's not paying attention.

*SENATOR WALLACE*

*...I'm sayin' let's take our time and write the best bill we can...*

BRYCE

Nikki? Hello? My exclusive?

NIKKI

(eyes still on the TV)  
God. She's unbelievable. You should have heard her in there. She basically threatened to stall until after the election to spite us.

BRYCE

Really?

NIKKI

She's disgusting.

Bryce can't believe Nikki just said that. She gets quiet.

**INT. RESTAURANT -- DAY**

Andrew is at a table by himself, waiting for someone.

JACK MCMANUS, 30, basically a Southern Conservative version of Andrew, walks in. He sees Andrew. Approaches his table.

MCMANUS

You don't return my calls anymore?  
Been leavin' messages all morning.  
Wish I could say I was sorry to  
hear what happened.

It's clear from the look on Andrew's face when McManus sits at his table that there's no love lost between these two.

ANDREW

You just stop by to gloat, McManus?

MCMANUS

I got a meeting for you.

ANDREW

There's no meeting you could set  
that I would take.

MCMANUS

Senator Wallace is a fan. We got an  
opening. She wants you to fill it.

Andrew laughs. McManus doesn't.

ANDREW

You're serious? No. Absolutely not.

MCMANUS

Just take the meeting, hear her  
out. What do you got to lose?

ANDREW

What does she have to gain?

McManus pulls up a chair.

MCMANUS

You're here to meet with someone  
from your side. Right? DNC?  
(off Andrew's nod)  
And they're gonna find you a good  
job where you can keep doin' good.  
And that revolving door will just  
keep on turnin'... And we all  
wonder why nothin' changes.

McManus gets up to go. Gives Andrew a BUSINESS CARD.

MCMANUS (CONT'D)

The offer expires at the end of the day. If you ever meant any of that crap you wrote, give her a call.

He reads the card: "The Office of Senator Caroline Wallace"

**INT. KLINE HOME -- DAY**

Sam lets herself into Michael's house with her key. She finds Michael's Journal on the table right where he left it. She turns to go, but stops when she notices a MAN'S SUIT JACKET lying in the foyer. She picks it up.

A moment later a SHIRTLESS MAN with a post-coital calm about him walks into the hallway. He and Sam stare at each other.

Then Deanna emerges with her blouse unbuttoned.

DEANNA

Sam...

Sam turns and practically runs out of the house.

**END OF ACT THREE**

ACT FOURINT. SENIOR ADVISER'S OFFICE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Michael is on his couch, looking like a writer with writer's block. He's got another draft of that SPEECH in-front of him, red ink all over it. Nikki and Gale are in the room trying to help him work through the problem.

MICHAEL

...the speech just needs to reaffirm The Bill without sounding like we're defending it. It has to be subtle, maybe a quote?

Sam walks in. She's got Michael's Journal in hand. She's startled to find Nikki and Gale there. She stays in the doorway, holding The Journal, out of Michael's sight.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

There you are. Everything OK?

SAM

Sorry. I got caught up. I'm here if you need me.

Sam sits at her desk. After a beat of consideration, she buries Michael's Journal in one of her desk drawers.

NIKKI

What about Lincoln? "Government should do for the people what they cannot do better for themselves"  
(off their intrigued look)  
You can argue about people being able to do a lot of things better for themselves, but fixing a 33 trillion dollar insurance system? Kind of had to be us.

Michael and Gale share a smile. A nod. That will work.

MICHAEL

Sam? Can you get the writers?

Nikki is grinning from ear-to-ear when Feig comes barging into Michael's office and turns on his TV.

FEIG

We have a problem.

ON TV: Len Foster is live VIA satellite from his offices giving an 'exclusive' breaking story to a CABLE NEWS HOST.

FOSTER

*...an Aide who was in the meeting with Senator Wallace, saying she threatened to stall Reform out of spite... calling The Senator quote "disgusting"...*

CABLE NEWS HOST

*Senator Wallace just released a statement denouncing The White House for not only leaking, but distorting, what were supposed to be closed-door negotiations...*

Feig turns off the TV. Everyone looks at Nikki as the color drains from her face.

**INT. PETER'S OFFICE -- LATE AFTERNOON**

Peter is holed up in his office surrounded by books, typing feverishly fast on his Mac Book. Harper walks in. She watches him working like a mad man for a moment.

HARPER

Delegate the long term incentives.  
It'll be done in like an hour.

Peter types even faster.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Talk to your team.

PETER

I'm done talking. Talking is what got me into this. I accepted a promotion, I didn't want and am in no way qualified for. I lead one team meeting that my entire team walked out on when I compared them to drone bees. And, to top it off, I hired you to be my assistant so now there's no way I can ever ask you out without coming off as a sleazy...

(realizes what he said)

...not that I'd ever want to ask you out, not because you're not attractive. You're very attractive, oh God, that's sexual harassment, isn't it? I'm sexually harassing my assistant, I'm such a cliché...

He turns bright red.

PETER (CONT'D)  
 You can quit, you should quit...  
 no, you know what, I'll quit.

Peter shuts his Mac Book, gathers his research books and leaves his own office before Harper can even say anything.

**INT. 'POLITICAL CAPITAL' OFFICES -- SUNSET**

Bryce is reading her story that's driving the news cycle. Thousands have read it, but she doesn't look happy about it. Her phone rings. She checks the ID. Braces herself.

**INT. THE WEST WING -- SUNSET**

Nikki's in her office on the phone with Bryce. She's furious.

NIKKI  
 I'm just calling to tell you to  
 never call me again. For anything.

BRYCE  
 I didn't think they'd jump on the  
 "disgusting" line. Honestly, I...

NIKKI  
 You made me look like an amateur. I  
 was talking to you as a friend.  
 Like always. You sold me out.

BRYCE  
 You were on-the-record. What was I  
 supposed to...

NIKKI  
 Rationalize it however you want.  
 You sabotaged me to get yourself  
 featured on the home page.

BRYCE  
 Nikki, I'm sorry, just...

NIKKI  
 Go to Hell.

Nikki slams the phone down. Bryce sighs. Looks regretful.

**INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- SUNSET**

Somewhere in the basement of The West Wing. Peter is by himself, surrounded by books, typing on his Mac Book.

His eyes keep darting to the clock on the wall. Sam finds him there. She walks in with a smile.

SAM

So Harper's looking for you,  
apparently she's worried you quit?

Peter just gives her a look that says "Don't ask". Sam sits down next to him. He keeps typing. So he's only half listening to Sam as she struggles to talk about Michael.

SAM (CONT'D)

So, hypothetically, say you're friends with someone you work with, and you know something that they need to know, but, this thing will be painful for them to hear and awkward for you to tell them, don't you have a professional obligation not to tell them? Since telling them will affect your working relationship? Or...

(frustrated)

Is any of this making sense?

Peter stops working and looks at her with understanding.

PETER

It is. And we don't need to talk in hypotheticals. We both know what this is about.

SAM

We do?

PETER

And I'm glad you're facing it head on, we're all thinking it.

SAM

We are?

PETER

Let's get it out on the table. You and Andrew broke up because of his job and now he doesn't have the job anymore, so it's like "Are you guys back together now?" I mean obviously you still love him. So I say screw work, screw politics, you should just tell him how you feel. The world was a better place when you guys were sleeping together.

Silence. He can tell from the look on her face that:

PETER (CONT'D)  
 This isn't about Andrew, is it?  
 (off Sam shaking her head)  
 I really gotta stop talking.

He goes back to typing. Sam sits there thinking for a beat.

SAM  
 You hear Monty's in town?

PETER  
 (knows what that means)  
 You don't think Andrew would...

SAM  
 I don't care. Contrary to popular  
 belief I'm not in love with him.  
 (off his concerned look)  
 If he wants to skim millions off  
 our economy and sleep with models,  
 that's his choice. He's a grown up.

PETER  
 No. He's not. He's Andrew. He's a  
 genius and all that, but he is not  
 good at making good choices.  
 (beat)  
 You gotta talk to him. I'm serious.

SAM  
 What do you want me to say?

PETER  
 Whatever you always say when he's  
 about to do something stupid.

Sam considers for a beat. Gets up to go. On her way out:

SAM  
 It wasn't just the job.

**INT. ROOFTOP BAR AT THE W HOTEL -- NIGHT**

Monty has rented out the entire bar. The vibe isn't so much  
 stuffy political fundraiser as it is New York City club.  
 Andrew is out on the terrace that overlooks The White House.  
 He just looks at it for a moment. Monty walks up beside him.

MONTY  
 You ready to say yes?

Andrew finishes his drink. Looks away from The White House.

ANDREW

No contracts. I can walk away whenever I want. I hire my own people. And you wear clothes to every meeting we have...

MONTY

I can handle that.

ANDREW

Then I'm not ready to say no.

Monty nods. Good enough for him. He takes Andrew's empty scotch glass and heads off to the bar.

A moment later Sam walks out on the terrace. Andrew sees her walking over. He starts to say something. She stops him.

SAM

Just let me talk for a minute. I was wrong to make what happened today about you and me. And, yes, in some deep dark, repressed place, I'm probably still pissed about the way we ended, but I shouldn't have made this about that... I'm sorry.

(beat)

"This is more important than you and me. This thing that we're doing." Your words.

ANDREW

Poorly chosen.

SAM

No. You were right then and I'm right now. You're too valuable to become just another self-centered millionaire. Whatever it is inside you that made you join the campaign or wrote "we work today for someone else's tomorrow" is still there.

He smiles.

SAM (CONT'D)

Look if you really think we failed, that the fight is over, then you're smart to walk away.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

But if you think there's even a chance that the tone can change, that rational adults can come together to solve real problems, don't you owe it to yourself to keep throwing punches?

She leaves him that thought. Andrew watches her walk away.

After a moment he reaches into his pocket and pulls out Senator Wallace's business card. He looks at it.

**EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. -- NIGHT**

The Monuments. The Memorials. The Capitol Building. We end up at a SENATE OFFICE BUILDING, most of the windows are dark.

**INT. SENATE OFFICE BUILDING -- NIGHT**

Andrew is waiting in an office looking at a PICTURE of Ronald Reagan when Senator Caroline Wallace walks in.

SENATOR WALLACE

So sorry to keep you waiting, you know how it goes around here...

She walks over and extends her hand. He takes it warily.

ANDREW

Nice to meet you, Senator.

SENATOR WALLACE

Oh please. Call me Caroline.

**END OF ACT FOUR**

ACT FIVEINT. SENATOR WALLACE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Andrew sits across from Senator Wallace. There's a genuine charm and ease to The Senator that her public persona lacks.

ANDREW

Due respect, Senator. But what's this about? What's the angle here? Make headlines? Steal a news cycle or two heading into the midterms?

SENATOR WALLACE

You don't mean that much, honey. I'll be Majority Leader in two months with or without you.

ANDREW

Why I am here? Why do you want me to write for you?

SENATOR WALLACE

Short answer. The President gave good speeches when he was in this chamber, he gave great speeches on that campaign. The difference? You.

ANDREW

What's the long answer?

SENATOR WALLACE

It's been awhile since I've conducted a job interview, but I'm pretty sure I'm supposed to ask the questions. You don't mind, do you?  
(off his apologetic nod)  
Why did you drop out of Yale?

ANDREW

To work on the campaign.

SENATOR WALLACE

Now you're not gonna start lyin' to me on your first day, are you? You left in December. The President didn't announce his candidacy 'til February. There was no campaign to work on. So? Why'd you drop out?

ANDREW

A friend of mine was starting a business. He wanted me to run it.

SENATOR WALLACE

Did the business fail?

ANDREW

Last I checked, he was managing around ten billion in assets.

SENATOR WALLACE

And you gave that up to make phone calls and knock on doors?

ANDREW

There was also a girl...

SENATOR WALLACE

There always is. I remember reading somewhere you grew up in a pretty small town... West Virginia, right? You do a good job hidin' the accent, but it's still there, if you know what you're listenin' for.

Andrew is taken aback. Clearly this isn't a part of his past that he likes to talk about.

ANDREW

Doesn't mean I'm not proud of where I came from.

SENATOR WALLACE

So we've got something in common.

They share a smile.

SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)

I grew up on a farm in Georgia. My daddy raised cattle. His neighbor and rival, Jack Ford, did the same. There was an old fence along the property line. Every now and then, it would break and our cattle would wander over and get mixed in with the Ford cattle or vice versa. Whenever that happened, Daddy and Jack and their men would go out and they'd have to separate the cattle and fix the fence. This was no easy task. We're talkin' hundreds of cows, spread out over dozens of acres. It cost money and time. But they didn't have ten meetings about it, or worry whose side the breach came from. No fingers were pointed, not a mean word exchanged.

(MORE)

SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)

They just got to the business of separating and fixing.

(off his intrigued look)

There are people in this world who know how to fix a fence and there are people who don't. I think you know how.

This gets a smile from him. She returns it.

SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)

That was the long answer.

McManus comes in. Points to his watch. She gets up. Scribbles an address down on a post it.

SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I have to run. There's a fundraiser tonight. If your answer is yes, I'd like you to come by. If it's no, you should still come by but you'll have to bring \$500.

They share a smile. She hands him the post it.

**INT. CHIEF OF STAFF'S OFFICE -- NIGHT**

Peter walks in looking completely exhausted and disheveled. Feig is just finishing up a call.

PETER

About The Briefing Book...

(bracing himself)

I wasn't able to finish.

FEIG

(picks up a BRIEFING BOOK)

This came down from your office a half hour ago. Are you telling me these aren't comprehensive?

Peter flips through the book masking his total surprise.

PETER

No... I'm not...

FEIG

What are you telling me?

PETER

I wasn't able to finish... reviewing them, so they might not be that polished. Typos and such.

FEIG

You had one day. Frankly I'm amazed you were able to delegate and get it done. Knowing you, I figured try to do the whole thing on your own.

Peter laughs a little too laugh hard.

**INT. PETER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT**

Harper has decorated the drab empty space with furniture, a few plants, it's a proper office now. She's got her coat on and his just finishing up for the day. Peter walks in. He's looking at her with a "what did you do?" smile.

HARPER

I only did it to buy you time. Vince won't even read 'til the weekend, if you want to finish on your own, I can have one of his assistants swap out the binders when you're done. I tried to tell you but I couldn't find you.

PETER

How'd you do it?

HARPER

I asked your team. A revolutionary concept, I know. They all pitched in. Well, almost all of them...

Peter follows her disapproving gaze to Stacy across the hall. Peter takes a breath for the first time all day.

PETER

Thank you.

HARPER

It's what I'm here for.

PETER

I'm sorry about that whole sexual harassment thing, that was not my best moment interacting with a woman. Sadly, not my worst either.

HARPER

It's fine. And for the record I've always thought you were "attractive" too.

Peter smiles. The moment is there. He decides to seize it.

PETER

You want to go get a drink? Or...

Before Harper can say anything, her DATE, a tall handsome Staffer, appears in the doorway.

DATE

You ready? Movie starts at eight.

Harper smiles sweetly at Peter as she heads out.

HARPER

Another time?

PETER

Another time.

They leave. Peter sits there a moment longer. Kind of bummed but proud of himself.

**INT. MICHAEL KLINE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT**

Michael is putting on his suit jacket and fixing his tie when Sam walks in and closes the door.

SAM

I need to tell you something.

He turns and sees her standing there holding his Journal.

MICHAEL

I told you not to worry about that.

SAM

Please. Just listen. When I got to the house. There was a man...

MICHAEL

His name is Roger Meeks.

Sam stops talking and just stares at him.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

He's a partner at her firm. She's in love with him. Or so she says.

SAM

You know?

MICHAEL

Our marriage has been over for awhile. What you see is a performance for you, for the girls.

SAM

I don't understand. If it's over why haven't you...

MICHAEL

We're working on it. Quietly. Nothing will be official 'til after the midterms. I don't want to be a distraction to The President. He'll feel responsible. He'll lose focus. We can't afford that right now.

SAM

Are you OK?

He puts on a brave face. Manages a smile for her.

MICHAEL

You look like you need a drink.

He pulls out the expensive bottle of champagne. Gives it to her. She smiles appreciatively.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry you had to find out this way. But I'm glad you did... I don't like lying to you.

Sam walks over and gives him a hug. It surprises both of them. They hold each other just long enough for us to notice.

**INT. THE WEST WING -- NIGHT**

Nikki is sitting in her office in the dark. A beautiful, elegantly-dressed WOMAN, 47, walks in and sits down.

ELEGANT WOMAN

You know you all spend way too much time here as it is. If you're going to wallow, you should wallow in the comfort of your own home...

(off Nikki's slight smile)

You were wrong, you know.

NIKKI

(smile fading)

I have to watch what I say to around reporters...

ELEGANT WOMAN

You weren't wrong for saying it to a reporter. You were wrong to say it. You called her disgusting.

(MORE)

ELEGANT WOMAN (CONT'D)  
 Not her politics, not her behavior,  
 not her wardrobe... you get me?

NIKKI  
 Yes, Ma'am.

ELEGANT WOMAN  
 If Caroline wants to compromise,  
 she'll compromise. If she doesn't,  
 then she won't. It really is that  
 simple. People can always find a  
 reason not to do something hard...  
 (beat)  
 We're not here to win news cycles,  
 we're here to govern.

Nikki nods appreciatively, can't quite manage a smile. The Woman gets up and heads for the door. Stops. Turns back.

ELEGANT WOMAN (CONT'D)  
 I almost forgot. How was the date?  
 What did you think of Alexander?

NIKKI  
 It was nice. He was...

ELEGANT WOMAN  
 I believe the word you're looking  
 for is "redundant?"  
 (off Nikki's smile)  
 Did he really call me "Lizzy"?

Nikki nods. The Woman just shakes her head with a sigh. In case we didn't know by now The Woman is THE FIRST LADY.

**INT. 'POLITICAL CAPITAL' OFFICES -- NIGHT**

The reporter's pit is empty, but Foster is still working the phones. Bryce walks into his office as he gets off a call. He sees the world weary look on her face. Knows what it's about.

FOSTER  
 Your friend screwed up. All you did  
 was your job. Don't let anybody  
 tell you different.

BRYCE  
 (nods halfheartedly)  
 You wanted to see me...

FOSTER  
 Yeah. You're done with Style. I  
 want you in the field.

BRYCE  
Just like that?

FOSTER  
You did good today. Keep it up.

Bryce allows herself a smile.

**INT. THE TOWNHOUSE -- NIGHT**

Andrew and Peter are playing BEER PONG in the living room. Andrew has just told Peter something that has him looking conflicted and confused. They play in silence for a moment. Peter makes a shot. Andrew drinks.

PETER  
You know Sam is gonna...

ANDREW  
Yeah.

PETER  
And Nikki, I mean she'll just...

ANDREW  
I know. What about you?

Andrew makes a shot. Peter considers as he drinks.

PETER  
You could write for The Sith Lords,  
I'd still love you.

Andrew smiles appreciatively. Nikki and Sam come home. Before they even put their purses down, they start in on Andrew.

NIKKI  
Monty? You've got to be kidding me?

ANDREW  
I'm not...

NIKKI  
You're the one who's always talking  
about changing things. You're the  
one who said we have to be better.  
You stuck a knife in our backs last  
night, now you're gonna twist it?

ANDREW  
I didn't...

SAM

Monty is everything that's wrong with the world in one, admittedly kind of hot, body.

ANDREW

You might say he's "disgusting"?

They both glare. That really ups the animosity level.

SAM

That was cheap.

NIKKI

You're a fraud.

ANDREW

You're yelling at me for something I haven't done yet. Can we at least try to be level-headed adults here?

SAM

Says the drunk guy on national television.

ANDREW

First of all, it was local television. And second...

PETER

Enough!

Everyone is startled by the authority in his voice.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'm sooooo tired of this. We're gonna start leaving work at work. Not letting what we do determine who we are, because, in case you haven't noticed, what we do makes people cynical and mean...

(emphatically)

We got into this insanity as friends. We're gonna leave as friends!

Everyone is kind of stunned to silence. No one looks more surprised than Peter.

ANDREW

Wow.

SAM

I know. Right?

NIKKI  
That was like "Norma Rae".

Somehow everyone is smiling again.

**INT. STUDIO APARTMENT -- NIGHT**

Bryce returns home carrying an "I'm Sorry" BIRTHDAY CAKE and BALLOONS. She walks in and finds her clothes packed in a SUITCASE by the door. Her Girlfriend is ignoring her.

BRYCE  
Really?

GIRLFRIEND  
You can keep the rest of your stuff here until you find your own place.

BRYCE  
Where am I supposed to stay?

GIRLFRIEND  
Stay at your office. He'll probably promote you again.

**EXT. THE TOWNHOUSE -- ROOFTOP TERRACE -- NIGHT**

A rooftop patio that looks out over the city. Andrew is just finishing up a call with Monty. Sam comes out carrying that expensive bottle of champagne and two mismatched glasses.

ANDREW  
...I appreciate the offer, Monty. I promise when I'm ready to sell out, you'll be the first guy I call.

Andrew hangs up as Sam approaches. She pops the bottle. Fills the glasses. They taste it at the same time.

SAM  
He might be everything wrong with the world, but he knows champagne.  
(off Andrew's weak smile)  
You're gonna land on your feet.  
I'll call my dad if I have to...

ANDREW  
I've got something lined up.

He downs the rest of his champagne in one gulp.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I was wrong then and you were wrong today. Nothing is more important to me than you. Nothing ever has been.

She's been waiting a long time to hear him say that.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Sammy, the person I'm going to work for... just know that I'm doing it because of what you said.

(he meets her eyes)

You're my best friend. You're the reason I came here, you're the reason I'm staying... and as much as you're going to hate me for what I'm about to do, just try to remember... I'm doing it for you.

He heads inside. She watches him go, touched but unsettled.

**INT. POLICY -- NIGHT**

Happy Hour. Tables of STAFFERS having drinks. Bryce is in a booth by herself. Her suitcase at her feet. Her phone rings. She checks the ID. Smiles to herself as she answers.

BRYCE

You just calling to absolve me of my sins?

**EXT. SIDEWALK -- NIGHT -- INTERCUT**

Andrew is on his phone walking in a ritzy DC neighborhood.

ANDREW

Actually, after last night, I figured I owed you.

(beat)

You want an exclusive?

Bryce listens. She grows a "holy shit" smile as she pulls out her reporter's note pad.

**INT. WEALTHY DONOR'S HOME -- NIGHT**

Where a GOP FUNDRAISER is underway. Andrew is walking amongst the various STAFFERS, SUPPORTERS and POLITICIANS. We see them recognizing him, wondering why he's there, etc.

Senator Wallace is at the center of it all. Jack McManus is at her side. They see Andrew approaching. She smiles.

SENATOR WALLACE  
What's your drink?

ANDREW  
Scotch rocks.

SENATOR WALLACE  
Jack, would you mind?

Clearly he does, but he dutifully walks off to the bar. Andrew and The Senator sit. Size each other up for a beat.

SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)  
So? Do you owe me \$500?

He smiles.

ANDREW  
You know there's a question that's nagged me since my first social studies class... if government is compromise, and both sides are working towards the middle, why does it matter so much which direction we start from?

She smiles.

SENATOR WALLACE  
I want to introduce you to someone.

### **INT. POLICY -- NIGHT**

Bryce is reading notes off her pad and typing away on her LAPTOP in that back booth. Sam, Peter and Nikki walk in. Nikki sees Bryce from across the bar. Her blood boils.

NIKKI  
I'm gonna kill her...

PETER  
No, no, no. This way. We're getting you an FDR special. Let's go.

Peter takes Nikki's hand. Leads her to the upstairs bar. Sam walks over to Bryce's table. They share a smile.

BRYCE  
Would it help if I said I was sorry again?

SAM

Yeah. But not tonight.

Bryce goes back to writing. Sam notices her intensity.

SAM (CONT'D)

You working on anything I need to be worried about?

BRYCE

I don't know. You tell me.

Bryce turns the laptop around so Sam can see it. She reads the headline of Bryce's story: **SPEECHWRITER FLIPS THE SCRIPT**

Sam's smile fades in the glow of the computer screen.

**INT. WEALTHY DONOR'S HOME -- NIGHT**

Andrew is being led through the crowd by Senator Wallace.

SENATOR WALLACE

...she just started at Georgetown.  
Your campaign was her teenage rebellion. She's dyin' to meet you.

They walk into another room where WALLACE'S DAUGHTER is talking to someone with her back to us.

SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)

Honey, I want you to be the newest member of my team...

We stay on Andrew's shocked expression as The Daughter turns around to shake his hand.

SENATOR WALLACE (CONT'D)

Andrew, this is my daughter, Erica.

Reveal that ERICA WALLACE is The Gorgeous Girl from the bar. She and Andrew stare at each other like deer in headlights.

McManus arrives with Andrew's scotch just in time.

**END OF PILOT**