

D.C.

PILOT PRESENTATION

written by

John August

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# dc

PRESENTATION SCRIPT -- 2/16/99

\*

## ACT ONE

1 INT. GYM SHOWERS - DAY

1

A shower curtain WHIPS back, revealing MASON SCOTT (22), wet and dripping.

MASON

"My Fellow Americans..."

(explaining)

You have to start with My Fellow Americans.

PETE

Given.

PETE KOMISKY (also 22) is toweling off. Mason grabs his own towel, drying off as he continues his speech -- practiced, but sincere.

MASON

"On this, the occasion of my inauguration, I am reminded of my childhood growing up in the woods of Virginia..."

PETE

...a mansion in the woods in Virginia...

MASON

(ignoring)

"Among those trees, some hundreds of years old, one could sense the ghosts of fallen patriots, still fighting for the ideals they were willing to die for: truth, freedom, and the nobility of every man and woman. These are the values I look to uphold as I begin my presidency."

PETE

I'm crying. I have actual tears.

MASON

Fine. Let's hear yours.

PETE

"My Fellow Americans, absolute power corrupts absolutely. So forgive me in advance for the next four years."

A beat.

MASON

Do you remember the exact moment your idealism was crushed?

Pete thinks, a long beat. He almost answers, then stops. Finally...

PETE

No. No, I don't.

2 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 2 \*

3 INT. GYM PARKING GARAGE / BOOTH - DAY 3

A line of cars waiting to get out, the PARKING ATTENDANT looks over, someone KNOCKING on the window behind him.

It's FINLEY SCOTT (22). Merely frantic on an ordinary day, today she has enough caffeine in her that if she died this instant, her body could keep running for another two weeks.

FINLEY

Hi. Hello. I'm parked over there...

She points to her father's old Volvo, its flashers going. It's parked in front of a large NO PARKING sign.

ATTENDANT

You can't park there.

FINLEY

I know, that's why I wanted to talk to you. Do you notice how the car is full? How every cubic inch is occupied, except for a tiny spot I left for myself to sit in and thus drive all night?

The attendant looks over. What Finley says is true.

FINLEY (cont'd)

All of my earthly possessions are in that car. So even though you don't know me or my whole deal, if you could put yourself in my position -- just pretend you are me, in this state and with these needs and hopes and fears -- and guard that car with your very life, I would so appreciate it.

ATTENDANT

You can't park there.

Some horns HONK, people wanting to pay and get out. Finley checks the attendant's name tag

FINLEY

Frank, your name is Frank?

(he nods)

Frank, I'm going to be here 20 minutes, but they're a really important 20 minutes. About as important of a 20 minutes as are going to happen in or near this garage ever, short of a murder or somebody giving birth, and neither is particularly likely because it's a garage, isn't it?

ATTENDANT

Yes.

She takes that as an okay to park there.

FINLEY

You're a star. Twenty minutes.

She heads for the elevators.

4 INT. GYM FRONT DESK - DAY

4

Taking a towel, a GUY moves away to reveal Finley.

FINLEY

(to check-in worker)

I'm looking for Mason Scott. Is he checked in?

The WORKER isn't sure if she's supposed to say.

FINLEY (cont'd)

Mason. Scott. It's an emergency.

\*

Finally relenting, the worker types in the name.

5 INT. MEN'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY

5

The door opens to reveal Finley. Without a moment of hesitation, she heads in, looking for Mason. We follow her as she weaves among half-naked (and fully naked) men, looking into each locker bay.

Near the showers, she literally bumps into a BEEFY GUY. She has to say something.

FINLEY

I'm a comparison shopper.

IN A LOCKER BAY

Mason and Pete are getting dressed.

PETE

So he's in the elevator with Fred Grandy -- the Love Boat's Gopher, but still, a Congressman -- he's in the elevator with him and he turns to him and says, "Lido Deck, please."

MASON

(disbelieving)

No.

PETE

He was out on his ass before lunch.

FINLEY

(from behind)

Mason?

He turns to see her. A beat, astonished.

MASON

Finley, what are you doing here?

FINLEY

I drove all night. I had a revelation.

(introducing to Pete)

Hi, I'm Finley.

PETE

Pete.

(they shake)

You're the notorious twin sister.

FINLEY

And you sleep with everyone.

Pete nods, guilty. Mason pulls Finley into the bay, turning her head so she's only looking at lockers. He and Pete are still in their underwear. Some OTHER GUYS are looking over.

MASON

What are you doing here now?

FINLEY

I went by your apartment. Your neighbors said you always go to the gym before work.

(turning to Pete)

He's very habitual.

PETE

I've noticed that.

Mason turns her head back, then continues dressing.

MASON

You're supposed to be at graduate school. What, are you running away?

FINLEY

I'm running towards. Like I said, I had a revelation. It's been a long time coming, weeks and months, maybe my whole life -- but just last night I realized that all this preparation, all this schooling has kept me from actually living my life. I'm like a butterfly trapped in the chrysalis. If I don't break free now, I'll die.

MASON

You were watching Mariah Carey: Behind the Music, weren't you?

A beat.

FINLEY

Yes. But that's unrelated.

6 EXT. FRONT OF THE GYM - DAY

6

PETE

See you later. Good to meet you.

Pete takes off with a wave. His hair still wet, Mason stays behind with Finley, ready to have it out.

FINLEY

I know this is sudden, but aren't most great ideas sudden? I mean, do you think Einstein sat around pondering the theory of relativity?

MASON

Yes. He did. And what great idea do you have, specifically? Come to D.C. and mooch off your brother?

(not letting her interrupt)

Just because we shared a womb for nine months does not give you first dibs on my life. I'm sick of being your fall-back plan.

FINLEY

Just let me stay with you for a few weeks while I figure out what specifically I want to do. You know that if I don't stay with you, Mom and Dad will freak out.

MASON

They'll freak out anyway.

FINLEY

They'll freak out less. They trust you. You're responsible. You got all those genes.

A beat. A few PEDESTRIANS look as they pass by, wondering what the disagreement's about.

FINLEY (cont'd)

Mason, your entire life, all you've ever talked about is coming here, doing this, and eventually freeing the world or something. Yes, I mock you, but on many levels I respect that. You have this razor-sharp vision of what you want to do with your life. I don't.

(MORE)

\*

FINLEY (cont'd)  
 But everything is telling me that I  
 won't find it in grad school. So  
 please. Just let me crash for a  
 while. I won't be any nuisance, I  
 swear.

Mason checks his watch, already running late. Finally  
 deciding, he digs out his keys, hands them over. She hugs  
 him.

FINLEY (cont'd)  
 You won't regret it.

\*

MASON  
 It's only because I know you're going  
 to change your mind. And by next  
 week, normal life will resume.

OPENING TITLES and MUSIC run over the montage:

7 EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE/DELI NEAR CAPITOL HILL - DAY 7

Mason emerges with a bagel and an apple, eating the former  
 as he nearly jogs, late.

8 EXT. NORTH EDGE OF THE MALL - DAY 8

He cuts through a bus group of MIDDLE-AGED TOURISTS, all  
 turning their cameras sideways. As we follow their focus,  
 we can see what's so impressive --

THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT

towers in the distance, the shadow falling like God's  
 sundial.

\*

TRACKING WITH MASON

He checks his watch, walks faster. Beyond him, we see  
 nothing but marble steps and ornate pillars, the feet of  
 massive monuments. The city is majestic in the way American  
 cities never are.

STOPPED AT A CROSS-WALK

Amid the TOURISTS, we see two other GUYS who could be clones  
 of Mason: shirt, tie and khakis. Mason leads the way  
 across, against the light.

\*



We let him pass us, looking right to see

THE CAPITOL

in the distance, shining like a palace.

9 INT. RUSSELL BUILDING / SECURITY CHECKPOINT - DAY 9

A line at the metal detector. Mason holds his apple in his mouth as he takes off his bookbag, showing the GUARD his hard-card pass.

10 INT. RUSSELL BASEMENT HALLWAY - DAY 10

Mason grabs a Roll Call newspaper off the shelf by the post office. Seeing the CROWD at the elevator, he heads for the stairs.

11 INT. RUSSELL BUILDING 3RD FLOOR - DAY 11

Mason emerges from the stairs. The hallway is lined with flags in front of each office. He tosses his apple core in the trash can as he heads into the office of

SENATOR WILLIAM ABBOTT  
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

The door shuts behind him. END OF TITLES.

12 INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - DAY / LATER 12

CLOSE-UP: On video, we see live coverage from the Senate floor on C-SPAN. Graphics superimpose, the results of a vote.

A hefty stack of mail THUMPS down in front of the screen. PULLING BACK, we see that we're at

MASON'S OVERSTUFFED DESK,

one of eight in the crowded front office. TV's play on desks throughout the office, all tuned to track the news: C-SPAN 1 and 2, MSNBC and CNC (Cable News Channel).

Flipping through the letters -- constituent mail -- Mason is horrified.

MASON

These can't all be for us.

NEIL

Not for us. For the endangered Red  
Ring-Tailed Squirrel of Jackson  
Forest.

NEIL (25) is Mason's pudgy, prickly supervisor. Mason flips  
through the letters.

NEIL (cont'd)

I want three replies. Jackson 1: I'm  
as concerned about the environment as  
you. Jackson 2: My support for  
responsible industry is unparalleled.  
Jackson 3: Jobs, jobs, jobs. I  
understand and I'm working my ass off.

\*

MASON

What's the turnaround?

NEIL

Give me all three by noon.

MASON

Can I get Chang?

They both look up to bewildered intern CHANG (17), who's  
standing near the door with a sheet of paper.

NEIL

Chang, what are you doing?

CHANG

Robert told me to hold this until he  
got back.

MASON

How long has he been gone?

CHANG

About an hour.

NEIL

You're with Mason.

A beat as Chang tries to decide what to do with the paper.  
He finally sets it down on the floor where he was standing.

13

INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

13

Chang feeds letters into the auto-pen while Mason works on the boilerplate, copying and pasting from other documents.

Coming in from the hallway, a RECEPTIONIST calls out --

RECEPTIONIST

Incoming.

The office that was busy-but-casual suddenly becomes frantic-and-military. The other three LA's (like Neil) scramble to get their notes together, while LC's and INTERNS throw away lunch containers and mash down the trash cans.

NEIL

(to Mason)

Do you have them?

MASON

Printing.

CLOSE ON the printer, the first page emerging. The second. Neil SNAPS his fingers -- he needs it. But then, a blinking light.

MASON (cont'd)

It jammed.

\*

Like a Marine breaking down his rifle, Mason opens the printer, rolls the gate, whipping out the crumpled sheet of paper, and slamming it back shut.

We WHIP BACK to the door, where SENATOR WILLIAM ABBOTT enters. White-haired and solid, he's either your favorite grandfather or a fiery old son-of-a-bitch, his mood determined by unseen forces.

He sweeps through the room like a hurricane, headed for his office. LA's and LD's (Legislative Directors) swirl around him, trying to get a moment of his attention.

The page finally emerging from the printer, Mason hands it off to Neil, who tries to cut in. But the CHIEF OF STAFF blocks the door to the inner office.

A moment later, the Senator re-emerges, heading back out. The process repeats in reverse, Neil never getting a chance to hand off the drafts to the Senator.

After the Senator is gone, a happy calm returns to the office. The danger is over.

**14** INT. COPY ROOM / LATER - DAY **14**

Mason is making copies when the Receptionist looks in, panicked.

RECEPTIONIST  
Where's Neil?

MASON  
I don't know. Why?

RECEPTIONIST  
Robert's with the Senator at  
committee. They need some P-31 file.  
They're freaking out.  
(deciding)  
I'll page Neil.

MASON  
No, I know what it is.

**15** INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - DAY **15**

Mason roots through Neil's desk, finding the file in question. He quickly skims through it, making sure it's all there.

MASON  
Tell Robert I'll be there in two  
minutes.

RECEPTIONIST  
I already paged Neil.

MASON  
When he calls in, tell him I took care  
of it.

He grabs his jacket as he leaves.

**16** INT. THIRD-FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY **16**

Mason runs for the stairs...

- 17** INT. STAIRWELL - DAY **17**  
 ...jumping the last three steps of each flight.
- 18** INT. RUSSELL BASEMENT - DAY **18**  
 Near the security checkpoint, he hangs a left, heading for...
- 19** OMIT FROM PRESENTATION **19** \*
- 20** OMIT FROM PRESENTATION **20** \*
- 21** INT. CAPITOL HALLWAY - DAY **21**  
 Two ornate elevator doors open, revealing Mason. He moves as fast as he can without actually running, squeezing past groups of TOURISTS, inevitably crossing a few flashbulbs.  
 He checks the doors, looking for the right room. Finally finding...
- 22** INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY **22**  
 The meeting has yet to start, just a few SENATORS up on the dais. The others mull about, their STAFFERS busily running through the agenda.  
 Abbott's Legislative Director, ROBERT (30), waves Mason over, taking the file from him. He flips through it, saying only...
- ROBERT
- Alright.
- His job finished, Mason should head back. But he doesn't.  
 Like a freshman at his first frat party, Mason tries to look like he's supposed to be there, not staring too long at any one thing. He's just waiting for someone to kick him out.  
 The Senator is just two feet away, in the middle of a conversation with a fellow COMMITTEE MEMBER. Mason is listening.

SENATOR

Christ, I went on safari there.

(to Robert)

Three years ago, I met with that African. Masura, Masire -- what country was that? The diamond place.

ROBERT

I don't remember.

Suddenly...

MASON

Botswana.

SENATOR

Botswana.

(beat)

You want to know how to get re-elected -- hire smart kids.

He knocks Mason in the shoulder. Mason smiles, surprised to be noticed by the Senator.

A few GAVEL KNOCKS. Our attention goes to the front...

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

If we can get started now.

The other staffers gather near a table at the side of the room, a few REPORTERS taking seats. Mason follows Robert to the staff table. A few looks shot his way -- he's the youngest person in the room.

As the senators take their seats, Mason's pager goes off, a shrill BEEPING. He checks the number, reluctantly heads for the door.

One last look back, taking it all in.

23 EXT. STEPS OF THE CAPITOL - DAY

23

Heading back to the office, Mason revels in a tiny triumph.

24 INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

24

Mason enters to find Neil sitting on his desk, waiting for him. The Receptionist looks away, knowing something bad is about to happen, and she played some small role.

Stuttering a step, Mason comes up to Neil.

MASON  
(matter-of-fact)  
Robert called and said he needed the P-31 file.

Neil holds up a file folder.

NEIL  
This P-31 file?

A heart-stopping moment while Mason wonders if he grabbed the wrong file. He turns his head to the side, reading the label.

MASON  
No. This was before the riders were split off. I took the right file.

NEIL  
But you could have taken the wrong file. Which would have been bad for you, and a hell of a lot of worse for me.

One by one, the other STAFFERS have stopped their work to watch the slow-speed brawl at Mason's desk.

MASON  
I didn't take the wrong file. I've been paying attention.

NEIL  
No, evidently you haven't. If you had been paying attention, you would realize that you are a Legislative Correspondent. You are responsible for constituent mail. They write the letters, and you answer them. That is your job, and that is your only job. Do you understand?

MASON  
I understand.

NEIL  
Have you been paying attention?

MASON  
(you dick)  
Rapt attention.

Neil hands Mason his squirrel letter drafts, soaked through with red marks.

NEIL

I made some corrections. Type type  
type.

He moves aside, letting Mason back to his desk. He takes a seat, quite literally put in his place.



## ACT TWO

25

EXT. STEPS OF THE CAPITOL - DAY

25

A LONG-HAIRED WOMAN with a megaphone addresses about a dozen DEMONSTRATORS.

LONG-HAIRED WOMAN

The veal cow lives its life in  
Darkness, in a Box so small it can't  
turn around, never knowing the Touch  
of another creature.

Down a few steps, Pete hands out press kits. This show is mostly for the TOURISTS, some of whom stop to watch, and NEWS CREWS, of which there are only two.

From behind him...

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Pete?

He turns to see SARAH GOLDMAN (24), a junior-level field producer for CNC. She's there with a much older and more-experienced CAMERAMAN.

PETE

Hi.

We see a spark of recognition -- he's met her before, but can't remember where.

SARAH

Sarah.

(beat)

We met in high school.

(still nothing)

National debate championships. Ann Arbor?

PETE

Sarah. Wow. Exactly. "Assisted Suicide..."

SARAH

"...Or murder by another name."

PETE

Which side were you on?

SARAH  
Does it matter?

PETE  
No. Look at you.

SARAH  
Look at you.

PETE  
Look at us all grown up. You, you  
work for the network? You're a  
reporter?

SARAH  
Field producer. Junior field  
producer, I'm often reminded.

Her Cameraman gets her attention.

CAMERAMAN  
We through?

SARAH  
Rex this is Pete. Pete, Rex.

Rex doesn't give a shit. Neither does Pete. Sarah motions  
that she'll follow Rex in a sec.

PETE  
You live here now?

SARAH  
I just moved down from New York.  
Still sleeping on couches. If you  
know a place...

To the right, Pete's SUPERVISOR is throwing a glare -- get  
back to work.

PETE  
I'll keep an eye out. Listen, let me  
give you my card.

SARAH  
I can do the same.

They trade business cards.

Pete's Supervisor is about to come over. Sarah notices the  
stare.

SARAH

Get back to work. It's good to see you.

PETE

Likewise.

She follows after her cameraman. Pete looks down at the business card, then back up at her walking away.

26

INT. THE FOUR HORSEMEN - NIGHT

26

A dart hits the board. We TURN TO REVEAL the Capitol Hill bar, a classic brick-and-brass rail affair. It's happy hour, and spirits are being lifted.

Mason and Pete retrieve their darts from the board.

MASON

So, did you sleep with her?

PETE

Over lunch?

MASON

Back in high school.

PETE

I don't know.

MASON

What do you mean?

PETE

I can't remember. I mean, I have a generally positive impression of her, but c'mon. It was senior year in high school. Most of those brain cells died an herbal death.

Finley arrives with three pints. Taking his beer, Pete trades her for his darts.

PETE

I hereby deputize you to kick your brother's ass.

He heads off for the restrooms. It's just a look, but there's palpable chemistry between Pete and Finley -- they run at the same speed. Noticing her gaze...

MASON

If you do, I will kill you. I will kill him, and then I will kill myself.

FINLEY

You worry too much.

MASON

I have enough stress at work, I don't need two little pheromone factories running in my apartment.

FINLEY

Nothing's going to happen.

They each throw a few darts.

FINLEY

Question. If you hate your job so much, why don't you quit?

MASON

Quitting's your thing, remember?

(throws)

It's a crappy job, but it's a prestigious crappy job. Abbott is well-respected, and he's on three big committees. If you want to learn policy, that's where to do it.

FINLEY

You're a cog in the machine. If you want to get anywhere, you have to strike out on your own.

She throws. OFFSCREEN, we hear a guy HOLLER. It didn't hit him, but it scared the hell out of him.

FINLEY

Sorry. My bad.

27

INT. MASON AND PETE'S BATHROOM - DAY

27

Groggy and decaffeinated, Finley sorts through the towels hanging on various hooks, sniffing to find one that's acceptable. Deeming none fit, we

CUT TO:

A ROLL OF PAPER TOWELS.

Finley perches it on the back of the toilet, ready for her shower. Still in her robe, she gingerly pulls back the grimy shower curtain. Turning the knobs unleashes a horrifying SHUDDER. The pipes gear up for what can only be a geyser.

But in fact, it's just a trickle. And a rusty one at that. No matter how far she turns, that's all the water there is.

The pipes still RUMBLING, Finley cranks the knobs off.

A KNOCK at the door before it opens. It's her brother.

MASON

Shower doesn't work. That why we use the ones at the gym.

FINLEY

What am I supposed to do?

MASON

Go back to graduate school.

28

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE / DELI - DAY

28

Looking grubby, Finley gets coffee with Pete. Mason is already at the counter, paying.

FINLEY

(low, conspiratorially)  
You're aware that you're living in third world conditions.

Pete drinks half his cup before re-filling, much to the chagrin of the MANAGER who's watching.

\*

FINLEY

We should be living someplace great, like Georgetown.

\*

PETE

First, what's with "we?" Second, Georgetown is too far. It's fifteen minutes just to get to the Metro.

He finds the right-sized lid, heading for the counter. Mason is reading the headlines, still out of earshot.

The Manager gives Pete a look about drinking the coffee.

FINLEY

Where would you want to live?

PETE

Dupont Circle. Adams-Morgan. But trust me, we can't afford it.

(off reaction)

What?

FINLEY

You said "we."

PETE

You're stretching and you smell.

FINLEY

If I found a place, would you back me up?

PETE

Sure. But only because I know you can't.

He heads off with Mason, who waves goodbye to her. As she pays for her coffee, we see a look of determination.

29

EXT. DUPONT CIRCLE / MONTAGE - DAY

29

Finley emerges from the Metro station to a crowd of food carts and incense vendors.

LEAVING KRAMERBOOKS

Finley sorts through a folding map of the city, trying to orient herself.

20TH STREET

Finley makes her way down the sidewalk, tall trees and townhouses on either side. It's a beautiful part of town.

VARIOUS DOORWAYS

Finley is turned away by several prospects. She finishes talking with one LANDLADY:

FINLEY

And that's in American dollars?

30 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 30 \*

31 INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - DAY 31

Mason skims and marks red squirrel letters, coding which response goes with which. Pete sits down beside him.

PETE

Hey.

MASON

Hey. What are you doing here?

PETE

Lobbying. I'm a lobbyist. I had a meeting with Piedmont's new LA.

MASON

Kristi?

PETE

Oh yeah.

MASON

Never happen.

PETE

That's what they said about space travel, but look at us now. And I found out about your squirrel. We have a file on it.

\*

He digs it out of his bag, handing it over. Mason flips through it.

\*

\*

MASON

Did you make a copy of this, or are you just giving me the original?

\*

\*

PETE

Why are you busting me down on this?

\*

\*

MASON

I'm not, I'm just...

\*

\*

A look. A look. Whatever.

\*

PETE

Re: the squirrel. Yes it's endangered and yes it's a forest.

\*

(MORE)

PETE (cont'd)

But what no one's saying is that the squirrel in question only lives in the north-east part of it. Two-thirds of that forest it is squirrel-free.

MASON

So you could just set the one part aside.

PETE

And permit away.

MASON

The squirrels get a home, people get jobs and suddenly there is no problem.

PETE

All because of a plucky young LC who took some initiative.

Mason skims through the file. Pete checks his watch, gets up.

PETE

Gotta go. I got a WOW.

MASON

A what?

PETE

A WOW. Wealthy Old Widow. Later.

MASON

Later. Thanks.

He flips through some of the letters in his pile, finding a certain letterhead. Hitting a new line, he dials out.

While it rings, he glances over to the far side of the office, where Neil is berating Chang for some offense.

MASON

(on phone)

Yes, I'm calling from Senator Abbott's office in Washington. I wanted to confirm some information.

CROSSFADES, various shots overlapping. Mason takes notes, dials new numbers, rechecks his facts.



MASON

(on phone)

So theoretically, a set-aside would be possible. Uh-huh.

(another)

Now, I just talked with Dr. Rayborn, who led that study...He spoke well of you, also.

(another)

What you tell me goes in a memo. I'm just trying to gather the facts.

(another)

I'm glad you think it makes sense, because it makes sense to me too.

A glance, Neil looking over. What are you doing? Mason shakes his head, nothing.

32 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 32 \*

33 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 33 \*

34 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 34 \*

35 EXT. STREET IN DUPONT CIRCLE - DAY 35 \*

Finley is at a pay phone.

FINLEY

(on phone)

Amelia! It's Finley...No, don't get him...In D.C. with Mason, you can't tell him. Swear to me...Listen, my mother was saying last week about some family friends who got appointed ambassadors to something...Lithuania! That's it! Who was it?...I remember them. Vaguely. Do you have their address?

Finley smiles as she writes it down on her hand, a brilliant plan forming.

36 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 36 \*

37 EXT./INT. FRONT STEPS OF DUPONT CIRCLE TOWNHOUSE - DAY 37

A door opens to reveal Finley, dressed to dazzle. It's a simple black dress, but it's a winner. Tip to toe, she's the perfect socialite daughter.

FINLEY

Hello. My name is Finley Scott. I'm a family friend of the Sorensens. Is Mrs. Sorensen available?

\*  
\*

REVERSE to LUPE the housekeeper, who eyes her suspiciously.

38 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 38 \*

39 EXT. FRONT HALL OF APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT 39

Arriving home from work, Mason checks the mailbox, sorting through bills. He turns to see Finley and Pete hauling boxes down the stairs.

MASON

What happened?

PETE

We're moving. Finley found a place.

\*

FINLEY

We're housesitting.

\*  
\*

Mason is bewildered.

FINLEY

Before you complain, you at least have to see it.

40 EXT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT 40 \*

We TILT UP to see Mason, surveying the townhouse. If anything, it's even better by night, lamps glowing in the windows.

\*  
\*  
\*

Pete and Finley stand behind him, convinced he'll approve.

FINLEY

Admit it. I did very, very, very well.

PETE

Plus, there's a guest apartment we can rent out. \*

Mason looks over, incredulous.

PETE

Okay, you have scruples. We find that charming. But I know this great girl who's looking for a place. We'd be helping the homeless. \*

Finley dangles the key in front of Mason's face, attempting hypnosis. He smiles, shaking his head. \*

MASON

Okay.

With a small "woo-hoo," Pete kisses Finley on the forehead.

PETE

I'm calling a room.

He snatches the key, charging up the steps. Finley hugs her brother. \*

FINLEY

You're the best. \*

At the top of the stairs, Pete gets the door open. A thunderous WOOF sends him scrambling back down the steps. \*

A MASSIVE GREAT DANE

stands in the open doorway, watching them with an eerie sadness, a giant bone in its mouth. It's the Largest Dog on Television. \*

PETE

What is that?

FINLEY

That's Lucy. We just sort of have to watch her for a while. Until they can ship her over.

Lucy drops her bone with a CLATTER and THUNK. She then looks up at Pete, who backs away.

## ACT THREE

41 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 41 \*

42 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 42 \*

43 INT. CNC OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY 43

Sarah and Pete come around a corner, walking towards  
dispatch. \*

PETE

It's a guest unit with its own  
entrance. You'd have to share a  
kitchen.

SARAH

It sounds great.

PETE

It'll be four of us, but there's  
actually enough space.

A beat, something catching her strangely. \*

SARAH

Oh. Okay. Here's where it gets  
suddenly awkward. When I saw you  
yesterday, I honestly wasn't sure I'd  
ever see you again, so I didn't move  
into full disclosure mode.

PETE

You're dying.

SARAH

I have a boyfriend. Lewis. He's  
clerking for the Supreme Court.

On Pete, trying not to visibly react to her news.

SARAH

We met at Yale, but he's from here. I  
actually moved down with the intention  
of moving in with him, once we found a  
place.

PETE

This place is big enough for two.

SARAH

You're sure?

He's not, but he's gone too far to back away.

PETE

Come over tonight and check it out.  
Hey -- it's always good to have a  
lawyer in the house. We live in  
litigious times.

He hands her the slip of paper.

\*

44

INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - THE SAME DAY

44

Mason watches as Neil flips through the memo he's written.

NEIL

So you set aside a thousand acres and  
the squirrel is fine?

MASON

No one's objecting to the rest of the  
plan. It's actually fairly  
conservative.

NEIL

And everybody wins.

(beat, considering)

Listen, let me call these people and  
make sure they're game. If it checks  
out, I'll give it to the Senator.  
I'll have to put my name on it so  
he'll take it seriously...

(preempting  
objection)

...but I'll tell him you helped out.  
I'm not trying to bone you on this. I  
just want it to actually happen.

\*

We hold on Mason, not entirely convinced.

\*

45 INT. GUEST APARTMENT - DAY

45

Lucy the Dog wanders around sniffing as Sarah and her boyfriend LEWIS, mid-twenties and black, check out the much smaller apartment. It's nice for the size, and smartly furnished.

Finley and Pete watch from the doorway.

SARAH

Yes.

Lewis GRUMBLES.

SARAH

No. Sorry.

(explaining to Finley and  
Pete)

I wasn't supposed to say yes. It  
takes away our leverage.

Lewis steps into the bathroom, checking it out. While his back is turned, Sarah mouths a "yes" to Pete. Finley is a bit annoyed by Sarah.

Coming out of the bathroom, Lewis motions for a sidebar with his girlfriend.

LEWIS

Do you really like it?

SARAH

Yes. I love it. And not just because  
I've been sleeping on couches.

LEWIS

(to Finley and Pete)

There's a lease we can sign? An  
actual, physical lease?

FINLEY

(a lie)

Absolutely.

ANGLE ON Pete, reacting to her shameless lie.

A beat, Lewis weighing his decision.

LEWIS

We'll take it.

PETE

Sold.

SARAH

Don't you have one more roommate to consult?

PETE

What's he going to do, filibuster?  
You're in.

Pete and Finley head back up the stairs, leaving Sarah and Lewis alone. Around other people, they seem like just friends, but when they're alone, they're a close and affectionate couple.

SARAH

I'm going to sleep here tonight.

LEWIS

You are?

SARAH

And tomorrow night, you're going to sleep here with me. In our apartment, together.

LEWIS

That's redundant.

SARAH

I'm happy. I'm joyfully happy.

46 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 46 \*

47 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 47 \*

48 INT. MASON'S ROOM - NIGHT 48 \*

From another room, we hear BANGING. A CLATTER. Mason wakes up, groggy. He checks his clock. It's 3:08 a.m.

49 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 49

In boxers and an old Harvard t-shirt, Mason looks in to find Sarah digging through the cupboards, finally removing a pot. Seeing him...

SARAH  
You must be Mason. Sarah.

MASON  
Good to meet you.

SARAH  
Do you know how this stove works?  
It's some sort of freaky professional  
deal. I mean, I know how to use a  
normal stove.

\*  
\*

She's right. It's a very intimidating stove. She turns the  
knob for the burner, but nothing sparks.

\*

MASON  
I've seen people use one.

He's kidding, but not by much. Over her shoulder, Mason  
spots --

MASON  
Wait. Matches.

SARAH  
You have to light this?

MASON  
Maybe?

SARAH  
What is this, Russia?  
(beat)  
Here.

She takes the matches from him, turns on a burner -- we hear  
it HISSING loudly. It takes three strikes to get her match  
to flare, but when she holds it to the burner, it doesn't  
catch.

MASON  
Is that the right burner?

SARAH  
I don't know. They're not labelled.

Her fingers burning, she waves out the match. The stove  
continues to HISS. Mason reaches to shut it off, but Sarah  
stops him.

SARAH  
Move back.



MASON

What?

SARAH

Trust me.

She backs into him against the far counter. With him just wearing boxers, it's a little awkward. Not that he's complaining.

Taking out a wooden match, she strikes it, then throws it at the stove. She misses, hitting a pot. The match goes out.

SARAH

But the idea was sound.

The stove continues to HISS.

She strikes another match, then hands it to Mason. He holds it for a beat, knowing this is a bad idea. But he has to throw it or burn his fingers.

He finally tosses it. Sarah turns to face him, shielding herself.

A cloud of fire POPS over the stove.

Just as quickly, all is calm. A happy blue flame curls in the burner.

Sarah smiles, fiddling with the knob to get it to the right level. We hold for a beat on Mason, still a little unnerved by the fireball.

50

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

50

Tomato soup spills into a mug -- Mason's. Sarah puts the pot back on the stove.

SARAH

For the record, Pete and I never hooked up.

MASON

Oh.

SARAH

I don't know what he said.

MASON

He didn't say.  
 (actually...)  
 He didn't know.

SARAH

I'm going to let him wonder.

MASON

You're evil.

SARAH

Evil women do not make boys soup.

Sarah takes a seat on the counter. There's a palpable chemistry between them, but neither openly acknowledges it.

SARAH

You work for Abbott, right?

MASON

I do.

SARAH

So I'm at the Capitol today, trying to get in to talk with this representative. I'm on the phone back to the office -- you know those phones on the first floor by Vandenburg?

(he nods)

I'm there, and there's a zillion people and Congressmen and tourists and I look around suddenly it hits me. This is my life. I work here.

Mason smiles.

SARAH

It was like this sudden sugar rush, I was giddy. There was this high school field trip going through -- girls with the hair -- and I could see myself in them but I wasn't them anymore. I was the grown-up wage earner. Me. It was bizarre.

MASON

That happened to me last week. It's like this moment.

SARAH

Where were you?

MASON

It was at work. This woman called in because her husband died and then his Social Security got screwed up. The woman was kind of a nightmare, and had clearly been hung up on by everyone else who should have dealt with her. But I do it, I make the calls. I'm calling her back to let her know that it's all worked out and she breaks down sobbing. I mean like, through the phone sobbing. It's maybe \$75 a month she's going to get, but that's all the money in the world to her. I'm here in the Capital secretly annoyed to be doing this grunt work and she's in Roanoke overjoyed that she'll be able to buy food again.

SARAH

It's great that you could help her.

MASON

What freaked me out was realizing that if I didn't do it, maybe no one else would have. I mean, in college you learn to be responsible for yourself, but suddenly I was responsible for people I didn't know. If I screwed up, the consequences weren't just my own.

Mason finishes his soup. A long beat. Sarah suddenly leans forward, turning him around to look at the back of his neck. She pokes at his shoulders.

MASON

What?

SARAH

You're carrying the weight of the world's problems. Figure it ought to give you some good muscle tone.

He smiles, embarrassed. She takes his mug away.

51 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION

51 \*

52 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION

52 \*

53 INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

53 \*

The Receptionist calls over to Mason, who's still flagging letters.

RECEPTIONIST

Where's Neil?

MASON

With the Senator. Why?

RECEPTIONIST

Can you take this call? The guy has questions about some Jackson Forest compromise.

MASON

Sure.

He picks up the line.

MASON

(on phone)

Hi, can I help you? Uh-huh. Oh, okay. I'm actually not the person who speaks to the press, I can transfer you over to...

Mason stops, listening. His expression changes, dropping. It's the first early heartbeats of panic.

MASON

That's not actually the case. Again, I'm not the person you need to talk to, but I think the Senator was just interested in looking for solutions to the problem, not trying to force anything on anyone. Uh-huh. Really. Okay, that's the first I'm hearing of this.

We continue to PUSH IN on Mason, claustrophobically tight.

Looking around the office, everything else is normal and calm. Mason's desk is a small island of panic.

\*

\*

54 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION

54 \*

55 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 55

While the committee meeting continues, Mason leans down to Neil at the aides' table, whispering into his ear. This is important.

56 INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 56

Sorting through the papers, Neil follows Mason out. Neil is perplexed -- he's not clear what the problem is.

MASON

When you called these people, what did you tell them?

NEIL

I asked them if they could make this compromise.

MASON

Did you say you were calling on behalf of the Senator?

NEIL

I gave them that impression. That's how you get things done.

MASON

I just got a call from the Richmond Herald, asking about this deal the Senator was trying to make on Jackson Forest.

NEIL

What was the spin on it?

MASON

It turns out the Senator's brother owns 3,000 acres of Jackson Forest. This deal goes through and he profits personally.

The news hits Neil like a shotgun blast.

NEIL

Why didn't you check into this? Robert has a list of the Senator's investments.

MASON

It's not the Senator, it's the  
Senator's brother. I can't be  
expected to have information that I  
could not conceivably know.

(not letting him interrupt)

If you would have let this go through  
the proper channels, the Senator  
himself would have seen there was a  
conflict.

A few beats as Neil tries to think of way out of this. A  
TOURIST GROUP passes, a few people looking at them.

NEIL

You're fired.

MASON

I'm what?

NEIL

You're fired. I want you out of the  
office by the time I get back.

MASON

This is eighty percent your mistake. I  
wasn't the one speaking on the  
Senator's behalf.

NEIL

But guess what? You don't have as far  
to fall.

Neil heads back into the conference room, leaving Mason  
alone in the hallway. If he had something to throw, he'd  
throw it now.

A TOURIST WOMAN approaches with her NEEDING-TO-PEE DAUGHTER.

TOURIST WOMAN

Excuse me, do you work here?

A long beat.

\*

MASON

No. No, I don't.

Mason slowly walks away.

## ACT FOUR

57 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 57 \*

58 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 58 \*

59 OMIT FROM PRESENTATION 59 \*

60 EXT. FRONT OF TOWNHOUSE - DUSK 60

Sarah and Finley unload the Volvo, watching as Mason helps Lewis maneuver a trunk down to the guest apartment.

SARAH

We should do something for your brother. Cheer him up.

FINLEY

He got fired. He didn't get cancer.

A beat, unloading more stuff.

SARAH

(genuinely curious)  
Have you ever had a job?

FINLEY

Believe me, I've been fired many times.

SARAH

No, I believe you.

61 INT. GUEST APARTMENT - DUSK 61

Mason and Lewis slide the trunk against the far wall, taking a moment to catch their breath.

LEWIS

So what's your plan?

MASON

You mean about my job?

(a nod)

Flattered you think I have a plan.

LEWIS

Some advice? Not legal, just good advice?

MASON

Sure.

LEWIS

Don't go out like a dog.

(beat)

Easiest thing to do now is to roll over and play dead. What's done is done. The trouble is, if you don't make this right, and make it right soon, that's as good as being wrong.

MASON

I can't make it right. It's out of my power.

LEWIS

Then go talk to the Senator.

MASON

He can't give me my job back. It was partly my fault.

LEWIS

You don't want your job. You want your potential. I mean, look at your old job. You were underpaid, overworked. You didn't have any real power. The only thing you had was the potential to be getting a better job, and then a better job after that.

MASON

I was paying my dues.

LEWIS

Exactly. Take some of your dues back.

We hold on Mason for a beat, thinking it over.

62

INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

62

Opening the door, Mason finds the office nearly empty, just Chang and the Receptionist closing up shop. They handle Mason delicately, perhaps afraid he'll go postal.



MASON  
Where's the Senator?

RECEPTIONIST  
The Senator's gone. He's at that  
dinner party. \*

MASON  
How about Neil?

A look between Chang and the Staffer.

RECEPTIONIST  
Robert fired him, like an hour ago.  
The paper's going to run that story.  
(beat)  
I'm supposed to get your ID.

On Mason, disbelieving. He hands over his pass, heads for  
the door. Apprehensive, Chang calls out after him.

CHANG  
Mason...What's your password? I have  
to do all your letters.

Mason smiles, sympathetic.

MASON  
Democracy.

63	OMIT FROM PRESENTATION	63	*
64	OMIT FROM PRESENTATION	64	*
65	OMIT FROM PRESENTATION	65	*
66	OMIT FROM PRESENTATION	66	*
67	OMIT FROM PRESENTATION	67	*
68	OMIT FROM PRESENTATION	68	*

69

EXT. GEORGETOWN STREET / FRONT OF TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

69

Mason sits on the curb, watching through windows as a dinner party winds down inside. Mason stands as TWO GUESTS leave, heading down the steps. A few moments later, the Senator is at the door, shaking his goodbyes and putting on his coat.

Crossing the narrow street, Mason stops at the bottom of the steps, not wanting to startle him.

MASON

Senator?

He turns, surprised to hear someone addressing him.

MASON

I'm really sorry to be bothering you. I just wanted to apologize and explain before it became too late to do either.

(beat, gathering thoughts)  
What happened was partly my fault, but it wasn't because of misguided ambition or some sort of power trip. I genuinely believed I could fix a situation, quickly and effectively, not costing anybody anything. I mean, I came to DC because I wanted to be part of a system that could make people's lives better on a macro scale. Even if it's often confused and frustrating, that's what I think government is supposed to be -- a way to help guarantee the safety, freedom, and nobility of every person. I know, I'm rambling. To summarize, I know I screwed up, and I'm deeply sorry about that. But I don't want to be knocked out of the game just for trying too hard.

That's it. He's spoken his peace.

SENATOR

(overwhelmed)

Well. I appreciate your conviction.

MASON

Thank you.

SENATOR

(a beat, still sorting out)  
Now, you're saying you used to work  
for me?

A beat. Mason very nearly laughs.

He could explain, but really, what's the point?

MASON

Listen, I'm very sorry to bother you.  
Have a good night.

He turns and starts walking away, disbelieving.

Back on the steps, the Senator shrugs, still not clear on what just happened. From inside the townhouse, GUESTS are beckoning him to rejoin their conversation. But instead, he calls out after Mason, who is by this time halfway down the street.

SENATOR

Son! How old are you?

MASON

(stops, turning)  
Twenty-two.

A beat, nothing said. Was the Senator just curious?

SENATOR

I was your age when I came here, and  
full of the most impractical ideas. I  
truly believed I could change the  
world.

(beat)

What you see here, my career,  
everything. I'd give it all up to be  
you right now.

Mason takes that, weighs it.

With a nod, he smiles. Another look to the Senator, who then goes back to the other guests.

Mason heads back down the quiet streets of Georgetown, unemployed but never more optimistic.