

THE GENTLEWOMAN FROM OHIO

"STATE OF THE UNION"

(PILOT)

Written by

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"There is nothing more difficult to carry out nor more doubtful of success nor more dangerous to handle than to initiate a new order of things; for the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order."

-- Nicolo Machiavelli

TEASER

OVER THE BLACK WE HEAR -

RYAN HART (V.O.)

I'm not naive enough to think this town will just stop being what it is overnight. What it is keeps too many people warm, fed and powerful... and powerful people don't give up power without a fight.

FADE IN:

INT. CAPITOL HILL RESTROOM - NIGHT

Mahogany on marble...not a stray paper towel or spec of dirt in sight.

We hear the COUGHS and HEAVES of a woman getting sick, before we make out her stylish heals below one of the wood stalls.

RYAN HART (V.O.)

But, as my former boss, Harvey Zandt used to put it "change is only impossible if no one's willing to fight for it."

We hear the toilet flush and the hasty click clack of heals on marble. The stall door swings open and THE WOMAN dashes to the nearest sink.

She unspools, rip, wads and wets a length of paper towels to frantically dab at her sick-splashed lapel. Jaw-clenched, this chick is doing her best not to lose it.

RYAN HART (V.O.)

And this town needs to know something about Ryan Hart...she's a fighter.

She doesn't look like much of a fighter or for that matter, a senator.

Yes, the chick in the vomit-splattered suit is our heroine, U.S. SENATOR RYAN HART (38). She's yet to grow into the weight of her title, not to mention the brightly colored suit she's currently wearing. Those facts plus the inch of Pan-Cake and the make-up artist's tissue paper -- still tucked into her collar -- make her look more like a young woman playing senator, than an actual U.S. Senator. But, nevertheless, she's persisting.

Her jaw tightens even more, at the site of her lapel now wet and smudged with chunks of soggy paper towel. Not good.

She swats at the soggy towel chunks and contorts herself to hold the lapel under a nearby hand-dryer. She hits the button, flinching as the hot air beats down on her chest. No, it doesn't get much less dignified than this.

The hand dryer clicks off and we hear a knock at the door...

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Ryan, we need you in the chair.

Ryan makes a face and possibly, a hand gesture.

She gives up on the lapel and turns to look at herself in the mirror.

Deep breath. She levels her gaze, doing her best to look less tired...less frightened.

RYAN HART

(to the woman in the mirror)

You are a pirate.

The words are strangely reassuring.

CABLE NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

That was Ryan Hart, three days ago, before she was sworn in as the junior Senator from Ohio.

INT. SENATE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (MOVING)

Ryan exits the restroom and heads down the hall, with such purpose that her waiting chief of staff, CATHY CARTER-COLLINS (52) jumps.

CATHY CARTER-COX

(chasing)

You're live in five.

Ryan doesn't acknowledge the older woman, who jogs ahead of her to open the door.

INT. SENATE RECORDING STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A STAFFER immediately descends on Ryan with a mic-pack -- getting a little, overly personal, up and under her jacket -- while ANOTHER STAFFER hurries her through a doorway, to the --

INT. SENATE RECORDING STUDIO - SET - CONTINUOUS

The set has been decorated to look like a Senate office, with a desk, flags and faux window. STAFF seem to be everywhere. We'll get to know a few of them later, but for the moment, they're all foreign, and faceless...heightening our sense that Ryan is facing this moment alone.

CABLE NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
 ...and she's who Democrats have
 tapped to deliver their response to
 President Ritchie's State of the
 Union Address.

CLOSE ON Ryan through the cameraman's lens as he brings her into focus. One of those STAFFERS steps forward to position her on the edge of the desk..."casual" but not "too casual"...the American flag conspicuous behind her. A MAKE-UP ARTIST steps in to fix her face. Another STAFFER might duck in and out to check levels.

CABLE PUNDIT 1 (V.O.)
 The American people are about to
 see Ryan Hart for the fraud that
 she is.

Ryan flinches.

CATHY CARTER-COX (O.S.)
 TURN IT OFF!

RYAN HART
 (her eyes grow wide)
 No! I want to hear it.

The make-up artist notices the spot on Ryan's lapel.

MAKE-UP ARTIST
 (to someone in the room)
 We need the back-up jacket.

Ryan is helped out of her jacket. Her expression, momentarily, brightens until she realizes the back-up jacket is the same, ill-fitting Ann Taylor-number she just took off.

CABLE PUNDIT 1 (V.O.)
 Am I surprised that a politician is
 selling her soul for a spotlight?
 Uhhh...No. But...COME ON! Three
 days ago Ryan Hart was pledging to
 fight partisanship and gridlock --
 til the proverbial last dog
 dies...and now she's the standard
 bearer for the Democratic Party?

We stay close on Ryan as she listens to the pundits debate her. Her expression registering each hit.

CABLE PUNDIT 2 (V.O.)

I couldn't disagree more. This is a smart move for Democrats.

CABLE PUNDIT 1 (V.O.)

Of course, it's a smart move for DEMOCRATS! Ryan Hart is the most popular member of their party by like 40 points. Hell, she's the most popular member of Congress by like 40 points. Elmer Long knows people might actually watch what his party has to say if she the one saying it.

CABLE ANCHOR (V.O.)

I know there's a but in there somewhere.

CABLE PUNDIT 1 (V.O.)

BUT -- just because it's a smart move for Democrats doesn't mean it's a smart move for her. She's popular BECAUSE she doesn't give bull shit partisan speeches like the one she's about to give.

CABLE ANCHOR (V.O.)

You've seen text of the speech?

CABLE PUNDIT 1 (V.O.)

Yes. And all I can say is. Ms. Hart's approval rating is about to plummet 40 points.

CABLE ANCHOR (V.O.)

OK.

(shifting gears)

Joanne?

CABLE PUNDIT 2 (V.O.)

Honestly, I admire her pragmatism. She's a talented young woman with a lot to offer, but the idea that this young woman was somehow going to "fix Washington." You can't be *that* gullible.

CABLE PUNDIT 1 (V.O.)

She was supposed to try.

Ryan's eyes fixate on something in the distance. She nods in its direction, and then, strangely..

...she smiles.

FADE TO BLACK.

NOW, OVER THE DARK WE HEAR --

Music. Something classic, but decidedly cool, like Nina Simone's version of "Feeling Good."

LEGEND: THREE DAYS EARLIER

EXT. EAST FRONT CAPITOL - DAY (MOVING)

Ryan expertly navigates the crowd outside the Capitol. Head down and bundled for DC's January weather, she could be any one of the many anonymous Hill staffers headed to work.

A glimpse of her earbuds, reveals we're hearing what our heroine hears. Her song selection muffles the otherwise cacophonous scene, giving the moment a sense of detached surreality. (Yes, for some, this really is just the path to work. And, yes, it always feels surreal.)

STAFFERS...PROTESTERS...CAPITOL POLICE OFFICERS...a multitude of SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN AND CHAPERONES, wearing the same obnoxiously colored hat...and at least one GROWN MAN DRESSED AS A FARM ANIMAL...probably two, there's a good chance one of them is beating s drum...all in the shadow of the Capitol Dome.

Approaching the door, Ryan stops at the sight of DOZENS OF PEOPLE amassing near the entrance. Some wear "Ryan Hart for Senate" T-Shirts and hats. Others hold homemade signs. News cameras wait nearby.

Ryan removes her earbuds, before slyly approaching the group.

RYAN HART

(loudly)

What are you guys doing here??!!

It takes the crowd a beat, but when they realize it's Ryan, they go nuts.

Reporters, cameras and crew spring into action. Microphones appear in her face.

REPORTER

How does it feel to finally be here?

Ryan smiles.

RYAN

Right now, the only thing I feel is exhausted. Construction on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, last night, had traffic backed up for hours. Are they ever going to finish whatever it is they're fixing?

Even the reporters laugh.

REPORTER

This morning, Rex Reading called you an offense to democracy, saying quote, "Ryan Hart deserves to be in a jail cell, right now, not a senate seat."

RYAN HART

(mocking)

Isn't he sweet?

Again laughter.

REPORTER

Do you have a response?

RYAN HART

The RNC chair wants me locked up for beating his party's candidate and you want to know what *I* think? I think you should ask if I have a response you can print?

REPORTER

But you understand why folks have questions about your win?

RYAN HART

I understand that losing sucks and people will go to great lengths to avoid taking responsibility for it. I understand that my win went against a lot of conventional wisdom and a lot rides on conventional wisdom in this town. And I understand it's easy to think a thing impossible, if you don't know how to do it yourself. But a thing is only impossible until someone figures out how to do it.

(beat)

(MORE)

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

Just like money only has power in politics until someone figure out how to win an election without it.

She let's that sink in a beat.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

I didn't just run for office to win, I ran for office to change the way this town does business.

(beat)

Look, I'm not naive enough to think this town will just stop being what it is overnight. What it is keeps too many people warm, fed and powerful... and powerful people don't give up power without a fight. But, as my former boss, Harvey Zandt used to put it "change is only impossible if no one's willing to fight for it." And this town needs to know something about Ryan Hart...she's a fighter.

(beat)

Now, to answer your question, of course, Mr. Reading wants to throw shade on my election. What do you think happens to party loyalty, if elected officials start to get it in their heads, they don't need the national party to get reelected? But that doesn't make my election any less legitimate. Yesterday, the secretary of state confirmed that the people of Ohio selected me to be their senator and now, I plan to do everything in my power to live up to the faith they've put in me. And if Mr. Reading and his merry band are really so afraid of change that they're going to keep fighting battles they already lost...well, I hate to break it to him, but change has come to Washington and she's not going anywhere.

The crowd goes nuts.

CROWD

(Chants)

YES, SHE CAN! YES, SHE CAN! YES,
SHE CAN! YES, SHE CAN!

Ryan basks in the moment.

RYAN HART
 (when the crowd quiets)
 Now, if you will excuse me, there's
 someplace I need to be.

More applause and shouts of support.

INT. CAPITOL - SENATE EAST ENTRANCE - DAY

Like all Capitol Hill entrances, the door is monitored by CAPITOL POLICE OFFICERS operating a walk through metal detector and baggage scanner.

All eyes appear to be on Ryan, as she gets in line for the scanner. But not in a good way.

Ryan smiles back awkwardly. What's she doing wrong?

A Capitol Police Officer takes Ryan's shoulder and guides her around the devices.

CAPITOL POLICE OFFICER
 You're a senator now.

Ryan starts to smile...but before her lips get that far, we see, the magnitude of his words -- of what she's about to do -- hit her. All of the confidence and swagger we just witnessed drains from her face, leaving us with the proverbial deer-in-headlights.

CATHY CARTER-COX (O.S.)
 There you are.

Ryan jumps at the sound of her chief of staff. The older woman rushes her down a narrow hallway to the left.

CATHY CARTER-COX (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry, but Senator Malone is
 looking for any excuse to get out
 of this.
 (noticing Ryan's coat)
 Give me that.

She slows. Grabs Ryan's bag and relieves the younger woman of her coat.

CATHY CARTER-COX (CONT'D)
 Let me look.

Like a mother readying her child for school, Cathy pushes Ryan's hair out of her face and aggressively bats at the lint on her suit jacket

CATHY CARTER-COX (CONT'D)

Go like this.

Cathy mimics rubbing lipstick from her teeth. Ryan complies and shows her the result.

CATHY CARTER-COX (CONT'D)

You're good.

(hurrying her back down
the hall)

Now all you have to do is follow
Senator Malone and say what they
tell you to say.

An ELDERLY MAN, rises to meet them as they approach.

Ryan holds out her hand.

RYAN HART

Senator, I just wanted to tell you
how much I --

Senator Malone looks at her hand, frowns and turns towards an ornate set of double doors.

SENATOR MALONE

Let's get this over with.

The double doors swing open to reveal --

INT. SENATE CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

It's the room we've all seen on TV. Rows of wooden desks arranged in front of a dais. Bright blue carpeting and curtains. Only, in person, it take a moment to adjust to the brightness of the TV lights.

The next moments are a bit of a blur, obscured beyond Ryan's pounding heart and blurred vision. She makes it to the front of the room, where she meets SOMEONE, who says words to her. Senator Malone says words. This man says some more words. Ryan just nods along, too overwhelmed to follow the specifics.

SOMEONE

Raise your right hand.

Ryan doesn't move. The someone, also known as the Vice President of the United States doesn't know what to do.

Senator Malone isn't about to help. A FEMALE SENATOR steps up to encourages Ryan to lift her hand. The contact snaps her into the moment.

VICE PRESIDENT

Repeat after me...I, say your name.

RYAN HART

I...Ryan Hart

VICE PRESIDENT

...do solemnly swear..

RYAN HART

..do solemnly swear...

VICE PRESIDENT

...that I will support and defend
the constitution of the United
States against all enemies, foreign
and domestic...

RYAN HART

...that I will support and defend
the constitution of the United
States against all enemies, foreign
and domestic...

VICE PRESIDENT

... that I will bear true faith and
allegiance to the same...

RYAN HART

... that I will bear true faith and
allegiance to the same...

VICE PRESIDENT

...that I take this obligation
freely, without any mental
reservation or purpose of evasion;
...

RYAN HART

...that I take this obligation
freely, without any mental
reservation or purpose of evasion;
...

VICE PRESIDENT

...and that I will well and
faithfully discharge the duties of
the office on which I am about to
enter...

RYAN HART

...and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter..

VICE PRESIDENT

...so help me God.

RYAN HART

...so help me God.

The SENATORS and STAFF on the left side of the chamber applaud. The PRESIDENT PRO TEM, seated atop the dais, bangs his gavel.

PRESIDENT PRO TEM

The chamber will come to order.

U.S. SENATOR ELMER LONG, (70s) the distinguished Democratic leader, with a southern accent as smooth as fine cognac, rises.

SENATOR LONG

Mr. President?

PRESIDENT PRO TEM

The minority leader is --

The left side of the chamber boos. The President Pro Tem gavels again.

PRESIDENT PRO TEM (CONT'D)

The chamber will come to order.

The chamber settles.

SENATOR LONG

Would the president like to try that again?

PRESIDENT PRO TEM

The majority leader is recognized.

SENATOR LONG

I note the absence of a quorum.

PRESIDENT PRO TEM

The clerk will call the roll.

THE CLERK initiates the roll call, which entails calling off each Senator's name in alphabetical order to determine whether or not they are present. It's typical background noise in the U.S. Senate.

Ryan beams. It almost doesn't seem real. All that time...all that hard work. Is there a better feeling than this?

She accepts congratulations from her Senate colleagues. Hugs. Handshakes. An occasional chuck on the shoulder.

The Vice President approaches and holds out his hand.

VICE PRESIDENT
Congratulations, Senator.

RYAN HART
(taking his hand)
Thank you, Mr. Vice President. It was nice of you to do this personally.

VICE PRESIDENT
Wild horses and such.

He pulls her into a polite hug, holding her close enough, so only she can hear --

VICE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
Enjoy your moment, hon, because from here on, you're gonna be grabbing your ankles and thinking of Texas.

Ryan stiffens as his hand skims her ass, giving it a light but menacing pat, before he walks away.

CLERK
(reading the roll)
Senator Hart...

She's too stunned to hear

CLERK (CONT'D)
(wanting to give the new senator her moment)
Senator Hart.

Ryan hears and indicates her presence...her first act as a U.S. Senator.

CLERK (CONT'D)
The Gentlewoman from Ohio is recognized.

END TEASER

ACT IINT. CAPITOL - CAUCUS ROOM - DAY

The ornate room is loud with the hubub of dozens of SENATORS, STAFF AND HONORED GUESTS, chatting as they help themselves to a catered buffet.

Ryan enters, with Cathy close at her heels. Someone gives the signal.

SENATORS, STAFFERS, ETC.

(singing)

For she's a jolly good fellow/
For she's a jolly good fellow/

Ryan doesn't look very jolly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAPITOL - CAUCUS ROOM - DAY (A FEW MINUTES LATER)

The senators, staffers, etc. now hover around Ryan and SENATOR PATICK CALLAHAN (70s), this Senate's liberal lion, universally loved and respected, even though there's a good chance he downed a few at breakfast. He raises a glass with one hand, as he rests the other on Ryan's shoulders.

SERIES OF SHOTS (AT THE RECEPTION):

- A SENATOR shakes Ryan's hand, they chat for a second, before he pulls her in for a selfie.

- STAFFERS crowd around Ryan for another selfie.

-Ryan appears to be having an actual conversation with A COLLEAGUE, until, wait for it...he pulls out his smartphone and asks her to pose for a selfie with him.

INT. CAPITOL - CAUCUS ROOM - DAY (A LITTLE LATER)

Cathy approaches Ryan, with CODY KIDD (25) in tow. This kid's a looker with particularly great hair.

CATHY CARTER-COX

How's it going?

RYAN HART

If I get asked for one more selfie -

Cody casually slips his phone in his pocket.

CATHY CARTER-COX

So, there's a downside to being the most popular politician in America.

RYAN HART

Who'da thought I'd want to tank my poll numbers?

CATHY CARTER-COX

Ryan, I'd like to introduce you to Cody Kidd, he's going to be helping us out with communications.

Ryan laughs. Cody's face falls.

RYAN HART

(feels bad)

I'm sorry, kid. I...I'm having a bit of a day. Cathy and I will talk about this, but right now...I need to...I need to mingle.

She walks away.

Cathy gives Cody a sympathetic look.

BACK TO:

Ryan, now, on the other side of the room, taking yet another selfie. She smiles politely and waits as the man checks his picture. How is this her life?

JOVE OLIVER (42), an attractive man in an extremely expensive suit, approaches and extends his hand.

JOVE OLIVER

Congratulations, Senator. Jove Oliver.

RYAN HART

Yes, of course. First Energy. Right?

He nods.

JOVE OLIVER

I'm sorry to crash your party, but I didn't know how else to get a hold of you and I have something that can't wait.

RYAN HART

As long as you don't want a selfie.

JOVE OLIVER
 I'll try to restrain myself.
 (beat)
 Is there somewhere we can talk?

INT. CAPITOL - ANTEROOM - DAY

Ryan and Jove find a nearby room that offers privacy.

JOVE OLIVER
 So, First Energy has been
 developing a wind farm off the
 coast of Lake Erie -

Ryan's face falls. She nods.

RYAN HART
 Erie Sails.
 (off his look)
 I've been in on the negotiations
 with Apple. Don't tell me.

JOVE OLIVER
 The Pentagon is objecting to our
 loan guarantee.

RYAN HART
 Fuck.

JOVE OLIVER
 They're concerned that turbulence
 generated by the wind turbines will
 interfere with a radar station
 they've got in Willowick.

RYAN HART
 DoD has a radar station in
 Willowick?

JOVE OLIVER
 I think it was news to them too.
 It's an unmanned World War II
 relic...hasn't been upgraded since
 Truman. But, since it's still
 functional...DoD considers it a
 "national security capability."

Ryan sighs.

JOVE OLIVER (CONT'D)
 DOE isn't canceling the loan
 guarantee.
 (MORE)

JOVE OLIVER (CONT'D)

Apparently, this isn't the first time, the Pentagon has dicked up one of their projects, but if the objection isn't cleared by Friday --

RYAN HART

We lose Apple.

Jove nods.

JOVE OLIVER

Without Erie Sails we can't guarantee the kilowatt hours they're asking for, at least not from a renewable source. Maybe eventually, but --

RYAN HART

They need it by Friday.

(beat)

Fuck! I said that already, didn't I?

Jove nods.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

(collecting herself)

So, we need to get the Pentagon to clear it's objection.

JOVE OLIVER

That's why I'm here.

CATHY CARTER-COX (O.S.)

There you are.

Cathy is in the door way.

RYAN HART

Jove, this is Cathy Carter-Cox, my Chief of Staff. Jove represents First Energy.

They shake hands. Jove hands her a card.

JOVE OLIVER

You were Tommy Paxton's chief of staff, right?

CATHY CARTER-COX

Good memory.

RYAN HART

Jove was just telling me --

CATHY CARTER-COX
 He'll catch me up. You have a
 meeting with the leader.

Ryan frowns.

RYAN
 (to Jove)
 We'll figure this out.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL: LEADER'S OFFICE - DAY

Elmer Long's office is nothing short of impressive. A near life-sized portrait of Lyndon Johnson hangs above his hand-carved mahogany desk. His walls are lined with meticulously curated bookshelves, filled with leather-bound editions and an impressive array of awards. There's a fireplace, that wouldn't look out of place at Versailles and then there's the view. It's hard to find a better view of the Capitol Mall than the one from the Majority leader's balcony.

Ryan takes it all in as she waits for the man to grace her with his presence.

She inspects the photos arranged on his desk. Pictures of his wife and various children/grandchildren. She picks one up for a better look...toppling a FIGURINE sideways off the desk. Ryan winces. The travails of being a klutz.

She bends to retrieve the figurine, a cheap, plastic replica of a bird...hardly the sort of thing you'd expect to find in this office.

SENATOR LONG (O.S.)
 Ryan, I'm sorry...

Ryan springs to her feet, bird still in hand.

RYAN HART
 (embarrassed)
 I was just...

The leader reaches for the bird. Ryan hands it over.

SENATOR LONG
 (admiring it)
 The Piping Plover -- or as some know it, the Charadrius melodus -- named for its mellifluous whistle...oft heard, while the minute beast goes unseen. Probably why the damn thing keeps getting itself killed.

He drops the figure in the trash.

SENATOR LONG (CONT'D)

(explaining)

My scheduler has a perverted
penchant for putting
environmentalists on my calendar.

(serious)

Take it from me, my dear, you must
always be kind to your scheduler.

She nods. He indicates her seat and waits for her to take it
before pulling out his own chair.

SENATOR LONG (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I couldn't attend your
lunch, but you know how my schedule
is. I did tell Allison to pull out
all the stops...make our newest
member feel special.

RYAN HART

(Get to the point.)

She did a great job. Thanks.

SENATOR LONG

So, I'm going to cut to the chase.
You have done your party a great
service and now your party would
like to do you one.

(leaning back)

How would you like to deliver our
response to the State of the Union?

RYAN HART

(he can't be serious)

On Thursday?

He nods.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

(shakes her head)

Sir, with all due respect, I was in
Ohio when we got the ruling last
night. I haven't slept since
yesterday. I have practically no
staff to speak of...hell, I haven't
even seen my office yet --

SENATOR LONG

(unfazed)

My staff would, obviously, be at
your service.

RYAN HART
I appreciate that, but --

SENATOR LONG
Do you know how many of your
colleagues would kill for an
opportunity like this? Men and
women, who've spent their careers...

RYAN HART
THEN GIVE IT TO ONE OF --
(catching herself)
I'm sorry, I meant no disrespect,
but...
(considers her words)
Look, I'm just going to be honest
with you...ideologically I am a
Democrat. There are very few
issues, where you and I won't be on
the same side. I was glad to help
put our party back in the
majority...but I want to DO something
about partisanship in this town,
not help perpetuate it.

The Leader considers this for a beat.

SENATOR LONG
You, obviously need some time to
mull it over. As you said, it's
been a whirlwind 24-hours for you
and I wouldn't want you to make a
decision you'll regret. You're
going to need friends in this town,
my dear. I know if Harvey Zandt
was here, he'd tell you the same.

INT. SENATE HALL - DAY

Ryan and Cathy walk and talk.

RYAN HART
(fuming)
Can you believe he had the audacity
to mention Harvey to ME.
(shaking her head)
Like I don't know exactly what
Harvey Zandt would have told him to
do with his bull shit "favor."
(off Cathy's look)
Yeah, I know, I need to stop
swearing.

CATHY CARTER-COX

(a beat)

So...about the speech?

RYAN HART

Fuck the speech. I mean...you know what I mean.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Senator --

RYAN HART

There is exactly zero upside to my giving that speech.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Except the leader asked you to do it.

(beat)

He hasn't given you your committee assignments, yet...and we've got this thing with Erie Sails. I know you don't want to here it, but he's right: you can't do this job without friends and you *really* don't want him as an enemy.

RYAN HART

What? Making him majority leader wasn't enough?

Ryan stops walking, takes a deep breath and turn to Cathy.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

Look, I hear your concern. I do. He's the leader. I worked here for seven years, I know what that means.

(beat)

I also know there's a certain amount of shit I just need to swallow around here. Like...I know I need to stop swearing, because people don't respond well to a woman, who talks like a sailor...even though -- technically speaking -- graduating from the Naval Academy makes me one.

(flashes her academy ring)

I know I need to be careful about, saying shit like that, because it can come off as bragging...and people don't respond well to women who brag.

(MORE)

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

I know I need to modulate my voice, so I don't come off as shrill and smile more, so I don't seem angry. I know I need to say "thank you," when a bunch of lawyers claim credit for winning the recount of an election I already won, and I know, when the Vice President of the United States threatens to metaphorically rape me, it's counterproductive for me to do anything but go about my day, because that's *not* how I want the world to know me.

Cathy wants to ask. Ryan shakes her head.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

But, for the record, I do not swallow said shit, because I like it or for the privilege of swallowing more.

(beat)

You said it yourself, right now, I am the most popular politician in the country. That's no small thing. Hell, it's why he wants me to give the stupid, speech, right?

Cathy nods.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

But I don't want to waste this opportunity on a stupid speech. I'm not saying, I can change things, but I know I can't change anything, if just do things the way they've always been done.

(off Cathy's look)

It's just a stupid speech that no one even remembers the next day...it can't be that big of a deal. Tell them I'll do fund-raisers, take selfies with every member of the damn caucus...whatever they need. Just not this speech. OK?

CATHY CARTER-COX

OK.

They walk in silence for a beat.

RYAN HART

We really need to fix this thing with Erie Sails. Apple is inches from announcing it will relocate the bulk of its manufacturing to Akron. I AND NOT losing that to a radar tower in Willowick.

CATHY CARTER-COX

I had Cody walk Jove back to our office.

RYAN HART

(remembering)
About that...

CATHY CARTER-COX

You crushed him.

RYAN HART

I wasn't having the best morning.

CATHY CARTER-COX

I gather...

She waits for Ryan to say more, but Ryan isn't about to get into it with a woman she barely knows.

RYAN HART

(needing to say something)
Let's just say...revenge is a dish best served cold.

Cathy masks her disappointment.

CATHY CARTER-COX

(changing the subject)
Cody's a good kid. You should give him a chance to prove himself.

RYAN HART

I need people, who won't be afraid to make waves with the party...and guys like that -- with *that* hair -- they all want to work *for* the party.

CATHY CARTER-COX

(frustrated)
We'll find them, but -- right now -- we need the help.

RYAN HART

What about the people I had working for me on the campaign?

CATHY CARTER-COX

As we discussed, we'll hire them, but *I* need to be the one to hire them.

RYAN HART

I am going to get some say in who works for me, right?

CATHY CARTER-COX

Of course, you'll get a say, but you hired me to manage your staff, right?

Ryan nods.

CATHY CARTER-COX (CONT'D)

Well...

(taking a different tack)

When you went to work for Harvey Zandt, who hired you?

(beat)

Seriously. You may have had a number of interviews and even met with the senator. But...who managed the process? Who ultimately picked up the phone and said, "Ryan Hart, come work with us?" I'm betting it wasn't the senator.

RYAN HART

(reluctantly)

Jack. Jack Parish, Harvey's Chief of Staff. He made me the offer.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Yeah, because Jack Parish was a great chief of staff, who knew you can't manage people, who don't think you have the power to hire and fire them.

(beat)

You're campaign staff were your people, but -- ask Jack -- you need to let me make them my people too.

RYAN HART

(after a beat)

Is his name really Cody?

VIDEO CLIP

We're seeing the previously-mentioned clip of RNC CHAIR, REX REYNOLDS's appearance on Fox and Friends, this morning. It's been replayed and debated all day.

REX REYNOLDS

If there was any justice in the world, Ryan Hart would be in a jail cell, right now, not a U.S. Senate seat.

PULL BACK to reveal

INT. SEN HART'S TRANSITION SUITE - RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ryan and Jove watch the clip on a small TV in her office.

As a freshman senator, Ryan has been assigned a windowless suite of rooms in the basement of the Russell Senate Office Building until her permanent office is assigned and readied.

[Note: Since senior senators are given the option to change/upgrade their office space before the newly elected get to select theirs, it will be months before Ryan, the most junior member of the U.S. Senate, moves into a permanent space.]

As we'll see, the transition suite consists of three rooms, that -- like adjacent hotel rooms -- each have doors connecting them to each other and the outside hall.

The room we're in now serves as Ryan's personal office. Four white walls. No windows -- so, no natural light -- and no decorations or personal touches. A standard-issue government desk, equipped with phone and computer, faces two basic chairs. The circa-1998 television, we were just watching, rests on a bookshelf, with no books, apart from the compulsory government manual and phone directory. There's also a round, wooden conference table with four additional chairs. And a boxy pleather sofa. So, about as much functional furniture as can fit in the space.

Ryan and Jove are on the sofa.

JOVE OLIVER

So, jail, huh? You know how to make a shiv?

Ryan smiles.

RYAN HART
 (light-bulb moment)
 That's why you're here, right?

JOVE OLIVER
 Me? Hardly. I mean, I've seen Oz,
 but that doesn't really make me as
 an expert. But I'm sure we could
 find a video on YouTube.

RYAN HART
 (shakes her head)
 I mean you'd have to be an
 exceptionally rinky-dink lobbyist
 to think a senator, with less than
 three hours on the job and
 virtually no staff to speak of, is
 the person to turn to with a crisis
 like this...and rinky-dink lobbyists
 don't wear \$6 thousand suits.

He smiles at the recognition.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)
 Seriously, you should be upstairs,
 chatting up the senior Republican
 from my state, who could fix this
 with one call to his buddy in the
 White House. But, you're not
 upstairs, you're down here...which
 suggests, you don't think they
 would fix it...and the only reason an
 elected official wouldn't be
 foaming at the mouth to save a
 bunch of jobs, he'd get to brag
 about saving, is --
 (a beat)
 You think they're trying to screw
 me.

Jove nods.

JOVE OLIVER
 I don't think they're present-tense
 trying to screw you...at least not
 where Erie Sails is concerned. But
 they're definitely looking for
 opportunities.
 (off Ryan's look)
 It's not personal. I take that
 back, a few of these guys are
 convinced you should be in jail for
 election fraud.
 (MORE)

JOVE OLIVER (CONT'D)

The usual nut jobs, plus a bunch, who don't think there's any way you could have won without cheating. But the pros just want to knock down your approval rating. I mean -- as I'm sure you know -- you aren't just helping Democrats rake in cash hand over fist, you're polling high among Republicans. No one seems to know what to make of it. You're making a lot of people nervous.

Ryan half smiles.

JOVE OLIVER (CONT'D)

All part of your master plan?

RYAN HART

Between you and me?

Jove nods.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

I have no idea what I'm doing.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICES - CATHY'S OFFICE - DAY

The center room of the three room suite, is divided into two sections by a temporary wall, that's sturdy enough to accommodate a door, but doesn't really contain sound. There's a reception area in front of the wall, while Cathy's office is behind it. [Note: the primary reason for this set-up, is it gives the chief of staff a door that lead's directly into Ryan's office.]

While Cathy's office has more stuff, papers, etc. than Ryan's. It's similarly sparse.

Cathy is on the phone at her desk. Cody stands at the door.

CATHY CARTER-COX

(into the phone)

Great. I owe ya. Can you email that to me. Thanks.

(waving Cody in)

What's up? I can give you a minute, while I wait for this message.

Cody steps in.

CODY

(sheepishly)

So...

CATHY CARTER-COX

(understanding)

She's sorry. She was having a rough morning. Had nothing to do with you. I convinced her to give you a chance.

CODY

Really?

CATHY CARTER-COX

I can't promise anything beyond a couple of weeks, so I urge you to make the most of it. Impress her.

CODY

Oh my god...I will. I SO will. I won't let you down, Cathy. Thank you.

CATHY CARTER-COX

You might want to...

She indicates his hair.

CODY

(insecure)

What?

CATHY CARTER-COX

(considering her words)

You just might want to look like you care more about her press than your own.

CODY

Got it.

Cathy turns her attention to her computer. CLICK. CLICK. We hear the printer fire up. Cody doesn't move.

CATHY CARTER-COX

(looking up)

Was there something else?

CODY

(remembering)

Uh...yeah...

(looks down at his pad)

Is it true the Senator was asked to give the State of the Union response?

Cathy studies him for a second, then gives him an almost, imperceptible NOD.

CODY (CONT'D)
 Seriously?! Can I write it?

CATHY CARTER-COX
 (retrieving the pages from
 the printer)
 Don't get too far ahead of
 yourself, bucko! Two minutes ago,
 you weren't sure you had a job.

CODY
 You just said I should impress her
 and well...I can write.

Cathy's on her feet, pages in hand, and about to enter Ryan's office --

CATHY CARTER-COX
 We'll talk later. Right now, I need
 to be in there.

She indicates Ryan's office. He nods.

Cathy opens the door --

INT. SEN HART'S TRANSITION SUITE - RYAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ryan and Jove are still on the couch.

RYAN HART
 (to Cathy)
 So, Jove says the Pentagon
 predicated its decision on an
 assessment conducted by the
 Department's Research and
 Engineering Enterprise.

Cathy hands the pages she just printed to Ryan and Jove,

CATHY CARTER-COX
 I reached out to a friend at DoD,
 who was able to track down the
 report's author.

JOVE OLIVER
 (reading)
 David Spector.

RYAN HART

So, normally, I'd suggest we announce our intention to hold every DoD nominee, until the administration decides to stop killing jobs and renewable energy.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Get some shots in on the administration as you set yourself up to get credit. I like it.

JOVE OLIVER

But...

RYAN HART

(to Cathy)

We're thinking, we should probably handle this quietly.

(off Cathy's look)

I know what you're going to say, but there are just too many people looking for a way to screw me, right now, and if it's a choice between fixing it without getting credit for it and not fixing it, I think we should fix it.

CATHY CARTER-COX

(after mulling for a beat)

I get it. We need to find a way to help Jove get Erie Flats back on track. But you need to be mindful of the fact that folks aren't going to stop looking for opportunities to screw you any time soon, and if you get in the habit of not caring about the credit...well, you're just doing the job for them.

(beat)

You don't want to spend the next six years solving problems, only to have your constituents think you've done nothing but sit around here twiddling your thumbs.

RYAN HART

This is a unique situation.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Every situation is unique.

RYAN HART

Yes, but --

JOVE OLIVER
 (silencing her)
 She's not talking to you.
 (to Cathy)
 Get this back on track and First
 Energy will ensure that Senator
 Hart gets the credit she deserves.

Cathy waits.

JOVE OLIVER (CONT'D)
 My boss will personally hand her
 the scissors to cut the ribbon.

CATHY CARTER-COX
 And...

JOVE OLIVER
 A full page ad, in every Northeast
 Ohio paper, thanking her for making
 it all possible.

Cathy still doesn't say anything.

JOVE OLIVER (CONT'D)
 (at a loss)
 We don't normally name turbines
 but...

CATHY CARTER-COX
 No, that's fine.

RYAN HART
 So, can we --

Cathy's already on her feet.

CATHY CARTER-COX
 I'll get the analyst over here as
 soon as possible. I'll tell him
 you're new and looking to get up to
 speed on few topics...nothing more to
 it than that.

Cathy exits.

RYAN HART
 We just might make this work.

Jove's distracted by something on the TV.

JOVE OLIVER
 You're giving response to the State
 of the Union?

RYAN HART

(WTF?)

No.

JOVE OLIVER

CNN seems to think otherwise.

Off, the CNN news crawl, announcing "NEWLY SEATED SENATOR
RYAN HART ASKED TO GIVE THE DEMOCRAT'S SOTU RESPONSE THURSDAY
NIGHT."

END ACT I

ACT IIINT. SEN HART'S TRANSITION SUITE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

We're on the other side of the wall from Cathy's office. The room is empty save for two desks -- one next to the door to Ryan's office, the other, obviously meant for reception -- and a couple of visitor chairs.

CODY (O.S.)
 (from Cathy's office)
 CNN called to confirm you were asked to give the address. Cathy said --

CATHY CARTER-COX (O.S.)
 I did NOT tell you to tell CNN!

CODY (O.S.)
 But she was asked...I don't...why don't...?
 (beat)
 Tell them I screwed up. This is my fault. I got it wrong. Blame me.

The door to the outer hall opens just wide enough for PRISCILLA "CILLA" JOHNSON (23) to get one of her strappy wedge-wearing feet inside. The foot slowly inches forward, pushing the door back, until one of the young woman's scantily clad legs is in the room and the heavy oak door is against her butt. She backs the door the rest of the way open.

Cilla pauses to catch her breath, resting the stacked FILING BOXES (we now see she's carrying) against the door jamb.

She doesn't exactly look like she belongs in the U.S. Senate, but she's arrived.

RYAN HART(O.S.)
 Oh yeah, because spoon-feeding Republicans an excuse to call me incompetent will make everything better.

Cilla smiles at the sound of Ryan's voice.

She considers the room a beat, before approaching the desk closest to Ryan's door. Placing the boxes on the desk, she turns her attention to the door, nudging it open a bit to make sure she's in the right place.

CODY (O.S.)

But...

CATHY CARTER-COX (O.S.)

The leader already confirmed they asked her to give the speech.

RYAN HART(O.S.)

So, now I can't turn down the leader's invitation, without publicly embarrassing him and kerfluffling the hell out of ---

Cilla studies the desktop computer on her new desk. She locates the power switch. Hits it. Nothing happens.

Ducking under the desk, she follows the power cord to a power strip. It's not plugged in. OK, so where is she supposed to plug this thing in?

As she looks for an outlet, we hear the HALL DOOR OPEN. Cilla springs to her feet, banging her head on her desk in the process.

CILLA

Can I help you?

GRAHAM KING (36) stands in the doorway. He'd tell you he's the "real life Sam Seaborn," which isn't entirely accurate, but says a lot about his ego. He takes in Cilla's outfit. Cilla couldn't care less.

GRAHAM

Graham King. To see Ryan.

JILL

Is *the senator* expecting you?

RYAN HART(O.S.)

Of course, he set me up!!!

Graham smiles.

GRAHAM

I think so.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICES - CATHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Cathy sits behind her desk. Ryan paces in front of it, while Cody tries to hide in plain site.

CATHY CARTER-COX

What are you going to do?

RYAN HART

I don't know. I don't know.
 (stop pace)
 I'm too tired to even think right
 now.

CATHY CARTER-COX

I know I don't have to remind you --

RYAN HART

No, you don't. I just need to
 think.

We hear a knock. The door to the reception area opens and
 CILLA steps in, like she works there.

CILLA

I'm sorry to interrupt, but there's
 a Graham King here. Says, you're
 expecting him.

Cody shrinks.

RYAN HART

(angry but hushed)
 Gee, I wonder what he's doing
 here?!

CATHY CARTER-COX

I can --

RYAN HART

You've already done enough, thank
 you.
 (beat)
 And, this is personal.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ryan enters from the chief of staff's office. Graham is
 standing in front of one of the white walls, holding a yellow
 folder.

GRAHAM

I was just admiring your view.
 Personally, I prefer my balcony in
 the Leader's suite, but there's
 something about this that speaks to
 me...I think it's the white.

Ryan rolls her eyes.

RYAN HART

I don't know, Graham, those balconies are nice, but seeing as they only give these temporary offices to newly elected senators...I'm pretty sure I prefer mine.

That got to him. He tries to hide it.

GRAHAM

Yeah, you won A Senate race. I just won eight.

RYAN HART

I won the one you couldn't.

INT. SEN HART'S TRANSITION OFFICE - CATHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Cody stand's in front of Cathy's desk.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Look, I don't know what to tell you, kid --

CODY

But she said it herself, I was set up.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Yes, but if you want to work at this level, you need to not let yourself get set up.

(beat)

She hasn't fired you, yet, but... There's plenty of work to do around here, but no more talking reporters.

Cody stomps out of Cathy's office into the --

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

He sees Cilla smirking at him from behind her desk.

CODY

What are you looking at?

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ryan and Graham glare at each other from opposite sides of her desk.

GRAHAM

You told my boss, you wouldn't have time to write a speech. So, God help me...I'm here to help.

He drops the yellow folder on her desk. Ryan regards it like a used doggy poo bag.

RYAN HART

Oh, so he *was* listening? Because I also told him I didn't want to give the speech.

GRAHAM

...and he's delighted you changed your mind.
(off her look)
You did change your mind, right? I mean, you're already trending on Twitter...wouldn't want to disappoint all those fans of yours.

Ryan's face falls as she realizes he's got her boxed in.

RYAN HART

What lame hashtag did you come up with this time?

GRAHAM

(smiling)
I had nothing to do with this.

RYAN HART

Yeah, like you had nothing to do with my not being able to get a job, when Harvey died.

GRAHAM

No, that was *all* my doing. There was a lot of sympathy for you back then, a lot of folks wanting to make sure Harvey's staff "landed on their feet," and...I just felt prospective employers needed to know that Ryan Hart was not a "team player."

(beat)

(MORE)

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

But it's a new day and couch is
handing you the ball...so the
question is, did Ryan Hart learn
her lesson?

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RECEPTION - DAY

Cilla and Cody are on their feet...this is already turning into
a full blown argument.

CODY

You can't just walk in a Senate
office building, dressed like
that...and pick out a desk. You could
be a terrorist for all I know.

CILLA

This is how you think terrorists
dress?

CODY

You could be in disguise.

CILLA

Wow. It's a wonder Ryan isn't keen
to keep your knock-off Gossling ass
around.

Cathy appears in her doorway.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Young lady, if you want your
things, I suggest you collect them
now. Capitol Police is on their way
to escort you from the building.

CILLA

Say what, now?

CATHY CARTER-COX

Cody shouldn't have been the one to
raise this with you, but he's
right. You can't just walk into a
senate office and pick a desk.

CILLA

I'm Cilla Johnson...Senator Hart's
assistant.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Well, I'm sorry, but I've never heard of you, Ms. Johnson, and I'm the Senator's Chief of Staff, the person who'll be hiring for that position. So, if you'd like to leave a resume --

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ryan and Graham still sit across the desk from each other.

RYAN HART

You know, you represent everything that's wrong with this place.

GRAHAM

Oh goody, I can't tell you how much I've missed getting lectured by Ryan Hart.

She was about to lecture him, but his words give her pause.

RYAN HART

(shaking her head)

You're right. I'd be wasting my breath.

(standing)

I'll give the stupid speech, but I', writing my own, so take whatever hackery that is

(indicates folder)

and get the hell out of my office.

GRAHAM

(standing)

Can I ask what you plan to say on behalf of our party?

RYAN HART

(Go fuck yourself.)

I don't know...seeing as I'm supposed to respond to the President's State of the Union, maybe I'll try something new and like, wait to hear what the president has to say for himself first.

GRAHAM

Good to know you're still a bitch.

RYAN HART

That's Senator Bitch to you, now.

Graham leaves. Ryan sits and puts her feet up on her desk. The yellow folder remains where he left it. She nudges it off with her foot.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
We're not arresting you, ma'am, but we do need to escort you from the premises.

CILLA
Looks like HE'S getting ready ta taze me

Ryan gets up from her desk and hurries to the --

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RECEPTION - DAY

TWO CAPITOL POLICE OFFICERS stand over Cilla. One *is* resting his hand on his tazer. Cathy and Cody watch from Cathy's doorway.

RYAN HART
What's going on here?

CILLA
Thank God. Please tell these "gentlemen" I work here.

RYAN HART
(to the officers)
Yes, Ms. Johnson is my assistant. I very much need her on the premises.

CILLA
TOLD YA!
(to Ryan)
(MORE)

CILLA (CONT'D)

I drove for flipping ever last night...had to get my beauty rest IN my car, which wasn't what I would describe as restful...nearly got arrested for "indecent exposure," because heaven forbid a girl should wanna wear a bra to her first day of work...drove around for like 67 hours trying to find a place to park around here, only to spend another 67 hours traipsing around in search of your office, which -- in case you didn't know -- is hidden in the mother fudgin basement...might as well be that Harry Potter room of, whatever...but HERE I AM...asking NOT what my country can do for me...but trying to work for ya'll, when THAT ONE...
 (she points at Cathy)
 ...calls the cops on me! I thought Democrats were supposed to be the good guys.

Everyone looks at Cathy,

CILLA (CONT'D)

(not missing a beat)

You have a 12:30 lunch with Anne Davis at Charlie Palmers, they have a shrimp salad special this week, Terrance seemed to think you'd really like it, although given your thoughts on cilantro, I recommend swapping the dressing for something they call chili lime. Ms. Davis said she'd meet you there, it's a ten minute walk, so you should get to skedaddling. I haven't gotten to the rest of your schedule yet, but will sync it with your Google calendar as soon as these folks give me a chance to find a fricking outlet for my computer.

POLICE OFFICER

Ooh, there's one over here, how long's your cord?

Ryan smiles as the police officers roll up their sleeves to help Cilla figure out power for her computer. (In a moment, we might find them moving her desk for her.)

Ryan turns back to

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

She finds her coat and bundles herself for the cold. Cathy enters from the door connecting their offices.

Before her chief of staff can speak.

RYAN HART

Save it.

(locking eyes w/ Cathy)

As far as I'm concerned, that girl is the only one, around here with any job security.

INT. CHARLIE PALMERS - DAY

The Capitol Hill steakhouse is packed with the lunch crowd of lawmakers and lobbyists. Ryan sits across from her friend, ANN DAVIS (40) a no-nonsense, Chanel-wearing lobbyist.

ANN DAVIS

Are you shitting me?

RYAN HART

I shit you not. Elmer Long -- of all people -- not only had the audacity to invoke Harvey's memory to ME...he did it to get me to give a hack partisan speech.

ANN DAVIS

Wow. I would have loved to see how Harvey would've responded to that!

RYAN HART

Me too.

His loss saddens them both,

ANN DAVIS

(raising her ice tea)

To Harvey.

RYAN HART

(raising hers)

To Harvey.

(beat)

You think he'd be disappointed I'm giving the hack, partisan speech?

Ann thinks for a beat.

ANN DAVIS

I think you're in a tough spot,
without a lot of good options.

(beat)

But you're writing the speech,
right? You've never done a hack
thing in your whole life.

RYAN HART

Yeah, but...I can't exactly go on
national television as the standard
bearer of the Democratic Party and
say what I really think about the
Democratic Party.

ANN DAVIS

Well, technically...

(off Ryan's look)

I'm not saying you should, just
pointing out that there isn't a
whole hell of a lot they could do
to stop you.

RYAN HART

Yeah, but then a desire to take me
out officially becomes the *only*
thing Democrats and Republicans can
agree on in this town.

ANN DAVIS

You said you wanted to promote
bipartisanship.

Ryan smiles.

RYAN HART

I also want a better committee
assignment than the "select
committee on aging."

ANN DAVIS

You'd make him regret it.

(smiling at the thought)

What was that thing you and Jack
use to say..."I'd rather be a
pirate...?"

RYAN HART

"...than join the Navy." It's a
Steve Jobs quote. Jack thought it
was funny because I was actually in
the Navy.

Ryan gets quiet at the thought of Jack.

ANN DAVIS
He still hasn't called you?

RYAN HART
I don't want to talk about it.

ANN DAVIS
That man's a child.

RYAN HART
(changing the subject)
Sure you don't want to be my chief
of staff?

ANNE DAVIS
Honey, having lunch in broad
daylight with a lobbyist is bad
enough. Hiring one to lead your
office would be suicide.

RYAN HART
This lunch was your idea.

ANNE DAVIS
Yeah, well I missed you. And what
looks bad for you, happens to be
good business for me.

She looks around and smiles at her world of potential
clients.

RYAN HART
Glad to be of service.

ANNE DAVIS
So...Cathy Carter Collins isn't
cutting it?
(as an aside)
God, I love to say her name "Cathy
Carter-Collins." I don't think it's
possible for me to just call her
Cathy.
(realizing)
So much for that theory.

RYAN HART
I specifically told her I didn't
want to give this speech...that I'm
now giving.

ANNE DAVIS
You know Long had Graham finagle
that shit.

RYAN HART

Yeah, but I shouldn't have to work so hard to get her to support my agenda.

Anne is conspicuously quiet.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

What?

ANN DAVIS

You don't want me to say it.

RYAN HART

Probably not, but you're gonna to say it anyway.

ANNE DAVIS

She's not Jack.

RYAN HART

Yeah and thank God for that.

ANNE DAVIS

Whatever, before the two of you had "issues," you were...

(searching for an answer)

...Lennon and McCarthy. Yeah, the two of you are John Lennon and Paul McCarthy. Your solo work's strong, but put the two of you in a room together and, well...you're the Beatles.

Ryan doesn't know where Anne is going with this.

ANN DAVIS

I'm just saying, Cathy Carter-Collins is like the person John Lennon tried to write songs with after Paul McCartney.

RYAN HART

Didn't he write with Yoko Ono?

ANN DAVIS

How the hell am I supposed to know who he wrote with. I was making an analogy.

RYAN HART

Yeah, well for the purposes of this analogy, I really think, I should be Paul McCartney.

Anne laughs.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)
I already have enough people
gunning for me.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - LEG SHOP - DAY

The third of the three rooms that make up Ryan's transition offices is colloquially known as the "leg shop." It's an open room with rows of desks, usually occupied by legislative assistants and others hired to help Ryan write and consider legislation.

Right now, Cody is the room's sole occupant. We find him sitting on the floor surrounded by mail. Lots and lots of mail. Empty envelopes cast to one side. Their contents in neat stacks piled concentrically around him.. And, oh yeah, Cody's wearing rubber gloves.

CILLA (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Cody looks up to find Cilla standing in the doorway.

CODY
I'm opening the mail.

CILLA
She hasn't even been a senator for
a day.

CODY
Well technically no one's held this
seat for the last three weeks.

CILLA
(picking up an envelope)
They're addressed to Senator
Trenchard.

CODY
Yeah, some...ok, most. And if the
contents are meant for him
personally, they go in this pile..
(indicates a small pile)
...which I will send to him. But any
constituent, who wrote to share an
opinion with him or ask for
help...well, now they're our
constituents.

CILLA
And the gloves?

CODY
Anything mailed to Congress gets irradiated, off site, before it get's brought in the building and the irradiation leaves a residue.
(off her look)
Anthrax.

She looks pale.

CODY (CONT'D)
Just wait til your escape hood training.

CILLA
You seem to have some experience with this.

CODY
I've interned for three different Congressional office.

CILLA
That seems like a lot.

CODY
I've also worked on a half dozen campaigns, which are technically supposed to lead to jobs, but somehow don't, for me. I've interviewed with 26 different offices, many of which ended up hiring someone from "back home," meaning, "not me." One guy did hire me...as a speechwriter, no less. Great. Dream come true, right? Yeah, well...the only thing I got to write for him was a statement announcing he was resigning, after being caught soliciting sex at a Chuck E Cheese.

(off her look)
I see you're familiar with my work.
(beat)
I actually let myself believe this was, finally, going to be my big break, a chance to be part of something that matters, you know? Well...so much for that.

(beat)
(MORE)

CODY (CONT'D)

So, right now, I'm gonna use the little power I have to let a few folks know, someone in this place cared enough to read what they took the time to write. As for tomorrow, maybe I'll finally listen to my Dad and find real job. Apparently, I'm breaking my mother's heart.

Cilla nods and starts back towards her desk, but after a few steps, she stops --

CILLA

You should give Ryan another chance.

CODY

Uh, I think you got that backwards. She's the one who gets to give chances and I blew the one she gave me.

CILLA

(shakes her head)

Nah. Ya gotta understand, Ryan hates hacks -- has zero patience for em...

(off Cody's look)

Shit. I said that wrong. I wasn't calling you a hack. Ryan just thinks everyone's a hack until they prove her wrong. But the thing to know about Ryan is she LOVES to be proved wrong.

CODY

What are you talking about?

CILLA

OK, so, she's a lot better at explaining this than me, but here goes nothing...Ryan says, politics makes people think you can only lead if you win or...I'm sorry, you have to win to lead. And she says, people have been thinking this for so long, that they think winning is leading. Which is bad, because winning isn't leading, and the shortcuts politicians take to win, make it impossible to lead.

(hitting her stride)

(MORE)

CILLA (CONT'D)

Like if you're running for office and all you care about is winning, it's a lot easier to freak voters out about some jacked up shit they believe about government, than it is to help them understand how government really works. But freaking people out about the jacked shit they believe doesn't lead them anywhere except maybe to a world where no one does anything, except believe a bunch of jacked up shit. Ya see what I'm saying?

CODY

Maybe.

CILLA

Well, when I say she hates hacks, I mean she hates the purveyors of said jacked up shit. And by "hate," I mean -- don't tell anyone I said this -- I think she just got herself elected to the U.S. Senate because she wanted to prove what a bunch of dumb, lazy shits they all.

CODY

Then why doesn't she want to give the speech on Thursday. Isn't this a chance to show the world what a non-hack sounds like.

CILLA

To tell you the truth, I don't think she's thought this far ahead. I mean, she knew she'd win, but didn't know...you know? And now...it's like she knows she wants to be a leader, but she doesn't know, where she wants to lead anyone, let alone how she's going to do it, and...

CODY

She doesn't want to be a hack.

CILLA

Look. I'm not saying Ryan's easy. Cuz she's not. She's like a fire-breathing, spikey, scaley thing with trust issues and a chip on her shoulder.

(MORE)

CILLA (CONT'D)

But some people are worth the work,
and when you get past the spikes
and scales, they don't come any
better than Ryan Hart.

(beat)

And well, I'm just sayin, if you
meant what you said about wanting
to be part of something that
matters. I'm pretty sure, that girl
in there, is who ya want to stick
with.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - LATE DAY

Ryan and Cathy sit across from DAVID SPECTOR (58), the
Pentagon Official sent to brief them. He appears to be
exactly what he is: a man who's spent his entire career in
mid-level bureaucracy. He's probably been wearing the same,
off-the-rack suit for the last ten years.

DAVID SPECTOR

Wind turbines, with tip speeds of 6-
7 times actual wind speed, can
create, what's know as clutter
interference...which has been shown
to cause certain types radar
systems to lose or - in some cases -
fail to detect targeted aircraft.

RYAN HART

Okay. So, what do we do about it?

David looks confused.

DAVID SPECTOR

What do you mean?

RYAN HART

I mean, the Pentagon won't let
First Energy build a wind farm on
Lake Erie, because you wrote a
report saying it would negatively
effect national security.

DAVID SPECTOR

It would.

RYAN HART

OK, so what do we do about it.

DAVID SPECTOR

Again, I don't follow.

RYAN HART

How do we get the Pentagon to lift its objection?

DAVID SPECTOR

The Pentagon's objecting to the wind farm, because it will negatively impact national security.

RYAN HART

Yes, I am aware of that, but exactly how much harm are we talking?

DAVID SPECTOR

Excuse me?

RYAN HART

(getting frustrated)

Like dirty bomb at the Super Bowl kind of harm or is this more along the lines of getting licked by an adorable kitten with a scratchy tongue...you know, not that big of a deal?

DAVID SPECTOR

(offended)

Senator, any threat to our national security capabilities is a big deal.

RYAN HART

But is it as big of a deal as, let's say 12,000 tech jobs? What about 2 billion kilowatt hours of green energy. That right there makes us less dependent on foreign sources of oil...which has to be good for national security right? So, is this radar station more or less of a big deal than those jobs and kilowatt hours.

DAVID SPECTOR

Those assessments are outside my purview.

RYAN HART

Well whose purview are they in?

DAVID SPECTOR

I don't follow.

RYAN HART
 (really frustrated)
 Who determines if saving the radar station is worth killing the wind farm?

DAVID SPECTOR
 I'm not sure it's in anyone's purview. DoD is asked to review projects to determine if they will negatively affect national security. If they do, we object. If they don't, we don't.

RYAN HART
 But no one has the authority to overrule the Pentagon's objection.

DAVID SPECTOR
 The president?

That doesn't help.

RYAN HART
 So, there's nothing I can do to get you to lift the Pentagon's objection?

DAVID SPECTOR
 Again, that's not in my purview. I just wrote the report.

RYAN HART
 That established the basis for DoD's objection.

Ryan's not getting anywhere with this guy. She turns to Cathy for help...or permission to strangle this guy.

CATHY CARTER-COX
 (referring to her notes)
 Mr. Spector, you said, "certain types of radar" can be affected by "clutter interference." Are there types of radar that aren't?

Ryan looks up. That was a good question.

DAVID SPECTOR
 Yes, the new technology can account for clutter interference, but the Willowick station isn't operating...

RYAN HART

What if we upgraded the radar equipment at the Willowick station?

DAVID SPECTOR

You mean retrofit?

Ryan tries not to roll her eyes.

RYAN HART

Yes, of course, what if we retrofitted the Willowick station with modern equipment.

DAVID SPECTOR

That would, likely, mitigate the problem. Studies have also shown that applying an active substance to turbine blades can help mask their Doppler signature.

RYAN HART

(through gritted teeth)
Really?

CATHY CARTER-COX

So, if the Willowick station was..."retrofitted" with the newest radar technology and First Energy agreed to this coating you specify..

DAVID SPECTOR

It's an absorbing media.

CATHY CARTER-COX

If they apply the absorbing media...would you change your report?

DAVID SPECTOR

I'd have to.

RYAN HART

Great.

INT. CAPITOL HILL BAR - NIGHT

It's a typical bar filled with twenty-somethings in suits. Cody sits at a high top with A FRIEND nursing a pitcher of beer.

CODY

She says I need to find a way to prove I'm not a hack, but --

FRIEND

How are you supposed to do that if they won't let you do anything?

CODY

I don't know. I printed off the text of like every speech she's ever given. I'm gonna read them to night and pray something comes to me...

GRAHAM (O.S.)

There's the man of the hour!

They turn to see Graham King standing behind him. Cody can't quite believe he's talking to them.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Cody Kidd, right?

Cody nods.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Great name. Hey --
 (signals waitress)
 Can I get another one of these
 (indicates empty pitcher)
 And a Dewars on the rocks.

The WAITRESS nods and leaves to retrieve his order. Graham takes a seat.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

So, how's the new job?

Cody cringes.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Rough first day?

CODY

I screwed up.

GRAHAM

Well, of course, Ryan sees it that way. She never has been able to tell, when someone's doing her a favor.

CODY

But --

GRAHAM

But what? You did me a favor. You stepped up. Took one for the team. I like team players.

CODY

But, I work for Senator Hart.

GRAHAM

Yeah, but who do you want to work for?

Cody doesn't know how to respond.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

I hear you're a hell of a speechwriter.

CODY

Where'd you hear that?

GRAHAM

(ignoring the question)
We're having a little meeting tomorrow morning. Just me and the other members of my communication's team. You should come by. We can explore ways we might be able to help each other out.

CODY

Seriously?

GRAHAM

I'll email you the details.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ryan is supine on the couch reading something.

CATHY CARTER-COX

You should go home. Get some sleep.

RYAN HART

I'm too tired to get up.

(beat)

Thanks for saving my ass in that meeting.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Just doing my job.

RYAN HART

Maybe, but I'm really glad you were here to do it. Do you think we have a chance of getting DoD to retrofit this thing without involving the Secretary? I talked to Jove, they're working on the "absorbing medium."

CATHY CARTER-COX

I'm trying, but I can't promise anything. There's a lot of bureaucracy over there, but when senator's call...it tends to get brought to his attention.

(beat)

If that's all?

She turns to leave.

RYAN HART

Wait. I'm sorry about before.

CATHY CARTER-COX

You had a rough day.

RYAN HART

Yeah, but...

CATHY CARTER-COX

My only concern is that you don't seem to trust me. I won't be very good at this job if you don't trust me.

Ryan considers this for a beat and sits up.

RYAN HART

Earlier, you asked about Jack Parish.

CATHY CARTER-COX

Yeah, I --

Ryan shakes her head.

RYAN HART

I was a bartender at Cafe Milano. You know, the one in Georgetown?

Cathy nods.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

I'd just gotten out of the Navy and was about to start law school at Georgetown. Had this big plan to go into international law. Prosecute war crimes and stuff.

(beat)

Anyway, this one night, I'm behind the bar and this hot shot Congressman comes in. I won't name names, but you've heard of him. He was all over cable news at the time. In fact, I think he had me change the channel so he could watch himself on TV. Anyway...in addition to be a narcissist, he apparently thought being a cable star means you can get handsy with cocktail waitresses. He kept grabbing their asses and trying to make them sit on his lap, even though anyone with eyes could see they weren't into it.

(Beat)

Well, I don't care who he is, I'm not about to let him get away with that shit, not at my bar. But, I don't just call him out for being a lecherous piece of shit. No -- on top of that -- I took it upon myself to tell him, and the rest of the bar's patrons, exactly what I thought of his op-ed on Iran's nuclear disarmament. And I thought his op-ed was the most asinine thing I'd ever read.

(beat)

So...I got fired. But as I'm grabbing my things to go, this guy, walks up to me, puts his business card down on the bar and says, "How'd you like to work for a U.S. Senator."

CATHY CARTER-COX

That sounds like Jack.

RYAN HART

He said Harvey Zandt needed people who weren't afraid to speak truth to power.

It's a happy memory, but the look on Ryan's face reminds us, it's not all happy, where Jack's concerned.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

Jack's the only chief of staff I've ever worked with...and he wasn't just my boss or my mentor...over the years he became my best friend, my partner-in-crime...we shared so many proverbial foxholes together...

CATHY CARTER-COX

(Sensing there's more)

What happened?

The request for trust still hangs in the air

RYAN HART

I was stupid. We were stupid.

Ryan's face says it all.

CATHY CARTER-COX

You had an affair.

Ryan nods.

RYAN HART

If once counts as an affair.

(beat)

Harvey was in the hospital. We weren't in the best frame of mind. Hell, we not only weren't thinking straight, I'm not sure we were thinking at all.

(beat)

I know that doesn't make it ok. He was married. It was wrong. I'd give anything to take it back but...it was one mistake! How does one mistake wipe out seven years??? It's like -

CATHY CARTER-COX

Killing 12,000 tech jobs to save an unmanned radar station?

Ryan smiles.

RYAN HART

Exactly.

CATHY CARTER-COX

When's the last time you spoke?

RYAN HART

Not since. I saw him at Harvey's funeral, but he went out of his way to avoid me. After that I couldn't get him to return a call...or an email. Hell, I couldn't even get him to give me a job reference.

CATHY CARTER-COX

I heard he got divorced, quit drinking and hiked the Appalachian Trail.

(off Ryan's look)

Sorry.

RYAN HART

As I said, Jack's the only chief of staff I've ever worked with --

CATHY CARTER-COX

You were a team...had a short hand --

Ryan nods.

CATHY CARTER-COX (CONT'D)

We'll get there --

(beat)

But right now, you need to get your ass in bed.

Ryan stands. Cathy retrieves her coat.

CATHY CARTER-COX (CONT'D)

Thank you for telling me. I know that wasn't easy.

(beat)

Now, give me a hug and get your ass out of here.

The two women hug.

Cathy watches Ryan collect her bag and exit. She waits a beat, takes out her cell phone and dials.

CATHY CARTER-COX (CONT'D)

(phone to her ear)

It's me.

(beat)

We got her.

END ACT II

ACT IIIINT. LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The communication team meeting is in full swing. Graham sits at the head of the table surrounded by VARIOUS DEPUTIES in charge of various levels and aspects of Democratic Caucus communication, like social media, minority outreach, event planning, etc.

[Note: I can name and describe the various deputies, but in general we're talking about an ethnically diverse group of educated, twenty-somethings, gender isn't that important, although given that Graham hired these guys, there's a good chance they're either all attractive women or younger versions of himself.]

DEPUTY 1

We really need her to hit them on seniors.

DEPUTY 2

(to Cody)

You remember the ad we did with House Republicans throwing granny off the cliff?

DEPUTY 3

Oh my God, you remember Gladys?

DEPUTY 2

Yes, she was literally the coolest grandma ever.

GRAHAM

How many scream takes did she do for us?

DEPUTY 2

Jared made a keyboard out of them, it's like the best thing ever.

DEPUTY 1

(back to Cody)

This has been a winning message for us, that we really need Ryan to keep hitting.

CODY

Why?

DEPUTY 1

What do you mean why?

GRAHAM

Does someone have the focus group data. Cody should see the dial results for the ad.

(to Cody)

You'll see it's our best hit on Republicans.

CODY

Yeah, I get that it's a great hit on Republicans, but and -- apart from the fact that there's like zero chance I could get Senator Hart to do anything let alone this -
- what does that do for us?

GRAHAM

Less people supporting Republicans is a win for us.

CODY

Is it? Because last I checked, Congress had like a 20 percent approval rating. Doesn't really seem like anyone's winning.

(beat)

Plus are Republicans pushing granny off the cliff?

DEPUTY 2

It's a metaphor.

CODY

I get that. But is what they're proposing really that bad? And be honest, is there anything they could have proposed that wouldn't have resulted in that ad? They could all start wearing I heart Medicare shirts and you'd still find an excuse to attack them. Wouldn't you?

GRAHAM

You mean the guys calling for your boss to be in prison right now. That's who you think we should go easy on?

CODY

Where does it end?

GRAHAM

Wow. Someone's been drinking the Ryan Hart koolaid.

CODY

You should try it. It tastes pretty good.

GRAHAM

Too bad she's going to fire your ass.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

RYAN, Cathy and Jove sit across from a meticulously-groomed gentleman, we're about to learn is the SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. He's flanked by a AIR FORCE COLONEL and an assortment of JUNIOR STAFFERS. This is a guy who likes to travel with an entourage.

CATHY CARTER-COX

I believe what the senator is trying to say.

SEC DEF

I'm well aware what the Senator is trying to say. But what I'm "saying" is, there's a right way and a wrong way to go about a thing...and I don't care how much power some new flavor of the month senator thinks she has, she doesn't have the authority to come into my department and order people to retrofit radar stations, because SHE thinks it's a good idea.

JOVE OLIVER

If it's a matter of cost.

SEC DEF

Put away your check book, son
(beat)

Can't say I don't appreciate the sentiment, but you're hitchin the plow to the wrong side of the mule...and it don't work like that.

(beat)

As I was saying. We have a process for these things, and now that you've brought this matter to our attention, we'll get the wheels in motion.

(MORE)

SEC DEF (CONT'D)

But these things don't happen over night. There are studies we need to conduct, alternatives to consider...

JOVE OLIVER

Jesus Christ, we're not asking you to renegotiate the test ban treaty.

SEC DEF

I don't think I like your tone.

JOVE OLIVER

Oh, you don't, do you?

CATHY CARTER-COX

Gentleman...

SEC DEF

He needs to show some respect.

RYAN HART

Are you having fun?

All eyes turn to Ryan, who we realize has yet to say anything.

SEC DEF

I beg your pardon?

RYAN

Look, Mr. Secretary, with all due respect. We all know what's really going on here. So, a girl can't help but wonder if this little sketch act of yours is for your benefit or mine.

The secretary starts to react. She doesn't let him.

RYAN HART

Let's cut the crap. Okay?

She waits for everyone's attention.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

I get that I'm easy to underestimate. I do. A young, smoking hot piece of ass such as myself...how could I possibly have it going on between the ears too? Am I right?

She looks around the room. The tension is palpable, as no one seems to know where she's going with this.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

Now, if you want to keep making that mistake, that's your prerogative. It's no skin off my nose. Hell, I am where I am today, in part, because your fellow Republicans underestimated me. And now, God bless em, they're awash in so much cognitive dissonance they're still underestimating me.

(momentarily amused)

But, before you make that decision, let me let you in on a little secret...I'm not actually a fluke.

(shakes her head)

You see, it's not -- as some have claimed -- impossible to win a senate race without piles and piles of cash. Hard? Yes. Impossible? No. I did it with an excel spreadsheet. Yup, I figured out how many votes I would need to win and then, I went out and found them.

(beat)

I didn't find all of them personally. Sure I found some. I knocked on my share of doors. Stood outside a lot of supermarkets. But every time I found someone who said they would vote for me, instead of asking them for money, I asked them to pledge to find me votes. And when they found me those votes, I put their name and contact information into my excel spreadsheet. There was a little more to it than that. We built an app and I organized one hell of a get out the vote operation. OK. Not really, I pretty much just asked the folks, who got me the votes to make sure they were cast. But, at the end of the day, working out of my living room, with not a lot more than a MacBook Air and some volunteers, I identified 3,167,581 voters in the state of Ohio. 3,167,578 of which voted on or before election day.

(MORE)

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

Two were in the hospital, while Mavis Barker had last minute business travel. We talked. She feels terrible.

She lets that sink in.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

Now, look, I know I'm not who you want in this office. But I also know you're a smart man with enough political ambition of his own to know a deal when he hears one.

(beat)

Now, I had hoped to, fix this "below the radar," but seeing as that no longer seems possible, I'm thinking this can go down one of two ways.

SEC DEF

This should be interesting.

RYAN HART

Well, I think you will be interested, because if you're willing to play ball with us on this, and do whatever it is that needs doing to get this wind project back up and running. I'm prepared to give you full credit.

That surprised him. And Cathy, who doesn't look pleased.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

Got your attention. Didn't I? And I meant it. Help save the wind farm and I will personally draft a press release thanking you for single-handedly saving Eerie Sails and every job it will bring to the state of Ohio. I will also use my considerable media profile to praise your leadership in bringing the Pentagon into the modern era. Yes, I will use the term "leadership" and you'll have more than enough footage to make an appeal for crossover votes back in that purple state of yours. Hell, I'll even campaign with you, if you'll have me.

Cathy DOES NOT look happy.

SEC DEF

I think your chief of staff is about to be sick.

RYAN HART

Look, I could give you my whole spiel about wanting to change politics as usual around here. It would be the truth and doing this would, no doubt, help feed that goal. But the overarching truth is that I was elected to represent the interests of the great state of Ohio and I wouldn't be doing my job if I don't do everything in my power to save this project.

SEC DEF

And if I don't play ball?

RYAN HART

Remember that story I just told about how I spent a year and a half meticulously gathering 3,167,581 votes from my living room?

The secretary nods.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)

Well, that's what I did the last time I was really ticked at someone. So, I suggest you avoid ticking me off.

CUT TO:

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - LATER

Jove is beaming. Ryan looks relieved. Through the open door, we see Cathy is showing the Secretary and the rest of the Pentagon staff out.

JOVE OLIVER

I thought Cathy was going to have a heart attack back there.

RYAN HART

I thought she was going to kill me...or quit...or quit then kill me. It's just good form to quit before you kill someone, right?

It's nervous energy.

JOVE OLIVER
You did good back there.

RYAN HART
Just doing my job.

JOVE OLIVER
No, seriously, 99 other senators
couldn't -- or wouldn't -- have
done what you just did.

RYAN HART
Is that a good thing?

JOVE OLIVER
I think so.

She smiles, momentarily satisfied with a job well done.

Cathy returns with a glum look on her face.

CATHY CARTER-COX
We may a problem.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE (LATER)

We pick up a few moments after we left off. Jove is on his cell phone in the background, as Ryan questions Cathy.

RYAN HART
(frustrated)
So, he said there was another
objection.

CATHY CARTER-COX
No, he wanted me to reassure him
you'd still put out the statement
if there was another objection. But
there was something about the way
he said it.

JOVE OLIVER
(getting off the phone)
There's another objection.

RYAN HART
Seriously? Didn't all the other
agencies already sign off?

JOVE OLIVER

Yes, but now Interior's says they anticipate a legal stay.

RYAN HART

Someone's suing?

JOVE OLIVER

Interior's only been notified of an intent to file, but...

CATHY CARTER-COX

And Interior isn't going to sign off on a loan guarantee, if the project's tied up in court.

JOVE OLIVER

Even a frivolous case could tie us up for months.

RYAN HART

Fuck.

(thinking)

So...we need to cut them off at the pass. Convince whoever's suing you not to sue you. So, who's suing you?

JOVE OLIVER

We don't know. My contact at Interior didn't know...or wouldn't say. Our lawyers are working on it.

RYAN HART

No. No. No. No.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Cilla is at her desk, when Cody returns from his meeting.

CILLA

You're back.

CODY

I am.

MONTAGE OF RYAN ET AL TRYING TO TRACK DOWN LAWSUIT

- We see Ryan, Jove and Cathy in the same room, but on three different phones.

- Ryan and Jove trade notes on a conference call.

- Cilla brings coffee to everyone still on the phone.
- Anne Davis arrives with food and takes off her jacket. She's there to help.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RECEPTION - DAY

Cody approaches Cilla's desk.

CILLA
Where have you been?

CODY
Working on something.

Ryan's door's open, giving Cody a view of Anne, Jove and Ryan at work around the round conference table.

CODY (CONT'D)
What's going on in there?

CILLA
It's the wind farm. Ryan got the Pentagon to lift their objection, but the project's still on hold. Someone's planning to sue the windfarm or something, but they don't know who. So they're trying to figure it out...

CODY
Wait, they just want to know who's suing the windfarm?

CILLA
Yeah...

Cody's already dashing towards the leg shop.

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The conference table is covered, with pads, print-outs, lap tops and carry-out containers. Ryan, Jove and Anne sit around the table. They look frustrated. (Cathy's in her office.)

There's a knock at the door and the three look up to see Cody enter.

RYAN HART
Yeah?

CODY
Cilla said you were trying to
figure out who's suing the windfarm

The three sit up in their seats. Cathy appears from her office.

RYAN HART
Yeah. Why?

CODY
Well...yesterday, I...uh...spent the
afternoon opening your constituent
mail.
(off Ryan's look)
Everything mailed to the office
over the last month.

She nods.

RYAN HART
Anyway, it may not be what you're
looking for, but, I remembered it,
because...well --

He places a familiar white, plastic FIGURINE OF A BIRD on the table.

CODY
It's a...

RYAN HART
Piping Plover.

CODY
Yeah --

RYAN HART
(putting it together)
Mother fucker.

Ryan is on her feet and headed for the door.

RYAN HART (CONT'D)
(to no one in particular)
Tell the leader. I'm on my way.

Cathy disappears in her office. Cody, Anne and Jove sit in stunned silence.

CODY
(after a beat)
So, did something happen between
her and the leader.

Jove suppresses a laugh.

CODY (CONT'D)

What?

JOVE OLIVER

You gonna tell him?

INTERCUT Anne telling the story with footage of Ryan making her way to the Leader's office.

ANN DAVIS

So...A few years back, this big time Democratic Donor, R.J. Golding, wanted the federal government to gift him 90 acres of Rocky Mountain National Park to -- get this -- expand his golf course. I guess you need eighteen holes to attract serious players and host tournaments and stuff, but this course was only nine holes, because it was literally surrounded by federally-protected wilderness.

(beat)

Anyone else would have been laughed out of the room. I mean, this land was designated as wilderness *to protect it* from being bulldozed, which is precisely what Golding wanted to do with it. But, again, this was R.J. Golding. The guy was cutting a million in checks to Democrats a cycle, so -- naturally - - Elmer Long wanted to help him.

(beat)

Now, I don't remember the specifics of the bill, but Long made it sound like some innocuous land transfer that most folks wouldn't have looked at twice. He, of course, couldn't bring it up for a full floor debate, because then, it would definitely have gotten that second look...and trust me, there was no way to explain this thing without the words "Quid pro quo." But, as you know, if you can pass a bill via unanimous consent, it only takes about sixteen seconds and no one needs to be on the record voting for it.

CODY

But Republicans would have to sign off.

ANN DAVIS

I was about to get to that. You're right, Long wouldn't be able to get unanimous consent, unless Republicans agree not to object to the bill's passage and *of course* they're going to object to passing something that helps one the Democratic Party's biggest donors, right? EXCEPT our fearless leader knew Republicans had their own piece of shit bill. So, he cuts a deal with Republicans. Democrats will allow the Republicans to quietly pass their piece of shit bill, if they will return the favor.

(let's that sink in)

The leader's plan would have gone off without a hitch, if it hadn't been for the man Ryan and I used to work for, Harvey Zandt.

(Smiling at his memory)

Harvey was the kind of senator, you're proud to work for and never want to let down. He was the little guy's consummate champion...made a career out of standing up for the right thing to do. He also had staff, who liked to research innocuous sounding bills to make sure they were as innocuous as they sounded. You see where I'm going with this?

(Off Cody's nod)

Now, he didn't want to embarrass his party's leader, but he also wasn't going to let these piece of shit bills just quietly become law. So, while he agreed not to make Long's plan public, he made it clear that as long as he could walk onto the Senate floor, he would be there to object to any attempt to pass these bills.

(the story is getting harder for her to tell)

(MORE)

ANN DAVIS (CONT'D)

Well, it went on like this for awhile, until one day Harvey couldn't walk onto the Senate floor. He had a seizure in the middle of a committee hearing...

(pauses to compose herself)

Turns out he had a brain tumor, and needed emergency brain surgery. The man was literally fighting for his life, and what does Elmer Long do? He walks onto the Senate floor and asks for unanimous consent to pass that piece of shit bill.

CODY

Seriously?

JOVE OLIVER

I was working for Senator Walsh, at the the time and yeah, that's how he went down.

ANN DAVIS

Well, we were all ticked. But Ryan...Harvey was like the father she never got. And when she found out...she didn't even blink. She just got up, marched out to the gaggle of reporters waiting outside the hospital and told the whole story. Killed the bills and nearly cost good old Elmer his leadership.

CODY

Why didn't it?

ANN DAVIS

How'd he put it? "You may not always like what I do, but you can rest in the knowledge there's nothing I *wouldn't* do for the Democratic Party."

INT. MAJORITY LEADER'S OFFICE - EVENING

The room is full of shadows, projected by the dome's ambient light.

Ryan waits by the window...taking in the million-dollar view, now blanketed in snow.

SENATOR LONG (O.S.)
 Why don't you take a seat?

His warm southern lilt has an icy edge.

RYAN HART
 I --

She turns to find the leader is holding a chair for her.

SENATOR LONG
 It wasn't a suggestion.

She complies. He places a yellow folder on the desk in front of her.

SENATOR LONG (CONT'D)
 That's the speech you'll be giving tomorrow night.

RYAN HART
 (Seriously?)
 All this for a stupid speech, no one will remember next week?
 (slightly relieved)
 I already agreed to give the damn thing, I just can't --

SENATOR LONG
 You can, and you will.

Ryan takes a beat to consider her words.

RYAN HART
 Look --

The leader raises a finger to his lips. The small gesture conveys a frightening amount of authority.

SENATOR LONG
 I don't care. In fact, I'm hoping it falls flat.

RYAN HART
 (confused)
 But...

Again with the finger.

SENATOR LONG
 You got us the majority. For that, we are grateful.
 (MORE)

SENATOR LONG (CONT'D)

But now that we have a bulwark against this president and the Republican agenda, you -- young lady -- will not be their useful idiot.

He might as well have smacked her.

SENATOR LONG (CONT'D)

(matter-of-fact)

Now, you can have an issue or two, to demonstrate your independence. But, otherwise, you will learn to toe the party line.

(a beat)

Support your party and your leader and they will support you. Your bills will have cosponsors. Your amendments will get votes and when an environmental group threatens to derail a jobs project in your state, you can count on your leader to help make it go away.

RYAN HART

Not hard when the group is his front.

SENATOR LONG

I can be your friend...or your enemy, Miss Hart. If you want to achieve anything during your tenure in this august body, I strongly suggest you pick the former.

She consider this.

RYAN HART

Aren't you the least bit concerned about having me for an enemy? I mean, people listen to me. I spent an hour yesterday taking selfies with half your caucus. When was the last time anyone wanted a selfie with you?

SENATOR LONG

I wonder, how many of them would want those selfies, if they knew America's sweetheart screwed another woman's husband. Jack Parish had kids too, right?

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Ryan storms in. She brushes past Cilla and Cody on her way to

INT. SEN HART TRANSITION OFFICE - RYAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ann's been waiting.

ANN DAVIS

What happened? Are you okay?

RYAN HART

I can't.

She locates her coat and bag. Cathy emerges from her office.

CATHY CARTER-COX

You have to understand..

RYAN HART

Fuck you.

She pushes past them to exit.

EXT. CAPITOL HILL - NIGHT

Few images are more powerful than the Capitol Dome at night. The sheer white marble, lit against the night sky can put a lump in, even, a psychopath's throat.

The image frames our heroine as we follow her walk home. She's fighting tears, snow and the realization she's facing Goliath alone. (If possible, this would be a great time, to hear the Heavy's "Short Charge Hero" and its refrain, proclaiming "This ain't no place for no hero.")

EXT. RYAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Ryan approaches the Capitol Hill row house, she calls home, she notices someone is waiting on her stoop. As we get closer, we see it's A MAN (50's), with sad, beautiful eyes that stop Ryan in her tracks.

RYAN HART

What are you doing here Jack?

END ACT III

ACT IVEXT. RYAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jack stands as Ryan tries to rush past him. She doesn't want to look at him.

JACK

Ann called. She said you needed help.

RYAN HART

And NOW you want to help me?
(Still too angry to look
at him)

Where were you five years ago? You know, when I literally begged for your help. How many messages did I leave you? How many emails did I send? My boss died and you couldn't even be bothered to give me a reference? But now, Ann calls and --

(beat)

Fuck you and your help.

Jack takes this in, but isn't giving up.

JACK

Ryan...You don't have to tell me I screwed up. I know I did. I was a chicken-shit ass hole, who needed a lot of therapy to admit what a chicken shit ass hole he was. I'd give anything to go back and make things right and spare you...but I can't.

(beat)

I know the odds of your forgiving me are slim...but I also know they are exactly zero if I don't, at least, try to earn your forgiveness.

(beat)

So, this is me, here, trying.

Ryan turns and looks at him. We see the beginnings of tears are in her eyes.

INT. RYAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ryan and Jack sit across from each other on the couch. All is not well between them, but Ryan's got bigger problems right now.

JACK

He's obviously threatened by you.

She scoffs.

JACK (CONT'D)

He wouldn't go to this much trouble if he wasn't.

RYAN HART

Glad I could provide the proper motivation.

JACK

If you weren't in the middle of this right now, you'd see --

RYAN HART

He's trying to hamstring me before I can get out of the gate. I see that.

JACK

It's not about you.

It takes her a moment to get it.

RYAN HART

He doesn't want me to find allies.

Jack nods.

JACK

Those selfies scare him. I'm sure he thinks protecting party unity is the right thing to do here, but it's easy to confuse the right thing to do with the thing that benefits you the most.

RYAN HART

Right or wrong, he's made it pretty clear I will accomplish exactly nothing in this office if I don't get in line.

JACK

And what exactly will getting in
line accomplish?

(beat

I thought you weren't naive enough
to think this town will just stop
being what it is overnight?

Ryan's stunned.

RYAN HART

You saw?

JACK

My being too chicken shit to pick
up a phone, doesn't mean I wasn't
watching?

The revelation clearly moves her

JACK (CONT'D)

As long as you've got the people
with you, you've got power, that's
why he's trying to take them from
you.

RYAN HART

So...

JACK

So...what would you advise yourself
to do?

[Note: this man isn't swooping in to rescue her, he's like
the chick who reminds the superhero he's got superpowers.]

She thinks for a beat.

RYAN HART

I'd tell myself to get ahead of the
story .

JACK

They're giving you the platform.

Ryan winces. It makes rational sense, but the thought of
actually...

RYAN HART

So, I'm going to go on live
national television and admit to
having an affair.

JACK

No, you're going to go on live national television and reveal that the leader of the Democratic Party is so threatened by your resolve to fix this town that he's blackmailing you with a moment of human weakness.

(beat)

You'll have to admit the human weakness, but --

RYAN HART

Blackmail is worse than being human.

JACK

The one who tells the story gets to frame it.

(beat)

We'll want to get ahead of the wind farm issue.

RYAN HART

We?

JACK

You think I'm going to let you do this alone?

The thought makes her smile.

RYAN HART

Am I really going to do this

JACK

What's the alternative?

As we watch her consider this, we see the resolve wash over her face.

RYAN HART

I'd rather be a pirate.

Now it's Jack's turn to smile.

JACK

Me too.

RYAN HART

But what about the rest of the speech?

JACK
What do you mean?

RYAN HART
I mean, I can't just attack the leader and come clean about...you know. I need to stand for something. Make a case that rallies the world to my cause. It took Jefferson three days to write the Declaration of Independence. I have...
(check the time)
...18 hours.

Almost, as if on cue, the doorbell rings.

Ryan looks at Jack.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. RYAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ryan opens the door to reveal Cilla and Cody. Cody holds out pages of paper.

CILLA
You should read it.

Ryan takes the pages and skims the opening lines. She looks up at Cody and smiles. She was wrong about him.

RYAN HART
Get your asses in here. We have work to do

INT. SENATE RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

We return to a few moments before we left off in the teaser

Ryan is in front of the camera as staff, again, fuss over her make-up and lighting.

CABLE PUNDIT 2 (V.O.)
I admire her pragmatism. She's a talented young woman with a lot to offer, but the idea that this little girl was somehow going to "fix Washington."

CABLE PUNDIT 1 (V.O.)
She was supposed to try.

At that line, we see the fear fall from Ryan's face and that faint smile come across her lips. But now we see the source of her smile.

ANGLE on Jack standing by the door smiling back. He nods at her as if to say "you've got this."

CATHY CARTER-COX (O.S.)
Jack Parish.

Jack turns to find Cathy behind him.

JACK
Cathy Carter-Cox. Just the person I was hoping to see.

She looks confused.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Places people. We need quiet on the set.

Jack signals for Cathy to follow him into the --

INT. SENATE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He takes a few steps and waits for the door to close.

CATHY CARTER-COX
Wow. It's been awhile. I didn't realize you and Ryan were still in touch.

JACK
We recently reconnected.
(beat)
She needed a new chief of staff.

It takes a second for Cathy to realize, what's going on.

Her eyes dart back at the closed door.

She grabs the handle. It's locked.

She pounds frantically, demanding to be let in.

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The soundproof environment mutes Cathy's yelling and pounding. CILLA moves in front of the door to hide her from site.

Across the room we see Cody working at a laptop. He looks up at Cathy and smiles. The Teleprompter is good to go.

They look at Ryan. The production staff have retreated. She's ready.

PRODUCER (O.S.)
Ten seconds til live. 10...9...

Ryan looks up at the camera.

It takes our eyes a moment, to adjust to the bright lights.

PRODUCER (CONT'D)
8...7...

The camera starts to come into focus, then the teleprompter...and the first words of her speech: "My fellow Americans..."

PRODUCER (CONT'D)
6...5...

Now we see the producer standing alongside the camera. He counts with his fingers.

PRODUCER (CONT'D)
4...3...

He silently raises two fingers...then one, which he points at us.

The camera's red light clicks on.

RYAN HART
My fellow Americans...

THE END