

WAYS AND MEANS

"Pilot"

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FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON DC - U.S. CAPITOL - RAYBURN OFFICE BLDG - DAY

The U.S. Capitol Dome looms large in the background as a Honda sedan pulls up to the Rayburn House Office Building. "JURASSIC JOE" CHAMBERS (spindly, late 80's) trundles out and smiles at the AIDE (early 20's, ex-Miss GA) behind the wheel.

AIDE

Now Chairman, you go right in that door to the Judiciary Committee. Staff will meet you there.

The old goat winks at her and then heads toward the building. But then, a cloud of confusion moves across his face. He turns, heads to the curb and hails a cab.

JURASSIC JOE

(to the driver)

The White House son and step on it! That bastard Nixon hates to wait!

The CABBIE shrugs: a fare is a fare. The cab speeds away.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL -- ENTRANCE TO HOUSE FLOOR - THAT MORNING

Staff and Members bustle about as we feel the electricity: this is the beating heart of the U.S. Congress.

At the entrance to the floor, a cluster of CORPORATE TITANS, wait -- and they are people who never wait -- impatiently. The APEX TITAN (50's), think Exxon CEO, squints at the bright light pouring from the floor; thanks to the C-SPAN TV lights.

YOUNG TECH TITAN

How long do we have to wait?

APEX TITAN

For Conor Byrne? As long as he wants. He runs this place.

YOUNG TECH TITAN

Nice guy?

Apex SNORTS. How can this fool be even richer than me?

And now, CONOR BYRNE emerges from the light, a nervous rookie Congressman, HEADLEY, at his elbow. Conor is the Majority Whip. He owns the Hill and it shows.

CONOR

(to Headley)

You're with me. Learn.

He approaches the Titans, flashing a million-watt smile.

APEX TITAN

Congressman Byrne, we've been looking forward to discussing this trade legislation. We'd hoped you--

Conor cuts through all the bullshit.

CONOR

I've taken a personal interest in your issue, Ron. We should be able to work something out.

Conor smiles. They don't. Uh-oh, now the catch.

CONOR (CONT'D)

You must have half the Fortune 50 here with you Ron. How many CEOs are in this esteemed delegation?

APEX TITAN

Eight.

YOUNG TECH TITAN

Nine actually. One gets in tonight.

Apex closes his eyes; that idiot had to pipe up.

CONOR

Nine.

(to Apex)

Exactly the right number, I'd say.

A long eye-to-eye beat between Conor and Apex, then--

APEX TITAN

We understand Sir. Completely.

Conor slaps his shoulder LBJ style.

CONOR

Outstanding. I'll be in touch.

They watch Conor and Headley disappear down the hallway.

YOUNG TECH TITAN

What just happened?

APEX TITAN

Y'all just attended a nine million dollar Republican fundraiser.

(then; to the whole group)

Welcome to Washington.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - STATUTORY HALL - CONTINUOUS

WITH Conor as he lopes through Statutory Hall, Headley struggling to keep up.

HEADLY

I don't understand, are you still planning to vote no on their trade subsidy?

CONOR

(to Headley)

As the great Jesse Unruh used to say, 'If you can't eat their food, drink their booze, take their money, and then vote against them, you've got no business being here.'

CARLSON, a preppy staffer races up to Conor.

CARLSON

(winded)

Excuse me, Sir. Mr. Wells really needs you at Judiciary.

CONOR

(grinning)

Wouldn't want to keep Pancho waiting.

(suddenly, to Headley)

You're voting no too. Got it?

Headley nods, then peels away, terrified. Conor starts following Carlson, but after a few steps, he clocks a group of FIFTH GRADERS across the hall, gawking at a towering statue of Daniel Webster. He shouts over to them.

CONOR (CONT'D)

Londonderry Lancers!

A BOY in Londonderry Lancer spirit-wear turns, surprised.

CONOR (CONT'D)

I'm from Londonderry too!

Their TEACHER (30) blushes a bit, recognizing Conor from TV.

CARLSON

(nervous)

Sir, there's some urgency.

TEACHER

This is Conor Byrne, from the 1st Congressional District of New Hampshire. He's our Congressman!

BRIGHT KID  
He's not a Congressman, he's a Whip!

CONOR  
(loving this)  
You're hired son! But I'm both.

BOY IN SPIRIT WEAR  
Do you use a real whip?!

CONOR  
Oh yes! Whenever I can.

A CHORUS of EWWWWS from the kids, as the Teacher LAUGHS.

TEACHER  
He's joking.

CONOR  
You haven't met my colleagues.  
(to the kids)  
No, there's no whip. The name comes from old England when the Whipper-in would keep all the hunting dogs from straying. I keep our dogs together.

Carlson, dying now, is furiously checking his watch.

CONOR (CONT'D)  
Let's get a picture!

A Staff Photographer is summoned as Conor organizes a photo.

CONOR (CONT'D)  
One, two, three... Lancers!

Finally, Carlson moves him down the hallway.

INT. RAYBURN BUILDING - JUDICIARY HEARING ROOM - LATER

Total bedlam as a herd of Reporters, Cameras, and Staff race past them into the large hearing room. HARRISON "PANCHO" WELLS - a fit, WASPY Yalie in his early 50's with a mischievous vibe - greets Conor at the door.

PANCHO  
You know my Uncle Porter was at Pearl. This feels very familiar.

Conor looks at the Committee dais: two GOP seats are vacant.

CONOR  
Where the Hell is Jurassic Joe?

PANCHO  
 Nobody can find him. Last seen  
 outside the building two hours ago.  
 And Wendi Purcell's having surgery.

CONOR  
 (calculating)  
 We're down two seats.

CARLSON  
 But we still control the committee  
 by one vote.

CONOR  
 Not anymore. They've flipped somebody.

From across the room, they both clock HOMER MARLIN, a nervous  
 Yuppie Republican in his mid-30's, avoiding their glances.

PANCHO  
 Homer Marlin.

CONOR  
 Figures. Always the first to  
 quiver and the last to vote. I'll  
 gut him for this.

Conor's trying to think of a move but there's no time.

PANCHO  
 And here's Charlie Averil to bless  
 the room.

The Democratic Minority Leader CHARLIE AVERIL - tan, 40's,  
 menschy - glides into the room, shaking hands. FLASHBULBS.

Charlie and Conor trade ace-rival nods as a nervous GOP  
 COMMITTEE COUNSEL (20's, nerdy) rushes up.

REPUBLICAN COMMITTEE COUNSEL  
 They're gonna roll us and move  
 Averil's gun control bill.

YOUNG STAFFER  
 (to Pancho)  
 But Chairman, you can stop it in  
 your Rules Committee, right?

CONOR  
 It's not about passing legislation.  
 (off the TV cameras)  
 It's about them. The election is in  
 five weeks. Now it'll be nothing  
 but guns all over the news.

Conor pauses, noticing somebody in the crowd of bemused reporters clustered in the back of the room. It's EMILY KNOX (30's), a stylish, sharp-eyed network TV correspondent.

CONOR (CONT'D)  
(distracted by her)  
They'll kill us in the suburbs.

Emily grins at Conor, then playfully teases him by nodding at the empty seats on the dais and silently mouthing, "uh-oh."

PANCHO  
We could throw Wendi into an ambulance. Dope her up and --

A GAVEL starts POUNDING as Conor grimaces at Emily.

CONOR  
Too late.

INT. RAYBURN HALLWAY - TEN MINUTES LATER

The Dems hold a victorious press scrum in the hall.

CHARLIE  
(for the cameras)  
Gun violence kills a hundred Americans each day, yet the other party simply refuses to act. But today, with the help of a courageous Republican, we acted. Now the American people will have their chance to act too, on election day.

Conor and Pancho watch, pissed: they've been out-foxed.

CONOR  
Punchbowl, meet turd.

He walks over to the scrum. Heads and cameras turn.

CONOR (CONT'D)  
What happened today was a cheap backroom trick to get a troubled Republican to turn his back on the voters who elected him. All to create a cynical media stunt about a piece of radical legislation that is a direct assault on the Second Amendment.

Charlie fires back; it's the worst of our uncivil politics.

CHARLIE

While Mr. Byrne and his party talk,  
guns are killing innocent people.  
Which child, must die today!?

CONOR

Why must *the Constitution* die today?

CHARLIE

We demand a floor vote on the  
measure. Now!

Conor walks away, with Pancho and Carlson following.

CARLSON

(nervous; off his phone)  
It's the Speaker, Sir.

PANCHO

I'll murder this thing in Rules.

CONOR

(a sudden IDEA)  
No. Pass it. Send it to the floor.

Pancho looks at him - WTF? - as Conor takes Carlson's phone.

CONOR (CONT'D)

(cooly)  
Mister Speaker. What's up?

Pancho smiles. That's Conor Byrne.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - HALLWAY OFF THE HOUSE FLOOR - HOURS LATER

House Speaker LAMAR BLUNT (68 and pure Texas) and Conor march  
from the Speaker's office to the House floor.

LAMAR

OK, Houdini. This had damn well  
better work.

But Conor just grins. It will.

CONOR

Abracadabra.

They walk on to the bright lit-for-TV House floor.

INT. US CAPITOL - FLOOR OF THE U.S. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lamar GAVELS the session into order. Pancho and several  
others watch the show from the back rail.



Charlie and Democrat JERLENE WILLIAMS (39) -- African American, telegenic and smart -- warily pace the floor.

CONOR

Mister Speaker, I move to amend the bill, combining HR2087 with HR 1192, the Save Our Planet Act.

LAMAR

So moved. I call the vote.

CHARLIE

(anger and admiration)  
Damn it. Byrne's using their majority to combine our gun bill with "Save The Planet," that progressive Christmas stocking.

JERLENE

So we gotta vote on the whole thing.

LAMAR (O.S.)

All in favor of the amendment?

A THUNDEROUS "YAY!" From the Republican majority.

LAMAR (O.S) (CONT'D)

Opposed?

CHARLIE AND JERLENE

(along with their party;  
not enough)

NAY!

LAMAR (O.S.)

The motion carries. We will now call the roll on final passage.

Jerlene and Charlie lock eyes, searching for a way out.

JERLENE

Maybe we just do it. Vote gun control and climate change. Stand up for our damn principles.

CHARLIE

It's a month before the election. With all the taxes built into Save Our Planet, half our caucus can't go there. It's political death.

JERLENE

(sharp)

As opposed to death by bullets or  
climate disaster?

Charlie looks at her. They're close and that hurt.

Meanwhile, Pancho and his pals at the back rail are giddy.

PANCHO

(comedy hick accent)

Gas tax? Hell no, not on my truck!

VOTING CLERK (O.S.)

(calling the roll)

Mr. Adams? Mr. Adams, No.

FEMALE GOP CONGRESSWOMAN

(imitating a whiny child)

Mommy? No Disneyland? I hate you!

They all LAUGH; this is so much fun.

Across the floor, Charlie and Jerlene deal with defeat.

CHARLIE

(defeated)

Tell our whips. Nobody has to vote  
for this. They're released.

(to Jerlene)

You can vote however you want.

VOTING CLERK (O.S.)

Mister Averil?

Charlie looks to the Clerk's table, gives a thumbs down.

VOTING CLERK (CONT'D)

Mister Averil, no! Ms. Benson?

As the bill dies, he pulls Jerlene away to speak privately.

CHARLIE

You know there's talk of you being  
groomed to replace me one day as  
Leader.

Jerlene's eyes widen. Where'd this come from?

JERLENE

Charlie I'm not behind any of that.

CHARLIE

I know. I'm the one doing the talking. But you need to remember today. This, is the real job. You think I enjoy it? I don't get to fly above it all and preach. I'm here in the muck. I just voted against my own gun bill because I knew it was a political trap and it's my job to protect our caucus!

Jerlene starts to see it from his side, the weight.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

We lose seats, we lose power and without power, we will never change this country. Principles come later, after you win. If you can't understand that, Jerlene, the Leadership is not for you.

Across the floor, Conor watches them.

VOTING CLERK

Mister Byrne?

Conor signals him with a thumbs down.

INT. RAYBURN OFFICE BUILDING - SUB-BASEMENT -- THAT NIGHT

Conor walks through the empty Rayburn sub-basement.

He stops at a steel double door marked "SB-322" and guarded by a UNIFORMED CAPITOL POLICE OFFICER. The Cop BUZZES the door open and Conor enters a dim hallway to another steel door. Is this a secret bunker? He opens the door.

INT. U.S. HOUSE MEMBERS ONLY GYM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie Averil's in gym clothes and dribbling a basketball. He looks over: Conor -- in his suit -- is approaching.

This is the underground House gym. No public photo of it even exists. Charlie and Conor lock eyes. A fight?

No. LAUGHTER. Conor takes the ball.

CHARLIE

You're late Con. I win by forfeit.

Conor passes the ball to him.

CONOR

Some ass ruined today by hijacking  
my Judiciary Committee.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I heard about that. The guy  
must be a genius. Good looking too.  
(then)  
But it didn't end so well for him.

CONOR

I'd call it a tie.

CHARLIE

Now the news is all about amending  
floor bills that nobody  
understands. And gas taxes.

CONOR

And gun control, in the suburbs.

Charlie takes a shot, and makes it.

CHARLIE

You ever find Jurassic Joe?

CONOR

They scooped him up at the White  
House gate. He was trying to tell  
Nixon it was time to pack it in.

They both laugh; they're fond of Jurassic Joe, a giant once.

CHARLIE

It's gonna be one helluva close  
election. Just four weeks to go.

CONOR

We may lose a few seats.

They both know it's far worse than that.

CHARLIE

So maybe in the new Congress, we  
can find a middle way on guns.

CONOR

A waste of time. My right-wingers  
will kill me for giving an inch and  
your lefties oppose anything in the  
middle. Nothing's gonna change.

CHARLIE

That's not how we felt as Freshmen.  
We were gonna change the world.

CONOR

(smiling fondly)

That's the thing I've always  
admired about you Charlie. Through  
thick and thin, you're a *believer*.

That hangs for a beat. Charlie grins at him.

CONOR (CONT'D)

(no more feelings dammit)

I've got a reception to drop by.  
Just wanted to say hi.

CHARLIE

One shot each, for the game? I  
mean we all go home tomorrow for  
the election, hate to end our games  
this session with a lame forfeit.

Conor nods. Charlie shoots. A near miss. He passes him the  
ball. Conor aims, shoots, also misses.

CONOR

God we suck.

CHARLIE

Tell me about it.

(then)

See you after November. And Con, I  
am going to come to you on guns.  
Something in the middle.

CONOR

Lost cause man.

CHARLIE

You know what I always say, those  
are the ones worth fighting for.

CONOR

You don't say that. Jimmy Stewart  
says that. In Mr. Smith.

CHARLIE

(grinning)

Doesn't mean it's not true.

CONOR

Remember we tried to make the kids  
watch it, up at Sunapee that time.

CHARLIE

And they all thought it was so boring.  
(he loves this story)  
And then it got to the filibuster  
scene, the big moment, and we look  
over, and they're all sleeping.

They both laugh. Conor looks at his friend, shakes his head.

CONOR

How are you always so damn happy?

CHARLIE

It's simple, Con. Sarah. And now  
I get to leave this place for a  
while and just be with her.

Conor nods, but he doesn't have a Sarah anymore.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What d'ya hear from Denise?

CONOR

You know, second year, they have to  
start thinking about a speciality.

CHARLIE

(trying to be upbeat)  
Hey, why don't you just fly out to  
see her during the recess. Just  
show up. I bet she'd appreciate it.

CONOR

Or not.  
(then...)  
I'll see you after the election, pal.

Conor's daughter is a tough subject for him.

CHARLIE

Con, either way, take some time for  
yourself. We did our best, we  
slugged it out and now...

He shoots, and scores this time.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's all up to the Great American  
Voter.

CONOR

Then God Help us.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BARABOO, WISC - HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

A male VOTER, (40's), white, chunky and bored, politely listens as CLAIRE KERKMANN (28) makes an earnest pitch about her candidacy for Congress.

CLAIRE

I just think it's about the science. We know if we don't act, it will be too late and then, well, things will be awful for the next generation. So I'm running.

(off his look)

For Congress.

He smiles but his eyes dart toward his kids, who are itching to go to their seats for the imminent football game.

Claire doesn't quit. She is German/Filipino, and her vibe is sunny Wisconsin nice meets clearly brilliant.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I know it's crazy. But somebody has to run or what changes, right? I think the crazy thing is to do nothing, especially when the science on climatology physics is so clear. Take carbon absorption.

VOTER

(huh?)

You know, I work two shifts, don't really follow, um, "climatology".

CLAIRE

Oh, it's just from the Greek.

VOTER

What Greek?

CLAIRE

The word climatology. It comes from "klima". Greek for weather. Sorry, I like words. What they really mean.

(conspiring)

I'm a lawyer. I mean I teach law.

(whispering)

Don't tell anybody.

He grins. She's really hard not to like. But his kids...

VOTER

I really got to go.

CLAIRE  
Take a pamphlet?

She hands him the world's worst campaign flyer; a Xeroxed essay. Claire turns to CAM TORRES - 27, shy, slight - her hopelessly inexperienced Campaign Manager.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
I think he'll read it.

Cam nods. Sure he will. They both look across the lot.

A crowd surrounds a group of CONGRESSMAN LARRY LUDAMAN SUPPORTERS who are happily handing out tons of Ludaman campaign chum: foam "I Like Larry" beer koozies, Number One fingers, hats, balloons, the works. Claire sighs.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Plastic. All of it.  
(off Cam's silence)  
What?

CAM  
There's a new poll out.

CLAIRE  
Twenty points down, right?

CAM  
Sixteen.

CLAIRE  
Great! We're surging! Come on.

She trots toward a Senior Couple. Claire never gives up.

EXT. MADISON, WISCONSIN - SMALL FRAMED HOUSE - HOURS LATER

A crisp American flag flies from the porch of a small house. Claire appears, passes a "Kerkmann for Congress" yard sign and runs up the stairs.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Claire enters and smiles at MONROE KERKMANN, "the Gunny", her father, in his favorite recliner. A career USMC Master Gunnery Sergeant, Monroe left part of a leg in Iraq but came back with the Navy Cross. The "Patriot News Channel" is on the TV - video of Conor and Charlie going at each other.

GUNNY  
So now your crowd is trying to pull  
a fast one with a new gas tax.



She grins. They trade sweet barbs; it's their thing.

CLAIRE

Somebody's been watching the  
Patriot Channel again. You know  
Gunny, I think there's a Clint  
Eastwood marathon on AMC.

He reaches for his remote to check. It's true. He smiles;  
nothing beats a smart daughter. Claire picks up a few yard  
signs, as Gunny comes toward her, limping on his steel cane.

GUNNY

New poll out. On Channel Six.

CLAIRE

(tightening a bit)  
I'm off to main street.

GUNNY

Know what I say about that poll?

She looks at him. Will he needle her on losing?

GUNNY (CONT'D)

Fake news!

She smiles and kisses her Dad on the temple, then heads out.

EXT. MADISON, WI - MAIN STREET - THAT EVENING

Cam and Claire staple the last sign on a telephone pole. She  
eyes the other, empty poles. Cam angrily adds more staples.

CLAIRE

They tear our signs down faster  
than we can put them up.

CAM

Let's just eat. No politics tonight.

They go inside a sports bar just down the street.

INT. LISCO'S RESTAURANT - MAIN ROOM - A BIT LATER

A bustling, friendly place. They accept a second round.

CLAIRE

Why not!

It feels good to unwind. But now two JERKS (20's) appear.  
They look like they marched at Charlottesville.

OAFISH JERK  
You're pretty cute.

CLAIRE  
Thanks. Just having dinner.

JERK'S WINGMAN  
I know you're running for Congress.

He unbuttons the top of his wool lumberjack shirt to reveal a "I Like Larry" Ludaman t-shirt underneath.

OAFISH JERK  
Larry, I can call him Larry, is my  
uncle.

CAM  
(under his breath)  
Living the dream.

The Oaf, a bit drunk, reaches over and touches Claire's hair.

OAFISH JERK  
You know, maybe I can convert you.

Claire sighs. Enough. She turns.

CLAIRE  
So look. My daddy was a career Marine  
gunnery sergeant and since I was  
fourteen years old he has obsessively  
worried about a moment just like this.  
(measured and firm)  
So, keep your hands to yourself.

OAFISH JERK  
Easy, I'm on your side! Climate  
change is definitely real. As the  
planet gets hotter, so do the chicks.

That makes his pal crack up, and empowered, the Oaf puts his hands on her again. A fatal mistake. In a blur, Claire turns, rotates his wrist and dislocates his shoulder. His head bounces hard off the bar edge as he goes down.

Shocked silence from the crowd. Cam sees iPhones everywhere, recording. He swallows his shyness.

CAM  
CLAIRE KERKMANN FOR U.S. CONGRESS!

The whole restaurant explodes in WHOOPS and CHEERS.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. WASHINGTON DC - U.S. CAPITOL - MORNING

SUPER: "TWO MONTHS LATER"

THE CAMERA swoops in on the U.S. flag flying high and proud in front of the Dome. But we PAN over and land on three shorter flag poles hidden in a corner of the Capitol's roof.

Three Capitol Workers unbox flags which mechanically shoot up the flagpoles for seconds, then return for re-boxing.

A Worker pushes a cart full of these boxed flags into a cage elevator, which descends through the roof.

INT. RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING - HALL - MINUTES LATER

We follow the Worker rolling the cart down the hallway. A sad-sack DEFEATED CONGRESSMAN (55) watching his staff move boxes of stuff out of his office, walks over to the cart.

DEFEATED CONGRESSMAN

Gave hundreds of these things away  
to my constituents, the bastards.  
Might as well get one myself.

He grabs a box as the cart rolls along. Now we pass a CABLE TV REPORTER doing a stand-up in the hall.

CABLE TV REPORTER

After an election which saw their  
majority cut to just five seats,  
Republican leaders are bracing for  
a very different new Congress.

CAMERA PANS away, finding Claire Kerkmann, looking totally lost. She ambles up to a seen-it-all CAPTIOL HILL COP.

CLAIRE

Excuse me, I'm a bit, um, I'm lost.

He could care less. She remembers, and hands him a letter. He reads it, snapping to attention. Christ, a Member-elect.

CAPTIOL COP

I'll escort you, Ms. Kerkmann.

He leads her to a shiny brass elevator marked "Members Only."

CAPITOL COP

Third floor, to the right Ma'am.

He nods respectfully as the doors close. Now alone, Claire's jaw drops. She still can't believe she fucking won!

EXT. WASHINGTON DC - LINCOLN MEMORIAL - CONTINUOUS

A racing bike flies past the iconic Lincoln Memorial. It's Conor. He's rolling miles, and calls.

CONOR

I don't care. You handle it! Make him cry, I need the vote.

(a new call)

It's me. What are you hearing?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING -- STATUTORY HALL

Pancho is on the prowl.

PANCHO

Trouble. We just lost one.

Conor skids to a stop. This is serious.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

Our scaly friend the Marlin. They got him on their big hook, so to speak. He's switching parties.

CONOR

Dammit. I let him live after his gun vote and he does this! He committed to us! So they got him?

PANCHO

Why lease when you can buy I guess.

CONOR

I'm coming in.

He's back on his bike.

**INT. MADISON WI - LISCO'S RESTARUANT - SHAKY CELL FOOTAGE**

**We see an old cable news story on Claire and the bar moment.**

**CLAIRE (FROM PHONOE)**

**... hands to yourself.**

**He doesn't. Wham, lights out.**

**NEWS ANCHOR**

**And that's when a long shot  
Democratic candidate became a viral  
sensation, earning the nickname  
"Commando Claire" Kerkmann. I'll  
bet she'll find plenty of new arms  
to twist in Congress, right Norm?**

*Stupid FORCED CHUCKLES from the news mannequins. We're in...*

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION - DAY

A few newly elected MALE FRESHMEN MEMBERS-ELECT watch the clip about CLAIRE on a smartphone. It's very High School.

One of them is TOMMY "BISH" BISHOP (30) a handsome ex-Jock type and loyal Tea Party Republican. Bish is no genius, but kind-hearted and quick to make lasting friendships.

MALE FRESHMAN-ELECT

My guess? Total lesbian.

The others CHUCKLE, but not Bish. A VOICE COUGHS. They look away from the phone. It's Claire, standing there.

It's clear she HATES the stupid "Commando Claire" thing. They all skulk away, except Bish who introduces himself.

BISH

I'm Tom Bishop. Call me Bish.  
Nice to meet you.

CLAIRE

(not giving him much)  
Claire Kerkmann.

BISH

I know. But did you know our districts are adjacent! Where your rural counties hit Minnesota's, that's me, in the "friendly" first! We're neighbors.

(forging ahead)

I was wondering if I could ask for your support. I'm running for Freshman class President.

CLAIRE

I had no idea there was such a thing.

BISH

I guess it's kinda like Congressional rush chairman.

She looks at him, an eyebrow up.

BISH (CONT'D)  
 Stupid analogy I guess. Sorry  
 about those lunkheads.  
 (sotto, wink)  
 Not midwesterners.

CLAIRE  
 Milk price supports.

Bish is confused, what?

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
 Our districts. We both have a lot  
 of dairy farmers. Maybe we could  
 work together on milk issues.

BISH  
 Just pass me a pail. I'm in.

She grins. He's corny but seems nice. Pancho starts calling  
 the class to order, so she takes her seat.

CLAIRE  
 You can put me down as, undecided.

Bish smiles. She's OK.

PANCHO (O.S.)  
 Welcome to Congress!

He's leading this session.

PANCHO (CONT'D)  
 Your first class is courtesy of the  
 House Ethics Committee. It's  
 called, "how not to go to jail."  
 (beat)  
 Take good notes.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - SPEAKER'S OFFICE - LATER THAT MORNING

Conor waits in Lamar Blunt's palatial office, grinning at the  
 decor; half Texas museum and half world leader photo wall.  
 In one shot Lamar and Conor sit fishing, like father and son.

LAMAR (O.S.)  
 These damn Presidents are no  
 different than a car lease...

Lamar storms in, theatrically complaining.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

All fresh and shiny at first, but after four years, you're pining for a new one! Meanwhile, we're here forever. Come on.

He motions Conor to follow him to his balcony.

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL -- "SPEAKER'S BEACH" - CONTINUOUS

Lamar plops into a lounge chair on his huge sunlit balcony.

LAMAR

I get the best sun in the Capitol. Makes 'em all think back home I still work on my ranch.

Conor tightens his suit coat; it's really fucking cold.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

Four seats now, huh? You gonna lose me anymore?

CONOR

No sir. I plan to steal a few back.

Lamar lights a cigar.

LAMAR

That's more like it.

(then)

I will not get tumped outta my Speakership because they flip themselves a few more fools and take our goddamn Majority.

They lock eyes. There will be no more fucking losses.

CONOR

I'm on it. We're bringing the Campaign Committee bunch in for a meeting in an hour.

LAMAR

Not a second too soon. Charlie Averil's probably out trolling for traitors as we speak.

Conor nods and leaves. The chilly air was a message.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - INSIDE THE DOME - THAT DAY

And sure enough, Charlie and Jerlene climb an ancient iron staircase high inside the Capitol Dome. It screams 1887.

CHARLIE  
 (off the view)  
 Ever been up here?

JERLENE  
 No. Maybe next Halloween.

CHARLIE  
 Took Sarah here on our second date.

JERLENE  
 How romantic.  
 (then; grim)  
 This is going to be awful.

CHARLIE  
 Of course it is. But we need to  
 close this deal. Just remember,  
 four seats...

INT. RAYBURN OFFICE BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Most of the GOP Leadership is there. DAN RIEUX, the ambitious young Vietnamese American chair of the Patriot Caucus is speaking. He and his group are a 24/7 pain in the ass for the Leadership.

RIEUX  
 That's where the troll farms and  
 bots are really great.

Conor trades a glance at Pancho; what an asshole.

RIEUX (CONT'D)  
 You can move information that the  
 mainstream media refuses to cover,  
 like sex scandals. Then, we force  
 'em to resign and try to pick up  
 their seats in a special election.

Pancho looks ill. An OLD BULL CHAIRMAN speaks up.

OLD BULL MEMBER  
 Look son, I don't care who the  
 folks on my Committee are sleeping  
 with. Hell, I get uneasy at the  
 way ol' Walt here looks at a mule  
 on Saturday night.

A few Old School CHAIRMEN LAUGH, including Walt.



RIEUX

It's not the 80's with Reagan and  
Tip O'Neill anymore, Chairman.  
It's war now.

JURASSIC JOE

I liked Tip, son.

RIEUX

I'm sure you guys all did. That  
was the problem back then.

Joe stares a dagger, as Conor stops the fight.

CONOR

We are in a tough corner, with a  
four seat margin.

RIEUX

(daring to interrupt)  
And losing Marlin sure didn't help.

Eyes turn to Conor. That punk gonna get away with that?

CONOR

It's not that easy Dan. Your  
district is so red it would elected  
a box of hammers if it had a R on  
it.

JOE

Some folks would say it has.

The old Bulls CHUCKLE. Rieux flushes at the humiliation.

CONOR

I'm on top of this. I don't want  
any of these moves from the  
Campaign Committee unless I  
personally give the word.  
(off Rieux's glare)  
I hear about anything, and you'll  
be inspecting postage meters on the  
House Administration Committee. If  
you're lucky. Clear?

Rieux nods, his eyes down. Conor is the Boss.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - INSIDE THE ACTUAL DOME - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Jerlene head back down the iron stairs. She  
looks up at a Figure in the shadows.

JERLENE

How long is Hennessy gonna hide up there?

CHARLIE

Hours. He's terrified word might get out. But the deal is done.

JERLENE

You didn't really need me to come along on this.

CHARLIE

No, I did.

Jerlene smiles knowingly.

JERLENE

We're down in the muck again, aren't we?

CHARLIE

Want a mint?

JERLENE

To take the bad taste out of my mouth?

He nods and hands her the whole tin. They keep walking.

CHARLIE

Who ever told you power was free?

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Charlie and Jerlene appear out of an unmarked door. A young AVERIL STAFFER is waiting there with a sweet YELLOW LAB; this is CHARLIE'S DOG. Charlie rubs the dog's ears.

CHARLIE

Sorry pal, gotta walk you later. Something I need to do right now.

EXT. WASHINGTON DC - 1818 I STREET NW (THE ALIBI CLUB) - DAY

A black Capitol Police SUV is parked in front of a three-story federal townhouse. A second, identical SUV pulls up; nose to nose with the first. Conor gets out, goes inside.

INT. THE ALIBI CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Charlie is waiting inside DC's most elite secret club; it's shabby and worn, with curios like Harry Truman's old poker IOUs on the wall. An OLDER MAN passes Conor as he walks in.

CONOR  
Mister Chief Justice.

OLD MAN  
Whip.

Conor sits at Charlie's table.

CONOR  
I gotta get into this place.

CHARLIE  
Only sixty members and one has to  
die to create an opening.  
(then)  
Right up your alley.

They laugh at Conor's reputation for evil and malice.

CONOR  
(off his phone)  
You pulled the fire alarm.

CHARLIE  
Because there's gonna be a huge  
awful fire and you know it.  
(then)  
I'm hearing things. PI's looking  
into personal lives. Trying to  
force resignations.

CONOR  
Four seats. Things will get rough.

CHARLIE  
Don't pretend you don't care about  
the institution, not with me. You  
know this is poison for the House.

Conor holds up his hands, okay I get it.

CONOR  
I know. I'm gonna keep my  
barbarians in their cages, on the  
personal stuff, but only if-

CHARLIE  
I know. Deal.

Beat. Charlie works up his nerve a bit.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Look Con, Sarah and I have been talking. This next session, I think it will be my last.

CONOR

(shocked)

Your last? Charlie, in two years you could be the next Speaker!

CHARLIE

Speaker of what? Nothing gets done anymore. Just gridlock and games. Look at us. When we started, we co-sponsored legislation together. Now, we can't even be seen in public together as friends.

(then)

I've had it, I'm done.

CONOR

After all the crap you've pulled over the years for your side? Now you're too good for it? And you just slap on your halo and leave.

CHARLIE

It doesn't work any more, Conor. I can't do it.

CONOR

(bitterly)

But I can, right. A swamp Congress is just fine for me, I'm just a lousy politician.

CHARLIE

You know that's not what I mean. This is about me.

CONOR

(then; quietly)

You didn't even talk to me.

Conor is hurt. Charlie tries to step it back.

CHARLIE

Anyway, we're just talking about it. I haven't made a decision.

Conor's not sure he believes him. They eat, silently.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - STATUTORY HALL - THAT DAY

Pancho - walking with a few other MEMBERS - looks across the Hall and clocks the defeated Member we saw taking the flag.

PANCHO

There but for the grace of God and  
a few loyal friends on the state  
redistricting committee back home  
goes any of us, Gentlemen.

The Members AD-LIB agreement. Then, Pancho spots a NATTY MALE SENIOR STAFFER (38) and spins off to chat with him.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

So, what's cooking on the Chiefs of  
Staff tom-toms? Any scoop?

NATTY STAFFER

Nah. Committee assignment  
plotting, the usual.

(then; thinking)

Though that moron who runs Harley  
Hennessy's staff has been  
insufferable. Bragging about  
snatching some grossly overpaid  
Railroad Association job.

PANCHO

I know that clod. He's even dumber  
than Hennessy. Not easy, mind you.

Crafty wheels start turning inside Pancho's head.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

What's Hennessy been up to on the  
Transportation committee?

NATTY STAFFER

He's Patriot Caucus so he votes no  
on everything.

PANCHO

A favor, por favor. Check, lately.

The natty staffer smiles -- a spy mission! -- and nods.

INT. RAYBURN BUILDING -- JERLENE'S OFFICE - THAT DAY

Claire takes in the wall PHOTOS that document Jerlene's rise from local activist, to Lansing, and then to Congress.

Jerlene enters with her Chief, GABE (36, modern orthodox).

GABE

We have about five minutes.

CLAIRE

Thank you, Ms. Williams. I've been trying to figure out what committee assignment to ask for.

JERLENE

(politely)

Go ahead.

CLAIRE

Okay, so I know Congress' true power comes from tax bills and spending bills.

(catching herself)

I know I don't have to tell you any of this, Chairwoman.

Jerlene holds back a smile. She was like this once.

GABE

No, you don't.

Claire just blurts it out.

CLAIRE

I'd like to get on Ways and Means.

GABE

The most powerful committee in Congress, writes the tax code?

Claire nods. Why not?

GABE (CONT'D)

No Freshman gets on Ways and Means!

JERLENE

(gently)

What Gabe means is, this place runs on seniority, Ms. Kerkmann. Freshmen don't get a seat on Ways and Means. Maybe in time.

GABE

Think House Administration.

Claire is feeling defeated, but she doesn't give up easy.

CLAIRE

I'm a law professor. I teach the tax code.

JERLENE

It was nice to meet you Claire.

And that's that.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL -- STATUTORY HALL - THAT AFTERNOON

HARLEY HENNESSY, (40's, self-important) is walking through the Hall. He stops to take a phone call.

CONOR (O.S.)

Harley Hennessy! What's up pal?

Hennessy smiles. Attention from on high!

HENNESSY

Whip, nice to hear from you. We back-benchers don't always.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CONOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Conor's at his desk.

CONOR

I'm a fan, Harley. And in a four seat world, I'm out and around. You have a PAC thing tonight, I heard.

Hennessy nods. Why would Byrne care?

CONOR (CONT'D)

I thought I'd show up and sing your praises.

HENNESSY

That would be amazing.

CONOR

Need to show the Leadership is behind our troops. I'll go over with Malone and Zenko. Portico in 30 minutes. I'll give you a ride.

CLICK. Hennessy walks on, smiling to himself.

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL - PORTICO - CONTINUOUS

Conor's black SUV idles. Two USCP AGENTS standing nearby. Harley Hennessy appears and climbs in. The SUV zooms off.

INT. CONOR'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

It's the two of them. The two USCP AGENTS sit up front.

HENNESSY  
(suspicious)  
Where's Zenko and Malone?

CONOR  
They left early. Just us.  
(it sits there, then)  
So it's the Railroad Association  
tonight, right?

Hennesy nods, suddenly a bit nervous. The SUV pulls away.

CONOR (CONT'D)  
You've had a little change of heart  
on voting transportation  
appropriations haven't you?

HENNESSY  
Infrastructure means jobs.

Conor grins. This idiot is trying a campaign slogan?

CONOR  
I know all about it Harley. You  
made an ugly little deal with the  
other side. They're pulling a wire  
to get you get an eight hundred  
thousand dollar a year job running  
the railroad association and you're  
gonna give up your seat a month  
into the new Congress.

Hennesy is pale.

CONOR (CONT'D)  
Since you are from a state with a  
Democratic Governor, she'll appoint  
a Democrat to replace you. Taking  
us down to three seats. Nice plan.  
Too bad your chief of staff was so  
proud of it.

HENNESSY  
Look, I made a deal, okay. It's  
what we do. We're *politicians!*

Wrong thing to say! Conor is ominously silent, then...



CONOR  
 I'm sorry too, Harley.  
 (off the SUV)  
 You like this Cadillac?

Hennessy brightens, pals again? He nods.

CONOR (CONT'D)  
 Me too. I'm gonna send another one  
 for you tomorrow morning.  
 (Irish ice)  
 But you're gonna decide right now if  
 it will be a limousine, or a hearse.

Hennessy's eyes close. It's over. He's toast.

CONOR (CONT'D)  
 We are going go see your pals at the  
 Railroad Association and tell the  
 chief fool there that you're turning  
 down the CEO job, because you're all  
 about service. You will serve your  
 full term in the new Congress and  
 then we'll replace you with a  
*trustworthy* Republican and hold our  
 district.

HENNESSY  
 (voice quivering)  
 And if I don't?

CONOR  
 You'll be the new head of the  
 American Railroad Association. And  
 I will grab every railroad CEO in  
 the country by the balls and drag  
 them in for the worst public  
 hearings they can imagine. Smog  
 emissions, oil car safety, the  
 works. You'll be fired before you  
 can cash your first paycheck.

The car stops in front of the Mayflower. Hennessy is  
 WHIMPERING now. The doors open. Conor tosses him a hankie.

CONOR (CONT'D)  
 Come on Harley. All aboard.

INT. WASHINGTON DC - NORA'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

A favorite Democratic hang-out. Charlie's with some  
 staffers. His three SECURITY AGENTS eat at a nearby table.

CHARLIE  
 (toasting)  
 To the New Congress, and the end of  
 the lame duck session.

Glasses CLINK. He flags down the WAITER.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 (off the agents)  
 I'm covering their tab.

The Agents smile, not every Member does this. A TOURIST  
 COUPLE timidly approach him.

TOURIST HUSBAND  
 Mister Averil, I, um recognize you  
 from the news. Maybe a selfie?

CHARLIE  
 Of course.

A WAITER takes their smart phone as they all smile and pose.

INT. MAYFLOWER HOTEL - RAILROAD ASSOCIATION - LATER

APPLAUSE from the crowd of Railroad Association folks, as  
 Conor approaches the podium. Harley, looking sick, watches.

CONOR  
 Thank you. I hadn't planned on  
 making remarks tonight, but I'm  
 always happy to support a great  
 industry that keeps America's  
 economy moving.

Suddenly, Conor's lead USCP Agent, JERRY, touches his  
 earpiece and tightens up. He locks eyes with a SECOND AGENT  
 by the door. They start moving. Jerry races to the podium.

JERRY  
 We have to leave now Sir.

Conor is confused, but starts moving with him. The SECOND  
 AGENT joins Conor, his weapon out, scanning the crowd.

SECOND AGENT  
 MOVE! CLEAR A PATH!

People step back, as the agents move Conor to the door as a  
 CAPITOL POLICE C.E.R.T. Unit - think SWAT with 2x the  
 firepower -- bursts into the room. The CROWD GASPS.

JERRY  
 Go, go, go!

We follow as they blitz... THROUGH THE LOBBY... THEN, OUTSIDE and then hustle Conor into his SUV.

INT. CONOR'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

Conor holds on as the vehicle SCREECHES AWAY, its SIREN blaring. RADIO TRAFFIC crackles as the AGENTS report in.

CONOR  
Jerry, what's happening?

Beat. Bad news. JERRY turns to Conor.

JERRY  
I'm very sorry Mister Byrne. It's Charlie Averil. He's been shot.

Stunned, Conor falls back into his seat. A silent beat.

CONOR  
Where, how?

Jerry pauses, then decides.

JERRY  
Show him.

The SECOND AGENT hands Conor a smartphone.

**INT. NORA'S RESTAURANT - SMARTPHONE POV VIDEO - EVENING**

**The selfie is wrapping up, but the waiter still rolls video.**

**TOURIST HUSBAND**  
**Thank you so much!**

**Charlie waves and starts walking out. He makes it a few steps, toward the door and then: RAPID GUNSHOTS. Charlie crumples to the floor as an AGENT dives through the frame and hard tackles a hooded MAN near the door. The phone drops.**

Conor struggles to speak.

JERRY  
He's in intensive care at George Washington hospital.

CONOR  
Take me there.

JERRY  
We are en route to a secure location sir. It's the protocol.

CONOR  
 (stronger now)  
 Take me there.

EXT. DC STREETS -- CONTINUOUS

Lights flashing, the SUV and CERT vehicles make a hard turn.

EXT./INT. G.W. UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Lights flash from police vehicles as Conor's motorcade rolls up. More AGENTS, Uzi's out, surround the SUV.

Conor, flanked by his agents, pushes through, and sees her: SARAH PAGE-AVERIL, Charlie's wife. Conor's friend since they were young Freshmen. She looks broken.

Conor runs to her and she falls into his embrace.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. ARLINGTON VA - CHARLIE'S HOUSE - EARLY NEXT AM

Conor, on his phone, is sitting in this tidy suburban back yard. He's still in a suit from last night and looks awful.

CONOR  
 Can you handle it, Pancho?

INT. U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING - STATUTORY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Pancho walks and talks.

PANCHO  
 With aplomb. And you should know the Speaker has called a "what the hell do we do now" session in two hours.  
 (then)  
 You holding up ok, Amigo?

CONOR  
 I'm trying.  
 (exhausted; jumbled)  
 I'm here. At the house. I haven't gone in yet.

PANCHO  
 I'm so sorry.

Conor hangs up, looks back at the house, and waits.

INT. CAPITOL HILL HOTEL LOBBY - C STREET - THE NEXT MORNING

This small hotel serves as temporary housing for New Members. Still stunned, Members-elect mill around the breakfast buffet, watching the news coverage on a large TV.

TWO CAPITOL COPS, a new addition, hover by the lobby doors. A television on the wall blares updates.

**NEWS ANCHOR (O.C.)**

***Law enforcement sources say the shooter, 23 year old Mason Jane, had been living with his parents in suburban Virginia since his recent release from a psychiatric hospital.***

Claire sits with others at a table, morosely picking at food.

CLAIRE

Hey, dad. No, I'm fine. They're saying this guy was a loner, and we have serious security.

(listens, then)

No, dad. No, please don't send me a gun.

(as Cam arrives)

I love you too.

She hangs up.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

(to Cam)

He's sending me a knife.

Cam smiles, that's the Gunny.

CAM

The word is we'll move out once Capitol Police coordinate with D.C. Metro on the shuttles.

CLAIRE

Thanks.

Bish approaches.

BISH

You doing okay?

CLAIRE

I guess. It's awful.

As Bish goes, Cam checks his phone as another text comes in.

CAM

I'm still getting all these texts from producers wanting you on cable news. From like, everybody.

CLAIRE

Absolutely not.

CAM

They're asking you to comment on the shooting.

CLAIRE

Except that's not what they really want. It'll just be more stupid "Commando Claire" stuff.  
(shakes her head)  
Tell them no way.

CAPITOL COP (O.S.)

Okay, we're ready to move out.

Everyone starts collecting their stuff.

SARAH (O.S.)

Anytime this afternoon is good.  
Thank you.

EXT. ARLINGTON VA - CHARLIE'S HOUSE

Conor turns. Sarah's standing on the Patio. She hangs up.

SARAH

(to Conor)

Wanna tell me where in the Bible it says when the worst thing in the world happens, you gotta invite a thousand people to your house for bagels and salmon.

Sarah's bravura "functioning" exterior is touching.

CONOR

I'm so sorry.

He goes to her, puts his arms around her. But though she accepts his hug, there's a troubling remoteness.

SARAH

Thanks, but I'm doing okay, really.

CONOR

There'll be lots of stuff, his pension, insurance...

CONOR (CONT'D) SARAH  
 ...whatever I can do. I appreciate that. \*

Again, a certain coldness. He follows her inside.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The house is warm and inviting, a couple in love. Family PHOTOS on the living room wall from a happier time. Conor takes them in.

CONOR  
 The kids back yet?

SARAH  
 Ellie should be here any minute.  
 Sam's still trying to get a flight  
 out of Port-au-Prince.

CONOR  
 I can call the embassy...

SARAH  
 You know Sam. No special help.

Conor picks up a framed photo *from Sarah and Charlie's wedding. The young newlyweds standing beside another couple - a younger Conor and his ex-wife, Helen. They're laughing.*

TIGHT ON Conor. Remembering his own lost Helen...

SARAH (CONT'D)  
 You know he was getting out. We  
 made a decision over recess.

He turns.

CONOR  
 Yeah, we talked. He said you guys  
 were thinking about it.

She's right back at him, suddenly even colder.

SARAH  
 No, not thinking. He was getting  
 out. He was tired of it. So was  
 I. We're looking... we *were*  
 looking, at places in New York.

Conor's trying to catch up. After a long moment.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
 (colder)  
 He hated it you know.

CONOR  
Sarah, he never stopped trying to  
get things done.

SARAH  
(rising anger)  
But what was getting *done*? Tell me!

CONOR  
You know how it works.

SARAH  
Yeah, I know how politics works,  
and I know how it *doesn't* work.

CONOR  
Sarah...

She grabs a remote, pops on the TV.

SARAH  
This how it works?

ANGLE ON: TV Conor and Charlie, after the gun vote.

**CHARLIE**  
***Guns are killing innocent people.***  
***Which child, must die today!?***

**CONOR**  
***Why must the Constitution die***  
***today?!***

RESUME:

CONOR (CONT'D)  
(weakly)  
The rhetoric, you know that's just--

SARAH  
'Rhetoric?' Did the man who killed  
my husband know it was *rhetoric*?

She snaps off the TV. Conor was not prepared for this.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
The police told me that man had a  
copy of the Constitution in his  
car. All torn up.  
(then; sobbing)  
He thought he was a hero!

Conor flinches. He didn't know that.



SARAH (CONT'D)  
 He didn't know it was this game you  
 all play.

Conor struggles for words.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
 And now Charlie's dead. Maybe  
 that's what you got done.

CONOR  
 I loved him, you know I did.

SARAH  
 (under her breath)  
 You should go.

Conor, speechless, turns to go.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - DEM CAUCUS ROOM - THAT MORNING

Jerlene sits at a large conference table with a dozen other  
 DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP MEMBERS. The mood is funeral grim.

A tall, dignified man in his 70's (think Lithgow) sits at one  
 end of the table. This is GEORGE STAUNTON of Illinois, the  
 "Liberal Lion". He nods at Jerlene, she should speak first.  
 She takes a deep breath.

JERLENE  
 I remember his shoes.  
 (off their looks)  
 It was my first term in the state  
 legislature. And we had a situation.  
 A powerful man, in our own party, was  
 taking, advantages. And I made a big  
 stink about it. So, big surprise,  
 they shut me down. That club, then,  
 it wasn't gonna change. And I was  
 mad, so mad I was thinking of getting  
 out of politics. But then I got a  
 phone call. And two days later,  
 there he was, standing at my door in  
 Sugar Hill, all the way from LA, tan  
 and smiling and wearing those penny  
 loafers he loved. In January, in ten  
 inches of Michigan snow.

Smiles and CHUCKLES. Those penny loafers...

JERLENE (CONT'D)  
 Before I knew it, he was asking me  
 to run for Congress.

Smiles and a few silent tears; that was Charlie.

JERLENE (CONT'D)

Our country, and our cause, was wounded last night. But I know the last thing Charlie would want is for us to slip into hopelessness and lose sight of our purpose. We have to move forward.

Nods and agreement. A glint appears in Staunton's eye.

INT. US CAPITOL - SPEAKER'S OFFICE - LATER

Lamar and the Republicans are having their own Leadership Council; Pancho, Dan Reieux, Banking Committee Chair SANDY MENZER (40's, soccer mom/MBA) and Agriculture Chair DON PARKER (60's, midwestern farmer). Conor is notably absent.

LAMAR

We're all gonna miss Charlie. A good man. But now our friends in the media are gonna whip up the country on guns and we need a plan.

RIEUX

(snide)

Where's the Whip?

LAMAR

Let it be. He'll be here. What's the talk among the rank and file?

RIEUX

Hold the Second Amendment line. Scream mental health. Existing laws.

SANDY

Do something on guns, fast, before we get killed.

PANCHO

So we're all united.

Conor enters, slumping into a chair. He's still crushed.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - DEM CAUCUS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A Democratic version of the same debate rages. CARL GARCIA, a moderate from New Mexico is battling with JUDITH GREEN, a tough pragmatist from Long Island.

GARCIA

This is the moment. Their moderates might go for a bill to close the gun show loophole.

JERLENE

What moderates? The Republican moderates are all stuffed and sitting in a museum somewhere.

GREEN

Look, I'm sorry, but we don't want to pass a bill. Not now. We want to use the issue, use the outrage, to help us win the next election and get a majority.

JERLENE

(upset)

Use the outrage?

Tension builds. To defuse it, George Staunton stands.

STAUNTON

There is one more thing and we all hate to face it. But we have to replace Charlie with a new Leader.

He looks over at Garcia and Green, both dripping ambition.

STAUNTON (CONT'D)

We cannot afford a divisive fight within our caucus. So I urge the contenders for Leader to put our party first and work it out soon, among yourselves. Very soon.

Green and Garcia both piously nod. As the meeting breaks up LUTHER GREY, a senior Black Member, pulls Jerlene away.

GREY

We should talk. Our Black Caucus votes are gonna decide this thing.

They both eye Garcia and Green. They are not impressed.

JERLENE

As usual.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING - SPEAKER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The same debate rages on the Republican side.

DAN RIEUX

We make a squish deal on guns now and we'll have war with the NRA.

CONOR

So we do nothing?

DAN RIEUX

These gun things always blow over.

CONOR

(deflated; he's been here  
before)

So we do nothing.

Lamar shuts things down.

LAMAR

Well, I always say that when in  
doubt you dance with the one what  
brung ya. We will stay the course.

They all get up to leave.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

Conor, mind staying a bit?

The others clear out while Conor waits, then--

LAMAR (CONT'D)

So look, I've been thinkin'. There's  
gonna be a big memorial service. And my  
guess is, given Charlie Averil's  
position on this, the other party will  
wanna make it all political.

(beat)

Didn't you introduce him to his wife,  
that lawyer?

CONOR

(wary)

I did.

LAMAR

Hell, then you're almost family. I  
think you should speak at his  
service. Be our voice. Show our  
respect for the man.

(then; the kicker)

And then, you hit 'em back on any  
gun control bullshit. Coming from  
you, it'll carry real weight.

Lamar smiles. Conor nods back, as he dies inside.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - LARGE COMMITTEE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Claire makes her case to the bored faces of the senior  
Democratic Members of the Committee on Committees.

CLAIRE

...in addition, if I could speak to income inequality, I believe reforming the tax code to create the right incentives is the key to..

She clocks the committee members -- no one is listening.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

...just about everything.

The CHAIRMAN finishes conferring with his colleagues.

CHAIRMAN

Good news, Ms. Kerkmann. You'll be serving on the Labor Committee and on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. We look forward to your fine work.

They look at her; not quite saying "next!" but--

CLAIRE

I could be of more value...

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)

... and good luck to you.

Shell-shocked, Claire gets up and leaves.

EXT CONGRESSIONAL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Claire, still reeling, wanders down the hall.

VOICE (O.S.)

Commando Claire!

She turns around; a snide Cable REPORTER, his camera rolling.

REPORTER

You had to slug anyone in Congress yet? Maybe a Republican?

Claire veers away and sprints down a hallway. Seeing an Members Only elevator, she jumps in as the doors close.

INT. MEMBERS ONLY ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Alone in the elevator, Claire stifles a quick Holly Hunter cry, then leans back against the wall. Her phone RINGS.

CLAIRE

Hey dad.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - WISCONSIN - CONTINUOUS

Monroe Kerkmann is in his recliner holding the remote.

MONROE

So sweetie, what's the sit rep?  
You get that committee thing you  
wanted, Ends and Means?

CLAIRE

Ways and Means, but no, I didn't.  
Gonna be on Merchant Marine and  
Fisheries.

MONROE

Outstanding! About time those  
politicians did something about the  
damn bighead carp in lake Michigan!

CLAIRE

(trying, but...)  
I'll get right on that.

The Gunny can tell something is off.

MONROE

Honey, I don't know the half of how  
things work up there, but you know  
what I always say to do when you're  
put in a tough corner?

CLAIRE

*"Don't think, just fight."*

MONROE

That's right. Now how--

The elevator doors open and Conor Byrne gets in. Conor Byrne!

CLAIRE

(under her breath)  
Inputs, dad.

Monroe jabs the remote and gets his TV picture back.

MONROE

How'd you know sweetie?

CLAIRE

(quietly, embarrassed)  
I knew Dad. Gotta go, I love you.

Conor stares straight ahead. Claire straightens, doing her feeble best to hide her recent crushing disappointment.

CONOR

Sorry.  
 (off her look)  
 ...to interrupt.

CLAIRE

That's okay. My dad.

The odd formality puts a lot of air around their words.

CONOR

Was he helpful?

CLAIRE

Excuse me?

CONOR

You know, fatherly advice.

CLAIRE

Oh, no. He called *me*.  
 (then)  
 It kinda goes both ways.

Conor flinches - so different from his own daughter.

CONOR

Then you're lucky. And so is he.

CLAIRE

I guess so, though I still have no  
 idea what 'take two and hit to  
 right' means.

CONOR

(smiles)  
 No one does.  
 (then)  
 I'm Conor Byrne.

CLAIRE

Yeah, I sorta recognize you.

CONOR

And I recognize you.

Claire's face falls a little... has he seen that damn video?

CONOR (CONT'D)

You took out one of my absolute prize  
 fools, Larry Ludaman.

(on a grin; you earned it)  
 Welcome to Congress, Ms. Kerkmann.

(MORE)

CONOR (CONT'D)  
And whatever your Dad said, I'll bet  
it was the right advice.

CLAIRE  
It usually is.

Conor takes that in -- with more pain than Claire realizes.

INT. CONOR'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

Conor makes it back to his office. He collapses into his  
desk chair, sad and exhausted.

Something about Claire. He picks up his phone. Dials. His  
face falls just a little - he has to leave a message.

CONOR  
(into phone)  
Hi, Deni, it's me. Just trying you  
again. Figure you've seen the news. I  
just...I was hoping we could talk.  
Give me a call when you get this, okay?

Conor hangs up. He couldn't feel more alone. He stands.

EXT. GEORGETOWN - TOWNHOUSE - THAT NIGHT

Conor rings the doorbell. Emily Knox appears at the doorway.  
She takes in his look.

KNOX.  
(warmly)  
If you're here for an interview,  
I'd fire your hair and make up  
person.  
(it was a nice try)  
Conor, I'm so sorry.

She opens the door. He steps inside.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

OVER BLACK:

EMILY (V.O.)  
(very gently)  
Hey, wake up.

INT. EMILY KNOX'S TOWNHOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

She's a network pro: a suitcase packed, ready by the door.



Now she's sitting beside Conor on the edge of her bed. He opens his eyes.

EMILY

Gotta get to work. There's some coffee.

He looks at her. She understands him.

CONOR

Thank's for listening last night.

EMILY

Thank you for trusting me. I had no idea you two were that close.

CONOR

No one did.  
(the absurdity of it)  
God it's so stupid.

EMILY

It's not. You couldn't have done your jobs any other way.

CONOR

That's the thing. We weren't doing our jobs. And now he's dead.

EMILY

It's not your fault, Con.

He nods, but his eyes say he doesn't agree. She kisses the top of his head.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You gonna be okay?

CONOR

Sorta.

She stands.

EMILY

I'll see you this afternoon. I'm doing the pool feed from the memorial service.

He sits up. Starts to dress.

CONOR

I don't know... maybe he had the right idea. Get out and get rich.

There's something about the way he says it.

EMILY

I don't buy that. You do what you do because it's in your blood.

CONOR

Sounds like a disease.

EMILY

More of a gift. I've interviewed a lot of Generals, Con, and you're all the same.

(then)

You just need to find the right war.

EXT. SOUTH SIDE OF THE CAPITOL - EARLY MORNING

Claire and Cam scamper up the white marble steps to the Cannon House Office building. Cam checks a sheet of paper.

CAM

It says your office is on the fifth floor. Probably a great view.

EXT. FIFTH FLOOR - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The hallway is grim; low ceilings, dim lamps, and mountains of dusty boxes and a sloppy pile of old wooden chairs.

CAM

They call it the Cannon Attic. Or "the Freshman dorm."

It's the worst, most cramped, lowest seniority office space in all of Congress. Continuing on, they find their office.

INT. CANON BUILDING - CLAIRE'S OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

A suite of three rooms, only one with a few dirty windows and no view. Welcome to Congress, small fry.

CAM

Who did we piss off?

Claire takes it all in.

CLARE

At home, when I was running I promised them I'd do something in Congress. And they believed me.

This is it. The final straw.

CLAIRE.  
Tell them yes.

Cam looks at her, what?

CLAIRE  
The news shows. Get me on the  
biggest TV show you can find.

INT. CONOR'S OFFICE - THAT MORNING

Conor, in memorial service black, is looking at his remarks  
for the service as Pancho enters.

PANCHO  
I got the scoop on the memorial.

Conor looks up.

PANCHO (CONT'D)  
Norm Starny is speaking. Unite the  
nation on gun control. Charlie's  
legacy.

CONOR  
His legacy?! Charlie hated Starny.  
They're only giving him the spotlight  
because he's running for Governor of  
Connecticut. God, they're even more  
cynical than we are. You see this  
stuff Lamar's guys wrote for me?  
Beyond awful.  
(reading)  
'Let's make Charlie Averil's legacy,  
a new day, in mental health.'

Conor laughs bitterly, But then...

PANCHO  
What are you gonna say?

Pancho silently motions toward the office down the hall --  
meaning Speaker Lamar Blunt.

PANCHO (CONT'D)  
The Gods do not enjoy subtlety.

Conor knows what's expected of him.

CONOR  
Tell Lamar not to worry.

INT/EXT. THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL - MEMORIAL SERVICE - LATER

A Choir sings the BATTLE HYMM OF THE REPUBLIC as D.C.'s elite watch Charlie's coffin carried forward by an Honor Guard.

INT. NATIONAL CATHEDRAL - PULPIT - LATER

A Rabbi is speaking.

RABBI

...and like his forbearer Jacob,  
Charlie Averil was one who wrestled  
with the angels. And when there  
was something he believed in, he  
put up one helluva fight.

He leaves the podium, as a well-coiffed NORM STARNY arrives.

STARNY

I was proud to work alongside  
Charlie Averil. Starny, he'd say,  
let's not waste today.

In a pew, Pancho and Lamar trade a contemptuous glance.

PANCHO

(under his breath)  
Wait for it.

STARNY

So now I say, let's not waste  
Charlie Averil's legacy. Not when  
so many are dying every day from  
gun violence. I say, we act today!

Conor's eyes drill into Starny.

INT. NATIONAL CATHEDRAL - ALTAR - TEN MINUTES LATER

STARNY

(finishing)  
We will prove that Charlie Averil  
did not die in vain. Thank you.

As Starny goes, Conor walks to podium. He scans the crowd, and tries to focus on Sarah, sitting there with her kids, Ellie and Sam. But it's too hard. He looks over the crowd, back toward the press section, where Emily is standing. She nods in silent support. He begins...

CONOR

Charlie Averil was... Charlie was a  
wise and good man. We came to Congress  
together. I watched his family grow.

(MORE)

CONOR (CONT'D)

Please know there was no worthier a colleague or finer friend than Charlie Averill. So we are left to ask, what is to be learned from his death?

He sees Lamar, waiting for his rebuttal, and Sarah. Her face...

But he can't do the bullshit, not today. He folds his notes.

CONOR (CONT'D)

Charlie's true legacy was his decency. And the love he shared with his family and his friends. I am proud to have been one of those friends, and I will miss him forever.

Conor steps quickly from the podium. Lamar is dead-eyed.

RABBI

We will conclude with the Jewish prayer of morning, the Yizkor.

The familiar, solemn prayer takes us to...

INT. MEMORIAL SERVICE - MOMENTS LATER

The service is over. As Conor moves through the crowd, he is suddenly face to face with Sarah. After a tentative moment, she steps forward and embraces him, for real now.

SARAH

He loved you so much.

CONOR

I'm so sorry.

As other's arrive, they break apart. Conor finds himself face-to-face with Lamar, who is not happy with Conor's speech.

LAMAR

What was that? You just rolled right over.

Conor looks at him eye to eye. Stand off.

CONOR

I said what I wanted to say.

Lamar backs down, then walks away. He respects strength.

Suddenly, Conor notices a YOUNG WOMAN heading out along a side aisle. She has spiky hair, her outfit more boho eclectic than "memorial service" formal yet still respectful.

Conor heads off after the young woman, tracking her through the crowd. He catches sight of her, leaving the cathedral.

EXT. MEMORIAL SERVICE - MOMENTS LATER

Conor comes outside, eyes scanning the crowd. He finds her again, heading for the street. He speeds up to a light jog.

CONOR

Denise!

She turns, her eyes red from crying. Conor's overjoyed to see his daughter. Whatever bridges have burned between them, in this second it doesn't matter.

They embrace. But, after a moment, she steps back, rubs at her eyes to hide the evidence of her grief.

CONOR (CONT'D)

What are you...how did you get here?

DENISE

Ellie called me. She said Sarah really wanted me to come.

CONOR

When did you get in? I could have picked you up at the airport.

DENISE

Last night. I took a cab.

CONOR

I've left you a bunch of messages.

DENISE

I know, I've been kinda crazed.  
(forced humor)  
Who knew? Medical school turns out to be hard as hell.

Conor looks at her. Does her light tone possibly mean...?

CONOR

You sticking around? We could have dinner...

DENISE

I can't, I gotta get back, Boards are next week.

CONOR  
Just a day or two? We could  
talk...

Another Guest passes by. Conor smiles at them.

DENISE  
I really gotta go.

CONOR  
Please.

DENISE  
Dad, I...

CONOR (CONT'D)  
(a sudden whisper)  
*Charlie's dead, for Christ's  
sake.*

DENISE (CONT'D)  
People die. Mom died.

TIGHT ON CONOR: After so many years, the awful reality of what that did to their relationship, still a gaping wound.

CONOR  
Ten years. And you still can't  
forgive me.

DENISE  
Dad, don't...

Two more Memorial GUESTS stop by at exactly the worst moment.

GUEST #1  
Take care, Conor.

CONOR  
Mr. Ambassador, Gina.

Denise stands silently until they walk away. She can't have this fight again. It's too painful.

DENISE  
I gotta go.

She moves in quickly to hug him, then breaks away.

And she's off, leaving Conor utterly and absolutely alone. He's immediately engaged by two other Mourners.

In the distance, unseen by Conor, Denise turns back, the love and pain streaking her face.

Twenty yards away, and unseen by them...

Emily watches. She wants to help. But how?

INT. CONOR'S APARTMENT - PRE DAWN EARLY MORNING

Sleepless, he checks the clock for the hundredth time. Finally, he gives up, and gets out of bed.

EXT. CONOR'S APARMENT HOUSE - BACK DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Conor in sweats, pushes his bike out into the darkness.

EXT. D.C. STREETS - PRE-DAWN (DARK)

He's riding, harder and harder, but whatever he's trying to outrun, it's not working. Losing focus, he takes a wide turn and accidentally brushes against the side of a van. His bike SMASHES into a curb, sending Conor over the handlebars.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - EARLY MORNING

We find Conor, bruised, with torn sweats, but otherwise okay, waiting for the Emergency Room to let him out. Jerry and another USCP Agent stand nearby.

JERRY

They just need to finish the paperwork, and you're outta here.

CONOR

Thanks.

SECOND AGENT

Good thing you were wearing a helmet. Got enough tragedy this week.

CONOR

(flatly)  
Yeah, good thing.

INT. NETWORK STUDIO - THE "IT'S AM AMERICA" SET -- MORNING

Cam, excited, walks with Claire toward the set.

CAM

Remember the talking points the party sent us. They really want you to talk about...

(reading card)

An agenda for advancing America.



INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Conor looks up at TV that's playing softly. The intro animation for "It's AM, America."

ON Conor, his face stone. Back to the bullshit...

INT. NETWORK STUDIO - "IT'S AM, AMERICA!" SET

A FLOOR DIRECTOR seats Claire beside famous anchor CHET LANCER, 42. Next to Chet is the co-anchor, TAMMY ALDERSHOT.

FLOOR DIRECTOR  
Five seconds, and --

LANCER  
This morning a hero, mourned in Congress. Joining our discussion, Claire Kerkmann, a newly elected House Member from Wisconsin. Or as you may know her, "Commando Claire" Kerkmann after a video of her became a true viral sensation.

The viral footage plays yet again. Claire just hates it.

LANCER (CONT'D)  
Commando Claire. What a moniker!

TAMMY  
So empowering!

LANCER  
Now, Claire, you're obviously a real fighter, but can more fighting really change Congress?

Claire looks at the pair for a beat. What? Then...

CLAIRE  
Well, Chet, with our party's agenda to advance America...

She stops. What bullshit. She sees a GRAPHIC of the stupid video on a FLOOR MONITOR. Enough: *Don't think, just fight.*

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
But those are just words. I don't even know what they mean.

INT. U.S. HOUSE MEMBERS ONLY GYM - EARLY MORNING

On an elliptical, Jerlene is watching a flatscreen. WTF?

INT. NETWORK STUDIO - "IT'S AM, AMERICA!" SET - CONTINUOUS

CLAIRE

I didn't come here to fight. It's the opposite! I want to get something done. I know I'm just a freshman, so I've been told to shut up, sit down and mind my place. But that, is what I am going to fight.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

A bank of screens, the DIRECTOR calling shots.

TECH

Who is this?

DIRECTOR

I dunno but push in.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A flicker of interest in Conor's dead eyes. Calling out --

CONOR

Can you turn this up?

On her elliptical, Jerlene is paying close attention now.

CLAIRE

I didn't come here just to treat politics like it's a big game. I don't hate anybody, and I don't like calling names. My father is a career Marine and a conservative, but I love him and I know he loves this country and loves me and respects my political views even though they are different than his.

Conor's watching this. It's moving him.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Now both sides can say there's nothing to talk about, that compromise is impossible. But if you believe that, you've given up on our country and on this democracy that my father and so many others have fought for. Mason Jane gave up, and Charlie Averil became the victim of that hopelessness.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

It's not enough to get up each morning and congratulate ourselves on what we stopped the other guys from doing. We have to find a way to work together. We have to find hope.

(then)

That's why I asked my party to put me to work on Ways and Means, a Congressional Committee with enough power to actually start to get good things done. They said no. They told me to work on fish. I like fish. But I won't take no for an answer. I belong on Ways and Means.

Jerlene slowly shakes her head. Kill her or promote her?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE IN WISCONSIN - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In his recliner, Gunny smiles, so proud of her.

Silence in the studio. Even Chet and Tammy are speechless.

LANCER

Well said, Ms. Kerkmann.

(to camera)

We'll be right back.

Conor smiles. Genuinely. For the first time in a while.

The Producer walks Claire off the set, as the entire crew spontaneously CLAPS. Claire nods, a bit embarrassed.

Cam runs up to her, waving his iPhone.

CAM

You're blowing up online.

(again, his phone)

It's the leadership office.

(answering)

Cameron Torres.

It's obvious someone's YELLING. He grimaces, and Claire gestures "no" when he tries to hand her the phone.

CAM (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I don't have the Congresswoman at the moment.

As soon as he hangs up, it rings again. But now...

AT THE NEWS DESK

Chet Lancer motions for Claire.

LANCER  
Congresswoman!  
(off his own phone)  
Someone wants to talk to you.

Claire looks at him. Wary, but it is the Chet Lancer.

LANCER (CONT'D)  
I think you'll want take this.

He tosses her the phone from the desk and she catches it.

CLAIRE  
Hello.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Conor's being discharged, talking to her at the same time.

CONOR  
I'd like to meet your dad one day.

CLAIRE  
Mr. Byrne?

CONOR  
So here's what I need you to do.  
First off, talk to no one,  
especially your own leadership.  
Second, go immediately to the  
Visitor Center at the Capitol. Its  
crawling with tourists, so no Member  
would be caught dead there. I'll  
send someone to meet you.

CLAIRE  
And...why am I doing this?

CONOR  
Because after what you just did,  
you have nothing to lose. I'll  
explain when I see you.

Claire hangs up, thinking.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - VISITOR'S CENTER - LATER

Claire's waiting. A few tourists notice her from TV. Now, Jerry, Conor's lead USCP Security Agent, approaches her. He nods, and she follows him.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - ROOM FULL OF COLUMNS - TEN MINUTES LATER

Jerry deposits an edgy Claire and leaves. Conor is waiting in the large room full of tightly spaced marble columns. No sweats now, the armor is back on. Perfect suit and tie.

CONOR

(off the columns)

We are under the Rotunda. No cell service, luckily for you. Come on, there is somewhere even more private where we can talk.

She follows, down more stairs.

CLAIRE

What is this all about?

CONOR

Your future.

They head down an ancient, narrow, arched hallway.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING - WASHINGTON'S TOMB - CONTINUOUS

They reach a cave-like room. A black catafalque lies inside.

CONOR (CONT'D)

This was built to be a tomb for George Washington. But George was an ornery sort, kinda like you, and he insisted on being buried at Mount Vernon.

(off the catafalque)

Lincoln, JFK, Reagan, they all laid in state on this very catafalque, directly above us.

CLAIRE

Are you telling me I'm dead?

CONOR

Well, I thought meeting in a tomb was rather appropriate, since you committed one magnificent act of political suicide this morning. But no. I want to help you rise from the dead.

CLAIRE

I can take care of myself. I'll go upstairs and deal with them.

CONOR

If you go upstairs now, they'll be the ones dealing with you.

(off her hesitation)

Look, I don't normally care much about the struggles in the other party, in fact I normally relish them. But in this case, if you wish, I can do you a favor.

(off her look)

Just stay down here for an hour. Off the grid. Then I'll send somebody for you.

CLAIRE

That's all?

CONOR

That's all. You in?

She considers. Trustworthy? Probably not. But nothing good's happening upstairs right now. She nods slightly.

He goes. Claire stands alone eyeing the black draped platform and feeling the power of all that history.

INT. JERLENE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jerlene enters. Staunton, Garcia and Green are waiting.

JERLENE

I know, I've seen it. Gotta say, it was one ballsy move.

GREEN

We let her get away with this and the freshmen will all run wild.

Staunton grins a bit, watching video of Claire's speech playing silently on a TV in the corner. She moved him.

INT. HOUSE RADIO AND TV GALLERY -- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Connor walks into the Capitol's press room.

CONOR

I want to comment on the Kerkmann interview this morning.

The Reporters react, this is going to be fun.

CONOR (CONT'D)

If the Democratic Leadership gives in to this kind of media stunt from the progressive left, it is a clear sign that the most radical elements have taken over the Democratic party. We strongly encourage, no we demand, that the Democratic Leadership stands by its decision to keep Ms. Kerkmann off the Ways and Means Committee.

Off that perfect sound bite, he leaves.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - JERLENE'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

They are all watching Conor on CNN.

GREEN

We crush her, simple as that.

JERLENE

But we'll look like we're taking orders from the damn Republicans!

George Staunton raises his hand, King Solomon style.

STAUNTON

So tell me about this young woman.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - CLAIRE'S HIDING PLACE - HOUR LATER

Claire hears FOOTSTEPS (O.S.) It's Pancho. He looks around.

PANCHO

You see her?  
(off Claire's confusion)  
The ghost of Marilyn Monroe.  
Probably not. She and Jack appreciate their privacy.

CLAIRE

Let's go. Enough of this.

She leads Pancho out of the crypt. He grins, knows something.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - STATUTORY HALL - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The ornate hall is packed and buzzing. Pancho and Claire, just up from the basement, walk in.

But now, a flock of savvy Staff and Members notice Claire for the first time.... Something's up. Bodies approach.

Claire is surrounded. VOICES everywhere, congratulating her.

VOICES  
 Congratulations! Ways and Means!

Cam appears. Bish flashes a thumbs up from across the hall.

CAM  
 You did it.

Carl Garcia, always on the make, approaches.

GARCIA  
 Ms. Kerkmann, I'd sure like to meet  
 and discuss your agenda.

Claire starts to realize... She's on Ways and Means!

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - STATUTORY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Jerlene walks through the hall. She sees a Congressional  
 INTERN walking Charlie Averil's morose yellow lab.

STAUNTON (O.S.)  
 Charlie's dog. They never forget.

Jerlene turns to see the old Liberal Lion beside her.

STAUNTON (CONT'D)  
 You have a moment?

JERLENE  
 Jesus, we just buried our friend.  
 (cold and fast)  
 The Black Caucus has not made any  
 decision yet.

The old Lion looks at her for a long beat, then--

STAUNTON  
 It should be you.  
 (off her stunned look)  
 The first African American Minority  
 Leader, and in two years, when we  
 win the Majority, and by God we  
 will, the first African American  
 Speaker of the House. It's time.  
 (again, stronger)  
 It should be you.

He's off. Jerlene's head is spinning.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - HOUSE FLOOR - A LITTLE LATER



Time to swear in the New Congress. Jerlene walks up to Conor. They smile like proud parents on the first day of school.

CONOR

And now, they join our family.

Jerlene smiles, still a bit dazed from the Staunton offer.

He takes out a tin of mints, takes one. She notices.

CONOR (CONT'D)

Charlie loved these.

She smiles. She knows.

Now Claire steps onto the House floor for the first time. It is a huge moment for her. The gavel POUNDS, all rise, and Speaker Lamar Blunt begins leading the Oath of Office.

The CAMERA sweeps over the faces of America - all races and colors - as they all pledge. We see Pancho, then Jerlene.

NEW MEMBERS

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

The CAMERA lands on Conor, and finally, on Claire.

CONOR

...that I will bear true faith and  
allegiance to the same; that I take  
this obligation freely, without any  
mental reservation or purpose...

CLAIRE

...of evasion, and that I will well  
and faithfully discharge the duties  
of the office on which I am about  
to enter. So help me God.

INT. EMPTY HALLS OF CONGRESS - LATER THAT NIGHT

Conor finds Claire alone on the floor, just taking it in.

CLAIRE

Why? Why did you do it? Was it  
just politics?

CONOR

I sure hope it looked that way.

Claire wants to know more, but Conor isn't the sharing type and starts to walk away. But then, he turns back to her.

CONOR (CONT'D)

You remind me of someone I met  
twenty years ago. Someone I deeply  
admired.

CLAIRE

A politician?

CONOR

No.

(then)

A believer.

With that, he walks off the floor, leaving her alone.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL - STATUTORY HALL - TEN MINUTES LATER

Conor walks alone through the nearly empty Capitol. He spots an  
Intern bringing Charlie's dog back from his evening walk. The  
dog breaks away and runs across the hall, right to him. Conor  
kneels, looks at the dog, and makes a decision.

CONOR

Okay, Truman. You're with me.

(off the intern's look)

I think he just crossed the aisle.

Have his dog bed sent over.

And with that, Conor takes the leash and walks Truman away.

INT. CANNON BUILDING - CLAIRE'S OFFICE - LATER

Claire is alone unpacking things in her new office. A KNOCK  
at the door. Bish peaks his head in. She's surprised.

BISH

(a bit humiliated)

They gave me attic number two.

Turns out you don't run for  
Freshman Class President unless  
they tell you to run.

(off her chuckle)

And congrats on Ways and Means.

That was really something.

CLAIRE

What'd you get?

BISH

Merchant Marine and Fisheries.

Claire keeps a straight face. They start unpacking.

INT. U.S. HOUSE GYM - A BIT LATER THAT NIGHT

Pancho, with two whiskey glasses and a bottle of Old Pappy, enters the empty gym. Conor's there alone, holding a ball.

PANCHO

Figured you might be here.

He pours a couple of drinks. They both take sips.

CONOR

Gun control. A real bill.

PANCHO

You mean actually pass *legislation*?

(off Conor's nod)

Hopeless. Both sides are totally dug in. You know that.

(then)

It's an impossible ask.

But there's that twinkle again in Conor's eyes. He smiles.

CONOR

Who says I'm gonna ask?

Conor puts down his glass and heads out, Truman behind him. A man on a mission.

FADE OUT