

Halls of Power

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. ELEVATOR -- DAY

Four 30-somethings, all in professional attire, are stuck in a stopped elevator. CASSIE -- oozing suppressed anxiety -- mashes her hand against the call button on the elevator.

CASSIE  
Why isn't this working?  
(beat)  
Hello? Hello!

LEE -- slender, conventionally handsome -- is on his phone, pacing back and forth as casually as one can in a crammed elevator.

LEE  
(on the phone)  
I mean, no one is going into anaphylactic shock if that's what you're asking.  
(to the group)  
Are any of you claustrophobic?

CASSIE  
Will that get them here faster?

LEE  
(on the phone)  
I did skip lunch if that changes anything.  
(looking at watch)  
Yes, I realize it's only, like, 1:15.  
(beat)  
Oatmeal and a soft-boiled egg.

MISSY leans against a wall, casually glancing around the elevator to fully assess the situation.

MISSY  
Did they really just ask you what you had for breakfast?

LEE  
They hung up after "anaphylactic shock".

CASSIE  
This is it. This is how we die.

The fourth of the group, TREVOR, sits in the corner, eyes closed. He's broad-shouldered, built like a running back.

MISSY  
Trevor, are you sleeping?

No response.

LEE  
Nothing wrong with fitting in a nap  
when you can.

MISSY  
It's been 4 minutes.

TREVOR  
(singing)  
Nobody knows, the trouble I've seen

CASSIE  
Am I the only one who's worried?

TREVOR  
(singing)  
Nobody knows, but Jesus.

MISSY  
(to Cassie)  
Almost always.

TREVOR  
What should the Senator's entrance  
music be?

CASSIE  
What?

TREVOR  
Metaphorically, for the meeting  
this afternoon, what song would we  
play?

LEE  
Hail to the Chief?

TREVOR  
Very funny.

MISSY  
Easy. Run the world. Beyonce.

LEE  
A safe play from Missy.

MISSY

And what would you suggest, Lee?

LEE

Woman by Kesha.

TREVOR

A little crass, but okay. I'd have to go with a classic, Aretha Franklin, Respect.

CASSIE

Did you know Respect was originally written and released by Otis Redding? Not Aretha Franklin.

LEE

(sarcastically)

Another woman riding the coattails of a man.

MISSY

You are the worst.

TREVOR

You didn't answer the question, Cassie.

CASSIE

I'd probably go with--

The elevator doors open suddenly, with Senator ELISE HALL (42) standing in the middle of the hallway -- wearing a scarf, gloves, long overcoat, and a wry smile.

ELISE

How's the staff meeting going?

Trevor jumps to his feet.

TREVOR

Good! We were, uh, just discussing the tone we think would best suit this afternoon's meeting with the president-elect--

(looks at watch)

Or, president, I guess.

ELISE

Just a girl.

TREVOR

I'm sorry?

ELISE  
If you're looking for an anthem to  
play, No Doubt, 1995, Just a Girl.

The group looks around at each other. Clearly unfamiliar.

ELISE (CONT'D)  
Really? No one?  
(beat)  
Let's get to work.

The group exits the elevator and they follow Elise down the  
hall.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Elise takes her coat off and carries it over her arm.

ELISE  
That was the coldest one of those I  
think I've been to.

TREVOR  
The President's staff sent over a  
memo.

ELISE  
It felt longer, too. Dragged a bit  
in the middle.

Lee, walking along, takes Elise's coat and carries it for  
her.

TREVOR  
It's mostly generic mumbo jumbo.

ELISE  
My toes are already itchy -- from  
thawing out, you know? Does that  
happen to anyone else?

TREVOR  
(reading from memo)  
"The President is looking forward  
to our meeting and is excited to  
get started together on the right  
foot."

ELISE  
Tell him I got started three weeks  
ago.

TREVOR  
Yes ma'am.

ELISE  
I'm kidding Trevor. Let's not sass  
the office of the President.

TREVOR  
Yes ma'am.

They arrive at the staff bullpen door and enter.

INT. OFFICE BULLPEN -- CONTINUOUS

Elise walks toward her office, which is connected to the  
bullpen, as the rest gather to continue their ad hoc staff  
meeting.

ELISE  
And let's keep phrases like "mumbo  
jumbo" to a minimum when talking  
about the highest executive  
position in the land.

TREVOR  
Yes ma'am.

Elise leaves.

TREVOR (CONT'D)  
Cassie, we should release a  
statement about this afternoon's  
meeting.

CASSIE  
Sure. When are they meeting?

TREVOR  
We don't know yet.

CASSIE  
Will anyone else be joining them?

TREVOR  
We don't know. Maybe.

CASSIE  
What will they be talking about?

TREVOR  
We don't know.

She narrows her eyes at Trevor.

TREVOR (CONT'D)  
Just put together something  
generic. *Collaboration! Looking  
forward to it!* Blah blah blah.

CASSIE  
Was that three 'blahs' or four?

TREVOR  
Moving on. Our top three priorities  
for the week are taxes, taxes, and  
taxes. Lee, where are we on this  
week's agenda with the leadership?

LEE  
Not great.

TREVOR  
Why's that?

LEE  
Apparently there are a bunch of  
agenda loopholes, workarounds --  
agenda havens, really.

MISSY  
Like a series of shell agendas?

LEE  
Yes! Each one obfuscating the paper  
trail of the last.

CASSIE  
Those off-shore agendas are always  
the hardest to audit.

LEE  
Exactly!

TREVOR  
Adorable. All of you.

LEE  
It's a discussion point, but  
there's no consensus about  
officially and publicly stating it  
as a priority.

TREVOR  
Meet with the minority leader's  
office today and get that  
consensus. We want the public  
debate. Anything else?

Silence from the group.

TREVOR (CONT'D)  
Good, onward and upward.

INT. OUTSIDE ELISE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Elise walks toward her office. Her secretary TRICIA sits at a desk and welcomes her.

TRICIA  
Good morning, Ms. Hall.

ELISE  
Good morning, Tricia, how's my day looking?

TRICIA  
Well, you should be on your way to the luncheon right now --

ELISE  
And why am I not?

TRICIA  
I'm not sure, ma'am. After the luncheon you'll be selecting your new chief of staff. And the President called -- they need to push today's meeting a little later.

ELISE  
Shift what you need to around. We make time for the office of the President.

TRICIA  
Yes ma'am. But it looks like the only time is just before the inaugural ball.

ELISE  
That works.

TRICIA  
Really? But when are you going to--

ELISE  
If we can't find a better time, that works.

Elise reaches for a door to her office.

TRICIA  
Peter is in there.

Elise nods and enters.

INT. ELISE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

PETER (45), whose salt-and-pepper hair belies his youthful spirit, stands up.

PETER  
Hey you.

ELISE  
Hey you?

PETER  
Hey Eli.

ELISE  
Don't call me that.

PETER  
Hello, the honorable Elise Hall,  
Senate Majority Leader from the  
great state of ...

ELISE  
Senator Hall is fine.

PETER  
You free Saturday?

ELISE  
Leader Hall also works.

PETER  
I've got Caps tickets.

ELISE  
Why are you doing this?

PETER  
For the nachos, mostly.

ELISE  
Things have to be different now.

PETER  
What do you mean?

ELISE  
This -- all of this -- can't happen  
anymore.

PETER  
Can't happen right now.

ELISE  
Can't happen for the foreseeable  
future.

PETER  
But you lost.

ELISE  
Thank you for being so delicate  
about that.

PETER  
Elise from a year ago wouldn't have  
worried about being delicate.

ELISE  
A year ago I was a junior senator  
who no one saw as a legitimate  
candidate and now I'm leading the  
upper chamber of the most powerful  
legislative body in the world.  
Things are different.

PETER  
And the power has gone to your  
head?

ELISE  
Get out.

PETER  
That's how your going to win this?  
Making me leave?

ELISE  
Opportunity has gone to my head,  
Peter. If you want to call it that,  
fine. This may be the most  
important thing I'll ever do.

PETER  
It's more important than --

ELISE  
Than anything else right now, yes.

PETER

O.k.

Peter turns to leave.

ELISE

Lee might go with you. He's a hockey fan.

PETER

Does he like being the big spoon or the little spoon?

ELISE

Out.

He leaves. Elise smiles to herself.

INT. TREVOR'S OFFICE -- LATER

Trevor is at his desk, looking through various papers.

MISSY

Who's on the short list?

TREVOR

Shaw, Evans and Woodhouse.

MISSY

Shaw would be good.  
(beat)  
Is it weird?

TREVOR

Is what weird?

MISSY

Choosing your new boss? Our new boss?

TREVOR

I'm not choosing anyone. I'm making recommendations. Leader Hall chooses her own Chief of Staff.

MISSY

You going to try to sneak your own name in there?

TREVOR

Absolutely not. It's been crazy enough being the temporary Chief of Staff.

MISSY  
Acting Chief of Staff.

TREVOR  
Acting. Boy, don't I know it.

MISSY  
Anyway, I've got the position brief  
you wanted.

She hands him the pages.

TREVOR  
Excellent. Have a seat. Let's talk  
through it.

Trevor begins reading as they walk over to a small meeting  
space with a couch and chairs. She sits. He's still reading.

TREVOR (CONT'D)  
Missy ...

MISSY  
I know.

TREVOR  
Missy!

MISSY  
I know!

TREVOR  
(reading blandly)  
By increasing the current top rate  
5 percent and adding another  
bracket above 1 million at 42  
percent we can ...  
(to Missy)  
This doesn't go far enough!

He finally sits.

MISSY  
I know.

TREVOR  
We can't be using this momentum to  
say 'let's make some minor tweaks  
to what we've got'.

MISSY  
But tweaks are the only things that  
will actually work.

TREVOR  
You don't know that.

MISSY  
Yes, we all know that. We go in there with U.B.I. or Medicare for all or fight for 15 and we'll get laughed out of the room.

TREVOR  
So they laugh. That's not for you to worry about. If we wanted someone to regurgitate moderate fluff we'd call the minority leader's office.

MISSY  
(clutching her pearls)  
How dare you!

TREVOR  
Fix it.

MISSY  
It would be a lot easier to write if I thought it had any chance of happening.

TREVOR  
Well, you can either spend hours and days convincing yourself that we can make it happen, or --

MISSY  
Or what?

TREVOR  
Acting.

MISSY  
O.k.

INT. OFFICE BULLPEN -- LATER

Cassie sits at her desk, typing feverishly. TINA walks by, wearing flared slacks and a blazer.

TINA  
Hey, sorry, I'm new here, but--

CASSIE  
 (not looking up)  
 You and me both. Let's get some t-shirts made.

TINA  
 I'm looking for Missy -- do you know where she sits? I've got some research she asked me to--

Cassie looks up and meets eyes with Tina. Tina brushes her pixie-cut bangs out of her eyes and smiles.

CASSIE  
 Uh yeah, Missy, she sits over there.

TINA  
 Thanks.

Tina takes a step away from Cassie's desk. Cassie goes back to typing. Tina turns back around.

TINA (CONT'D)  
 New here or new here?

CASSIE  
 What?

TINA  
 You said you were also new. I was asking -- I meant -- are you new to this job or new to D.C.?

CASSIE  
 My first government job. But I grew up around here.

TINA  
 Neat.  
 (beat)  
 Ok.

Tina turns again to leave.

CASSIE  
 You! What about you?

Tina turns back around.

TINA  
 New here and here -- new to D.C.

CASSIE

Fun.

(beat)

Hey ... a bunch of us are going to grab drinks tonight. You can come. You should come. Not you "can" come -- you don't need my permission. I'm not the keeper of the drinking invitations. You should come.

TINA

That'd be great.

Tina points to Cassie's cell phone on her desk.

TINA (CONT'D)

Can I?

Cassie grabs her phone and hands it to Tina.

CASSIE

Yeah. Sure.

Tina types in her phone number and hands Cassie her phone back.

TINA

(pointing toward Missy's desk)

That way?

CASSIE

Yep.

Cassie looks at the contact Tina created. It says "Tina" with a heart emoji. Cassie smiles, then firmly puts the phone down and restarts her feverish typing.

INT. MEETING ROOM -- LATER

Staffers from the various congressional leadership offices -- including Lee -- sit around a large table. SARAH, a staffer for the Senate minority leader's office, leans back in her chair.

SARAH

We only need one of your guys.

LEE

Sarah--

SARAH

We only need one! The Vice President breaks any tie, so all we need is one.

LEE

Is that how it's going to be the next four years?

SARAH

Four? Try two.

LEE

Sure. Nevermind any actual legislating that needs to happen now, let's move straight to the mid-terms.

SARAH

I'm just saying you can't come in here saber rattling and expect us all to bend over.

LEE

Who's saber rattling!? I just want all of us to say that taxes are our top priority.

SARAH

Sure.

LEE

Publicly.

SARAH

No! They're not our top priority publicly.

LEE

Sarah--

SARAH

They're not! Abortion, immigration, gun rights --

LEE

I can't believe this.

SARAH

Voter fraud, trade deficits, judicial appointments --

LEE

So for the first time in, what, 50 years you guys suddenly don't want to talk about taxes?

SARAH

We have the tax laws we want. Why would we want to go through all that again?

LEE

(getting worked up)  
Are you worried it won't stand up to actual scrutiny?

SARAH

You're not giving me any incentive to let it.

LEE

Your principles aren't inherently worth defending?

SARAH

Is this you reaching across the aisle?

LEE

(emphatically)  
Listen! You're not setting the agenda anymore! We have the House. We have the Senate. Screw your aisle. We're going to undo your cockamamy billionaire-blowjob tax bill whether you like it or not!

Several in the room are a taken aback. Sarah is unfazed. TIM, a staffer for the Speaker of the House, chimes in.

TIM

Lee, why don't we --

LEE

(losing it)  
Oh, can it Tim.  
(to Sarah)  
I'm sick of this. Everyone is. Your position of "I'm against whatever the other guy says" is getting tired. And I came in here to talk, to reason, to collaborate.

(MORE)

LEE (CONT'D)

You are so insecure about your whole trickle-down bullcrap -- which you, by the way, rammed through knowing it had zero support outside of this building -- that you can't even agree to talk about it now that you're not in the majority.

SARAH

Your sabers are rattling.

Lee stands up.

LEE

I'm done.

He walks to the door and leaves.

SARAH

(hollering)

We only need one!

INT. OFFICE BULLPEN -- LATER

Trevor, papers in hand again, walks through the bullpen, stopping first at Cassie's desk.

TREVOR

Cassie.

CASSIE

Yes sir.

TREVOR

Trevor is fine. On this release about the meeting --

CASSIE

Is it awful?

TREVOR

No no no, it's fine.  
(hands her the papers,  
marked up in red)  
You just need to change everything.

CASSIE

What?!

TREVOR

I'm kidding. See? I started out saying everything needs to change, so when I tell you what actually needs to change it'll seem like no big deal.

CASSIE

(flatly)

How savvy of you.

TREVOR

Leader Hall -- and this is my fault for not telling you before -- Leader Hall never ever ever ever ever wants to see any terms like "bipartisan" or "across the aisle" or any language that overtly or subtly pits the parties against each other.

CASSIE

Are the parties not pitted against each other?

TREVOR

Only in a deep-seeded, fundamental, foundational sort of way that is tearing apart the fabric of our country. Not, you know, on the surface.

CASSIE

O.k.

TREVOR

I'll be back for it in 30 minutes.

CASSIE

O.k.

Trevor moves on toward Missy's desk, more papers in hand.

TREVOR

What the hell is this?

MISSY

The position brief.

TREVOR

This is about sex ed.

MISSY

Yes.

TREVOR  
Your tax plan position brief  
outlines a new approach to sexual  
education in public schools.

MISSY  
Yes.

Trevor flips through the pages.

TREVOR  
Do you at any point attempt to make  
a connection -- tenuous as it may  
be -- between sex ed and, I don't  
know, the top marginal tax rate?

MISSY  
Am I still not going far enough?

TREVOR  
Oh ho ho, you're going plenty far.  
(reading)  
Some may want to reverse Roe v.  
Wade. But our goal will be to make  
it irrelevant. While we  
unequivocally uphold Roe as  
established law with more than 40  
years of precedent, the best way to  
reduce abortion is to reduce  
unwanted pregnancy -- and the best  
way to reduce unwanted pregnancy is  
to stop ignoring the failures of  
public education and public health,  
and instead embrace a nationwide  
sex ed curriculum based in reality.  
(to Missy)  
Is this you acting?

MISSY  
It's good stuff.

TREVOR  
And I'm sure they'll hang this  
lovely prose right next to the  
Gettysburg address -- pinned up  
with the pitchforks they use to run  
us out of town.

MISSY  
What happened to using this  
momentum? What happened to more  
than minor tweaks?

TREVOR

On taxes! Go big on taxes. On economic reform. On corporate loopholes and offshore accounts and marginal tax rates.

MISSY

You think the people who voted for us care about offshore accounts? You think they have offshore accounts? You think they're going to call their Senator, demanding we raise the second-highest marginal tax bracket fifteen points? This is what they care about.

TREVOR

Taxes are the fight we're fighting right now.

MISSY

Trevor --

TREVOR

This is the fight we're fighting. Channel your passion. Or don't. I don't care how you do it, but get it done.

Trevor drops the pages on her desk and begins to walk away. Missy pushes them into the trash can by her desk and begins typing.

Trevor comes back over and pulls them out of the trash, placing them on the desk.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Not never. Just -- not now.

MISSY

(holding the pages)

Trevor --

TREVOR

Just not now.

MISSY

I have digital files of all this, I don't need to save every printout.

TREVOR

I was just--

(smiling)

At least recycle, okay?

She tosses them back on her desk.

MISSY

Yes sir.

INT. ELISE'S OFFICE -- LATER

Elise and Lee stand by her desk.

ELISE

Cockamamy billionaire-blowjob bill,  
did I hear that right?

LEE

Tax bill.

ELISE

I'm sorry?

LEE

I said 'Cockamamy billionare-  
blowjob tax bill'.

ELISE

Ok. I just wanted to make sure that  
when Leader Stevens called me just  
now saying I needed to get a hold  
of my loose-cannon staffer and  
cited your crass -- albeit  
alliterative -- pomp, you weren't  
being misquoted.

LEE

No ma'am.

ELISE

Is this how we're going to lead the  
legislative agenda? From the  
gutter?

LEE

No ma'am.

ELISE

My father always told me you catch  
more flies with honey than with  
vinegar. I'm not sure why anyone is  
trying to catch flies, or why honey  
and vinegar are our only two  
options -- but we don't threaten.  
We don't strong-arm. Especially  
since we have how many legislative  
wins under our belt so far?

LEE  
Exactly zero ma'am.

ELISE  
Anything else?

LEE  
No. Thank you.

Lee turns to leave.

ELISE  
Lee.

He turns back around.

ELISE (CONT'D)  
You're not wrong.

He smiles and nods. Then leaves and Trevor enters.

ELISE (CONT'D)  
Where are we at?

Trevor hands Elise some paperwork.

TREVOR  
I've got Shaw, Evans and Woodhouse.

ELISE  
Shaw would be good.

TREVOR  
Yes ma'am. That's who I would  
recommend as well.

She shuffles through the papers.

ELISE  
(jokingly?)  
I don't see your name here.

TREVOR  
No ma'am. Temporary Chief of Staff  
has lasted long enough.

ELISE  
Acting Chief of Staff.

TREVOR  
Yes ma'am.

ELISE

You know you've done a fantastic job, right? I just wanted to say that. I know it's been crazy before with the campaign and now being in session again and all that, but you've stepped up.

TREVOR

Thank you.

She shuffles through the papers.

ELISE

Do you know how much they love you?

TREVOR

I'm sorry?

ELISE

The staff, do you realize how much they trust and respect you?

TREVOR

We get along well.

ELISE

Really? That's it? 'We get along well'? You know each and every one of them would walk over hot coals for you, right?

TREVOR

Which is the last thing I would want any of them to ever do. We've shared the victories, I've owned the defeats, and we've all moved on.

ELISE

Right.

TREVOR

Right.

ELISE

So Shaw then?

TREVOR

Yes ma'am. I really do think he would be the best choice. Top to bottom, the best qualified of the bunch.

ELISE  
You think anyone would walk over  
coals for him?

TREVOR  
He'll run a tight enough ship that  
I doubt anyone would ever have to.

ELISE  
O.k. then. Shaw it is. Would you  
send Tricia in on your way out?

TREVOR  
Yes. Thank you Senator.

ELISE  
Oh, and Trevor --

TREVOR  
Yes ma'am?

ELISE  
We're making Roe v. Wade  
irrelevant?

TREVOR  
Not yet we're not.

ELISE  
Anything I need to worry about?

TREVOR  
If it comes up again, we'll leave  
it for Shaw to handle.

ELISE  
O.k.

Trevor leaves, Elise shuffles through the papers and Tricia enters.

TRICIA  
Would you like me to get Mayor Shaw  
on the phone?

ELISE  
(pausing)  
No.

She hands the papers to Tricia.

ELISE (CONT'D)  
File these away.

EXT. HOT DOG STAND -- LATER

Sarah stands by a hot dog stand, eating a soft pretzel. Lee walks up.

SARAH

This may surprise you, but I've been on less impressive first dates.

LEE

If you think this is a date, then let me be clear up front that we're going dutch.

SARAH

I'm out here freezing my ass off, what do you want?

LEE

I wanted to apologize, sincerely. I lost my cool. And I shouldn't have.

SARAH

Did Elise chew you out?

LEE

Did Leader Hall chew me out, you mean?

(beat)

Yes. Yes she chewed me out. Rightfully so. But I would have apologized regardless.

SARAH

Apology accepted. Especially because I'm sure at some point I'm going to lose my cool too.

LEE

Yeah.

SARAH

You don't have to agree with me! Geez.

Lee motions to the vendor for a hot dog and hands him a \$10.

LEE

What happened, Sarah?

SARAH

I'm sorry?

LEE

What happened? In college we were--

SARAH

Both in the CRNC?

LEE

But we were passionate about the ideas, not about the party.

SARAH

I should be asking you what happened. It's not like I'm the one who has run the full gamut from libertarian to socialist.

LEE

I was a twenty-something, white, upper-middle-class college smartass. Of course I was a libertarian.

SARAH

Is this the kind of big-tent language Leader Hall has asked you to start using?

LEE

It's just -- you and I could throw out an idea and debate it hypothetically, and then debate it again on its practical merits, on what would actually happen in the real world.

SARAH

Yeah.

LEE

But now, when I talk to, you know, you people--

Lee smirks. Sarah smirks back.

LEE (CONT'D)

Someone says: "There should be no stop signs, only yield signs. The government shouldn't be telling us what to do." And I think, "Oh, nice, what an interesting thought experiment! Let's dive in!" But -- they're serious. There are people out there who genuinely think there should be no stop signs.

SARAH

There are not.

LEE

Yes! Yes there are! And they have radio shows and websites and followings! People, voters -- your voters -- listen to people spew this anti-stop-sign agenda.

SARAH

You've been listening to right-wing radio?

LEE

I'm trying to do this the right way. I'm trying to find the nuggets of genuine truth and concern, hidden underneath the Everest of bullcrap you all pile on top. It's not easy.

SARAH

You're right.

LEE

I am?

SARAH

Yeah. You're right. And here, at the hot dog stand, we can philosophize and debate and go through the cerebral exercises, but when I'm in that building, I'm representing an elected official. It's my job to represent the interests of the state, and the interests of the people who elected Leader Stevens -- and the party. When we're meeting in there, it's business, not pleasure.

LEE

I assure you, I took no pleasure in our discussions today.

(beat)

Okay, maybe a little.

They smile. She finishes her snack.

LEE (CONT'D)

I am sorry about earlier.

SARAH

I know.

(beat)

I got to get back. Thanks for the pretzel!

LEE

I told you we were going dutch.

SARAH

(pointing to the vendor)

Yeah, but I told him to short change you.

Lee looks down at the stack of bills in his hand. The vendor smiles and shrugs.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Try to keep up.

INT. TREVOR'S OFFICE -- LATER

Missy comes in.

MISSY

Here it is.

TREVOR

How do you feel about it?

MISSY

Good. I feel good.

TREVOR

And we've omitted any and all references to sex?

MISSY

There's a juicy part in the middle where the increased tax revenue supporting the social safety net brings the whole economy to climax -- but they're doing it responsibly. Using protection.

TREVOR

Right.

MISSY

Other than that it's pretty tame.

TREVOR

Thank you. I'll read this tonight,  
I've got to --

MISSY

I know.

Trevor walks toward his door.

TREVOR

Missy, we need you to be the voice  
of reason around here. The Yin to  
Lee's Yang.

MISSY

(shaking her head)

That guy.

TREVOR

Let him push the ideological  
envelope. Let the Senator push the  
political envelope. We need you to  
bring us back, but only as much as  
you have to still get it done.

MISSY

Lee wants to make college free for  
everyone -- ignoring the fact that  
would flood the market with more  
advanced degrees than it could  
support -- and everyone sings his  
praises. I want to reduce the  
number of abortions in this country  
by educating people and I get  
scolded.

TREVOR

I know. It's not fair.

MISSY

That doesn't make me feel any  
better.

TREVOR

It wasn't supposed to.

MISSY

Push the envelope, but only as far  
as reality allows, in a way that's  
not too liberal, but also doesn't  
just maintain the status quo.

TREVOR

See? You're getting it already.

Trevor walks toward the door.

MISSY  
Thanks for giving me another shot.

TREVOR  
You'll have as many as it takes to  
get it right.

He exits his office and walk to Elise's.

INT. ELISE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Trevor enters. Elise is at her desk in a stunning, powerful  
ballgown. Trevor enters.

TREVOR  
You're meeting the President  
wearing that?

ELISE  
'You look lovely, Leader Hall.' 'I  
hope you have an enjoyable evening  
Senator'

TREVOR  
Yes, sorry.

ELISE  
I'm meeting with him right before  
the inaugural ball, and I'm booked  
solid between now and then, so here  
we are. Is everyone out there?

TREVOR  
Yes ma'am. In the bullpen waiting.

ELISE  
Excellent.

TREVOR  
Did Shaw accept?

ELISE  
No.

TREVOR  
Wait really? What did he say?

ELISE  
I didn't call him.

TREVOR

What?

ELISE

Trevor, on the other side of those doors is a group of people who have just started a new congressional session and are already exhausted. They haven't recovered from the fight we just finished, and there is a marathon of hot coals we're already asking them to walk across. So -- in about 30 seconds I'm going to walk out there, liven some spirits, rouse some pulses -- and announce you as our permanent Chief of Staff.

(beat)

Is there any reason why I shouldn't do that?

TREVOR

I make the recommendations, Senator. You choose your Chief of Staff.

(beat)

And I know whoever you choose would be honored.

ELISE

O.k.

They turn to head out the door.

TREVOR

You do look amazing.

ELISE

He won't know what hit him.

Trevor smiles.

ELISE (CONT'D)

Let's get to work.

They walk out the office doors together.

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- EVENING

PRESIDENT HART stands at the Resolute desk, white bow tie, white suspenders, tuxedo jacket folded on the desk. He is tall, with flowing hair and grand presence. His SECRETARY enters.

SECRETARY  
Leader Hall is here, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT  
Yes, send her in.

Elise enters.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)  
Senator Hall.

He walks from behind the desk and shakes her hand.

ELISE  
Mr. President.

PRESIDENT  
You look lovely.

ELISE  
You look quite dapper yourself. At ease. A far cry from your rolled-up sleeves at the Iowa state fair.

PRESIDENT  
You ran a hell of a campaign.

ELISE  
Thank you sir.

There's a pause. The President walks back and picks up his jacket. He drapes it over his arm. He sighs.

PRESIDENT  
Where do we go from here?

ELISE  
I'm sure the Secret Service has a car waiting for you.

PRESIDENT  
Elise, I love your wit.

ELISE  
Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT  
We're going to have to work together if we want to get anything done in this town.

ELISE  
No, sir. I don't see it that way.

PRESIDENT

I'm sorry?

ELISE

I don't need your help.

PRESIDENT

Last time I checked, the only way to get your bills passed is with my signature.

ELISE

Yes sir.

PRESIDENT

And it's not like you're working with veto-proof majorities.

ELISE

No sir. Not even close.

PRESIDENT

So why the theatrics?

ELISE

92 percent of Americans support universal background checks on all gun sales. Two-thirds support legalizing marijuana. 64 percent don't want Roe v. Wade overturned, and 62 percent support Planned Parenthood. Two-thirds support LGBTQ rights generally -- although that number fluctuates a bit when you get into specifics.

(beat)

I don't need you. I need your pen -  
- that's it.

PRESIDENT

You think it's that simple? The Federal government is not a democracy. You think we can build a country based on the tyranny of the majority?

ELISE

Tyranny? Is that collective noun you're choosing for millions of middle-class families? A tyranny of voters -- like a flock of geese?

(MORE)

ELISE (CONT'D)

You think there's some oppressive assembly of voters with some malicious master scheme to lord healthcare and education and infrastructure over the rest of the population?

PRESIDENT

Aviation regulations are not established by a raise of hands. We don't collectively decide where to deploy the military. And what do you think the income tax rate would be if we just left it up to a popular vote?

ELISE

Or imagine who would be president!

PRESIDENT

We're done here.

The President puts on his tuxedo jacket.

ELISE

Mr. President, your populism put you in this room -- not your policies. It was your drum-beating and fear-mongering and dog-whistling. And now all of America will want results -- not just the handful of voters in the three states that got you elected.

PRESIDENT

Excuse me, I have my inauguration ball to go to.

ELISE

You need me, Mr. President. Not the other way around.

The president exits, leaving Elise standing alone in the Oval Office. She looks around the room for a moment, getting emotional. The secretary enters the room.

SECRETARY

Leader Hall, I can escort you out.

She takes a moment to compose herself.

ELISE

Yes, of course.

INT. BAR -- LATER

Cassie and Tina sit at the bar. Trevor puts on his coat.

TREVOR  
Looks like you two are the last  
ones standing. You good? You need  
me to get you an Uber?

CASSIE  
I'm just a couple blocks away.

TINA  
I'll get an Uber.

TREVOR  
Okie dokie.

CASSIE  
(to Trevor)  
How're you holding up? You up to  
the task, Mr. Chief of Staff?

TREVOR  
Yeah I'm good. I will be good.  
(beat)  
Every job I've ever had up until  
now has been manual labor --  
construction, moving companies,  
farming, welding. And there's no  
better feeling than collapsing into  
your bed after that kind of day,  
exhausted, and just melting right  
into your pillow. I don't think  
this is going to be any different.  
We're going to do some great work.  
(beat)  
Goodnight ladies.

CASSIE  
Goodnight.

TINA  
Goodnight.

Tina sips on her bourbon.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
What a crazy day.

TINA  
Yeah?

CASSIE  
I got stuck on an elevator.

TINA  
Really?

CASSIE  
Yeah, I did not handle it well.

TINA  
Are you claustrophobic?

CASSIE  
No. I just -- don't always handle a crisis well.

TINA  
Aren't you the PR flack?

CASSIE  
Yes.

TINA  
The person the media will call if there's a crisis?

CASSIE  
Yes.

TINA  
So what're you going to do when there's an actual crisis? You know, one that's perhaps a little more serious than 5 minutes in an elevator?

CASSIE  
Oh, if it's not happening to me, I'm cool as a cucumber.

TINA  
That dispassionate separation is exactly what a good PR department needs.

CASSIE  
(laughing)  
Shut up.  
(beat)  
What would the Senator's entrance music be?

TINA  
Entrance music?

CASSIE  
Metaphorically. What song would you  
use to pump her up, to pump us all  
up?

Tina thinks for a moment.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
We were talking about it in the  
elevator, but I didn't get the  
chance to offer a suggestion.

TINA  
So what would you have picked?

CASSIE  
Defying Gravity.

TINA  
From Wicked?

Cassie puts her hand on Tina's knee.

CASSIE  
You know it?! Oh my goodness. And  
the girl they have playing Elphaba  
now, she's --

Cassie takes her hand back.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
Sorry. That's probably -- I  
probably shouldn't --

Tina puts her hand on Cassie's back.

TINA  
No, it's fine. What were you  
saying?

CASSIE  
Just that, we were talking about  
entrance music. When we were all in  
the elevator. That's the song I  
wanted to say.

TINA  
I love Wicked.

There's a lull in the conversation, then Cassie leans 90% of  
the way into a kiss. Tina doesn't reciprocate, but doesn't  
retract either. Cassie pulls back.

CASSIE

Anyway, everyone was throwing out ideas, a couple I'm not even sure I've heard before, and then --

Tina and Cassie's eyes lock. Cassie leans into a kiss again, not going quite all of the way. Tina leans in and they kiss.

They pull back from each other and both smile.

TINA

I should probably get that Uber.

CASSIE

I'm just a couple blocks away.

Tina smiles. Cassie pulls out some cash and leaves it on the bar. They put on their coats. Tina reaches out and grabs Cassie's hand as they walk out the door together.

FADE TO BLACK.