

NW/EP: Malcolm D. Lee
NW/EP: Debra Martin Chase

"AT THAT AGE" (AKA "LEGACY")

Written by

Carla Banks Waddles

REVISED NETWORK DRAFT
January 1, 2020

Characters

Avery Cooper, 41 - Charming, confident, the oldest of the Cooper children and second in command at Cooper Corporation. He's the golden child, destined for greatness, always done what's expected of him and embodies the Cooper family's hopes and dreams. The consummate politician, he's open to "mutually beneficial creative compromises."

Victoria Cooper-Hargrove, 37 - The ultra-competitive, over-achieving middle child. Desperately needs work-life balance. She's a daddy's girl. But feeling like she'd never escape her brother's shadow, she shunned the family business and made a name for herself in Harlem as a discrimination attorney, making big money for the little guy.

Layton Cooper, 35 - youngest of the siblings. Rough around the edges, but still has the Cooper charm. Not built for traditional business, he's the entrepreneurial big ideas guy. He's struggled with substance abuse and mental health issues. Although he's labeled the black sheep, his moral center is the strongest.

Samantha Cooper, 41 – Avery's wife, glam, savvy, former party girl. She's smart but has become content to stay at home and reap the benefits of the Cooper wealth and name. She's often not taken seriously by the Coopers who respect hard work and good stock.

Justin Hargrove, 37 – Victoria's husband, handsome, athletic type, good natured, thoughtful, but struggles to get the focus and attention of his alpha wife. An orthopedic surgeon with his own sports medicine practice.

Peyton Cooper, 33 – Layton's estranged wife, reliable, down to earth, great friend, attracted to wounded souls. The Coopers love her because she works hard and was a positive influence on their son's troubled life. Struggling financially, she's trying to make ends meet with the rising costs of new Harlem. She's working on her Master's in Social Work at Columbia.

Jabari Patterson, 35 – Samantha's younger brother, intellectual playboy, known for his candor, wit and conscious commentary on his independent podcast, "For the Culture." He's also a walking contradiction in that he preaches black power but doesn't date black women, but he's secretly in love with Peyton.

Horace Cooper, 60s – The patriarch. Warm, big personality. Founder, Chairman and CEO of Cooper Corporation. He's respected and loved in Harlem and is adored by his children.

Grace Cooper, 60s, – The matriarch. Colder and stricter than her husband. She likes who she likes and is clear about who that is. She garners equal respect and love as her husband in Harlem. She was instrumental in the creation and success of Cooper Corporation.

Kendall Cooper, 16 - Avery & Samantha's oldest daughter. Lot of attitude, outspoken, socialite, partying in elite social circles, experimenting with dating, drugs and currently dating the son of a billionaire.

Jolie Cooper, 13 - Avery & Samantha's youngest daughter. Woke, activist, a bit of a tech geek, equestrian, animal lover. If it were PC to have a favorite child, she's clearly the one.

Sonia, 37 – Avery's true love. An artsy, natural beauty, sincere, authentic, laid back. She's been having an on and off again affair with Avery for years.

The Cooper Family Tree

Horace and Grace Cooper



*Jabari Patterson
(brother to Samantha)

EXT. HARLEM STREET - MORNING (DAY 2)

Over a cool soundtrack, we OPEN on BEAUTY SHOTS of where our show is going to live -- HARLEM.

SUGAR HILL -- The Dance Theatre of Harlem, The Hamilton Grange Library.

CENTRAL HARLEM -- Wide, tree-lined streets accented with statues of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Harriet Tubman.

Trendy restaurants on FREDERICK DOUGLASS BOULEVARD where a younger set brunches on outdoor patios, sipping craft coffee.

THE APOLLO THEATER -- A relic of the Harlem Renaissance now stands in contrast to Red Lobster and American Apparel.

We end on -- residential streets fraught with CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT amid crisp-looking CONDOS. As we pass a tall construction CRANE....

PRE-LAP the sounds of a HELICOPTER PROPELLER.

EXT./INT. HELICOPTER - LATER - DAY

A HELICOPTER flies over the CRANE. We go inside to find VICTORIA COOPER-HARGROVE, 37, beautiful, over-achiever and AVERY COOPER, 41, handsome, savvy, confident. They're flying over a stunning view of Harlem. Avery points out of the window.

AVERY

120th and Broadway, 114th and Saint
Nicholas, 136th and Amsterdam, East
125th and Park. Our first four
buildings.

Victoria basks for a minute. Seeing their family's real estate footprint from this view is humbling.

VICTORIA

(out window, nostalgic)

Who could've imagined that mom and
dad's storefront realty shop would
become all of this...

Avery TAPS the pilot's seat and the helicopter makes a sharp turn. Avery leans forward, excited.

AVERY

I'm setting us up for the future,
V. The mayor wants 300,000
affordable housing units by 2026.

And we're gonna get our piece of that. I've built a lot of goodwill with this administration.

Victoria's still looking out of the window.

VICTORIA

There was a time when we were the heroes of Harlem.

AVERY

People still love us. Everybody just wants a piece of Harlem and they don't know who to trust.

She looks at him, skeptical.

VICTORIA

Pushing our own people out, demolishing our city's history. Not sure they should trust us either.

AVERY

Can you just sit back and be impressed?

He points out the window as they fly over a huge lot.

AVERY (CONT'D)

There it is. Lindero.

As they fly closer and closer...

AVERY (CONT'D)

250,000-square-feet. 10,000 square feet of retail space. And 45 condos just for seniors.

Victoria is in awe. It's a massive piece of vacant land right in the center of Harlem. A tiny church, Zion Hill, sits right in the middle.

VICTORIA

What about Pastor Chavis' church?

AVERY

Everybody has a price.

VICTORIA

Not always about money, Avery.

AVERY

It's always about money. And we're gonna hire all minority contractors to build that bad boy. Fill all those stores with black and brown employees. Trust me, we're on the right side of history.

Victoria contemplates as she takes in the lot. A game-changer for sure. Avery looks out of the window with her.

AVERY (CONT'D)

This is the legacy, sis.

And off Victoria, the reality sinking in...

EXT. VICTORIA AND JUSTIN'S HARLEM BROWNSTONE - THAT NIGHT

Victoria and her husband, JUSTIN HARGROVE, 37, handsome, athletic, thoughtful, damn near perfect, walk out, dressed for a party.

JUSTIN

I can't remember the last time we went on a date.

VICTORIA

I wouldn't call my dad's retirement party a date.

He makes a show of politely opening her door, she curtsies.

INT. BLACK ESCALADE - CONTINUOUS

They slide into the BACK SEAT and as the DRIVER heads off. She leans back, sighs, happy to relax for a moment.

VICTORIA

I didn't realize how draining spending all day with my brother could be.

JUSTIN

Does he sleep? Every time I look up, he's doing another interview.

VICTORIA

Lindero is all he talks about. And he's got five good answers for every concern.

JUSTIN

That's why people love him.

VICTORIA

I'm not gonna let him charm me into submission like he does with everybody else.

JUSTIN

It's always a competition with you two, but you'll figure out a way to work together.

VICTORIA

I'm not sure I want to.

She looks at him. He looks at her. A beat.

JUSTIN

I mean... if you wanted to walk away, I wouldn't be mad.

VICTORIA

I quit my job to do this.

JUSTIN

Right. To be less stressed, not more. My practice is solid. I'm turning away patients. Financially, I got us.

VICTORIA

I've never not worked.

JUSTIN

Would it be the worst thing? Take a time out, focus on family, have time for a real date.

She smiles at the thought of that.

VICTORIA

Can you imagine?

JUSTIN

I can dream.

Victoria rests her head on his shoulder, intrigued by the possibility...

INT. BLACK LIMO - NIGHT

Avery rides with his picture perfect Obama-esque family -- SAMANTHA, 41, pampered but savvy, and his two daughters, KENDALL, 16, wild child and JOLIE, 13, smart, sweet. A glammed Samantha checks her teeth for lipstick in a mirror. Kendall's engrossed in TikTok. Avery's phone BUZZES.

Caller ID reads: "FIJI." He tucks it inside his suit coat to focus on the moment.

AVERY

What's the number one rule tonight?

JOLIE

Cell phones down, firm handshake,
look people in the eye, don't
mumble.

AVERY

Good answer, but no.

They look at him.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Have fun.

He smiles. Samantha smiles. The girls shake their heads -- dad's so cheesy. His phone BUZZES, he glances. A different number. This time he answers. A beat...

AVERY (CONT'D)

What do you mean he won't sign?
(to the driver)
Pull over.

Samantha looks at him. Off Avery, frustrated...

EXT. SWANKY HARLEM HOTEL - NIGHT

A limo and an SUV pull up. The limo door opens and HORACE COOPER, 60s, polished and stately exits and takes the hand of GRACE COOPER, 60s, the epitome of dignity and old school tradition. He helps her out of the car. As Victoria and Justin step out, they greet them with hugs and kisses. Another black limo pulls up. Samantha and the girls step out.

GRACE

Where's Avery?

SAMANTHA

He had to take a business detour.

GRACE

We can't walk in without him.

VICTORIA

Sure we can. It's dad's night.

Samantha subtly glares at Victoria.

INT. SWANKY HARLEM HOTEL ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The family files in to a private elevator. As they ride, Horace proudly puts his arm around Victoria.

HORACE

I'm thrilled to finally have my Baby Girl onboard.

VICTORIA

Avery's used to making his own decisions. Not sure he wants me looking over his shoulder.

HORACE

His credibility has taken some blows and your reputation with the community is exactly what he needs.

She smiles, loving her dad's adoration.

JUSTIN

She went out with a bang on her last day. \$20 million settlement for that family with toxic waste in their yard.

HORACE

You've always fought hard for the underdog.

GRACE

It's about time you started fighting hard for your own family. Bring that big brain in-house.

Victoria shakes her head, nothing is good enough for her.

HORACE

I think what your mother is trying to say, is she's glad you're joining the family business.

VICTORIA

Ohhhh, thanks mom.

Then DING! The elevator doors OPEN and the family turns on ALL SMILES as they step into--

EXT. ROOFTOP PARTY - NIGHT

A festive cocktail PARTY overlooking the CITY LIGHTS. The Who's Who of Harlem have come out to celebrate Horace. Live jazz band, passed hors d'oeuvres.

Horace proudly leads the way and everyone stands and claps as the family walks in. As flashbulbs go off, Horace leans into Victoria, reassuring.

HORACE

Don't worry. You and Avery are going to make a great team.

Off Victoria, not entirely convinced...

INT. ZION HILL CHURCH - HARLEM - NIGHT

A tiny, stained glass windowed church. Avery walks and talks with REV. PHILLIP CHAVIS, who pushes a cart of old hymnals down the aisle, placing a stack at the end of each pew.

REV. CHAVIS

Zion Hill is a cultural institution in Harlem. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., preached in that very pulpit.

AVERY

Phil. Your membership is down and you can't even afford the upkeep.

He points to a BUCKET catching water from a leaky ceiling.

REV. CHAVIS

There's community groups who want to help the churches that are left get fair value for our property. Said we're getting exploited.

AVERY

I wouldn't call \$28 million exploitation. We had a deal.

REV. CHAVIS

We had a handshake.

Avery stares at him. Can't believe he's reneging.

REV. CHAVIS (CONT'D)

Tell your old man congratulations.

Rev. Chavis turns to walk away. Avery doesn't budge, cool.

AVERY

What do they say about God? He's omnipotent, omnipresent and...

REV. CHAVIS

Omniscient.

AVERY

That's the one. He knows all there is to know. Like what you're up to when your wife's at the annual women's retreat in the Poconos.

Rev. Chavis stops, turns back and looks at Avery.

AVERY (CONT'D)

How 'bout we make it more than a handshake this time?

Avery pulls a document and a PEN from inside his suit coat. Off Rev. Chavis, backed into a corner...

EXT. ROOFTOP PARTY - NIGHT

Victoria and Justin are at the FONDUE BAR. She doesn't notice a SEXY WOMAN checking Justin out. Justin smiles back, used to this kind of attention. He subtly shows his wedding ring. The woman moves on. JABARI PATTERSON, 35, an intellectual playboy approaches. He's full of swagger, wit, and too much candor. He's the only guest sporting a TUXEDO.

JABARI

No Henny fountain? What kind of Fyre Festival is this? I want a refund.

VICTORIA

Oh look, public enemy number one.

JUSTIN

A tux. Aggressive choice.

JABARI

Someone told me it was black tie. Not sure why everyone feels the need to comment.

JUSTIN

Speaking of unwelcome guests...

He indicates COUNCILWOMAN SUSAN ELLISON, 50s, holding court with a few guests nearby.

COUNCILWOMAN ELLISON (O.S)

...They're making over Harlem for the one percent. It's community and ethnic cleansing.

JABARI

So she gets to eat shrimp and drag the family?

VICTORIA

I'm surprised she's not passing out campaign buttons.

JABARI

I think she set some out near the carving station.

JUSTIN

Avery will handle it when he gets here.

JABARI

Yeah, let's wait on your big bro to save the day.

She hands Justin her plate.

JABARI (CONT'D)

Want me to hold your earrings?

As she crosses off, Justin glares at Jabari -- Always starting some mess.

ANGLE ON: Avery steps off of the elevator. He works the crowd with swagger and charisma, POSING for pictures with different groups of people. You'd think it was his night.

ANGLE ON: Susan and the group.

COUNCILWOMAN ELLISON

...tearing down our churches,
destroying community gardens. We're
losing our neighborhood beauty and
character.

Victoria steps into the circle. Everyone turns.

VICTORIA

(with a smile)

You know who can't enjoy our neighborhood beauty? Seniors living on the top floors of tenement buildings with no elevators. In your district alone Susan, there are 5,000 seniors on wait lists for better housing. That's who Cooper Corp. is fighting for. But guess you can't build your re-election around a population who can't even get to the polls.

Mic drop. Everyone looks to Susan. An awkward silence hangs in the air. And from nowhere, Avery APPEARS with a smile.

AVERY

This is a family celebration. We should be celebrating!

He hands Susan a glass of CHAMPAGNE and ushers Victoria away.

ANGLE ON: Samantha keeps an eye on them from across the room as she chats with a socialite friend, JASMINE BLACKWELL.

JASMINE

Rumor has it that you and Avery aren't coming to the Vineyard.

SAMANTHA

(surprised)
What's that now?

JASMINE

Sorry. Um... Avery mentioned it at golf with Curtis last week.

An awkward moment for Sam. She skillfully covers.

SAMANTHA

Kendall's visiting colleges, so we're staying flexible with vacation plans.

JASMINE

Right. Great.
(waves to someone, then)
Let's do lunch soon.

Jasmine can't hustle away fast enough. Off Sam, humiliated.

EXT. ROOFTOP PARTY - LATER

ANGLE ON: Avery is at the end of a heated conversation with Victoria.

AVERY

...So if you wanna walk away, I get it. But they're handing us the torch. And I don't want to carry it without you.

A long beat as Victoria considers, then... BUZZ BUZZ, Avery reaches inside his suit coat to check his cell, but he feels a TUG at his elbow and turns to see a PISSED Samantha.

SAMANTHA

Talk to you for a sec?

Samantha pulls Avery away. We stay with Victoria as she crosses to the bar. Justin approaches.

JUSTIN

That looked tense. You good?

VICTORIA

(to the bartender)

Vodka tonic with lime.

JUSTIN

Maybe you should go easy, ya know?

VICTORIA

Babe. It's one drink.

The BARTENDER hands her a glass, but under Justin's watchful gaze, she can't bring herself to drink it. Instead, she smells it deeply, then puts it down. He smiles, good choice.

ANGLE ON: Jabari works his way through the crowd. He rounds the corner to find Avery in a hushed argument with Samantha.

SAMANTHA

... I know you're eager to blow up our life, but apparently the wrecking ball is already swinging and I can't even get the courtesy of a fucking memo.

Jabari realizes he just walked into some shit.

JABARI

Heyyyyyy Sis.

(to Avery)

Your dad's looking for you. Time to present Simba to the pride.

Avery downs his DRINK and walks off. We stay with him as his PHONE BUZZES. "Fiji" again. He looks, then finally answers.

AVERY

Hey! It's fine. This just isn't a good time.

CLINKING OF a GLASS and we--

ANGLE ON: Horace stands authoritatively at the front of the room -- The unofficial mayor of Harlem.

HORACE

Welcome, welcome...

Music goes down and everyone faces Horace.

HORACE (CONT'D)

As you know, I'm stepping down as the Chairman and CEO of Cooper Corporation. It's been 40 long years. I'm so proud of how far we've come. If we win the Lindero contract, it will put us on the map as the largest black-owned real estate firm in the country.

The crowd claps. He turns his attention to Grace.

HORACE (CONT'D)

And as for the love of my life. We started this together. It's our time, Baby. I can't wait to travel the world with you.

Grace smiles. Other couples look on. This is the kind of love they all aspire to. He looks to Avery and Victoria.

HORACE (CONT'D)

And my children. I'd like to officially announce that Cooper Corp. will be run by my son Avery Cooper and my daughter Victoria Cooper-Hargrove. Come on up here.

APPLAUSE. Avery tucks his cell phone in his coat and looks to Victoria. He crosses to her and extends his arm as an olive branch. She looks to Justin. A long beat. Then, she takes Avery's arm. A standing ovation. As they make their way to the front, Avery stops in his tracks.

VICTORIA

Ave? You good?

He rests a beat, supporting himself on a high cocktail table. Then his hand slips suddenly. He stumbles, then collapses.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Avery!

The family rushes over. Screams of "call 9-1-1" Panic and commotion as everyone surrounds Avery. Off his limp body...

END TEASER

ACT ONE

CHYRON: THAT MORNING

INT. CNBC STUDIOS - DAY

Avery sits at the desk with ANCHOR KELLY EVANS being interviewed as a guest on CNBC's "The Exchange"

AVERY

... And we've thrown our hat in the ring to develop the Lindero Project. A 250,000-square-foot mixed-use project in East Harlem. 10,000 square feet of retail space and a 45-unit condo exclusively for seniors.

ANCHOR KELLY EVANS

Why seniors?

AVERY

They're the fastest growing homeless population. They've worked their whole lives to earn pensions and collect social security, but when their property values rise, they can't afford the taxes...

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S KITCHEN - MORNING

We PULL BACK to reveal that Samantha is watching the interview on the TV in her kitchen as a MAKE-UP ARTIST works on her face. Kendall walks in full of her usual attitude.

KENDALL

Do I have to go to this party?

SAMANTHA

It's for your grandfather.

KENDALL

You hate dad's family.

SAMANTHA

Never said that.

KENDALL

Definitely have.

SAMANTHA

Stay out of grown folks business.

Kendall walks out, passing Jolie, who walks in carrying an open LAPTOP. She sticks it in front of Samantha.

JOLIE

This is the one! Independent, hypo
allergenic, no shedding.

Sam's eyes are looking upward as the woman applies eye liner.

SAMANTHA

That's nice.

JOLIE

You didn't even look.

SAMANTHA

Don't need to. We're not getting a
dog.

Jolie pouts away as the make-up artist finishes. Samantha's PHONE rings. She answers to see video-cam footage of PEYTON COOPER, 33, genuine, the best friend you wish you had.

EXT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S WESTCHESTER HOME - DAY

Peyton sits in her OLD TOYOTA outside of the gate -- a giant, ornate, iron "C" adorns it. She looks into the camera.

PEYTON

Open the palace gates please.

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Samantha, face fully made up, is now getting a mani-pedi. She sits at a table, FEET soaking, cuticles being pushed back as Peyton picks through A BOX of clothes and accessories.

PEYTON

The women at the shelter are gonna
go crazy for these designer brands.
Thank you.

SAMANTHA

Gave me and the girls an excuse to
finally clean out our closets.

PEYTON

A lot of these still have tags.

SAMANTHA

You know how you buy stuff and it
doesn't work out, but you never get
around to returning it.

PEYTON

I know how you buy stuff, wear it once and return it to get money for groceries.

SAMANTHA

I don't know why you insist on struggling. You're a Cooper.

PEYTON

An in-law. Who left their son. I'm not asking them for anything. When I get my MSW, I'll be in a better position to make some real money.

Peyton pulls a PURPLE DRESS with tags from the bag.

PEYTON (CONT'D)

This DVF wrap dress is everything!

SAMANTHA

Keep it. Wear it to the party.

PEYTON

Nice try. Still not going.

SAMANTHA

You spend all of your time squirreled away in that tiny apartment counseling the needy, donating bone marrow to battered, homeless people.

PEYTON

Never did that.

SAMANTHA

But you would.

PEYTON

And that tiny apartment doubled in rent since Whole Foods opened.

SAMANTHA

Come have some Dom and crab claws on the family dime. No shame in looking out for yourself a little.

Peyton takes the dress out of the bag and stares at it, considering Samantha's advice...

INT. LAW FIRM CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Victoria walks into a packed room. Standing room only.

CO-WORKERS

Surprise!

She looks around at all of the food and the GIANT SHEET CAKE: "We'll Miss You, Victoria." She shakes her head. You got me. She walks to the front and joins MARTIN SHEPHERD, 70s, the firm's founding partner. Victoria is humbled.

VICTORIA

You've already done too much.

MARTIN

You're a legend here. To say you've changed the trajectory of this firm is an understatement. You've taught us that fighting for the little guy isn't enough if we're not putting money in their pockets. You weren't afraid to make enemies.

VICTORIA

I made a lot.

MARTIN

But you've always led with integrity. I guess what I'm really trying to say is... don't leave.

Everyone laughs. He gives her a heartfelt goodbye hug as the room begins to stand for an ovation. She looks outside of the glass room and sees the whole floor has gathered in the hallways and bullpens, everyone STANDING and CLAPPING. It's overwhelming. What a way to go out.

INT. PODCAST STUDIO - LATER - DAY

Avery is in the middle of another interview. A PODCAST - "For The Culture." He's being challenged by the outspoken host who we see is Jabari. Victoria also sits in.

JABARI

... And Cooper Corp. has a rep for taking money from big firms who only partner with you so they can trot you out to city council meetings to be the friendly black face to ease concerns while they have their way with our community.

Victoria nods -- Jabari is speaking truth.

AVERY

Yes, Cooper Corp. has had some lucrative partnerships.

But it's all to put us in a power position to take on big projects like Lindero. And once we're in that driver's seat, we become that big firm, making the decisions that benefit our own community.

JABARI

Uh-huh. So Victoria. I hear your father has been trying to get you over to Cooper Corp. for years.

VICTORIA

Yes. And now that he's retiring, the timing is finally right.

JABARI

So tell me, how is it working for your big brother?

VICTORIA

With him. And I haven't started yet. Just shadowing and observing a day in the life of greatness.

JABARI

Damn. You already got her brainwashed.

AVERY

That's the idea.

VICTORIA

Not quite. I'm very aware of my brother's questionable reputation.

AVERY

Right. For trying to help the community where I grew up and love.

VICTORIA

Except now you love it all the way from Westchester.

JABARI

Preach!

AVERY

Sam likes the 'Burbs. Happy wife. Happy life.

JABARI

That's why I like you way better than this dude. You keep it real.

Avery frowns. How did this become two against one?

JABARI (CONT'D)

The million dollar question is,
will the woman who's built her
career helping the people of
Harlem, turn her back on them to go
do her family's dirty work?

VICTORIA

I fully intend to keep my rep as
the Cooper with a moral compass in
tact.

Victoria and Jabari share an amused laugh. Avery doesn't.

JABARI

I'll be watching to make sure you
do.

Jabari's technical director, ALINA, 20s, plays theme music.

JABARI (CONT'D)

Thank you to my guests. I'm Jabari
Patterson. You can find me on
Twitter, Facebook and Insta
@ForTheCulture. 'Til then, be
black, like nobody's watchin'.

They take off their headphones.

AVERY

Wow. Thought I was supposed to be a
guest, not a punching bag.

JABARI

Lobbing softballs isn't my style.

AVERY

Uh-huh. I know your style.

Avery nods to the ethnically-ambiguous Alina across the room.

JABARI

I'm not even hittin' that.

AVERY

Yet.

As they all cross to the door--

JABARI

See ya'll at the party later.

AVERY

You know it's black tie, right? Do you even own a tux?

JABARI

You're not the only classic man in Harlem.

Avery smirks as they head out...

EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY

Avery and Victoria walk out. Victoria hails a cab.

AVERY

How about we keep the witty jabs between us?

VICTORIA

Just messing around.

AVERY

Jabari doesn't need any new material. And we need to present a united front right now.

VICTORIA

Right, almost forgot. Keep my opinions to myself and carry the Cooper party line at all costs.

AVERY

That's not what I meant.

A CAB pulls up, and she can't hop in fast enough. Off Avery wondering how this all went south so quickly.

JUSTIN (PRE-LAP)

Anything she can do different this time?

INT. ATLANTIC FERTILITY CENTER/OFFICE - LATER - DAY

Victoria sits with Justin across from a FERTILITY DOCTOR. There's a wall of PHOTOGRAPHS -- happy couples holding happy babies-- twins, triplets.

JUSTIN

Reflexology, acupuncture?

VICTORIA

(jokingly)
Handstands? Bone broth?

FERTILITY DOCTOR

Good news is you froze in your 30s,
so your eggs are healthy.

VICTORIA

Egg. Last one left.

FERTILITY DOCTOR

The only viable one, yes.

VICTORIA

We're hoping switching clinics
might help our chances this round.

FERTILITY DOCTOR

As you know, IVF isn't an exact
science. A lot of it is pure luck.

JUSTIN

We could use some of that.

The doc notices Victoria distracted by a text on her phone--

FERTILITY DOCTOR

And if you work in a high stress
job, maybe take a week off.

Justin nudges Victoria, who looks up embarrassed.

VICTORIA

Sorry... Avery again.

FERTILITY DOCTOR

If there are no more questions.
(to Justin)
You're up.

She hands him a SAMPLE CUP. Off Justin...

FLIRTY NURSE (PRE-LAP)

A stronger level of excitement
creates a more robust sample.

INT. ATLANTIC FERTILITY CENTER/COLLECTION ROOM

A FLIRTY NURSE walks Justin through a state of the art man
cave - Dimly lit with a large flat screen and erotic artwork.

FLIRTY NURSE

We have videos, live sex cams...

She holds up GOGGLES and indicates a table of interactive
smart sex toys and Teledildonic devices.

FLIRTY NURSE (CONT'D)

We also offer a virtual experience.
When the actress moves, the digital
masturbator replicates her exact
movements.

He looks around, tries to pretend this isn't awkward at all.

JUSTIN

Cool, cool.

FLIRTY NURSE

Don't have too much fun without me.

JUSTIN

I'll do my best.

She winks at him and leaves. He looks around this high tech sex dungeon. BBW, S&M, girl on girl. Nothing does it for him. He pulls out his phone. A few clicks then BINGO. He props it up against a tissue box. He SITS in the chair and UNZIPS his pants. As the party begins, we wonder what exactly gets Justin off...

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Avery stands in a white t-shirt and jeans as he deliberates suit options laid out on the bed.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

How did the day go with Victoria?

AVERY

Challenging. She's focused more on what outsiders think. And Jabari didn't help. Wish you could control him more.

Samantha, wearing only bra and panties, walks out of their closet carrying her PARTY DRESS.

SAMANTHA

I can't control my brother any more than you can control your sister.

She hangs her dress on a hook. She looks fantastic. Years of pilates have kept her body tight. Avery glances, looks away.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

You can look.

He lays out some TIES on the bed. A beat then he feels her ARM around his waist.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

It's yours.

She moves her HAND down his pants. He crosses away.

AVERY

Can't be late. The family's walking in together.

SAMANTHA

That the excuse you're going with this time?

AVERY

Not trying to start an argument.

She pulls on her ROBE, dejected.

SAMANTHA

Didn't know grabbing my husband's dick would lead to one.

He looks at her. She knows that's not what this is about.

AVERY

How long do you want to keep pretending, Sam?

She sips a glass of her CHAMPAGNE from the dresser.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Have you even gone to see a lawyer?

SAMANTHA

It's not a good time. Kendall's going to college in two years. Jolie is starting high school.

AVERY

Always gonna be something.

SAMANTHA

Why are you in such a rush to give up everything?

AVERY

It's not giving up. It's taking a chance that we could both have something better.

He opens HER nightstand DRAWER, pulls out the DIVORCE PAPERS, places them on the bed. A long beat.

SAMANTHA

Then maybe I just want my husband
to touch me. One last time.

She stands there. Raw, honest, hurt. He doesn't budge. After a beat, she walks into the bathroom and CLOSES the door.

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha STARES in the mirror, hating herself for being so vulnerable. Then the bathroom DOOR opens. Avery stares at her, letting her know he gets it. He's not a monster. He hugs her. A long embrace. Then they KISS. Tender pecks at first, that grow deeper, more passionate. And before they know it... it's happening. Avery grabs her. She fumbles for his pants. He picks her up, backs her against the wall. She moans as Avery gives her what she wants. As they go at it, we HEAR a chorus of men SINGING a fraternal hymn..

FRATERNITY MEN (PRE-LAP)

Though we may part when school is
done/We'll cherish memories, days
of fun./Again, we'll meet and we
will say...

EXT. ROOFTOP PARTY - NIGHT

We're back to the party in progress. Horace sits in a CHAIR being saluted by his Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity brothers, a circle of men ages 25 to 70, including Justin and Avery.

FRATERNITY MEN

A SONG, A TOAST, FOR A PHI A/So
drink dear friend a toast we'll
give/To A Phi A, long may she
live/The memories live though we're
away/A SONG, A TOAST, FOR A PHI A.

The song finishes and they all show Horace love. The music starts back up and the PARTY continues (We'll see new moments and continuations of moments from earlier) The event PHOTOGRAPHER gathers the family for a group photo.

ANGLE ON: Peyton sits at a table focused on changing out of her subway SNEAKERS into her party heels when--

HORACE (O.S.)

Peyton! Get over here!

She looks up to see the family waving her over. Caught off guard, she hurries over and joins them in the family photo still wearing her sneakers. FLASH!

After the photo -- Horace and Grace hug Peyton, delighted.

HORACE (CONT'D)
How's my favorite daughter-in-law?

GRACE
We didn't think you were coming.

PEYTON
Are you kidding? Wouldn't miss it.

HORACE
How's grad school?

PEYTON
Busy. But good.

GRACE
Have you talked to Layton?

Horace nudges Grace. Not now.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Okay okay. Have fun.

Horace and Grace move on. Peyton sits again to change her shoes, when Samantha walks up.

SAMANTHA
The struggle is real, huh?

PEYTON
Not everyone arrives in a limo.

Peyton zips up her sneakers in her ever-present BACKPACK and stands, looking gorgeous in that PURPLE DRESS.

SAMANTHA
Look at you in your freakum dress.

Peyton takes in the sea of fancy strangers, uneasy.

PEYTON
Still feels weird without him.

SAMANTHA
Please. You're their favorite daughter in-law.

Samantha looks at Peyton, realizing she overheard Horace.

PEYTON
That's just something he says.

SAMANTHA

I've been married to their favorite son for sixteen years, never said it to me.

Samantha grabs two CHAMPAGNE FLUTES off a passing tray.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

You've been married for three years to the black sheep in rehab. No offense.

PEYTON

Some taken.

SAMANTHA

(smiles)
Glad you came.

They CLINK glasses. Samantha sees something across the room.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

No she didn't.

ANGLE ON: A teen has just walked in, BRYCE, 16, white. Kendall crosses and kisses him. Samantha approaches.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Kendall. Bryce.

BRYCE

Evening, Mrs. Cooper. Thank you for having me.

SAMANTHA

I didn't know I was having you actually.

Victoria walks up.

VICTORIA

I told her it was okay to add a plus one.

SAMANTHA

Oh YOU told her? 'Cause her MOTHER told her tonight was for family.

KENDALL

And a hundred of your friends. Why can't I have one?

VICTORIA

Sam. Maybe you let it go for now.

SAMANTHA

Vicki. Stay in your lane please.

KENDALL

(quickly, to Bryce)
Let's go get food.

Kendall and Bryce hustle away having lit a new fuse with Victoria and Samantha.

VICTORIA

I wasn't trying to step on any toes.

SAMANTHA

This is on Kendall, not you.

All seems squashed, but...

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

By the way, Avery needs a teammate right now, not another opponent.

Victoria bristles.

VICTORIA

Speaking of staying in one's lane.

Victoria walks away. Off Samantha, tired of the disrespect.

ANGLE ON: Peyton sits alone at a back table. She quickly dumps a plate of COOKIES in a napkin and stuffs them in her backpack, when she HEARS--

JABARI (O.S.)

I see you.

Her eyes widen as Jabari, pulls up a CHAIR next to her.

JABARI (CONT'D)

Hiding out in the cheap seats.

She smiles, relieved.

PEYTON

I check my phone, admire the artwork, wander to the bathroom. I got the anti-social game on lock.

JABARI

And I shut down the start of three soul train lines and two Cupid Shuffles. Crisis averted.

PEYTON

We are crushing this party.

They clink glasses.

PEYTON (CONT'D)

Still mad you couldn't stand in the frat circle?

JABARI

I don't need a fraternity to validate my manhood.

PEYTON

Sam told me you got cut from the line at FAMU. You forgot we tell each other everything.

JABARI

Really now?

He raises his eyebrow at her. She pivots.

PEYTON

There's a Kardashian wannabe with a fake ass at the fondue bar. Got your name all over it.

He stands, straightens his tux.

JABARI

Bring you back more Snickerdoodles for your purse.

He winks and she cringes as he walks off...

ANGLE ON: Avery has pulled Victoria aside to school her on her Susan Ellison faux pas.

AVERY

Sue Ellison is a political powerhouse and good friends with Commissioner Leavy, head of the Housing Preservation Board.

VICTORIA

So?

AVERY

The Board selects a developer for Lindero in three days and we can't afford to agitate the wrong people.

VICTORIA

She accused our family of ethnic cleansing.

AVERY

You can't get in the boxing ring with everyone who hurts your feelings.

VICTORIA

Right. I should just kiss their ass instead. Please big brother, teach me everything you know.

AVERY

How about you take that chip off your shoulder and respect that I've been grinding for this family, for this business, for 20 years.

VICTORIA

That was your choice.

AVERY

One of us had to make it.
(A beat, then)
No one's forcing you to take this job.

VICTORIA

Good, then maybe I won't.

AVERY

Fine. But you tell dad. 'Cause we promised we'd try to make this work. So the legacy they built stays alive. Dad's not getting any younger and Mom's...

He leaves that unspoken, but she gets it.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Yes, this gig comes with some bullshit. If you wanna walk away, I get it. But they're handing us the torch. And I don't want to carry it without you.

A long beat. He makes a helluva argument. BUZZ BUZZ, Avery reaches inside his suit coat to check his cell, but he feels a TUG at his elbow and turns to see a PISSED Samantha.

SAMANTHA

Talk to you for a sec?

She pulls Avery around a corner. This time, we FOLLOW them.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Holly Miller said she never got our check for the Links Benefit?

AVERY

We're not buying a table this year.

SAMANTHA

Since when? I'm an officer.

AVERY

You're like the assistant archivist.

SAMANTHA

And then I have to hear from Jasmine Blackwell that we're not going to the Vineyard?

He rubs his head, can't do this right now.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I know you're eager to blow up our life, but apparently the wrecking ball is already swinging and I can't even get the courtesy of a fucking memo.

Jabari rounds the corner and quickly realizes he just walked into some shit.

JABARI

Heyyyyyy Sis.

(to Avery)

Your dad's looking for you. Time to present Simba to the pride.

Avery downs his DRINK and walks off. Jabari looks at a rattled Samantha. He reaches in his tux and offers her a handkerchief, she bats it away annoyed.

ANGLE ON: Avery walks off when his phone BUZZES. He looks at the number -- "Fiji". He finally answers.

AVERY

Hey! It's fine. This just isn't a good time.

CLINKING OF a GLASS as Horace begins his speech.

AVERY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Where are you?... You know that's
not possible...

EXT. SWANKY HARLEM HOTEL - NIGHT

REVEAL a woman, SONIA, a natural beauty wearing an understated dress. She can hear the festivity emanating from the party above. She's hurt more than angry.

SONIA
I know. I just wanted to be there
for your big speech.

HORACE (O.C.)
... My son Avery Cooper and my
daughter Victoria Cooper-Hargrove.

ON AVERY -- APPLAUSE. He looks to Victoria.

AVERY
(into phone)
Stay on. It'll be like you're here.

ON SONIA -- It's stupid but it makes her feel better.

SONIA
Okay.

ON AVERY -- He tucks his PHONE in his suit coat, extends his arm to Victoria as an olive branch. They walk to the front.

STAY ON SONIA -- She sits on a bench, listening on her phone, anticipating Avery's speech. A beat, then she hears a commotion.

SONIA (CONT'D)
Avery. What's going on?!

VICTORIA (O.S.)
Avery! Avery! Someone Call 9-1-1

SONIA
Avery!

But all she can hear is a mix of frantic VOICES and MASS CONFUSION. Sonia notices SECURITY in the lobby running to the elevator. Something's wrong, but all Sonia can do is listen, terrified and helpless.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. HARLEM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL/WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Justin comforts Victoria. Grace and Horace lean on each other. Samantha is with Jabari. Peyton has her arm around Jolie. Even Bryce is there to hold Kendall's hand. DOCTOR BRIGGS briefs the anxious family.

DOCTOR BRIGGS

Your husband's CT scan confirmed a ruptured brain artery. His blood pressure was very high.

SAMANTHA

Is he going to be okay?

DOCTOR BRIGGS

The brain trauma has caused a loss of consciousness.

VICTORIA

A coma?

They all react.

DOCTOR BRIGGS

We've seen patients wake up after days, weeks, some cases, even months.

A beat. They all look to each other worried.

DOCTOR BRIGGS (CONT'D)

I'd like to order additional scans and start seizure prevention meds.
(to Samantha)

I assume you have Power of Attorney?

SAMANTHA

Of course.

He hands her a clipboard to sign the documents. The family exchanges a look, realizing she's in control.

GRACE

Can we see him?

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The family stands around Avery's bed. Lying helpless, he's far from the vibrant, charismatic man we've met.

It's sad and real. Only the sound of the MEDICAL MACHINES can be heard. After an excruciatingly long beat--

VICTORIA

High blood pressure? Avery always took good care of himself.

SAMANTHA

He was also under a lot of stress.

Everyone looks at her.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I mean with this new project. And the transition hasn't gone as smoothly as he would've liked.

Samantha glances to Victoria, who picks up on it.

VICTORIA

What's that supposed to mean?

HORACE

Okay. No one's to blame here.

VICTORIA

We should call Layton.

SAMANTHA

No. We don't know what state he's in.

VICTORIA

Still. Just in case.

SAMANTHA

Just in case what?

A beat.

VICTORIA

In case, God forbid, Avery doesn't make it. And we took away Layton's last chance to see his own brother.

PEYTON

He and Avery were close. The news could cause a setback in his recovery.

SAMANTHA

Exactly.

VICTORIA

So now we're taking advice from the woman who caused him to O.D. in the first place?

Peyton reacts, hurt. Samantha turns with a quickness.

SAMANTHA

Hey!

PEYTON

It's okay. I should go.

GRACE

No. You stay.
(to Victoria)
You go get some air.

Victoria huffs out, Justin follows. Off the family, overwhelmed and devastated...

EXT. HARLEM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - A LITTLE LATER - NIGHT

Horace walks out and joins Victoria and Justin on a bench.

VICTORIA

Sorry. Does everyone hate me?

HORACE

No. Emotions are high right now.

He pats her hand. She smiles, appreciating his understanding.

HORACE (CONT'D)

Avery was working hard to get ready for this meeting with the Housing Preservation Board.

VICTORIA

I know. Guess I underestimated the pressure he was under.

HORACE

We're one of three finalists.

Victoria looks at him, realizing what he's really saying.

HORACE

I'll jump back into it. Avery would want us to cross the finish line.

Victoria looks to Justin. He already knows what she's thinking, but wishes she wasn't, then--

VICTORIA
I'll do it.

HORACE
What? No. That's too much to ask.

VICTORIA
Just focus on being here for mom.

HORACE
You sure? The meeting's tomorrow.

VICTORIA
Won't be my first all-nighter.

HORACE
Thanks, Baby. A big help. I'll make sure you have what you need to get up to speed.

He pats her leg, grateful and heads back inside. A beat.

JUSTIN
You probably haven't had time to check your voicemail.

Victoria stares at him - What's he talking about?

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
They want to do the embryo transfer tomorrow. Doctor says the quality and maturity is perfect.

VICTORIA
Wow, so soon. That's great.

A long beat. They both know timing sucks.

JUSTIN
A few hours ago, you had one foot out the door...

VICTORIA
No one expected this to happen.

JUSTIN
And now you're taking on the biggest project of your family's career all by yourself.

VICTORIA
What do you want me to say, Justin?

JUSTIN

Say no! Do they even know we're trying right now?

VICTORIA

I didn't want to put everyone on that roller coaster ride again.

JUSTIN

Part of taking this job was so you could slow the pace, re-prioritize. This is it. We don't get another chance.

A long beat.

VICTORIA

My father needs me.

JUSTIN

So does your husband.

He walks off, leaving her alone. Off Victoria, torn...

INT. HARLEM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL/VENDING AREA - SAME TIME

Peyton shakes the vending machine as Justin walks up. He gives it a solid bang and her FLAMING HOT CHEETOS fall down. He reaches in and hands them to her.

PEYTON

Thanks.

JUSTIN

She didn't mean that you know.

PEYTON

Trust me. I struggle with that guilt every day.

JUSTIN

Layton was in a bad place. And you were in it alone for a long time. Nobody blames you.

She smiles thankful.

PEYTON

Avery was always there for him... I just can't be the one to make that call.

She walks off. A beat. Justin pulls out his phone, scrolls through the contacts to find... CASA HARMONY REHAB.

INT. HARLEM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Victoria walks in and sees a POLITE NURSE pointing Grace in a different direction.

VICTORIA
Everything okay?

POLITE NURSE
She just got a little lost. Walked
into the men's room.

The nurse walks off. Victoria looks at Grace, who quickly returns to her feisty self.

GRACE
All of these doors look alike.

As Grace heads down the hall, Victoria sees her niece Jolie sitting in the waiting room.

VICTORIA
Hey. Why are you out here by
yourself?

JOLIE
Too many people.

She sits next to her. A beat.

VICTORIA
I remember when your grandad got a
stent put in for his heart. I was
about your age. There were all
these doctors and family swirling
around. And I remember wishing the
world would stop. So I could sit
with him for a few minutes all by
myself. Just the two of us.

JOLIE
Did you?

VICTORIA
I was too scared to ask. But
everything turned out okay. Cooper
men are fighters.

Jolie gets emotional, places her head on her shoulder.
Victoria softens -- a little glimpse of her maternal side.

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Horace, Grace, Victoria and Justin, all sit, exhausted. Kendall sits on Bryce's lap with her head on his shoulder. He rubs her back. Jabari walks up, protective uncle mode.

JABARI

Keep your hands where I can see
'em, playa.

Bryce sits up straighter. Kendall crosses to Samantha.

KENDALL

I'm really tired. Can Bryce drop me
off at home?

SAMANTHA

Fine.
(to the family)
Everyone should go home and rest.

HORACE

She's right. We'll be back in the
morning, first thing.

Victoria and Justin stand.

VICTORIA

If it helps, I'll come up with a
schedule. We can all take shifts.
Make sure he's never alone.

Samantha nods appreciative. Grace walks over to Avery's bed, kisses his cheek. Victoria does the same.

INT. HARLEM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL/WAITING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The family has long gone. A tired Peyton is still there, watching over Jolie, asleep, curled up in a chair with Jabari's tux jacket. Samantha approaches with her coat and purse. She hugs Peyton goodbye, then nudges Jolie awake.

SAMANTHA

Come on. We'll shower, grab some
clothes.

Jolie nods and uncurls herself out of the chair.

INT. HOSPITAL/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

Samantha and Jolie wait for an ELEVATOR. Samantha digs for her keys in her PURSE. The doors open. Still no keys.

SAMANTHA

Be right back.

She doubles back to the room, letting the elevator doors close. Jolie plops in a nearby seat.

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha walks into the room and is startled to see an emotional WOMAN standing over Avery. It's Sonia, the woman who called from outside of the party. A long beat, then--

SAMANTHA

What are you doing here?

Sonia wipes her eyes as she turns to see a pissed Samantha.

SONIA

I'm sorry. I thought everyone was gone.

SAMANTHA

(hushed urgency)

You're still fucking him?!

Sonia quickly grabs her PURSE, hands shaky, puffy, red eyes. A red flag for Samantha.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

What's really going on here?!

Sonia is backed into an emotional corner, then--

JOLIE (O.S.)

Mom?

Samantha composes herself, then turns to Jolie.

SAMANTHA

Everything's fine.

Sonia uses this interruption to make an exit.

JOLIE

Who was that?

SAMANTHA

Friend from college.

And off Samantha, wheels turning, we:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. VICTORIA AND JUSTIN'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

With the weight of the family business on her shoulders, Victoria preps for an all-nighter. She sits surrounded by file BOXES. Justin walks in with FILES of his own, puts them on the table along with a few MEDICAL MANUALS and ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY BOOKS. He starts arranging a place for himself.

VICTORIA
What are you doing?

JUSTIN
New patient portal. I've been
putting off updating these files.

She eyes him, curious, knows exactly what he's doing.

VICTORIA
Seems like something your assistant
could do.

She watches as he props up a THROW PILLOW behind his back.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Me staying at home. That was just a
fantasy anyway.

JUSTIN
Maybe that's all you wanted it to
be.

She crosses, leans over the back of his chair and hugs him.

VICTORIA
Don't worry. I'll make it all work.

JUSTIN
(pats her hand)
Okay. Better get crackin'.

He opens his laptop. For now, they're burning the midnight oil side-by side. Off Justin, this dynamic wearing on him...

INT. PEYTON'S HALLWAY/APARTMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Peyton's SNEAKERS as she CREEPS down the hall toward her door. She quiets the JINGLING of her KEYS as she gently turns the locks.

Safe in her apartment, she tosses her BACKPACK on the kitchen table, then there's a LOUD KNOCK at the door.

Peyton SITS in silence. MORE KNOCKING. A beat. A PAPER slides under the door. She picks it up. "PAST DUE RENT NOTICE."

INT. AVERY AND SAMANTHA'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Heavy panting in the darkness. Kendall straddles Bryce on the SOFA, dress hoisted around her waist.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Hey!

The lights FLICK on. Samantha and Jolie walk in. Kendall rolls off his lap, drops to the FLOOR and pulls down her dress. Bryce quickly adjusts his pants. Samantha SNAPS.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Your father is fighting for his life! What part of you thinks this is a good time to ride your boyfriend?

(to Bryce)

Good night!

Bryce grabs his things, does a quick bow of apology and hurries off. Samantha turns on Kendall.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Starting now. You two are on break!

KENDALL

That's why I never tell you anything. You always over react!

SAMANTHA

Give me your cell phone. How's that for over-reacting?

KENDALL

That's my phone!

SAMANTHA

Oh you've got a job now?

KENDALL

No more than you do.

Samantha steps to her. They're face to face now.

SAMANTHA

You've got five seconds.

Kendall waits for four of them. It's painfully long. And just when we think she's not going to budge... she reaches in the SOFA CUSHION, pulls out her PHONE and slams it on the table.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

How does a little girl who's been given everything. Every privilege. Every opportunity. EVERYTHING! Turn out to be such an ungrateful bitch.

A beat. These biting words can't be taken back. Kendall tears up. Jolie gets emotional too. It's a mess. All three ladies alone in the house without their father. Broken, Samantha walks off, passing a framed photo of their family. Matching sweaters, smiling, happy. Back when things were perfect.

INT. BOARD ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

We're on Victoria in the middle of an impressive Powerpoint presentation. In her power suit, looking fierce. You'd never guess she was operating on zero sleep.

VICTORIA

... And Cooper Corporation has a well-established history of committing our bottom line to the long-term betterment of the communities in which we build.

Reveal she's bringing her A-game to just two HOUSING PRESERVATION BOARD MEMBERS. Before she moves on--

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Will anyone else from the Board be joining us?

BOARD MEMBER #1

This is our busy season.

VICTORIA

And Commissioner Leavy?

They look to each other.

BOARD MEMBER #2

His meeting ran long.

A beat. Victoria CLICKS to the last SLIDE.

VICTORIA

(quickly)

And in conclusion, community engagement early in the process ensures full transparency to achieve the best outcome for the neighborhood. Any questions?

There are none. Shocking. As the Board members file out--

BOARD MEMBERS

We'll be in touch./Nice job.

Victoria closes her laptop, worried. The absence of the power players doesn't bode well for their prospects. A REMINDER ALERT on her PHONE: "IVF Appointment - 10:30."

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE/EXAM ROOM - A LITTLE LATER - DAY

Victoria lies on the TABLE, feet in stirrups. Justin videotapes the ultrasound MONITOR as the doctor guides a catheter through her uterus and implants the embryo. Victoria's phone BUZZES throughout the procedure. BUZZ... BUZZ. Justin looks at her-- really?

VICTORIA

I asked Michelle to track down the Commissioner's schedule.

JUSTIN

She can wait.

The doctor removes his medical GLOVES.

FERTILITY DOCTOR

Everything went really smooth...
That means you can breathe now.

Victoria and Justin both smile relieved.

FERTILITY DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Takes about 10 days until HCG
levels are high enough to detect a
positive pregnancy.

He hands them an ULTRASOUND PICTURE of the implanted embryo.

JUSTIN

Thanks Doc.

The doctor LEAVES as they stare at the FUZZY PICTURE. They're not really sure what they're looking at, but it's beautiful.

VICTORIA

That's our baby.

An emotional and tender moment. Then... BUZZ, BUZZ. Victoria tries to ignore it, but--

JUSTIN

Go on.

She reaches in her purse, eager to get the information...

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Samantha's shift -- She sits by Avery's bedside, studying the person she thought she knew. After a long unreadable beat...

She walks to the HOSPITAL CLOSET and opens it to see his party SUIT draped over a hanger, his dress shoes are still there and a clear plastic hospital bag with all of his belongings. Belongings she's forgotten about. Until now. She grabs the bag, RUMMAGES through it -- belt, tie, socks, underwear. Then she finds what she's looking for. His CELL PHONE. As she POWERS it on, this starts a stylistic sequence:

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S HOME - DAY

QUICK CUTS OF Sam searching for any clue that will help her put the pieces of Avery's secret together.

- BEDROOM. She rifles through Avery's nightstand, underwear drawer, his CLOSET shoeboxes.

- BATHROOM. She searches through his toiletries, his SHAVING bag, under his sink

- HIS BRIEFCASE. She's pulls out PAPERS and FILES. LEAFS through legal STENOPADS.

- HIS LAPTOP. She opens DESKTOP FOLDERS, EMAILS, DOCUMENTS.

- AVERY'S CAR. She pulls ATM receipts from the glove compartment. PULLS dry cleaners receipts from his center CONSOLE, lifts the SPARE tire compartment in his TRUNK.

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Samantha sits on the office floor, surrounded by PILES of PAPERS, CREDIT CARD STATEMENTS, CELL PHONE BILLS. She lines up a row of different bank statements next to each other and stares at them, utterly and completely stunned.

INT. PEYTON'S HALLWAY/APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peyton turns the corner and commences her creeping routine toward her door. Her eyes go wide and we reveal a BOLT LOCK on her door. She jiggles the LOCK. A beat, then--

SUPERINTENDENT (O.S.)
Not this time, sneaky one.

She turns to see her SUPERINTENDENT, a middle-aged woman.

PEYTON
What the hell is this?

SUPERINTENDENT

The eviction process is long and expensive. This is an interim agreement.

PEYTON

You're a criminal.

SUPERINTENDENT

And you're two months past due. Think of it as incentive.

The super disappears into her apartment, SLAMMING the door. Peyton stands there alone and homeless. She sighs, leans against her door, then slides to the ground and sits. She pulls her PHONE from her backpack. A beat as she contemplates, struggles with the decision, then dials...

INT. FANCY HARLEM RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A beautiful, upscale restaurant in Harlem. Chic, fabulous, expensive. A distinguished looking man, COMMISSIONER ANTHONY LEAVY, 40s, enjoys a quiet steak dinner in his private booth.

VICTORIA (O.S.)

Ever stay up all night studying for a test and then it got canceled?

He looks up as Victoria slips into the seat across from him.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

You're so prepared. Adrenaline rushing and then nothing. No test.

He stops cutting his steak, smirks, knows exactly who she is.

COMMISSIONER LEAVY

Those meetings are really more of a formality in the RFP process.

He puts down his FORK, wipes his mouth.

COMMISSIONER LEAVY (CONT'D)

What's more important, is that the Board has yet to reverse any recommendation that I make.

VICTORIA

So how do we get your recommendation?

COMMISSIONER LEAVY

Avery already had it.

VICTORIA

Had?

COMMISSIONER LEAVY

I know you're doing your best to fill big brother's shoes, but with his condition, unfortunately the Board has lost faith in what Cooper Corp. can deliver.

VICTORIA

If they heard what I had to say, they wouldn't feel that way.

COMMISSIONER LEAVY

Avery knew how to get things done with a lot more backdoor savvy than hijacking a man's dinner.

VICTORIA

What are you saying Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER LEAVY

You're a smart girl.

A beat as he tries to suss out how strict her moral code is.

VICTORIA

That's not how my family does business.

COMMISSIONER LEAVY

That's exactly how they do business, Sweetheart.

He writes a number on his cocktail NAPKIN.

COMMISSIONER LEAVY (CONT'D)

The Board assembles in two days.
(slides her the napkin)
I'd love to restore their faith.

Victoria takes the napkin, looks at it. She stands.

VICTORIA

I'm not just filling my brother's shoes. I am the shoes. A Google search will gladly introduce you to my track record. And should you have the good fortune of being in my presence again, remove the word Girl and Sweetheart from your lips and address me as Attorney Hargrove.

She walks off, leaving the Commissioner intrigued.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peyton stands in front of a door. She closes her eyes, steels herself. Then she KNOCKS. The door swings open to reveal--

JABARI

This is a surprise.

INT. JABARI'S LOFT - NIGHT

Jabari opens a BEER. A hip hop track PLAYS through his sound system. Peyton walks around, scans his BOOK COLLECTION -- Malcolm Gladwell, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Colson Whitehead...

PEYTON

I can't remember the last time I read something that wasn't on a syllabus.

JABARI

Sam said you want to open a health center in Harlem.

PEYTON

Seems I've got a soft spot for wounded souls.

(sits on a bar stool)

Am I interrupting anything? No naked underaged girl in a towel is gonna pop out, try to stab me?

JABARI

She left hours ago. School night.

He hands her his beer, stands directly in front of her. She takes a long SWIG, then casually riffs--

PEYTON

God forbid you be with an age appropriate black woman with real lips and real hips, and--

He kisses her. Hot and heavy. And as they go at it, we realize, this isn't their first time at the rodeo--

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. JABARI'S LOFT - MORNING

Peyton wakes up to the sound of a COFFEE BEAN GRINDER. She focuses and sees Jabari in the kitchen. He sees her awake.

JABARI
Tea or coffee?

She fumbles for her PHONE on the floor, looks at the time.

PEYTON
Um... Coffee.

JABARI
See how we're getting to know each other? You should break your no sleepover rule more often.

PEYTON
Rules haven't changed. We're just friends. No strings.

She pats the floor for her clothes, quickly gets dressed.

JABARI
And how could there be strings? You're a married woman.

A beat.

PEYTON
It's complicated.

JABARI
What really happened with you two?

PEYTON
Why the third degree this time? I feel like one of your podcast victims.

JABARI
Just curious. Never hung out with him outside of family get togethers. The ones I was invited to anyway.

A beat. He seems genuine in this moment so--

PEYTON

Manic depression. Horace dismissed it as a "weak constitution." The coddled baby boy.

Jabari shakes his head.

PEYTON (CONT'D)

He got hooked on pills. Oxy. Fentanyl. I couldn't stay and watch him kill himself.

JABARI

That's rough.

PEYTON

I'm all about getting my life on track. I can't lose myself in him again.

JABARI

Gotta take care of you, first.

He hands her a coffee. They sip as the sunlight streams through a window. A rare shared moment of realness between them, then--

JABARI (CONT'D)

So how much do you need?

He nods to her unzipped BACKPACK on the floor. A few things have spilled out -- textbooks, pens and that PAST DUE RENT NOTICE. She starts quickly stuffing everything back inside.

PEYTON

So when a girl sleeps over, you snoop through her stuff?

JABARI

No. It was right there.

She starts pulling on her shoes.

JABARI (CONT'D)

Relax. We all get in a tight spot.

PEYTON

My financial aid got screwed up.

JABARI

I can help you out.

PEYTON

That's not why I came here.

JABARI

I didn't say you did.

She finishes her shoes, shoulders her backpack, ready to go.

JABARI (CONT'D)

That's what friends do, right?

Peyton stares at him for a long, uncomfortable beat. Off Peyton, unsure of this new territory...

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S HOME OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER - DAY

Victoria sits across from Samantha, who sits in her yoga gear behind Avery's desk like she's holding a business meeting.

VICTORIA

There's no easy way to say this.

SAMANTHA

Just spit it out.

VICTORIA

Avery's paying off the Commissioner so he'll recommend us to the Board. I know it seems hard to believe--

SAMANTHA

(a little too quick)
Not that hard.

VICTORIA

Okay. But before I ring the alarm, I need to know what I'm dealing with. What kind of paper trail. I need to see bank accounts, credit card statements, checkbook ledgers--

SAMANTHA

You mean all of this?

She opens a DRAWER and pulls out stacks of disheveled PAPERS and slides them toward Victoria. Off Victoria, surprised that Sam is already ahead of the game.

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S FAMILY ROOM - LATER

A mini war-room. Avery's LAPTOP is open, PILES are laid out as they roll up their sleeves and put the pieces together. They're a well-oiled machine when they have a common goal.

SAMANTHA

Our savings are almost all gone.

Victoria SCANS documents on Avery's laptop.

VICTORIA

He took advances from some big investors, too.

Samantha clocks Kendall walking by and CLOSES the door.

SAMANTHA

So what does the Commissioner want?

VICTORIA

His final payment. Avery was going to transfer it after the party.

SAMANTHA

How much?

A beat. Victoria reaches in her purse and hands Samantha the napkin from the Commissioner. Samantha looks at her...

VICTORIA

I'm not transferring that money.

SAMANTHA

Without his support, you lose the Lindero contract.

VICTORIA

And if it got out that I paid a bribe to get it, I'll go to prison.

SAMANTHA

Without that deal, I have no way to make that money back. I have a mortgage, bills, tuition.

VICTORIA

Maybe you should've paid more attention to what was happening in your own house.

This hits home in more ways than one for Samantha.

SAMANTHA

If you walk away now, your whole family loses.

Victoria looks at her. What isn't she saying...

VICTORIA

Spit it out, Samantha.

Samantha takes the LAPTOP, opens an account and hands it back to Victoria. Off Victoria in disbelief, we SMASH CUT:

INT. HORACE AND GRACE'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

CLOSE ON VICTORIA.

VICTORIA

He wiped out your retirement
account to pay a bribe!

Reveal she's talking to Horace and Grace, who look over the papers. Victoria's outraged they're not more outraged.

GRACE

I'm sure he was going to put it all
back after this deal went through.

VICTORIA

You don't know that!

GRACE

He wouldn't leave the family in a
bad place.

VICTORIA

Wow, you really think his shit
doesn't stink!

HORACE

Avery was a soldier for this
company! Don't ever question his
loyalty!

Victoria backs down, reminded of who she's talking to.

HORACE (CONT'D)

I stand behind him the same way I
stood up for you when he tried to
convince me you weren't cut out for
this.

A beat. Duly noted.

HORACE (CONT'D)

The landscape is different now. The
players. The politics. Avery knew
how to navigate all of it. Whatever
moves he was trying to make are the
right ones. We play it out.

She looks at him, realizes what he's asking her to do.

VICTORIA

Not sure I can do that, dad.

HORACE

I've seen you in the courtroom.
Bring that bulldog.

VICTORIA

It's different when you know what
you're fighting for.

HORACE

You're fighting for family. That's
the only side you need to be on.

VICTORIA

I'm not Avery.

HORACE

You're a Cooper. We don't come in
second. We don't lose. Time to suit
up, Baby Girl.

Horace walks out, leaving Victoria and Grace. A long beat.

GRACE

Know why I always bet on Avery to
win?

Victoria looks at her. Is this another crazy moment?

GRACE (CONT'D)

Your races. When you were kids. You
always got mad when I bet on Avery.

VICTORIA

Mom, it's fine.

GRACE

Because it made you run faster. You
always beat him. You're stronger
than your brother. Always have
been. Finish the race your way.

Victoria is speechless. Grace walks out. Off Victoria with a
big decision to make.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. HALLWAY/OUTSIDE OF AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Victoria's shift -- She sits outside the room studying a report on the Lindero Project. A NURSE is about to walk into Avery's room with supplies. Victoria stops her.

VICTORIA

Ten more minutes.

The nurse nods and moves on. Victoria glances in the room window to SEE... Jolie by her father's bedside. A quiet moment. Just the two of them. Victoria smiles -- stopping the world for a few more minutes. Back to the report. She FLIPS to a diagram of the Lindero property with Zion Hill church in the middle. Off Victoria, an idea brewing...

INT. PEYTON'S HALLWAY - DAY

Peyton stands with the superintendent removing the lock.

SUPERINTENDENT

Glad you were incentivized.

PEYTON

Just open the damn door.

The LOCK falls off.

SUPERINTENDENT

See you in 30 days.

INT. PEYTON'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Peyton walks in, closes the door. SIGH of relief. She flops on the sofa a beat, her eyes land on the BOX of Samantha's clothing donations for the shelter. She closes her eyes. Off Peyton, hating herself for what she's about to do...

INT. TRENDY HARLEM COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Peyton studies at a table. A WOMAN shows up. Peyton WAVES her over. The woman approaches and from underneath the TABLE, Peyton pulls out a big SHOPPING BAG. The woman RUMMAGES through Samantha's designer clothes. She nods, impressed.

EXT. TRENDY HARLEM COFFEE SHOP - MOMENTS LATER - DAY

The woman exits and walks off with the SHOPPING BAG. Seconds later, Peyton exits stuffing CASH in her backpack. She marks the clothes "Sold" on her OfferUp app, then heads off.

INT. SAMANTHA'S CAR - LATER THAT DAY

Samantha drives. A disinterested Kendall rides shotgun staring out the window. Jolie is unusually quiet in the back seat. Finally, she rolls to a stop and puts the car in PARK. Jolie sits up, confused.

JOLIE

Where are we?

SAMANTHA

Pitstop.

Samantha waits as Jolie figures it out. Then her eyes land on "NYC Pet Adoption Center." A big smile forms across her face.

JOLIE

Are you serious right now?

She SCREAMS and hugs her mom tight around the neck.

JOLIE (CONT'D)

Come on, Kendall!

Jolie hops out and runs inside. Kendall doesn't budge. Samantha looks to her.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry. For everything.

More silent treatment. Samantha OPENS the door, then--

KENDALL

I miss daddy.

A beat.

SAMANTHA

Me too.

KENDALL

Are we gonna be okay?

Samantha looks at her daughter. No one's had to count on her like this before.

SAMANTHA

We are. I promise.

(then)

Let's go get this wild animal.

Kendall smiles, gets out. Off Samantha, determined to keep that promise...

INT. SAMANTHA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Samantha sits alone on her bed with a glass of WINE. She's on her LAPTOP making sense of their financial life. Bills, mortgage, insurance, etc. -- It's all on her now.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Victoria also working on a game plan.

VICTORIA

What if there's a way we could all
get what we want?

Reveal she's sitting with Councilwoman Susan Ellison and Rev. Phillip Chavis.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(to Rev. Chavis)

What if you didn't have to lose
Zion Hill? We build around it. Pay
for all the repairs. Bring it up to
code.

REV. CHAVIS

(nods)

I'm listening

VICTORIA

(to Susan)

And what if it was all your idea?
You reposition your campaign around
how you fight for the little guys
like Rev. Chavis. How you strong-
armed Cooper Corp. into keeping a
piece of Harlem's history alive.

COUNCILWOMAN ELLISON

What's in it for you, Victoria? How
much money?

VICTORIA

I want Lindero. Convince Councilman
Leavy that Cooper Corp. is the
right one for the project.

COUNCILWOMAN ELLISON

Why would he listen to me?

VICTORIA

'Cause you won't endorse his
campaign for mayor if he doesn't.

Susan nods, finally getting the angle. Victoria smiles.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

It's not always about money.

Susan and Rev. Chavis nod, seriously considering. Off Victoria, working her magic for the family...

INT. HARLEM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL/VENDING AREA

Jabari is at the vending machines when Peyton walks up.

JABARI

Wait, I thought it was my shift?

PEYTON

Just came by to give you this.

Peyton reaches in her backpack and hands him a wad of CASH.

PEYTON (CONT'D)

I don't like owing people.

JABARI

So I'm "people" now?

They walk down the hall toward Avery's room as they talk.

PEYTON

And I got that financial aid thing fixed.

JABARI

Glad it all worked out.

PEYTON

(sincere)
Thank you.

JABARI

It's not like you didn't earn it the other night.

PEYTON

Next time I'll charge by the hour.

JABARI

(means it)
You should sleep over more often.

A beat.

PEYTON

I'll call ya when I need a tune-up.

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They walk in and their mood instantly changes when they see a MAN standing by Avery's bedside. Peyton stops cold.

PEYTON

Layton?

It's LAYTON COOPER, 33, ruggedly handsome, lots of edge, the infamous third Cooper sibling. He indicates Avery, lying helpless. He's upset, confused...

LAYTON

How the fuck did this happen, P?

She walks over to him, unexpectedly emotional. She hugs him, tight, burying her head in his chest. It feels better than she remembers.

LAYTON (CONT'D)

Missed you, Baby.

They catch up over emotional hugs and kisses. This goes on for a long beat, then--

JABARI

I'll wait outside... Give you two a minute...

Lost in their own world, Jabari just became invisible.

INT. HALLWAY/OUTSIDE OF AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Jabari steps out, he fixates on their reunion from the hallway, the first time we've seen him uncomfortable. And off this love triangle in the making--

INT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - MORNING

The family is in various morning routines as they get ALERTS:

Justin brushes his TEETH and checks his PHONE at the same time -- An ALERT pops up.

Victoria takes a WALK through the streets of Milan on her Peloton TREADMILL -- An ALERT on her screen.

Grace is doing YOGA stretches when Horace walks up and shows her an ALERT on his PHONE.

Samantha is going for a morning JOG -- An ALERT on her WATCH.

Victoria SLOWS her treadmill and we finally see her cell.
BREAKING NEWS: "City Taps Cooper Corporation For Largest
Mixed-Use Project in Harlem."

Justin walks in and looks at her. Did you see this? Victoria smiles. It worked...

INT. COMMISSIONER LEAVY'S OFFICE - DAY

Victoria walks past an ASSISTANT sitting at a desk and heads into--

INT. COMMISSIONER LEAVY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The Commissioner is at his desk. She marches in with confidence.

VICTORIA

So, looks like we worked out a compromise--

But she slows when she sees someone else sitting on the sofa, sipping a cup of coffee.

SAMANTHA

Hello Vicki.

VICTORIA

What are you doing here?

Victoria looks to the Commissioner.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

What is she doing here?

SAMANTHA

The Commissioner was just thanking me for my charitable donation.

VICTORIA

You went behind my back?

SAMANTHA

I need to take care of my family.

VICTORIA

(to Leavy, confused)
So, you haven't talked to Susan Ellison?

COMMISSIONER LEAVY

She's on my call sheet, but I haven't returned yet. Why?

Victoria's confidence fades as she realizes her plan to find a compromise got pre-empted by Samantha.

VICTORIA
(to Samantha)
You have no idea what you've done.

COMMISSIONER LEAVY
This will be good for Cooper Corp.

VICTORIA
Don't you dare tell me what's good for my family.

He holds up his hands, backs off.

SAMANTHA
Cooper Corp. has a fighting chance now. We all do.
(stands)
See you in the office tomorrow.

VICTORIA
Excuse me?

SAMANTHA
I have Power of Attorney, so it's me and you for a while. Let's put on our big girl panties and go secure this bag.

Samantha smiles pleased, turns on her heels and leaves. Victoria stares daggers at the Commissioner, who winks.

COMMISSIONER LEAVY
Have a good day Attorney Hargrove.

Off Victoria, walking out, fully in it now...

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE/EXAM ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON a fuzzy image on a sonogram machine. Victoria? We REVEAL that it's Sonia lying on an exam table. She stares at her baby's image on the screen, emotional.

INT. VICTORIA AND JUSTIN'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

As Justin sets out plates for dinner, we go behind a closed door to find...

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Victoria stares at the TOILET where we see DROPS of BRIGHT RED. She CLOSES her eyes, pained, knowing what this means.

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

The girls play on the floor with their new TEACUP TERRIER. Petco bags and dog toys everywhere. We track through the house, go behind a closed door to find...

INT. SAMANTHA AND AVERY'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Samantha holds those DIVORCE PAPERS. Then she slowly starts putting them through a shredder. Keeping a little secret of her own.

END OF SHOW