

POLITICAL ANIMALS

“PILOT”

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NETWORK DRAFT

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"The shorthand of it is this... women run for office to do something, and men run for office to be somebody."

- Debbie Walsh, Director of the Center for American Women and Politics

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Really.

The CRIES of A RAUCOUS CROWD fill the blackness.

DIANE SAWYER (V.O.)
What a night for American politics.

INT. AN EXPENSIVE HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

A TV plays DIANE SAWYER covering a POLITICAL EVENT.

DIANE SAWYER (ON TV)
Former first lady, Governor of Illinois
and candidate for President of the United
States Elaine Barrish Hammond just
minutes from addressing the packed hall
at Union Station in Chicago...

PAN OFF the TV and across the suite to an interesting
tableau: THREE STYLISTS (two hair, one make-up) buzz
around a SEATED WOMAN in a bathrobe with her BACK TO US.

The STYLISTS apply finishing touches, while the WOMAN
makes some FINAL NOTES on a SPEECH. Diane continues:

DIANE SAWYER (CONT'D)
There's not much you can say about the
Governor that hasn't been said: she's
been called everything from a feminist
liberal icon, to an opportunistic closet
conservative -- cold and ambitious, to
warm, charming and unfairly maligned.

The woman lifts her head slightly, nods signalling her
stylists she's ready, they exit. The WOMAN rises, HOLD
on HER BACK as she crosses to her closet.

DIANE SAWYER (CONT'D)
But no matter your opinion, you have to
admire what she's accomplished. Democrat
or Republican, man or woman, watching
Union Station, it's impossible not to
feel a sense of history tonight.

REVEAL a striking RUBY RED PANTSUIT hanging on the door.
Bold in its color, though familiar attire to any woman
who has forged her destiny in a man's world. Our WOMAN
reaches for it, before we can see her face we CUT TO:

INT. UNION STATION, CHICAGO - GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Packed with SUPPORTERS. Floor to ceiling BANNERS and
makeshift SIGNS let us know the subject of the room's
ardor is Presidential Candidate ELAINE BARRISH HAMMOND.

We CUT BETWEEN TV CAMERA ANGLES on the FLOOR and VARIOUS ANCHOR DESKS, hearing snippets of VARIOUS NETWORKS covering the event. The CROWD'S ROAR GROWS, signalling:

BRIAN WILLIAMS/NBC

That's the sound of the Hammond family now entering the hall. First, is Douglas Hammond, with his girlfriend Anne...

FIND DOUGLAS HAMMOND (28), heading to the stage. His subdued good looks, piercing blue eyes and ruthless tenacity all reminiscent of a young Bobby Kennedy --

WOLF BLITZER/CNN

-- Douglas taking a leadership role in his mother's campaign. Some say he has quite a future of his own in politics.

Douglas holds hands with his shy, bohemian, Asian-American girlfriend ANNE OGAMI (late-20s). She smiles, trying to hide how much she hates campaigning.

BRIT HUME/FOX NEWS

-- And of course, right behind them is Thomas -- referred to as T.J. inside Hammond circles --

-- enter Douglas's fraternal twin, THOMAS "T.J." HAMMOND (28). If Douglas got his parents' drive, T.J. inherited their beauty and that's it. Openly gay, T.J. has never met a man he wouldn't fuck and a drug he wouldn't use.

BRIAN WILLIAMS/NBC

T.J. is quite popular with the youth vote for his rumored "extracurricular" activities on the campaign trail --

RACHEL MADDOW/MSNBC

-- everyone kept waiting for his homosexuality to be an issue but, nope, it never was -- The Governor's mother entering now --

Elaine's mother, MARGARET BARRISH (70's) enters -- a tough Chicago broad and one time Vegas showgirl. Margaret has mellowed into the family's grande dame.

SCOTT PELLETT/CBS

-- always a fixture in a Hammond campaign, dating back to both of her son-in-law's successful runs for the Presidency.

CHRIS MATTHEWS/MSNBC

-- sharp tongue on this lady. Called her daughter's opponent, Senator Garcetti from New York, "The Italian Mare". Riffing on the popular "Rocky" moniker --

Suddenly -- the CROWD goes BONKERS.

CHUCK TODD/NBC

(from the floor)

If you can't hear anything -- that's because Bud Hammond has now entered the room -- man, they just love this guy --

FORMER PRESIDENT DONALD "BUD" HAMMOND (late 50's) strides into the hall. A king's wave, a rockstar's gait. Bud is a Southern political legend cut from the cloth of LBJ. If his best days are behind him, no one has let him know.

BRIAN WILLIAMS/NBC

-- Former President Hammond got himself into a bit of trouble the last few months -- calling directly into question Garcetti's competency for the job --

The SOUND of ROCK MUSIC fills the HALL. CHANTS: *ELAINE, ELAINE, ELAINE, ELAINE, ELAINE...*

DIANE SAWYER/ABC

The Governor's campaign song signalling her entrance. This kind of enthusiasm is usually associated with her husband, but it's not his name they're shouting now.

REVEAL ELAINE BARRISH HAMMOND (50's). Our first good look at her -- even in the pantsuit she's *breathhtaking*. Brilliant and indefatigable -- Elaine is a force and a beauty. Like her husband, she has a regal countenance. If America had a queen, it would be Elaine.

She arrives at the podium. Tries to quiet room --

ELAINE (INTO MIC)

Please. Thank you. Please.

(finally, quiet)

Earlier today I called Senator Garcetti to congratulate him on a tough and hard fought primary -- but a primary worthy of the people of this party and this great nation.

If it wasn't already apparent, we get it now, this is not a celebratory speech; it's a concession.

ELAINE (INTO MIC) (CONT'D)
 Though we were not successful in securing the nomination, this campaign is not without its victories. I'd like to take a moment and say something to all the young women and little girls who joined our cause -- please don't be discouraged by my loss. As sure as I stand here -- *and because I stand here* -- one day one of you will be the President of the United States of America. And that is a day this woman plans on living to see!

This elicits her LOUDEST CHEERS YET. Elaine pauses, her forced politician's smile covering any hint of sadness.

INT. A CROWDED HALLWAY - JUST AFTER

ON a PAIR of DOUBLE DOORS as they BURST OPEN. Elaine, her family, and POLITICAL OPERATIVES exit into the hall.

Bud stops to shake the "hand" of a YOUNG FEMALE SUPPORTER (20's) catching his eye.

FEMALE SUPPORTER
 Mr. President can you sign my pin.

The pin hovers above her left breast. Bud lifts a hand to sign, his mother-in-law yanks him off.

MARGARET
 Keep walking, Bud.

Wisely, Bud does. The Female Supporter calls out:

FEMALE SUPPORTER
 Why can't you run again, Mr. President?

BUD
 Would if I could, sugar.

INT. A MAKESHIFT GREEN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elaine, her team, and the SILENCE of defeat fill the room, until the most garrulous man on the planet enters --

BUD
 There has been some serious self-perpetrated ass-fucking that has happened in this party's history. But none, none as historic as this horseshit. We are talking Mondale level self-fuckery.

MARGARET

I could use a drink. T.J. be a dear and grab my flask from my purse over there.

T.J.

Only if I get to share --

MARGARET

Of course. Two fingers and a little Coca-cola. Diet, I have to watch my figure --

T.J.

C'mon. You're a hottie, Grams --

MARGARET

All homos love me. It's the rich straight ones I'm worried about.

BUD

(lights a cigar)

What retard with half a brain thinks that Eye-Talian shit-show is gonna take the general? Florida, gone. Texas, say-onara.

Elaine smokes a rare cigarette, watching the snow fall. Douglas moves to her, wants to console her, instead:

DOUGLAS

Arnie wants to make sure you're still good sitting down with the majors in an hour.

BUD

If this party thinks we're lifting one finger to help that douche get elected, they've got another thing coming.

ELAINE

Enough, Bud.

BUD

Don't feel bad, babe. Garcetti had the press corps so far up his ass they were french kissing him from behind. Even in my prime -- he'd a been a challenge -- I'da licked him, sure -- but he would have given me one hell of a race.

ELAINE

(sharp)

Bud, I said shut the fuck up.

A deafening SILENCE. Elaine turns to them.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

The room, please.

People clear. Except a SECRET SERVICE STIFF in the corner we hadn't even noticed.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

It's okay, Sam. If I was gonna assassinate him I would have done it years ago. In his sleep.

The Secret Service guy exits. Leaving the Ex-President and Governor (or husband and wife) to themselves.

BUD

I should have campaigned more. I told you that fuck-nut Harris wasn't putting me in the game. They had me spending so much time in North Carolina, you'd a thought I was running for Governor again.

ELAINE

I know, given your epic levels of narcissism, it's impossible for you to fathom that this loss has nothing to do with you, but imagine for a moment that it doesn't. The country loves you, Bud, they'll always love you -- it's me they have mixed feelings about.

BUD

Sugar --

ELAINE

Don't give me that *crap* about how the people would love me if they just knew me. It's been twenty years. They know me. I hate campaigning, it's an Olympic sport in hypocrisy: fat smokers droning on and on about their shitty medical coverage -- smiling, as babies with runny noses are shoved in my face -- most of all, I hate lying and telling people things are going to get better when *they never will*. You believe the lie and that's why you've won every election you've ever run. And that's why Garcetti's going to win, too.

BUD

Bullshit --

ELAINE

That man is going to get elected
President. If you don't get in line,
you're gonna get iced out --

BUD

I left office with an 84 percent approval
rating -- I am the most popular Democrat
since Kennedy had his brains splattered
across the Dallas concrete -- Baby, I am
the meat in the Big Mac of this fucking
party, the white, creamy center of its
Oreo-fucking-cookie and that greasy,
Michael Corleone knockoff needs me to win
this son of a bitch. Plain. And. Simple.

Bud punctuates this with a defiant puff on his cigar.

ELAINE

You bastard. It's the hardest night of
my professional life and you can't even
pretend to make it easy on me.

BUD

You're asking me to eat shit. I held the
highest office in the land -- an office
only 41 men before me ever held.

(another puff)

I don't eat shit, I serve it.

Elaine watches him for a moment. Studying the man she
once loved with a sad mixture of disgust and regret.
Elaine moves casually for her purse. Calm.

ELAINE

I'm going back to Springfield tonight.
You can use the room at the Four Seasons.
We'll still have the campaign jet, but
it's better if you hitch a ride back to
D.C. with Carslen or one of the other
donors. My office will work it out with
yours. And no need calling the State
Chairs, I'll take care of that this week.

Elaine's at the door now, adding a last, minor thought,

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Oh and Bud... I want a divorce.

Before he can respond, Elaine is gone. Bud is left in a
dense cloud of confusion and cigar smoke.

INT. THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Elaine Barrish walks the length of the long hall toward CAMERA. We HEAR a discerning VOICE.

SUSAN (V.O.)

So that was it... After thirty-two years of marriage you were compelled to ask for a divorce the night you conceded the nomination?

Elaine APPROACHES the CAMERA, we try to READ her FACE --

ELAINE (V.O.)

Your tone suggests there was a political motive behind my decision?

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER TITLE CARD: **POLITICAL ANIMALS**

ELAINE (V.O.)

It's not news that some journalists have accused me of divorcing my husband for political gain...

FADE UP ON:

INT. A TREATY ROOM - STATE DEPARTMENT - PRESENT

Dusty light and tension fill the air. ELAINE sits across from longtime foe and WASHINGTON JOURNAL reporter SUSAN BERG (mid-30's), J.Crew casual to Elaine's tailored pantsuits, but just as whip smart and intense.

ELAINE

...They just don't usually work for the nation's leading paper, Ms. Berg.

SUPER: **WASHINGTON D.C.**

SUSAN

Your husband was a known adulterer for the entirety of your marriage --

ELAINE

(deadpan)

Really? I wasn't aware.

SUPER: **TWO YEARS LATER...**

SUSAN

When he was President you stayed, you left when you lost your shot at the Presidency. It's a fair assumption, that politics had something to do with it.

ELAINE

You won a Pulitzer in your twenties writing about his affairs. Did you not?

SUSAN

I did.

ELAINE

I'm curious, what's it like launching your career stepping on the throat of someone else's marriage?

Susan barely blinks, prepared for this counter assault.

SUSAN

His adultery was a story. I covered it.

ELAINE

No Pulitzers to speak of since, though?

SUSAN

(a beat)

No.

ELAINE

So either you peaked as a journalist or you just ran out of high profile marriages to savage. Which is it?

Susan absorbs the dig. Ignores it.

SUSAN

You went to work for the Garcetti campaign immediately after your loss. Developing quite a rapport with the President, then still Candidate Garcetti.

EXT. POLITICAL RALLY - DOWNTOWN ATLANTA - TWO YEARS AGO

CLOSE ON Elaine as she shouts in an Oprah-like fashion:

ELAINE

Hellooooooo, Atlanta!

REVEAL a PACKED "Garcetti For President" rally. Elaine stands before them looking relaxed, at ease, upbeat.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Many observed a change in your demeanor
after the loss. Elaine unplugged.

ELAINE

(over the din)

How would you like to meet the next
President of the United States?!

REVEAL, political coverboy SENATOR PAUL GARCETTI (mid-40s). Part Clooney, Part Sinatra, he's too good looking to be *that* smart and too smart to be *that* good looking.

Over THE P.A. -- the old hit "People Got To Be Free."

ELAINE (CONT'D)

(over the song)

I'm sure if you ask nicely, we can get
the Senator here to show us some of his
dance moves he's been sporting lately.

SENATOR GARCETTI

Only if you join me, Elaine.

The CROWD goes CRAZY. The Senator, suavely, begins to grind his hips, doing "the Garcetti" (1 part Cabbage Patch, 2 parts Hustle). And "Elaine unplugged" joins in.

SUSAN (V.O.)

The joke around D.C. is you traded up --
one Presidential husband for another --

BACK WITH SUSAN AND ELAINE

Elaine's silence lets us know she's aware of the joke.

SUSAN

Any truth to the rumor you turned down
the Veep position and asked for State?

ELAINE

I'm on record as stating I didn't want to
be Secretary of State.

SUSAN

But you said yes.

ELAINE

I'm old fashioned that way. When the
President asks you to serve, you serve.

IMAGES WHIP by SUPER FAST. SHOTS of ELAINE with LEADERS in front of landmarks, MAGAZINE COVERS from THE ATLANTIC to VOGUE, joint PRESS CONFERENCES around the world...

SUSAN (V.O.)

You blossomed in the role. Traveling the globe the last two years, charming foreign heads of state and their countries...

...STOPPING on a PRESS CONFERENCE in MOSCOW. The RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER (VIKTOR PORCHOV) is beside her.

ELAINE (INTO MIC)

...I want to express my gratitude to the Russian Foreign Minister for this lovely scarf with St. Basil's on it...

(brass tacks)

Our goal this week is to prepare for the Tripartite Energy Summit with the Chinese government. There is much our three countries share in common --

Using the podium as cover, The MINISTER places HIS HAND discreetly on ELAINE'S ASS. And keeps it there. Elaine flinches, but presses on with her talk.

SUSAN (V.O.)

While privately -- you've used methods some have called unorthodox.

AFTER THE PRESS CONFERENCE

ELAINE, VIKTOR and their respective TEAMS enter a tiny conference room. Elaine seethes behind a smile.

ELAINE

Did you enjoy the ass grab, Viktor?

A nearby TRANSLATOR translates -- the MEN in the room share a MACHO CHUCKLE at Elaine's expense.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Good. Because the next time you touch me, I am going to rip off your old, tiny shriveled balls and serve them to you in a cold borscht soup. *Do you hear me, I will fuck your shit up!*

Elaine looks to the TRANSLATOR. *Go on, translate that.* The translator does, Viktor shrinks, scared --

RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

Da.

BACK WITH SUSAN AND ELAINE

SUSAN

And after twenty years in the public eye,
you've become the one thing even you
yourself would never have predicted...

ELAINE

What's that, Ms. Berg?

SUSAN

According to Gallup, you are --

SMASH TO: ONE LAST "TIME MAGAZINE" COVER.

It's A WIDE SHOT of ELAINE BARRISH in a CANARY YELLOW
RUNNER'S OUTFIT, power-walking THREE BIG DOGS on a D.C.
street, surrounded by a phalanx of SUITED DIPLOMATIC
SECURITY AGENTS (State's equivalent of Secret Service).
The TYPE reads: "AMERICA'S FAVORITE WOMAN".

SUSAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The most popular woman in America.

The SHOT COMES to LIFE. SCATTERED FANS line the street.
Elaine turns to her main SECURITY AGENT -- a gorgeous
AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN (30) named CLARK.

AGENT CLARK

You're all good, Madam Secretary.

Elaine approaches A GIRL (9) holding out a book to sign.

LITTLE GIRL

Are you gonna run for President again?

Elaine privately winces a little as she signs.

ELAINE

No sweetie. I'm out of elective office.

LITTLE GIRL

Does it suck working for the guy that
beat you?

ELAINE

Serving your President is a great honor.
Don't ever forget that.

Elaine moves back to her SECURITY --

ELAINE (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

Snot-nosed little...

Agent Clark can't help but smile. He digs her.

SUSAN (V.O.)
 By most polls, if you ran today you'd win
 in a landslide --

BACK WITH SUSAN AND ELAINE

SUSAN
 Defeating the last four Presidents --
 including your ex-husband -- though
 that's not much of a surprise --

Susan pauses hoping for a response. But Elaine's face is
 inscrutable when it comes to her ex-husband's exploits.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
 Madam Secretary, you have to agree that
 the former President has... struggled
 since your divorce. First, there were...
 the women...

INT. PIERS MORGAN STUDIO - DAY

On PIERS MORGAN in his studio --

PIERS MORGAN
 Each of you claims to have had sex with
 former President Bud Hammond on multiple
 occasions since his split.

REVEAL about NINE WOMEN sitting in two rows before him,
 ranging from PLAYMATE (30's) to STREET HOOKER (40's).

PIERS MORGAN (CONT'D)
 Ladies, is he really that good in bed?

PLAYMATE
 (as they all "yes" and nod)
 And his you-know-what is way big.

STREET HOOKER
 There's a reason he got the *nickname*.

PIERS MORGAN
 The *nickname*?

STREET HOOKER
 President Thunderstick.

Piers LAUGHS. The world does, too. And Bud's once
 steadfast popularity drops a tick.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Then there was the incident at the Yalta
Economic Conference of Emerging Nations --

INT. A SEMI-FULL AUDITORIUM - E.C.O.E.N. - YALTA

Bud, dashing as ever, addresses a semi-packed hall.

BUD (INTO MIC)

...with the advancement in technologies
you'll begin to see a rearrangement in
the order of world nations. A country
with traditionally low GDP such as
Cambodia or Kenya could --

PERSON IN THE CROWD

Loser!

Bud continues on.

BUD (INTO MIC)

...could turn its fortunes around by
refocusing its investment into green
technologies, much the way --

PERSON IN THE CROWD

Where's your ex-wife?!

This gets Bud's attention. He lasers in on the HECKLER.

BUD (INTO MIC)

Excuse me?

PERSON IN THE CROWD

I said where is your ex-wife? At least
she knows what she's talking about!

The crowd SNICKERS. Bud goes RED FACED.

BUD (INTO MIC)

Why don't you blow me, shitbag.

Some LAUGHS. More GASPS. Bud smirks, proud of himself.

SUSAN (V.O.)

There's remixes all over the internet.

The IMAGE of BUD MORPHS into A YOU TUBE VIDEO OF THE
EVENT with over 10 million hits. TECHNO MUSIC UP.

BUD

*"Why why why don't you blow me, shitbag.
Why why why... why don't you blow me
shitbag. Shitbag. Shitbag. Shitbag."*

BACK WITH SUSAN and ELAINE

SUSAN

Recently, he's been romantically linked to TV star Eva Alvarez. A union that hasn't helped his descent into political ignominy.

INT. MASTRO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT - A FEW MONTHS AGO

Bud huddles in a booth of the chic Beverly Hills steakhouse, catching up with his bald BOOK AGENT.

BUD

I'm telling you, Eliot, I need to release another book.

BOOK AGENT

In all due respect, Mr. President, the timing just isn't right for you now.

Bud glowers, not one for bad news. His agent flounders.

BOOK AGENT (CONT'D)

I just wouldn't want to damage your quote -- it's the best one a former President's ever gotten for a memoir.

Bud smiles. That's more like it.

BUD

Maybe I'll write it anyway. There is a story to tell here that the mainstream media is ignoring. President Dipshit Fuckface says he wants to be a different President than me, then he goes and hires half my administration including my ex-wife -- who should be renamed Secretary of Save His Motherfucking Dago Ass. He's got all my players, but he doesn't have my genius or my playbook. That's why this administration is on the ropes --

(to a passing waiter)

-- another Jonny Walker, Sammy.

(notices)

Now who's that gorgeous piece of tail at the bar -- keeps staring over here.

Looks familiar.

At the bar -- a KNOCKOUT BRUNETTE with breasts for days (late 20's). Flirty smiles are exchanged.

BOOK AGENT

Eva Alvarez -- she's on that show where all the doctors are screwing all the time... "Seattle Medical".

BUD

(another look, whistles)
What a pair of flesh bombs on that girl.

BOOK AGENT

I hear they're insured by the network.

BUD

Get outta here. How does that work?

BOOK AGENT

If something happens to her, like if she gets hit by a car or a piano falls on her tits or something, they're covered.

BUD

Fascinating. Why don't you see if she wants to come over.

LATER - AT THE BOOTH

Bud's agent is gone. Bud and Eva are laughing, half-way through her Skinnygirl margarita.

EVA

You're so funny Mr. President.

BUD

Darling. Call me Bud.

EVA

That feels strange but I'll try...
You're pretty sexy, *Bud*.

BUD

See, it's not so hard.

Under the table. Eva slides her hand over Bud's CROTCH.

EVA

I'd say it is... So the rumors are true.

INT. A PENINSULA HOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Eva rides Bud, giving a performance worthy of both her People's Choice Awards.

EVA

Fuck me Mr. President. Fuck me.
 (corrects herself)
 I'm sorry... Bud. Fuck me, Bud!

ELAINE (V.O.)

I haven't watched her show. But I hear she's very talented.

BACK WITH SUSAN AND ELAINE

SUSAN

You haven't seen him since the divorce?

ELAINE

Bud... no?

Elaine looks away, a sense of wistfulness in her eyes.

SUSAN

So tonight will be the first time. Any residual feelings there?

ELAINE

If there were, I wouldn't tell you.

Elaine turns back to Susan -- then, with the glare of the law school professor she once was --

ELAINE (CONT'D)

What are you really after Ms. Berg?

SUSAN

To follow the Secretary of State for the week of her son's engagement party. Observing how one of --

CLICK. Elaine's just shut off Susan's digi-recorder.

ELAINE

Spare me the bullshit, we're off the record. My office informed me we were given a choice, either I let you cover me the week of Douglas's engagement -- or you were going to run a piece on my other son Thomas's difficulties with sobriety. An empty threat, except that you obtained a legally sealed document regarding one night last December --

Elaine glares. Whatever T.J. did, it's bad.

SUSAN

I did.

ELAINE

Then you know what happened. You're a newspaper, that's news -- and yet you traded it for a week with me. Which brings me to my original point... What are you really after?

SUSAN

Like any reporter, Madam Secretary, I want the truth. Why did you ask your ex-husband for a divorce that night? Was he too much political baggage for you to recreate yourself in the face of such a setback -- or did you just think your political career was over, so you no longer had to tolerate his rampant infidelity? Were you surprised at the public's reaction to the split -- that the President was suddenly despised for the same repugnant sexual behavior that the country used to find roguish and cute; that you were suddenly beloved after having been viewed for so long as a cold and calculating political animal? And lastly, do you regret staying with your ex-husband all that time -- was it worth it, if you didn't get the grand prize, the gold, glittering tiara of the Presidency?

Elaine's eyes burn. She hates this woman.

DOUGLAS (PRELAP)

How'd it go?

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT HALLWAY, 7TH FLOOR - AFTER - MOVING

Elaine is escorted by her son DOUGLAS, now her CHIEF OF STAFF (at 30 the youngest in State's history). And ANDY BREWER (50's) a friend and STATE DEPARTMENT COUNSELOR.

ELAINE

You remember what my mother called her?

BREWER

The Royal Cunt?

ELAINE

She undersold it. And I should know,
being a card carrying member of the club
myself.

They enter a BUSTLING OUTER OFFICE -- passing Elaine's
PRIVATE SECRETARY, ALICE (40's), an intimidating woman in
her own right.

ALICE (PRIVATE SECRETARY)

Bolivian Ambassador's office on one,
they've been holding for twenty minutes.
Under Secretary Bradford's office on two
and Secretary Rivera's office is on
three, they say it's important.

ELAINE

Tell Rivera's office to hold, the rest
I'll call back --

-- and pass into ELAINE'S OFFICE. Wood panelled, boring,
tchotchkes from trips, a portrait of Eleanor Roosevelt.
Her door shuts.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

You're positive there's no way I can get
out of the remainder of this.

DOUGLAS

Not unless you're cool with the world
finding out what happened with T.J. -- or
with what he might do once the world
finds out --

ELAINE

And when the Times or the Post wants to
write the same thing? Do we give them
whatever they want, too?

Douglas looks to Brewer -- "Help me out here" --

BREWER

Susan Berg despises you. She's wanted a
sit down since you sequestered her from
Bud's White House -- she finally figured
out how to get one. No one else of merit
is going to chase this.

Elaine slumps. A vulnerable look --

ELAINE

Thomas is coming tonight, right?

DOUGLAS

Yeah... He wants to talk to you and Dad about the nightclub.

ELAINE

Jesus Christ. Not again.

DOUGLAS

I already told him you won't do it. Are you even sure you want Dad at the salon --

We can tell by his tone, Douglas has issues with his dad.

ELAINE

If I'm gonna finally be in the same room with Anne's parents, your father and that trashy soap actress, I'd rather not do it the night of your engagement party.

-- Alice enters -- Elaine looks to her phone --

ALICE

The Secretary dropped off. He's gonna meet you at the White House now. You're being called in.

ELAINE

What did they fuck up this time?

EXT. WASHINGTON JOURNAL BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Home of the nation's leading paper for political news.

SUSAN (V.O.)

I forgot what a flaming-bitch-on-wheels that woman was.

INT. WASHINGTON JOURNAL NEWSROOM - MOVING - SAME

The floor roils with energy. Susan glides through the partitions, queen of this joint. She is followed by her severely low key assistant RUSS (24).

SUSAN

Whatever feud exists, she started. One little comment about her epitomizing the "death of feminism" -- and they banned me from the White House for six years. I couldn't even go to the Easter Egg roll. I love the Easter Egg roll.

They reach her GLASS-WALLED OFFICE. It's a crime scene.

RUSS

Don't forget the Secretary's salon is tonight.

(off her look)

Don't you have to change or something --

SUSAN

What's wrong with what I'm wearing? I wear one outfit a day. I'm not Beyonce.

RUSS

It's just... not very salon-y.

SUSAN

Exactly how many political salons have you been to, Russ?

(a beat)

None. There you go... Good-bye.

He exits. Susan studies her REFLECTION in the glass wall -- suddenly a little insecure about her outfit.

She sees through her reflection, to ANOTHER OFFICE across the way where her BUREAU CHIEF ALEX DAVIES (40's, a handsome New England wasp) chats with fellow journalist GEORGIA GIBBONS (27, Monica-cute).

IN ALEX'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Georgia and Alex hover over a cupcake with a candle.

GEORGIA

You have to blow it out.

ALEX

No... no, you blow it.

SUSAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Somebody blow something quick.

Georgia and Alex look up to see Susan in the doorway.

GEORGIA

We're celebrating. My blog had over a million unique users this month. I made cupcakes.

SUSAN

That's great, Georgia.

GEORGIA

If you ever wanted to contribute, it would be a complete honor.

SUSAN

I'd love to. I could share my favorite dating tips or revealing beauty secrets.

Georgia LAUGHS, unsure if she's being picked on. She is.

GEORGIA

I should get back to work. I'm filing my story on what Eva Alvarez might be wearing to the Hammond engagement party.

SUSAN

Better hurry before Woodward files it first.

Georgia holds her look -- studies her outfit.

GEORGIA

Aren't you going to the Secretary's salon tonight?

SUSAN

Yes, I am.

GEORGIA

(off Susan's outfit)
I'm sure it's pretty casual.

Georgia smiles, Susan smiles back as Georgia exits.

SUSAN

She is the journalistic equivalent of a weather girl.

ALEX

Claws in. She looks up to you.

SUSAN

I don't trust her. If Eve Harrington were an actual person today -- she'd look like Georgia, she'd bake cupcakes, and she'd have a blog.

(then, adds)

And her little crush on you is growing irritating.

ALEX

Don't worry. Cause I have a crush on someone else...

Alex leans in and kisses her. Yep, they're a couple. As they finish, Susan pushes away just slightly.

SUSAN

Hey... we're at work.

ALEX

Babe, we live together. Everyone knows.

SUSAN

You're a guy and my boss. If we kiss at work, you get high fives. I get glares from people who think, "That whore is fucking our Bureau Chief."

Put off, Alex backs away. Susan immediately feels bad.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. It's this Barrish interview. It's got me in a mood. She brought up the Pulitzer.

Alex CHUCKLES at this rare moment of vulnerability.

ALEX

If the world only knew how insecure you actually were --

His PHONE RINGS.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(answers, into phone)

This is Davies... Wait a second, Gary... slow down. Okay, I'm getting a pen, hold on a second --

(real concern, to Susan)

Something happened in Iran.

INT. A HOTEL ROOM - TEHRAN, IRAN - DAY

SUPER: **LALEH HOTEL. TEHRAN, IRAN.**

A dingy, smoke filled room. A group of THREE IRANIAN-AMERICAN JOURNALISTS (2 male, 1 female) hang out, smoke, eat food, file stories. There's A SHOUT at the door --

SAMSON (V.O.)

At approximately nine hundred thirty hours this morning, Iran Standard Time -- the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence apprehended three American journalists in Tehran.

Before they can move the door BURSTS OPEN -- A HALF DOZEN IRANIAN MILITARY OFFICERS storm in, wielding GUNS, SHOUTING ORDERS. It's a fast, confusing frenzy.

SAMSON (V.O.)

The Iranian Military moved them to a facility where they were interrogated, until they each signed a confession --

One of the JOURNALISTS tries to protest. He gets the END of A GUN to the FACE. Off his BLACK OUT, CUT TO --

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The residence of every President since Adams.

SAMSON (V.O.)

-- admitting to spying on behalf of the American government.

INT. THE SITUATION ROOM, WHITE HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON PHOTOS of the beaten CAPTIVE JOURNALISTS displayed across LARGE SCREENS that line the window-less room deep in the bowels of the White House.

SAMSON (O.S.)

President Hakam's administration has just released the names of the journalists -- all three of which are of Iranian-American descent -- and made a statement promising a swift trial within the next forty-eight hours.

ELAINE sits with PRESIDENT GARCETTI and the rest of his NATIONAL SECURITY TEAM. They absorb the news from PAULINE SAMSON (40's), the President's NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER. Douglas and TOP STAFFERS line the back walls.

ELAINE

Well someone has to ask it -- are they *actually* spies?

SAMSON/N.S.A.

No. They're innocent. But with the signed admissions and a sham trial they'll be convicted. Hakam is promising the death penalty unless President Garcetti negotiates for their release himself.

(here's the rub)

And in person. Hakam has discontinued all contact until we agree to the terms.

ELAINE

You're kidding me -- he wants the President of the United States to fly to Iran and beg for their release?

(a LAUGH, notices)

Why am I the only one reacting to the absurdity of this?

Suddenly it all makes sense. Elaine's face sours.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

How long have you all known about this?

Sweet and oblivious VICE PRESIDENT FRED COLLIER (50's) leans forward, confused --

VICE PRESIDENT COLLIER

Well I for one am just finding out --

Elaine's look darkens. She hates being lumped in with that dumb fuck. The President's CHIEF OF STAFF, very short, very weaselly BARRY HARRIS (40's) speaks up:

HARRIS/CHIEF OF STAFF

I'm sorry Mr. Vice President, we've only known for a few hours ourselves. We were trying to handle this internally.

ELAINE

You were trying to handle a diplomatic crisis with a hostile regime in a combustible region internally?

HARRIS/CHIEF OF STAFF

(fuck you)

We figured you had your son's big engagement party this week. We didn't want to bother you, Elaine.

ELAINE

(fuck you, too)

That's very thoughtful of you -- but seeing as I'm the nation's leading diplomat, I should probably be involved when there's a hostage crisis --

HARRIS/CHIEF OF STAFF

This is not a hostage crisis. They are *wrongfully detained prisoners.*

ELAINE

They're innocent civilians being held against their will. The American people aren't idiots.

HARRIS/CHIEF OF STAFF

I don't think they're idiots --

ELAINE

You ran my campaign, Barry, I know what you think of them.

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

Elaine --

Everyone turns -- the big man is talking. Elaine has utmost respect for him -- and Garcetti does for her.

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

(CONT'D)

You and Fred should have been notified.

She tosses Harris a stern look -- *there*, matter settled.

ELAINE

Why would he do it? Hakam knows you're not going to capitulate.

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

That's what we're trying to figure out. But with the expedited trial we don't have much time --

ELAINE

If there's nothing else, I'd like to go try some other contacts -- and call the journalists' families, I'm assuming no one has done that?

(off their looks)

Right. Figures.

HARRIS/CHIEF OF STAFF

Actually, there is one other thing. We've prepared a statement for you to read to the press, *Madam Secretary*.

Elaine goes cold. Harris, shit-eating grin, slides the statement towards her. Douglas shoots up, pissed.

DOUGLAS

That is bullshit!

HARRIS/CHIEF OF STAFF

Listen asshole, you're not your mother so don't think you can talk to me that way!

DOUGLAS

We release our own statements -- that's the department policy --

ELAINE

Douglas!

The room goes deathly silent. Garcetti saves the moment with one of those winning Presidential smiles.

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

Elaine, don't read anything you don't want -- but we got the budget review next week, we're in the middle of a standoff with the House Republicans on the EPA bill -- if you could keep the press calm on this one, I'd appreciate it.

Elaine nods, always respectful and submissive where the President and his office are concerned.

INT. ELAINE'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

Elaine is surrounded by Douglas, Brewer and MEMBERS of her MID-EAST CRISIS TEAM. They talk over one another -- Douglas fumes -- in his mind, still in the last meeting.

DOUGLAS

Could they be more incompetent? If the American people really knew how this government ran, there would be one big collective upchuck the size of which FEMA would have to clean up.

BREWER

We probably shouldn't start the press conference with that.

Elaine ignores her son -- for now --

ELAINE

Where are we with the contacts?

DEPARTMENT DEPUTY

Linus got off with his counterpart in Syria. They don't know anything.

DOUGLAS

Every time there's a fire the administration uses your popularity to quell it, we should pass --

ELAINE (CONT'D)

(to the Deputy)

Keep going down the list -- and I want the name of every foreign ambassador from the region who's presently in the U.S. --

DOUGLAS

Let's forget this press conference -- if we don't draw a line in the sand with Harris and the White House now --

Elaine grabs a set of policy papers and WHACKS DOUGLAS REPEATEDLY WITH THEM -- until he silences. The room is quiet, not shocked. This has happened before.

ELAINE

You could've gotten yourself fired for that kind of behavior in front of the President. He's not just a *boss* -- he's not your floor manager at *Chili's* -- he's the President of the United States. And whether or not this administration is trading on my popularity is not what matters now. *All that matters now* -- are the three scared, innocent people sitting in a jail cell in Tehran, wondering what the fuck their country is doing to help them. Are we clear?

DOUGLAS

Yes.

Elaine turns back to Brewer -- still on track --

ELAINE

Hakam may be an evil bastard -- but he's not crazy. Elections aren't for two years -- he's on good standing with the Supreme Leader. Why pick a fight with us now? It doesn't make sense.

BREWER

It's the Middle East, it's the diplomatic equivalent of instructions from Ikea -- none of it makes any sense.

Elaine's eye catches Douglas, quiet and duly chastised. She softens, her motherly side coming out.

ELAINE

Go and get ready for tonight -- make sure you still have a fiancée to have a party with this weekend. Go on.

Douglas nods and exits. Brewer leans forward, private.

BREWER

He has your sense of loyalty. He hates how they treat you and this department --

ELAINE

He hates losing. That's not me, that's his father. Sophia, what do you have --

FEMALE SPEECH WRITER

"This is yet another reprehensible act by an authoritarian state."

MATCH CUT TO: NEWS FOOTAGE of ELAINE'S PRESS CONFERENCE on A TV. She continues where her writer leaves off.

ELAINE (ON TV)

...These journalists are wrongfully detained and innocent of all charges. The President is doing everything to handle the matter swiftly and to get the journalists released safely to the Swiss Embassy, our de facto embassy in Iran --

FEMALE NEWSCASTER (ON TV)

The situation in Iran adds to an already busy week for the Secretary of State. Her son Douglas's engagement is the must attend event in D.C. this weekend.

CUT TO: NEWS FOOTAGE OF BUD HAMMOND and EVA ALVAREZ outside their hotel. Eva signs autographs, Bud obliviously waves to onlookers as though they still care about him. They don't.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

Former President Hammond and girlfriend actress Eva Alvarez arrived in D.C. today, where the star of the hit show "Seattle Medical" stopped to sign autographs outside their hotel --

INT. ELAINE'S GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

REVEAL MARGARET and T.J. watching TV in Elaine's expansive kitchen. A pair of HALF EMPTY MARGARITAS before them. KITCHEN STAFF prepares the evening's meal.

MARGARET

(re: Eva)

If I had tits like hers I'd still be getting laid. I read in "In Style" they're insured by the show.

Elaine enters, stacks of paperwork in her hands. She spies the duo watching the coverage and, as usual, drinking.

ELAINE T.J.
 Mother, T.J. -- Hey, Momma.

T.J. gives her a kiss, Elaine's DOGS give an even bigger reception. Margaret gives her a critical once over.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
 You're not seeing Bud for the first time in two years dressed like that?

ELAINE
 I'm sorry, mother, but I've been engaged in a diplomatic crisis all day, I didn't have time for a costume change. Are you really both drinking already?

MARGARET
 T.J. started it. He said you can't make a Maragarita with Jack Daniels.

T.J.
 Turns out you can. And it's good.

MARGARET
 Redneck Margarita. Sinatra taught me to make one himself in Vegas in '62 after one of the shows. And I didn't even have to blow him. Just a hand-job.

ELAINE
 Delightful story.
 (to the Chef)
 This looks great, Martin. And the yellowtail sashimi for the Japanese Ambassador?

MARTIN/CHEF
 It's on its way Madam Secretary.

MARGARET
 I saw the attendee list. Why is Susan Berg coming?

ELAINE
 Because she's covering me this week. Please do me the favor of not talking to her. Or if you must, try not saying things like, the country didn't elect me because they didn't want to fuck me.

Elaine exits and heads upstairs. T.J. pursues --

T.J.

Listen, so I met the investors today -- They already have locations picked out in Los Angeles and New York -- I'd be one of the lead partners in D.C. --

ELAINE

I already told you, I'm not giving you a hundred thousand dollars to invest in a nightclub --

T.J.

It's an exclusive restaurant *and* nightclub. These guys are legit, they're the same dudes who did Soho House -- and I don't need a hundred. I just need fifty, I'll get the other fifty from Dad.

Elaine heads into her BEDROOM -- it's pretty swank -- she notices a GORGEOUS OSCAR DE LA RENTA DRESS hanging.

ELAINE

What's this?

T.J.

I rummaged through your spare closet. Found something I thought you'd look killer in tonight. Figured you wouldn't give yourself time --

Elaine is noticeably touched. She moves to the dress.

ELAINE

I'm not even sure I still fit in this --

T.J.

You will. I didn't get a lot of gay genes, but I got the style one --

ELAINE

I haven't worn it since --

T.J.

The State Dinner for the Saudi Royals when I was fifteen -- it was right after Dad's first affair leaked to the press -- you said you bought it because it's always important to look your best when you feel your worst.

Elaine looks from the dress up to her sweet, wayward son. A loaded moment as she decides to share some bad news --

ELAINE

Thomas. Susan Berg has the story. She knows about last December.

T.J. looks away, the air rushes out of him.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

She agreed not to run it if we let her cover me this week. We stopped her, but someone else --

T.J.

It's okay. Occupational hazard, right? Comes with being a Hammond. They only love us when they're not busy hating us.

Seeing her son this fragile, Elaine can't help herself --

ELAINE

Listen. About the restaurant. Talk to your father, if he's in, I'm in.

T.J.

Seriously? That is so awesome.

T.J. kisses her. She regrets it almost immediately.

T.J. (CONT'D)

Wait until you guys see the business plan, it's like fifty pages. It's got pictures and blueprints and -- do you want me to help with your hair?

ELAINE

I've got it covered, sweetheart.

T.J. races out of the room, exultant. Elaine sighs, knowing she just made a huge mistake. We DISSOLVE TO:

A LITTLE LATER. PAN UP that GORGEOUS DRESS -- Elaine's wearing it now. She looks incredible. She gazes at herself in the MIRROR.

A rare quiet moment with one of the world's most powerful women -- and she behaves like any other woman her age might. Tugging at her cheeks to wish away lines. God she hates her neck. Elaine is reminded of the Philip Roth quote about age not being a battle, but a massacre.

There's a COMMOTION outside. People are arriving. She peeks out the shade and down at -- BUD and EVA getting out of the car. PAPARAZZI FLASHBULBS POP. Eva drinks it in. Elaine closes the shade. We FOLLOW HER --

INTO THE HALL

The kindly and surreptitious AGENT CLARK stands nearby. He gives her a once over. Smiles at the dress.

AGENT CLARK

Looking good, Madam Secretary.

Elaine smiles, grateful for the compliment. FOLLOW ELAINE down the stairs. She HEARS BUD before she sees him -- he's busy charming his future in-laws, the Asian American, very down-to-earth BEATRICE and LARRY OGAMI.

BUD (O.S.)

Beatrice, you get any younger looking and we're gonna have to make you a flower girl at the wedding.

Everyone LAUGHS. Bud looks up from the GUESTS, his eyes find ELAINE'S -- they share a look -- and in that moment, we see it all: their immense shared history, how shaky she is in his presence, and how smitten Bud still is.

She moves toward him quickly. Very professional. First a hello to the Ogamis. Polite kisses and hugs.

ELAINE

Beatrice, Lawrence. So nice to see you again. Exciting week.
(finally, turns to)

Bud.

BUD

Sugar.

They hug uncomfortably -- too long. A throat CLEARS.

BUD (CONT'D)

Elaine, this is Eva.

Elaine sticks out her hand, a little too friendly.

ELAINE

Elaine Barrish. I'm a fan of your work.

EVA

Thank you, Madam Secretary...

(not sure what to say)

I'm a fan of yours too. Oh, and I love that dress.

ELAINE

It's an old one.

BUD
 (without missing a beat)
 Saudi State Dinner. October '97.

ELAINE
 Yes. Good times. Shall we?

They head in... but not before Elaine notices SUSAN BERG--
 wearing a dress now herself -- standing in the archway --
 watching. She's clocked the whole encounter.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
 Glad you could join us, Ms. Berg.

SUSAN
 Thanks for the invite, Madam Secretary.

ELAINE
 You changed?

SUSAN
 You did, too.

A flash of understanding. Together, they enter the room.

INT. ELAINE'S LIVING ROOM - COCKTAIL HOUR - LITTLE LATER

Cocktail hour. 20 GUESTS join the HAMMONDS (a few famous
 D.C. faces: Zbig Brzezinski, Christiane Amanpour).

FIND SUSAN, alone, examining some PHOTOS of ELAINE on an
 antique table. PICTURES of ELAINE with her BOYS, WORLD
 LEADERS, OPRAH, and even ONE of ELAINE AND BUD. Years
 ago with their BABY BOYS. Big smiles. Promising.

Susan looks up and over to the bar where Margaret
 refreshes her martini. Susan approaches her.

MARGARET
 I know who you are, honey. Waste of
 time. They never let me go on record.
 I'm either too drunk or too honest -- or
 god forbid, both.

SUSAN
 We're off the record. Tonight's just for
 color.

Margaret sips her drink. The slightest of fiendish
 smiles creeps across her lips.

MARGARET
 You got a boyfriend?

SUSAN

Um, yes. I do.

MARGRET

I always thought you were a rug muncher myself. You're like my daughter was at your age -- no sense of style. Average looks. At least she had strength of character. But you -- you're just a rotten little thing, who makes a living saying really smart, really nasty things about people. But you still have a boyfriend. Good for you. You must give one fuck of a hummer, lady.

Margaret tosses back her drink and moves off. Susan blinks, just run over by a verbal mack truck.

INT. ELAINE'S DINING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

The GUESTS are seated at a DINING TABLE. Dinner amongst the in-laws would be awkward enough -- the HIGH-POWERED RANDOMS make the whole ordeal that much more bizarre.

ZBIG BRZEZINSKI

The journalist situation in Iran is a bind for the President. He cannot fly to negotiate for fear of looking weak. Yet he ran for election saying he was willing to sit down with these madmen. Hakam is merely calling his bluff.

BUD

You nailed it, Z-bud. Except, this isn't a situation, it's a G-D hostage crisis is what it is.

Bud tosses a look to Elaine, taunting her.

ELAINE

I'm not at liberty to speak about the negotiations -- needless to say the President is very concerned and doing everything he can.

BUD

And you Ms. Berg? I've read a few of your pieces on the President -- What did you call him -- the Fashion--

SUSAN

"Fashionista-In-Chief."

BUD

I like that line -- "He was elected a man of the people, but he's just a man of the Prada."

EVA

They always dress us in Prada on the show. I complain because my character, Nurse Anna Flores, couldn't afford it all in real life, it's just not realistic.

Awkward crickets.

MARGARET

And all the screwing your characters do -- how realistic is that?

ELAINE

(stifled LAUGHS)

Mother.

Eva forces a smile. Christiane turns to a waiter:

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR

More wine please.

The JAPANESE AMBASSADOR asks Larry Ogami SOMETHING in JAPANESE. Larry looks confused.

LARRY OGAMI

I'm sorry, Mr. Ambassador. My Japanese isn't too great.

JAPANESE AMBASSADOR

I ask -- you been to Japan leecently.

LARRY OGAMI

Oh, not since the 80's.

ANNE

My parents were born here. As was I.

Implicit in this, why the fuck is the Japanese Ambassador at this dinner?

DOUGLAS

We're thinking of going to Japan for our honeymoon, Mr. Ambassador.

ANNE

(news to her)

We are?

DOUGLAS
It's on the list.

EVA
Why did you guys pick the zoo for your
engagement party?

Before Anne can answer, Douglas fields it --

DOUGLAS
Our family has always been supporters of
the National. Ever since we first moved
to D.C.

ELAINE
I used to take the boys there all the
time. They loved the elephants. The
event is helping fund a new enclosure.

T.J.
I think it's my mom that loved the
elephants.

ELAINE
Larry, Beatrice, planning the engagement
party with Anne has been a delight. The
sheer number of guests and the size of
the venue, it could overwhelm anyone --
but she's been a dream.

THE BATHROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Anne enters. She casually removes her top and hangs it
on the back of the door, turns the sink on so the WATER
is going FULL BLAST. Then, like she's done this a
hundred times, she kneels before the toilet -- takes her
index and middle finger, sticks them IN HER THROAT and
VOMITS HER ENTIRE MEAL.

BACK IN THE DINING ROOM - SOON AFTER

Anne rejoins the table, sits quietly. Douglas smiles at
her, barely noticed she was gone.

BEATRICE OGAMI
Douglas, Anne told me you're thinking of
having the wedding near us, in Del Mar.

This is all news to Elaine. She (badly) tries to hide
her distaste for the notion. She turns to Douglas --

ELAINE
Really? Del Mar. You hadn't mentioned
that to me.

DOUGLAS

It was just one idea we're tossing around?

ANNE

But we're pretty partial to it. Seeing how it's where I grew up.

Anne has just drawn a line in the sand. Elaine smiles, sitting on her opinion. For now. Bud CLINKS his glass.

BUD

I'd like to say something to the two lovebirds. Ever since Dougie was a little shit running around the North Carolina Governor's mansion -- if I was gonna pick one of my boys to end up homosexual, I'da picked Dougie -- the boy was gay as a spring dress. Clothes had to be perfect, hair had to be perfect --

T.J.

This is awesome.

DOUGLAS

Move it along, Dad.

BUD

And typical Dougie, he went and found himself the perfect wife-to-be.

(raises his glass)

Anne, you're a treasure, welcome to the family. I couldn't be more proud of you, son.

ELAINE

Here, here.

Everyone raises and CLINKS. T.J. approaches his Dad --

T.J.

Can I talk to you guys for a second?

CLOSE ON A BUSINESS PLAN -- tattered with creases --

INT. ELAINE'S STUDY - LATER

T.J. holds it before Bud. He's nervously in the midst of his hardsell to his father, rambling from point to point. Elaine and Douglas look on. Concerned.

T.J.

It's three thousand square feet of prime real estate, in this market we're getting it for a steal. Here's the view of the Capitol Dome from the patio. That's why we're calling it The Dome. Killer name, right?

A sad face comes over Bud as he interrupts, quietly --

BUD

No.

T.J. stops -- confused by the answer --

T.J.

No -- You need to think about it or --

BUD

I'm not doing it. Neither is your Momma.

T.J.

She already said yes. Tell him --

T.J. looks to Elaine, desperate. Her face falls.

ELAINE

I said if your father committed --

T.J.

So, you're gonna back out now. You're a god damn liar.

BUD

Don't talk to your mother that way! Giving a known drug addict that kinda money, is like buying a blind man a gorgeous hooker -- it's plain stupid.

T.J.

I've been going to N.A. meetings --

BUD

And the drinking -- shit, you're wasted right now, aren't you?

T.J.

My problem wasn't with the alcohol.

BUD

No, your problem was looking for any excuse in the world to get fucked up. Three boarding schools -- two colleges --

ELAINE

Bud.

BUD

(softens, then)

Why don't you play piano anymore?

T.J.

Not this shit again -- People don't become concert pianists at thirty, Dad. It just doesn't happen --

BUD

It's what you love. I could speak to someone at Georgetown or GW, get you a job on their staff --

T.J.

I'm not going to be a lame piano teacher. You all just want me to have some boring life!

BUD

After that stunt you pulled last December -- boring would do you some good!

This drops like a bomb. T.J.'s eyes wet with quiet rage.

T.J.

Is that what it was to you? A stunt. I hate this family. How am I ever supposed to do anything important if nobody helps me?!

He storms out. Douglas shakes his head.

DOUGLAS

He worked on that pitch for a month. You could've at least heard him out.

BUD

Your mother was never gonna say yes to that bullshit idea. She brought me in here to be the bad guy, same reason she keeps you around.

Ouch. The comment hangs there for a second. Douglas studies his father -- choosing his words meanly --

DOUGLAS

I've enjoyed the past year. Without Mom or the office to hide behind, people finally see you for what you are -- a big fucking joke. President Thunderstick.

Bud just takes it. Douglas exits...

ELAINE

Nice to see you haven't lost your touch with them.

BUD

You got a blind spot for T.J. -- always did --

ELAINE

He was the first openly gay child of a President. We'll never know what he went through.

OVER THIS, CUT: INSIDE THE BATHROOM

Where Anne puked her brains out. T.J. reaches into his back pocket for a VIAL of COKE.

ELAINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He didn't choose our life and he doesn't have the strength to withstand it.

BUD (V.O.)

He's a ticking bomb, just like your Daddy was -- you can't help him. He has to want to help himself.

Fuck this. Fuck them. Fuck everyone. T.J pours some onto his hand. SNIFFS IT up his nostril. Relief.

BACK WITH BUD and ELAINE --

Elaine moves to the bar. Bud admires her beauty.

BUD

I tell you how good you look tonight?

ELAINE

Save your compliments for your girlfriend.

BUD

I miss you, sugar. Do you miss me?

ELAINE

No.

BUD

I don't believe you.

ELAINE

I don't care.

She looks at him -- she can see in his eyes how badly he feels -- he can see in hers it doesn't make a difference.

BUD

I'm not a perfect man, baby. But you always knew that.

ELAINE

I was twenty-two when I fell in love with you -- I had no idea what kind of person you were --

BUD

C'mon, it was fun. Helping the state, the nation. And the problems we faced -- we faced together, as a family. We're not a family anymore -- we're just like the rest of this country, something else broken that nobody knows how to fix.

ELAINE

It's not my fault it's over, Bud.

Elaine's look warns him -- please don't make me review the crap you pulled -- Bud nods, solemn, regretful.

BUD

Your guinea boyfriend -- he's roasting you on this Iran thing. The White House can't reach Hakam... I heard. Bullshit.

He moves in, flashing his political brilliance --

BUD (CONT'D)

Hakam is a detestable sonofabitch, who would prefer if Israel were a memory -- and thinks the Saudis are a buncha greedy ragheads who want to keep the Middle East in the dark ages -- but he wouldn't poke America in the eye unless he knows he's got a handshake and a deal. Now I'm sure you're trying to figure out *why* he's killing those journalists. But the question you should be asking is, *why* the expedited trial? Why's he doing it so fast? That only helps one guy. Your boy. Dago Don of the White House.

(lets this land)

You're looking for the shot -- Garcetti already has the ball and he's just running the clock out.

And *that's* why Bud was President.

ELAINE

Why would the President do that?

BUD

Why do we do anything -- why did I ruin the best thing that ever happened to me -- because people are stupid and weak.

(then)

My advice, stay out of this one. If I'm right, you'll just make an enemy out of your boss --

ELAINE

You know I can't do that.

BUD

All anybody ever talks about is your ambition -- they never talk about your heart -- I don't know why they don't see it. It's all I ever saw.

And *that's* the other why... why Elaine fell in love with him. He gives her one last once over -- smiles --

BUD (CONT'D)

That... *and* you were the foxiest piece of ass I ever laid eyes on. Still are.

And Bud exits. Elaine breathes like she's been holding in air this whole time. She's collecting herself when she HEARS LOUD, RAGTIME JAZZ coming from the nearby room.

INT. ELAINE'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elaine enters to find -- T.J. PLAYING A JOPLIN RAG. The WHOLE PARTY watching. To those who haven't seen him high, he just seems brilliant -- his family knows better.

Elaine looks to Bud. It's the sad look of parents with an unpredictable addict son. He finishes with a flourish. People unwittingly APPLAUD. T.J. looks to his parents -- a wild man on the wire --

T.J.

This next one's for my bro and his sweet-ass fiancée. Love you guys.

He begins a HAUNTING RENDITION of the 1940 STANDARD, "I'll Never Smile Again." Susan Berg takes the whole thing in, oddly moved by the song and by this family. As the MUSIC CONTINUES OVER THE FOLLOWING:

INT. BUD'S LIMO - MOVING - LATER THAT NIGHT

BUD as he stares longingly out at the LIT WHITE HOUSE.
Eva sits beside him, cold. It's been a long ride.

EVA

That old witch made fun of me. You could've said something... And what was up with that dress Elaine was wearing? She shouldn't be in a strapless anything. That woman needs to stick to the dykey pantsuits and leave real fashion to the rest of us.

BUD

That woman is the epitome of class and style. There's not a lady in the world that's done half of what she's done -- or looked half as good doing it.

Eva pauses -- stung by his words -- then --

EVA

If you like her that much, why don't you fuck her tonight. Oh, that's right, she won't let you do anal. Cause she's got class and style.

Bud stares out the window wondering amongst other things how he went from leader of the free world to this moment.

INT. T.J.'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

T.J. finishes a LINE of COKE as his DOORBELL RINGS. He answers it -- there stands a HOT DUDE he met online.

GRINDR DUDE

Hey man. You didn't send a face pic -- so do you mind if I take a look at --
(realizes who T.J. is)
Oh, damn -- you're --

T.J.

Let's pretend I'm not.

A LITTLE LATER - IN THE BEDROOM

As they make out, kiss, rip each other's clothes off --

GRINDR DUDE

Okay, this is gonna sound kinda weird but I gotta tell you...

T.J.'s face falls. Knows what the guy is gonna say.

T.J.

You've wanted to sleep with me since I was a teenager in the White House.

GRINDR DUDE

Yeah.

T.J.

Now's your big chance -- if you shut the fuck up.

Grindr Dude gets it, his head goes south to blow T.J. and -- DOUGLAS'S HEAD COMES UP into FRAME -- We're in --

INT. DOUGLAS AND ANNE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Douglas and Anne are NAKED and in bed and MID-FUCK (probably doggy-style). Anne is preoccupied.

ANNE

First she hijacked the engagement party and now she's hijacking the wedding.

DOUGLAS

There has to be a rule against discussing my mother while I'm inside you --

ANNE

It's your fault. We weren't finished with the conversation and you wanted to start having sex.

Douglas stops, knows they won't finish until they finish.

DOUGLAS

She didn't hijack the engagement.

ANNE

We wanted to have sixty people at a club -- we're having three hundred people at *the zoo* because your mother likes elephants. There's gonna be helicopters and metal detectors and paparazzi posing as busboys --

DOUGLAS

Yeah, there's a tsunami of bullshit that comes with being in my family. But... don't you love me more than you hate all that?

There's a sweetness in the way he asks that we have yet to see in Douglas. Anne melts. They are in love. He smiles, grateful -- and ONE OF HIS TWO CELLPHONES RINGS --

ANNE

It's your mom. I know. Get it. Ask her why the Japanese Ambassador was at the dinner tonight -- tell her it's racist.

He answers. We INTERCUT ELAINE in her bed. Drinking a glass of wine, surrounded by paperwork, watching CABLE NEWS. Elaine's been thinking, she has an idea --

ELAINE

Porchov. He's coming to the engagement party. He's in New York early.

DOUGLAS

The Russian Foreign Minister?

ELAINE

We need to get to New York tomorrow morning. Don't let him know we're coming.

DOUGLAS

Mom -- that's in, like, six hours.

ELAINE

Get to work on it then.

Click. We STAY WITH ELAINE. Her attention on the TV.

ANDERSON COOPER (ON TV)

...As of right now there doesn't seem to be any contact between the Garcetti administration and Iran. With the ruling on the case set for tomorrow the three journalists' lives hang in the balance --

She FLIPS the channel to where... CONAN O'BRIEN jokes:

CONAN O'BRIEN (ON TV)

Bud Hammond and his girlfriend Eva Alvarez arrived today in D.C. for his son's engagement party. Eva's breasts arrived last night. So...

(AUDIENCE LAUGHS)

The former President introduced his ex-wife to his girlfriend this evening. He's hoping they don't kill each other. Well, he's really hoping there'll be a three-way, but he'll settle for them not killing each other.

More LAUGHS as she SHUTS the TV OFF.

It's not funny, just sad. And for the first time in a long time -- all alone with her work and her wine and her dogs -- Elaine softly cries. T.J.'s SONG FINISHES.

SUSAN (PRELAP)

If I didn't know better, I'd say she was still in love with him.

INT. SUSAN AND ALEX'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex (her boyfriend and boss, remember) is in bed with a book. Susan finishes getting ready for bed: t-shirt, jammy bottoms, maybe applying a little hand lotion.

SUSAN

The way she dressed up, kept averting his gaze -- honestly, it was like she was a nervous school girl around him --

ALEX

They were married for thirty years, is it that surprising she still has feelings?

SUSAN

After everything he did, all the affairs, it's not surprising it's just... sad.

(then)

Elaine Barrish could have been anything. When she graduated law school, she gave the valedictorian address and got a standing ovation for ten minutes. *Ten minutes*, can you imagine that? Where did that girl go? And how did she decide to sit out the next twenty years catering to a man who repeatedly cheated on her?

A question occurs to Alex -- something he's wanted to know for some time now --

ALEX

You still never told me, y'know -- how you snagged the interview --

(off her look)

I'm not asking as your boss, I'm asking as your boyfriend. How'd you get it?

Susan sighs. Knows she has to tell him now --

SUSAN

T.J. Hammond tried to kill himself.

And there it is. A revelation that we may have suspected given vague references to last December. It floors Alex.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I've got a contact at GW Hospital. Last December T.J. was rushed to the E.R. -- under a pseudonym -- for carbon monoxide poisoning. They swept the police report under the rug, but not the medical ones.

ALEX

You told the Secretary's office you had the story --

SUSAN

I wasn't gonna write it, but they didn't know that -- I feel creepy even telling you about it.

ALEX

Why didn't you?

SUSAN

Because it's not news. Or if it is, it's not news the Journal should be printing.

ALEX

No, just threatening to print.

A tense moment, feels more professional than personal.

SUSAN

There's a difference... And you just asked me to tell you as my boyfriend. Which I did. But no one else can know, Alex. Okay?

ALEX

Fine. But if you got a hold of that medical file, someone else will -- you should've said something.

SUSAN

I promise the next time I hear news that's disgusting and exploitative you'll be the first to know... Goodnight.

She's in bed now, flips off the light and rolls away from Alex to FACE CAMERA. Susan clearly has relationship difficulties of her own.

EXT. THE SECRETARY'S BOEING 757 - FLYING - MORNING

The Secretary of State's jet en route to New York City.

INT. SECRETARY'S BOEING 757 - ELAINE'S CABIN - MORNING

As Secretary, Elaine travels more than 200,000 miles a year. This plane is her home away from home. Elaine reviews papers and finishes breakfast. REVEAL SUSAN across from her, ignored for the last twenty minutes.

SUSAN

I assume this trip is concerning the journalists?

(a beat, no answer)

Madam Secretary, I wouldn't write anything that would interfere with whatever high level talks are happening.

ELAINE

You've finally decided to acquire some journalistic ethics. How nice for you.

A beat. Susan looks for another way in --

SUSAN

You still have the same breakfast. Steel cut oats with strawberries...

(off Elaine's look)

You wouldn't remember, but I was in your pool for two months during your husband's first run for the Presidency. Before they put me at the D.C. desk.

ELAINE

I do. You were just out of school. You had a sister who went to Amherst. Your mother was a former physician.

Elaine says it like it was nothing -- but it practically knocks Susan out of her chair.

SUSAN

Yes... Look, I know I wrote some tough things about you in the past --

ELAINE

You may be surprised, Ms. Berg, but I've never read your columns. If I read half of what people wrote about me, I wouldn't get out of bed in the morning.

Elaine decides whether or not to reveal the next part.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

I did read your book. The one about the impending fourth wave of feminism. It was rather good.

SUSAN

No one read my book.

ELAINE

Perhaps it was the title: "When Bitches Will Rule"?

SUSAN

It was about reclaiming the word.

ELAINE

It may have impacted your sales. After all, you should know better -- never call a bitch a bitch. Us bitches hate that.

An authentic LAUGH from Susan. A returned smile from Elaine. In an alternate universe, these women are close friends. Douglas interrupts, entering with a dour look.

DOUGLAS

This came in -- it's not good.

He hands Elaine a paper and exits. Elaine reads it and shuts her eyes, they open and look out the window.

ELAINE

The Iranian court found the journalists guilty. President Hakam set their execution for twenty-four hours from now.

Susan's heart sinks. Elaine returns to her work. Susan watches, for the first time ever, impressed by Elaine's emotional stamina -- not just deeming it heartless.

SUSAN

How do you do it? You've suffered more than your fair share of setbacks -- but you don't stop. What's your secret?

ELAINE

My usual answer is I share the ethos of most Americans -- that if you work hard and give it everything you've got, tomorrow will be better than today.

SUSAN

And the answer you won't let me print --

Elaine removes her glasses, holds Susan's gaze.

ELAINE

Most of life is hell. It's filled with failure and loss. People disappoint you, dreams don't work out, hearts get broken -- innocent journalists die. And the great moments of life, the ones where everything feels perfect, totally in synch -- are few and fleeting. But... you never get to the next great moment if you don't keep going.

(glasses on, back to work)

So that's what I do, I just keep going.

The answer hits Susan Berg on a deep level.

EXT. FOUR SEASONS - NEW YORK CITY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The I.M. Pei-designed five-star hotel basks in the morning sun. TWO BLACK SUV'S pull up to the FRONT.

INT. FOUR SEASONS, HOTEL SUITE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A very gross, very drunk and -- close your eyes -- very naked VIKTOR PORCHOV (Russian Foreign Minister) finishes playing naked poker with a pair of NAKED PROSTITUTES.

VIKTOR

I'm out.

Viktor drops his cards. A BUXOM BLONDE PROSTITUTE pulls the chips close to her. Jiggles with excitement.

BUXOM BLONDE PROSTITUTE

Yay! I keep winning.

We HEAR SOME VOICES MUFFLED IN THE NEXT ROOM --

ELAINE (O.S.)

I know Mr. Porchov is here -- please tell him the Secretary of State of the United States is here and she needs to see him.

Viktor makes a sour face at the sound of her VOICE.

BUXOM BLONDE PROSTITUTE

Is that your wife?

VIKTOR

Nyet. Worse.

ELAINE (O.S.)
 Viktor -- you stupid asshole -- I know
 you're here. I need to speak with you.
 It's important.

INT. FOUR SEASONS, HOTEL SUITE - MAIN ROOM

Viktor enters, donning his robe. ELAINE is there -- as
 well as AGENT CLARK and VIKTOR'S DIPLOMATIC SECURITY.

VIKTOR
 Madam Secretary -- translator not here.
 Can't speak. See you at engagement.

He turns to go back in the room.

ELAINE
 You went to Cornell undergrad -- quit
 with the whole you don't understand me
 crap. It's fine when everyone else is
 around -- but right now I need your help.
 I'm serious.

A beat. When Viktor speaks again, he still speaks with a
 thick accent but it's clear he speaks idiomatic English.

VIKTOR
 What the fuck is it, Elaine?

ELAINE
 I need your help getting in touch with
 the Iranian Ambassador to the UN --

VIKTOR
 No way, I cannot get involved --

ELAINE
 I'm not asking you to get involved. I'm
 asking you to get me in a room with
 Ambassador Jobrani, who is in this city
 and won't return my calls --

VIKTOR
 If my Prime Minister found out --

ELAINE
 It's not your Prime Minister you should
 be scared of. It's your wife. You think
 I don't know who's in that other room?

A stare down. After which Viktor surprisingly CHUCKLES.

VIKTOR

I'm doing this -- not because you're threatening me. Because you've got balls. I respect balls.

(as he dials)

And a great ass.

LATER - SAME ROOM

Iranian Ambassador to the U.N., AMIR JOBRANI, 50's, small, grey with a slight build -- enters the suite.

AMBASSADOR JOBRANI

Mr. Foreign Minister, I came as soon as --

REVEAL ELAINE on the couch. Some tea in front of her. The Ambassador is shocked. Elaine smiles.

ELAINE

Mr. Ambassador. I was just here having some tea with my buddy Viktor and I didn't even realize you were coming. You've been impossible to reach. Cell phone issues?

AMBASSADOR JOBRANI

We can't be talking, Madam Secretary.

ELAINE

We are Amir -- Thank you, Viktor.

VIKTOR

You owe me.

Viktor exits back into the bedroom.

AMBASSADOR JOBRANI

There is nothing you can do Madam Secretary. The wheels of this are in motion.

ELAINE

When those Americans are dead, then there's nothing I can do.

(moves to him)

Now you and I go back Amir -- I know you're a good man. I also know you worked for Hakam in the private sector, you're close. You either know why this is happening or you have a good idea why. Either way, I need to know what you know.

Off Jobrani's face, considering -- we MATCH CUT TO:

The FACE of NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER PAULINE SAMSON, the CAMERA PANS to CHIEF OF STAFF, BARRY HARRIS, then, finally, to the impenetrable PRESIDENT PAUL GARCETTI.

ELAINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Hakam is sick. Pancreatic cancer. Before he dies he wants to begin negotiations to freeze Iran's nuclear program entirely. He believes Iran has the natural resources to become the leading force in the Gulf -- but not without being in business with the West.

The CAMERA finally arrives ON ELAINE, who sits across from them in the OVAL OFFICE, finishing her briefing...

ELAINE (CONT'D)

He prioritizes that over Iran's nuclear ambitions because once Iran becomes a superpower, he believes, the world will have to meet its nuclear demands anyway. He can't forge a treaty of real meaning without the support of the ultra-conservatives, so he takes an aggressive action. Either he kills some American spies or you agree to negotiate for their release on Iranian soil. Both are clear wins that get him to the table.

The room is silent.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

My recommendation, Mr. President, is that either you or an emissary from this administration meets with Hakam in Turkey -- to release the journalists there --

Her recommendation lands with a thud. Elaine takes in their reaction -- it doesn't surprise her.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

But you're not going to do that, are you? Because you already knew what Hakam was up to and you're just letting it happen.

A heavy accusation. Harris fumes --

HARRIS/CHIEF OF STAFF

You've crossed some serious lines today, Elaine. First the rogue mission to New York -- and now you accuse the President of this --

ELAINE

You were an awful campaign manager,
Barry. You're a shitty Chief of Staff.
But you're an even worse liar. I'd like
a moment alone with the President.

Samson and Harris look to Garcetti -- who nods "give us a
minute." Harris and Samson exit. The President gets up
from his desk, wanders to the office window behind him --

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

Yeah, we knew. Harris, Samson, a few
others. But we *didn't* agree to it.

ELAINE

I'm supposed to believe you now. After
you used my office to quiet the press --

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

I'm sorry about that -- and don't believe
me, but it's the truth. Hakam floated
the idea through one of our contacts. We
floated back "no way". Two weeks later
he's doing it anyway --

ELAINE

If you knew this was a means toward
negotiations, why not meet some demands
and save the lives of those journalists.

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

C'mon, Elaine. When we ran against each
other you were the one who said I was an
idiot for suggesting we sit down with
Iran. I'd look even worse doing it under
these circumstances.

ELAINE

And I lost.

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

Be glad you did. I was a dog chasing a
car and I caught a bus -- the economy is
in free fall, we can't get a single piece
of legislation through Congress, I go on
TV to try and communicate a vision -- and
the country switches me off to watch
drunk housewives or singing competitions
-- which when you think about makes sense
since fifteen million of them are
unemployed, forty million of them live
below the poverty level and fifty percent
of them hate my fucking guts.

ELAINE

I've been here before. I stood in this office when Bud faced darker hours than this -- and I'm telling you -- now isn't the time to be discouraged. Now is the time to lead --

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

I'm not your ex-husband, Elaine.

A cold beat and a revealing one. Elaine realizes they don't have the closeness she thought they did.

PRESIDENT GARCETTI

(CONT'D)

A nuclear treaty with Iran is the objective. It's not how we wanted to get it, and we tried to stop it, but I'll take it.

(he sits)

Go on... go focus on your son's party. You've done everything you can.

Elaine watches this disenchanted man -- a worn down version of the man we first met on stage with her.

ELAINE

"It's not enough to have the courage of your convictions. You have to have the courage of others', too." Those were your words during our last debate. The voters believed you. I believed you.

(a beat)

Some days, sir, it would be nice to be working for the man that beat me.

And Elaine exits. Garcetti watches her go -- and, perhaps, silently wishing he could trade places with her.

INT. A WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY - JUST AFTER

Elaine moves toward Douglas -- who waits for her. She's too busy being pissed to read the dire look on his face.

ELAINE

The only thing I hate worse than being wrong about something, is your father being right about it --

Elaine sees Douglas's face -- knows before he says it --

DOUGLAS

It's out.

INT. A DARK HALLWAY - ONE NIGHT LAST DECEMBER

WE'RE inside SOMEONE'S POV heading down a BARELY LIT HALL. We APPROACH A DOOR at the hall's end. OVER THIS:

GEORGIA (V.O.)

According to files obtained exclusively by journalist Georgia Gibbons, the Washington Journal has just learned that Thomas James Hammond, son of former President Donald Hammond and Secretary of State Elaine Barrish, was taken to George Washington Hospital last December after an apparent suicide attempt --

The DOOR opens and REVEAL a GARAGE. Inside the garage is a RUNNING CAR. INSIDE the CAR is T.J. -- HALF DEAD.

REVERSE to REVEAL it was ELAINE'S POV. She SCREAMS FOR HELP (NO SOUND, only the ARTICLE) and squints her eyes at the HEAVY FUMES, as she races to the CAR.

GEORGIA (V.O.)

-- Thomas was admitted to the emergency room at 11:15 PM on December 22nd, under the pseudonym of Aaron Walsh, and treated immediately for high levels of carbon monoxide poisoning. The report is the latest unfortunate event in the troubled life of the former first son --

The VOICE and IMAGE CUTS OUT SHARPLY -- WE'RE BACK IN --

INT. ELAINE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Elaine hovers over her COMPUTER just having finished reading Georgia's story. Douglas and Susan are near.

ELAINE

You called your brother?

DOUGLAS

I'm already on it --

ELAINE

Keep trying until you get him. Go.

Douglas exits. Elaine turns to Susan, ice --

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Our time together is done... get out.

SUSAN

Madam Secretary, I assure you, I had nothing to do with this --

ELAINE

Like that makes a difference.

SUSAN

I wasn't even aware there was anyone else at my paper looking into it. Really. I'm as upset as you are --

ELAINE

You couldn't possibly be as upset as me!
Was it *your* child that you found barely alive? Was it?! Yes, it seems the story missed a few details -- like how *you* coerced me into an interview by threatening to run this shit in your paper. Where is that?! Where in there does it say what kind of person *you* are?! The only good news I've gotten all week is I don't have to share the same room with you anymore. Now get the hell out.

A beat as Susan woefully exits. Elaine holds her head in her hands, the world spins, emotions boil over.

She tries to gather herself, reaches desperately for her cell and places a call. Waits impatiently for an answer.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

(into phone, upset)

It's me... I need to see you. Right away... please.

INT. A RUN DOWN APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

T.J. sits across from OMAR, a tough AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN with dreads. They watch some TV COVERAGE on the BREAKING NEWS about T.J.'s apparent suicide last December.

OMAR

That sucks, yo. You better now?

T.J.

Much. Gimme the usual.

Omar tosses him a couple of VIALS of COKE. He's T.J.'s dealer. Pours a line for them both to do. A SHOT of ELAINE comes across the SCREEN causing Omar to comment.

OMAR

Your Mom is hot. You gotta get me her autograph. I want a picture of her in one of those fine ass Chanel suits with "To Omar, my favorite black motherfucker... Love, Elaine" written on it. Or if she won't write love, she can just use XO.

T.J.'s phone BUZZES. He looks down.

T.J.

It's my brother. I should get this. He keeps calling.

T.J. ANSWERS. CUT TO DOUGLAS on the phone. He's at the STATE DEPARTMENT, surrounded by the usual hustle and bustle. A nearby TV plays the SAME STORY. We INTERCUT.

DOUGLAS

There you are -- I've been trying to reach you. Did you see it yet?

T.J.

Yeah. It's all bullshit. Don't worry about it. I'm... with my sponsor.

The dealer SNORTS a line.

T.J. (CONT'D)

Worry about your party. I'm all good, brother. I swear. Love you.

He hangs up. STAY WITH DOUGLAS. Who thinks, then makes a call. WE CUT TO ELAINE as she answers. She's in the PASSENGER SEAT of a CAR. Driving somewhere.

ELAINE

Did you reach him?

DOUGLAS

He says he's with his sponsor. I know... he's lying. I was supposed to pick up my tux with Anne in a half hour, but I'm gonna track him down and call you back when I'm with him. Where are you?

ELAINE

I'm following a lead, I think there's still a way to save those journalists... And Douglas...

(finally)

You're a good brother and a good son.

A rare acknowledgement and judging from his expression, it's a big part of why Douglas does what he does.

He hangs up. We STAY WITH ELAINE. REVEAL she's inside a civilian car which AGENT CLARK DRIVES. It's just them. OUTSIDE we watch as The LONE CAR makes its way down an EMPTY ROAD in VIRGINIA. It's a very covert trip.

EXT. A SECLUDED MOTEL - NORTHERN VIRGINIA - DUSK

Clark's car pulls up. Elaine and Clark get out. Walk over to a door where ANOTHER MAN STANDS SENTRY -- the door opens -- Elaine enters. Clark waits outside.

INSIDE THE ROOM

The late afternoon sun casts its glow. Elaine speaks.

ELAINE

Thanks for coming. I'm having one of the worst days of my life and... you're still the one person that can make me feel like everything is going to be okay. Even if it's not.

REVEAL, of course, it's BUD she's speaking to.

BUD

C'mere, Sugar.

Elaine practically collapses into his arms -- they begin to kiss. At first slowly, then more passionately.

INT. WASHINGTON JOURNAL NEWSROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

MOVING with GEORGIA through the partitions, a few congratulatory WAVES tossed her way. She demures, feigning humility. Turns to enter her office where --

Susan sits waiting in Georgia's chair. Quietly livid.

GEORGIA

(fake sincerity)

Oh, hey Susan. I'm sure you're upset over the whole Hammond suicide story -- I'm sorry if it stepped on your Barrish piece, but I had a source come forward and I had to run with it.

SUSAN

With all the industries that were available to you -- looking the way you do -- porn, reality hosting, you picked journalism. Why? You don't care about its history. You have no sense of regard for what we do -- or who's come before you -- just like you have no regard for the life on the other end of this piece. You're a disgrace to the profession.

GEORGIA

You're not mad I ran that story -- you're just mad it cost you one. Bitch.

SUSAN

You're gonna regret you ever posted this. Oh, and Georgia -- never call a bitch a bitch. Us bitches hate that.

Susan goes to exit -- stopped by --

GEORGIA

Your boyfriend knew about it. He had to approve it before I could post it --

This stops Susan in her tracks. Off her face, SLAM TO --

ALEX

I warned you that this kind of thing could happen. That it could get out.

WE'RE IN ALEX'S OFFICE NOW -- SUSAN is letting into him.

SUSAN

Then you come to me and tell me.

ALEX

So you could pressure me to stop it? That's exactly the kind of conflict of interest I can't have occur.

SUSAN

Are we a paper or a website?

ALEX

We're a dodo bird. A dying institution. In fifty years people are going to talk about newspapers the way we talk about rotary phones or disco.

A sudden and unsettling thought occurs to Susan --

SUSAN

Did you give Georgia the story?

ALEX

No. You asked me not to tell anyone.

A second and even worse thought occurs to her --

SUSAN

Are you fucking her?

ALEX

Okay. Now you're just being paranoid --
 Seriously, is this what hanging out with
 Elaine Barrish does to you?

SUSAN

Are. You. Fucking. Her.

An infinitesimal pause -- but that's all Susan needs.

ALEX

I'm not gonna answer that --

SUSAN

(turns to go)
 You just did.

FOLLOW SUSAN as she storms away from Alex, moving quickly through the newsroom to the exit. She prays no one is watching as she struggles to maintain composure.

INT. HALLWAY - BY THE ELEVATORS - MOMENTS LATER

Susan feverishly pushes an elevator button. Alex emerges from the offices -- he moves to her -- private, contrite.

ALEX

Okay... I screwed up. I know. But we've been seeing each other for two years -- I had to beg you to move in with me. I'm not allowed to kiss you in the office because you're worried what people will think -- when our friends ask us if we're gonna get married, you laugh and say "no" without even looking at me. You say, "I don't believe in it and Alex failed at it twice, that's why I picked him." Name one time that you've spent as much effort on something for us as you have on this Barrish piece... Even now, I can't tell if you're more pissed that I slept with Georgia or that I gave her the story.

SUSAN

Wow. For a second I thought I was gonna get the "I'm sorry I hurt you" speech.

The elevator finally opens. Susan steps on.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Let's be clear, I'm definitely more upset that you stuck your dick in another woman than I am about the story.

ALEX

(remorseful)

You know I'm sorry. I am. But... you don't make it easy, you know -- you don't make it easy to love you --

SUSAN

(in tears now)

It's not supposed to be easy, you asshole. Easy is Georgia. Easy is where you can spend the night while I move out.

And the doors close on Alex and their relationship --

INT. THE SECLUDED MOTEL ROOM - NORTHERN VIRGINIA - DUSK

The CAMERA PANS up the bed to where Bud and Elaine are happily post-coital -- and naked beneath the sheets.

BUD

Think we broke a couple of mattress springs. That was for sure top ten.

ELAINE

It wasn't even close. Unlike you, I'm out of practice.

Bud asks a burning, troubling question --

BUD

How's T.J. doing? I tried calling him, he won't take my calls.

ELAINE

Douglas is looking for him. I don't know, Bud -- we can't just *make* him go to rehab. We tried that twice. And we can't give him money for another failed venture -- I don't know what to do. I'm the highest ranking co-dependent in the country.

(MORE)

ELAINE (CONT'D)

It was so much simpler when they were boys yelling at us about the Secret Service detail, or why they didn't get to learn to drive on the road like normal sixteen-year-olds.

BUD

Yeah. It was simpler. Man... we had some good times --

ELAINE

Some fun times.

An acknowledgement of their earlier conversation, she's admitting Bud was right. She gets up, starts dressing --

ELAINE (CONT'D)

I'd like to propose to the President that he send you to Iran as a last ditch effort to negotiate for the journalists' release. Hakam may not go for it -- but it's worth a try.

BUD

(there's that grin)
I thought you'd never ask.

ELAINE

(a beat, confused)
What?

BUD

I figured you'd come to me -- it's not like President Sinatra was lifting a fucking finger -- besides I know Hakam, I know the players on the ground -- the Iranian people love me. They called me "President Khoob" -- means "The Good President".

Elaine shakes her head, putting all the pieces together -- it hits like a truckload of bricks.

ELAINE

That's what it was all about -- all along -- the "I missed you, sugar" and "You're still the foxiest piece of ass I ever laid eyes on" -- it was all bullshit --

BUD

I meant every word of it. I always do.

ELAINE

You talked me into bed so I'd get Garcetti to send you to Iran -- so I'd put you back in the game -- and I fell for it! How could I be so stupid?! And how could you be such a... *such a fucking motherfucker!*

She picks up A LARGE ITEM, probably a VASE --

BUD

You've been working out, baby.

As Elaine hurls the VASE we GO --

OUTSIDE THE MOTEL ROOM

SMASH! Agent Clark reacts, about to run inside --

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

(calm)

Give 'em a minute --

AGENT CLARK

They're gonna kill each other --

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

I covered them for fifteen years. Give 'em a minute.

ANOTHER SMASH BRINGS US -- BACK INSIDE THE ROOM

Bud has ducked both volleys. He moves to her.

BUD

Settle down, Elaine. Now I am the best person to get those journalists back and you know it. Shit, you're not pissed I wanted you to ask me, you're just pissed I thought of it first. And I wasn't playing you anymore than you were playing me -- Did we sleep together because of politics? Sure. But it was also about love. It's always *both* with us. That's our story, baby. We were made for each other, we were made to fight for this country -- together. And we're not done fighting yet, not by a fucking long shot.

Elaine grabs the rest of her things -- furious --

ELAINE

Listen to me, Bud -- we are done! *Done!*

BUD

I love you, sugar. If you think for a second that I'm giving up on us then you don't know me and you never did.

She exits. Bud smiles, still madly in love with her and sensing, in spite of her protestations, how mutual it is.

OUTSIDE THE MOTEL

Elaine, still buttoning herself, huffs toward the car. Clark follows, giving a "you were right" look to the Secret Service guy who smiles back.

INT. AGENT CLARK'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER - EVENING

Night begins to fall as Elaine and Clark make their way back to the Capital City. Clark looks over, expecting to see Elaine still upset...

But instead she's just shaking her head... which turns into a smile... which, somehow, turns into a HEARTY UNCONTROLLABLE LAUGH. It's the first time we've seen Elaine LAUGH and it's FULL and LOUD, and yes, SEXY.

Life, love, it's all so fucked up. She makes a call. We CUT TO ALICE back at State. We HEAR.

ALICE (OVER PHONE)

Hello, Madam Secretary.

ELAINE

Did Douglas call?

ALICE (OVER PHONE)

No. But I have a list of others -- including Susan Berg who's tried you several times.

Off Elaine's look, considering... WE CUT TO AN ELEPHANT. A GIANT GRAY ASIAN ELEPHANT, feeding peacefully in --

EXT. THE ELEPHANT HOUSE - THE NATIONAL ZOO - NIGHT

After hours. But they open the zoo for the secretary when she likes to visit... or have a private meeting.

Elaine sits quietly on a nearby bench, gazing at the MASSIVE CREATURES. Clark, as always, stands his usual distance away. After a moment, SUSAN BERG appears -- she crosses to Elaine's bench and sits down beside her.

SUSAN

Thank you for seeing me. I wanted to apologize. I found out the story was my fault. I inadvertently leaked it... I told my bureau chief, who I'm sleeping with -- he told the other woman he's also sleeping with. A fellow journalist.

ELAINE

I'm sorry to hear that. Genuinely.

SUSAN

I thought you'd appreciate the irony.

ELAINE

That may be the meanest thing you've ever said about me.

SUSAN

You haven't read my columns. They were pretty mean...

ELAINE

I may have read a *few* of your columns...

SUSAN

For years I wrote about you as an affront to women because you stayed with your husband. Like most, I thought it was because of your political ambitions. Then I went to pack tonight... and it was the hardest thing I ever had to do.

A slight beat where Elaine decides to reveal --

ELAINE

I stayed because I loved him.

SUSAN

I know... so why did you finally leave?

ELAINE

Because after thirty years -- in that moment, exhausted from the campaign, suffering the greatest professional setback of my life -- I *finally* had the strength to. Any other day, I'm not so sure I would've. I never answer the question -- because there is no article, no book that could explain the complexities of a single marriage.

A beat. Elaine straightens -- back to business --

ELAINE (CONT'D)

I'm going to give you a headline that should supplant the whirlwind currently surrounding my son. We'll be postponing the engagement a few days. Bud is going to Iran.

SUSAN

The President is sending him?

ELAINE

The President hasn't agreed to it, but he will -- we're meeting in an hour, and I'm giving him a choice: either he sends my ex-husband or he accepts my resignation. I don't think he's in a position to deny me. Now, you've just heard that proposal from a very high level source at State.

Implicit in this, "not from me". Elaine rises.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

And Ms. Berg, I expect to see you at the engagement party. You've got an article to finish --

SUSAN

You don't have to do that --

ELAINE

I know. It seems we have more in common than either of us would care to admit. Perhaps there are ways we can help each other from time to time --

SUSAN

I'd like that.

A nod. Elaine looks back one last time at the ELEPHANTS.

ELAINE

Beautiful creatures, aren't they? Majestic, fearsome but still gentle -- they move slower than most animals, but they travel just as far. But that isn't what I love most about them...

(a final beat)

They're a matriarchal society. When the males reach their mating age, the females kick them the fuck out of the herd.

And with that, Elaine walks off. Susan gets her phone and dials -- all traces of heartbreak replaced by the adrenaline of a great story.

SUSAN

(into phone)

Russ... it's me. Write this down exactly as I say it -- "High level sources at the State Department are confirming that Secretary of State Elaine Barrish will recommend to President Garcetti --

EXT. PARKING LOT - NATIONAL ZOO - NIGHT

Elaine and Clark make their way to the car. They get in. Elaine looks out at SOMETHING in the distance --

ELAINE

Can you keep a secret, Clark?

AGENT CLARK

That's my job, Madam Secretary.

After a beat -- as she keeps looking --

ELAINE

I'm gonna run for President again. And this time, I'm gonna win.

Clark grins. Turns on the car, a SONG comes on the radio. Elaine BLASTS it, smiling and still enjoying that view. As they DRIVE OFF, we CRANE UP and AWAY from her and Clark in the car...

The CAMERA PANS -- and WE SEE what Elaine was staring at -- a lit-up WASHINGTON D.C. on the HORIZON. It's a gorgeous city at night. And tonight... it's perfect.

FADE OUT.

THE END