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DARK HORSE fka TOTAL CONTROL

“Pilot”

Written by:

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Based on the original format “Total Control”

From Blackfella Productions



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Keshet

ACT ONE

1

INT. REZ DINER - EVENING

1

A greasy spoon with cracked-and-patched vinyl seats and a proudly-stubborn 70s aesthetic. ALEX IRVING (35, Native, tough and witty) is on hour nine of a six-hour shift. She's got a COFFEE POT in hand, freshening cups.

The clientele is mostly LOCALS from the Reservation. One table's a little rowdy, a group of Native American TEENAGE BOYS in their high school basketball jerseys.

A NATIVE HUSBAND and WIFE (60s) seat themselves at a booth. Alex approaches, order pad ready. The Husband squints at her.

ALEX IRVING

What can I get ya?

NATIVE HUSBAND

You're Alex, right? Jan's girl?

ALEX IRVING

Sure am.

NATIVE HUSBAND

...Could you send a different server over?

Alex smiles through gritted teeth--

ALEX IRVING

You got it.

When she turns away, the couple immediately start whispering to each other, gossiping.

Alex picks up a CHECK from an empty table, sees a zero on the tip line. She's not even surprised.

And then a patron stands up. An OUTSIDER (30s, white, nervous and twitchy). He's holding a GUN in shaky hands.

OUTSIDER

Alright, everybody! This is a robbery! Let's keep this easy.

He pulls a drawstring TRASH BAG from his pocket. He walks up to the older Native couple. Holds the bag towards them.

OUTSIDER (CONT'D)

Jewelry, cellphones -- all of it.

The couple is terrified -- they move slowly. The Outsider, impatient and tweaky, FIRES a shot into the ceiling as a threat. But he underestimated the kickback and the volume of a gunshot -- it startles him bad enough that he FIRES AGAIN out of nervous reflex, SHATTERING a window.

There are YELPS and SCREAMS from the patrons, quickly suppressed.

The Husband, with placating gestures, drops a faded WALLET into the trash bag. The Wife drops in a FLIP-PHONE. The Outsider grimaces at the meager offering.

On the other side of the restaurant, one of the basketball teens slides real low in his seat, slowly, trying not to alert the nervous guy with a gun. Delicately, discretely, he peeks the camera of his PHONE over the lip of the table, surreptitiously RECORDING this whole thing...

The Outsider moves to Alex. With trembling hands, she reaches into her apron. Pulls out a pile of receipts and loose singles. The Outsider is disgusted.

OUTSIDER (CONT'D)

That all you got?

She should be scared -- everyone else is. But she's holding a check with a zeroed tip line. She's tired. Fed up.

ALEX IRVING

Why are you doing this, man?

OUTSIDER

I need money! Put it in the bag!!

He puts the gun right in Alex's face. She flinches, because who wouldn't? She's human. But she doesn't back down.

ALEX IRVING

Hey. Look. I know what it's like to hit a run of bad luck. Let me help.

People are cutting looks at Alex, "*What the fuck are you doing?!*" panic in their eyes. Alex ignores them. Keeps her eyes locked with the Outsider's.

He wasn't expecting sympathy. It throws him.

OUTSIDER

...It's too late.

ALEX IRVING

It's never too late. Believe me.
What if you put the gun down?

He thinks. Allllllmost softens. The diner patrons are all holding their breath...

But he shakes it off. Cocks the hammer back. The diner patrons gasp involuntarily.

OUTSIDER

I thought y'all had a casino, but here you are. Trying to give me therapy instead of some money. Put the cash in the bag, Pocahontas.

Alex *knows* she should try to placate this racist asshole, should try being the submissive mark he's expecting.

But that ain't Alex. This dude spit on her empathy, *and* ladled some racism on top of it. *Fuck* this guy.

ALEX IRVING

Look. I've been on my feet since noon. I've made ten bucks this shift. Shoot me if you gotta, but I'm not giving you anything.

The Outsider seethes. Alex stares him down.

The tension in the room is palpable. The Husband takes his Wife's hand, bracing to hear a gunshot--

But one of the teens barks an involuntarily, nervous LAUGH at Alex's gutsiness--

The Outsider spins to aim at the kid--

And Alex SLAMS the coffee pot she's still holding into the Outsider's head.

He drops, unconscious. Alex kicks his gun away.

There's shocked silence in the diner, until the teen filming all this exclaims:

BASKETBALL TEEN

Holy FU--

SMASH CUT TO:

2 INT./EXT. DIGITAL MONTAGE - VARIOUS

2

Like wildfire, the footage from the diner showdown spreads. From Instagram to Twitter, to Reddit, to national news, to local news. And, finally, to-

3 INT. RACHEL'S OFFICE - NIGHT 3

RACHEL ANDERSON (45, white, confident and shrewd), sitting in the Governor's Office. An imposing room, all oak and copper. It's late and she's exhausted, nursing a glass of whiskey.

The local news is on the TV, showing POLICE DASHCAM FOOTAGE of a roadside sobriety test (*note: we'll get a fuller look at this later*). Rachel turns the TV off in disgust -- this story is the reason for her exhaustion.

She picks up her phone, scrolls social media. A video grabs her attention -- the recording of the showdown at the rez diner. Rachel perks up as she watches Alex look a desperate man in the eye and ask what help he needs. As she sees Alex refuse to blink or back down.

Then, the sound of coffee pot hitting skull. Rachel grins.

RACHEL ANDERSON
She's perfect.

DARK HORSE

4 INT. JAN'S HOUSE - MORNING 4

Alex is in the bathroom, on the edge of a tub, letting the water warm up for a shower. She's bone-tired. It shows.

And then the water turns brown. Slows to a trickle. Stops.

Alex walks into the living room. The house is modest and tidy. Furniture was acquired piecemeal, mostly secondhand, and nothing quite matches. JAN IRVING (60, Native, warm and playful) is watching the news.

JAN IRVING
Ooh, I love this part.

It's a clip from the diner robbery. Jan turns it up right as Alex drops the gunman. Jan marvels, genuinely proud --

JAN IRVING (CONT'D)
My strong girl.

Alex can't look at the TV. Too surreal to see herself on it.

ALEX IRVING
Water's out.

JAN IRVING
Yeah, that'll happen.

ALEX IRVING

Who do I have to call to fix it?

JAN IRVING

Good question. The President? God?

Jan chuckles. Alex is visibly frustrated -- at the situation, sure, but also at her mom's acceptance of it.

ALEX IRVING

It's not funny, mom. Somebody needs to fix this.

JAN IRVING

Alex. I love you. I'm glad you're back. But you have forgotten some things.

Jan turns back to the TV. Alex *has* forgotten some things, so she gets to sprinkle some guilt on her anger.

Alex's cell rings. She answers reflexively--

ALEX IRVING

I'm not doing interviews at this time. Please leave me and my family in peace.

(listening)

Oh. Sorry. I'll be right there.

She hangs up. Starts to rub her temple in frustration. It's already a long day, and it's not even 10 AM.

5 INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

5

A small, cramped office with a single, tiny window. Cinderblock walls painted, decades ago, in beige and yellow. The furniture's mostly metal -- prison vibes abound.

The stern PRINCIPAL (Native, 60s), does paperwork at his desk. EDDIE IRVING (Native, 15 surly but empathetic) is sulking in a chair in the corner. Alex enters, forces a polite smile, and takes a seat.

She spots a TEXTBOOK on the Principal's desk--

ALEX IRVING

Oh, wow, we had that textbook when I went here.

PRINCIPAL

(ignoring that)

Shall we talk about Eddie?

ALEX IRVING

Right, of course. Is he in "no TV for a week" trouble or, "start looking at military schools" trouble?

The Principal pulls a PACK OF CIGARETTES from his drawer and places them on his desk. Eddie sinks lower in his chair.

PRINCIPAL

In my experience, problems like this start at home. I hoped that you, of all people, would be passing along the right lessons. Would know how vital these years are, how much can go wrong if one... Sets down a bad path.

Alex stews with a mixture of anger and embarrassment. Eddie knows his mom well enough to worry -- *"is she about to make this worse for me?"* He watches her, rapt and worried...

The Principal, too, is expecting an outburst. Waits a beat, like it might come. But Alex swallows her anger. Eddie breathes a silent sigh of relief.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

I'm suspending Eddie for a week. I hope this gives him -- and you -- time to reflect and change.

Alex tries, but can't bite her tongue any longer--

ALEX IRVING

I made mistakes. Fifteen years ago. Okay? And then I grew up. But here you are -- same office, same textbooks, same lectures. How about you reflect and change?

Eddie deflates -- the inevitable eruption has occurred. Alex grabs the cigarettes with one hand, Eddie's arm with the other. Storms out.

6

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

6

The school's squat and cinderblock, a classic tribal government building. Alex's car, a beat-up PT CRUISER, is parked out front. Jan's waiting in it. Alex and Eddie come out of the school. There are NATIVE PARENTS, waiting for their kids. They toss some dirty looks at Alex, and Alex glares right back. The parents blink first.

Alex turns to Eddie.

ALEX IRVING
You don't smoke. So. Who were you
trying to impress?

Eddie's eyes go wide, a wordless "*How did she know?!*"

EDDIE IRVING
Nobody! I... Found them on the
ground.

Alex gives Eddie a wordless look: "*Bullshit.*" Eddie feigns indignation... But then he sags in defeat. Busted.

ALEX IRVING
You don't want to run with that
kind of crowd, okay? I've been down
that road. I want better for you.

Eddie, extremely 15, decides to try and reclaim some dignity--

EDDIE IRVING
And yet you brought me here.

Alex takes that on the chin. Remembers being 15 and angry.

ALEX IRVING
Come on. Your grandma has dialysis.

EDDIE IRVING
You gonna drop me off on the way?

ALEX IRVING
No. You're coming. A suspension
isn't a vacation.

Off Eddie's frustrated sigh--

7 EXT. REZ / INT. CAR - DAY

7

Alex, Jan, and Eddie drive on a bumpy highway.

EDDIE IRVING
It's stupid that the hospital's so
far away.

ALEX IRVING
Sure is.

EDDIE IRVING

Then why'd we move back here? We could've stayed in Phoenix. Grandma could've come to us.

ALEX IRVING

It's... Complicated.

JAN IRVING

No, it's not. Our people aren't in Phoenix. They're here. That matters.

Alex and Eddie both fall into chastened silence.

8

INT. HOSPITAL, DIALYSIS WARD - DAY

8

Jan's hooked up to a dialysis machine. Alex and Eddie sit next to her. There's another PATIENT in the room, a white man, his white WIFE at his side.

The ward's TV is set to the local news:

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)

...and that was State Senator Morrison, confirming his resignation from his seat, after a high-profile traffic stop...

The news cuts to DASHCAM FOOTAGE of SENATOR MORRISON undergoing a field sobriety test. He's audibly hammered.

SENATOR MORRISON (ON TV)

Why are y'all hassling me like I'm some kinda drunk Indian?!

Watching in the hospital ward, the Irving family winces. It's not the first time they've seen this footage, but it hasn't gotten any easier, watching flagrant racism on screen.

In the news footage, Morrison starts to do his "walk a straight line" test. He's wobbly, can't pull it off -- and as he stumbles, he turns it into a caricature of a rain dance:

SENATOR MORRISON (ON TV) (CONT'D)

Hey ya-ya ya! Ay ya-ya ya!

The white couple watching in the ward can't help but laugh. For the Irvings, the news story was already a slap in the face -- the laughter alongside the cruelty just compounds it. Eddie gets visibly angry. Alex takes his hand and squeezes, as if to say, "It's okay. I got this."

She looks right at the couple, and she starts to LAUGH.

And then she laughs LOUDER.

And EVEN LOUDER, in an exaggerated, unhinged CACKLE. She stares at the couple the whole time.

The couple is equally unsettled and embarrassed. Eddie loves it. He and Jan share mischievous, delighted grins.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)

...the vacancy committee is expected to meet tomorrow. All of Colorado is wondering: Who will fill the empty seat?

And off that lingering question...

9 INT. REZ DINER - NIGHT

9

Alex finishes her last roll of silverware. End of shift. She tries saying her goodbyes to her colleagues--

ALEX IRVING

I'm heading out. Have a good one!

But her colleagues studiously ignore her. Alex is unsurprised -- she's getting used to the distance her tribe holds her at.

She looks out the window, and sees a NATIVE GIRL smoking in the parking lot. And off Alex, steel in her eyes--

10 EXT. GAS STATION / ROADSIDE BAR - NIGHT

10

On the outskirts of the reservation, a 3-pump gas station. There's a beige-painted BAR one lot over, with neon signs for beers that don't exist any more.

Alex pulls up in front of the gas station. Marches in...

11 INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

11

...And right up to the counter. The CLERK (white, 60s) is reading a paperback novel. Alex gets the Clerk's attention, pulls out her phone, and shows off a photo of Eddie--

ALEX IRVING

This is my son. If you ever sell to him again, I'm coming back here with a baseball bat.

The Clerk stares blankly at Alex, confused. Alex nods to the rack of CIGARETTES behind the Clerk. The Clerk turns, looks. Gets it. The Clerk gives Alex a look -- "Understood."

12 EXT. GAS STATION / ROADSIDE BAR - NIGHT

12

Alex walks out of the gas station. She casts a look at the bar that's almost... longing? But she shakes it off. Moves towards her car. Until--

LOUISA BASIN (O.S.)
No way! Alex Irving?!

Alex winces, recognizes that voice. She turns to see LOUISA BASIN (30, Native, ebullient but naive). She's coming out of the bar with a full TRASH BAG in hand.

ALEX IRVING
(with forced cheer)
Louisa Basin!

LOUISA BASIN
I saw you on the news! I was like,
"Oh my gosh! That's Alex!" I heard
you were back, but I hadn't seen
you, and then there you were on TV!
It was crazy!

ALEX IRVING
Sure was.

Louisa goes to give Alex a hug, but Alex pulls away -- Louisa's still got that trash bag in hand.

LOUISA BASIN
Right, yeah, garbage.

ALEX IRVING
(moving past that)
You're bartending! Last I saw you
was, what, fifteen years ago? You
were still in braces!

LOUISA BASIN
And your hair was down to your
waist! God, I was so jealous. I
always wanted to know your secret --
did you flatiron? Did it just do
that?! I wanted to ask, but my
cousin would always stop me and--

Alex's eyes spark at the mention of Louisa's cousin, but Alex tries to softplay it, feigns casual--

ALEX IRVING

Oh, your cousin! How is Henry?

LOUISA BASIN

He's fine, I guess.

(rapid-fire)

But how have you been? People say things, but you know how people are. How was Phoenix? How's your mom? Why haven't you come in?

It's a torrent of questions, none of them easy to answer, but it's the last question that hangs in the air. Why *hasn't* Alex come to visit?

Alex is struggling to answer when a PICK-UP rolls up to the bar. HENRY BASIN (35, Native, smoldering but world-weary) steps out. Magnetically, like instinct, his eyes find Alex's.

Alex's heart RACES -- anxiety, anticipation, longing, guilt.

ALEX IRVING

Henry?

We don't yet know the history between these two, but we *feel* the weight of it. Alex and Henry have both spent fifteen years thinking about this exact moment, building it up in their heads... and it has arrived in a dive bar parking lot.

Henry says nothing, shows nothing -- this wasn't how he thought this moment would come, and he has nothing prepared. He breaks eye contact first. Heads for the bar. He walks with a pronounced LIMP.

LOUISA BASIN

Great job, cousin! Real hospitable!

And like that, the spell is broken. Alex makes for her car--

ALEX IRVING

I've gotta go.

LOUISA BASIN

Come back some time, yeah?

But Alex is already gone, not looking back. She'd never admit, not even to herself, that she's running away. Again.

Alex is getting out of her car when she spots approaching HEADLIGHTS. A LIMO pulls up, and Rachel steps out. Alex is confused and suspicious.

RACHEL ANDERSON

Alex Irving?
(off Alex)
I'm Rachel Anderson.

ALEX IRVING

...The Governor?

RACHEL ANDERSON

That's right. I saw your video.

ALEX IRVING

You and the rest of the country.

RACHEL ANDERSON

I'm sorry you had to go through
that. But I must say, I was
impressed.

Alex is baffled by this whole conversation -- she has no idea where it's coming from, let alone where it's going. She's cracking jokes like this is normal, trying to *make* it normal--

ALEX IRVING

(miming a coffee pot slam)
All in the wrist, I guess.

RACHEL ANDERSON

You're quick, you're charismatic.
You got laughs in a robbery, for
God's sake. You don't scare easy.

ALEX IRVING

...Thanks? What... is this?

RACHEL ANDERSON

I want to offer you a job. Or, no --
something more. A chance to make a
difference.

Alex thinks, gears in her head clicking together--

ALEX IRVING

That Senator. Making firewater
jokes in the middle of his DUI
stop. You're doing damage control.

Alex presents it like a "gotcha," like she's calling Rachel out. She expects Rachel to balk. But instead...

RACHEL ANDERSON

I am.

That honesty catches Alex off guard. Gets her attention.

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

But that's not why I like you, Alex. I've done my research. You were a paralegal in Phoenix. Before that, you were in college. Pre-law, until you dropped out.

ALEX IRVING

(defensive)

I thought I could balance school, work, and a son. I could, for a while. And then I couldn't.

RACHEL ANDERSON

You wanted to be more, to do more. You volunteered with food banks and homeless shelters. You care about people, Alex.

ALEX IRVING

I have sympathy for people with bad luck. Sorry -- What is this? Do you want me to be your Native Ambassador? Your Indian friend?

RACHEL ANDERSON

There's an empty seat in the state Senate. I want you to fill it.

Alex is shell-shocked, for a moment. And then she starts to process the deep, cosmic irony -- an entire day of feeling helpless, like she doesn't have the tools to fix what needs fixing. And now THIS. So Alex laughs right in Rachel's face.

ALEX IRVING

I'm not a politician.

RACHEL ANDERSON

Good. I work with too many politicians as it is.

Alex takes a beat to process all of this. Then:

ALEX IRVING

Let's take a drive. I've never been in a limo, before.

From the backseat of Rachel's government limo, Alex shows Rachel around the rez. Rachel's too savvy to say as much, but this is her first time seeing a reservation up close and personal - same as for a lot of our audience, honestly.

The first thing that jumps out is how much space there is. Houses and trailers are a half-mile apart, nothing but scrub-brush and unfarmable land between. Plenty of room to abandon a dead car, for rez dogs to roam for scraps.

The limo passes Eddie's school...

ALEX IRVING

Over here, we've got the school my son goes to. 12 grades, one building, textbooks old enough they haven't heard of Obama.

They pass by a CASINO...

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

That casino employs seventy percent of the tribe. They have a bad month, and the whole town feels it. And as if that wasn't enough of a burden to place on one business...

On the other side of the parking lot, there's a sprawling CULTURAL CENTER--

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

That's the tribe's cultural center. Paid for with casino funds. There's a museum for the history. There are chambers for the ceremonies. There are grounds for the pow-wows. They get so little from you that one business has to carry all of that.

They pass a sprawling, modern building -- red brick instead of cinderblock. It sits dark and empty.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

And this. This could be a clinic. I wouldn't have to drive my mom two hours to get dialysis. But the State won't let the tribe decide how to use a building on their own land.

For the first time on this tour, Rachel shows a little discomfort. We don't know why, yet, but there's something about this building in particular that gets to her.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

I don't think I can be a part of your government, Rachel. Politics happens to us, not for us.

(MORE)

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

The work I've done, that you say you like so much? I only did it because I was tired of waiting on people like you to care. So, thanks for the insane offer. But you're gonna need to find a different token Native. Are these little waters free?

Rachel nods, Alex takes a TINY WATER.

RACHEL ANDERSON

You're right. We don't give a damn. Not enough of us, anyway.

Alex pauses, tiny water pressed to her lips -- That blunt honesty caught her off guard.

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

For too many, Denver is a stepping stone on the road to Washington. Constituents are numbers on a spreadsheet. Wallets at a fundraiser. Nobody has the passion, the guts, to lay into the Governor in the back of her own limo.

Alex blushes -- didn't fully realize how gutsy she was being until she heard it out loud.

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

I want fire on my team, Alex.

And off Alex, feeling the weight of the offer...

15 EXT. JAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

15

Rachel's limo pulls up outside Jan's house, next to a beat-up, late-90s RAV-4. It belongs to CHARLIE IRVING (30s, Native observant and wry). He's in a blackjack dealer's outfit, pulling a bag of TAKEOUT FOOD from his passenger seat.

Charlie catches a glimpse of Rachel as Alex steps out. The limo pulls away. Alex tries to feign casual.

ALEX IRVING

Hey, brother. How was work?

CHARLIE IRVING

Awful, it was work. Was that the governor?

Alex doesn't answer. Heads straight for the house.

16 INT. JAN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

16

Alex, Jan, Eddie, and Charlie, sitting around the table in mismatched chairs, eating their takeout. Alex is staring at her plate, avoiding Charlie's eye. It's quiet. Tense.

Jan doesn't acknowledge the tension.

JAN IRVING
(to Charlie)
How's the casino, Charlie?

CHARLIE IRVING
They're talking layoffs again. Slow season, I guess.
(to Alex)
Why were you with the Governor?

ALEX IRVING
...She offered me a job. There's an empty seat in the state Senate. She wants me to fill it.

Stunned reactions around the table. Until--

EDDIE IRVING
That would mean, what? We stay here forever?

ALEX IRVING
What? No. I already told her she should find somebody else.

Eddie's suspicious, resents even the *possibility* of staying here longer. But that answer gives him *some* peace of mind.

Charlie gives Alex a look -- "*Talk to you outside?*"

17 EXT. JAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

17

Charlie and Alex are standing on the porch outside the house. Charlie's smoking a CIGARETTE.

CHARLIE IRVING
So. Why don't you want to do it?

ALEX IRVING
The commute seems gnarly.

CHARLIE IRVING
I'm serious. What's up?

ALEX IRVING

...I was only supposed to be here for a few weeks. Give mom a break. Give you a break from giving mom a break. But she keeps sliding down the transplant list, and...

Alex takes Charlie's cigarette, takes a drag. Braces herself to be more vulnerable than she would be for anyone else.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

Honestly? I spent fifteen years telling myself how terrible this place was, how much better off I was in Phoenix. I come back and, yeah, a lot of it still sucks. Everyone hates me, for one thing.

CHARLIE IRVING

Not everyone hates you.

ALEX IRVING

Then a lot of folks have me fooled. But I'm remembering the good parts, too. I get to hear a language I didn't realize I missed. I get to see mountains I forgot I loved. I've got family here. That matters.

Alex grinds the cigarette out.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

I'm still trying to figure out how I feel. But I'm supposed to speak for everybody? Be the voice of a community that hates me? Nah.

Charlie *could* try to mollify Alex. But he knows her.

CHARLIE IRVING

You know what? Yeah. A lot of people are pissed. And that made things hard on me, hard on mom, for a long time.

ALEX IRVING

Ah, hell. You're right. I'm sorry--

CHARLIE IRVING

Not fishing for an apology. You know what would help more than rides to the hospital? A clinic in town. Educational grants. Fixing the damn roads.

(MORE)

CHARLIE IRVING (CONT'D)

Call me crazy, but I think a
Senator has better shot than a
waitress.

ALEX IRVING

...State Senator.

Charlie snorts a half-laugh.

CHARLIE IRVING

State Senator. If you can't speak
for the whole tribe, don't. Speak
for me. For mom. For Eddie. That's
more than anyone else in Denver is
doing.

Alex gets dangerously close to choking up in front of her
brother... But then, Charlie pulls out a fresh cigarette.
Alex grabs it, flicks it out into the scrub-brush.

ALEX IRVING

Knock this off. Your nephew
idolizes you, you know.

Charlie's (mostly-affectionately) exasperated by the double-
standard. Alex makes for the house, smiling and determined...

18

INT. DENVER CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

18

...And just like that, Alex is standing in the rotunda of the
Colorado State Capitol Building. She's in a Goodwill suit and
heels, ill-fitting and out of date.

She's nervous as hell -- but there's no way she'll let these
motherfuckers see her sweat.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

19 INT. DENVER CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

19

Alex is staring up at the dome when she's politely approached by JONATHAN COSGROVE (28, Latino, quick and cunning). He's sharp-dressed, in a crisp suit.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
Senator Irving?
(beat)
Excuse me, Senator Irving?

ALEX IRVING
Oh! Right! That's me! Feels weird.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
I'm Jonathan Cosgrove. It's a
pleasure to meet you.

ALEX IRVING
You're my... Aide, right?

JONATHAN COSGROVE
Indeed I am. I'm to give you a
tour, help you make your
introductions.

ALEX IRVING
God, you're barely older than my
son, huh?

Jonathan continues to smile diplomatically, but he's starting to take Alex's self-deprecating jokes as a bit of an insult -- the universal pain of having more experience than your boss.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
I was a double-major in poli-sci
and communications. I've spent five
years working my way from intern,
to page, to aide.

ALEX IRVING
(genuinely impressed)
Damn. All I had to do was hit a guy
in the head with a coffee pot.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
I should give that a try. Shall we
get started?

And off Jonathan, leading Alex into the belly of the beast--

20

INT. CAPITOL HALLWAY - SEQUENCE - DAY

20

Jonathan takes Alex on a whirlwind tour of the capitol. We jump between flashes of her meeting her new colleagues in hallways, a rapid-cut sequence.

The vibe in this sequence is, simply, OVERWHELMING. The state Capitol has, on any given day, HUNDREDS of people in its halls. Lawmakers, lobbyists, aides, assistants, maintenance and service staffs. A hive, constantly buzzing.

To Alex, anybody in business attire looks the same -- she absolutely cannot tell the difference between her new colleagues and the lobbyists. It comes naturally to Jonathan.

Jonathan leads Alex to DARREN HALL (50s, white, petty and condescending). Jonathan aide-whispers to Alex--

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Darren Hall. 14th District, Eaton.

ALEX IRVING

Senator Hall! Alex Irving, pleasure to meet you.

DARREN HALL

(not meaning it)

Pleasure's all mine.

ALEX IRVING

You're from Eaton, right?

Alex is making small talk, being friendly. Darren, however...

DARREN HALL

I am. And you're from... the western slope?

ALEX IRVING

Yeah! I'm from--

DARREN HALL

I know some men over there. Capable men. Men who would've made fine senators.

Two things happen simultaneously: Alex realizes that this guy sucks, and she realizes a fun way to fuck with him. She pulls out her phone, Googling the perfect piece of evidence--

ALEX IRVING

You know, I thought "Eaton" rang a bell. Took me a second to place it.

(MORE)

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

My ex was a point guard, I went to all his games -- whatever, I was 17. But Eaton High School... Y'all were the Fightin' Reds!

Alex holds up her phone -- showing a *super* racist Native mascot. She does an impersonation of the Eaton Reds mascot (*Note: real team! Real racist!*), arms crossed, face stern.

Darren is embarrassed, backfooted, suddenly on the defensive--

DARREN HALL

Yes, well. It's complicated. The intent is to honor--

SMASH CUT TO:

21 INT. SECOND CAPITOL HALLWAY - SEQUENCE - DAY

21

Alex gets separated from Jonathan, gets turned around. He finds her, and leads her to ELIZABETH CHEN (40s, Chinese, folksy but cagey).

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Elizabeth Chen. 7th District, Gunnison.

(beat)

Maybe keep this more... friendly?

ALEX IRVING

That was me being friendly.

(to Elizabeth)

Senator Chen! Alex Irving.

ELIZABETH CHEN

Alex! So excited to meet you!

ALEX IRVING

Gunnison, yeah? Practically neighbors! How's the snow?

Alex tosses Jonathan a look: "*See? Being friendly!*"

ELIZABETH CHEN

Dry and deep. Do you ski?

ALEX IRVING

Oh, god no. I'm poor and brown -- I'd get chased off the slopes.

Elizabeth frowns. Jonathan rubs his temple.

SMASH CUT TO:

22 INT. THIRD CAPITOL HALLWAY - SEQUENCE - DAY

22

Jonathan leads Alex to KEVIN CARTWRIGHT (60s, aggressively white). He's in a cowboy hat and polar fleece.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
Kevin Cartwright, 1st District.
(beat)
Maybe try really small chat?

ALEX IRVING
Senator Cartwright! Alex Irving. I
love the hat! Is that a Stetson?

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT
No, it isn't.

Jonathan all but puts his face in his hands.

ALEX IRVING
...Ah. You know, I'm really looking
forward to working together. I have
a lot of ideas, and I was hoping--

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT
I don't talk shop without an
appointment, Miss Irving. My office
can find a time with yours.

Kevin gives a nod to his aide, MICHAEL (20s, white, inexperienced but opportunistic). Michael pulls Jonathan aside. Kevin walks off. Alex is left adrift.

ANGLE ON: Michael talking in hushed tones with Jonathan--

JONATHAN COSGROVE
We're never getting on his
calendar, are we?

MICHAEL
Oh, god no.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
That's fair.
(beat)
I need a drink. Do you wanna get
one tonight?

MICHAEL
A second date? What will people
think, Jonathan?

JONATHAN COSGROVE
That I have excellent taste.

The two share quick, mischievous grins, and then Jonathan returns to Alex. Leads her off to--

23

INT. ALEX'S OFFICE - DAY

23

Jonathan holds the door open for Alex, and she steps into her new office. It's modest, reasonably appointed. But Alex has never had an office that was hers -- this is a revelation.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
We should prep for your first
committee meeting.

ALEX IRVING
Which one's that?

JONATHAN COSGROVE
Indigenous Affairs.

ALEX IRVING
...I'm literally Indigenous,
Jonathan. I think I'll be okay.

Jonathan almost speaks up. Doesn't. He exits instead.

Alex marvels at her office. She tries out every chair.

She's dangerously close to having a moment of relaxation,
until there's a knock at the door.

Jonathan sticks his head in--

JONATHAN COSGROVE
There's a journalist here for you.
This guy... I should probably send
him off. Should I send him off?

Alex gives up on relaxation. Reminds herself she's at work.

ALEX IRVING
It's fine. Let him in.

Jonathan can see trouble coming, but he doesn't know Alex,
doesn't know she'll respond to being questioned--

JONATHAN COSGROVE
Are you... Sure? That might not be--

ALEX IRVING
I'm a grown woman, Jonathan.

Jonathan's still skeptical, but withdraws. A beat, and then NICK STEPHENS (35, Black, charming and savvy) enters, already flashing a megawatt smile.

NICK STEPHENS

Alex Irving! The Overnight Senator.
It's an honor.

After a long chain of people not knowing her, that gives Alex a little dopamine hit. But she catches herself -- she's smart enough to be skeptical of kind people, here.

ALEX IRVING

Pleased to make your
acquaintance...?

NICK STEPHENS

Nick Stephens. Channel 3. Can I ask
you something kind of random?

ALEX IRVING

...Sure.

NICK STEPHENS

How do dudes like your assistant
keep their suits that crisp, all
day long? Does he take breaks to
iron it?

Alex barks an involuntary laugh. Loosens up.

ALEX IRVING

Right?! What does he do when he has
to take a dump? Does he strip down
completely? Hang it up on those
little hooks?

It's Nick's turn to laugh. Casually, effortlessly, he pulls a NOTEBOOK and PEN from his pocket. Preps to write.

NICK STEPHENS

It's the only logical explanation.
How's the drive to Denver?

ALEX IRVING

Two boring hours.

NICK STEPHENS

That's a brutal commute. You should
get a place in the city -- a lot of
the Senators do.

ALEX IRVING

A lot of the Senators have a
waitress' bank account?

NICK STEPHENS

Fair. And makes me wonder -- what
do you think of your new
colleagues?

Before Alex can answer, the door BURSTS open -- Jonathan,
doing his best to pretend like he wasn't eavesdropping.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Apologies, Senator, but I have to
pull you away. Committee meeting.

Irritation flashes over Alex's face before she can catch it.

ALEX IRVING

Thank you, Jonathan.

NICK STEPHENS

I'd love to sit down for a proper,
on-camera interview -- would it be
okay if I saw you again?

He's looking Alex right in the eye. Sparks fly.

ALEX IRVING

I think I'd like that.

And off their immediate chemistry--

24

INT. DENVER CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

24

Alex and Jonathan walk through the hallway. Alex is annoyed.

ALEX IRVING

Thank you for interrupting the
first nice conversation I've had
today.

For the first time, Jonathan's professional demeanor cracks.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

You didn't ask to go off the
record, and you were about to talk
about your colleagues.

ALEX IRVING

You were listening in on me?!

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Yes, and you're welcome. Nick Stephens is dangerous. Who do you think found the footage that gave you your seat?!

That throws Alex for a loop -- both her brush with danger, and the realization that even her aide respects her little enough to attribute her job to one news clip.

Not that she thinks Jonathan is wrong, mind you.

ALEX IRVING

I... Didn't know that.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Clearly.

(beat)

It's just a wool suit with a viscose lining, and a dry cleaner I trust. It's not magic.

ALEX IRVING

Not exactly sure what "viscose" is, but it's working for you.

Alex's phone rings. She answers as she walks--

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

Hey, mom. What's up?

25

INT. DENVER CAPITOL/JAN'S HOUSE (INTERCUT) - DAY

25

Jan's stirring a LARGE POT in the kitchen. Eddie's at the kitchen table, sulking, staring at his phone.

JAN IRVING

Your son says he isn't going to the pow-wow tomorrow night. Please let him know he is incorrect.

ALEX IRVING

Can this wait, mom? I'm--

But Jan is already handing the phone off to Eddie--

EDDIE IRVING

I'm not going. Waste of time.

ALEX IRVING

It's not a waste of time, it's the tribe's culture.

EDDIE IRVING

It's not my culture. I don't know this crap. And you know what? I don't want to! We were supposed to be here a few weeks, then a few months, and now what?

ALEX IRVING

Look. I know we're--

EDDIE IRVING

You said you weren't taking this job! But I'm the asshole?!

Alex keeps losing sight of Jonathan, keeps colliding with people in the hallway. All while trying to deal with 15 years of emotional baggage, over the phone. It's a lot.

She comes to a stop. People flow past in the halls.

ALEX IRVING

Eddie. Listen to me. I missed out on a lot. I regret it. I don't want you to have regrets, too. Okay?

EDDIE IRVING

You know what I regret? Leaving Phoenix. Leaving my friends. You left this place, but now it's on me to love it? Whatever.

Eddie hangs up, furious. Another blow to Alex.

Alex realizes she's lost sight of Jonathan entirely. She's alone. Lost.

Miraculously, Alex spots Rachel down the hall. A much-needed ray of light in an ego-battering day -- and a perfect excuse to harden back up. To put a mask back on.

Rachel is in a HUDDLE OF ASSISTANTS. Alex pushes in--

ALEX IRVING

Rachel!

Rachel turns, smiles wide. Keeps walking, though.

RACHEL ANDERSON

Alex! Hope you're settling in.

ALEX IRVING

Settling's for settlers. I have a list of issues I want to tackle--

RACHEL ANDERSON

You'll have to tell me all about them, when things aren't so crazy. It's one of those days.

It feels like a brush off, because it is. Alex drops back, stops, left in Rachel's wake. Rachel tosses one last remark--

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

You should have Jonathan pick out some new clothes for you! You're in the medium leagues, now, Alex!

Rachel didn't intend any malice, was trying to be light and glib, was genuinely in a hurry. But Alex doesn't know that. Instead, it feels like one more reminder that she's doing this all wrong. One more reminder she doesn't belong.

26 INT. DENVER CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

26

Alex and Jonathan approach a conference room. Alex is still rattled, but is trying to shake it off.

ALEX IRVING

Alright. Indigenous Committee. Let's do this.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Wait.

There's a lot he wants to say -- about how Alex isn't prepared, about how bad he'll look if she fails. But he doesn't trust Alex enough to be that honest with her, yet. So instead, he hands her a BINDER--

JONATHAN COSGROVE (CONT'D)

The prep material. Just in case.

Alex is still skeptical, but she can tell this means a lot to Jonathan. She takes the binder, takes one last deep breath...

27 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

27

Alex half-expected one of the polished-wood halls you see on C-SPAN. But this is just any meeting in a conference room, right down to an untouched VEGGIE TRAY on the table.

Alex is also surprised by the committee's small size (six people), and by the committee's... Demographics.

It's all white dudes. Kevin Cartwright heads the table.

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT

Is that everybody?
(off nod from Michael)
Very well. Let's dive in. I
understand the Gaming Regulation
Bill is ready to go to the floor?

A committee member nods. But those words ring alarm bells for Alex. She grabs for her binder...

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Great. Any other old business?

ALEX IRVING

Fifteen percent?!

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT

...Pardon?

ALEX IRVING

(re: binder)
You want to raise the taxes on my
tribe's casino by fifteen percent.

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT

It's a vice tax on electronic
gambling machines. That's all.

ALEX IRVING

That's not "all!" Do you know how
much rides on that casino? There's
a whole community, there are
families that rely on the money
that comes through there. You can't
do that to them.

And Alex catches herself. All episode long, she's been saying, "the tribe." "Them." But here, when the government's coming at the tribe? When she's the only one that can say something?

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

You can't do this to us. I can't
let this stand.

Alex stands the fuck up for her people, because Alex does what needs doing. She's passionate, unflinching, staring down Kevin with the weight of her family's struggles as her fuel. And off her grit, off her steely, determined stare --

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

28 INT. DENVER CAPITOL HALLWAY - DAY

28

The Indigenous Committee members file out of the conference room. Alex is the last, still fuming, still flipping through the binder as she walks. Jonathan is waiting for her.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

That... Could have gone better.

ALEX IRVING

I'm looking for a way to stop this casino bill thing. We don't need taxes that are gonna give money we don't have to people who don't care about us. We need a clinic. Better roads. Literally anything else.

(re: binder)

There's gotta be something in here I can use.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

(delicately)

There... might not be...

Alex does a doubletake when she sees a window, and the setting sun beyond it. She checks her phone--

ALEX IRVING

It's already six?! I need to get on the road. Can you get me an appointment with Rachel, first thing tomorrow morning?

Jonathan is thrown. Tries to adjust gears.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

I can try, but--

ALEX IRVING

Great! Thanks!

And off Jonathan, left reeling--

29 INT. JAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

29

When Alex comes in, Eddie's sitting cross-legged in front of the TV, rapt. It's HANDICAM FOOTAGE of an old basketball game. Jan's on the couch, watching over his shoulder.

Alex sees what's on the TV, and rolls her eyes.

ALEX IRVING

Mom, where did you even find--

But Jan shushes Alex. Gives her a look -- "*Don't interrupt.*" Alex knows this tape, knows how it ends. She takes a seat. At first, she's just watching Eddie. Trying to gauge his reaction. But soon, she's getting pulled in...

30 INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM, 2005 - NIGHT

30

HANDICAM FOOTAGE of a high school gym. The bleachers are all wooden. The crowd is mostly Native. The concession stand is slinging as much frybread as popcorn. This isn't just a basketball game -- this is REZ BALL.

The crowd *loves* their home team, the NATIVE TEENS holding dominance on the court. But one player is drawing all eyes. The LeBron of the reservation.

It's Henry Basin. 17, effortlessly commanding attention.

There are seconds left on the clock. Score's tied. And then a foul, a whistle -- Henry gets a freethrow.

The Handicam zooms in on Henry's face. We *feel* an entire gymnasium, holding its breath...

He sinks it.

The crowd ERUPTS in cheers! Fans storm the court!

The Handicam follows Henry. The crowd parts before him, and he finds... Alex. She's 17, ecstatic. She and Henry shout in shared excitement, he pulls her in for a hug. The Handicam zooms in on Alex...

31 INT. JAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

31

And an image of young Alex, blissed out, is frozen on the TV.

Eddie had been caught up in the tension of the game, of the moment. He comes back to the present.

EDDIE IRVING

Wow, mom. I don't think I've ever seen you smile like that.

JAN IRVING

My beautiful girl.

Alex is smiling with wistful nostalgia--

ALEX IRVING

That's Henry. He was supposed to go pro. First NBA player from our rez. Everybody loved him -- he was ours, and the world was going to see it.

Then she remembers how that stories ends. Her smile fades.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

But it didn't work out that way.

EDDIE IRVING

Why? What happened?

Alex doesn't answer. Can't. Eddie looks to Jan, who gives a "Not my story to tell" shrug, and turns to her knitting.

EDDIE IRVING (CONT'D)

Oh, cool, something else we're not talking about.

It's kinda tragic, this moment -- Eddie, finally curious about the past and the reservation. But Alex, unable to talk about *this*. So close, yet so far.

Eddie walks out the room, petulant and annoyed. Alex lets him go. She feels guilty, but she doesn't stop him. Doesn't bother trying to explain.

32

EXT. JAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

32

Alex and Charlie are out on the patio, again. Charlie reaches for a cigarette, but then he remembers the last time he and Alex were out here. He puts the cigarettes away.

ALEX IRVING

How was work?

CHARLIE IRVING

Awful, it was work.

(beat)

Casino let Ricky go. Remember him?

ALEX IRVING

Little guy? Loved anime?

CHARLIE IRVING

Yeah. They had him barbacking, over by the slots.

(MORE)

CHARLIE IRVING (CONT'D)

Guess they decided bartenders can change their own kegs. He's looking after his sister's kid, you know? It's rough.

Charlie almost pulls his cigs back out. Catches himself.

CHARLIE IRVING (CONT'D)

It's just... What's he gonna do? What're any of us gonna do? Sorry. You don't want to hear about the casino. How was the capitol?

ALEX IRVING

Awful, it was work.

Charlie's favorite joke, turned around on him. He laughs.

Charlie doesn't know that the joke is a distraction. He doesn't know that hard times are coming for the casino, and that Alex is too scared, too *guilty* to talk about it.

But the guilt in Alex's eyes turns into determination. She *will* fix this.

33

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

33

We're in an uncanny, almost artificial shot -- close in on Rachel, the Rocky Mountains perfect and beautiful behind her.

RACHEL ANDERSON

Welcome to Denver International Airport. I'm Governor Rachel Anderson. I hope you enjoy your stay in the Mile High City.

We cut wide, and see Rachel standing in a grimy, empty parking lot. A FILM CREW is surrounding her. The shot wraps, and Rachel drops her smile. Says to the DIRECTOR--

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

You travel, right? You ever pay attention to one of these?

The Director shrugs -- "Nope." Rachel shrugs right back. But then, Alex is at her side.

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Alex! Sorry I couldn't carve out a proper block for you. No rest for the wicked, right? Walk with me.

Alex follows Rachel towards the Capitol--

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)
So. What's the crisis?

ALEX IRVING
The Indigenous Committee is a
white, pasty sausage fest. A Vienna
sausage fest.

RACHEL ANDERSON
That's... Evocative.

ALEX IRVING
They have this bill that's going to
screw my tribe, my family. I'm
going to make a play to stop it.
I'd like your help.

RACHEL ANDERSON
I can't do that.

ALEX IRVING
Why not? You wanted fire, let's
give them some fire.

RACHEL ANDERSON
Alex, you've been here a day. You
don't get to tell a committee how
to run. You don't get to tell me
how to move.

ALEX IRVING
So I should, what, just take it?

RACHEL ANDERSON
Until you make allies, until you
have leverage? That's exactly what
you do. Learn how to play the game,
Alex. I can't play it for you.

For Rachel, this is tough love -- relaying a lesson she had
to learn the hard way. For Alex, this feels like a betrayal.

ALEX IRVING
You said you didn't like
politicians. Why are you asking me
to act like one?

RACHEL ANDERSON
I'm telling you to be realistic.

ALEX IRVING
Fine. I'll do it myself. I'm used
to that.

Alex peels off. Rachel thinks about stopping her. Doesn't.

34 INT. KEVIN CARTWRIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY

34

Alex bursts into Kevin's office, pushing past his aide, Michael--

MICHAEL

I tried to stop her--

ALEX IRVING

Senator, please, I just want to talk. Like people. No games, no aides, no red tape. Just one person, talking to another person.

Alex is pouring her heart out. Michael looks to Kevin for guidance, but Kevin just gestures to Alex -- "Go ahead."

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

My tribe's treading water, Senator, and the casino's all that's keeping us afloat. If we had money to spare, we'd be using it. You could be tossing a life-vest, but instead you're... Throwing bricks at us. Sorry, this metaphor's getting away from me.

(collecting herself)

I'm not asking you to help us, Senator. I'm asking you not to hurt us. That's all.

Kevin sits quietly, processing. Alex takes that as a good sign -- did her earnest play pan out?

But then Kevin speaks.

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT

Casinos are interesting. They take money, and they produce nothing. They prey on people.

Alex *immediately* feels this skidding away from her--

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT (CONT'D)

If we reduce your tribe's dependency on such a damaging institution, they'll be inspired to find a more sustainable income stream. There will be growing pains, but it will be for the best.

Alex stares at Kevin in disbelief, disgust, frustration. So much she *wants* to say that she doesn't know where to start.

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT (CONT'D)

I have several appointments. But please, feel free to always come to me with your concerns.

He gestures to the door, picks up a ringing phone, and swivels his chair away. He's done, here. Alex exits, dazed.

35

INT. COLORADO CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

35

Alex comes out of Kevin's office angry at Kevin, angrier at herself. All this stress, and misery, and *humiliation*, and she has nothing to show for it. Jonathan is waiting.

ALEX IRVING

Who else can I talk to?

Alex isn't the only one feeling disrespected today -- Jonathan's about hit his limit, too.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

There isn't anybody.

ALEX IRVING

There must be. Get me a list of anybody the committee members are friends with, I'll--

JONATHAN COSGROVE

If you'd read the prep material, you'd know this bill has been retooled in committee for months. Everyone got a hand on it, they're all in. It's going to the floor on Friday, and it's going to pass.

ALEX IRVING

That's ridiculous. I'll explain to people, I'll get them to put a word in with their friends, I'll--

JONATHAN COSGROVE

No, you won't. Nobody. Knows. You. And, sorry, but it's insane that I have to explain basic politics to my boss.

ALEX IRVING

(cold)
Then don't.

Jonathan blanches, realizing he crossed a line. And when Alex sees that response, that fear, she feels immediately guilty. She didn't mean to punch down like that. Her spark goes out.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)
If I have anything else today,
cancel it. I'm going home.

And Alex walks away.

36

INT. REZ BAR - AFTERNOON

36

Alex is bone-tired when she slumps onto a stool at the bar.

LOUISA BASIN
Alex! How was Senating? Senatoring?
I mean, how was government?

ALEX IRVING
Whiskey ginger. Well.

Louisa knows a "not ready to talk" customer when she sees one. Pours the drink in silence. Alex sips. Looks around.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)
Where is everyone?

LOUISA BASIN
Pow-wow.

ALEX IRVING
Oh my god, I completely forgot...
(beat)
What am I doing? I keep trying to
make people see me. Take me
seriously. For nothing.
(beat)
There's so much that I could do,
that I need to do, and I... I don't
know if I can. I think I've made a
terrible mistake.

A voice speaks up from a dark corner of the bar--

HENRY BASIN
Yeah. You did.

And Henry Basin, the reason Alex moved away from the rez, the man she hasn't spoken to in fifteen years, steps out of the shadows. Off Alex, dread in her eyes--

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

37 INT. REZ BAR - NIGHT

37

Henry limps over to the bar. Sits next to Alex.

LOUISA BASIN
Come on, Henry. Leave her alone.

HENRY BASIN
It's alright, cousin, we're just talking.
(to Alex)
You did what you always do, didn't you? You put the whole world on your shoulders, and you acted surprised when it crushed you.

By now, we know how Alex is gonna respond to that sort of blunt, direct antagonism -- we know she's gonna lash out. Tell this guy to kick rocks. Right?

But instead, Alex does something we haven't seen: she cries.

Henry starts to reach for her, an old habit he forgot he had. But he catches himself.

LOUISA BASIN
Jesus, Henry, could you just, like, try not being an enormous a-hole? See how it feels?

Alex wipes her tears away--

ALEX IRVING
No, no, it's fine. He's not wrong. I keep doing the same thing, expecting different results.
(to Henry, charged)
So, what? You gonna do what you always do? Tell me not to worry so much? Tell me to relax, have another drink?

HENRY BASIN
I'm not seventeen anymore, Alex.

ALEX IRVING
Neither am I. So who's New Henry? This guy who wouldn't acknowledge me in a parking lot?

HENRY BASIN

...I had fifteen years to imagine what I'd say if I ever saw you again. Running plays in my head, trying to get it just right. It wasn't supposed to happen in a parking lot. I'm sorry about that.

And that rattles Alex. She was halfway hoping for a fight, might've known how to handle it. This really is a New Henry.

HENRY BASIN (CONT'D)

There's somewhere we should go.

It's presumptuous. If anybody else tried it, Alex would laugh in their face. But there's still *something* between them--

ALEX IRVING

...Okay.

And off Alex, almost surprised at herself as she follows Henry out of the bar--

38

EXT. FESTIVAL GROUNDS - SUNDOWN

38

There's a pow-wow in full swing, across the parking lot from the tribal casino. Picnic tables with pot-luck offerings, ranging from heirloom squash grown with centuries-old seeds, to KFC still in the bucket. They're covered by pop-up CANOPIES, emblazoned with the casino's logo.

Some folks are in traditional regalia, some in Levis and t-shirts. There are men circled around a DRUM, pounding out a rhythm. There are elders in collapsible camping chairs, watching the festivities with smiles on their faces.

Henry and Alex approach, but Alex stops them short--

ALEX IRVING

I'd rather hang back. For now.

HENRY BASIN

Why?

Alex sees that eyes have already found her, even out on the edges of the grounds. Whispers are starting.

ALEX IRVING

...Some days, I feel like I'm not even a person to them. I'm like a... Natural disaster.

(impersonating)

(MORE)

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

"Hey, remember when Hurricane Alex blew in? Busted up that poor boy's leg?"

(in a different voice)

"He'd have made the NBA if it weren't for that storm. First from the rez, he would've been."

HENRY BASIN

Yeah, Colorado's famous for its hurricanes.

ALEX IRVING

It's a metaphor. It's-- I'm-- Look, I'm working on them, alright?

Henry catches himself smiling, turns so Alex doesn't see. Regains his cool, dark composure.

HENRY BASIN

If it's any consolation, I think that's all stupid. If I'm over it, everybody else should get over it. But we can hang back, if you want.

Alex genuinely appreciates that -- being heard.

ALEX IRVING

Thanks.

(beat)

You're "over it?"

HENRY BASIN

I wasn't at first. I wanted to get out of here. Thought I would. Then I got stuck. Got mad I got stuck.

(beat)

Then I realized there were good things here. Might not have seen them, if I'd left.

They stand quietly, watching the pow-wow. It's a comfortable silence -- first one Alex has had in a while.

39

INT. DENVER BROWNSTONE - EVENING

39

A well-appointed drawing room with old-school solemnity. Rachel sits at a table with her father, DANIEL ANDERSON (80, white). The two are working on a JIGSAW PUZZLE.

DANIEL ANDERSON

How's work been, darling?

RACHEL ANDERSON

The usual. An absolute snakepit.

DANIEL ANDERSON

Have you made partner, yet?

Rachel corrects her father with melancholy patience--

RACHEL ANDERSON

I'm not at the law firm any more,
dad. I'm the Governor.

DANIEL ANDERSON

Oh? Well. That can't be easy.

Rachel keeps thinking she'll get used to her father's mental decline. That each lapse will be the last one that breaks her heart. But every time, there's a pang. She buries it.

RACHEL ANDERSON

It isn't. First woman Governor the
State has ever had, Dad. Ever.

DANIEL ANDERSON

(delighted)

Really?! That's amazing, darling.
What does David think?

A twist of a knife that Rachel sometimes forgets is still buried in her side.

RACHEL ANDERSON

David and I are divorced. Have been
for three years. Men always say
they want a strong woman, but...

(beat)

Anyway. If someone comes for me, if
they take my spot, I'm a one-term
novelty. I'm not a trendsetter, I'm
an aberration.

DANIEL ANDERSON

I see. Is someone? Coming for you?

RACHEL ANDERSON

I never know. I had a problem.
Thought I solved it. Thought I kept
all the snakes at bay.

For Rachel, these "conversations" with her Dad (if you can even call them that) are therapy. A chance to speak out loud the thoughts she normally keeps to herself--

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

I might've picked wrong. And it's a shame, honestly.

(beat)

In another world, I think we'd be friends. Going out for drinks...

(beat)

Anyway. Do you see a red, knobly piece?

DANIEL ANDERSON

Hmm... Ah! Here!

(sliding piece over)

So. Are you and David thinking about kids, yet? Settling down?

He's already forgotten the conversation. Rachel smiles sadly.

RACHEL ANDERSON

Not yet, Dad.

Rachel's sounding board, the only person she can truly bring herself to be honest with, can't even *really* hear her. Even as we start to see the lengths Rachel will go to in manipulating others and protecting herself, we see how deeply, deeply lonely she is...

40

EXT. FESTIVAL GROUNDS - NIGHT

40

Alex and Henry are still lurking on the outskirts of the pow-wow. Alex spots Jan, Charlie, and Eddie on the far side of the grounds. She points them out to Henry--

ALEX IRVING

That's my son, Eddie. I can't believe my mom got him out here.

HENRY BASIN

Oh, I believe it. I swear she's got magic powers.

(beat)

He's gonna be tall. How old is he?

ALEX IRVING

Fifteen.

Henry just nods. Does some mental math. Starts to ask himself some interesting questions...

The pow-wow M.C. is a familiar face: the Native Husband from the teaser, who rejected Alex out of hand, and asked for a different server. He walks to the center of the grounds, microphone in hand. He is, surprisingly, warm and funny--

NATIVE HUSBAND

And now, the all-ages dance. I hear some of you saying, "Ohh, but I don't know the steps!" Looking at you, Earl.

A six-year-old NATIVE BOY laughs, thrilled and scandalized at being teased on mic. The tribe laughs along with him.

NATIVE HUSBAND (CONT'D)

To that I say: you don't know the steps yet. Get on out there, you'll find them.

People walk into the circle, everyone from toddlers in tiny regalia to elders clad all in denim. Older folks teach the younger the steps, in time with the beat of the drum.

Alex sees Jan and Charlie drag Eddie into the circle. She watches as he learns the steps, trying them out with the tentative anxiety of any teen trying a new thing in public.

She sees him smile. Sees him take his first step towards loving this place.

Alex watches three generations of her family, dancing to the beat of a single, communal drum. Happy tears well in her eyes -- she didn't realize, until this moment, how much she missed this. How much she *needed* it.

She wipes her tears away. Affects sardonic and detached.

ALEX IRVING

Is this why you wanted me to come out? So I could learn a lesson about the power of community, or whatever?

HENRY BASIN

(shrugging)

It's not not that.

(beat)

I think you've got the tribe wrong, Alex. They're not mad about the accident, they're not mad I didn't go pro. They're mad that you left.

Henry puts a hand on her shoulder. And with that touch, if only for a moment, Alex is seventeen again.

She shrugs off the touch, not unkindly.

And then, the Native Husband spots Alex--

NATIVE HUSBAND

Is that Alex Irving I see out there?

All eyes turn to Alex. Exactly what she *didn't* want.

NATIVE HUSBAND (CONT'D)

Our very own senator! How about a round of applause for her?

There's a smattering of halting, unenthusiastic applause.

NATIVE HUSBAND (CONT'D)

So now we know -- any problems we've got, take 'em to Alex!

The audience laughs. To the M.C., to the crowd, this is just teasing. But all Alex can think about is how she's already let the tribe down.

She waves to the crowd. And then, the dance resumes. She takes a second. And then, she confesses to Henry:

ALEX IRVING

State Senate's trying to ram through a new casino tax, and I couldn't stop it.

Henry winces. He knows how bad that sounds, knows what this is gonna do to Alex's already-shitty reputation.

HENRY BASIN

Mind if I tell my dad? Let the Tribal Council know it's coming?

ALEX IRVING

God, please. But... Say I tried?

HENRY BASIN

I could do that. Or, I could wait a day. See if the Senate learns how stubborn you can be.

Henry and Alex lock eyes. He's showing a faith in her, right when she doesn't have it herself. It means the world. A long-dormant flame starts to spark back to life.

And Alex turns to the circle, smiling. She joins the dance, for the first time in years.

She's next to her son. She stumbles -- it's been a while. She's rusty.

EDDIE IRVING

I messed it up too, at first.

Eddie shows Alex a step he's just learned himself. One Alex used to know. She finds the beat again, finds the step.

EDDIE IRVING (CONT'D)

You've just gotta stick with it.
Find the rhythm. Y'know?

It's the first time in a long time that Eddie hasn't been pissed at Alex. As she's dancing, she's looking at this community, *her* community.

ALEX IRVING

Yeah. Yeah, I think I will.

41 INT. ALEX'S OFFICE, LOBBY/ALEX'S OFFICE - DAY

41

Jonathan sits on the desk of ALICIA (20s, quiet and reserved), Alex's secretary. A clerk, MANNY (20s, sarcastic and haughty), hovers nearby, futzing with a stapler.

MANNY

Do you think she's coming back?

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Grapevine isn't optimistic. The things people are saying...

Everyone jolts to attention when the door swings open. Alex strides in.

ALEX IRVING

No, I didn't quit. No offense taken if you thought I might have.

Guilty looks from the staff -- busted.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

So, first things first: what the hell is up with this casino bill?

She pulls the binder with the bill out of her bag.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

I want to see the revisions it's gone through, the studies it cites, the voting records of anybody who put it together -- anything.

The staff starts to move -- except for Jonathan.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
Still tilting at that windmill?

The rest of the staff freezes. Watches, rapt. Alex steps closer to Jonathan, stares him down--

ALEX IRVING
This can't be the first time you've felt this.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
...Pardon?

ALEX IRVING
This feeling that you know more than your boss. That you're not being listened to.

It's an awkward moment for Jonathan -- he's being *seen*. But part of him worries that it's a trick...

JONATHAN COSGROVE
I wouldn't... Phrase it that way.

ALEX IRVING
The smart, gay, Latino man had an easy run? My bad.

Jonathan laughs, in spite of himself. He's not worried about Alex's intentions, any more.

Alex addresses the whole office--

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)
There's a lot I don't know. I don't even know which things I don't know. But I want to learn. I want to find the rhythm.
(to Jonathan)
Care to dance?

He weighs his options. Sees the fire in Alex's eyes.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
...Why not?

ALEX IRVING
(chipper)
Great! Let's get to work.

Alex enters her office proper. She sees an OUTFIT laid out on her desk -- Jonathan followed up on Rachel's advice, and got Alex some nicer clothes. Some new SHOES, that look great (if wicked uncomfortable). Alex smiles. Jonathan's alright.

42 INT. CAPITOL HILL, VARIOUS (SEQUENCE)- DAY 42

In a stylized, process-porn montage, we see staffers gathering information. They pull folders in an ARCHIVE ROOM, they get DOCUMENTS from varying clerks.

It's quick, it's zippy -- but it's a subtle reminder that being informed takes work. Alex is putting that work in.

43 INT. ALEX'S OFFICE - DAY 43

Coming out of the sequence, Alex is reading a PILE of documents at her desk. An idea sparks.

ALEX IRVING
(shouting)
Jonathan? Can I get your thoughts?

Jonathan enters. Alex pulls her phone out, searching--

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)
They know they can't just say, "We want to tax Indian casinos more," so they target something we have that the white casinos in Blackhawk don't, right? They go after "electronic gambling machines."

JONATHAN COSGROVE
Sure...

Alex finds what she's searching for. Shows Jonathan--

ALEX IRVING
This is from the site for one of the Blackhawk casinos. Does it look like the sportsbook bets are placed on tablets?

Jonathan looks... Ponders... And then LAUGHS.

JONATHAN COSGROVE
Oh, you're mean.

ALEX IRVING
I need to put in some calls to Blackhawk, talk about how broad the term "electronic gambling machine" could be. And while I do that, could I ask you something?

JONATHAN COSGROVE

(hesitant)

Okay...?

ALEX IRVING

If you agree with me, could you talk to some of your friends? The people that everybody else in this place ignores. The people that, I dunno, whisper in ears to tell people stuff they should know. Could those people hear that I'm asking inconvenient questions?

It's Alex asking for a favor. But it's also an uncommon acknowledgement of the power of "invisible" people.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

...It'd be my pleasure.

And off Jonathan, loving all of this--

44 INT. CAPITOL CAFETERIA -- DAY

44

A bustling cafeteria, full of people that make the government run -- but that can't afford to go off-campus for lunch.

Cartwright's aide, Michael, is wrestling with a semi-functional espresso machine. Jonathan sidles up next to him.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Late night?

Michael blushes. He remembers last night, alright.

MICHAEL

Something like that.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Lemme help you. You've just gotta grab this... And yank it... And there you go.

Jonathan didn't *need* to make this whole exchange sexually charged, but he did anyway. He has to find his fun somewhere.

MICHAEL

Thank you kindly.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Can I complain about my boss for a second?

(off Michael)

(MORE)

JONATHAN COSGROVE (CONT'D)
She's obsessed with this casino
bill. She's making us go over it,
again and again and again.

Michael gives a sympathetic look -- "*Sounds exhausting.*"

JONATHAN COSGROVE (CONT'D)
The most annoying part, though? I
think she might be on to something.

Jonathan's selling the hell out of this -- acting like this
is any other piece of gossip. Michael is all ears...

45 INT. RACHEL'S OFFICE - DAY

45

Kevin Cartwright storms into Rachel's office, livid.

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT
What the hell is Irving doing?

RACHEL ANDERSON
Sorry, what are we fighting about?

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT
The casino bill. She's got
Blackhawk thinking they'll get
burned. Everyone wants to "study
the issue." The vote's pushing.

Rachel's surprised and, secretly, fucking *impressed*.

RACHEL ANDERSON
She did all that on her own?

Kevin starts pacing, ranting--

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT
It's a vice tax! Nobody cares about
these! Especially not for ind--

Kevin realizes, a half-beat too late, that he's let his mask
slip. He tries to reel it back--

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT (CONT'D)
This bill could've sailed through,
could've generated funds to help
out my constituents. But you turned
that seat into a race thing.

RACHEL ANDERSON
I believe the drunk driver doing
the Tomahawk Chop on a dashcam
turned this into a "race thing."

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT

Let me make this clear, Rachel. My constituents expect me to deliver. If I don't, I have a problem. If I have a problem, you have a problem.

Rachel sits up. This is officially a *threat*.

KEVIN CARTWRIGHT (CONT'D)

We have six months until the election. You can make this right, and I can spend these months making sure you keep this office. Or you can let your dog keep pissing on my rug, and I can spend six months backing your replacement.

And off Rachel's silent fury--

46 INT. ALEX'S OFFICE, LOBBY - DAY

46

Alex has a bottle of cafeteria LEMONADE that she's treating like a champagne bottle. She pours glasses for her staff--

ALEX IRVING

We did it! We got the vote pushed and bought ourselves some time! Now we just have to bring it home.

The celebration is warm and fun, silly and endearing. Even Jonathan's celebrating.

And then Rachel enters. Alex flashes her a warm smile, but Rachel is a kettle of barely-restrained anger--

RACHEL ANDERSON

...Let's talk in your office.

ALEX IRVING

That's not necessary. I trust my team. Whatever you want to say--

Rachel turns to Jonathan--

RACHEL ANDERSON

You're fired.

(to Alex)

I don't make requests, Alex.

Jonathan is stunned. And off Alex, shellshocked--

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

47 INT. ALEX'S OFFICE - DAY

47

Rachel comes in, cold fury. Alex follows, fiery rage--

ALEX IRVING

You do not have the right to fire anybody in my office.

RACHEL ANDERSON

(ignoring that)

When I told you to slow your roll and play the game, I wasn't saying it to hear myself talk. Your little stunt pissed off Kevin Cartwright.

ALEX IRVING

Who cares? That guy sucks.

RACHEL ANDERSON

(even more frustrated)

Of course he sucks! He's also the most prolific fundraiser in the party. He's been termed out four times, and keeps coming back. He makes campaigns. He breaks campaigns.

ALEX IRVING

Good for him.

RACHEL ANDERSON

(even more frustrated)

I'm up for re-election in six months. You'll be up for your first election. And here you are, throwing elbows.

ALEX IRVING

I don't care if I get another term! I'd rather have six months of doing good -- like I did today -- than a lifetime of kissing rings and living off scraps.

The last thread of Rachel's patience unravels. We see her get animated, angry, *passionate* in a way she usually masks--

RACHEL ANDERSON

You still don't get it, Alex. This is bigger than six months, bigger than one election. Use your head. Think. You've seen the harm that's hit your tribe when nobody cares about them. How do you think it will go when they have an enemy?

Rachel is staring Alex dead in the eye. And when Alex stares *back*, her eyes full of hurt and anger and questions, Rachel has a moment of pause. Collects herself.

For the first time, she's *really* honest with Alex.

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

...I got elected three years ago. Right away, right out the gate, I tried to push some policy. Protections for meat-packing plant workers. It was good policy. My parents were...

Rachel trails off. She's being honest, but she's not quite ready to rip open all her scars.

RACHEL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Doesn't matter. I didn't play the game. Not only did my policy die in committee, I found out that I'd put a bullseye on my back. I became a mark. I have spent three years trying to claw my way back. I am trying to help you.

Rachel isn't lying, exactly -- that bit of her backstory is true. But we also know that she doesn't *really* have Alex's best interests at heart. Not completely. But her self-serving bit of honesty still strikes a chord...

ALEX IRVING

...Fine. How do I fix it?

RACHEL ANDERSON

You're not going to like it.

ALEX IRVING

It'd be weird if I did.

RACHEL ANDERSON

The empty building on your reservation. The one you showed me on your tour. That building was supposed to be a prison.

ALEX IRVING

I heard that, yeah. One more undesirable thing dumped on the rez. But the State messed up the paperwork, yeah?

RACHEL ANDERSON

Certain... Developmental procedures were overlooked, yes.

ALEX IRVING

We sued--

RACHEL ANDERSON

And we countersued, and so on, and so on. It was a black eye for the Indigenous Committee. For Kevin.

Alex can read between the lines. She hates what she sees.

ALEX IRVING

We don't need a prison. We need a clinic.

RACHEL ANDERSON

I know that. You know I know that. But if you get your tribe to drop the suit, you drop back off his radar.

It hurts, but Alex gets honest with Rachel--

ALEX IRVING

...Most of my tribe hates me. Okay? Even if I wanted to help you, they won't listen to me.

Rachel is sympathetic. Knows about loneliness. *Wants* to connect with Alex.

But she's got bigger priorities. She hardens--

RACHEL ANDERSON

...Sounds like a "you" problem.

Rachel starts to exit. Alex knows she's lost, but she can't let Rachel get this many unanswered points--

ALEX IRVING

You can't fire my aide.

Rachel gives that a, "*Fine, whatever,*" wave. Exits.

Alex stews. Paces. PUNCHES a wall in frustrated, impotent anger -- leaves a hole in the drywall.

She paces some more. Calms down.

Has an idea.

She calls out--

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

Jonathan!

(off his entry)

Two things. One, you're rehired.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Thank you so much, I swear--

ALEX IRVING

Two, I want to do that interview with Nick Stephens.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

...Is that the best idea?

ALEX IRVING

But on one condition: We do it live. And at my house. So, two conditions, I guess.

They're *wild* requests, and Jonathan's disbelief reflects that. And then, he laughs at the chutzpah of it.

They share daredevil grins. But a *bit* of reason comes back to Jonathan--

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Please let me help you prep for it. If you crash and burn, I might get fired. Again. But, you know, harder.

Alex nods -- "*Fair enough.*"

48

EXT. FESTIVAL GROUNDS - SUNSET

48

Last night, there was a pow-wow here. Now, there are lights, cameras, chairs. The cultural center and the casino are both in the background.

Alex is pacing. She's dressed in the outfit that Jonathan got her, right down to the shoes. She has FLASHCARDS in hand. Jonathan's nearby, watching where he steps--

JONATHAN COSGROVE

It's really... Rustic, here, huh?
Anyway. Can you think of any
missteps made by the previous
administration?

ALEX IRVING

(reciting)

I can't speak to the circumstances
of the previous administration, so
I'd hesitate to call anything a,
"misstep." I look forward to
finding a new path, together.
(more natural)
That doesn't mean anything.

JONATHAN COSGROVE

Yes, it's perfect! You will be
reasonable, and safe, and
inoffensive. We're proving party
loyalty. Game of inches, Alex.

A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (20s) approaches--

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

We're five minutes out.

The PA exits. Alex takes a deep breath. Collects her
flashcards...

And then she realizes there's a call she needs to make. She
gets her phone out and dials.

49 INT. JAN'S HOUSE, EDDIE'S ROOM/EXT. FESTIVAL GROUNDS - SUNSET

Eddie picks up his phone.

ALEX IRVING

Hey, Eddie. Got a minute?

EDDIE IRVING

(sarcastic)

I dunno, mom, I'm pretty busy.
There's so much to do here.

ALEX IRVING

Look. I know none of this is fair.
I know you didn't ask for any of
this.

Eddie softens. Knows how hard this sort of thing is for Alex.

EDDIE IRVING

...Yeah.

ALEX IRVING

But I think... I believe that we can find good things in situations we didn't ask for. We have to. It's not fair. And it's scary. And it's not what we would've asked for. But I want to make it work. We can make it work. We've just gotta find the rhythm. Okay?

Eddie smiles. Mists up a little. Feels some relief that his mom can't see him misting up.

EDDIE IRVING

Yeah, mom.

ALEX IRVING

I love you.

And *now*, Alex is ready to walk into history.

50

EXT. FESTIVAL GROUNDS - EVENING

50

Cameras are aimed at Nick and Alex as they sit across from each other in tall canvas chairs, the reservation spilling out behind them.

As the crew does last looks, Alex jokes:

ALEX IRVING

Look at you, making history.
Bringing production values to the rez.

Nick gives a polite laugh, goes back to his notes. Alex rubs at her heel -- the shoes Jonathan picked out are chafing.

Nick looks back up, slightly guilty--

NICK STEPHENS

Sorry. I'm used to these things being kind of adversarial. You doing alright?

ALEX IRVING

I am, I think.

NICK STEPHENS

Good. That's good.

Nick's conflicted. He covers his mic. Leans towards Alex.

NICK STEPHENS (CONT'D)

When the cameras roll, I have a journalistic responsibility to be tough. To ask hard questions.

(sincerely)

We can still back out of this.

That throws Alex. She was told Nick was dangerous and planned around that. Actual kindness surprises her. And yet, it was still patronizing.

ALEX IRVING

I think I'll be alright. Last guy that underestimated me got hit with a coffee pot.

She flashes a confident grin -- he can't help but smile back at it. A reminder of their sparks.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Quiet on set! Rolling!

Nick drops his smile. Interviewer mode. Alex straightens up, getting into the character of a confident Senator.

NICK STEPHENS

Alex Irving. The "Overnight Senator," as they call you.

ALEX IRVING

Thank you for driving out here. It's easy to forget that my tribe is a part of this state. But we're still here. We deserve to be heard.

It's powerful. It plays. Jonathan's watching from the sidelines, cautiously optimistic -- Alex is doing well...

NICK STEPHENS

...But do you? You have no political experience, no resume to speak of, you've been in Colorado for six weeks. You did not campaign for this position. Why do you deserve the seat you have?

Nick doesn't deliver it as an attack -- he's merely stating facts. But it's an aggressive start to the interview. Despite his warning, Alex still stumbles.

ALEX IRVING

Ha! Well. I mean, you're not wrong.
But I-- Well, I was born here,
actually. I just...

Nick is almost... Disappointed. Was her confidence, her bravado, a front? Alex fumbles with her flashcards...

51 INT. JAN'S HOUSE - EVENING

51

Jan and Charlie are watching the interview on TV. They know how much this means -- for Alex, for their family, for the tribe. They're nervous, watching her stumble like this.

CHARLIE IRVING

Come on, Alex...

52 EXT. FESTIVAL GROUNDS - EVENING

52

Alex drops a flashcard by accident. She gets frustrated, and tosses the rest intentionally.

She pulls off the uncomfortable shoes and tosses those too. But then she collects herself. When she speaks, she doesn't try for "political" or even "polished." She's just... Alex.

ALEX IRVING

I don't know that I deserve it. But
does anybody "deserve" this job?

Nick's attention is more than piqued -- he can tell a viral moment when he sees one. *This* is the Alex that intrigues him. He gives Alex the space she needs...

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

I can tell you this much - I've
been training for this job my whole
life. I've been belittled, ignored,
and tokenized. Every day. I've been
talked down to, treated like an
idiot, and made to feel like I
don't belong. Every day.

Alex takes a beat--

53 INT. REZ BAR - EVENING

53

Alex's interview is up on the bar TV. Louisa turns up the volume, and the patrons in the bar quiet down as they watch...

54 EXT. FESTIVAL GROUNDS - EVENING 54

Alex continues--

ALEX IRVING

But it'll be worth it, if I get to speak up for the people that need it. People who haven't had anybody to speak up for them before. People like my mother, my brother, my son. Anybody who's felt as invisible as them. As invisible as me.

Nick, like everybody watching this, is electrified...

55 INT. HENRY'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING 55

Henry sits on his couch, watching the interview. He's just as enraptured as Nick. Just as electrified.

And then, HENRY'S WIFE enters. She kisses his forehead.

Yeah, holy shit, Henry's married.

Henry changes the channel as casually as he can manage...

56 EXT. FESTIVAL GROUNDS - EVENING 56

Alex's interview continues--

ALEX IRVING

If anybody in my district has concerns, they can bring them to me. Directly. I'm setting up an office here, on the rez. Nobody should have to go to the capitol just to feel like they have a voice.

Jonathan, on the sidelines, is unpleasantly surprised, looking around at the place he views as "rustic"--

JONATHAN COSGROVE

...What?

But Alex is still going--

ALEX IRVING

I don't want to paint all of the capitol with one brush. I'm lucky enough to have an ally. A true friend, that I know I can count on.

NICK STEPHENS

Really? Who's in your corner?

ALEX IRVING

Rachel Anderson.

(off Nick)

She talks an inclusive talk, and I'm thrilled, relieved, to see that she walks it. See, I'd like to bring a clinic here, to people who need it...

On the sidelines, Jonathan FREAKS THE FUCK OUT. He starts texting furiously, trying to figure out what the hell Alex is talking about--

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

...To people who are taken for granted, who are used and ignored. Rachel has promised her help, and I'm thankful for it.

Alex affects an almost... wistful look. Jonathan watches in mute horror. What the FUCK is Alex doing?

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

The day we met, Rachel told me she was tired of politics as usual. She said she wanted fire on her team.

Alex looks straight down the barrel of the camera.

ALEX IRVING (CONT'D)

Together, we'll bring some fire.

57 INT. RACHEL'S OFFICE - EVENING

57

Rachel is watching Alex's interview at her desk, on her phone, the same tableaux as when she first discovered Alex.

Rachel sneers at the screen. Marveling at the sheer chutzpah of this play. She's half affectionate when she says--

RACHEL ANDERSON

This bitch.

END OF PILOT