

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

by

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THIRD DRAFT REVISED
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FADE IN:

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

MAIN TITLES END ON

EXT. BEAUTIFUL ESTABLISHING SHOT OF THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

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

CUT TO:

INT. A CORRIDOR IN THE RESIDENCE - DAY

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

AGENT COOPER
Liberty's moving.

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

PRESIDENT ANDREW BENJAMIN SHEPHERD.

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

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

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

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

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

JANIE starts to make a note.

JANIE
Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD
Janie, I was kidding.

JANIE
Of course, sir.

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

AGENT COOPER
'Morning, Mr. President.

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

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

SHEPHERD
Is he upset about the speech last
night?

JANIE
He seemed concerned.

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

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

LEWIS
You skipped the whole paragraph.

SHEPHERD
(to Janie)
And Monday morning it is.

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

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

This is a time for prudence, Lewis.

LEWIS

That was the kick-ass section.

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

SHEPHERD

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

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

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

LEWIS

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

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

GROUNDKEEPER

'Morning, Mr. President.

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

JANIE

Charlie.

SHEPHERD

'Morning, Charlie.

LEWIS

Sir, the press is gonna need an explanation.

SHEPHERD

For what?

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

INT. THE WEST WING - DAY

They walk quickly down a hallway teeming with STAFFERS, AIDES AND OFFICE WORKERS.

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

There's a thing hanging out there?

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

And it's hanging out there?

LEWIS

Yes, sir.

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

SHEPHERD

Maria--

STAFFER (MARIA)

Good morning, sir.

SHEPHERD

Did they tell you I'm gonna need--

STAFFER (MARIA)

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

SHEPHERD

Thanks.

SHEPHERD moves on. LEWIS and JANIE stay with him.

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

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

LEWIS

I don't drink coffee.

SHEPHERD

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

Another STAFFER crosses their path--

JANIE

Happy birthday, Laura.

SHEPHERD

Hey, Laura, happy birthday.

STAFFER (LAURA)

Thank you, sir.

Once out of earshot--

SHEPHERD

(to JANIE)

I should send her some flowers.

JANIE

You already did, sir.

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

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

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

MRS. CHAPIL

Good morning, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD

How're you, Mrs. Chapil?

MRS. CHAPIL

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

SHEPHERD

Sixty-three percent of it, at any rate.

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

MRS. CHAPIL

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

JANIE

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

SHEPHERD

(to JANIE)

What time does she get home today?

JANIE

Three-twenty.

SHEPHERD

How's my afternoon look?

JANIE

Very crowded.

SHEPHERD

Schedule some time for me at 3:30.

WOMAN (O. S.)

Buenos dias, Senor Presidente.

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

SHEPHERD

Too-tall McCall, how was Mexico?

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

LEWIS
(to ROBIN)
He dumped a whole section.

SHEPHERD
Now there's a thing hanging out there.

ROBIN
Not a great society, sir?

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

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

LEWIS
See?

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

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

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

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

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

ROBIN
Are they blaming the President for
global warming?

A. J.
Well, they don't think he caused it,
if that's what you mean.
(to SHEPHERD)
Sir, I'm on the phone with these
people twice a week. I honestly don't
know what they want at this point.

LEWIS
What they want is a 20 percent
reduction in fossil fuel emissions.

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

LEWIS
We haven't really tried.

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

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

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

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

MRS. CHAPIL (O. S.)

Aaagh!

KODAK (O. S.)

Sorry! Sorry, my fault.

A. J.

(to the AIDE)

Never mind.

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

KODAK

Excuse me. Good morning, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD

You all right?

KODAK

They keep moving that big ficus plant.

A. J.

We're all here, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD

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

KODAK

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

Everyone LAUGHS... even SHEPHERD smiles...

SHEPHERD

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

ROBIN

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

A. J.

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

LEWIS

Hang on, are we not--

A. J.

Lewis--

LEWIS

Are we not putting back the handgun restrictions?!

A. J.

We're leaving 'em out.

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

After the elections.

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

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

A. J.

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

ROBIN

Got it.

A. J.

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

KODAK

Scare the shit out of 'em?

A. J.

Yeah.

KODAK

I can do that.

A. J.

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

LEWIS

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

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

SHEPHERD

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

LEWIS

Yes, sir.

A. J.

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

SHEPHERD

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

A. J.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

JANIE

Security briefing, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WASHINGTON BUSINESS DISTRICT - DAY - ESTABLISHING

It's around 10 o'clock the same morning as the capital district, in its own way, is showing signs of the approaching Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

EXT. A CHROME AND GLASS BUILDING - DAY

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

RECEPTIONIST (V. O.)

Global Defense Council...

SUSAN (V. O.)

You wanted to see me?

LEO (V. O.)

I just got off the phone with A. J. MacInerney.

CUT TO:

INT. LEO SOLOMON'S OFFICE - DAY

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

SUSAN

Did the President read the letter?

LEO

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

SUSAN

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

LEO

This isn't the guy who needed us four years ago, Susan. He's incredibly popular. He's gonna win re-election in a walk, and he could give a shit what we stand by! If the President passes the most important piece of environmental legislation in history, and does it despite our negative endorsement, our political weight in the future will rank somewhere below the Save the Spotted Owl Society.

(beat)

I'm bringing in some help.

SUSAN

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

LEO

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

SUSAN

Who?

LEO

Sydney Ellen Wade.

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

SHEPHERD and LEWIS -- working on a speech.

SHEPHERD
Try it like this and lose that.

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

LEWIS
What did you tell him?

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

SHEPHERD
Perfect.

JANIE steps in--

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

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

JANIE
Yes, sir.

ROBIN
You gonna go stag?

SHEPHERD
That's not a problem.

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

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

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

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

JANIE
It's 3:45, sir.

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

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

ROBIN
Mr. President--

SHEPHERD
Robin, don't worry about it.

CUT TO:

INT. THE RESIDENCE - DAY

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

He walks into--

INT. LUCY'S ROOM - DAY

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

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

LUCY
Scales.

SHEPHERD
Well... you play it with gusto!

LUCY
Are my lips swollen?

SHEPHERD
Are they supposed to be?

LUCY
Yeah.

SHEPHERD
Then you're doing fine.

LUCY
Whatcha got behind your back?

SHEPHERD
A little gift.

LUCY
Is it a dirt bike?

SHEPHERD
Nope.

He hands her an old textbook ...

LUCY

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

SHEPHERD

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

LUCY

(reading the cover)

"Understanding the Constitution."

SHEPHERD

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

LUCY

You talked to Mr. Linder?

SHEPHERD

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

LUCY

I like it fine, Dad.

SHEPHERD

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

LUCY

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

SHEPHERD

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

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

SHEPHERD
 The next page.

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

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

LUCY
 I can't wait.

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. CABINET ROOM - NIGHT

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

DEFENSE SECRETARY

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

A. J.

How soon can you deploy them?

CHAIRMAN

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

A. J.

Any security concerns?

SECURITY ADVISOR

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

SHEPHERD

Okay. Let's move on it. Thank you, gentlemen.

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

They pass MRS. CHAPIL and JANIE.

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

Have a good evening, Mrs. Chapil.

MRS. CHAPIL

You too, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD starts his walk from the West Wing back to the residence.

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

SHEPHERD

I'll see you in the morning, Janie.

JANIE

You will, Mr. President.

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT follows at a distance.

AGENT #2
(sotto)
Liberty is moving.

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

SHEPHERD
It's about time.

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
Mention it to Janie.

A. J.
Good.

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

A. J.
We will, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD
Good.

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

SHEPHERD
(continuing)

A. J. ?

A. J.
Yes?

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

A. J.
Good night, Mr. President.

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

A. J.
I beg your pardon?

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

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

They have reached the south entrance to the White House.

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

SHEPHERD
Good night, A. J.

SHEPHERD enters the White House.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

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

EXT. THE NORTHWEST EXECUTIVE ENTRANCE - DAY

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

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

SUSAN
He just needs your driver's license.

SUSAN hands the guard her license.

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

SUSAN
He doesn't care.

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

SUSAN
He doesn't need to know that.

The GUARD BUZZES her through the gate.

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

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

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

SYDNEY
Thanks.

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

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

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

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

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

HUD SECRETARY

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

SHEPHERD

How're we doing?

JANIE

You're running four minutes ahead of schedule.

SHEPHERD

Ahead?

JANIE

Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD

(exited)

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

JANIE

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

SHEPHERD

The GDC meeting. Right.

CUT TO:

INT. A. J. 'S OFFICE - DAY

A. J.

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

SYDNEY

Hardly an impressive distinction, A. J.

SUSAN is trying to avert the inevitable--

SUSAN

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

SYDNEY

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

SUSAN

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

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

SYDNEY

You're right. I haven't read it. If someone had asked me yesterday, I'd have told them the Quebec Conference was made up of six professional hockey teams. But what I do know is that it's time for the President to run for president again. Leon Kodak is as good as it gets when it comes to electoral strategy, and I'm certain he's told the President exactly what I'd tell him: Nail down Michigan and California, where they make cars and airplanes -- and burn plenty of fossil fuel. But if I had read these eight hundred pages, I would have discovered that it's the burning of fossil fuels that's been mostly responsible for global warming and that the 20 percent reduction recommended by the GDC is a necessary first step toward arresting the catastrophic greenhouse effect that has gone unchecked by this administration...

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

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

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY
 The President's expecting our full
 support?

A. J.
 Yes, he is.

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

SUSAN
 Sydney!

SYDNEY
 --the President has critically
 misjudged reality. If he honestly
 (more)

SYDNEY (cont'd)
 thinks that the environmental
 community is going to whistle a happy
 tune while rallying support around
 this pitifully lame mockery of
 environmental leadership just because
 he's a nice guy and he's done better
 than his predecessors, then your boss
 is the Chief Executive of Fantasyland.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
 All evidence to the contrary.

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

SHEPHERD
 Sydney?

SYDNEY
Yes, sir?

SHEPHERD
You got a second?

SYDNEY
(quietly)
Of course.

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

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

JANIE
Yes, sir.

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

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

JANIE
(to SYDNEY)
This way...

JANIE leads SYDNEY into...

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

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

SHEPHERD strides in--

SHEPHERD

Sorry to keep you waiting.

SYDNEY

Mr. President--

SHEPHERD

Is it okay if I call you Sydney?

SYDNEY

Of course. Mr. President--

SHEPHERD

Have you ever been in the Oval Office?

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

I hear it's pretty good.

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

(pause)

Well...

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

No, I'll give you that.

SYDNEY

Mr. President--

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

I didn't know that.

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

Learned that one the hard way.

SHEPHERD

Sydney, this bill is important to me.

SYDNEY

Yes, sir, I'll convey your message.

SHEPHERD

But you don't believe me?

SYDNEY

The GDC is asking for 20 percent, sir.

SHEPHERD

It's not gonna pass at 20 percent. It's a long shot at 10.

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

Sydney, at 20 percent, we are 34 votes shy in the House. It can't be done. But I tell you what.

(more)

SHEPHERD (cont'd)
I'll make you a deal with you. If you can get 24 votes, I'll get you the last 10.

SYDNEY
Twenty-four votes?

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

SYDNEY
Do I have your word on that, sir?

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

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

SYDNEY heads for the door--

SHEPHERD
You can't do that, Sydney.

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

SHEPHERD

Well, if you go through that door,
the United States Secret Service.
That's my private office.

(pointing)

You need to go out that way.

SYDNEY

(beat)

Ah.

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE BILLIARD ROOM - NIGHT

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

A. J.

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

SHEPHERD

Should I meet with them?

A. J.

Let Lewis take a pass at them first.

SHEPHERD

Fine. 2 in the side.

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

A. J.

Nice shot, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD

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

A. J. assesses the table.

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

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

SHEPHERD makes the shot.

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

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

SHEPHERD
I forgot to tell you.

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

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

A. J.
Also, Sydney Wade called.

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

SHEPHERD
Sydney Wade?

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

SHEPHERD
Did she say anything about me?

A. J.
(beat)
Sydney Wade?

SHEPHERD
When she called.

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

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

A. J. is staring at him in disbelief.

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

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

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

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

He misses the shot.

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

A. J.
You're not serious.

SHEPHERD
Don't I sound serious?

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

SHEPHERD
Why not? Jefferson did. Wilson did.

A. J.
You're not--

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
What are you saying?

A. J.
We'll take a hit.

SHEPHERD
How big?

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

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

A. J.
It could be more.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
 That's something.

JANIE enters--

JANIE
 Yes, sir?

SHEPHERD
 I need you to track down a phone
 number.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RESIDENTIAL STREET IN GEORGETOWN - NIGHT -
 ESTABLISHING

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

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

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

SYDNEY

(into phone)

Richard... Richard, it wasn't funny.
I acted like a college freshman at a
protest rally.

BETH

Tell him the part about walking out
the wrong door.

SYDNEY

Oh God, I forgot about that.

(back into phone)

No, Richard... Richard, I don't want
to hear your Andrew Shepherd
imitation...

BETH

I wanna hear it.

SYDNEY

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

She hangs up.

SYDNEY

(continuing)

The President must think I'm a third-
rate jerk.

BETH

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

SYDNEY

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

BETH

And then you walked out the wrong
door.

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

BETH
That's my current plan, yes.

THE TELEPHONE RINGS...

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

SYDNEY picks up the phone--

SYDNEY
(continuing; into
phone)
Hello?

PHONE VOICE
Uh, hi, is this Sydney?

SYDNEY doesn't recognize the voice--

SYDNEY
(into phone)
Leo?

PHONE VOICE
No, this is Andrew Shepherd.

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

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

And we CROSS-CUT between SYDNEY and SHEPHERD.

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

SYDNEY
 Oh, really. Well, I'm so glad you called, because I forgot to tell you today what a nice ass you have. I'm also impressed that you were able to get my phone number, considering I don't have a phone. Good night, Richard.

SYDNEY hangs up the phone.

INT. SHEPHERD'S PRIVATE OFFICE/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
 as SHEPHERD, undaunted, dials the number again.

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

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT
 as the PHONE RINGS.

SYDNEY
 I don't believe this.

BETH
 You want me to deal with him?

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

She picks up the phone.

SYDNEY
 (continuing)
 Hello?

And we begin CROSS-CUTTING again between the two.

SHEPHERD
 Sydney?

SYDNEY
 Are you learning-impaired?!

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

SYDNEY
(beat)
What?

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

SHEPHERD hangs up.

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

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

She dials.

BETH
What's going on?

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

The OPERATOR answers.

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

SYDNEY swallows.

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

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

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

CUT TO:

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

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

SHEPHERD
Hello.

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

(beat)

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

SYDNEY

(trying to pretend
it's just another
guy on the phone)

The FBI. Sure. 'Cause i-if you want to find someone and you're the president, that's who you would call.

SHEPHERD

You know who else is good at that?

SYDNEY

The C. I. A. ?

SHEPHERD

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

There's a long silence on the phone.

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

(beat)

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

SYDNEY

No. Of course. I'm a little...uh...what do I do? I, I mean, where do I go? Should I meet you? Will you...

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

Of course.

SHEPHERD

I'll see you Thursday night.

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

Me too.

They hang up.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - EST. DAY

INT. THE CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY

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

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

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

KODAK

Who's on Indiana?

(raising his voice)

Excuse me. New people, I can't remember your names. Raise your hand if you're on Indiana.

Two INTERNS raise their hands--

KODAK

(continuing)

Put your hands down -- you're on Illinois.

LEWIS comes in.

LEWIS

We've got Jarrett.

KODAK

What?

LEWIS

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

KODAK

I don't believe it.

(to an INTERN)

You. New guy. "Jarrett, Democrat, Minnesota." Slide his name on over to "for."

(more)

KODAK (cont'd)
 (to Lewis)
 We just had his name laminated under
 "Undecided." How'd you get the fence
 pole out of his butt?

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

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

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

LEWIS
 (continuing)
 We should have gone after the
 handguns.

KODAK
 We gotta do one thing at a time.

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

CUT TO:

INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY

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

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

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

SYDNEY

(into phone)

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

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

LISA

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

SYDNEY

Terri fic!

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

DAVID

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

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

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

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

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

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

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

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

REPORTER (LLOYD)

(to the camera)

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

RUMSON

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

CUT TO:

INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucy is standing behind her father, tying his bow tie.

SHEPHERD

That's a little tight, Luce.

LUCY

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

SHEPHERD

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

LUCY

All done.

He looks in the mirror.

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

LUCY
Social studies.

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

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

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

LUCY
Yeah.

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

LUCY
It's totally okay.

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

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

SHEPHERD
You know, I'm a little nervous.

LUCY
You'll be fine. Just be yourself.

SHEPHERD
Be myself.

LUCY
And compliment her shoes.

SHEPHERD
Her shoes?

LUCY
Girls like that.

CUT TO:

INT. EAST WING ENTRANCE - NIGHT

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

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT sits alone behind a small desk.

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. SITTING HALL/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD approaches SYDNEY.

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

SYDNEY
Yes, sir. I remember.

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

A. J.
You know my wife, Esther.

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

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY
Got it.

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

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

SYDNEY
An honor to meet you both.

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

SHEPHERD

Sydney, it sounds like our table's ready.

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

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

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

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

They took me through it.

After a slight pause--

SYDNEY

(continuing)
Do you do this often, sir?

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

Do I date a lot?

SYDNEY

Well, yeah.

SHEPHERD
No. How 'bout you?

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

SHEPHERD
Then you're experienced at this.

SYDNEY
Oh yeah, you can ask me anything.

SHEPHERD
How are we doing so far?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
By the way, nice shoes.

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

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

The GROUP following the President catches up to the spot
where SYDNEY has stopped walking.

They all join in the applause. We can see in SYDNEY's face that she's been quite swept up.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EAST ROOM - NIGHT

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

CUT TO:

AT SHEPHERD'S TABLE

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

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

They're hammered. Esther, do you speak French?

ESTHER

Latin.

SHEPHERD

I thought you spoke French.

ESTHER

No, Latin.

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

(taking over--to
D' Astier)

Monsieur le President, nous sommes tous habilles, nous avons ce merveilleux orchestre, une piece magnifique... comment se fait-il que les invites ne dansent pas?

SHEPHERD

(proudly to A. J. and
Esther)

That's my date.

D' ASTIER

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

SYDNEY

Really?

MADAME D' ASTIER

Absolument.

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

D' ASTIER

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

A. J.

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

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

SHEPHERD
More beheadings at the White House?

A. J.
Bob Rumson would embrace it.

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

SHEPHERD stands, holds out his hand to SYDNEY.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Would you like to dance?

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

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

The dance band begins, and SYDNEY and SHEPHERD dance...

...beautifully.

CUT TO:

THE GUESTS

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

CUT TO:

A. J. AND ESTHER MACINERNEY,

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

CUT TO:

RUMSON' S TABLE

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

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD AND SYDNEY DANCING

SYDNEY

I don't know how you do it.

SHEPHERD

Arthur Murray. Six lessons.

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

LEWIS AND ROBIN

looking on from the back of the room.

LEWIS

They make a nice couple.

ROBIN

Lovely.

LEWIS

We've got troubles.

ROBIN

Huge.

As PEOPLE start onto dance floor, we

CUT TO:

INT. A BLACK LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - MORNING

SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY IN THE LIFE

CUT TO:

INT. OUTER OFFICE OF THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

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

SHEPHERD

Good morning, Mrs. Chapil.

MRS. CHAPIL

Good morning, Mr. President. Mr. Rothschild and Miss McCall are in the office, sir. They said they needed to speak with you before scheduling.

SHEPHERD

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

JANIE

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

SHEPHERD

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

JANIE

I don't understand.

SHEPHERD

I want the phone number of a florist.

JANIE
You just want the phone number?

SHEPHERD
Yeah.

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
Thank you.

He heads into the office.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

where LEWIS and ROBIN are waiting anxiously.

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

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

JANIE enters and hands SHEPHERD a piece of paper.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Thank you, Janie.

She exits.

LEWIS
Who are we calling, sir?

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

LEWIS
Yes, sir.

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

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

SHEPHERD dials the phone number JANIE's given him.

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

CUT TO:

LEWIS and ROBIN
hovering near the outer office.

LEWIS
Janie?

JANIE
Yes?

LEWIS
What's the President doing?

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

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD ON THE PHONE

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

CUT TO:

THE OUTER OFFICE

ROBIN
Does this have something to do with
Sydney Wade?

JANIE
I'm really not at liberty to say.

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD AT HIS DESK

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

THE OUTER OFFICE

SHEPHERD'S VOICE comes through on INTERCOM.

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

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

MRS. CHAPIL
The dogwood.

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD AT HIS DESK

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

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

CUT TO:

THE OUTER OFFICE

LEON KODAK walks by.

KODAK
 It's a tree and a flower.

JANIE
 Are you sure?

KODAK
 Yes. What's going on?

CUT TO:

OVAL OFFICE

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

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

CUT TO:

THE OUTER OFFICE

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD (O. S.)

Janie! Do you have any idea where my credit cards might be?

CUT TO:

SHEPHERD AT HIS DESK

JANIE

They're in storage in Wisconsin with the rest of your personal items.

SHEPHERD

Ah.

(into phone)

Listen, what might be better is if you just bill me for the flowers. I'm sure it'll be okay with your boss. Well, I don't know if you recognize my voice, but this is the President.

(beat)

The United States.

(they've hung up)

Hello, hello...

CUT TO:

INT. LEO SOLOMON'S OFFICE - DAY

SYDNEY enters.

SYDNEY

Leo, you wanted to see me?

LEO

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

LEO produces a copy of the morning paper, which has a photo of SHEPHERD and SYDNEY dancing.

SYDNEY

Leo--

LEO

Then I picked up the Times--

SYDNEY

It was crazy. He called me at home.

LEO

What's going on?

SYDNEY

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

LEO

Did you sleep with him?

SYDNEY

What?

LEO

Did you sleep--

SYDNEY

That's none of your business, Leo.

LEO

Yeah, it is, Sydney.

SYDNEY

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

LEO

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

SYDNEY

That's unfair.

LEO

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

SYDNEY

You're making way too much of this.

LEO

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

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

SYDNEY

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

LEO'S SECRETARY

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

LEO

The White House has sent me something perishable?

LEO'S SECRETARY

It's for Ms. Wade.

LEO

Here we go...

SYDNEY begins unwrapping the package.

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

LEO'S SECRETARY
(exited)
It's from him.

LEO
Of course it's from him.

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

LEO'S SECRETARY
He wrote the note himself.

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

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

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

LEO'S SECRETARY
Apparently he went through several
drafts.

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

LEO
What is it...what is it?

SYDNEY
A ham.

LEO
(beat)
A ham?

SYDNEY
He sent me a Virginia ham.

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

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT. THE NORTHWEST EXECUTIVE ENTRANCE - DAY

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

SHEPHERD is conferring with LEWIS and ROBIN.

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
 The Sydney issue?

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

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

JANIE pokes her head in.

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

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

JANIE
Yes, sir.

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

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

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

SHEPHERD
No problem. Did you get the ham?

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

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

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

JANIE enters.

JANIE
They're 45 seconds away, sir.

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

Are you free for dinner tomorrow night?

SYDNEY

Dinner?

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

An AIDE has slipped in and hands SHEPHERD a note.

SHEPHERD

(reading to himself
as he talks SYDNEY)

She's gonna like you.

(calling to the AIDE)

Excuse me -- Jeff!

SYDNEY

Actually, I have some concerns that--

The AIDE (JEFF) steps back in--

JEFF

Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD

(reading the note)

I can't do this.

JEFF

Which? Robbins or Stackhouse?

SHEPHERD

Either one. I have to be in and out.

JEFF

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

SHEPHERD

Stackhouse wants to talk about grazing rights. Trust me.

JEFF

Got it.

And he's gone.

SHEPHERD

(to Sydney)

Sorry. You have concerns.

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

You like to make jokes about this, but--

SHEPHERD

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

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

SYDNEY

What's that?

SHEPHERD

My ride's here.

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

It's just not--

SHEPHERD

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

As SHEPHERD rushes out...

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

Seven-thirty.

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

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SOUTH LAWN - DAY

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

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

CUT TO:

INT. SITTING HALL/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

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

Lucy enters.

LUCY

Are you Ms. Wade?

SYDNEY
(standing up, smiling)
Sydney.

LUCY
Lucy Shepherd.

SYDNEY
Nice to meet you.

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

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

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

SYDNEY
Who is he on the phone with?

LUCY
The Prime Minister of Israel.

SYDNEY
They're probably not discussing his
teeth.

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

SYDNEY
C-STAD?

LUCY
Yeah.

SYDNEY
Capri corn Surface To Air Defense.

LUCY
Right.

SHEPHERD enters.

SHEPHERD
Let meat loaf night begin.

SYDNEY
Everything all right with your teeth?

SHEPHERD
My teeth?

SYDNEY
The dentist.

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

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

SHEPHERD
(to LUCY)
You turned on me.

LUCY
Can we eat?

CUT TO:

INT. A POSE HOUSE IN CHEVY CHASE - NIGHT

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE HOUSE IN CHEVY CHASE - NIGHT

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIBRARY - NIGHT

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

RUMSON

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

STAFFER #1

So it comes down to character.

STAFFER #2

The press like him, Senator. The networks, the newspapers, they're--

RUMSON

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

STAFFER #3

The press is an unwitting accomplice.

CARL

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

RUMSON

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

CARL

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

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

CARL
 What's going on?

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

RUMSON
 The President's got a girlfriend.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE OFFICE/THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

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

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

SHEPHERD
 She's not having any fun, though.

LUCY
 Dad--

SYDNEY
 You're not having fun?

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

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

LUCY gets up from the table and kisses her father.

LUCY
G' ni ght, Dad.

SHEPHERD
G' ni ght, sweetheart.

LUCY
It was nice meeting you, Mrs. --

SYDNEY
Sydney.

LUCY
It was nice meeting you, Sydney.

SYDNEY
Thank you. It was nice meeting you.

SHEPHERD
Sleep well, honey. I love you.

LUCY
I love you, too.

LUCY leaves. SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are alone now.

SYDNEY
She' s wonderful.

SHEPHERD
She' s her mother.

SYDNEY
She' s you.

After a pause...

SHEPHERD
Would you like the 25-cent tour?

CUT TO:

INT. THE EAST WING - NIGHT

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

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

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

SYDNEY
The Israelis?

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

SYDNEY and SHEPHERD enter the:

INT. THE CHINA ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

SYDNEY
It's not the dish--

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

SYDNEY
It's the China Room.

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

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

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

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

SHEPHERD

Sydney.

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

This last statement is not lost on SYDNEY.

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

SYDNEY

You think this is a good idea?

SHEPHERD

Probably not.

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

AGENT #3 (O. S.)

Mr. President...

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

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

SHEPHERD knows what that means.

SHEPHERD
Excuse me.

He moves out the door and into the corridor.

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

AGENT #3
Sorry, ma'am.

SYDNEY
(beat)
No... of course.

SHEPHERD comes back in.

SHEPHERD
Listen--

SYDNEY
Is anything wrong?

SHEPHERD
I'm sorry, we're going to have to cut
our evening short. The Libyans have
just bombed C-STAD. I'll try to call
you tomorrow.
(to the AGENT)
Can you show Ms. Wade out.

SHEPHERD exits.

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE SITUATION ROOM - NIGHT

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

CHAIRMAN

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

SHEPHERD

And we're gonna hit Libyan Intelligence Headquarters?

MAN

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

A. J.

What's the estimate?

GENERAL

We'll level the building.

SHEPHERD

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

GENERAL

Only if we miss.

SHEPHERD

Are we gonna miss?

GENERAL

No, sir.

SHEPHERD

How many people work in that building?

CHAIRMAN

We've been all through--

SHEPHERD

How many people work in the damn building?

DEPUTY

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

SHEPHERD

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

DEPUTY

By far. Mostly custodial staff and a few--

SHEPHERD

What time does the night crew go on?

DEPUTY

They're on now, sir.

SHEPHERD

A. J. ?

A. J.

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

SHEPHERD

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

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

CHAIRMAN

Mr. President?

SHEPHERD

Attack.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

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

A. J.

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

LEWIS

General Rork says around 0-Eight Hundred.

ROBIN

Sir, what do you think about a national address?

SHEPHERD

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

KODAK

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

SHEPHERD

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

KODAK

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

SHEPHERD

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

KODAK

Yes, sir.

PRESS (V. O.)

Mr. President... Mr. President!

CUT TO:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

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

SALLY

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

SHEPHERD

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

LESLIE

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

A. J.

(sotto to ROBIN)

Get him off.

SHEPHERD

Yes, we'd just finished dinner.

ROBIN

Last question.

MARK

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

SHEPHERD

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

CAROL

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

SHEPHERD

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE CORRIDOR - DAY

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

ROBIN

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

SHEPHERD

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

ROBIN

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

SHEPHERD

Nobody gets ten minutes today.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHEPHERD'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NIGHT

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

SHEPHERD

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

RUMSON

(continuing)
...Last night, the price of his liberal programs was raised to include the blood of 22 American soldiers.

He hangs up. On the TV, we see a quick sound bite from RUMSON.

RUMSON

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

SHEPHERD
I went to Stanford, you blowhole.

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

SHEPHERD clicks off the TV and then stares at
A SLIP OF PAPER THAT SAYS "SYDNEY"

CUT TO:

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

BETH
Sydney?

SYDNEY
Why did I have to kiss him?

BETH
You kissed him?

SYDNEY
Yeah.

BETH
You didn't tell me that.

SYDNEY
I kissed him.

BETH
Where?

SYDNEY
On the mouth.

BETH
(exasperated)
Where in the White House?!

SYDNEY
In the dish room.

BETH
The dish room?

SYDNEY
The Chi na Room.

BETH
Then what happened?

SYDNEY
He had to go and attack Li bya.

BETH
It's always something.

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

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

The PHONE RINGS--

SYDNEY freezes.

The PHONE RINGS again.

BETH
(continuing)
Answer the phone.

SYDNEY
It's hi m.

BETH
Answer the phone.

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

BETH
Answer the phone.

SYDNEY
I don't want to go over there.

BETH
Answer the phone.

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

CUT TO:

INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

SHEPHERD
(to COOPER)
Thanks, Coop.

SHEPHERD closes the door.

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

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

But SYDNEY doesn't take her coat off.

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

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

SYDNEY

That's not what I...

SHEPHERD

I didn't think so. Listen...

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

Why is that, by the way?

SYDNEY

Why's that?

SHEPHERD

Why aren't you on my staff?

SYDNEY

You can't afford me.

SHEPHERD

How much do you make?

SYDNEY

More than you do, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

What the hell does it matter how much money I--

SHEPHERD

You would raise your voice to the President?

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

Are you attracted to me?

SYDNEY

I beg your pardon?

SHEPHERD

I asked if--

SYDNEY

(of course she is)

That's not the issue--

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

You're not most people.

SHEPHERD

You know what your problem is?

SYDNEY

What's my problem?

SHEPHERD

Sex and nervousness.

SYDNEY

Sex and nervousness is my problem.

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

Ahhhhh.

SHEPHERD

You see what I'm getting at?

SYDNEY

Yes. May I use your bathroom for a moment?

SHEPHERD

Sure. It's right through there.

SYDNEY

I want to freshen up.

SHEPHERD

As you pass through, you'll see a large closet on your left.

(more)

SHEPHERD (cont' d)

If you feel comfortable, hang up your coat, and when you come back I'll have fixed up a drink, we'll sit on the couch, and I will explain to you my plan.

SYDNEY

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

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

SHEPHERD

(speaking up)

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

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

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

Perhaps I didn't properly explain the fundamentals of the "Slow Down" plan.

SYDNEY

You explained it great.

She moves closer to him.

SHEPHERD

(pause)

Are you nervous?

SYDNEY

No.

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

The most powerful man in the world?

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

(gently)

Andy...

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

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

RUMSON (V. O.)

Does New Hampshire want traditional American values back in the White House?

CROWD (V. O.)

Yes!!

CUT TO:

INT. AN ELKS LODGE - NIGHT

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

RUMSON

Does New Hampshire want the pride back?

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

CROWD
Yeah!!!!!!!

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

And as the CROWD loses its mind, we

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAWN

CUT TO:

INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - MORNING

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

SHEPHERD picks it up--

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

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

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Sydney?

SYDNEY turns around.

SYDNEY
Hi.

SHEPHERD
What are you doing?

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

There's a KNOCK on the door.

SHEPHERD

...on his way up.

SYDNEY

What?

SHEPHERD

Come on in, Lewis.

LEWIS comes in--

LEWIS

'Morning, Mr. President. Hi, Sydney.

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD laughs at Sydney's purposely lame try--

SHEPHERD

(to LEWIS)

What's the situation?

LEWIS

They're camped out at every exit.

SYDNEY

Who? Who's camped out?

LEWIS

The press.

SYDNEY
The press is camped out?

LEWIS
You shoulda taken a cab, Sydney.

SYDNEY
They know my car?!

ROBIN enters.

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

SHEPHERD
Thank God.

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

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

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

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

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

ROBIN
We need a diversion.

SYDNEY
A diversion.

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

SHEPHERD

No, please, let's do.

LEWIS

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

A. J.

Good for you, Lewis.

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

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

ROBIN

No diversion.

SHEPHERD

(to SYDNEY)

We'll have somebody take you home.

A. J.

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

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

LEWIS

Okay. Good. Now, the press statement.

SHEPHERD

(to SYDNEY)

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

ROBIN

No comment?

SHEPHERD

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

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

I tell you what, Lewis, we just did.

LEWIS

But, sir...

A. J.

(the meeting's over)

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

A. J.

(continuing)

Sydney. Esther'll be in my office.
You take your time.

SYDNEY

Thanks, A. J.

A. J. leaves...

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

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

SHEPHERD

No, I mean...

SYDNEY

I know. I had a good time.

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY

I'd like that.

SYDNEY gives him a good-bye kiss. . .

SYDNEY
(continuing)

Bye.

She exits the bedroom.

SHEPHERD
Al right...okay...this is good.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY/NIGHT

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

INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY

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

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY

The tote board reads "8 Votes in 45 Days." KODAK is pointing to a spot on an electoral map to emphasize a point to a young INTERN.

REPORTER #2 (V. O.)
The President returned from Panama this evening after a three-day tour through Central America.
(more)

REPORTER #2 (cont'd; V. O.)
 His first order of business: An
 intimate supper with Sydney Wade at
 a romantic Georgetown bistro.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BISTRO - NIGHT

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

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT. NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, CITY HALL - DAY

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

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

EXT. GDC BUILDING - NIGHT

SYDNEY exits the building and is mobbed by the press.

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

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

INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

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

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

EXT. MANCHESTER RAMADA - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the Ramada.

EXT. A SUITE AT THE MANCHESTER RAMADA - NIGHT

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

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

Rumson is signaling for an AIDE to take over his phone call.

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

He hands off the phone--

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

STU
Call me Santa Claus, Senator.

Several TOP AIDES join this slightly confidential conversation.

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

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

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

STU
I've got art.

RUMSON comes back. STU hands him the photo.

STU

(continuing)

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

RUMSON

(staring at the photo)

Oh man...tell me the smoke is coming from what it looks like it's coming from.

STU

Yes, sir -- it's burning flag.

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

RUMSON

(singing softly)

"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas..."

CUT TO:

INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY

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

The tote board now reads "11 Votes in 42 Days." DAVID is supervising things while SYDNEY is trying to lose her patience on the phone.

SYDNEY

(into phone)

I understand, Congressman...Of course you need to deliberate. I know the fact that there isn't any heavy industry in your district doesn't make this decision any easier. But we met three weeks ago, and at the end of that meeting you said that you were leaning our way but that you wanted to sleep on it.

(more)

SYDNEY (cont'd)
 Since I haven't heard from you since then, the only conclusion I can reach is that you haven't slept in 21 days.

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

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

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

She hangs up.

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

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

DAVID
 How's this?

SYDNEY
 That's better!

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY
Yeah.

DAVID
Cars, you understand, run on gasoline.

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY
(exciting)
Good night, David.

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

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WEST WING - DUSK

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

CUT TO:

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DUSK

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

SHEPHERD

(into phone)

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

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

SHEPHERD

(continuing; into phone)

--Yeah, look, we're gonna continue this tomorrow. I'm late for the party fund-raiser. I'll be sure and put in a good word for you, by the way.

(listens)

Okay.

He hangs up.

JANIE

You're incredibly late.

SHEPHERD

Let's go.

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

A. J.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WEST WING - NIGHT

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

ROBIN
(calling)
Sir...

JANIE
He's incredibly late.

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. SHEPHERD'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

LEWIS
We've got a small problem.

ROBIN

(meant for LEWIS)

It could've been a small problem.
It's now at the very least a medium-sized--

LEWIS

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

ROBIN

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

LEWIS

We caught it.

ROBIN

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

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

Guys, do I have to be here for this meeting?

LEWIS

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

ROBIN

--it's got a bullet.

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

(pause)

Today?

LEWIS

About 13 years ago.

ROBIN

Outside the Department of Commerce.
Anti-apartheid.

SHEPHERD

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

(beat)

Just out of curiosity, what was the fourth story?

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

Don't deal with it.

LEWIS

Excuse me?

SHEPHERD

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

LEWIS

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

SHEPHERD

Aw... hell!

ROBIN

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

SHEPHERD

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

CUT TO:

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

SYDNEY

It's terrific, Beth. I love it.

BETH

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

SYDNEY

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

BETH

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

The PHONE RINGS. SYDNEY answers it--

SYDNEY

(into phone)

Hello...

(listens)

I'm just trying on dresses. How do you feel about leather?

CUT TO:

INT. SHEPHERD'S CAR - NIGHT

SHEPHERD's on the phone to SYDNEY.

SHEPHERD

(into phone)

I feel terrible, but I have to cancel our date tonight.

SYDNEY

Another woman?

SHEPHERD

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

SYDNEY
Boys, if I had a nickel for every
time I heard that one.

SHEPHERD
Thanks for understanding. I'll call
you tonight

SHEPHERD hangs up the phone.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Boy, I hate doing that. She was
trying on dresses.

LEWIS
I tell any girl I'm going out with to
assume that all plans are soft until
she receives confirmation 30 minutes
beforehand.

ROBIN
And they find this romantic?

LEWIS
Well, I say it with a great deal of
charm.

SHEPHERD sees something out the window and gets excited.

SHEPHERD
Look! Look! There it is! Carmen's
House of Flowers! We gotta stop.

LEWIS
What?

SHEPHERD
I gotta get her flowers.

LEWIS
Here?!

ROBIN
Now?!

SHEPHERD
I broke our date. This is what men do.

ROBIN

It's not what men do. I know no men who do that.

SHEPHERD

(to the DRIVER)

Coop, I'm gonna hop out at that flower shop.

AGENT COOPER

You're gonna hop out, sir?

LEWIS

No, he's not hopping. Sir, no hopping. Stay in the car. I'll get the flowers.

SHEPHERD

Then it's not personal.

LEWIS

Let the agents do a security sweep. We don't know who's in there.

SHEPHERD

You think there's a florist who's planning an assassination on the off-chance that I'd be stopping by?

LEWIS

It's possible.

SHEPHERD hops out of the car. AGENT COOPER trails after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF FLOWER SHOP - NIGHT

SHEPHERD's sudden decision sets off a chain reaction of Secret Service activity to accommodate the change of plans.

INT. CARMEN'S HOUSE OF FLOWERS - NIGHT

A high school GIRL is behind the counter, talking to a friend on the phone. Her back is to the door when SHEPHERD walks in with a couple of SECRET SERVICE AGENTS scrambling to keep up. SHEPHERD begins surveying the various flowers that are behind the glass.

GIRL
(into phone)
At the basketball game...

SHEPHERD
Excuse me--

GIRL
No, at the game. I'm telling you,
Kiki wasn't even there.

SHEPHERD
Excuse me--

GIRL
(to Shepherd)
I will be right with you.

The GIRL notices, and the receiver falls from her hand as she stares in disbelief.

SHEPHERD
(to the GIRL)
Hey, I don't know if you're the one
I talked to on the phone... Virginia,
dogwood, the President ...any of this
ring a--

And apparently it does, because the GIRL faints and falls to the floor. AGENT COOPER goes to help her.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Same girl. She remembers me.

AGENT COOPER
She'll be fine.

RUMSON (V. O.)
Yes, and I'm glad to see ol' Andy's
got himself a girl.

APPLAUSE and appreciative LAUGHTER from a CROWD as we

CUT TO:

INT. MEMPHIS GRAND HYATT - NIGHT

RUMSON is speaking to a black-tie fund-raiser for the
REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE.

RUMSON

(continuing)

Never mind she's the hired gun of an ultra-liberal political action committee.

The crowd's getting into it--

RUMSON

(continuing)

Never mind that the President takes the Fifth anytime a reporter has the temerity to ask a question about a woman in a position to exert enormous influence over a huge range of issues.

A wave building--

RUMSON

(continuing)

Never mind that this woman's idea of how to unwind at the end of a tough day is by getting together with her ACLU pals and setting American flags on fire...

CUT TO:

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE/ST. LOUISE HILTON - NIGHT

The RUMSON FAMILY glows from a TELEVISION in the corner. LEWIS and ROBIN react to the news highlight reel of that day's screw-up.

ROBIN

(to herself)

No reaction from the White House.

SHEPHERD's off in a corner, talking on the phone. The Presidential Suite has been turned into the St. Louis Oval Office for the night as STAFFERS zigzag around room service tables during the late-night preparations.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

SYDNEY

(into phone)

What do Lewis and Robin think?

SHEPHERD
 (into phone)
 Brutus and Cassius? They want me to
 get into the character debate and mix
 it up.

SYDNEY
 (into phone)
 Lewis and Robin are very smart.

SHEPHERD
 (to LEWIS and ROBIN)
 Sydney says you guys are really
 stupid.

SYDNEY
 (shouting through the
 phone)
 I didn't say that!

SHEPHERD
 (to LEWIS and ROBIN)
 She's questioning your loyalty.

LEWIS
 Hell, I question it all the time.

SHEPHERD
 (into phone)
 Wait a second, here comes my favorite
 part.

He's referring to RUMSON on the TV.

RUMSON (V. O.)
 My name is Bob Rumson, and I'm
 running for President.

SHEPHERD
 (into phone)
 It's a good thing he cleared that up,
 'cause the crowd was gettin' ready to
 buy some AMWAY products.

SYDNEY
 (into phone)
 His number are climbing.

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
Sydney, his number have nowhere to go
but up.

SYDNEY
(into phone)
What about yours?

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
We're fine. We'll be back up in the
60's once I get the votes for the
crime bill.
(beat; into phone)
Say, what're you doing this weekend?

SYDNEY
(into phone)
I've got some work I was gonna bring
home. Why?

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
The negotiations are going pretty
well here. It looks like the nation's
going to keep on flying. Lucy's
sleeping over at a friend's house
Saturday night.

SYDNEY
(into phone)
What'd you have in mind?

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
Have you ever been to Camp David?

SYDNEY
(into phone)
Camp David? Sure. I used to go there
all the time, but then they changed
chefs and...

SHEPHERD
(into phone)
It's sass, right? You're sassing me.

SYDNEY
(into phone)
Yes.

SHEPHERD
 (into phone)
 I'll have a car pick you up Saturday
 morning.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP DAVID - DAY

Scattered STAFF and MARINE PERSONNEL hold their hats to their heads against the wind that MARINE-1 kicks up as it touches down on the helicopter pad.

CUT TO:

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

SYDNEY, nose pressed against the window, is drinking it in. SHEPHERD is finishing up a crossword puzzle.

SYDNEY
 Do you ever get used to helicopters
 dropping you off at your front door?

SHEPHERD
 How many "e"'s in "kaleidoscope"?

SYDNEY
 I guess you do.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are lounging in front of a fireplace, having hot cups of something alcoholic. SYDNEY is reading a book. SHEPHERD is running through satellite TV channels, searching for something.

SYDNEY
 Oh good God.

SHEPHERD
 What?

SYDNEY

I'm looking at your college transcripts. This isn't human. Nobody gets this many "A's." You were like a Stepford student.

SHEPHERD

Are you still reading that ridiculous biography?

SYDNEY

Actually I finished Andrew Shepherd: Road to the White House. Now I'm onto Shepherd: The Early Years.

SHEPHERD

Seven-trillion-dollar communications system at my disposal, you'd think I'd be able to find out if the Packers won.

SYDNEY

(re the book)

Oh, Andy... C-minus in Women's Studies?

SHEPHERD

Yeah... that course wasn't about what I thought it was gonna be about.

SHEPHERD has landed on a news station.

NEWS ANCHOR #1

(on T. V.)

...for his routine physical exam. Doctors at Bethesda Naval Hospital pronounced President Shepherd in excellent health.

SHEPHERD

Who cares? Let's see some scores.

NEWS ANCHOR #2

(on T. V.)

While the President spent the day at Camp David, G. O. P. presidential hopeful Robert Rumson continued his attacks on President Shepherd's character.

(more)

NEWS ANCHOR #2 (cont'd)

During the Saturday morning news program Capitol Review with Kenneth Michaels, Senator Rumson suggested that GDC political director Sydney Ellen Wade, whose personal relationship with the President has been causing the White House headaches over the past two months, may have traded sexual favors for key votes in the Virginia State Legislature while lobbying for the Virginia Teachers Association.

The NEWS PROGRAM goes to the segment showing RUMSON and MICHAELS on that morning's show. SHEPHERD and SYDNEY sit and watch...knowing they're about to take a punch...powerless to stop it...

MICHAELS

(on T. V.)

Wait a minute, Senator--

RUMSON

(on T. V.)

I'm not saying--

MICHAELS

(on T. V.)

--'cause that's a heck of an accusation to make, and--

RUMSON

(on T. V.)

I'm not making an acc-- let me be very clear. I'm not making an accusation. I am saying when we hear one thing, we dismiss it. We hear two, we dismiss it. But when several, several well-respected members and former members of the Virginia State House--

MICHAELS

(on T. V.)

Can you give us names?

RUMSON

(on T. V.)
 --each of their own accord,
 comes to me and expresses
 concern over the woman
 standing next to -- I don't
 even know, do we call her
 the First Mistress? When
several--

SYDNEY

My God. He's making this up
 as he goes along.

SHEPHERD

I'm so sorry about this,
 Sydney.

SYDNEY

Oh, man. My father heard
 that.

SHEPHERD clicks off the T. V.

SHEPHERD

You gotta tell him to turn a deaf ear.

SYDNEY

My father doesn't have a deaf ear. He
 hears fine out of both. So do I. So
 does my sister, so do my friends.
 You're the only one who seems to--

SHEPHERD

Sydney, I can't challenge the school
 bully to a fight just because he
 picked on my girlfriend.

SYDNEY

I'm not asking you to. I can take
 care of myself. This isn't about me.
 How can you keep quiet? How do you
 have patience for people who claim
 they love America but clearly can't
 stand Americans?

SHEPHERD

I have one more election left,
 Sydney. I don't have the luxury of
 losing my patience.

SYDNEY prepares to say something important.

SYDNEY

I want to say something, but I'm
 gonna fumble it a little bit, so I'd
 just like you to wait till I'm done
 before you respond. I'm in love with
 you. I'm certain of it. And I want to
 be with you more than anything.

(more)

SYDNEY (cont'd)
But maybe things would be better for
you if I disappeared for a while.

SHEPHERD
Things will be better when I pass a
crime bill. And Sydney, if you
disappeared, I'd find you.

He goes to kiss her, she responds.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SOUTH LAWN - NIGHT

The official White House Christmas Tree is glimmering for the
TOURISTS.

CUT TO:

INT. RESIDENCE - NIGHT

An informal Christmas party is underway with maybe 20 GUESTS,
some of them familiar faces.

SHEPHERD and a GREEN-BLAZERED MAN

GREEN BLAZERED MAN (GILL)
Mr. President, militant women are out
to destroy college football in this
country.

SHEPHERD
Is that a fact?

GREEN BLAZERED MAN (GILL)
Have you been following this
situation down in Atlanta? These
women want parity for girls'
softball, field hockey, volleyball...

SHEPHERD
If I'm not mistaken, Gill, I think
the courts ruled on Title 9 about 20
years ago.

GREEN BLAZERED MAN (GILL)
Yes sir, but now I'm saying these
women want that law enforced.

SHEPHERD

Well, it's a world gone mad, Gill.

LEWIS, KODAK and ROBIN stand huddled with cups of eggnog...

KODAK

The country has mood swings.

LEWIS

Mood swings? Nineteen post-graduate degrees in mathematics and you explain going from a 63 to a 46 percent approval rating in 5 weeks on mood swings?

KODAK

Well, I could explain it better, but I'd need charts and graphs and an easel.

ROBIN

Fellas, we haven't slept in three years. Can't we forget work for one night and take this moment to enjoy each other as friends? It's Christmas.

LEWIS

(pause)

It's Christmas?

KODAK

Yeah, you didn't get the memo?

AT THE BUFFET TABLE

KID #1

'Cause your father's President, does he automatically get to be on money?

LUCY

I honestly don't know.

KID #2

I think only if he's a really good President.

A. J. AND SYDNEY

A. J. spots SYDNEY as she walks through the doorway and comes over to her. She seems a bit agitated.

A. J.
Hey, Sydney, Merry Christmas.

SYDNEY
Merry Christmas, A. J.

A. J.
Where you been?

SYDNEY
I got stuck on DePont Circle. I can never remember which lane I'm supposed to take. Then I got cut off by this idiot cab driver who starts screaming at me like it's my fault.

A. J.
Syd, relax. It's Christmas.

SHEPHERD joins them.

SHEPHERD
Hi, Syd. Get stuck on DuPont Circle again?

SYDNEY
It's not funny. I hate that place. Can't you declare it a Federal Disaster Area or something?

SHEPHERD
I'll look into it.

A. J.
What were you doing up on the Hill, anyway?

SYDNEY
Ahhh...I had a terrible meeting today. Totally lost my cool with McSorley, McCluskey and Shane.

SHEPHERD
You went to see the Motown Three?

SYDNEY
I pitched 'em the hill.

A. J.
(beat)
On its merits?

SHEPHERD

The woman knows no fear. She'd lobby the Carolinas to the American Lung Association.

SYDNEY

It was a disaster.

A. J.

You're in good company. I sat with 'em a week ago. They told me there was nothing on the President's domestic agenda they were more committed to defeating than the crime bill.

SYDNEY

Well, congratulations, fellas, you're outta the cellar. McSorley told me the only thing on the President's domestic agenda they were more committed to defeating than the crime bill was the fossil fuel package.

This catches SHEPHERD and A. J. by surprise--like accidentally drawing to an inside straight.

A. J.

You're kidding, right?

SYDNEY isn't aware she's said anything of particular consequence.

SYDNEY

No, I'm not kidding. It's funny that he used the same words.

A. J. and SHEPHERD are trying to study the situation without giving anything away.

A. J.

Yeah. . .

SHEPHERD

I don't think the Pep Boys know too many words.

SYDNEY

I'm gonna get a drink and shake this off. When I come back, I'll have Christmas spirit.

SHEPHERD

(beat)

Okay.

SYDNEY

Is something wrong?

SHEPHERD

No, I was...I was thinking about--
nothing.

SYDNEY

I'll be back in a minute.

She goes off.

A. J.

Did what I think just happened, just happen? Did the GDC's political director just tell the President and the White House Chief of Staff that there are three votes on the crime bill that can be bought by stickin' the fossil fuel package in a drawer.

SHEPHERD

No, the GDC's political director didn't tell us anything. Sydney Wade told her boyfriend and her boyfriend's best friend that she had a lousy day.

A. J.

It doesn't change the facts, Mr. President. If Sydney gets her 24 votes and we're three short, there's some maneuvering to be done.

SHEPHERD

I made a promise, A. J.

A. J.

You made a deal, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD

I made it with Sydney.

A. J.

You made it with the GDC.

SHEPHERD

Yeah, well, this is all academic anyway. We're not going to need those votes.

A. J.

If your approval rating drops any more, things are gonna get tight.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A WASHINGTON WATERING HOLE - NIGHT

LEWIS sits with a Congressman's aide.

LEWIS

I'm hearing rumors that your boss is wavering on the crime bill.

AIDE

You can't believe rumors, Lewis, you know this town.

LEWIS

That's what I wanted to hear.

AIDE

I'll tell you, though. My boss is starting to waver on the crime bill.

INT. A POSE WASHINGTON RESTAURANT - DAY

A lunchtime crowd is doing business over white wine, oysters and cobb salads. SYDNEY, a CONGRESSMAN, and his LEGISLATIVE AIDE are going at it.

CONGRESSMAN (PENNYBAKER)

Sydney, everybody cares about the environment during a phone survey. On election day, nobody gives a damn. That's, that's why you have a job.

SYDNEY

Congressman Pennybaker, on election day, people give a damn about what I tell them to give a damn about. And that's why I have a job.

(more)

SYDNEY (cont'd)
 (offering the bread
 basket)
 Did you want another roll?

CUT TO:

INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY

DAVID is on the phone--

DAVID
 (to the INTERNS)
 She got Pennybaker.

DAVID rips off the top sheet of the tote board, which now reads "5 Votes in 14 Days."

DISSOLVE TO:

CONGRESSMAN MILLMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

MILLMAN is walking on a treadmill while LEWIS stands by.

LEWIS
 Congressman, it was our understanding
 that we had your support.

MILLMAN
 Hey, look, I like your boy. Always
 have. But for God's sake, kid, does
 the woman have to spend the night?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY

INTERNS photocopying, clipping, stamping, crunching numbers, drinking coffee... DAVID is on an extension, listening to SYDNEY's final pitch over the phone.

The tote board reads: "3 Votes in 5 Days."

SYDNEY
 (into phone)
 We've got the full backing of the
 White House, Catherine.
 (more)

SYDNEY (cont' d)

(listens)

Yes, at 20 percent. Three more votes and the President sends it to the Hill.

(listens)

Katie, 10 years from now any cars with an internal combustion engine is gonna be considered a collector's item. Come on board, we'll make your Volvo a classic.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOSEVELT ROOM - DAY

LEWIS and KODAK, each with an AIDE, have been meeting with two CONGRESSMEN and their AIDES.

LEWIS

Congressman, the assault weapons are gone.

KODAK

The bill is priced to move.

CONGRESSMAN

The bill isn't the issue, fellas. I'm facing a serious challenge in November, and the President's coattails aren't what they used to be.

KODAK

The President's coattail's are gonna have room for you, Congressman, you leave that to us.

AIDE

We left that to you people, Leon, and the President's in a free-fall.

KODAK

I wouldn't say he's in a free--

CONGRESSMAN

I just can't give you my vote.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A. J. ' S OFFICE - DAY

LEWIS and KODAK stand in front of A. J. ' s desk.

LEWIS
The well is drying up. The
President's gotta make a move or
we're gonna die fast and quiet.

KODAK
What if I do a new poll? We give him
detailed public opinion.

LEWIS
And we put Sydney in the new model?

A. J. hesitates.

LEWIS
(continuing)
A. J., it's meaningless unless we ask
him about Sydney.

A. J.
Fine. Do it.

CUT TO:

EXT. SYDNEY' S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The street's been temporarily closed to traffic, and SECRET
SERVICE AGENTS man the sidewalk. The PRESS and ONLOOKERS form
a small crowd, kept well at bay by police barricades.

CUT TO:

INT. SYDNEY' S APARTMENT - NIGHT

SHEPHERD and SYDNEY are finishing up dinner.

SHEPHERD
This was delicious. Thank you. Is
there any left?

SYDNEY
(taking his bowl)
Tons. I didn't think you liked it.

SHEPHERD

Are you kidding me, of course I did. But actually it's not for me. The agent who checked the food thought it was delicious, and I sort of told him I'd bring him some if there was any left.

SYDNEY

So you didn't like it.

SHEPHERD

No, I loved it.

SYDNEY

You're lying.

SHEPHERD

No, I'm not.

SYDNEY

You are. I can tell when you're holding something back. You do a thing with your face.

SYDNEY pops a bottle of port and pours two glasses.

SHEPHERD

When have you seen me do a thing with my face?

SYDNEY

Two days before I met you. You gave a speech for the Daughters of the American Revolution. I was there.

SHEPHERD

You were?

SYDNEY

You remember the speech?

SHEPHERD

Vaguely.

SYDNEY

"American can no longer afford to pretend that they live in a great society."

SHEPHERD

Ah.

SYDNEY

There was supposed to be something else after that, wasn't there?

SHEPHERD

How did you know?

SYDNEY

I told you. The face.

SYDNEY hands him a glass. They clink glasses and sip.

SHEPHERD

Wow... what's the occasion?

SYDNEY

You're looking at a lady who's two votes shy of the promised land.

SHEPHERD

Two votes?

SYDNEY

I got Pennybaker. That got me Cass and Zimmer.

SHEPHERD

(beat)

That's great, Sydney. I mean it.
That's great work.

SYDNEY

Well, I'm not there yet.

SHEPHERD

Look, no matter what happens, you have every right to be proud of yourself.

SYDNEY

I'll be proud when I see you sign the bill.

SHEPHERD

Yeah, well...

SYDNEY

Andy?

SHEPHERD

Yeah?

SYDNEY

You're doing that thing with your face.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - DAY - EST.

A light rain is falling.

CUT TO:

INT. CRIME BILL WAR ROOM - DAY

KODAK sits at his desk staring at a computer printout. LEWIS is nearing the end of a phone conversation that isn't going well. He's pacing around with the phone...desperate and intense.

The tote board reads: "1 Vote in 2 Days." ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

(to KODAK)

How're the numbers?

KODAK

Bad.

ROBIN

How bad?

KODAK

Forty-one. Character across the board.

ROBIN

Who is Lewis on with?

KODAK

Jarrett. He's trying to keep his finger in the dam.

LEWIS

(into phone)

You're supposed to be a United States Congressman, for the love of Christ.

ROBIN and KODAK appear in the doorway, sensing a surprise development. LEWIS is losing it on the phone.

LEWIS
 (continuing; listens)
 But you're not gonna stay at 41. The numbers are gonna be go back up.
 (listens)
 But they're gonna go back up.
 (listens)
 George...
 (listens)
 Congressman...
 (listens)
 Congressman Jarrett...
 (listens)
 George, it's crunch time. It's personal. This is one of those moments. It's just you and the President. Now that's it gonna be?

LEWIS looks over at ROBIN and KODAK ...his face telling the story.

LEWIS
 (continuing)
 Yeah.
 (listens)
 Yeah.
 (listens)
 Hey, George? Can I tell you something? We're gonna win this thing. We're gonna get the votes and we're gonna win. And after we do, I mean that very night, I'm gonna go to Sam & Harry's, I'm gonna order a big steak, and I'm gonna make a list of everybody who tried to fuck us this week.

ROBIN and KODAK are trying to get their friend from setting fire to a bridge out of pure frustration.

ROBIN
 (a whispered shout)
 Lewis!

LEWIS
 (into phone)
 Vote your conscience, you chicken-shit, lame-ass--

LEWIS hangs up the phone. He takes a deep breath, slumps down in the nearest chair, and looks up at ROBIN and KODAK.

There's a long silence before LEWIS says--

LEWIS
(continuing)
We lost Jarrett.

KODAK
(beat)
I hope so. 'Cause, you know, if that was an "undecided," then we need to work on our people skills.

LEWIS picks up the phone and punches in a few numbers. Even before that line starts ringing, he picks up another phone and punches in a different set of numbers.

LEWIS
(into the first phone)
Karen, it's Lewis. Could you hunt down Congressman Quincy for me. I need to talk to him right way.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

SHEPHERD stands in front A. J., LEWIS, ROBIN, and KODAK. JANIE is somewhere in the background.

A. J.
We lost Quincy, too.

SHEPHERD
Did he give a reason?

LEWIS
He thinks your numbers aren't likely to rebound.

KODAK
We're three votes down again, sir.

There's a pause before ...

KODAK

(continuing)

Mr. President, as of this morning, Sydney only needed one more vote. The Motown Three have gotta be scared blind. I don't think there'll be a better opportunity.

ROBIN

The press is expecting an announcement on the crime bill by the Sate of the Union.

KODAK

If you agree to stick 455 in a drawer until after the elections, they'll give you the three votes.

ROBIN

(beat)

And we declare victory, sir.

SHEPHERD

We said as a last resort.

KODAK

We're there, sir. The State of the Union is 48 hours away.

SHEPHERD

No. Come on. There's gotta be three votes someplace else.

KODAK

There isn't.

SHEPHERD

Bullshit, Leon. There's gotta be somebody we haven't--

KODAK

There isn't, sir.

SHEPHERD

Storch.

KODAK

I beg your pardon?

SHEPHERD

What about Storch?

A. J.
Mr. President --

KODAK
Storch is a "no."

SHEPHERD
Wagner.

KODAK
No.

SHEPHERD
Sobel.

KODAK
No.

SHEPHERD
Clark.

KODAK
No.

SHEPHERD
Not that Clark, the one from Indiana.

KODAK
(pause)
That one too, sir.

SHEPHERD is stopped.

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

SHEPHERD
She is one vote away, A. J. It's important legislation that for the first time has a legitimate chance. I think she deserves every possible opportunity to--

LEWIS
She? You meant "it," didn't you, sir? You meant the "important legislation" deserves every opportunity.

A. J.
Lewis, shut up.

There's a horrible silence in the room. SHEPHERD has locked eyes with LEWIS.

SHEPHERD

You got something to say to me?

LEWIS

Respectfully, sir. I think we should examine the new poll for more than its value as a box score.

SHEPHERD

Examine what? They don't like that I'm going out with Sydney.

LEWIS

It's not that simple, sir. I think this poll helps bring a murky problem into specific relief.

SHEPHERD

Whose problem we talking about, Lewis? Yours? You worried about your job? This poll isn't talking about my Presidency. This poll is talking about my life. Two hundred and sixty-four million people have decided--

LEWIS

Mr. President, two hundred and sixty-four million people don't give a damn about your life. They give a damn about their own.

A. J.

All right, that's enough.

LEWIS

Mr. President, you've raised a daughter almost entirely on your own, and she's terrific. What does it say to you that in the last seven weeks, 59 percent of this country has begun to question your family values?

A. J.

The President doesn't answer to you, Lewis.

LEWIS

Oh yes, he does, A. J. I'm a citizen, this is my president, and in this country it is not only permissible to question our leaders, it is our responsibility. But you already know that, Mr. President, because you have a deeper love of this country than any man I've ever known, and I want to know what it says to you that in the past seven weeks 59 percent of Americans have begun to question your patriotism?

SHEPHERD

Look, if people want to listen to Bob Rumson--

LEWIS

They don't have a choice! Rob Rumson's the only one doing the talking. People want leadership. And in the absence of genuine leadership, they will listen to anyone who steps up to the microphone. They want leadership, Mr. President. They're so thirsty for it, they'll crawl through the desert toward a mirage, and when they discover there's no water, they'll drink the sand.

SHEPHERD

(evenly)

Lewis, we've had Presidents who were beloved, who couldn't find a coherent sentence with two hands and a flashlight. People don't drink the sand, 'cause they're thirsty, Lewis. They drink it 'cause they don't know the difference.

The room is slightly stunned by what their President has just said.

SHEPHERD picks up the polling data and heads to the door...

SHEPHERD
 (continuing; on his
 way out)
 Make the deal, A. J.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FOSSIL FUEL WAR ROOM - DAY

SYDNEY, SUSAN, DAVID, INTERNS and STAFFERS are having a little office celebration. Champagne flows from paper cups. Streamers and balloons adorn the tote board, which reads Q Votes in 1 Day.

SUSAN, maybe a little drunk, has concerned SYDNEY.

SUSAN
 I want to go on the record and apologize for my attitude toward you since your arrival.

SYDNEY
 I didn't notice. Was there an attitude?

A PHONE RINGS, and one of the staffers takes it. SYDNEY tries to rejoin the party, but--

SUSAN
 I think I have a lot of pent-up hostility.

SYDNEY
 Well--

SUSAN
 I wonder who I can blame it on.

SYDNEY
 I'm not really qualified to--

SUSAN
 'Cause I've been blaming it on my mother and my ex-husband, and that hasn't been working.

DAVID
 (approaching SYDNEY)
 Leo needs to see you.

SYDNEY

Tell him to get over here. It's a party.

DAVID

He needs to see you in his office.

SYDNEY

It can't wait?

DAVID

He just got off the phone with MacInerney. There's been a development.

SYDNEY holds for a moment...then heads out the door and we

CUT TO:

INT. A CORRIDOR IN THE RESIDENCE - LATE AFTERNOON

TROMBONE MUSIC comes from LUCY'S bedroom as SHEPHERD rounds the corner.

INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - LATER AFTERNOON

SHEPHERD pops his head in.

SHEPHERD

Sounds good.

LUCY

It's progressive.

SHEPHERD

I'll say.

LUCY

Hey, Dad, what's wrong with Sydney? You guys have a fight?

SHEPHERD

(beat)

What do you mean?

LUCY

She seemed pretty--

SHEPHERD
You saw her?

LUCY
She's here.

SHEPHERD
Where?

LUCY
In your room. Why is she mad?

SHEPHERD
Don't worry about it.

LUCY
Were you a dork?

SHEPHERD
Practice your music.

LUCY
If you were a dork, you should say
you're sorry. Girls like that.

CUT TO:

INT. SHEPHERD'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

SYDNEY is going through the closet in search of something. The door opens, and SHEPHERD steps in, perhaps a little tentatively. He doesn't see SYDNEY at first.

SHEPHERD
(calling out)
Syd?

SYDNEY comes out.

SYDNEY
Have you seen a gray cableknit
sweater?

SHEPHERD
(beat)
A grey...sweater? No. I called you at
the office, but...

SYDNEY

It's Beth's. I wore it here one time,
and I didn't want to leave it.

SHEPHERD

Where were you going?

SYDNEY continues her search.

SYDNEY

I'm going home, and then I'm going to
Hartford.

SHEPHERD

Connecticut?

SYDNEY

Yes. Do you know if it was sent with
your dry cleaning by any--

SHEPHERD

What's in Connecticut?

SYDNEY

Richard Reynolds' campaign. He may be
able to get me a job.

SHEPHERD

When did you decide to get a new job?

SYDNEY

Not long after Leo Solomon fired me
from my old one. Beth's gonna kill
me. She loves that--

SHEPHERD

Why did he fire you?

SYDNEY

Total failure to achieve any of the
objectives for which I was hired. I
told him he was being unreasonable.
After all, I did get to dance with
the President and ride in Air Force
One a couple of times. But you know
those prickly environmentalists. It's
always gonna be something with them.
If it's not clean air, then it's
clean water. Like it isn't good
enough that I'm on the cover of
People Magazine.

SHEPHERD

I'll call him.

SYDNEY

You'll call him? You mean you'll call him yourself? Personally? It'll come from the President? That's a great idea. I think you should call Leo and make a deal. He hires me back for, say, 72 days. I go around scaring the hell out of Congress, making them think that the President's about to drive through a very damaging and costly bill. They'll believe me, right, 'cause I'm the President's Friday Night Girl. Now I don't know if you can dip into this well twice, especially since I've lost all credibility in politics, but you never know, I might just be able to pull it off again. I might be able to give you just the leverage you need to pass some ground-breaking piece of crime legislation -- like a mandatory three-day waiting period before a five-year-old can buy an Uzi. Fuck the sweater -- she'll have to learn to live with disappointment.

She starts to exit

SHEPHERD

What do you think went on here today?

She stops.

SYDNEY

I know exactly what went on here today. I got screwed. You saw the poll, you needed the crime bill, you couldn't get it on your own, so I got screwed.

SHEPHERD

The environment got screwed. Nothing happened to you today, Sydney. Governing is choosing. Governing is prioritizing. I've made no secret of the fact that the crime bill was my top priority.

SYDNEY

Well then, congratulations. It's only taken you three years to put together crime prevention legislation that has no hope of preventing crime.

SYDNEY heads out the door--

SHEPHERD

(stopping)

Sydney. Please. I don't want to lose you over this.

SYDNEY

Mr. President, you got bigger problems than losing me. You just lost my vote.

And SYDNEY is out the door...

...we HOLD on SHEPHERD, looking like a man who's taken a lot of punches to the heads...

CUT TO:

INT. THE POOL ROOM - NIGHT

A rack of billiard balls explodes from the break.

A. J.

Hartfort? What's in Hartford?

SHEPHERD

Richard Reynolds' district office. She's thinking of running his campaign. Four in the corner.

SHEPHERD gets down over the ball--

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

Hartford. The insurance capital of the world. Have a good time, Syd.

SHEPHERD smacks the ball, BULL'S-EYE.

A. J.

Listen. I'm gonna have Janie clear your schedule for the weekend. You need to get some rest.

SHEPHERD
You handling me, A. J. ?

A. J.
No, sir.

SHEPHERD
Good. 14 in the side.

SHEPHERD gets down over the ball...

SMACK!!!

...but instead of the cue hitting the ball, it's A. J.'s palms slamming the cue against the table.

A. J.
But I sure as hell will if you don't start gettin' your head outta your ass.

SHEPHERD
Excuse me.

A. J.
Lewis is right. Go after this guy.

SHEPHERD
Has he lied?!

A. J.
What?

SHEPHERD
Has Rumson lied in the last seven weeks?

A. J.
Has he lied?

SHEPHERD
Other than not knowing the difference between Harvard and Stanford, has he said something that isn't true? Am I not a Commander-in-Chief who's never served in the military? Am I not opposed to a Constitutional amendment banning flag burning? Am I not an unmarried father who was sharing a bed with a liberal lobbyist down the hall from my twelve-year-old daughter?

A. J.
And you think you're wrong?

SHEPHERD
I don't think you win elections by
telling 59 percent of the people that
they are.

A. J.
We fight the fights we can win.

SHEPHERD
Don't--

A. J.
You fight the fights that need
fighting!

SHEPHERD
Is the view pretty good from the
cheap seats, A. J.?

A. J.
I beg your pardon.

SHEPHERD
It occurs to me that in 25 years I've
never seen your name on a ballot. Why
have you always been standing a pace
behind me?

A. J.
Because if I hadn't been, you'd be
the most popular history professor at
the University of Wisconsin.

SHEPHERD
Fuck you.

SHEPHERD's tossed his cue stick and is heading out...

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
Have Lewis put the final drafts of
the State of the Union and the Crime
Bill announcement on my desk in the
morning.

A. J.
Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD gets to the doorway...stops...turns around...

SHEPHERD
If Mary hadn't died...would we have
won three years ago?

A. J.
Would we have won?

SHEPHERD
If we'd had to go through a character
debate three years ago, would we have
won?

A. J.
I don't know. But I would've liked
that campaign. If my friend Andy
Shepherd had shown up, I would have
liked that campaign.

SHEPHERD looks away...nods absently...

SHEPHERD
(pause)
Yeah.

SHEPHERD exits, leaving A. J. alone as we

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A series of shots showing SHEPHERD walking down the corridor
to the dish room, then walking down a long corridor which
contains a series of paintings of various presidents. Then
sitting alone in the Oval Office, lost in thought...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESIDENCE DINING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

SHEPHERD and LUCY are eating breakfast in silence, neither of
them very happy, each with their own problems. A nearby T.V.
MONITOR glows with the live coverage of ROBIN's morning press
briefing.

Finally...

SHEPHERD
You're not hungry?

LUCY
This is oatmeal.

SHEPHERD
Yeah.

LUCY
We never have oatmeal.

SHEPHERD
It's good for you.

LUCY
I'm from Wisconsin. I need food.

SHEPHERD
You're not from Wisconsin. I'm from
Wisconsin. You've lived in Washington
your whole life.

He glances toward the T.V. screen. ROBIN's standing up there doing what she's been told: "No comment...No, this President is not participating in character debates..." He mutes the volume.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
How are you doing in your
Constitutional debates?

LUCY
We're done.

SHEPHERD
You're done?

LUCY
We ratified it last week.

SHEPHERD
Oh...well...that's good. Why didn't
you tell me?

LUCY
It's not a big deal, Dad.

SHEPHERD

Okay, I give up. I don't care why you're not happy in social studies. I care about why you're not talking to me about why you're not happy in social studies.

LUCY

Dad, I'm perfectly--

SHEPHERD

You're not perfectly happy. You don't think I know when something's bothering you?

LUCY

Damnit, Dad!

SHEPHERD

Hey!

LUCY

You know--

SHEPHERD

Talk to me.

LUCY

Look--

LUCY winds herself up. It would appear she's about to burst. She's about to say the hardest thing she's ever had to say in her life--

LUCY

(continuing)

--sometimes when you talk, you say things I disagree with.

SHEPHERD is stunned and totally confused...

SHEPHERD

Almost every time I talk, I say things you disagree with.

LUCY

I mean politically.

SHEPHERD

(pause)

Politically?

LUCY

Yes.

SHEPHERD

(pause)

What do you mean?

It just starts spilling out in a stream--

LUCY

Yes. Okay. Yes. Sometimes, I mean, I'm not sure. You know a lot more than I do -- but still, I have these feelings, and I don't think they're wrong. Like, okay, for instance, I'm not so sure it's all right to burn a flag. I mean, it really bothers a lot of people, and I don't know why you think it's okay. I hear Senator Rumson talk, and some of the things he says sounds right to me, and I think, "God, am I like Bob Rumson?! I mean, Dad thinks he's a jerk. Dad hates this guy! Why am I agreeing with him" And then I think, "Well, maybe I'm not really like Bob Rumson, but maybe I'm not like Dad either." But the point is I'm the President's kid, and people pay attention to what I say, and if I say something different from what you say, it'll be embarrassing for you. So I can't just get up in social studies class and say whatever I want.

SHEPHERD is silent...totally blown away...he had absolutely no idea...

He stands up slowly and moves toward her...LUCY doesn't know what's coming...

SHEPHERD

(quietly)

Stand up please.

LUCY gets up slowly...

She's never seen her father like this...

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

I want you to pay very close attention to what happens now.

SHEPHERD kneels down, cups her daughter's face in his hands, and gently kisses her forehead. He pulls her to him and holds her in a tight embrace...

SHEPHERD

In your lifetime, you will never embarrass me. It could never happen. You're not the President's daughter, Lucy, you're mine. And no one's gonna vote me out of that job. You're my daughter, and everything else is a distant second. School is for you, Lucy. You say what you want. The only thing you have to do to make me happy is come home at the end of the day.

LUCY squeezes her dad tight...they hold the embrace for a long moment.

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

One more thing. I don't dislike Senator Rumson because of his political views. And even if you voted for everything he would vote for, that wouldn't make you like him. There's a fundamental difference between you and the Bob Rumsons of the world.

LUCY

What's that?

SHEPHERD

The difference is that he says he loves America. Saying you love America is easy. What takes character -- and this is what you have--

SHEPHERD trails off, realizing he's about to quote Sydney...

SHEPHERD
 (continuing)
 What takes character is loving
 Americans.
 (beat)

And now it's as if SHEPHERD is waking himself up from the longest trip of his life...

...he looks over at the T.V. monitor... "No comment"... "No, I don't know how many other ways I can say it. The White House isn't getting involved in..."

SHEPHERD
 (continuing)
 Luce, I gotta go.

LUCY
 Dad, is everything all right?

SHEPHERD
 Everything's fine. I'm just a little late for work.

He heads for the door, shouting out as he goes--

SHEPHERD
 (continuing)
 Somebody get my daughter some food!
 The girl's from Wisconsin, for cryin'
 out loud!

And he's gone as we...

CUT TO:

INT. THE PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

ROBIN is on her last drops of energy and patience.

REPORTER #4
 Robin, will the President ever
 respond to Senator Rumson's question
 about being a member of the American
 Civil Liberties Union?

But instead of hands going up, the PRESS CORPS suddenly stands. ROBIN turns to see SHEPHERD stride in and step up to the podium.

SHEPHERD

Yes, he will. 'Morning.

ROBIN

Good morning, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD takes the podium. There's a palpable BUZZ in the room as video operators adjust their equipment, etc. People starts to stand.

SHEPHERD

That's all right, you can keep your seats. For the last couple of months, Senator Rumson has suggested that being president of this country was, to a certain extent, about character...

ANGLE - ROBIN

who's picked up the receiver from a wall phone and punches in four numbers.

She turns in to the wall to shield her conversation from the rest of the room.

ROBIN

(into phone)

Lewis...call A. J. and come on down here...I don't know, but something's happening.

SHEPHERD

...and although I have not been willing to engage in his attacks on me, I've been here three years and three days, and I can tell you without hesitation: Being President of this country is entirely about character.

LEWIS enters with A. J. and KODAK.

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

For the record: Yes, I am a card-carrying member of the A. C. L. U. But the more important question is why aren't you, Bob?

(more)

SHEPHERD (cont' d)

This is an organization whose sole purpose is to defend the Bill of Rights, so it naturally begs the questions.

Why would a senator, his party's most powerful spokesman and a candidate for president, choose to reject upholding the Constitution? If you can answer that question, then, folks, you're smarter than I am, because I didn't understand it until a couple of minutes ago. Everybody knows American isn't easy. America is advanced citizenship.

You gotta want it bad, 'cause it's gonna put up a fight. It's gonna say, "You want free speech? Let's see you acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil, who's standing center stage and advocating, at the top of his lungs, that which you would spend a lifetime opposing at the top of yours. You want to claim this land as the land of the free, then the symbol of your country can't just be a flag; the symbol also has to be one of its citizens exercising his right to burn that flag in protest." Show me that, defend that, celebrate that in your classrooms. Then you can stand up and sing about the land of the free. I've known Bob Rumson for years. I've been operating under the assumption that the reason Bob devotes so much time and energy to shouting at the rain was that he simply didn't get it. Well, I was wrong.

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

This is a country made up of people with hard jobs that they're terrified of losing. The roots of freedom are of little or no interest to them at the moment. We are a nation afraid to go out at night.

(more)

SHEPHERD (cont' d)

We're a society that has assigned low priority to education and has looked the other way while our public schools have been decimated. We have serious problems to solve, and we need serious men to solve them. And whatever your particular problem is, friend, I promise you, Bob Rumson is not the least bit interested in solving it. He is interested in two things and two things only: Making you afraid of it and telling you who's to blame for it. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how you win elections. You gather a group of middle-aged, middle-class, middle-income voters who remember with longing an easier time, and you talk to them about family and American values and personal character. Then you have an old photo of the President's girlfriend. You scream about patriotism and you tell them she's to blame for their lot in life, you go on television and you call her a whore. Sydney Ellen Wade has done nothing to you, Bob. She has done nothing but put herself through law school, prosecute criminals for five years, represent the interests of public school teachers for two years, and lobby for the safety of our natural resources.

You want a character debate? Fine, but you better stick with me, 'cause Sydney Ellen Wade is way out of your league. I've loved two women in my life. I lost one to cancer, and I lost the other 'cause I was so busy keeping my job I forgot to do my job. Well that ends right now.

Tomorrow morning the White House is sending a bill to Congress for its consideration. It's White House Resolution 455, an energy bill requiring a 20 percent reduction of the emission of fossil fuels over the next ten years.

(more)

SHEPHERD (cont'd)

It is by far the most aggressive stride ever taken in the fight to reverse the effects of global warming. The other piece of legislation is the crime bill. As of today it no longer exists. I'm throwing it out. I'm throwing it out and writing a law that makes sense. You cannot address crime prevention without getting rid of assault weapons and handguns. I consider them a threat to national security, and I will go door to door if I have to, but I'm gonna convince Americans that I'm right, and I'm gonna get the guns. We've got serous problems, and we need serious men, and if you want to talk about character, Bob, you'd better come at me with more than a burning flag and a membership card. If you want to talk about character and American values, fine. Just tell me where and when, and I'll show up. This is a time for serious men, Bob, and your fifteen minutes are up. My name's Andrew Shepherd, and I am the President.

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

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

ROBIN

Any questions?

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - WEST WING - DAY

A. J. and LEWIS are following after the President.

A. J.

Well, you don't see that every day of the week.

LEWIS
 He's got the whole White House Press
 Corps asking each other how to spell
 "erudite."

A. J.
 Lewis, call the printer.

LEWIS
 I know. Gotta rewrite the State of
 the Union.

A. J.
 Every word, Lewis. It's a whole new
 ball game. You've got 35 minutes.

LEWIS
 Oh, good. I thought I was gonna be
 rushed.

LEWIS goes off in one direction. A. J. heads towards the Oval
 Office.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

SHEPHERD is on the phone.

SHEPHERD
 I don't want the limo. I don't want
 an escort.

A. J. enters.

SHEPHERD
 (continuing)
 I want a plain, ordinary, non-bullet-
 proof automobile. Someone around here
 must have a Chevy I can borrow. Well,
 find one and meet me outside the West
 Wing entrance in five minutes.

A. J.
 Where are you going?

SHEPHERD

I'm going to her house. I'm gonna stand at her front door till she lets me in. And I'm not leaving till I get her back.

A. J.

How're you gonna do that?

SHEPHERD

I haven't worked that out yet. But I'm sure groveling will be involved.

A. J.

You're just gonna drive over?

SHEPHERD

I'm the Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful army in the world. You don't think I can drive ten blocks?

SYDNEY (O. S.)

Just stay away from DuPont Circle. I hear it's murder this time of day.

SHEPHERD doesn't need to turn around to know who's standing in the doorway, but of course he does anyway.

SYDNEY

Hi, A. J.

A. J.

It's nice to see you, Ms. Wade. If anybody needs me, I'll be in the Roosevelt Room, giving Lewis oxygen.

A. J. exits.

SYDNEY

I heard your speech. I was in my car, and it just kind of steered its way over here.

SHEPHERD

I'm glad.

SYDNEY and SHEPHERD just gaze at each other for a moment and smile. SYDNEY starts toward him.

SHEPHERD
 (continuing)
 Sydney, I didn't decide to send 455
 to the floor to get you back.

SYDNEY
 I didn't come back 'cause you decided
 to send 455 to the floor.

They move to kiss. It doesn't last very long because...

LEWIS
 (entering)
 Mr. President, I thought you might
 want to look at this. I moved Social
 Security up front. Hello, Sydney.

JANIE enters--

JANIE
 Mr. President, Leventhal at Treasury
 wants two minutes. Hello, Sydney.

MRS. CHAPIL enters--

MRS. CHAPIL
 Mr. President -- Excuse me, Miss
 Wade -- Miss McCall is on her way
 over.

SHEPHERD
 (to SYDNEY)
 I've got some things to do.

SYDNEY
 Yes, you do.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CAPITOL - NIGHT

It's lit up and glowing on this cold, clear night.

ANCHOR (V. O.)
 We're only a moment or two away from
 the arrival of President Shepherd and
 his State of the Union address.
 (more)

ANCHOR (cont'd; V.O.)
 Lloyd, you've served on the staffs of
 several past administrations, what
 kind of last-minute activity is the
 President engaged in right now?

CUT TO:

INT. A VIP ROOM - NIGHT

It's off the main corridor, and it's being used as a green room for SHEPHERD and his group -- LEWIS, KODAK, A. J., JANIE, and various AIDES and STAFFERS. People are buzzing around in a last-minute flurry. SHEPHERD is fumbling with his cuff links.

SHEPHERD
 I'm having a cuff links crisis.

LUCY takes his sleeves.

SHEPHERD
 (continuing; to LUCY)
 I think they've locked.

LUCY
 Hold still.

ROBIN steps in.

ROBIN
 Mr. President, they're waiting for you.

LUCY
 All done.

SHEPHERD
 Lewis.

LEWIS
 Sir.

SHEPHERD
 Things have been a little rough
 between us lately.

LEWIS
 I know sir, I'm sorry.

SHEPHERD

Don't stop what you're doing.

LEWIS

That's kind of you, sir, but I realize I've been a little insensitive about some personal...

SHEPHERD

No, you were right. Two hundred and sixty-four million people don't give a damn about my life.

LEWIS

Just so you know I've never been one of them, Mr. President.

ROBIN

This way, people. Let's go.

SHEPHERD

(to LEWIS)

See you after.

The PEOPLE in the room start to gather their things and exit, ROBIN handling any and all last-minute "Mr. President"'s as she herds people out the door.

LUCY walks past SHEPHERD. She holds SHEPHERD's old tattered textbook and has it opened to a specific page...

SHEPHERD

(continuing)

Whatcha got there, Luce?

LUCY

Article 2, Section 3, of the U. S. Constitution. Executive Powers.

(reading)

"He shall, from time to time, give to the Congress information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient."

A. J.

Sounds right up your alley.

SHEPHERD looks at his old friend and extends his hand for a deeply-felt handshake. A. J. grasps SHEPHERD's hand and then pulls him into a strong embrace.

A. J. whispers a shout into SHEPHERD's ear--

A. J.
(continuing)
Give 'em hell, Andy.

A. J. pulls away, leaving SHEPHERD to enjoy the moment without having to speak--

A. J.
(continuing)
You've got 30 seconds, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD
Thank you.
(to LUCY)
I'll see you afterward. I want a
critique.

The room clears out...revealing SYDNEY, dressed like the First Lady she's soon to be, sitting against the window sill.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
There's been something I've been
trying to give you since our first
date. I tried a bunch of times, but
somehow I've always managed to trip
over my job.
(beat)
Anyay...

SHEPHERD has picked his black canvas gym bag with the gold Presidential seal.

He reaches in the bag and pulls out a bouquet of flowers.

SHEPHERD
(continuing)
These are for you.

SYDNEY
They're beautiful.

JANIE pokes her head in.

JANIE
Mr. President?

SHEPHERD
Gotta go.

SYDNEY
Should I stay here?

SHEPHERD
No, walk with me.

They exit into a hallway lined with Congressional STAFFERS, SECRET SERVICE, CAPITOL SECURITY, WHITE HOUSE STAFF, and, most prominently, A. J., LEWIS, ROBIN, JANIE and KODAK.

SYDNEY is still clutching her flowers as they near the double doors to the House Chamber--

SYDNEY
How'd you finally do it?

SHEPHERD
(raising his voice
above the cheering)
Do what?

SYDNEY
Manage to give a woman flowers and be
President at the same time.

SHEPHERD
Well...it turns out I've got a rose
garden.

SYDNEY is stopped in her tracks as--

--the doors to the Chamber fly open--

DOORKEEPER
Mr. Speaker!!!...THE PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES!!!

The CHAMBER leaps to its feet in a thunderous ovation, shouts of "Bravo!" from the gallery...

At the back, LEWIS and ROBIN and KODAK are trying to maintain their professional cool, but it's a moment impossible not to get caught up in...SYDNEY is clutching her flowers with both hands...SHEPHERD is making his way down the aisle, shaking hands and receiving congratulations and good wishes, and we

FADE OUT.