

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)	
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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:

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:

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\*  
\*

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

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

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

SYDNEY  
You're right. I haven't read it. If someone 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 our 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-grouped, you gotta gimme that. I pulled it together at the end. I stood in the middle of the Oval Office and made it very clear that from now on, he who doesn't take the GDC seriously does so at his peril.

BETH

And then you walked out the wrong door.

SYDNEY

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

BETH

That's my current plan, yes.

The TELEPHONE RINGS...

SYDNEY

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

SYDNEY picks up the phone--

SYDNEY

(continuing; into  
phone)

Hello?

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...with me, and uh...there it is.  
That's why I was calling.

There's a long silence on the phone.

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

(beat)

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

SYDNEY

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 him.

LEO

Of course it's from him.

SYDNEY

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

LEO'S SECRETARY

He wrote the note himself.

SYDNEY

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

LEO'S SECRETARY

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

SYDNEY

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

LEO'S SECRETARY

Apparently he went through several  
drafts.

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

LEO

What is it...what is it?

SYDNEY

A ham. \*

LEO

(beat)

A ham? \*

SYDNEY

He sent me a Virginia ham.

LEO'S SECRETARY

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

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

LEO

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

CUT TO:

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 after we meet with the Security Council.

ROBIN

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

SHEPHERD

Nobody gets ten minutes today.

DISSOLVE TO:

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 fundraiser. 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  
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 somebody we haven't--

KODAK

There isn't, sir.

SHEPHERD

Storch.

KODAK

I beg your pardon?

SHEPHERD

What about Storch?

A.J.

Mr. President--

KODAK

Storch is a "no."

SHEPHERD

Wagner.

KODAK

No.

SHEPHERD

Sobel.

KODAK

No.

SHEPHERD

Clark.

KODAK

No.

SHEPHERD

Not that Clark, the one from Indiana.

KODAK

(pause)

That one too, sir.

SHEPHERD is stopped.

A.J.

Mr. President, I think we have to do it.

SHEPHERD

She'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 OMITTED  
THRU  
98

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--

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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:

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\*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 that in your classrooms. Then you can stand up and sing about the land of the free. I've known Bob Rumson for years. I've been operating under the assumption that the reason Bob devotes so much time and energy to shouting at the rain was that he simply didn't get it. Well, I was wrong.

Xx

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

Bob's problem isn't that he doesn't get it. Bob's problem is that he can't sell it. Nobody has ever won an election by talking about what I was just talking about.

(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 emission of fossil fuels over the next ten years. It is by far the most aggressive stride ever taken in the fight to reverse the effects of global warming. The other 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 am the President.

SHEPHERD exits the press room, leaving a stunned room in his wake.

The MURMURS begin from the PRESS CORPS. They're talking among themselves, confirming that they just saw what they just saw. ROBIN steps to the podium...

ROBIN

Any questions?

CUT TO:

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 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

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT - VIDEO PLAYBACK

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 assesement?

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:

**"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.

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