

# House Rules

Pilot  
"Freshman Class"

by  
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January 22, 2009

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TEASER

1

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

1

A packed plane. JULIA BRYCE, 32, stands in the second row of coach, searching for her ticket because there is a WOMAN in her seat. The woman's shmuck husband is in no mood...

SCHMUCK

Ain't your seat, honey. Trust me.

JULIA

It's the computer I don't trust...  
Can we just...

She tries to grab a passing FLIGHT ATTENDANT, who gives her the *one sec.* Then Schmuck's wife squints as she looks at Julia.

WIFE

Do we know each other?

JULIA

I don't think so.

WIFE

Are you sure? I feel like we've met. St. John's Episcopal?

Julia shakes her head no. The Wife studies her, searching. Then, a burst of inspiration.

WIFE (CONT'D)

Wait... you're in my *People Magazine!* You're that teacher!

JULIA

Julia Bryce. Very nice to meet...

WIFE

Yes! Julia Bryce! Honey, she's a congresswoman! Her high school students helped her win!

He's unimpressed. Meanwhile, the line of PEOPLE behind Julia lose their patience, aggressively squeezing past Julia. The FLIGHT ATTENDANT walks up as Julia FINDS HER TICKET.

JULIA

Yep, same seat.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

May I see your ticket, Sir?

The attendant frowns and takes the tickets to the front. Shmuck and Julia stare each other down. The wife opens her People Magazine article: "MS. BRYCE GOES TO WASHINGTON!"

WIFE

Hey, shouldn't they be flying you in First Class?

JULIA

Whoever *they* are should fly us all in First Class.

SHMUCK

I don't understand this country. We vote for people who don't know anything and expect things to get better.

JULIA

Of the People, by the People, right?

The Flight Attendant returns.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm so sorry, it appears you do have the same seat...

JULIA

I have to be in DC this morning.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

There's a man in First who bought two seats for himself. Wanna try?

A THWACK as Julia gets smacked in the head by an annoyed passenger stowing his luggage in the overhead bin.

2

INT. FIRST CLASS CABIN - SAME

2

The man on his cell phone. Expensive suit, shiny hair, deliberately loud, your basic asshole. His name is ALAN LEVI. The flight attendant steps up to him. Julia stands a few feet away.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Sir? Could I ask you a big favor? We're overbooked and we have a...

ALAN

Absolutely not!

She's taken aback. He points to the PHONE - he wasn't talking to her.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

We'd issue you a complete refund,  
of course...

ALAN

We can talk about it at dinner  
tonight.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

That's flattering, but...

ALAN

(points to phone)

Mary, I pay you to get that  
information before it's on the  
street!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Sir...

ALAN

I said I can't help you. I'm not  
giving up the seat. Can I go back  
to my call now? Or do you want to  
take my drink order?

Julia finally SNAPS reaches in and GRABS HIS PHONE.

JULIA (PHONE)

Mary, he'll call you back.

ALAN

What do you think you're doing?

JULIA

You don't want to help me, fine.  
But apologize to this woman.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

It's okay. He doesn't have to...

JULIA

Yes he does.

ALAN

Why is it that every time I buy  
myself two seats I have to justify  
it to someone like you?

JULIA

You don't. I know why you buy the  
extra seat. So you have somewhere  
to fit your massive sense of  
entitlement. And FYI?

(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)

Yes, we hear your phone call. And we're not impressed by the rantings of a soul-less Wall Street slickster with a tooth whitening fetish who yells at his employees for the benefit of his own ego! What will impress us is if you apologize for the way you just treated this nice lady who was only doing me a favor.

Alan sees EVERYONE STARING at him. Julia crosses her arms, waiting for his answer.

ALAN

(to flight attendant)

I apologize.

(takes his stuff off the other seat)

I get the aisle.

3 INT. PLANE - LATER

3

Alan sits with his headphones on, laptop on the tray in front of him. Sitting next to him, pleased as punch, is Julia. Out the window she takes in the stellar view of the Mall, the WASHINGTON MONUMENT, the CAPITOL BUILDING...

She turns to Alan, who doesn't look up, couldn't care less about the view. She turns back to the window.

4 EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

4

Julia stands at the foot of the mammoth, white columned icon that houses the legislative branch of the U.S. government. She can't believe where she is. Nearby, a TOUR GUIDE addresses a TOUR GROUP.

TOUR GUIDE

For the design of the building, a contest was held in 1792. Submissions poured in from the top architects in the world. The winner was the famous architect William Thornton.

The tour guide notices Julia gently shaking her head no.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

No?

JULIA

He wasn't actually famous at all. In fact, Thornton wasn't even a trained architect. He was an amateur. When the contest ended without a winner, Thornton sent his design in, with the hope it might be considered. George Washington picked it, saying that only in America could a building housing such power have been designed by an ordinary citizen.

TOUR GUIDE

Are you even on this tour?

She smiles sheepishly and slinks away, up the grand steps.

5 INT. ROTUNDA, CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

5

Julia stares at the stunning DOME. She walks up to a SECURITY GUARD.

JULIA

I'm looking for Statuary Hall?

A WOMAN passes by her and overhears. She's ROBIN CALHOUN, 34, pretty, if a bit buttoned up.

ROBIN

It's this way.  
(starts walking)  
Are you a freshman, too? Robin Calhoun. Democrat, Virginia.

JULIA

Oh, uh, Julia Bryce, also a Democrat. New Jersey.

Julia can't stop staring at the walls, the ceiling, the art work, the throngs of people. It's overwhelming.

6 INT. STATUARY HALL - SAME

6

A magnificent two-story semicircular room surrounded by Corinthian columns and sculptures of famous Americans.

Julia stands with fifty-five other FRESHMEN CONGRESSMEN gathered on the black and white tiled floor beneath the massive chandelier. They're all wearing NAME TAGS with their state and party affiliation on their chests. Addressing them is a young WOMAN - SCOTTY FISHER, 32 - young, brash, smart as hell, and no bullshit. Ever.

SCOTTY

Hello everyone. I'm Scotty Fisher, political aide to the Speaker. I first want to congratulate you. You worked hard and you've achieved something remarkable. With that said, for the next eight weeks you're not yet officially congressmen. You're students of congress. And my job is to help the fifty-five - sorry, fifty-six of you learn enough to be effective on that very first day.

Robin leans over and whispers to Julia.

ROBIN

It's fifty-six because of the recount in Georgia. Rules say that both of them have to come for orientation.

JULIA

That's the Cameron Drummer race, right? I see him up there in front. I was so heartbroken when his mother died.

CAMERON DRUMMER, 36, fidgety and nervous, stands up front.

ROBIN

She was such a hero of mine.

JULIA

So one of them is going to have to go home? Oh God.

SCOTTY

(continuing)

Start with the basics. Fire, Shelter, Food and Water. *Fire*: that's your staff. Plow through those resumes and start hiring. *Shelter*: After an election there are a lot of empty apartments. Grab one before they're gone. *Food and Water*: Feed those big brains that got you here. Take the seminars we've set up and read all the upcoming bills.

(beat)

Look, a Senator gets six years, you only get two.

(MORE)

SCOTTY (CONT'D)

That means you have to work three times as fast to get anything done and ten times as hard in order to stick around a while. Otherwise, you're just the Christmas help.

Julia looks around, they're as terrified as she is. Someone shifts out of her way and she GETS A CLEAR LOOK AT ALAN, the guy from the plane. He SEES her. Laughs, incredulous.

7

INT. HALLWAY, CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

7

Scotty leads the group down the hallway.

SCOTTY

Stay together, place is a maze!

Alan walks up next to Julia, puts out a hand.

ALAN

Alan Levi, soul-less Wall Street slickster.

JULIA

Julia Bryce. Did I really call you that?

ALAN

Let me buy you a drink and you can make it up to me.

(off her look)

Relax, I'm not asking you out. It wouldn't work anyway.

(points to his nametag)

I'm a Republican. I'd need you to stay home baking pies and rearing my children while I hunt baby seals and bomb abortion clinics.

JULIA

I hate baby seals.

ALAN

Who doesn't?

He smiles as another woman sidles up - KATHY MCADAMS, 45 - checking out Julia's nametag.

KATHY

Julia Bryce! Hi, Kathy McAdams. Republican, Cal-thirtieth. I've been dying to meet you.



JULIA

How nice...

KATHY

We have a lot in common. You're the *(air quotes)* teacher from New Jersey, I'm the *(air quotes)* soccer mom from California.

*(whispers)*

No one takes us seriously.

JULIA

They don't?

SCOTTY

Here we are!

Scotty at the doors next to NATE TIERNAN, 35, confident and handsome in a grey suit and tie.

SCOTTY (CONT'D)

For those of you who don't know, this is Nate Tiernan, Chief of Staff to the Speaker. My boss.

NATE

Take a deep breath, folks. This is what you've been dreaming about since that first day you woke up and said, "Why not me?"

Nate nods to Scotty and they each OPEN a door, REVEALING...

8

INT. FLOOR OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - CONTINUOUS

8

A relief portrait of Thomas Jefferson stares down at them from above this room we've seen in so many State of the Union addresses, 435 empty chairs in balconies and the main floor.

The wide-eyed freshmen walk down the aisle, staring up at the balconies, the ceilings, Jefferson and the rest of the faces of the lawmakers of old hovering over them.

NATE (O.S.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, Congresswoman Alice Hardy, Speaker of the House.

At the ROSTRUM at the other end of the room - SPEAKER ALICE HARDY, 55, striking in a Pucci scarf and a French blue pantsuit. She speaks with a melodic LOUISIANA DRAWL.

SPEAKER HARDY

Welcome to the hall where history lives and breathes, where the great laws of the land have been written, debated, and passed. The men and women who have occupied this room have fought and united over everything from suffrage to social security, slavery to Civil War.

Julia and Nate make eye contact. He smiles hello.

SPEAKER HARDY (CONT'D)

Abraham Lincoln addressed the nation from this rostrum, and so has every President since. A couple of them have even been impeached in the very same room. And that's because, more than any other place in the country, this is the House of the People.

ROBIN

(whispers to Julia)  
Nate Tiernan is staring at you.

JULIA

Long story.

Alan hears that and takes note. The Speaker concludes.

SPEAKER HARDY

I'll give you the same advice my friend, Senator Rebecca Drummer, gave me many years ago. Never forget that your job title is your job description.

(pause)  
Representative.

Julia swells with excitement, pride, and a little fear.

END TEASER

ACT I

9

INT. FLOOR OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - LATER

9

Everyone gone, Nate and Julia sit in the front row.

JULIA

The flowers were lovely.

NATE

I tried to get the Speaker to come for a photo-op during the campaign but...

JULIA

Nobody thought I'd win? It's okay, they were right. I shouldn't have.

NATE

That's not true.

JULIA

Oh, come on, I wasn't polling anywhere near Cox. If the bribery thing hadn't come out, I would have been a footnote.

Beat.

NATE

Why didn't you ever go back to law school?

JULIA

I'd taken a job as a substitute teacher. Turned out to be a much-needed break from dad's chemo and everything else. And I realized I loved teaching. Only good thing to come out of that horrible period. And the memory of my one year at Penn faded very quickly.

NATE

Along with me?

JULIA

Unfortunately, you lingered a bit longer.

NATE

I should have come to the funeral.

She shrugs. An awkward beat. He changes the subject.

NATE (CONT'D)

You used to hate politics.

JULIA

I still do! The story in the press is absolutely true. The kids refused to believe that any one of them could run for office, so I took them down to watch me enter my name. Next thing I know, I'm here!

NATE

I want you to use me. I mean it. I can be a big help.

JULIA

Well, now that you offered, how do I get on the Education Committee?

NATE

Gimme a harder one than that. Who wouldn't put you on Education?

JULIA

I just assumed the school voucher issue might be a problem. I think I'm the only pro-voucher democrat in the House.

The DOUBLE DOORS OPEN and MEN and WOMEN start streaming in.

NATE

House is in session.

JULIA

Right now?

NATE

We're trying to get an Appropriations bill passed this week. Finally. Been dragging for months while everyone tries to jam their pet projects into it.

At the front of the pack of congressmen entering is REP. JOHN GRANGER, 60, hefty in both physicality and personality.

NATE (CONT'D)

You know who that is?

JULIA

John Granger. He hates me. He campaigned for Cox.

NATE  
He hates me more, believe me.

JULIA  
Why?

NATE  
He had my boss' job when they had  
the majority and he wants it back.

Granger approaches them.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Congressman, allow me to introduce  
you to...

JOHN GRANGER  
I'm familiar with Ms. Bryce.  
(a wry smile)  
She stepped over the body of my  
good friend Leonard Cox in order to  
be with us.

JULIA  
I'm sorry about that...

JOHN GRANGER  
Don't be sorry to your critics,  
Congresswoman. Prove them wrong  
and make them sorry.

He grins and keeps walking. As Nate and Julia leave...

NATE  
That wasn't so bad. Just be  
careful with him. He's a killer.

10

INT. CAFETERIA, CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

10

Julia tears off phone numbers APARTMENTS ADS at the bulletin  
board. Scotty passes, followed by a throng of congressmen.

CONGRESSMAN #1  
What about offices?

CONGRESSMAN #2  
Where can I get copies of the bills  
coming up for vote?

They shout out questions simultaneously, she keeps walking,  
ignoring all of them, but they're relentless. Finally she  
spins on them, her hands in the air to STOP THEM.

SCOTTY

Congressmen!!! Please!

(they all stop)

Office space is assigned by lottery. You will be notified of empty offices when your name comes up on the list. In the meantime, the cafeteria is yours.

(beat)

Also, stop asking me to pass on messages to the Speaker. You are each scheduled for five minutes of face time with her this week. And now you have a brand new reason to impress her because the President has asked us to choose ten members of the freshmen class to attend a dinner at the White House on Saturday. I suggest you dazzle.

Everyone BUZZES - they ALL want to go to that dinner! As they rush her again, she RAISES HER HANDS, STOPPING THEM.

SCOTTY (CONT'D)

I'm getting an apple now. Alone.  
And then I'm leaving.

Julia exhales. So much to do. She hears a voice behind her.

MR. VORNO (O.S.)

Ms. Bryce?

Julia turns to find a Caucasian COUPLE in their 60s - THE VORNOS - and a 4 year old BOY, CADEN.

MR. VORNO (CONT'D)

We called your office in New Jersey. They said we might find you here. I believe you knew our son, Jared Vorno?

JULIA

Yes, of course. We were teachers together. This must be Caden.

(to Caden)

Your dad used to show us pictures of you. You were much smaller then.

MR. VORNO

We thought since you knew Jared, you might help us.

MR. VORNO (CONT'D)  
Jared's wife Maria has been  
arrested.

JULIA  
Why? What happened?

MRS. VORNO  
Jared and Maria got married five  
years ago. They filed her  
residency application but never  
heard back from immigration. They  
called and called but were told  
that it was "in process." After  
Jared died last year, they told  
Maria she couldn't stay in the  
country because she was no longer  
married to an American.

JULIA  
But that's crazy. If she filed the  
paperwork...

MRS. VORNO  
They never got to it, so it wasn't  
stamped in time.

MR. VORNO  
We've been trying for months to get  
the decision reversed. But time  
was running out. So we came down  
to the Washington office.

MRS. VORNO  
Nobody would see us! What did they  
expect? She's the mother of my  
grandson!

JULIA  
What did you do?

MR. VORN  
We sat in their lobby and wouldn't  
leave until someone saw us.

JULIA  
So they called the police?

MRS. VORNO  
They're sending her back to Panama  
in two weeks.

MRS. VORNO (CONT'D)  
Can you do anything?

11      INT. US CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES - DAY

11

Julia sits in an office talking to an OFFICIAL at USCIS.

OFFICIAL

We have no choice but to enforce the statute, which states that the spouse must be married to an American at the time of processing.

JULIA

But she was married to an American.

OFFICIAL

When she *filled out* the application, not when the application was *processed*.

JULIA

But that's a technicality. Isn't there room for discretion?

OFFICIAL

As a future lawmaker, I don't think you want your government agencies using discretion. You write it, we follow it.

Julia is frustrated... but her mind is turning.

12      INT. NATE TIERNAN'S OFFICE - DAY

12

Nate. He sits behind his desk, talking with Cameron Drummer.

NATE

You're not in a *runoff*, Cameron, you're in a *recount*. The votes are in. Until the final count, what do you gain by doing any press?

CAMERON

I have to start thinking about what I'm going to do if I lose. Getting my face out there can help...

NATE

This has been your problem from the beginning. You always plan for failure instead of success, and people read that on you. You were a city councilman at twenty-five, you worked for a very popular governor, not to mention, you're Rebecca Drummer's son.

(MORE)



NATE (CONT'D)

And still you don't know how to act like a winner. That's why you have to stay away from a TV camera 'til this is over.

Cameron is uncomfortable. He knows Nate is right but he's trying to maintain some sense of dignity.

CAMERON

I thought Alice would be in this meeting...

NATE

Alice? You mean *The Speaker*.

CAMERON

Sorry, I always forget. I mean, she did change my diapers.

NATE

I don't care if she gave you a reach-around at your college graduation, she's *Madame Speaker*.

(beat)

If I let her sit with you, she has to sit with the other guy. When the results are announced, the winner gets a sit and not before.

CAMERON

What about the White House dinner?

Nate's look - *What do you think?* Cameron's frustrated. He gets up, walks to the window, pensive and thoughtful.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

My mother told me to stay out of politics. She got the biggest law firm in Atlanta to fast track partnership just to keep me out of her world. Said I didn't have the stomach for Washington. What she really meant, of course, was that I didn't have the brains.

Nate looks at his watch.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

I graduated Yale with honors. You'd think that would have impressed her.

NATE

Do you see the name *Dr. Freud* on my door? No. Because your mommy issues aren't my area of expertise. The only thing I care about is your effectiveness if you win. A *Congressman Drummer* has great value. But you're no good to anyone if you're a joke.

CAMERON

I don't need your permission to do press.

Nate watches quietly as Cameron walks out.

13

EXT. WASHINGTON MONUMENT - DAY

13

Robin walks along the reflecting pool approaching a 55 year old man in an army uniform sitting on a park bench - GENERAL GEORGE CALHOUN. He stands - forcing a smile - straight, tall, and rigid.

ROBIN

Hi dad.

Clearly, a complicated relationship.

TIMECUT: They walk along the REFLECTING POOL.

GENERAL CALHOUN

The Speaker has a bill she wants to put up for a vote in the new session. A Stop-Loss bill, limit tours of duty by reservists. She's going to ask you to co-sponsor it.

ROBIN

That's ridiculous. I'm a freshman. I have no clout whatsoever.

GENERAL CALHOUN

But if she does reach out, will you consider what I'm asking you?

ROBIN

Exactly what are you asking me?

GENERAL CALHOUN

It's a bad law. It will restrain the military, which is already stretched to its breaking point.

ROBIN

You want me to say no to her?

GENERAL CALHOUN

We're talking about your country's ability to win a war.

ROBIN

We're talking about sending reservists into a war zone indefinitely. Can't you guess how I would feel about this?

GENERAL CALHOUN

I don't have to guess, I just have to read your website.

ROBIN

You know you haven't even congratulated me?

GENERAL CALHOUN

I was proud when you enlisted, Robin. I was proud when you went to Iraq. But campaigning to end the war with your brother still over there? What do you expect?

ROBIN

I'm not having this fight again. It's all moot anyway. The Speaker is never going to ask me to sign onto a bill that important to her. She doesn't even know my name.

GENERAL CALHOUN

It's not about your name, it's about my name!

(tries calmer)

I'm asking you to do the right thing for your family.

14

INT. FOUR SEASONS LOBBY - DAY

14

Julia enters quickly but STOPS when SHE SEES Alan with John Granger between her and the elevator. She can't deal right now. She looks at her watch - SHIT, she's late.

Granger SPOTS her, leans over and whispers something to Alan. Alan looks across to Julia, nods, says something else. Granger guffaws and leaves. Julia wants to jump out a window. As she walks to the elevator, Alan meets her.

ALAN

I didn't know you were staying here.

JULIA

Not for long, hopefully.

ALAN

I found a great loft in Adams Morgan. Hoping to close escrow...

JULIA

(keeps walking)  
Sounds great.

ALAN

You have time for lunch?

JULIA

No, actually. I have to go get cleaned up and get to my meeting with the Speaker.

ALAN

Look, I know we got off to a bad start, but I'm really not the asshole you think I am.

JULIA

Really? What were you and your buddy Granger just talking about?

ALAN

What do you mean?

JULIA

You saw me and had a good laugh?

ALAN

Are you crazy?  
(laughs, realizes)  
We were talking about Chuck Norris, over there with Mike Huckabee.

He points. Sure enough, Huckabee and Chuck are chatting. Now she really wants to jump out a window.

JULIA

Okay... I'm mortified.

ALAN

How do you think Chuck Norris feels?

(beat)

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

Hey, I think that kid over there is waving at you.

Across the lobby, coming toward her, knapsack over his shoulder, is an 18 year old Asian kid named PETER CHIBA.

JULIA

Peter? What the hell...

ALAN

Who's he?

JULIA

He was my campaign manager.

PETER

Ms. Bryce! So glad I found you!

JULIA

You're supposed to be in Boston!

PETER

I know...I...I dropped out!

JULIA

You what?!

PETER

It's a long story, but...

(looks at Alan)

Holy crap, you're Alan Levi!

JULIA

You know him?

PETER

You kidding? This is Alan Levi!  
He's a Master of the Universe!

ALAN

I like this kid already.

JULIA

(looks at her watch)

Oh God, I don't have time...

(hands Peter her KEY)

Hang out in my room til I get back.

We need to talk about this.

(an IDEA)

On second thought, come with me.

PETER

Really?!

ALAN

See ya around, Pete.

Peter looks back, giddy, as she drags him out.

15

INT. TAXI - DAY

15

PETER

Mr. Vorno's wife? That's awful.

JULIA

I should be able to do something.  
I'm in congress! Almost. What  
committee deals with immigration?

PETER

*Judiciary.* But John Granger is the  
ranking member. He rose to power  
on the immigration issue. Remember  
he wanted to build that wall  
between the US and Mexico?

JULIA

I'm not talking about a new law.  
It's one word. "Spouse must be  
married to an American at the time  
of *processing*." It should read "at  
the time of *application*." How do I  
fix that?

PETER

Maybe *Steering and Policy*?

JULIA

Steering and Policy? What's that?

PETER

You should know that. You're a  
teacher.

JULIA

And you shouldn't know it, you're  
eighteen. Go figure.

PETER

The Steering and Policy Committee  
is part of the House Democratic  
Caucus.

JULIA

(to the driver)

You can't get around this traffic?

PETER

Basically, the Caucus provides a forum for all Party members in the House to make decisions together...

JULIA

I know what a Caucus is. Get back to Steering and Policy.

PETER

It's exactly what it sounds like. It *steers* the caucus toward certain decisions and advises the Speaker on *policy*.

JULIA

Can't the Speaker fix this on her own?

PETER

It's pretty small, so maybe she could just attach it to another bill. People do that all the time.

They pull up in front of the Capitol Building.

JULIA

You're coming with me.

PETER

In the Capitol! Are you serious?!

16

INT. NATE'S OFFICE - DAY

16

Scotty walks in to talk to Nate. He looks at his watch.

NATE

Is she here yet?

SCOTTY

Your girlfriend? No, she's late. Have you seen this?

She shows him the headline: "MS. BRYCE GOES TO WASHINGTON."

SCOTTY (CONT'D)

Know what she could help us with?

NATE

Way ahead of you.

17

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

17

Peter is mesmerized by the nameplate outside of the Speaker's office. He and Julia walk in, right into Scotty.

JULIA

Hi. Sorry I'm late.

PETER

You're Scotty Fisher!

SCOTTY

No staff in these meetings.

JULIA

He's not staff.

PETER

This is awesome!

SCOTTY

He's creeping me out. Follow me.

(to Peter)

Not you. Sit over there.

18

INT. SPEAKER HARDY'S OFFICE - DAY

18

Scotty leads Julia into the office, where Speaker Hardy and Nate stand to greet her. Nate nods to Scotty, who leaves.

NATE

Madame Speaker, Congresswoman Julia Bryce.

JULIA

Madame Speaker, this is such an honor for me.

SPEAKER HARDY

Oh, stop that. Please, sit. I understand you were the one that got away?

Julia doesn't understand at first. Then...

JULIA

Oh, you mean from Nate? Yes, I'm the one that got away. Thanks to a restraining order. Which I believe is still in effect.

(to Nate)

You might be sitting too close, actually.



The Speaker looks at Nate and smiles. She likes this girl.

SPEAKER HARDY

Well, getting elected in your district with no prior experience is an incredible accomplishment.

JULIA

Let's be honest, I got very lucky.

SPEAKER HARDY

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.

JULIA

Thomas Edison.

SPEAKER HARDY

One of your New Jersey brethren. You were in the right place at the right time because of your hard work and no small amount of talent. So, what do you want to do with this opportunity?

Julia takes a deep breath. She's nervous.

19

INT. LOBBY, SPEAKER'S OFFICE - SAME

19

Peter sits in the lobby, breathlessly watching the busy world around him. Scotty sits at a desk and starts typing an email. She looks up at him. He's staring at her.

PETER

You wrote the "Return of Grace" speech.

She squints - *what's going on here?*

PETER (CONT'D)

Best speech of her career, if you ask me.

Scotty tilts her head... maybe this kid isn't so bad.

20

INT. SPEAKER HARDY'S OFFICE - SAME

20

JULIA

Jared volunteered as a teacher in Panama during summer breaks. That's where they fell in love. She moved here, they married, had a child...

SPEAKER HARDY

But they're not deporting the child.

JULIA

They might as well be. She's not going to leave her son behind.

NATE

Normally, we could make a phone call, but if the Speaker intervenes in an immigration matter these days it's front page news.

JULIA

What about just fixing the law itself? Changing one word so that the letter of the law and the spirit of the law are the same.

NATE

You can't change the law for one person.

JULIA

There are many Marias out there. And you have changed the law for one person before. In the Terri Schiavo case. Both houses convened special sessions and changed the law in one afternoon.

The Speaker smiles. She likes the argument.

SPEAKER HARDY

I'm sold. Let's gather some more info on this and see what we can do.

JULIA

Really? That's great! Thank you!

SPEAKER HARDY

Julia, do you mind if I change subjects? Time's a bit short.

(beat)

We've noticed that you've spoken very passionately about your support of school vouchers.

JULIA

My parents worked several jobs to keep me out of a dangerous public school. Government assistance would have been a lifesaver.

SPEAKER HARDY

I understand, but our Party's position has always been clear. Draining money from our public school system to provide vouchers for those who wish to go private will only create more of those dangerous schools your parents wanted to protect you from.

(beat)

The reason I bring this up is that we're initiating new legislation on this and, because it's such a hot-button with people, and you're a respected educator...

JULIA

That's overstating it a bit.

SPEAKER HARDY

Your opinion matters to people. I was hoping there might be a way you could help us.

JULIA

But I'm pro-voucher...

SPEAKER HARDY

I'm not asking you to change your opinion. I'm just asking you to think about how you might be helpful to your Party. Just think about it. In the meantime, we'll see what we can do to help you with this immigration law.

Julia is shocked at the obvious horse-trade. Is this really how it's done? The Speaker deflects with a warm smile and handshake.

21

INT. LOBBY, SPEAKER'S OFFICE - DAY

21

SPEAKER'S DOOR OPENS. Nate walks Julia out through the lobby, as they pass Peter, Julia's hand tells him to wait.

JULIA

Did that just happen? If I don't change my position on vouchers, she won't help me with Maria?

NATE

We were going to bring up the voucher issue with you, regardless.

JULIA

But now it's a quid-pro-quo.

NATE

Nobody is making any demands. You asked her to step up for you, she's asking you to step back for her. Is that really so outrageous?

Julia thinks about it.

NATE (CONT'D)

You have a moment in the sun right now. Use it to do her a favor and she'll be happy to return it.

JULIA

Publicly change my position?

NATE

Katie Couric wants you for their "Women on The Hill" series. They can put you on tomorrow.

JULIA

Tomorrow?!

NATE

Scotty can help you prep. And if all goes well, we can talk about your friend Maria on Saturday night at the White House dinner.

Hold on Julia, stunned -- *This shit really happens?!*

END ACT I

ACT II

23

INT. ROTUNDA, CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

23

Julia and Peter walk through the corridors of the Capitol.

JULIA

I didn't spend all that time helping you with your college applications to have you drop out of Harvard after one semester!

PETER

I'm good at this and, frankly, you need me, Ms. Bryce!

JULIA

Stop calling me that. I'm not your teacher anymore.

PETER

Gotta meet a guy who's letting me crash at his dorm. *Hasta mañana?*

JULIA

*Hasta I'm-calling-your-parents.*

He grins and heads out. Kathy McAdams runs into her.

KATHY

Julia? Kathy McAdams, remember?

JULIA

The (air quotes) Soccer Mom.

KATHY

That's what they called me in the California Assembly, too. Suckers! By the way, my son, Ron, is in DC as well. At Georgetown. In fact, I'm hoping we can room together.

JULIA

Huh? Oh, no, I... Peter's not... Wait, did you say *room together*?

KATHY

Even with the break we get on school housing - the Dean is a fraternity brother of my husband's - it's still expensive as heck. I'm going to float it by Ron tonight.

JULIA

Ah. Good luck with that.

24      EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY      24

A TV crew films a nervous Cameron.

25      INT. CAFETERIA, CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY      25

Julia and Kathy find a bunch of the freshmen, including Robin, gathered around the TV, watching Hardball. Julia sees Robin and sits down with her. Kathy on her other side.

KATHY

How's the interview going?

ROBIN

Just started.

KATHY

He must be his father's son. Sure doesn't have the magic his mom had.

ROBIN

A little unfair, don't you think?

CAMERON (ON TV)

*Right now, the most important thing is that the recount be handled with complete transparency.*

CHRIS MATTHEWS (ON TV)

*Is it true that your mother - the late Senator from Georgia - wanted you to stay out of politics?*

CAMERON (ON TV)

*No. Totally untrue.*

CHRIS MATTHEWS (ON TV)

*I understand she didn't think you had the stomach for it?*

Cameron is flummoxed, not just because it's awkward but because he knows full well where the questions came from.

26      INT. NATE'S OFFICE - SAME      26

Nate sips a diet Coke as he watches the interview. Scotty walks in, sits down to watch.

NATE

I know how you feel about this.  
But if he wins, I have to be able  
to control him. If he doesn't win,  
it won't matter.

SCOTTY

It'll matter to him.

CAMERON (ON TV)

*My mother always encouraged me to  
serve my country.*

27

INT. CAFETERIA, CAPITOL BUILDING

27

CHRIS MATTHEWS (ON TV)

*Didn't she use her influence to  
procure you an offer at the largest  
law firm in Atlanta to discourage  
you from entering politics?*

Julia whispers to Robin...

JULIA

And they want me to go on Katie  
Couric? I'm gonna make Sarah Palin  
look like Winston Churchill.

KATHY

Did you say Sarah Palin? Oh my  
God, I'm dying to meet her.

ROBIN

(ignoring Kathy)  
Who wants you to go on Katie  
Couric?

JULIA

Nate and the Speaker.

ROBIN

Wow, tough to be you, huh?

JULIA

What's that supposed to mean?

ROBIN

Nothing. Never mind.

She gets up and walks away. Julia follows Robin.

JULIA

Did I do something wrong?

ROBIN

No. Forget it.

JULIA

Hey, I know we just met, but if you have something to say...

ROBIN

You've gotten more press than anyone and now you're bitching because your ex-boyfriend is hooking you up with Katie Couric?

JULIA

No, it's not like that. This isn't a good thing. Really.

ROBIN

You're getting something handed to you that the rest of us have to work for. At least have the decency not to complain about it.

Robin walks away, leaving Julia feeling awful.

28

INT. KINKEAD'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

28

Kathy sits across from her sullen son, RON MCADAMS, 18.

KATHY

I'll be back in California one week a month, so you'll have the place to yourself when I'm gone.

(off his horrified look)

You hate the idea.

RON

Of course I hate the idea! I hate that we're even in the same city!

KATHY

Keep your voice down. Please. Where did you think I was going to be? I ran for Congress.

RON

Yes, but I didn't know that when I picked Georgetown, did I?

KATHY

Fine, Ron. You don't want to live with me, that's fine. But why do you always have to be so cruel? I thought we were closer than this.



RON  
You thought we were close? I moved  
three thousand miles away from you!

KATHY  
You moved away from dad. You two  
were fighting so much.

RON  
No, you two were fighting so much.

KATHY  
What? We don't fight any more than  
any other couple...

RON  
Then share an apartment with him.

29

INT. USCIS DETENTION CENTER - DAY

29

Julia sits with MARIA VORNO, 35, bronze skin, pretty, tired.

MARIA  
If they send me back to Panama, how  
do I take that boy from his  
grandparents?

JULIA  
I'm going to do everything I can,  
Maria, but I'm not even a  
congresswoman yet.

MARIA  
Caden is all the Vornos have left  
of their son. And they're all he  
has left of his father.

Maria breaks down. Julia is more determined than ever.

30

EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

30

Julia notices the ADDRESS in her hand is not for the  
beautiful BROWNSTONE, but for the BASEMENT APARTMENT.

31

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

31

Julia enters the tiny place. The REAL ESTATE AGENT appears.

REAL ESTATE AGENT  
Congresswoman Bryce! I hope you  
don't mind, I double-booked.  
Always busy after election day!

The "double-booking" emerges from the bedroom. It's Robin.

Robin and Julia step up onto the sidewalk.

ROBIN

The brownstone is triple the price  
of the basement.

JULIA

I can barely afford the basement.

ROBIN

Tell me about it. ... Listen,  
about before...

JULIA

They're asking me to sell-out  
something that's important to me.

ROBIN

What are they offering in exchange?

JULIA

Something more important to me.

ROBIN

Welcome to Washington. At least  
you don't have your father telling  
you to do it.

JULIA

Who's your father?

ROBIN

He's a General. Pentagon.

JULIA

I noticed your ring. Iraq?

ROBIN

Fifth Mechanized. Zubair.

JULIA

So the war is a family issue.

ROBIN

In my family it's the only issue.

JULIA

He has to respect your opinion.  
You're not exactly an outsider.

ROBIN

If I were elected President he'd still treat me like the teenage daughter who banged the car up. What's truly ironic is that if I don't find a place to live soon I'm going to have to move back in with them until I do! I might have to kill myself if that happens.

JULIA

(stops walking)  
I just had an idea!

33      EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT      33

Julia and Robin walk up as the Agent is locking up.

JULIA

Any chance we can see the upstairs?

34      INT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT      34

Julia and Robin walk through the space. It's big, beautiful, and full of character and charm.

ROBIN

You're serious?

JULIA

We just need a third roommate.

35      INT. GYM, CAPITOL BUILDING - MORNING      35

Scotty reads the paper as she power-walks the treadmill, a pile of discarded PAGES on the floor. Julia walks in, bleary-eyed, in a track suit.

JULIA

We couldn't have met over coffee?

SCOTTY

Best I could do.

JULIA

(gets on treadmill)  
You don't like me, do you?

SCOTTY

I don't know you. But I read all your press last night. You tell anyone who'll listen that you never planned on this.

(MORE)

SCOTTY (CONT'D)

You're so insecure about your own abilities that you practically fall over yourself apologizing for winning. If you don't respect what you've accomplished, how do you expect anyone else to?

Nobody's ever called Julia out like that before. What Scotty said is absolutely true... and Julia knows it.

Scotty drops her newspaper on the floor. Scotty turns the speed up on her treadmill. Julia matches it, defiantly.

SCOTTY (CONT'D)

It's a ninety second interview. After the fluff, like *what you wore on your first day*, she'll ask you about vouchers.

JULIA

How can you be sure?

SCOTTY

She's smart and that's where the story is.

JULIA

Because I differ with the speaker on something, that's a story?

SCOTTY

You're a woman, a democrat, and a public school teacher who wants to pay parents who send their kids to private school. That's a story.

JULIA

I see. Will I have time to mention the immigration issue?

SCOTTY

I wouldn't.

JULIA

Why not?

SCOTTY

If you want the Speaker to support something, you don't make her hitch herself to it after the fact. You do it together or it doesn't happen. The first mistake people in this town make is in not recognizing the giant in the room.

JULIA  
What's the second mistake?

SCOTTY  
Not knowing what to feed the giant  
to keep it from eating you.

JULIA  
How do I do this thing without  
selling out?

Scotty turns off her treadmill.

SCOTTY  
Finally, a smart question.

36

INT. HALLWAY, CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

36

Julia is in the same spot Cameron was in earlier. They're putting the mic on, turning on lights, setting the camera. Scotty is behind the MAKEUP GUY applying powder to Julia.

SCOTTY  
Complete sentences, don't babble,  
and if you need time to think, what  
do you do?

JULIA  
*Katie, that's a very good question,  
I'm glad you asked it...* Do I call  
her Katie or Ms. Couric?

SCOTTY  
If you call her Ms. Couric you're a  
teacher from New Jersey. Call her  
Katie and you just summered  
together in East Hampton.

JULIA  
Which is better?

SCOTTY  
Katie!

JULIA  
I'm kidding. Relax.  
(to herself)  
You are what you pretend to be.

SCOTTY  
What's that?

JULIA  
 Vonnegut. If I pretend I belong, I  
 belong.

PRODUCER  
 Thirty seconds!

Across the corridor, Alan leans against the wall to watch.

37 INT. NATE'S OFFICE - DAY 37

Nate turns on CBS EVENING NEWS, cracks a Diet Coke.

KATIE COURIC (ON TV)  
*This past June, Julia Bryce was a  
 high school history teacher. Now  
 she's a United States Congresswoman  
 from New Jersey. Hello  
 Congresswoman! Can you hear me?*

JULIA (ON TV)  
*Yes, I can, Katie.*

KATIE COURIC (ON TV)  
*You're in the U.S. Capitol  
 building! Are you experiencing  
 some culture shock or what?*

38 INT. HALLWAY, CAPITOL BUILDING - SAME 38

Scotty stands behind the cameras - she shakes her head NO.

JULIA  
 It's funny you ask that because I  
 was just saying that this place is  
 a lot like high school.

Scotty gives her the OK SIGN - nice!

39 INT. CAFETERIA, CAPITOL BUILDING - SAME 39

A bunch of the FRESHMEN are once again watching the monitors.  
 Cameron Drummer sits by himself, away from the group.

KATIE COURIC (ON TV)  
*Anyone bring an apple for the  
 teacher?*

JULIA (ON TV)  
*I'm the one bringing the apples  
 these days.*

Robin sits down next to Cameron.

ROBIN  
How's she doing?

CAMERON  
Not bad.

*KATIE COURIC (ON TV)*  
*So, Congresswoman, what do you*  
*think your experience as a teacher*  
*will bring to your new job?*

JULIA (ON TV)  
It's a great question, Katie.  
Actually, many of the issues  
confronting our society right now  
will affect the youngest among us  
Take health care, for example...

40      INT. NATE'S OFFICE - SAME      40

Nate sips his Coke, pleased so far.

*KATIE COURIC (ON TV)*  
*I was surprised to learn that you*  
*are a proponent of school vouchers.*

41      INT. HALLWAY, CAPITOL BUILDING - SAME      41

Julia is ready with her answer. Scotty encourages her.

JULIA  
Speaker Hardy has been very  
supportive of differing voices...

KATIE COURIC (O.S.)  
Are you going to oppose the bill?

JULIA  
Haven't read it yet, but if there  
is one thing I've learned from  
Alice Hardy, it's to remain open to  
other points of view. And to be  
unafraid to be convinced.

42      INT. NATE'S OFFICE - SAME      42

Nate's seems pleased enough. He turns off the TV.

43      INT. HALLWAY, CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY      43

The TECHNICIANS remove the earpiece and the mic from Julia as she does a postmortem with Scotty.

SCOTTY

I thought that went well.

JULIA

Long as she helps me with the immigration bill, it was worth it.

(smiles)

And I wouldn't mind going to that White House dinner, either.

SCOTTY

(uncomfortable)

Listen, I gotta run. Nice job.

Scotty nods, enigmatically, and leaves. Alan, who has been listening to the whole conversation, gives her a THUMBS UP.

ALAN

Wish you were on our side. Raise a lot of money with you.

(beat)

Listen, it's none of my business, Julia, but Alice Hardy isn't gonna go anywhere near immigration.

JULIA

Why not?

ALAN

Louisiana has no Latinos, so there'd be nothing for her to gain. And because of the country's attitude on immigration, she'd be handing a public relations tool to her sworn enemy.

JULIA

John Granger.

Hold on Julia. Surprised, worried... and furious.

END ACT II



ACT III44 INT. NATE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

44

Julia stands in front of Nate's desk. She's furious.

JULIA

Is it true or not?

NATE

Of course it's not true. She's not afraid of John Granger.

JULIA

Is she going to help Maria?

NATE

She said she'd look at it...

JULIA

She said she wanted to help.

Nate sits down. It's time to level with her.

NATE

No one said this would be a *First Hundred Days* item.

JULIA

First Hundred Days? This can't even wait 'til the First Hundred Hours! She's being deported!

NATE

And I'm sorry about that. She can always reapply for residency if and when things change.

JULIA

That puts her at the back of a very long line! Meanwhile, their lives are torn apart!

NATE

Do you have any idea how glacially slow Congress moves?

JULIA

The *Appropriations bill is being voted on this week*. You could easily attach this as a rider.

NATE

I can't jam a last minute item onto the Appropriations bill as a favor to you.

JULIA

I'm the one who did the favor! *She steps up if I step back*, remember?

NATE

I'm sorry if you feel misled.

She glares, shaking her head at him and at her own naivete.

JULIA

I can't believe I'm surprised. You haven't changed one bit.

Disgusted, she turns and walks out.

45

INT. JULIA'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

45

Julia walks in and finds Peter hard at work at the desk. The place is spotless. He's setting up a rack of FILE FOLDERS.

JULIA

What are you doing in here?

PETER

You gave me your room key, remember?

JULIA

Vaguely.

PETER

I sorted the box of staffer resumes. Policy wonks over there, Press aides here, Chief-of-Staff are here. Those are the ones I've been concentrating on.

JULIA

Peter, you don't work for me.

Peter gets very excited and starts talking VERY FAST.

PETER

Hope you don't mind, but I threw out all but the most qualified. You just can't take a flyer on the top job. In fact, I think you should go fifty percent on it.

JULIA  
What do you mean, *fifty percent*?

PETER  
I met this guy Dwayne Greene in the lobby. Works for Congressman Solister from the Minnesota Eighth. Really cool guy. His T-shirt said "Staffers Rule!" How awesome is that?

She can't help but smile. She loves his enthusiasm.

PETER (CONT'D)  
Dwayne said everyone gets the same budget but different people spend it differently. Some spread it out and have a big staff and others focus on a select few who are just majorly-tight, know what I mean? That's what you should do. Compensate for what you lack the most. For you that's experience. You need a total insider, with sharp elbows and balls of steel. Excuse my language.

JULIA  
No problem.

PETER CHIBA  
A real mother-effer. But the mother-effers tend to be the guys that cost the most money, 'cause everybody wants them. That's what Dwayne says.

Peter finally takes a breath.

JULIA  
Nice work, Peter.

PETER CHIBA  
Cool! So... am I hired?

JULIA  
What did your parents say when you told them you were dropping out?

PETER  
They'll get over it.

JULIA  
Maybe they shouldn't get over it.

PETER

I can always go back to school.

JULIA

Yeah, well, I know a little something about that and in some cases that may be true. But not in this case. Peter, you're going to get so caught up in this world that you'll never want to leave it.

PETER

Then maybe I'm not supposed to be in school.

JULIA

You have the sharpest mind of anyone I know. But it's not enough. Trust me. The mother-effers won't be bringing a knife to the gunfight. And as long as I have something to say about it, neither will you.

(beat)

Here's the deal. You transfer to a school in DC and you can work for me, part time and over breaks.

PETER

I tried to transfer but all the schools here are full up.

JULIA

Then you come back next year.

Peter doesn't like that plan at all.

46

INT. FOUR SEASONS LOBBY - NIGHT

46

Julia sits with the Vornos. Caden is playing with a toy on another sofa.

MRS. VORNO

You said she was going to help.

JULIA

I know.

MR. VORNO

I don't understand...

JULIA

It's just more complicated than I thought.

MRS. VORNO  
It's not complicated at all! We're Americans and she's our daughter-in-law!

JULIA  
I'm not giving up yet...

MRS. VORNO  
What does that mean?

Julia looks at Caden and exhales deeply.

JULIA  
I don't know.

MRS. VORNO  
But you said you could help!

JULIA  
I said I would try and I am trying.

Mr. Vorno holds his wife's hand to calm her.

MR. VORNO  
We know you are. And we appreciate it.

MRS. VORNO  
I'm sorry.

JULIA  
No. I'm the one who's sorry.

Mrs. Vorno gets up and goes over to take Caden. Julia's heart breaks as she watches them gather to leave.

47

INT. SPEAKER HARDY'S OFFICE - DAY

47

Robin sits with The Speaker and Nate - her "face time."

ROBIN  
As you might imagine, I'm very interested in getting on the Armed Services Committee.

SPEAKER HARDY  
Your father reports regularly to that committee...

ROBIN  
I attended the academy, served two tours in Iraq, spent a year at the Pentagon...

SPEAKER HARDY

Do you think your father's current assignment would be advantageous or detrimental if you were appointed to the committee?

ROBIN

Advantageous, I would assume.

SPEAKER HARDY

Given his public statements, the fact that you're a Democrat tells me that you're not afraid to part company with him on the big issues, which leads me to something I'd like to discuss with you.

Robin braces herself for what's coming next.

48

INT. LOBBY, FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - NIGHT

48

Julia crosses the lobby, exhausted, and sees Alan at a table with a WOMAN in a business suit. They both stand, finishing up. He spots Julia. He waves for her to come over. Last thing she wants to do is talk to anyone. But there's really no choice now. She begins the long trek to the table. As she arrives, she sees who the woman is. MARY MATALIN.

ALAN

I wanted to introduce you to Mary Matalin. Mary, meet Julia Bryce.

MARY MATALIN

I believe we spoke on the phone.

JULIA

We did?

(realizing - horrified)

You're not the Mary I hung up on?

MARY MATALIN

Don't worry about it. You're not the first, you won't be the last.

(to Alan)

Great to see you. I'll get the numbers to you by tomorrow.

(to Julia)

Pleased to meet you, Congresswoman.

Handshakes and she leaves them. He grins playfully.

ALAN

Sorry, couldn't resist.

JULIA  
Kind of a perfect cap on the day.

ALAN  
Day's not over yet. Maybe it'll  
get better.

She looks at him. Actually, she *considers* him.

JULIA  
You hungry?

ALAN  
I hear they serve a nice baby seal  
at Gerard.

48A INT. CALHOUN HOME - NIGHT

48A

Robin sits at dinner with her parents in the house she grew up in. The General is in khaki pants and a pressed plaid shirt. Her mother, ANNE, in jeans and sweater.

ANNE  
(enthusiastic)  
So, tell me about this White House  
dinner? Will you meet the  
President?

ROBIN  
If I'm chosen, I guess. They're  
only picking ten of us. Everyone's  
pretty amped up about it.

GENERAL CALHOUN  
I've met him plenty. I don't see  
what the fuss is about.

ROBIN  
You don't think he's doing a good  
job.

GENERAL CALHOUN  
Hasn't saved the world or anything.

ANNE  
What else? I want to hear  
everything.

ROBIN  
We have a seminar next week on how  
a bill becomes a law.

GENERAL CALHOUN

They teach you that after you're elected? They might want to make that a prerequisite.

Robin puts her silverware down.

ROBIN

Maybe we should do this already.

ANNE

No! You promised me you wouldn't talk business until after dinner.

GENERAL CALHOUN

What have we been talking about if not business?

ANNE

We're talking about Robin's first week.

GENERAL CALHOUN

Did it happen like I said? She asked you to put your name on it?

ROBIN

Yes.

GENERAL CALHOUN

And what did you tell her?

Robin looks at her mother.

ROBIN

Sorry mom.

His FIST POUNDS THE TABLE, but neither woman flinches.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You're wrong.

GENERAL CALHOUN

You're going to tell me what's right for this army?

ROBIN

I meant, in trying to bully me.

GENERAL CALHOUN

I was trying to reason with you! But apparently that's not possible.



ROBIN

I'm the one who's unreasonable?

He drops his napkin on his plate and walks out of the room.

ANNE

You should talk to him.

ROBIN

I just did.

49

INT. GERARD BISTRO - NIGHT

49

The soft glow of candlelight, white tablecloths, hushed atmosphere. Julia and Alan are eating. He catches her lost in thought, staring aimlessly at her food.

ALAN

My father was the most unlucky broker you ever met. The year he lost all our money, he'd come home every night, sit at the table and my mother would say the same thing. *"If there's nothing you can do about it for the next hour, you might as well enjoy the meal."*

Julia smiles, finally. Gratefully.

JULIA

Why would you ever want to work on Wall Street after what it did to your father?

ALAN

*Win, sin, or kin.* Another gem from mom. She said men do things for one of three reasons - ambition, sex, or family. *Win, sin, or kin.*

JULIA

Which was it for you?

ALAN

All of the above.

JULIA

Well, you definitely won. I googled you. You're loaded.

ALAN

Is that why we're having dinner?

JULIA  
No, but it's why I'm gonna sleep  
with you later.

He practically spits out his wine.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
Seriously, why Congress? You could  
do anything with that kind of  
money, start a foundation...

ALAN  
Did that.

JULIA  
You could run for President!

ALAN  
Not qualified. Yet.

JULIA  
That didn't stop Bush.

ALAN  
Sure it did.

She likes that answer. She likes him.

They hear some laughter behind them as the door opens and a  
few men walk in. One of those men is Nate. Shit.

JULIA  
What's with this town? No escape.

ALAN  
Say the word and we're outta here.

JULIA  
No way.

Nate excuses himself from his group and crosses toward them.  
He offers a hand to Alan.

NATE  
Alan. Good to see you.

ALAN  
Nate.

NATE  
(to Julia)  
Can I borrow you for a second?

JULIA  
I don't think so.

NATE  
Please.

She looks at Alan - *be right back*. Reluctantly, she stands.

50

INT. REST ROOM HALLWAY - SAME

50

Julia and Nate walk away from the main dining room.

NATE  
That man is an opportunist, Julia.  
He'll use you.

JULIA  
Like you did?

NATE  
You can continue saying that, but  
it doesn't make it true.

JULIA  
You can continue to deny it, but it  
doesn't make it any less true!

NATE  
You haven't changed either, you  
know. You're as stubborn as ever.

JULIA  
And you're as self-centered, self-  
important, self-righteous, as ever!

NATE  
This isn't about today at all, is  
it? You've never forgiven me.

JULIA  
It sounds like you've never  
forgiven yourself. Get over it. I  
have.

NATE  
I didn't end things with us because  
your father got sick. Things just  
happened. I never promised you  
anything.

JULIA  
That's a theme with you, isn't it?

NATE

Think hard before you make an enemy  
out of me, Julia. Trust me, you  
don't want to end up in bed with  
the Alan Levis of the world.

JULIA

I'll get in bed with Alan Levi or  
anyone else I damn-well please!

ALAN (O.S.)

Guys? Maybe you should take this  
outside.

Julia turns sharply and finds Alan standing there. OMFG!

END ACT III

ACT IV

52

INT. FOUR SEASONS BAR - NIGHT

52

Robin walks through the lobby and sees Julia sitting alone at the bar. She sits down next to her. Neither of them needs to speak. They've both had a shitty day.

Robin gets the BARTENDER'S attention, points to Julia's drink, signalling she wants the same.

JULIA  
It's a vodka tonic.

ROBIN  
Whatever.

They watch as the drink is poured. Robin holds up the glass to Julia, they clink, and drink.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
We need to find a roommate.

JULIA  
Yup. Any ideas?

ROBIN  
No Republicans.

JULIA  
Why not?

ROBIN  
Cause I don't want to fight in my own house. Let's make that a house rule. Democrats only.

JULIA  
I haven't met any other Democrats I'd live with.

CAMERON (O.S.)  
I'll be your roommate.

They turn around. Cameron is sitting in a booth by himself.

CAMERON (CONT'D)  
If I win.

Julia and Robin look at each other. Nope.

JULIA  
Sorry Cameron. House rule...

ROBIN  
Girls only.

53 INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

53

Julia and Robin stumble, drunk, into the elevator. They're laughing as they try to hit the buttons for their floors.

The doors close and open on the SECOND FLOOR, revealing KATHY and a MAN locked in a ROMANTIC EMBRACE. Julia and Robin share a look. Kathy and the man are startled.

Kathy gives a slight wave to Robin and Julia as she and the man get in the elevator. They wave back. It's weird.

JULIA  
Hi. You must be Mr. McAdams. I'm Julia...

MAN  
Uh... no, actually, I'm... Dave.

Kathy looks down. Awkward. Dave hits the button on the next floor. The ELEVATOR STOPS. Dave looks at Kathy but she shakes her head NO. He gets out, the doors close. Kathy continues to stare at the floor as Robin and Julia share a look of shock. Then Julia sees that KATHY IS CRYING.

JULIA  
Kathy? You okay?

54 INT. JULIA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

54

Kathy is hysterical, mascara running, crying her eyes out. Julia and Robin clean her up, trying to calm her down.

ROBIN  
You just won your election. How bad could it be?

KATHY MCADAMS  
Are you serious?! It couldn't be any worse!! I have nowhere to live, my son hates me, I'm not speaking to my husband, and I'm having sex with a....  
(sobbing)  
With a....  
(more sobs)  
With a....

JULIA  
With a what?!

KATHY MCADAMS  
WITH A LOBBYIST!!

She breaks into heaving sobs. Robin and Julia share a look. Robin knows what she's thinking...

JULIA  
We can solve one of those problems.

KATHY MCADAMS  
Which one?

ROBIN  
(relenting)  
We have a place for you to live.

Julia looks at Robin - nice.

55      INT. CORRIDOR, CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY      55

Julia walks down a corridor and suddenly STOPS because her eye caught something. She backs up - the office nameplate reads "LEONARD COX, NEW JERSEY 6TH."

56      INT. LEONARD COX OFFICE - SAME      56

Julia walks in and finds nobody at the reception desk. She can HEAR somebody in the inner office. She walks in, peeks her head inside, and there he is.

LEONARD COX, her former opponent. He's in his 60s, gray hair, balding, his suit jacket draped over a chair, his white sleeves rolled up. He takes some photos off the wall and drops them in a box. Julia knocks lightly. He turns.

JULIA  
I hope I'm not disturbing you.

LEONARD  
And yet here you are, in someone's office, uninvited.

Julia withdraws, but he keeps talking, holding her there.

LEONARD (CONT'D)  
My staff has gone on to other jobs.  
Rats leaving a sinking ship.

JULIA  
Congressman...I feel terrible about the way this happened.

LEONARD

Ms. Bryce, the only thing worse than losing is having to endure the pity of those who've defeated you.

JULIA

I don't pity you.

LEONARD

Yes, you do. But if you're going to stay and have a drink with me, you'll have to find a way to conceal your agreeable nature.

JULIA

I'd like to stay, but I can't have that drink. In fact, I don't think I can have another drink as long as I live.

LEONARD

You'll get used to those nights.

She pauses, watches him pour himself a scotch.

JULIA

Can I ask your advice on something?

LEONARD

Why not...

JULIA

I need to get something done very quickly. It'll change the lives of people who mean a great deal to me. I promised them I'd...

LEONARD

You're gonna promise a lot of things to a lot of people. Most of the time you won't be lying. But most of the time you are lying.

He's drowning in self-pity but he snaps back.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

Look, there are nine ways to skin a cat - outside the beltway. Inside, there are only two. *Partnership* and *Compromise*.

JULIA

I already compromised. Didn't work.



LEONARD

Then you look for *partnership*.

JULIA

How do I do that?

LEONARD

You find someone that shares the same agenda. They may not know they share it, in which case you educate them on why it's in their interest. Here's the best part... Your shared agenda doesn't even have to be about the issue itself.

JULIA

What else would it be?

LEONARD

Politics.

He takes a sip, lets that sink in. And it does.

57

INT. HALLWAY, CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

57

Julia stands in a corridor with Alan.

JULIA

After last night, I don't have a right to ask you for a favor.

ALAN

So you're a little unhinged. I kinda like that about you.

JULIA

Thank you for doing this.

ALAN

I made a phone call. Hard part's yours.

They walk in, past a nameplate that says REP. JOHN GRANGER.

58

INT. JOHN GRANGER'S OFFICE - DAY

58

Alan and Julia sit across from John Granger.

JOHN GRANGER

You are aware of my record on immigration policy?

JULIA

This one's different.

JOHN GRANGER  
They all are.

JULIA  
This one isn't about opening our borders, it isn't about security, and it isn't about jobs.

JOHN GRANGER  
Then what's it about?

JULIA  
Family.

JOHN GRANGER  
(likes her spunk)  
The lady knows how to bait a hook.

JULIA  
The Republican Party is in a rebuilding period right now. What are you rebuilding? Your brand. You are reminding the American people that yours is still the party of family values.

(beat)  
This man - this American man - did everything we told him to. He fell in love, he got married, he put down roots, he started a family. Now, tragically, he's not around to protect his family anymore. But his country can.

(beat)  
You guys spend a lot of time talking about the rights of the unborn child. This is a chance to do something for the child already born. And the family that loves him.

Granger looks at Alan. He bobs his head, mulls it.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
One more thing. The Speaker had a chance to help these people, but she let politics get in the way.

Granger looks at Alan again. This time with a sneaking grin.

Back where the week started. Julia paces the floor, waiting. After a few moments, Scotty arrives.

SCOTTY

I only have a minute.

JULIA

I'm giving you a head's up. I know that a big part of your job is to make sure your boss is aware of things before they happen. Well, something is going to happen.

SCOTTY

Why are you telling me?

JULIA

I need you to be on the Speaker's good side because I'm definitely going to be on her bad side.

SCOTTY

I don't understand.

JULIA

I want you to come work for me. I want you to be my chief-of-staff.

SCOTTY

Remember I told you about recognizing the giant in the room? I work for her.

JULIA

No, you work for Nate. But if you work for me, you'll run the show. Hire the staff, help create the agenda, and make me a player. Not to mention, I think I can probably double your salary.

(beat)

Let me tell you what's happening...

SCOTTY

Don't. Information is currency and you won't get what you paid for. I'm flattered, but I'm going to have to pass.

Julia is disappointed but Scotty is clearly resolute.

60

INT. CAR - DAY

60

General George Calhoun and Anne sit in the parked car.

ANNE

And you're really going to sit here sulking on your son's birthday?

GENERAL CALHOUN

When she leaves, I'll join you.

ANNE

We both know what this is really about and it's not that damn bill.

He remains silent. Finally, she opens the car door.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Shame on you, George.

61      EXT. ARLINGTON CEMETERY - SAME      61

Anne walks through the field of white stone, to Robin, at the GRAVESTONE of "GEORGE CALHOUN JR., SON and BROTHER."

JOHN GRANGER (V.O.)

This young lady will be a U.S. Congresswoman in just seven weeks.

62      EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY      62

A PRESS CONFERENCE: Granger, Julia and Alan, along with Mr. and Mrs. Vorno, holding Caden, stand before the camera.

JOHN GRANGER

And I'm proud that her first piece of legislation will bear my name.

63      INT. NATE'S OFFICE - SAME      63

Nate and Scotty watch the press conference on his TV.

JOHN GRANGER (ON TV)

*This is not a new bill, but a correction to a glaring error in our immigration law, an error that would separate a family struggling to rebuild after an awful tragedy.*

NATE

(to Scotty)

What do you think?

SCOTTY

I think she kicked our ass.

SPEAKER HARDY (O.S.)

She sure did.

They turn to find the Speaker standing in the doorway. She stares at the TV screen, clearly impressed by Julia.

SPEAKER HARDY (CONT'D)  
 Maybe you shouldn't have let her  
 get away after all.

Nate tries a smile but he's too embarrassed.

SCOTTY  
 Madame Speaker, we should get in  
 front of this, see if we can get  
 the woman released before Granger  
 does.

SPEAKER HARDY  
 Good. And schedule a lunch for Ms.  
 Bryce and I for next week.

The Speaker nods and walks out. Nate turns to Scotty.

NATE  
 Woulda been good to know about this  
 yesterday.

Scotty smiles to herself as she walks out. She's impressed.

64 EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - SAME 64

Granger steps from the microphone, inviting Julia to say a few words. She steps up to it nervously.

JULIA (V.O.)  
 It's only my first week, but I'd  
 like to tell you what I've learned.

65 EXT. THE MALL - DAY 65

A FRISBEE skates on the air above us. As we settle down with it, we see the CAPITOL BUILDING in the deep background. A dog snatches the frisbee and darts back to his owner.

JULIA (V.O.)  
 I learned that the law is very good  
 at drawing lines. *This is where you  
 can go, this is where you can't go.*

Running toward the dog is little Caden. He pets the dog and turns back to wave to his grandparents.

JULIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 But where America is at it's best,  
 isn't in our power to draw lines...

Then Caden turns and SEES Julia walking up over the rise.  
And a moment later, HE SEES HIS MOTHER. He RUNS to her...

JULIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
It's in our capacity to erase them.

Julia grins as she watches her friend wrap her arms around that little boy and swing him in the air.

66 EXT. ARLINGTON CEMETERY - DAY 66

Anne and Robin stand silently, holding hands at the gravestone of Robin's brother.

Robin turns, startled, as her father steps up beside her. And then she feels his hand take a hold of hers.

67 INT. BROWNSTONE - DAY 67

Boxes everywhere. The three women are moving in. The DOORBELL RINGS and Julia comes out to answer it. It's Peter.

JULIA  
Great, you got my message. The boxes marked *office* should be moved to the dining room. You can set up your laptop there for now...

PETER  
I'm confused. Your message only said meet you here...

Kathy emerges from the kitchen, cup of coffee in her hand.

JULIA  
Peter, meet Congresswoman McAdams.

KATHY  
Hi Peter. The Dean at Georgetown asked if you'd be willing to repeat your first semester.

PETER  
What?

KATHY  
You didn't finish your semester at Harvard, so there are no credits to transfer...

PETER  
I don't understand...

He looks at Julia as she smiles warmly.

JULIA  
 Congratulations. You join the  
 freshman class on January Third.  
 Same as us.  
 (she hands him a phone)  
 Your parents are expecting your  
 call.

He throws his arms around her - almost knocking her down.

PETER  
 Thank you, Ms. Bryce! Thank you so  
 much! I won't disappoint you!

JULIA  
 I know.

Robin walks in and it's clear that something's up.

ROBIN  
 The White House dinner list is up.

JULIA  
 Are you on it?

ROBIN  
 Yes!

KATHY  
 Oh my Goodness, Robin! That's so  
 exciting!!

ROBIN  
 I'm sorry, Kathy, you're not on it.

KATHY  
 That's okay. Didn't expect to be.

JULIA  
 We'll go to a movie that night.

ROBIN  
 No you won't.

Julia and Robin get out of a taxi, each in a stunning gown.  
 They look up at the White House, glowing and enchanting in  
 the warm evening.

69

INT. WHITE HOUSE BALLROOM - NIGHT

69

Julia and Robin enter. Julia's nervous as she looks around the room. All the TUXEDOS and GOWNS and SERVANTS and MARINES in full dress uniform. It's a fairy tale.

Alan steps up next to them.

ALAN

How about some champagne to go with those beautiful gowns?

He already has a WAITER next to him with a tray. He hands a glass to each of them.

ALAN (CONT'D)

You and I could have come together, you know.

JULIA

That's what I need, everyone talking about you and me.

ALAN

After our first dance, that's all they'll be talking about.

Robin turns and finds Cameron next to her.

ROBIN

Cameron? You weren't on the list.

CAMERON

Not 'til today. I won!

Wow! Alan hands him a last glass of champagne. CLINK!

The Speaker, Nate and Scotty are making their rounds. They approach the group.

SPEAKER HARDY

Ladies, you look gorgeous.

ROBIN

So do you, Madame Speaker.

The Speaker steps up to Julia.

JULIA

Thank you for inviting me. I know I probably wasn't your favorite person this week.



SPEAKER HARDY

Julia, every now and then we really do leave politics at the door. Enjoy yourself tonight. You've earned it.

The Speaker continues on, chatting with Alan. Scotty talks with Robin. And Nate and Julia are left together.

JULIA

Are you the reason I'm here?

NATE

Nope. She is.

Scotty. He moves on as she walks up and puts out her hand.

SCOTTY

I need you to be a player. Because I'm taking the job.

Julia smiles as she shakes Scotty's hand.

JULIA

I don't want to be a player. I want to be the giant in the room.

They both grin as A HUSH SUDDENLY FILLS THE ROOM...

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen! The President of the United States!

CAMERA FOLLOWS THE BACK OF A TUXEDO AS HE ENTERS THE ROOM. The crowd erupts in APPLAUSE. THE PRESIDENT'S HAND raises up to wave to the crowd.

Julia catches her breath...

FADE OUT.

END