Jackson

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

screenplay

by

Aaron Sorkin

THIRD DRAFT REVISED
11/11/94 (blue)

11/21/94	(pink)	1/11/95	(2nd blue)	4/3/95	(3rd blue)
11/30/94	(yellow)	1/12/95	(2nd pink)	4/5/95	(3rd pink)
12/5/94	(green)	1/13/95	(2nd yellow)		
12/15/94	(goldenrod)	1/13/95	(2nd green)		
12/23/94	(buff)	1/17/95	(2nd goldenrod)		
1/3/95	(salmon)	1/19/95	(2nd buff)		
1/4/95	(cherry)	1/26/95	(2nd salmon)		
1/5/95	(tan)	3/10/95	(2nd cherry)		
1/10/95	(white)	3/13/95	(2nd tan)		
		3/29/95	(2nd white)		

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1 **FADE IN:** 1

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

MAIN TITLES END ON

2 **EXT. BEAUTIFUL ESTABLISHING SHOT OF THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY** 2

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

CUT TO:

3 **INT. A CORRIDOR IN THE RESIDENCE - DAY** 3

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

AGENT COOPER
Liberty's moving.

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

PRESIDENT ANDREW BENJAMIN SHEPHERD

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

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

SHEPHERD
(to JANIE)
The 10:15 is American Fisheries?

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

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

JANIE starts to make a note.

JANIE
Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD
Janie, I was kidding.

JANIE
Of course, sir.

SHEPHERD
(to the AGENT at the elevator)
Hey, Cooper.

AGENT COOPER
'Morning, Mr. President.

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

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

SHEPHERD
Is he upset about the speech last night?

JANIE
He seemed concerned.

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

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

LEWIS
You skipped the whole paragraph.

SHEPHERD
(to JANIE)
And Monday morning it is.

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

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

SHEPHERD
This is a time for prudence, Lewis.

LEWIS
That was the kick-ass section.

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

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

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

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

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

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

GROUNDSKEEPER
'Morning, Mr. President.

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

JANIE
Charlie.

SHEPHERD
'Morning, Charlie.

LEWIS
Sir, the press is gonna need an explanation.

SHEPHERD
For what?

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

4 **INT. THE WEST WING - DAY** 4

They walk quickly down a HALLWAY teeming with STAFFERS, AIDES and OFFICE WORKERS.

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

SHEPHERD
There's a thing hanging out there?

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

SHEPHERD
And it's hanging out there?

LEWIS
Yes, sir.

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

SHEPHERD
Maria--

STAFFER (MARIA)
Good morning, sir.

SHEPHERD
Did they tell you I'm gonna need--

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

SHEPHERD
Thanks.

SHEPHERD moves on. LEWIS and JANIE stay with him.

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

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

LEWIS
I don't drink coffee.

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

Another STAFFER crosses their path--

JANIE
Happy birthday, Laura.

SHEPHERD
Hey, Laura, happy birthday.

STAFFER (LAURA)
Thank you, sir.

Once out of earshot--

SHEPHERD
(to JANIE)
I should send her some flowers.

JANIE
You already did, sir.

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

5 **INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY** 5

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

MRS. CHAPIL
Good morning, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD
How're you, Mrs. Chapil?

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

SHEPHERD
Sixty-three percent of it, at any rate.

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
(to JANIE)
What time does she get home today?

JANIE
Three-twenty.

SHEPHERD
How's my afternoon?

JANIE
Very crowded.

SHEPHERD
Schedule some time for me at 3:30.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Buenos dias, Senor Presidente.

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

SHEPHERD
Too-tall McCall, how was Mexico?

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

LEWIS
(to ROBIN)
He dumped a whole section.

SHEPHERD
Now there's a thing hanging out there.

ROBIN
Not a great society, sir?

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

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

LEWIS
See?

SHEPHERD
(re: a memo he's been looking at)
A.J. did you get one of these?

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

A.J.
Is that the letter from Solomon at the GDC?

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

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

ROBIN
Are they blaming the President for global warming?

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

A.J.
(continuing; to SHEPHERD)
Sir, I'm on the phone with these people twice a week. I honestly don't know what they want at this point.

LEWIS
They want a 20 percent reduction in fossil fuel emissions.

A.J.
It won't pass at 20 percent.

LEWIS
We haven't really tried.

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

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

A.J.
(to an AIDE)
Would you call Mr. Kodak and tell him the President's--

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

MRS. CHAPIL (O.S.)
Aaagh!

KODAK (O.S.)
Sorry! Sorry, my fault.

A.J.
(to the AIDE)
Never mind.

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

KODAK
Excuse me. Good morning, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD
You all right?

KODAK
They keep moving that big ficus plant.

A.J.
We're all here, Mr. President.

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

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

Everyone LAUGHS...even SHEPHERD smiles...

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

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

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

LEWIS
Hang on, are we not--

A.J.
Lewis--

LEWIS
Are we not putting back the handgun restrictions?!

A.J.
We're leaving 'em out.

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

SHEPHERD
After the election.

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

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

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

ROBIN
Got it.

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

KODAK
Scare the hell out of 'em?

A.J.
Yeah.

KODAK
I can do that.

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

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

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

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

LEWIS
Yes, sir.

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

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

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

JANIE
Security briefing, sir.

CUT TO:

6 **EXT. THE WASHINGTON BUSINESS DISTRICT - DAY - ESTABLISHING** 6

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

7 **EXT. - A CHROME AND GLASS BUILDING - DAY** 7

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

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
(into phone)
Global Defense Council...

SUSAN (V.O.) *
You wanted to see me? *

LEO (V.O.)
I just got off the phone with A.J. MacInerney.

CUT TO:

8 **INT. LEO SOLOMON'S OFFICE - DAY** 8

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

SUSAN
Did the President read the letter?

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

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

LEO
This isn't the guy who needed us four years ago, Susan. He's incredibly popular.
(more)

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

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

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

SUSAN
Who?

LEO
Sydney Ellen Wade.

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

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

CUT TO:

9 **INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY** 9

SHEPHERD and LEWIS - working on a speech.

SHEPHERD
Try it like this and lose that.

ROBIN
(entering)
David Sasser from the Times called and wanted to know what the White House felt was a great society.

LEWIS
What did you tell him?

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

LEWIS
Perfect.

JANIE steps in--

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

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

JANIE
Yes, sir.

ROBIN
You gonna go stag?

SHEPHERD
That's not a problem.

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

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

ROBIN
(continuing)
My God.
(beat)
I can't believe I said that.
(beat)
Mr. President, that was an incredibly thoughtless remark. I would never dream of insulting you or the memory of your wife.

SHEPHERD
That's okay, forget it.
(to JANIE)
What time is it?

JANIE
It's 3:45, sir.

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

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

ROBIN
Mr. President--

SHEPHERD
Robin, don't worry about it.

CUT TO:

10 **INT. THE RESIDENCE - DAY** 10

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

He walks into--

11 **INT. LUCY'S ROOM - DAY** 11

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

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

LUCY
Scales.

SHEPHERD
Well...you play it with gusto.

LUCY
Are my lips swollen?

SHEPHERD
Are they supposed to be?

LUCY
Yeah.

SHEPHERD
Then you're doing fine.

LUCY
Whatcha got behind your back?

SHEPHERD
A little gift.

LUCY
Is it a dirt bike?

SHEPHERD
Nope.

He hands her an old textbook...

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

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

LUCY
(reading the cover)
"Understanding the Constitution."

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

LUCY
You talked to Mr. Linder?

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

LUCY
I like it fine, Dad.

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

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

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

LUCY
(reading)
"Property of Gilmore Junior High School."

SHEPHERD
The next page.

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

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

LUCY
I can't wait.

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

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

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

He gives her a kiss on the head and heads out the door. Behind him, he hears Lucy's rendition of "Hail to the Chief." SHEPHERD shoots her a look as we

CUT TO:

12 **INT. CABINET ROOM - NIGHT** 12

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

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

A.J.
How soon can you deploy them?

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

A.J.
Any security concerns?

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

SHEPHERD
Okay, let's move on it. Thank you, gentlemen.

SHEPHERD and A.J. leave the Cabinet room amidst a volley of "good-bye"'s and "Thank you, Mr. President"'s.

They pass MRS. CHAPIL and JANIE.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Have a good evening, Mrs. Chapil.

MRS. CHAPIL
You too, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD starts his walk from the WEST WING back to the residence.

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

SHEPHERD
I'll see you in the morning, Janie.

JANIE
You will, Mr. President.

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT follows at a distance.

AGENT #2
(sotto)
Liberty is moving.

A.J.
Leo Solomon brought in a hired gun at the GDC.

SHEPHERD
It's about time.

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
Mention it to Janie.

A.J.
Good.

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

A.J.
We will, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD
Good.

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

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
A.J.?

A.J.
Yes?

SHEPHERD
Listen, Robin said something to me today that I'm sure she wouldn't have said if...I mean, she wasn't saying it to me, I realize...
(beat)
Ah, never mind. Have a good night.

A.J.
Good night, Mr. President.

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

A.J.
I beg your pardon?

SHEPHERD
I mean you were best man at my wedding, for cryin' out loud. Call me Andy.

A.J.
(laughing off the suggestion)
Whatever you say, Mr. President.

They have reached the south entrance to the White House.

A.J.
(continuing)
Have a good night, sir.

SHEPHERD
Good night, A.J.

SHEPHERD enters the White House.

CUT TO:

13 **EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT** 13

DISSOLVE TO:

14 **EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY** 14

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

15 **EXT. THE NORTHWEST EXECUTIVE ENTRANCE - DAY** 15

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

SYDNEY
(to the GUARD)
Hi, my name's Sydney Ellen Wade.

SUSAN
He just needs your driver's license.

SUSAN hands the guard her license.

SYDNEY
(handing him her license)
I'm from Virginia.

SUSAN
He doesn't care.

SYDNEY
(to the GUARD)
I'm here for a meeting with Mr. MacInerney.

SUSAN
He doesn't need to know that.

The GUARD BUZZES her through the gate.

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

SUSAN
He doesn't know what Capra-esque means.

GUARD
(to SUSAN)
Yeah I do. Frank Capra, great American director--It's a Wonderful Life, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. *
(handing SYDNEY and SUSAN their laminated passes)
Sydney Ellen Wade of Virginia. Knock 'em dead.

SYDNEY
Thanks.

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

CUT TO:

16 **INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY** 16

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
We're already doing the least we can do, but I can't think of anything better, so we'll go with this for now.
(to HUD SECRETARY)
Jerry, say hello to Linda for me. And if I don't see you again, have a good Thanksgiving.

HUD SECRETARY
Thank you, Mr. President.

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

SHEPHERD
How're we doin'?

JANIE
You're running four minutes ahead of schedule.

SHEPHERD
Ahead?

JANIE
Yes sir.

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

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

SHEPHERD
The GDC meeting. Right.

CUT TO:

17 **INT. A.J.'S OFFICE - DAY** 17

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

SYDNEY
Hardly an impressive distinction, A.J.

SUSAN is trying to avert the inevitable--

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

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

SUSAN
Sir, Ms. Wade's been thrown into the deep end of the pool on her first day. She hasn't even had a chance to read the report of the Quebec Conference.

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

SYDNEY
You're right. I haven't read it. If someone asked me yesterday, I'd have told them the Quebec Conference was made up of six professional hockey teams. But what I do know is that it's time for the President to run for president again.
(more)

SYDNEY (cont'd)
Leon Kodak is as good as it gets when it comes to electoral strategy, and I'm certain he's told the President exactly what I'd tell him: Nail down Michigan and California, where they make cars and airplanes--and burn plenty of fossil fuel. But if I had read these eight hundred pages, I would have discovered that it's the burning of fossil fuels that's been mostly responsible for global warming and that the 20 percent reduction recommended by the GDC is a necessary first step toward arresting the catastrophic greenhouse effect that has gone unchecked by this administration...

SUSAN
(to SYDNEY)
It's really time to--

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

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

A.J.
(pause)
I'm afraid Sydney is right. Although not about Michigan and California. The President has asked me to convey to you that he's sending his energy bill to the floor with a call for a reduction of 10 percent.

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

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

SYDNEY
The President's expecting our full support?

A.J.
Yes he is.

SYDNEY
The President's dreamin', A.J.

SUSAN
Sydney!

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

VOICE (O.S.)
Let's take him out back and beat the shit out of him.

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

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
All evidence to the contrary.

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

SHEPHERD
Sydney?

SYDNEY
Yes, sir?

SHEPHERD
You got a second?

SYDNEY
(quietly)
Of course.

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

SHEPHERD
I thought maybe we might have a word in private. Someplace a little less intimidating.
(calling)
Janie.

JANIE
Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD
(to SYDNEY)
This is my personal assistant, Janie Basdin. Janie, would you show Ms. Wade into the rec room. I'll be there in just a second.

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

JANIE
(to SYDNEY)
This way...

JANIE leads SYDNEY into...

18 **INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY** 18

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

SHEPHERD strides in--

SHEPHERD
Sorry to keep you waiting.

SYDNEY
Mr. President--

SHEPHERD
Is it okay if I call you Sydney?

SYDNEY
Of course. Mr. President--

SHEPHERD
Have you ever been in the Oval Office?

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

SHEPHERD
I hear it's pretty good.

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

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

SYDNEY
(pause)
Well...

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

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

SHEPHERD
No, I'll give you that.

SYDNEY
Mr. President--

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

SYDNEY
I didn't know that.

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

SYDNEY
Learned that one the hard way.

SHEPHERD
Sydney, this bill is important to me.

SYDNEY
Yes, sir, I'll convey your message.

SHEPHERD
But you don't believe me?

SYDNEY
The GDC is asking for 20 percent, sir.

SHEPHERD
It's not gonna pass at 20 percent. It's a longshot at 10.

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

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

SYDNEY
Twenty-four votes?

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

SYDNEY
Do I have your word on that, sir?

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

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

SYDNEY heads for the door--

SHEPHERD
You can't do that, Sydney.

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

SHEPHERD
Well, if you go through that door, the United States Secret Service. That's my private office.
(pointing)
You need to go out that way.

SYDNEY
(beat)
Ah.

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

CUT TO:

19 **INT. THE BILLIARD ROOM - NIGHT** 19

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

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

SHEPHERD
Should I meet with them?

A.J.
Let Lewis take a pass at them first.

SHEPHERD
Fine. 2 in the side.

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

A.J.
Nice shot, Mr. President.

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

A.J. assesses the table.

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

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

SHEPHERD makes the shot.

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

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

SHEPHERD
I forgot to tell you.

A.J.
It's a waste of time.

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

A.J.
Also, Sydney Wade called.

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

SHEPHERD
Sydney Wade?

A.J.
(beat)
She wanted to apologize one more time for her behavior. 3 in the side. *

SHEPHERD
Did she say anything about me?

A.J.
(beat)
Sydney Wade?

SHEPHERD
When she called.

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

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

A.J. is staring at him in disbelief.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
She didn't say anything about me?

A.J.
(quietly)
Well, no, but I can pass her a note before study hall and--

SHEPHERD
Tell me this: Hypothetically, what would happen--

A.J.
I feel a nightmare coming on. 1 in the corner. * *

He misses the shot. *

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

A.J. *
You're not serious. *

SHEPHERD
Don't I sound serious?

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

SHEPHERD
Why not? Jefferson did. Wilson did.

A.J.
You're not--

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

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

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

A.J.
No, sir, this is the White House.

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

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

SHEPHERD
What are you saying?

A.J.
We'll take a hit.

SHEPHERD
How big?

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

SHEPHERD
Five points we're standing here talking about?!

A.J.
It could be more.

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

A.J.
You want me to have Kodak put together some numbers so we know what we're talking about?

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

A.J.
Mr. President, the American people have a funny way of deciding on their own what is and isn't their business.

SHEPHERD
I like her, A.J.
(pause)
Stop being a chief of staff for one minute.

A.J.
(beat)
Give her a call.

SHEPHERD
(calling out)
Janie!
(to A.J.)
She didn't say anything about me? *

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

SHEPHERD
That's something.

JANIE enters--

JANIE
Yes, sir?

SHEPHERD
I need you to track down a phone number.

CUT TO:

20 **EXT. A RESIDENTIAL STREET IN GEORGETOWN - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING** 20

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

CUT TO:

21 **INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT** 21

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

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

SYDNEY
(into phone)
Richard...Richard, it wasn't funny. I acted like a college freshman at a protest rally.

BETH
Tell him the part about walking out the wrong door.

SYDNEY
Oh God, I forgot about that.
(back into phone)
No, Richard...Richard, I don't want to hear your Andrew Shepherd imitation...

BETH
I wanna hear it.

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

SHE hangs up.

SYDNEY
(continuing)
The President must think I'm a third-rate jerk.

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

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

BETH
And <u>then</u> you walked out the wrong door.

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

BETH
That's my current plan, yes.

The TELEPHONE RINGS...

SYDNEY
That's gonna be Leo Solomon. He said he'd call at nine.

SYDNEY picks up the phone--

SYDNEY
(continuing; into phone)
Hello?

PHONE VOICE
Uh, hi, is this Sydney?

SYDNEY doesn't recognize the voice--

SYDNEY
(into phone)
Leo?

PHONE VOICE
No, this is Andrew Shepherd.

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

SYDNEY
Andrew Shepherd.
(back in the phone)
You're hilarious, Richard. You're a regular riot.

And we CROSS-CUT between SYDNEY and SHEPHERD.

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

SYDNEY
Oh, really. Well, I'm so glad you called, because I forgot to tell you today what a nice ass you have.

SYDNEY
(continuing)
I'm also impressed that you were able to get my phone number, considering I don't have a phone. Good night, Richard.

SYDNEY hangs up the phone.

22 **INT. SHEPHERD'S PRIVATE OFFICE/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT** 22

as SHEPHERD, undaunted, dials the number again.

SHEPHERD
(under his breath)
This used to be easier.

CUT TO:

23 **INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT** 23

as the PHONE RINGS.

SYDNEY
I don't believe this.

BETH
You want me to deal with him?

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

SHE picks up the phone.

SYDNEY
(continuing)
Hello?

And we begin CROSS-CUTTING again between the two.

SHEPHERD
Sydney?

SYDNEY
Are you learning-impaired?!

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

SYDNEY
(beat)
What?

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

SHEPHERD hangs up.

CUT TO:

24 **INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT** 24

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

SYDNEY
(to herself)
This isn't happening to me.

She dials.

BETH
What's going on?

SYDNEY
(to herself)
It's not possible I did it twice in one day.

The OPERATOR answers.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
(filtered)
Good evening, The White House.

SYDNEY swallows.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
(continuing; filtered)
Hello?

SYDNEY
(quietly)
My name is Sydney Ellen Wade. I'd like to--

OPERATOR (O.S.)
(filtered)
The President's expecting your call, ma'am. I'll put you right through.

CUT TO:

25 **INT. SHEPHERD'S PRIVATE OFFICE/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT** 25 *

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

SHEPHERD
Hello.

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
(smiling)
What did you mean when you said you don't have a phone.

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

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

SYDNEY
(trying to pretend it's just another guy on the phone)
The FBI. Sure. 'Cause if you want to find someone and you're the president, that's who you would call.

SHEPHERD
You know who else is good at that?

SYDNEY
The C.I.A.?

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

There's a long silence on the phone.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Sydney? Sydney, <u>Congress</u> doesn't take this long to--

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

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

SYDNEY
Of course. I'm a little...uh...what do I do? I mean, where do I go? Should I meet you? Will you...

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

SYDNEY
Of course.

SHEPHERD
I'll see you Thursday night.

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

SHEPHERD
Me too.

They hang up.

DISSOLVE TO:

25A **EXT. OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - EST. - DAY** 25A *

26 **INT. THE CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY** 26

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

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

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

KODAK
Who's on Indiana?
(raising his voice)
Excuse me. New people, I can't remember your names. Raise your hand if you're on Indiana.

Two INTERNS raise their hands--

KODAK
(continuing)
Put your hands down--you're on Illinois.

LEWIS comes in.

LEWIS
We got Jarrett.

KODAK
What?

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

KODAK
I don't believe it.
(to an INTERN)
You. New guy. "Jarrett, Democrat, Minnesota." Slide his name on over to "for."
(to LEWIS)
We just had his name laminated under "Undecided." How'd you get the fence pole out of his butt?

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

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

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

LEWIS
We should have gone after the handguns.

KODAK
We gotta do one thing at a time.

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

CUT TO:

27 **INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY** 27

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

The two INTERNS are marking spreadsheets. DAVID is on one phone, SYDNEY is on another.

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY
Terrific!

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

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

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

CUT TO:

28 **EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT** 28

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

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

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

29 **INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT** 29

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

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

29A **INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT** 29A

LUCY is standing in front of her father, tying his bow tie.

SHEPHERD
That's a little tight, Luce.

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

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

LUCY
All done.

He looks in the mirror.

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

LUCY
Social studies.

SHEPHERD
Very funny.
(smiles)
Really, where did you learn?

LUCY
I don't know...I guess...

SHEPHERD
Sweetie, did Mom teach you how to do this?

LUCY
Yeah.

SHEPHERD
(pause)
Lucy, is this okay with you? My having dinner with a woman?

LUCY
It's totally okay.

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

LUCY
Dad, it's cool. Go for it.

SHEPHERD
You know, I'm a little nervous.

LUCY
You'll be fine. Just be yourself.

SHEPHERD
Be myself.

LUCY
And compliment her shoes.

SHEPHERD
Her shoes?

LUCY
Girls like that.

CUT TO:

30 **INT. EAST WING ENTRANCE - NIGHT** 30

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

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT sits alone behind a small desk.

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

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

CUT TO:

31 **INT. SITTING HALL/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT** 31 *

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

A.J.
Sydney, come on in. You look beautiful.

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

A.J.
I promise you there's no hidden agenda.

SHEPHERD approaches SYDNEY.

SHEPHERD
Sydney, Andrew Shepherd. We spoke on the phone.

SYDNEY
Yes, sir. I remember.

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

A.J.
You know my wife, Esther.

SYDNEY
Sure. It's nice to see you again.

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY
Got it.

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

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

SYDNEY
An honor to meet you both.

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

SHEPHERD
Sydney, it sounds like our table's ready.

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

CUT TO:

32 **INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT** 32

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

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

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

SYDNEY
They took me through it.

After a slight pause--

SYDNEY
(continuing)
Do you do this often, sir?

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

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

SHEPHERD
Do I date a lot?

SYDNEY
Well, yeah.

SHEPHERD
No. How 'bout you?

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

SHEPHERD
Then you're experienced at this.

SYDNEY
Oh yeah, you can ask me anything.

SHEPHERD
How are we doing so far?

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

And all of a sudden an INCREDIBLE SOUND from inside the EAST ROOM--

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

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

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

VOICE (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

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

SHEPHERD
By the way, nice shoes.

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

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

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

DISSOLVE TO:

33 **INT. EAST ROOM - NIGHT** 33

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

CUT TO:

AT SHEPHERD'S TABLE

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
They're hammered. Esther, you speak French.

ESTHER
Latin.

SHEPHERD
I thought you spoke French.

ESTHER
No, Latin.

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

SYDNEY
(taking over--to D'ASTIER)
Monsieur le President, nous sommes tous habilles, nous avons ce merveilleux orchestre, une piece magnifique...comment se fait-il que les invites ne dansent pas?

SHEPHERD
(proudly to A.J. and ESTHER)
That's my date.

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

SYDNEY
Really?

D'ASTIER
Absolument.

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY
There's a lesson there, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD
More beheadings in the White House?

A.J.
Bob Rumson would embrace it.

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

SHEPHERD stands, holds out his hand to SYDNEY.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Would you like to dance?

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

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

The Dance Band begins, and SYDNEY and SHEPHERD dance...

...beautifully.

CUT TO:

THE GUESTS

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

CUT TO:

A.J. AND ESTHER MACINERNEY,

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

CUT TO:

RUMSON'S TABLE

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

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD AND SYDNEY DANCING

SYDNEY
I don't know how you do it.

SHEPHERD
Arthur Murray. Six lessons.

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

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

LEWIS AND ROBIN

looking on from the back of the room.

LEWIS
They make a nice couple.

ROBIN
Lovely.

LEWIS
We've got troubles.

ROBIN
Huge.

As PEOPLE start onto the dance floor, we

CUT TO:

34 **INT. A BLACK LIMOUSINE - NIGHT** 34

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

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

CUT TO:

34A **EXT. WHITE HOUSE - MORNING** 34A *

SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY IN THE LIFE *

CUT TO: *

35 **INT. OUTER OFFICE OF THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY** 35

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

SHEPHERD
Good morning, Mrs. Chapil.

MRS. CHAPIL
Good morning, Mr. President. Mr. Rothschild and Ms. McCall are in the office, sir. They said they need to talk to you before scheduling.

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

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

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

JANIE
I don't understand.

SHEPHERD
I need the phone number of a florist.

JANIE
You just want the phone number?

SHEPHERD
Yeah.

JANIE
(beat)
I don't understand, sir, is there--

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

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

SHEPHERD
Thank you.

He heads into the office.

CUT TO:

36 **INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY** 36

where LEWIS and ROBIN are waiting anxiously.

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

SHEPHERD
(to ROBIN)
I just need two minutes to make a call and I'll be right with you. *

JANIE enters and hands SHEPHERD a piece of paper. *

SHEPHERD *
(continuing)
Thank you, Janie. *

She exits. *

LEWIS
Who are we calling, sir?

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

LEWIS
Yes, sir.

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

SHEPHERD *
(to the OPERATOR) *
Yeah, good morning. How do I get an * outside line? Really? That's * simple. Thank you. *

SHEPHERD dials the phone number Janie's given him.

SHEPHERD
(continuing; into phone)
Hello, yes, is this Carmen's House of Flowers? Good, I'd like to order some flowers...

CUT TO:

LEWIS AND ROBIN

hovering near the outer office.

LEWIS
Janie?

JANIE
Yes?

LEWIS
What's the President doing?

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

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD ON THE PHONE--

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
Tell me something. What's the state flower of Virginia?

CUT TO:

THE OUTER OFFICE

ROBIN
Does this have something to do with Sydney Wade?

JANIE
I'm really not at liberty to say.

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD AT HIS DESK

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
Is there someone else there who might know?
(beat)
No, I'm not trying to give you a hard time, I was-- hold on please. *

CUT TO:

THE OUTER OFFICE

SHEPHERD's VOICE comes through on INTERCOM.

SHEPHERD (O.S.)
(through intercom)
Janie, what's the state flower of Virginia?

JANIE
(turning to MRS. CHAPIL)
Mrs. Chapil. State flower of Virginia.

MRS. CHAPIL
The dogwood.

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD AT HIS DESK

JANIE (O.S.)
(through intercom)
The dogwood, sir.

SHEPHERD
(to JANIE)
Thank you.
(into phone)
It's the dogwood.
(pause)
What? Hang on please. *
(to JANIE, through intercom)
Janie, the dogwood is a tree, not a flower.

CUT TO:

THE OUTER OFFICE

LEON KODAK walks by.

KODAK
It's a tree and a flower.

JANIE
Are you sure?

KODAK
Yes. What's going on?

CUT TO:

OVAL OFFICE

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

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

CUT TO:

THE OUTER OFFICE

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

SHEPHERD (O.S.)
Janie! Do you have any idea where my credit cards might be?

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD AT HIS DESK

JANIE (O.S.)
They're in storage in Wisconsin with the rest of your personal items.

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

CUT TO:

37 **INT. LEO SOLOMON'S OFFICE - DAY** 37

SYDNEY enters.

SYDNEY
Leo, you wanted to see me?

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

LEO produces a copy of the morning paper, which has a photo of Shepherd and Sydney dancing.

SYDNEY
Leo--

LEO
Then I picked up the Times--

SYDNEY
It was crazy. He called me at home.

LEO
What's going on?

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

LEO
Did you sleep with him?

SYDNEY
What?

LEO
Did you sleep--

SYDNEY
That's none of your business, Leo.

LEO
Yeah, it is, Sydney.

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

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

SYDNEY
That's unfair.

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

SYDNEY
You're making way too much of this.

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

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

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

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

LEO
The White House sent me something perishable?

LEO'S SECRETARY
It's for Ms. Wade.

LEO
Here we go...

SYDNEY begins unwrapping the package.

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

LEO'S SECRETARY
(excited)
It's from <u>him</u>.

LEO
Of course it's from him.

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

LEO'S SECRETARY
He wrote the note himself.

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

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

SYDNEY
Okay, listen, so he--
(to LEO'S SECRETARY)
--it took him ten minutes to write a card?!

LEO'S SECRETARY
Apparently he went through several drafts.

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

LEO
What is it...what is it?

SYDNEY
A ham. *

LEO
(beat)
A ham? *

SYDNEY
He sent me a Virginia ham.

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

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

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

CUT TO:

38 **EXT. THE NORTHWEST EXECUTIVE ENTRANCE - DAY** 38

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

CUT TO:

39 **INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY** 39

SHEPHERD is conferring with LEWIS and ROBIN.

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

LEWIS
There is no reason to entertain that at this point.

ROBIN
How do you want me to handle the Sydney issue?

SHEPHERD
The Sydney issue?

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

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

JANIE pokes her head in.

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

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

JANIE
Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD
(to LEWIS and ROBIN)
There is no Sydney issue.

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

SYDNEY
(to SHEPHERD)
Thanks for seeing me on such short notice.

SHEPHERD
No problem. Did you get the ham?

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

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

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

JANIE enters.

JANIE
They're 45 seconds away, sir.

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
You free for dinner tomorrow night?

SYDNEY
Dinner?

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

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

An AIDE has slipped in and hands SHEPHERD a note.

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

SYDNEY
Actually, I have some concerns that--

The AIDE (JEFF) steps back in--

JEFF
Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD
(re: the note)
I can't do this.

JEFF
Which? Robbins or Stackhouse? *

SHEPHERD
Either one. I wanna be in and out.

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

SHEPHERD
Stackhouse wants to talk about grazing rights. Trust me.

JEFF
Got it.

And he's gone.

SHEPHERD
(to SYDNEY)
Sorry. You have concerns.

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

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

SYDNEY
You like to make jokes about this, but--

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

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

SYDNEY
What's that?

SHEPHERD
My ride's here.

And, sure enough, coming into view outside the windows of the Oval Office, is MARINE 1, the President's helicopter. JANIE comes back in and helps him on with his coat and scarf.

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

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

SYDNEY
It's just not--

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

As SHEPHERD rushes out...

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Seven-thirty.

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

CUT TO:

40 **EXT. WHITE HOUSE - SOUTH LAWN - DAY** 40

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

41 OMITTED 41

42 **EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT** 42

CUT TO:

43 **INT. SITTING HALL/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT** 43

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

LUCY enters.

LUCY
Are you Ms. Wade?

SYDNEY
(standing up, smiling)
Sydney.

LUCY *
Lucy Shepherd. *

SYDNEY *
Nice to meet you. *

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

SYDNEY
Your father's on the phone with his dentist?

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

SYDNEY
Who is he on the phone with?

LUCY
The Prime Minister of Israel.

SYDNEY
They're probably not discussing his teeth.

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

SYDNEY
C-STAD? *

LUCY *
Yeah. *

SYDNEY *
Capricorn Surface to Air Defense. *

LUCY
Right.

SHEPHERD enters.

SHEPHERD
Let meat loaf night begin.

SYDNEY
Everything all right with your teeth?

SHEPHERD
My teeth?

SYDNEY
The dentist.

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

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

SHEPHERD
(to LUCY)
You turned on me.

LUCY
Can we eat?

CUT TO:

44 **EXT. A POSH HOUSE IN CHEVY CHASE - NIGHT** 44

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

CUT TO:

45 **INT. THE HOUSE IN CHEVY CHASE - NIGHT** 45

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

RUMSON (V.O.)
You're over-thinking this.

CUT TO:

46 **INT. THE LIBRARY - NIGHT** 46

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

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

STAFFER #1
So it comes down to character.

STAFFER #2
The press likes him, Senator. The networks, the newspaper, they're--

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

STAFFER #3
The press is an unwitting accomplice.

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

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

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

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

CARL
What's going on?

And four STAFFERS grab whatever newspaper is closest to their hand and toss them to CARL.

RUMSON
The President's got a girlfriend.

CUT TO:

47 **INT. PRIVATE OFFICE/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT** 47

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

SYDNEY
(to LUCY)
Your dad says you're studying the Constitutional Convention.

SHEPHERD
She's not having fun, though.

LUCY
Dad--

SYDNEY
You're not having fun?

LUCY
(to herself)
This is a nightmare. This is a social studies nightmare.

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

LUCY gets up from the table and kisses her father.

LUCY
G'night, Dad.

SHEPHERD
G'night sweetie. *

LUCY
It was nice meeting you, Ms.-- *

SYDNEY
Sydney.

LUCY
It was nice meeting you, Sydney.

SYDNEY
Thank you. It was very nice meeting you.

SHEPHERD *
Sleep well honey. I love you. *

LUCY *
I love you too. *

LUCY leaves. SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are alone now.

SYDNEY
She's wonderful.

SHEPHERD
She's her mother.

SYDNEY
She's you.

After a pause...

SHEPHERD
Would you like the 25-cent tour?

CUT TO:

48 **INT. THE EAST WING - NIGHT** 48

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

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

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

SYDNEY
The Israelis?

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

SYDNEY and SHEPHERD enter the:

49 **INT. THE CHINA ROOM - NIGHT** 49

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

SHEPHERD
(remembering)
I think this is the dish room.

SYDNEY
It's not the dish--

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

SYDNEY
It's the China Room.

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
Sydney.

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

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

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

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

This last statement is not lost on SYDNEY.

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

SYDNEY
You think this is a good idea?

SHEPHERD
Probably not.

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

AGENT #3 (O.S.)
Mr. President...

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

AGENT #3
We have a secure call from the sit-room.

SHEPHERD knows what that means.

SHEPHERD
Excuse me.

He moves out the door and into the corridor.

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

AGENT #3
Sorry, ma'am.

SYDNEY
(beat)
No...of course.

SHEPHERD comes back in.

SHEPHERD
Listen--

SYDNEY
Is anything wrong?

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

SHEPHERD (cont'd)
(to the AGENT)
Can you show Ms. Wade out.

SHEPHERD exits.

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

CHAIRMAN (V.O.)
The response scenario's in place...

CUT TO:

49A **INT. THE SITUATION ROOM - NIGHT** 49A

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

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

SHEPHERD
And we're gonna hit the Libyan Intelligence Headquarters?

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

SHEPHERD
What's the estimate?

GENERAL
We'll level the building.

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

GENERAL
Only if we miss.

SHEPHERD
Are we gonna miss?

GENERAL
No, sir.

SHEPHERD
How many people work in that building?

CHAIRMAN
We've been all through--

SHEPHERD
How many people work in the damn building?

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

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

DEPUTY
By far. Mostly custodial staff and a few--

SHEPHERD
What time does the night crew go on?

DEPUTY
They're on now, sir.

SHEPHERD
A.J.?

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN
Mr. President?

SHEPHERD
Attack.

CUT TO:

49B **INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT** 49B

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

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

LEWIS
General Rork said around 0-Eight Hundred. *
*

ROBIN
Sir, what do you think about a national address?

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

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

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

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

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

KODAK
Yes, sir.

PRESS (V.O.)
Mr. President...Mr. President...

CUT TO:

50 **INT. THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY** 50

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

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

SHEPHERD
No. We did everything but show them the blueprints. The hardware was sitting in an airplane hangar for a month. They didn't hit it until the American personnel got there. Leslie.

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

A.J.
(sotto to ROBIN)
Get him off.

SHEPHERD
Yes, we'd just finished dinner.

ROBIN
Last question.

SHEPHERD
No. We did everything but show them the blueprints. The hardware was sitting in an airplane hangar for a month. They didn't hit it until the American personnel got there. Leslie.

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

A.J.
(sotto to ROBIN)
Get him off.

SHEPHERD
Yes, we'd just finished dinner.

ROBIN
Last question.

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

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

51 **INT. THE WHITE HOUSE CORRIDORS - DAY** 51

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

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

SHEPHERD
There's nothing that needs prepping. A.J., let's meet with the leadership <u>after</u> we meet with the Security Council.

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

SHEPHERD
Nobody gets ten minutes today.

DISSOLVE TO:

52 **INT. SHEPHERD'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NIGHT** 52

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

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

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

He hangs up. On the T.V. we see a quick sound bite from RUMSON.

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

SHEPHERD
I went to Stanford, you blowhole.

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

SHEPHERD clicks off the T.V. and then stares at

A SLIP OF PAPER THAT SAYS "SYDNEY"

CUT TO:

52A **EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT** 52A

BETH (V.O.)
This box just says "Miscellaneous." Is this bedroom miscellaneous or kitchen miscellaneous?

53 **INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT** 53

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

BETH
Sydney?

SYDNEY
Why did I have to kiss him?

BETH
You kissed him?

SYDNEY
Yeah.

BETH
You didn't tell me that.

SYDNEY
I kissed him.

BETH
Where?

SYDNEY
On the mouth.

BETH
(exasperated)
Where in the White House?!

SYDNEY
In the dish room.

BETH
The dish room?

SYDNEY
The China Room.

BETH
Then what happened?

SYDNEY
He had to go and attack Libya.

BETH
It's always something.

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

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

The PHONE RINGS--

SYDNEY freezes.

The PHONE RINGS again.

BETH
(continuing)
Answer the phone.

SYDNEY
It's him.

BETH
Answer the phone.

SYDNEY
He's gonna ask me to come over there.

BETH
Answer the phone.

SYDNEY
I don't want to go over there.

BETH
Answer the phone.

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

CUT TO:

54 **INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT** 54

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

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

SHEPHERD
(to COOPER)
Thanks, Coop.

SHEPHERD closes the door.

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

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

But SYDNEY doesn't take her coat off.

SYDNEY
Mr. President, this isn't gonna work.

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

SYDNEY
That's not what I...

SHEPHERD
I didn't think so. Listen...

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

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
Why is that, by the way?

SYDNEY
Why's what?

SHEPHERD
Why aren't you on my staff?

SYDNEY
You can't afford me.

SHEPHERD
How much do you make?

SYDNEY
More than you do, Mr. President. *

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

SYDNEY
(loudly)
What the hell does it matter how much money I--

SHEPHERD
You would raise your voice to the President?

SYDNEY
I'm only thinking about the health of your Presidency. You think this * morning's press conference was the end of it? Bob Rumson's gotta be drooling over this.

SHEPHERD
Are you attracted to me?

SYDNEY
I beg your pardon?

SHEPHERD
I asked if--

SYDNEY
(of course she is)
That's not the issue--

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

SYDNEY
You're not most people.

SHEPHERD
You know what your problem is?

SYDNEY
What's my problem?

SHEPHERD
Sex and nervousness.

SYDNEY
Sex and nervousness is my problem.

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

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

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

SYDNEY
Ahhhhhhh.

SHEPHERD
You see what I'm getting at?

SYDNEY
Yes. May I use your bathroom for a moment?

SHEPHERD
Sure. It's right through there.

SYDNEY
I want to freshen up.

SHEPHERD
As you go through, you'll see a large closet on your left.
(more)

SHEPHERD (cont'd)
If you feel like it, hang up your coat. When you come out, I'll have made us some drinks, we'll sit down on the couch, and we'll talk about my plan.

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

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

SHEPHERD
(speaking up)
Okay. You're attracted to me, but the idea of physical intimacy is uncomfortable because you only know me as the President. It's not always gonna be that way, and the reason I know that is because there was a moment last night when you were with me and not the President, and I know what a big step that was for you. So, Sydney, I'm in no rush. Here's my plan: We're gonna slow down. When you feel comfortable, that's when it'll happen.

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

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Perhaps I didn't properly explain the fundamentals of the "Slow Down" plan.

SYDNEY
You explained it great.

She moves closer to him.

SHEPHERD
(pause)
Are you nervous?

SYDNEY
No.

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

SYDNEY
The most powerful man in the world?

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

SYDNEY
(gently)
Andy...

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

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

RUMSON (V.O.)
Does New Hampshire want traditional American values back in the White House?

CROWD (V.O.)
Yes!!

CUT TO:

55 **INT. AN ELKS LODGE - NIGHT** 55

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

RUMSON
Does New Hampshire want the pride back?

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

CROWD
Yeah!!!!!!!!

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

And as the CROWD loses its mind, we

CUT TO:

56 **EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAWN** 56

CUT TO:

57 **INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - MORNING** 57

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

SHEPHERD picks it up--

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
Yeah...put him through.
(listens)
Lewis, it's 5:00 a.m. You gotta get yourself a life, man.
(listens)
Yeah...all right.

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

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Sydney?

SYDNEY turns around.

SYDNEY
Hi.

SHEPHERD
What are you doing?

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

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

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

There's a KNOCK on the door.

SHEPHERD
...on his way up. *

SYDNEY
What?

SHEPHERD *
Come on in, Lewis. *

LEWIS comes in--

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

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

SHEPHERD laughs at Sydney's purposely lame try--

SHEPHERD
(to LEWIS)
What's the situation?

LEWIS
They're camped out at every exit.

SYDNEY
Who? Who's camped out?

LEWIS
The press.

SYDNEY
The press is camped out?

LEWIS
You shoulda taken a cab, Sydney.

SYDNEY
They know my car?!

ROBIN enters.

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

SHEPHERD
Thank God.

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

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

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

A.J.
Good morning, Mr. President. Good morning, Ms. Wade. I see everyone's getting an early start today.

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

ROBIN
We need a diversion.

SYDNEY
A diversion.

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

SHEPHERD
No, please, let's do.

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

A.J.
Good for you, Lewis.

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

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

SYDNEY
No diversion.

SHEPHERD
(to SYDNEY)
We'll have somebody take you home.

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

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

LEWIS
Okay. Good. Now, the press statement.

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

ROBIN
No comment? *

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

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

SHEPHERD
I tell you what, Lewis, we just did.

LEWIS *
But, sir... *

A.J.
(the meeting's over)
Thank you, Mr. President.

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

A.J.
(continuing)
Sydney. Esther'll be in my office. You take your time.

SYDNEY
Thanks, A.J.

A.J. leaves...

SHEPHERD
I'm sorry about all this. We'll do it better next time.

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

SHEPHERD
No, I mean...

SYDNEY
I know. I had a good time.

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

SYDNEY
I'd like that.

SYDNEY gives him a good-bye kiss...

SYDNEY
(continuing)
Bye.

She exits the bedroom.

SHEPHERD
(to himself)
All right...okay...this is good.

CUT TO:

58 **A SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY/NIGHT** 58

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

59 **INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY** 59

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

REPORTER #1 (V.O.)
Sydney Ellen Wade, the political strategist who accompanied President Shepherd to last week's state dinner, reportedly spent the night at the White House as the guest of--

DISSOLVE TO:

60 **INT. CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY** 60

The tote board reads "8 Votes in 46 Days." KODAK is pointing to a spot on an electoral map to emphasize a point to a young INTERN.

REPORTER #2 (V.O.)
The President returned from Panama this evening after a three-day tour through Central America. His first order of business: An intimate supper with Sydney Wade at a romantic Georgetown bistro.

DISSOLVE TO:

61 **INT. BISTRO - NIGHT** 61

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

REPORTER #3 (V.O.)
Conservative and religious family organizations are starting to smell blood in the water as--

DISSOLVE TO:

62 **INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT** 62

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

RADIO GUY (V.O.)
All right, caller, you're on the air.

CALLER (V.O.)
Dan, what about Lucy Shepherd? Is anyone concerned about this little girl? Can we now, finally, have a serious debate about family values?

62A **EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY** 62A

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

SCHLOCK TALK SHOW HOST (V.O.)
We're gonna take a commercial break. When we come back, we're gonna meet a junior high school classmate of Sydney Wade's, who says--

CUT TO:

63 **EXT. NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, CITY HALL - DAY** 63

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

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

64 **EXT. GDC BUILDING - NIGHT** 64

SYDNEY exits the building and is mobbed by the press.

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

ED EARL (V.O.)
Well, if they're not concerned, they sure oughta be.

65 **INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY** 65

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

JOHN McLAUGHLIN TYPE (V.O.) *
Columnist Cynthia Skyler, how much *
will this new wrinkle affect his *
ability to put together a win on his *
crime bill? *

66 OMITTED 66

66A **EXT. MANCHESTER RAMADA - NIGHT** 66A

Establishing shot of the Ramada.

67 **INT. A SUITE AT THE MANCHESTER RAMADA - NIGHT** 67

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

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

RUMSON is signaling for an AIDE to take over this phone call.

RUMSON
(continuing; into phone)
That's very generous of you, ma'am, and I'm gonna take that money off your hands right now.

He hands off the phone--

RUMSON
(continuing)
What do you got for me, Stu?

STU
Call me Santa Claus, Senator.

Several TOP AIDES join this slightly confidential conversation.

STU
(continuing)
She's got an FBI file.

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

RUMSON starts to walk away when STU pulls an 8x10 photo from the manila folder.

STU
I've got art.

RUMSON comes back. STU hands him the photo.

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

RUMSON
(staring at the photo)
Oh man...tell me the smoke is coming from what it looks like it's coming from.

STU
Yes, sir--it's a burning flag.

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

RUMSON
(singing softly)
"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas..."

CUT TO:

68 **INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY** 68

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

The tote board now reads "11 Votes in 42 Days." DAVID is supervising things while SYDNEY is trying not to lose her patience on the phone.

SYDNEY
(into phone)
I understand, Congressman... Of course you need to deliberate. I know the fact that there isn't any heavy industry in your district doesn't make this decision any easier. But we met three weeks ago, and at the end of that meeting you said that you were leaning our way but that you wanted to sleep on it. Since I haven't heard from you since then, the only conclusion I can reach is that you haven't slept in 21 days.

DAVID
(to SYDNEY)
Ask him about his position on statehood for Hawaii.

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

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

She hangs up.

SYDNEY
(continuing; announcing)
Tote board's heavy.

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

DAVID
How's this?

SYDNEY
That's better.

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY
Yeah.

DAVID
Cars, you understand, run on gasoline.

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY
(exiting)
Good night, David.

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

CUT TO:

69 **EXT. THE WEST WING - DUSK** 69

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

CUT TO:

70 **INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DUSK** 70

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
(continuing; into phone)
--Yeah, look, we're gonna continue this tomorrow. I'm late for the party fund-raiser.
I'll be sure and put in a good word for you, by the way.
(listens)
Okay.

He hangs up.

JANIE
You're incredibly late.

SHEPHERD
Let's go.

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

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

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

A.J.
Don't have an airline strike at Christmas?

SHEPHERD
Yeah. I'm going to St. Louis.

A.J.
You can leave straight from the fund-raiser. Janie, get him outa here.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT #4
(sotto)
Liberty's moving.

CUT TO:

71 **EXT. THE WEST WING - NIGHT** 71

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

ROBIN
(calling)
Sir...

JANIE
He's incredibly late.

SHEPHERD
(to LEWIS and ROBIN)
Hop in. We'll talk in the car.

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

CUT TO:

72 **INT. SHEPHERD'S CAR - CONTINUOUS** 72

LEWIS
We've got a small problem.

ROBIN
(meant for LEWIS)
It could've been a small problem. It's now at the very least a medium-sized--

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

ROBIN
It could've been an opportunity if we'd caught it...

LEWIS
We caught it.

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

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

SHEPHERD
Guys, do I need to be here for this meeting?

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

ROBIN
--it's got a bullet.

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

SHEPHERD
(pause)
Today?

LEWIS
About 13 years ago.

ROBIN
Outside the Department of Commerce. Anti-apartheid.

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

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

SHEPHERD
Don't deal with it.

LEWIS
Excuse me?

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

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

SHEPHERD
Ah...hell!

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

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

CUT TO:

73 **INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT** 73

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

SYDNEY
It's terrific, Beth. I love it.

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

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

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

The PHONE RINGS. SYDNEY answers it--

SYDNEY
(into phone)
Hello...
(listens)
I'm just trying on dresses. How do you feel about leather?

CUT TO:

74 **INT. SHEPHERD'S CAR - NIGHT** 74

SHEPHERD's on the phone to SYDNEY.

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
I feel terrible but I have to cancel our date tonight. *

SYDNEY
Another woman?

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

SYDNEY
Boy, if I had a nickel for every time I've heard that one.

SHEPHERD
Thanks for understanding. I'll call you tonight.

SHEPHERD hangs up the phone.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Boy, I hate doing that. She was trying on dresses.

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

ROBIN
And they find this romantic?

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

SHEPHERD sees something out the window and gets excited.

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

LEWIS
What?

SHEPHERD
I gotta get her flowers.

LEWIS
Here?!

ROBIN
Now?!

SHEPHERD
I broke our date. This is what men do.

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

SHEPHERD
(to the DRIVER)
Coop, I'm gonna hop out at that flower shop.

AGENT COOPER
You're gonna hop out, sir?

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

SHEPHERD
Then it's not personal.

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

SHEPHERD
You think there's a florist who's planned an assassination on the off-chance that I'd be stopping by?

LEWIS
It's possible.

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

CUT TO:

75 **EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF FLOWER SHOP - NIGHT** 75

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

76 **INT. CARMEN'S HOUSE OF FLOWERS - NIGHT** 76

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

GIRL
(into phone)
At the basketball game...

SHEPHERD
Excuse me--

GIRL
(into phone)
No, at the game. I'm telling you, Kiki wasn't even there.

SHEPHERD
Excuse me--

GIRL
(to SHEPHERD)
I'll be right with you.

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

SHEPHERD
(to the GIRL)
Hey, I don't know if you were the one I talked to on the phone...Virginia, dogwood, the President...any of this ring a--

And apparently it does, because the GIRL faints and falls to the floor. AGENT COOPER goes to help her.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Same girl. She remembered me.

AGENT COOPER
She'll be fine.

RUMSON (V.O.)
Yes, and I'm glad to see ol' Andy's got himself a gal.

APPLAUSE and appreciative LAUGHTER from a CROWD as we

CUT TO:

77 **INT. MEMPHIS GRAND HYATT - NIGHT** 77

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

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

The CROWD's getting into it--

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

A wave building--

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

CUT TO:

78 **INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE/ST. LOUIS HILTON - NIGHT** 78

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

ROBIN
(to herself)
No reaction from the White House.

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

79 **INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME** 79

SYDNEY
(into phone)
What do Lewis and Robin think?

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

SYDNEY
(into phone)
Lewis and Robin are very smart.

SHEPHERD
(to LEWIS and ROBIN)
Sydney says you guys are really stupid.

SYDNEY
(shouting through the phone)
I didn't say that!

SHEPHERD
(to LEWIS and ROBIN)
She's questioning your loyalty.

LEWIS
Hell, I question it all the time.

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
Wait a second, here comes my favorite part.

He's referring to RUMSON on the TV.

RUMSON (V.O.)
My name's Bob Rumson, and I'm running for President.

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

SYDNEY
(into phone)
His numbers are climbing.

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
Sydney, his numbers have nowhere to go but up.

SYDNEY
(into phone)
What about yours?

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
We're fine. We'll be back up in the 60's once I get the votes for the crime bill.
(beat; into phone)
Say, what're you doing this weekend?

SYDNEY
(into phone)
I've got some work I was gonna bring home. Why?

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

SYDNEY
(into phone)
What'd you have in mind?

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
Have you ever been to Camp David?

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

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
This is sass, right? You're sassing me.

SYDNEY
(into phone)
Yes.

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
I'll have a car pick you up Saturday morning.

CUT TO:

80 **EXT. CAMP DAVID - DAY** 80

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

CUT TO:

81 **INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS** 81

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

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

SHEPHERD
How many "e"'s in "kaleidoscope"?

SYDNEY
I guess you do.

DISSOLVE TO:

82 OMITTED 82

83 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 83

SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are lounging in front of a fireplace, having hot cups of something alcoholic. SYDNEY is reading a book. SHEPHERD is running through satellite T.V. channels, searching for something.

SYDNEY
Oh good God.

SHEPHERD
What?

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

SHEPHERD
Are you still reading that ridiculous biography?

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

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

SYDNEY
(re the book)
Oh, Andrew...C-minus in Women's Studies?

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

SHEPHERD has landed on a news station.

NEWS ANCHOR #1
(on T.V.)
...for his routine physical exam. Doctors at Bethesda Naval Hospital pronounced President Shepherd in excellent health.

SHEPHERD
Who cares? Let's see some scores.

NEWS ANCHOR #2
(on T.V.)
While the President spent the day at Camp David, G.O.P. presidential hopeful Robert Rumson continued his attacks on President Shepherd's character.
(more)

NEWS ANCHOR #2 (cont'd)
During the Saturday morning news program Capital Review with Kenneth Michaels, Senator Rumson suggested that GDC political director Sydney Ellen Wade, whose personal relationship with the President has been causing the White House headaches in the past two months, may have traded sexual favors for key votes in the Virginia State Legislature while lobbying for the Virginia Teachers Association.

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

MICHAELS
(on T.V.)
Wait a minute, Senator--

RUMSON
(on T.V.)
I'm saying--

MICHAELS
(on T.V.)
--'cause that's a heck of an accusation to make, and--

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

MICHAELS
(on T.V.)
Can you give us names?

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

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

SHEPHERD
I'm sorry about this, Sydney. *

SYDNEY
Oh, man. My father heard that.

SHEPHERD clicks off the T.V.

SHEPHERD
You gotta tell him to turn a deaf ear.

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD (cont'd)
Except one day his opponent accused him of being soft on communism, and my father engaged the debate, and that's what the campaign became about, and he got creamed. He lost the election, and not long after that he lost his teaching job and most of his friends. He spent half his life defending the Constitution and the other half trying to prove he wasn't a communist. And he died young. And he died tired. Sydney, I have one election left. I don't have the luxury of losing my patience.

SYDNEY prepares to say something important.

SYDNEY
I want to say something, but I'm gonna fumble it a little bit, so I'd just like you to wait till I'm done before you respond. I'm in love with you. I'm certain of it. And I want to be with you more than anything. But maybe things would be better for you if I disappeared for a while. * *

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

He goes to kiss her, she responds.

DISSOLVE TO:

84 OMITTED 84

84 OMITTED 84

85 **EXT. SOUTH LAWN - NIGHT** 85

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

CUT TO:

86 **INT. RESIDENCE - NIGHT** 86

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

SHEPHERD and a GREEN-BLAZERED MAN

GREEN BLAZERED MAN (GILL)
Mr. President, militant women are out to destroy college football in this country.

SHEPHERD
Is that a fact?

GREEN BLAZERED MAN (GILL)
Have you been following this situation down in Atlanta? These women want parity for girls' softball, field hockey, volleyball...

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

GREEN BLAZERED MAN (GILL)
Yes, sir, but now I'm sayin' these women want that law enforced.

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

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

KODAK
The country has mood swings. *

LEWIS *
Mood swings? 19 post-graduate * degrees in mathematics and you * explain going from a 63 to a 46 per * cent approval rating in 5 weeks on * mood swings? *

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

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

LEWIS *
(pause) *
It's Christmas? *

KODAK *
Yeah, you didn't get the memo? *

AT THE BUFFET TABLE

KID #1
'Cause your father's President, does he automatically get to be on money?

LUCY
I honestly don't know.

KID #2
I think only if he's a really good President.

A.J. and SYDNEY

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

A.J.
Hey, Sydney, Merry Christmas.

SYDNEY
Merry Christmas, A.J.

A.J.
Where you been?

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

A.J.
Syd, relax. It's Christmas.

SHEPHERD joins them.

SHEPHERD
Hi, Syd. Get stuck on DuPont Circle again?

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

SHEPHERD
I'll look into it.

A.J.
What were you doing up on the Hill, anyway?

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

SHEPHERD
You went to see the Motown Three?

SYDNEY
I pitched 'em the bill.

A.J.
(beat)
On its merits?

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

SYDNEY
It was a disaster.

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

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

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

A.J.
You're kidding, right?

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

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

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

A.J.
Yeah...

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

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

SHEPHERD
(beat)
Okay.

SYDNEY
Is something wrong?

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

SYDNEY
I'll be back in a minute

She goes off.

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
I made a promise, A.J.

A.J.
You made a deal, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD
I made it with Sydney.

A.J.
You made it with the GDC.

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

A.J.
If your approval rating drops any more, things are gonna get tight.

DISSOLVE TO:

86A **INT. A WASHINGTON WATERING HOLE - NIGHT** 86A

LEWIS sits with a Congressman's aide.

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

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

LEWIS
That's what I wanted to hear.

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

87 **OMITTED** 87

88 OMITTED 88

89 **INT. A POSH WASHINGTON RESTAURANT - DAY** 89

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

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

SYDNEY
Congressman Pennybaker, on election day, people give a damn about what I tell them to give a damn about. And that's why I have a job.
(offering the bread basket)
Did you want another roll?

CUT TO:

90 **INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY** 90

DAVID is on the phone --

DAVID
(to the INTERNS)
She got Pennybaker.

DAVID rips off the top sheet of the toteboard, which now reads "5 votes in 14 days".

DISSOLVE TO:

90A **CONGRESSMAN MILLMAN'S OFFICE - DAY** 90A

MILLMAN is walking on a treadmill while LEWIS stands by.

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

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

DISSOLVE TO:

90B **INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY** 90B

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

The tote board reads: "3 votes in 5 days".

SYDNEY
(into the phone)
We've got the full backing of the White House, Catherine.
(listens)
Yes, at 20 percent. Three more votes and the President sends it to the Hill.
(listens)
Katie, 10 years from now any car with an internal combustion engine is gonna be considered a collector's item. Come on board, we'll make your Volvo a classic.

CUT TO:

90C **INT. ROOSEVELT ROOM - DAY** 90C

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

LEWIS
Congressman, the assault weapons are gone.

KODAK
The bill is priced to move.

CONGRESSMAN #1
The bill isn't the issue, fellas. I'm facing a serious challenge in November and the President's coattails aren't what they used to be.

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

CONGRESSMAN #2
We left that to you people, Leon, and the President's in a free-fall.

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

CONGRESSMAN #1 *
I just can't give you my vote. *

DISSOLVE TO: *

91 OMITTED 91

91A **INT. A.J.'S OFFICE - DAY** 91A

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

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

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

LEWIS
And we put Sydney in the new model? *

A.J. hesitates.

LEWIS
(continuing)
A.J., it's meaningless unless we ask them about Sydney. *

A.J.
Fine. Do it.

CUT TO:

92 **OMITTED** 92

93 OMITTED 93

93 OMITTED 93

93A **EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT** 93A

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

CUT TO:

93B **INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT** 93B

SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are finishing up dinner.

SHEPHERD
This was delicious. Thank you. Is there any left?

SYDNEY
(taking his bowl)
Tons. I didn't think you liked it.

SHEPHERD
Are you kidding me, of course I did. But actually it's not for me. The agent who checked the food thought it was delicious, and I sort of told him I'd bring him some if there was any left.

SYDNEY
So you didn't like it.

SHEPHERD
No, I loved it.

SYDNEY
You're lying.

SHEPHERD
No, I'm not.

SYDNEY
You are. I can tell when you're holding something back. You do a thing with your face.

SYDNEY pops a bottle of port and pours two glasses.

SHEPHERD
When have you seen me do a thing with my face?

SYDNEY
Two days before I met you. You gave a speech for the Daughters of the American Revolution. I was there.

SHEPHERD
You were?

SYDNEY
You remember the speech?

SHEPHERD
Vaguely.

SYDNEY
"Americans can no longer afford to pretend that they live in a great society."

SHEPHERD
Ah.

SYDNEY
There was supposed to be something else after that, wasn't there?

SHEPHERD
How did you know?

SYDNEY
I told you. The face.

SYDNEY hands him a glass. They clink glasses and sip.

SHEPHERD
Wow...what's the occasion.

SYDNEY
You're looking at a lady who's two votes shy of the promised land.

SHEPHERD
Two votes?

SYDNEY
I got Pennybaker. That got me Cass and Zimmer.

SHEPHERD
(beat)
That's great, Sydney. I mean it. That's great work.

SYDNEY
Well, I'm not there yet.

SHEPHERD
Look, no matter what happens, you have every right to be proud of yourself.

SYDNEY
I'll be proud when I see you sign the bill.

SHEPHERD
Yeah, well...

SYDNEY
Andy?

SHEPHERD
Yeah?

SYDNEY
You're doing a thing with your face.

CUT TO:

93C **EXT. OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - DAY - EST.** 93C

A light rain is falling.

CUT TO:

94 **INT. CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY** 94

KODAK sits at his desk staring at a computer printout. LEWIS is nearing the end of a phone conversation that isn't going well. He's pacing around with the phone...desperate and intense.

The tote board reads: "1 Vote in 2 Days". ROBIN enters.

ROBIN
(to KODAK)
How're the numbers?

KODAK
Bad.

ROBIN
How bad?

KODAK
Forty-one. Character across the board.

ROBIN
Who is Lewis on with?

KODAK
Jarrett. He's trying to keep his fingers in the dam.

LEWIS
(into phone)
You're supposed to be a United States Congressman, for the love of Christ.

ROBIN and KODAK appear in the doorway, sensing a surprise development. LEWIS is losing it on the phone.

LEWIS
(continuing; listens)
But we're not gonna stay at 41. The numbers are gonna go back up.
(listens)
But they're gonna go back up.
(listens)
George...
(listens)
Congressman...
(listens)
Congressman Jarrett...
(listens)
George, it's crunch time. It's personal. This is one of those moments. It's just you and the President. Now what's it gonna be?

LEWIS looks over at ROBIN and KODAK...his face telling the story.

LEWIS
(continuing)
Yeah.
(listens)
Yeah.
(listens)
Hey, George? Can I tell you something? We're gonna win this thing. We're gonna get the votes and we're gonna win. And after we do, I mean that very night, I'm gonna go to Sam & Harry's, I'm gonna order a steak, and I'm gonna make a list of everyone who tried to fuck us this week.

ROBIN and KODAK are trying to get their friend from setting fire to a bridge out of pure frustration.

ROBIN
(a whispered shout)
Lewis!

LEWIS
(into phone)
Vote your conscience, you chicken-shit, lame-ass--

LEWIS hangs up the phone. He takes a deep breath, slumps down in the nearest chair, and looks up at ROBIN and KODAK.

There's a long silence before LEWIS says--

LEWIS
(continuing)
We lost Jarrett.

KODAK
(beat)
I hope so. 'Cause, you know, if that was an "undecided," then we need to work on our people skills.

LEWIS picks up the phone and punches in a few numbers. Even before that line starts ringing, he picks up another phone and punches in a different set of numbers.

LEWIS
(into the first phone)
Karen, it's Lewis. Could you hunt down Congressman Quincy for me. I need to talk to him right away.

CUT TO:

95 **INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY** 95

SHEPHERD stands in front of A.J., LEWIS, ROBIN, and KODAK. JANIE is somewhere in the background.

A.J.
We lost Quincy, too.

SHEPHERD
Did he give a reason?

LEWIS
He thinks your numbers aren't likely to rebound.

KODAK
We're three votes down again, sir.

There's a pause before...

KODAK
(continuing)
Mr. President, as of this morning, Sydney only needed one more vote.
(more)

KODAK (cont'd)
The Motown Three have gotta be scared blind. I don't think there'll be a better opportunity.

ROBIN
The press is expecting an announcement on the crime bill by the State of the Union.

KODAK
If you agree to stick 455 in a drawer until after the elections, they'll give you the three votes.

ROBIN
(beat)
And we declare victory, sir.

SHEPHERD
We said as a last resort.

KODAK
We're there, sir. The State of the Union is 48 hours away.

SHEPHERD
No. Come on. There's gotta be three votes someplace else.

KODAK
There isn't.

SHEPHERD
Bullshit, Leon. There's gotta be <u>somebody</u> we haven't--

KODAK
There isn't, sir.

SHEPHERD
Storch.

KODAK
I beg your pardon?

SHEPHERD
What about Storch?

A.J.
Mr. President--

KODAK
Storch is a "no."

SHEPHERD
Wagner.

KODAK
No.

SHEPHERD
Sobel.

KODAK
No.

SHEPHERD
Clark.

KODAK
No.

SHEPHERD
Not <u>that</u> Clark, the one from Indiana.

KODAK
(pause)
That one too, sir.

SHEPHERD is stopped.

A.J.
Mr. President, I think we have to do it.

SHEPHERD
She's one vote away, A.J. It's important legislation that for the first time has a legitimate chance. I think she deserves every possible opportunity to--

LEWIS
She? You meant "it," didn't you, sir? You meant the "important legislation" deserves every opportunity.

A.J.
Lewis, shut up.

There's a horrible silence in the room. SHEPHERD has locked eyes with LEWIS.

SHEPHERD
You got something to say to me?

LEWIS
Respectfully, sir, I think we should examine the new poll for more than its value as a box score.

96 THRU 98 OMITTED 96 THRU 98

SHEPHERD
Examine what? They don't like that I'm going out with Sydney.

LEWIS
It's not that simple, sir. I think this poll helps bring a murky problem into specific relief.

SHEPHERD
Whose problem are we talking about, Lewis? Yours? You worried about your job? This poll isn't talking about my Presidency. This poll is talking about my life. Two hundred and sixty-four million people have decided--

LEWIS
Mr. President, 264 million people don't give a damn about your life. They give a damn about their own.

A.J.
All right, that's enough.

LEWIS
Mr. President, you've raised a daughter almost entirely on your own, and she's terrific. What does it say to you that in the last seven weeks, 59 percent of the country has begun to question your family values?

A.J.
The President doesn't answer to you, Lewis.

LEWIS
Oh yes he does, A.J. I'm a citizen, this is my president, and in this country it is not only permissible to question our leaders, it is our responsibility. But you already know that, Mr. President, because you have a deeper love of this country than any man I've ever known, and I want to know what it says to you that in the past seven weeks 59 percent of Americans have begun to question your patriotism?

SHEPHERD
Look, if people want to listen to Bob Rumson--

LEWIS
They don't have a choice! Bob Rumson's the only one doing the talking. People want leadership. And in the absence of genuine leadership, they will listen to anyone who steps up to the microphone. They want leadership, Mr. President. They're so thirsty for it, they'll crawl through the desert toward a mirage, and when they discover there's no water, they'll drink the sand.

SHEPHERD
(evenly)
Lewis, we've had Presidents who were beloved who couldn't find a coherent sentence with two hands and a flashlight. People don't drink the sand 'cause they're thirsty, Lewis. They drink it 'cause they don't know the difference.

The room is slightly stunned by what their President has just said.

SHEPHERD picks up the polling data and heads to the door...

SHEPHERD
(continuing; on his way out)
Make the deal, A.J.

CUT TO:

99 **INT. THE FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY** 99

SYDNEY, SUSAN, DAVID, INTERNS and STAFFERS are having a little office celebration. Champagne flows from paper cups. Streamers and balloons adorn the tote board, which reads 0 Votes in 1 Day.

SUSAN, maybe a little drunk, has cornered SYDNEY.

SUSAN
I want to go on the record and apologize for my attitude towards you since your arrival.

101 **INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON** 101

SHEPHERD pops his head in.

SHEPHERD
Sounds good.

LUCY
It's progressive.

SHEPHERD
I'll say.

LUCY
Hey, Dad, what's wrong with Sydney?
You guys have a fight?

SHEPHERD
(beat)
What do you mean?

LUCY
She seemed pretty--

SHEPHERD
You saw her?

LUCY
She's here.

SHEPHERD
Where?

LUCY
In your room. Why's she mad?

SHEPHERD
Don't worry about it.

LUCY
Were you a dork?

SHEPHERD
Practice your music.

LUCY
If you were a dork, you should say
you're sorry. Girls like that.

CUT TO:

102 **INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON** 102

SYDNEY is going through the closet in search of something. The door opens, and SHEPHERD steps in, perhaps a little tentatively. He doesn't see SYDNEY at first.

SHEPHERD
(calling out)
Syd? *

SYDNEY comes out.

SYDNEY
Have you seen a grey cableknit sweater?

SHEPHERD
(beat)
A grey...sweater? No. I called * you at your office, but... *

SYDNEY
It's Beth's. I wore it here one time, and I didn't want to leave it.

SHEPHERD
Where are you going?

SYDNEY continues her search.

SYDNEY
I'm going home, and then I'm going to Hartford.

SHEPHERD
Connecticut?

SYDNEY
Yes. Do you know if it was sent with your dry cleaning by any--

SHEPHERD
What's in Connecticut?

SYDNEY
Richard Reynolds' campaign. He may be able to give me a job.

SHEPHERD
When did you decide to get a new job?

SYDNEY
Not long after Leo Solomon fired me from my old one. Beth's gonna kill me. She loves that--

SHEPHERD
Why did he fire you?

SYDNEY
Total failure to achieve any of the objectives for which I was hired. I told him he was being unreasonable. After all, I did get to dance with the President and ride in Air Force 1 a couple of times. But you know those prickly environmentalists. It's always gonna be something with them. If it's not clean air, then it's clean water. Like it isn't good enough that I'm on the cover of People Magazine.

SHEPHERD
I'll call him.

SYDNEY
You'll call him? You mean you'll call him yourself? Personally? It'll come from the President? That's a great idea. I think you should call Leo and make a deal. He hires me back for, say, 72 days. I go around scaring the hell out of Congress, making them think that the President's about to drive through a very damaging and costly bill. They'll believe me, right, 'cause I'm the President's Friday Night Girl. Now I don't know if you can dip into this well twice, especially since I've lost all credibility in politics, but you never know, I might just be able to pull it off again. I might be able to give you just the leverage you need to pass some ground-breaking piece of crime legislation--like a mandatory three-day waiting period before a five-year-old can buy an Uzi. Fuck the sweater--she'll have to learn to live with disappointment.

She starts to exit.

SHEPHERD
What do you think went on here today?

She stops.

SYDNEY
I know exactly what went on here today. I got screwed. You saw the poll, you needed the crime bill, you couldn't get it on your own, so I got screwed.

SHEPHERD
The environment got screwed. Nothing happened to you today, Sydney. Governing is choosing. Governing is prioritizing. I've made no secret of the fact that the crime bill was my top priority.

SYDNEY
Well then, congratulations. It's only taken you three years to put together crime prevention legislation that has no hope of preventing crime.

SYDNEY heads out the door--

PAGE 133A OMITTED

103 **OMITTED** 103 *

104 **OMITTED** 104 *

105 **OMITTED** 105 *

106 **OMITTED** 106 *

107 **INT. THE POOL ROOM - NIGHT** 107

A rack of billiard balls explodes from the break.

A.J.
Hartford? What's in Hartford?

SHEPHERD
Richard Reynolds' district office. She's thinking of running his campaign. Four in the corner.

SHEPHERD gets down over the ball --

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Hartford. The insurance capital of the world. Have a good time, Syd.

SHEPHERD smacks the ball, BULL'S-EYE.

A.J.
Listen. I'm gonna have Janie clear your schedule for the weekened. You need to get some rest.

SHEPHERD
You handling me, A.J.?

A.J.
No, sir.

SHEPHERD
Good. 14 in the side.

SHEPHERD gets down over the ball...

SMACK!!!

...but instead of the cue hitting the ball, it's A.J.'s palms slamming the cue against the table...

A.J.
But I sure as hell will if you don't start gettin' your head outa your ass.

SHEPHERD
Excuse me.

A.J.
Lewis is right. Go after this guy.

SHEPHERD
Has he lied?!

A.J.
What?

SHEPHERD
Has Rumson lied in the last seven weeks?

A.J.
Has he lied?

SHEPHERD
Other than not knowing the difference between Harvard and Stanford, has he said something that isn't true? Am I not a Commander-in-Chief who's never served in the military? Am I not opposed to a Constitutional amendment banning flag burning? Am I not an unmarried father who was sharing a bed with a liberal lobbyist down the hall from my twelve year old daughter?

A.J.
And you think you're wrong?

SHEPHERD
I don't think you win elections by telling 59 percent of the people that they are.

A.J.
We fight the fights we can win?

SHEPHERD
Don't --

A.J.
You fight the fights that need fighting!

SHEPHERD
Is the view pretty good from the cheap seats, A.J.?

A.J.
I beg your pardon?

SHEPHERD
It occurs to me that in 25 years I've never seen your name on a ballot. Why have you always been standing a pace behind me?

A.J.
Because if I hadn't been, you'd be the most popular economics professor at the University of Wisconsin.

SHEPHERD
Fuck you.

SHEPHERD's tossed his cue stick and is heading out...

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Have Lewis put the final drafts of the State of the Union and the Crime Bill announcement on my desk in the morning.

A.J.
Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD gets to the doorway...stops...turns around...

SHEPHERD
If Mary hadn't died...would we have won three years ago?

A.J.
Would we have won?

SHEPHERD
If we'd had to go through a character debate three years ago, would we have won?

A.J.
(pause)
I don't know. But I would have liked that campaign. If my friend Andy Shepherd had shown up, I would have liked that campaign.

SHEPHERD looks away...nods absently...

SHEPHERD
(pause)
Yeah.

SHEPHERD exits, leaving A.J. alone as we

CUT TO:

***page 139A omitted**

108 **INT. WHITE HOUSE CORRIDOR - NIGHT** 108

A series of shots showing SHEPHERD walking down the corridor to the dish room, then walking down a long corridor which contains a series of paintings of various presidents. Then sitting alone in the oval office, lost in thought...

DISSOLVE TO:

109 **INT. RESIDENCE DINING ROOM - EARLY MORNING** 109

SHEPHERD and LUCY are eating breakfast in silence, neither of them very happy, each with their own problems. A nearby T.V. MONITOR glows with the live coverage of ROBIN's morning press briefing.

Finally...

SHEPHERD
You're not hungry?

LUCY
This is oatmeal.

SHEPHERD
Yeah.

LUCY
We never have oatmeal.

SHEPHERD
It's good for you.

LUCY
I'm from Wisconsin. I need food.

SHEPHERD
You're not from Wisconsin. I'm from Wisconsin. You've lived in Washington your whole life.

He glances toward the T.V. screen. Robin's standing up there doing what she's been told: "No comment... No, this President is not participating in character debates..." He mutes the volume.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
How are you doing in your Constitutional debates?

LUCY
We're done.

SHEPHERD
You're done?

LUCY
We ratified it last week.

SHEPHERD
Oh...well...that's good. Why didn't you tell me?

LUCY
It's not a big deal, Dad.

SHEPHERD
Okay, I give up. I don't care why you're not happy in social studies. I care about why you're not talking to me about why you're not happy in social studies.

LUCY
Dad, I'm perfectly--

SHEPHERD
You're not perfectly happy. You don't think I know when something's bothering you?

LUCY
Dammit, Dad!

SHEPHERD
Hey!

LUCY
You know--

SHEPHERD
Talk to me.

LUCY
Look--

LUCY winds herself up. It would appear she's about to burst. She's about to say the hardest thing she's ever had to say in her life--

LUCY
(continuing)
--sometimes when you talk, you say things I disagree with.

SHEPHERD is stunned and totally confused...

SHEPHERD
Almost every time I talk, I say things you disagree with.

LUCY
I mean politically.

SHEPHERD
(pause)
Politically?

LUCY
Yes.

SHEPHERD
(pause)
What do you mean?

It just starts spilling out in a stream--

LUCY
Yes. Okay. Yes. Sometimes, I mean, I'm not sure. You know a lot more than I do --but still, I have these feelings, and I don't think they're wrong. Like, okay, for instance, I'm not so sure it's all right to burn a flag.

(more)

LUCY (cont'd)
I mean, it really bothers a lot of people, and I don't know why you think it's okay. I hear Senator Rumson talk, and some of the things he says sound right to me, and I think, "God, am I like Bob Rumson?! I mean, Dad thinks he's a jerk. Dad hates this guy!
Why am I agreeing with him?" And then I think, "Well, maybe I'm not really like Bob Rumson, but maybe I'm not like Dad either." But the point is I'm the President's kid, and people pay attention to what I say, and if I say something different from what you say, it'll be embarrassing for you. So I can't just get up in social studies class and say whatever I want.

SHEPHERD is silent...totally blown away...he had absolutely no idea...

He stands up slowly and moves toward her...LUCY doesn't know what's coming...

SHEPHERD
(quietly)
Stand up please.

LUCY gets up slowly...

She's never seen her father like this...

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
I want you to pay very close attention to what happens now.

SHEPHERD kneels down, cups her daughter's face in his hands, and gently kisses her forehead. He pulls her to him and holds her in a tight embrace...

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
In your lifetime, you will never embarrass me. It could never happen. You're not the President's daughter, Lucy; you're mine.
And no one's gonna vote me out of that job. You're my daughter, and everything else is a distant second.
(more)

SHEPHERD (cont'd)
School is for you, Lucy. You say what you want. The only thing you have to do to make me happy is come home at the end of the day.

LUCY squeezes her dad tight...they hold the embrace for a long moment.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
One more thing. I don't dislike Senator Rumson because of his political views. And even if you voted for everything he would vote for, that wouldn't make you like him. There's a fundamental difference between you and the Bob Rumsons of the world.

LUCY
What's that?

SHEPHERD
The difference is that he says he loves America. Saying you love America is easy. What takes character--and this is what you have--

SHEPHERD trails off, realizing he's about to quote Sydney...

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
What takes character is loving Americans.
(beat)

And now it's as if SHEPHERD is waking himself up from the longest nap of his life...

...he looks over at the T.V. monitor... "No comment"... "No, I don't know how many other ways I can say it. The White House isn't getting involved in..."

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Luce, I gotta go.

LUCY
Dad, is everything all right?

SHEPHERD
Everything's fine. I'm just a little late for work.

He heads for the door, shouting out as he goes--

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Somebody get my daughter some food! The girl's from Wisconsin, for cryin' out loud!

And he's gone as we...

CUT TO:

110 **INT. THE PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - EARLY MORNING** 110

ROBIN is on her last drops of energy and patience.

REPORTER #4
Robin, will the President ever respond to Senator Rumson's question about being a member of the American Civil Liberties Union?

But instead of hands going up, the PRESS CORPS suddenly stands. ROBIN turns to see SHEPHERD stride in and step up to the podium.

SHEPHERD
Yes, he will. 'Morning.

ROBIN
Good morning, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD takes the podium. There's a palpable BUZZ in the room as video operators adjust their equipment, etc. People start to stand.

SHEPHERD
That's all right, you can keep your seats. For the last couple of months, Senator Rumson has suggested that being president of this country was, to a certain extent, about character...

ANGLE - ROBIN

who's picked up the receiver from a wall phone and punches in four numbers.

She turns in to the wall to shield her conversation from the rest of the room.

ROBIN
(into phone)
Lewis...call A.J. and come on down here... I don't know, but something's happening.

SHEPHERD
...and although I have not been willing to engage in his attacks on me, I've been here three years and three days, and I can tell you without hesitation: Being President of this country is entirely about character.

LEWIS enters with A.J. and KODAK.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
For the record: Yes, I am a card-carrying member of the A.C.L.U. But the more important question is why aren't you, Bob? This is an organization whose sole purpose is to defend the Bill of Rights, so it naturally begs the question.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Why would a senator, his party's most powerful spokesman and a candidate for president, choose to reject upholding the Constitution? If you can answer that question, then, folks, you are smarter than I am, because I didn't understand it until a couple of minutes ago. Everybody knows America isn't easy. America is advanced citizenship.

Xx

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
You gotta want it bad, 'cause it's gonna put up a fight. It's gonna say, "You want free speech? Let's see you acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil, who's standing center stage and advocating, at the top of his lungs, that which you would spend a lifetime opposing at the top of yours. You want to claim this land as the land of the free, then the symbol of your country can't just be a flag; the symbol also has to be one of its citizens exercising his right to burn that flag in protest." Show me that, defend that, celebrate <u>that</u> in your classrooms. <u>Then</u> you can stand up and sing about the land of the free. I've known Bob Rumson for years. I've been operating under the assumption that the reason Bob devotes so much time and energy to shouting at the rain was that he simply didn't <u>get</u> it. Well, I was wrong.

Xx

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Bob's problem isn't that he doesn't get it. Bob's problem is that he can't <u>sell</u> it. Nobody has ever won an election by talking about what I was just talking about.
(more)

SHEPHERD (cont'd)
This is a country made up of people with hard jobs that they're terrified of losing. The roots of freedom are of little or no interest to them at the moment. We are a nation afraid to go out at night. We're a society that has assigned low priority to education and has looked the other way while our public schools have been decimated. We have serious problems to solve, and we need serious men to solve them. And whatever your particular problem is, friends, I promise you, Bob Rumson is not the least bit interested in solving it. He is interested in two things and two things only: Making you afraid of it and telling you who's to blame for it. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how you win elections. You gather a group of middle-aged, middle-class, middle-income voters who remember with longing an easier time, and you talk to them about family and American values and personal character. Then you wave an old photo of the President's girlfriend. You scream about patriotism and you tell them she's to blame for their lot in life, you go on television and you call her a whore. Sydney Ellen Wade has done nothing to you, Bob. She has done nothing but put herself through law school, prosecute criminals for five years, represent the interests of public school teachers for two years, and lobby for the safety of our natural resources.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
You want a character debate? Fine, but you better stick to me, 'cause Sydney Ellen Wade is way out of your league. I've loved two women in my life. I lost one to cancer, and I lost the other 'cause I was so busy keeping my job I forgot to do my job. Well that ends right now.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Tomorrow morning the White House is sending a bill to Congress for its consideration. It's White House Resolution 455, an energy bill requiring a 20% reduction of the emmision of fossil fuels over the next ten years. It is by far the most aggressive stride ever taken in the fight to reverse the effects of global warming. The other peice of legislation is the crime bill. As of today it no longer exists. I'm throwing it out. I'm throwing it out and writing a law that makes sense. You cannot address crime prevention without getting rid of assault weapons and handguns.
(more)

SHEPHERD (cont'd)
I consider them a threat to national security, and I will go door to door if I have to, but I'm gonna convince Americans that I'm right, and I'm gonna get the guns. We've got serious problems, and we need serious men, and if you want to talk about character, Bob, you'd better come at me with more than a burning flag and a membership card. If you want to talk about character and American values, fine. Just tell me where and when, and I'll show up. This is a time for serious men, Bob, and your fifteen minutes are up. My name's Andrew Shepherd, and I <u>am</u> the President.

SHEPHERD exits the press room, leaving a stunned room in his wake.

The MURMURS begin from the PRESS CORPS. They're talking among themselves, confirming that they just saw what they just saw. ROBIN steps to the podium...

ROBIN
Any questions?

CUT TO:

111 **INT. HALLWAY - WEST WING - DAY** 111

A.J. and LEWIS are following after the President.

A.J.
Well, you don't see that every day of the week.

LEWIS
He's got the whole White House Press Corps asking each other how to spell "erudite."

A.J.
Lewis, call the printer.

LEWIS
I know. Gotta rewrite the State of the Union.

A.J.
Every word, Lewis. It's a whole new ball game. You've got 35 minutes.

LEWIS
Oh, good. I thought I was gonna be rushed.

LEWIS goes off in one direction. A.J. heads towards the Oval Office.

CUT TO:

112 **INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY** 112

SHEPHERD is on the phone.

SHEPHERD
I don't want the limo. I don't want an escort.

A.J. enters.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
I want a plain, ordinary, non-bullet-proof automobile. Someone around here must have a Chevy I can borrow. Well, just find one and meet me outside the West Wing entrance in five minutes.

A.J.
Where are you going?

SHEPHERD
I'm going to her house. I'm gonna stand at her front door till she she lets me in. And I'm not leaving till I get her back.

A.J.
How're you gonna do that?

SHEPHERD
I haven't worked that out yet. But I'm sure groveling will be involved.

A.J.
You're just gonna drive over?

SHEPHERD
I'm the Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful army in the world. You don't think I can drive ten blocks? *

SYDNEY (O.S.)
Just stay away from DuPont Circle. I hear it's murder this time of day.

SHEPHERD doesn't need to turn around to know who's standing in the doorway, but of course he does anyway.

SYDNEY
Hi, A.J.

A.J.
It's nice to see you, Ms. Wade. If anybody needs me, I'll be in the Roosevelt Room, giving Lewis oxygen.

A.J. exits.

SYDNEY
I heard your speech. I was in my car, and it just kind of steered its way over here.

SHEPHERD
I'm glad.

SYDNEY and SHEPHERD just gaze at each other for a moment and smile. SYDNEY starts toward him.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Sydney, I didn't decide to send 455 to the floor to get you back.

SYDNEY
I didn't come back 'cause you decided to send 455 to the floor.

The move to kiss. It doesn't last very long because...

LEWIS
(entering)
Mr. President, I thought you might want to look at this. I moved Social Security up front. Hello, Sydney.

JANIE enters--

JANIE
Mr. President, Leventhal at the Treasury wants two minutes. Hello, Sydney.

MRS. CHAPIL enters--

MRS. CHAPIL
Mr. President -- Excuse me Ms. Wade -- Ms. McCall is on her way over. *

SHEPHERD *
(to SYDNEY)
I've got some things to do.

SYDNEY
Yes, you do.

CUT TO:

112A **EXT. THE CAPITOL - NIGHT** 112A

It's lit up and glowing on this cold, clear night.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
We're only a moment or two away from the arrival of President Shepherd and his State of the Union address. Lloyd, you've served on the staffs of several past administrations, what kind of last-minute activity is the President engaged in right now?

CUT TO:

113 OMITTED 113

114 **INT. A VIP ROOM - NIGHT** 114

It's off the main corridor, and it's being used as a green room for SHEPHERD and his group--LEWIS, KODAK, A.J., JANIE, and various AIDES and STAFFERS. People are buzzing around in a last-minute flurry. SHEPHERD is fumbling with his cuff links.

SHEPHERD
I'm having a cuff link crisis.

LUCY takes his sleeve.

SHEPHERD
(continuing; to LUCY)
I think they've locked.

LUCY
Hold still.

ROBIN steps in.

ROBIN
Mr. President, they're waiting for you.

LUCY
All done.

SHEPHERD
Lewis.

LEWIS
Sir.

SHEPHERD
Things have been a little rough between us lately.

LEWIS
I know sir, I'm sorry.

SHEPHERD
Don't stop what you're doing.

LEWIS
That's kind of your sir, but I realize I've been a little insensitive about some personal...

SHEPHERD
No, you were right. Two hundred and sixty four million people don't give a damn about my life. *

LEWIS
Just so you know I've never been one of them, Mr. President. *

ROBIN
This way, people. Let's go.

SHEPHERD
(to LEWIS)
See you after.

The PEOPLE in the room start to gather their things and exit, ROBIN handling any and all last-minute "Mr. President"'s as she herds people out the door.

LUCY walks past SHEPHERD. She holds SHEPHERD's old tattered textbook and has it opened to a specific page...

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Whatcha got there, Luce?

LUCY
Article 2, Section 3, of the U.S. Constitution. Executive Powers.
(reading)
"He shall, from time to time, give to the Congress information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient."

A.J.
Sounds right up your alley.

SHEPHERD looks at his old friend and extends his hand for a deeply felt handshake. A.J. grasps SHEPHERD's hand and then pulls him into a strong embrace.

A.J. whispers a shout into SHEPHERD's ear--

A.J.
(continuing)
Give 'em hell, Andy.

A.J. pulls away, leaving SHEPHERD to enjoy the moment without having to speak--

A.J.
(continuing)
You've got 30 seconds, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD
Thank you.
(to LUCY)
I'll see you afterward. I want a critique.

The room clears out...revealing SYDNEY, dressed like the First Lady she's soon to be, sitting against the window sill.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
There's been something I've been trying to give you since our first date. I tried a bunch of times, but somehow I always managed to trip over my job.
(beat)
Anyway...

SHEPHERD has picked up his black canvas gym bag with the gold presidential seal.

He reaches in the bag and pulls out a bouquet of flowers.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
These are for you.

SYDNEY
They're beautiful.

JANIE pokes her head in.

JANIE
Mr. President?

SHEPHERD
Gotta go.

SYDNEY
Should I stay here?

SHEPHERD
No, walk with me.

They exit into a hallway lined with Congressional STAFFERS, SECRET SERVICE, CAPITOL SECURITY, WHITE HOUSE STAFF, and, most prominently, A.J., LEWIS, ROBIN, JANIE and KODAK.

SYDNEY is still clutching her flowers as they near the double doors to the House Chamber--

SYDNEY
How'd you finally do it?

SHEPHERD
(raising his voice above the cheering)
Do what?

SYDNEY
Manage to give a woman flowers and be the President at the same time.

SHEPHERD
Well...it turns out I've got a rose garden.

SYDNEY is stopped in her tracks as--

--the doors to the Chamber fly open--

DOORKEEPER
Mr. Speaker!!!...THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES!!!

The CHAMBER leaps to its feet in a thunderous ovation...shouts of "Bravo!" from the gallery...

At the back, LEWIS and ROBIN and KODAK are trying to maintain their professional cool, but it's a moment impossible not to get caught up in...SYDNEY is clutching her flowers with both hands...SHEPHERD is making his way down the aisle, shaking hands and receiving congratulations and good wishes, and we

FADE OUT.

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THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT - video playback
1/26/95

Screenplay

by

Aaron Sorkin

INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY (VIDEO PLAYBACK SCENE 52)

ROBIN
(calling on a REPORTER)
Yeah, in the back. Bruce.

REPORTER (BRUCE)
Robin, why's it taking so long to get the bomb damage assessement?

ROBIN
A storm system's moved into the area and visibility's--I'm not sure--diminished, certainly.

BRUCE
Wouldn't you ordinarily get a preliminary report of some kind through contacts in the Libyan intelligence network?

ROBIN
Sure.

BRUCE
Why not this time?

ROBIN
We blew up the Libyan intelligence network.

BRUCE
Good point.

ROBIN
Next question.

INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY (VIDEO PLAYBACK SCENE 52)

REPORTER #2
Sir, there are going to be some who suggest that President Shepherd's lack of military experience was an open invitation for an attack like this. Do you think--

DEFENSE SECRETARY
That is utter nonsense. Who's suggesting this?

REPORTER #2
Well, no one yet. I'm saying--

DEFENSE SECRETARY
But you just did.

REPORTER #2
No, sir, I'm saying--

DEFENSE SECRETARY
F.D.R. was Secretary of the Navy. His resume didn't stop the Japanese from attacking Pearl Harbor.

INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY (VIDEO PLAYBACK SCENE 52/TAPED REMOTE)

RUMSON
For three solid years, this President has done little else but dismantle the Pentagon. He has re-financed his liberal social-welfare programs at the expense of our national defense, and last night the price of his liberal programs was raised to include the blood of 22 American soldiers. Mr. Shepherd's read a lot of books, but you didn't need a Harvard degree to see this comin' a mile down the road.

INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY (VIDEO PLAYBACK SCENE 52)

CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS
This operation was discussed and approved by the United Nations Security Council.

REPORTER
Did intelligence give any indication there was any risk?

CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS
Our intelligence information gave no indication of risk, but let me say, with an operation of this size there are always inherent risks.

INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY (VIDEO PLAYBACK SCENE 65)

ROBIN is in the midst of a press conference--

REPORTER #1
Robin, can you tell us how they met?

ROBIN
Harry--

REPORTER #1 (HARRY)
Just how they met!

ROBIN
This is not the business--

REPORTER #2
Now wait just a second--

ROBIN
This is not the business of the White House Press Corps--

REPORTER #2
The People--

ROBIN
--this is not the business of the People, and this sideshow is over. Thank you very much, we do matinees Wednesday's and Saturday's.

And with that she walks off and we

CUT TO:

Jackson

"The American President"
Memo

To: All Concerned

From: Production

Date: February 13, 1995

Re: Additional Script Pages

Attached you will find Script Pages with additional dialogue for scenes 59, 60, and 77-79 to be used for Montage and Video Playback purposes. Please note that these pages do not collate into the full script and will be used separately.

If you have any questions please call the production office.

Thank you.

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

MONTAGE MATERIAL/ADDENDUM TO RUMSON RALLY SPEECH/VIDEO PLAYBACK

Screenplay by

Aaron Sorkin

SCENE 59 - MONTAGE MATERIAL

INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - NIGHT

SYDNEY, DAVID and LISA are in the middle of a heated discussion.

SYDNEY
David, what about an incentive package?

DAVID
Like what?

SYDNEY
I don't know. Federally funded day care for plant workers who --

DAVID
Day care?!

LISA
Hey, it's very important to young mothers today.

DAVID
And with so many young mothers working on assembly lines in Detroit, we'd be fools not to exploit...

SYDNEY
Okay. Different incentive.

DAVID
How 'bout frequent flyer miles.

CUT TO:

SCENE 60 - MONTAGE MATERIAL

INT. CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY

KODAK is pacing around, lecturing his troops...

KODAK
I'll tell you guys, the number of people who want strong gun control is rising every day, but so's the number of people buying guns. That's a stat we want to stay away from, right Barney?

INTERN
Fred.

KODAK
Fred?

INTERN (FRED)
Yes, sir.

KODAK
Has it always been Fred?

FRED
My whole life.

KODAK
Keep up the good work.

SCENES 77-79: ADDENDUM TO RUMSON RALLY SPEECH/VIDEO PLAYBACK

INT. MEMPHIS GRAND HYATT/ST. LOUIS HILTON/SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

The CROWD's getting into it--

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

A wave building --

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

RUMSON
(continuing)
Never mind that this woman twice worked to elect a congressman who has voted seventeen times to raise your taxes to fund Andrew Shepherd's liberal social welfare programs. Never mind that while his twelve year old daughter is asleep down the hall, Andrew Shepherd is sharing his bed with a woman who has gone on record as supporting federally funded abortions on demand. Never mind any of that folks, America - we've got work to do!! America wants the pride back!!

SHEPHERD
Wait a second, here comes my favorite part.

RUMSON
(continuing)
My name's Bob Rumson and I'm running for President.

Dana Jackson

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

VIDEO PLAYBACK (SCENE #109)

Screenplay by

Aaron Sorkin

VIDEO PLAYBACK FOR SCENE #109

INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

The PRESS is milling about as ROBIN enters from the side with a fist full of the day's schedules and announcements. The atmosphere is routine and informal.

ROBIN
The President was scheduled to meet with the Council of Economic Advisors at three o'clock. That's been scratched and we'll reschedule for tomorrow.

REPORTER #1
With regard to Senator Rumson's latest character attack on the President involving his permissive attitude toward condom distribution in schools --

ROBIN
The President feels that condom distribution can be very effective in limiting teenage pregnancy, not to mention an effective aids prevention measure.

REPORTER #2
The Christian Right feels that if you hand a teenager a condom his thoughts turn to lust.

ROBIN
With all due respect to the Christian Right, if you hand a teenager a lug wrench his thoughts turn to lust.

REPORTER #3
Would you comment on the President's position regarding a constitutional amendment that would allow prayer in the schools.

ROBIN
The President took an oath of office to uphold the constitution which clearly calls for a separation of church and state.

REPORTER #4
With the President's approval ratings now in the low 40's, does he feel he needs to answer Senator Rumson's unrelenting attacks on his character to save his Presidency?

ROBIN
First of all, we don't feel that Mr. Shepherd's Presidency is in any way in need of saving. Secondly, as far as Senator Rumson's attacks are concerned, we feel this is a desperate attempt to rally support around a reactionary agenda that is basically all rhetoric at this point, with no real specifics to back it up.

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

ADDITIONAL MONTAGE MATERIAL -- RUMSON RALLY

Screenplay by

Aaron Sorkin

3/10/95