Secretarial Wars
Screenplay by Marla Cukor

Based on the novel "Secretarial Wars" by Linda Gould
EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - ESTABLISHING SHOT

It’s fall in the nation’s capital. Leafless cherry blossoms stand at attention, lining the streets and framing the iconic symbols of the U.S. Government: The Jefferson Memorial, The Lincoln Memorial, The White House.

INT. DUPONT CIRCLE - MORNING

Welcome to the morning rush.

WORKERS, TOURISTS and DIGNITARIES crowd the streets.

A group of TEENS cruise the sidewalk, one has a large boombox on his shoulder.

EXT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Uniformed COPS enter and exit through a door with a sign that reads: “Third District Headquarters”.

INT. JAIL CELL - MORNING

Inside a grungy cell, THREE WOMEN sit squashed together.

MIRIAM COOPER, 27, wears a black cocktail dress and ripped nylons. Her face is smeared with makeup and her hair looks like it lost a fight with a blender.

JOCELYN JONES, 24, wears a tight red dress, and sports a Pat Benatar-style hairdo. One red stiletto dangles from her toes.

CASS PALEY, 35, is clad in a Redskins’ football jersey and an old pair of Wranglers. She snores loudly with her mouth open.

A DETECTIVE walks over to the women, opens the cage.

MINUTES LATER

Miriam stands at his same detective’s desk, a rotary phone in her hand. Behind her on the wall, a calendar reads, “1983”.

The phone RINGS in her ear.

INTERCUT WITH
INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - MORNING

A drab workplace filled with fluorescent lights, microwave-sized desktop computers, and incessantly RINGING phones.

FEMALE SECRETARIES populate this land - most have teased-out hair, neon accessories, and suits sewn with linebacker-issue shoulder pads.

We go in close on an EMPTY desk. Photos of Miriam and her two jailbird friends, in happier times, are posted here.

POLICE STATION

The detective, impatient, taps his foot. Miriam has the phone pressed against her ear, it’s still RINGING.

INT. BROADWATER’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ELAINE BROADWATER, 60’s, a tall, dog-faced woman with a sharp symmetrical hairdo and a pair of ever-present bifocals, yanks the receiver to her ear.

    BROADWATER
    Broadwater, here.

    MIRIAM
    Uh... Ms. Broadwater?

    BROADWATER
    Who is this?

    MIRIAM
    It’s Miriam.

Broadwater peers out through her door at Miriam’s vacant desk.

    BROADWATER
    Miriam? Where are you?

POLICE STATION

As the detective rolls his eyes, and taps his watch, Miriam shifts her body, speaks softly into the phone.

    MIRIAM
    I... uh... I don’t think I’m going to make it in today.

    BROADWATER
    What?
In fact, I’m not sure when I’ll be coming back.

Super: THREE MONTHS EARLIER

INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - MORNING

Miriam, a harried expression, sits at a desk piled high with manila folders.

She’s got a phone crunched between her shoulder and ear, and is rifling through a dozen papers on her lap.

MIRIAM
Okay, found it!

She opens up a file.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
Well? Am I accepted?

Her face falls as she sees the bright red “REJECTED” stamp on the paperwork.

MIRIAM
I’m sorry. We aren’t supposed to reveal anything until the official announcements have been made.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
Listen, lady, I spent four months putting together that application and I demand to know the results.

MIRIAM
I’m really not at liberty to say.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
Fine! Then get your superior on the line.

MIRIAM
She, uh, doesn’t like to be disturbed.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
I pay taxes like anyone else, and I won’t be put off by some goddamn incompetent secretary!

Miriam pauses, takes a deep breath.
JOCELYN (O.S.)
Here, let me.

Jocelyn parks herself on the edge of Miriam’s desk, crosses her miniskirt-clad legs and sticks out her arm—it’s filled with black gummy bracelets that stretch to her elbow. She tries to grab the phone from Miriam—who resists handing it over.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
I can’t believe I’m getting the runaround from some mouthbreather! Now are you gonna let me speak to your higher-up or not?

Miriam’s face hardens.

MIRIAM
Just a moment, please.

Miriam cups the phone.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
(whispers to Jocelyn)
I give up.

Jocelyn takes the phone, looks over her shoulder towards Broadwater’s office—making sure the coast is clear—then drops her voice a few octaves.

JOCELYN
Deputy Director Broadwater, here.

Miriam also glances towards Broadwater’s direction and locks eyes with Cass, who sits at a place of honor—the desk in front of Broadwater’s private office.

Cass silently mouths, “What’s going on?”

WHITTLE (O.S.)
Finally!

JOCELYN
How may I help you?

WHITTLE (O.S.)
I demand to know the results of my application!

JOCELYN
So, you’re asking if you’ve been awarded a grant?
WHITTLE
No. I’m asking if the Redskins are gonna be in the Superbowl.

Jocelyn looks to Miriam for an answer -- Miriam points to the overflowing “REJECTEES” bin on her desk. The answer's a big, fat no.

Miriam hands her Whittle’s grant application.

JOCELYN
Why yes, I see your application right here, Ms....

WHITTLE (O.S.)
Professor. Professor Pam Whittle.

JOCELYN
Hmmm. I see you’ve got some glowing letters of recommendation. An impassioned statement of purpose. A heartfelt essay on personal goals.

Miriam stifles a giggle.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
Lots of big words and fancy fonts.

Behind Jocelyn, Broadwater approaches.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
Unfortunately, as director of this program, I have to make some hard decisions about who gets accepted.

Broadwater is now RIGHT BEHIND Jocelyn.

Miriam’s eyes register “danger!” Jocelyn doesn’t get the message.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
I’ve heard all about the ‘hard decisions’ this agency makes. They involve ‘hard cash,’ do they not!

JOCELYN
Look, Professor. I’m a very busy woman. I’ve got an entire staff to terrorize. I can’t respond to your slander.

Jocelyn, ever-so proud of herself, smiles. Miriam drops her head into her hands.
JOCELYN (CONT'D)
If you’ve got problems with how I run this agency, take it up with my boss. He lives on Pennsylvania Avenue. Big white house on the right. You can’t miss it.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
I am not done with you, Broadwater!

Just then, Broadwater taps Jocelyn on the shoulder.

JOCELYN
(into phone)
Uh. I have to go.

Jocelyn, with a tiny shrug, hands Miriam back her phone.

BROADWATER
My office. Now.

The entire place quiets as Jocelyn follows Broadwater -- it’s the ultimate walk of shame.

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - DAY

Jocelyn, Miriam and Cass are seated at a table inside this smoky, dark and dank watering hole. The place is mostly empty, save a few craggy-faced DRUNKS at the bar.

The walls are decorated with black-and-white photos of rock star NICK NICHOLS, and his band NICHOLS, POWERS AND JUDD, playing gigs on stage way-back-when at the Krammerkeller.

An old photo of Nick and Jocelyn -- her years younger with sky-high hair and thick rings of eyeliner framing her eyes -- hangs on the wall behind where Jocelyn is seated.

Miriam and Cass each have a hamburger, chips and beer in front of them. Jocelyn has a glass of wine. She picks chips off of Miriam’s plate and eats them one by one.

Above the counter, a muted TV broadcasts "PUCK'S WATER COOLER" a cheesy cable-access sports commentary show.

MIRIAM
I feel like it’s all my fault.

JOCELYN
Well it is.

MIRIAM
What?
JOCELYN
If you hadn’t handed me the phone,
I wouldn’t have gone there.

CASS
Don’t blame Miriam. You dug your
own grave.

JOCELYN
Whatever.

Jocelyn downs her beer, holds it up towards the bartender,
HEINZ KRAMMERKELLER, 30’s, his sexy smile leaves them all
swooning.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
Filler up, baby.

Heinz refills Jocelyn’s mug, gives her a kiss on the lips.

CASS
So what are you gonna do now?

MIRIAM
She isn’t going to do anything
because right after lunch I’m
marching into Broadwater’s office,
and telling her the truth.

Miriam swigs her brew, turns to Jocelyn.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
It is my fault you got fired.

JOCELYN
Why do you always have to be such a
friggin’ martyr.

MIRIAM
What?

JOCELYN
That job was bogus. And you know
what, that raging reject was right.

MIRIAM
Right about what?

JOCELYN
Oh, come on. Don’t pretend.

MIRIAM
(to Cass)
What is she talking about?
Cass shrugs. Jocelyn digs into her burger.

**JOCELYN**
The two of you, really? No clue?
UGH!

Jocelyn makes a WRETCHING SOUND, spits out her burger.

**JOCELYN (CONT'D)**
(yells to bar)
Heinz? What’s up with these burgers? The cook get deported again?

Heinz holds his spatula up, confused.

**HEINZ**
I made them myself.

**MIRIAM**
Mine taste fine.

**CASS**
Mine too.

Jocelyn pulls out a cigarette pack, takes out a joint. Cass and Miriam give her a curious look.

**JOCELYN**
It’s medicinal. To settle my stomach.

She sparks up her joint, takes a deep hit.

**JOCELYN (CONT’D)**
So as I was saying, every year the Peace Council doles out a select few teaching and research grants, but thousands of applicants get the big old heave ho.

**MIRIAM**
And?

**JOCELYN**
And haven’t you drones ever noticed that the most qualified candidates never win.

**MIRIAM**
Win what?

**JOCELYN**
The grant. Jesus!
MIRIAM
Well, that’s because there’s a lot of other qualifying factors.

JOCELYN
Right. A lot of them. Maybe even...
(beat)
...millions of them.

CASS
You’re nuts. I’ve been there twelve years, if there was weirdness going on, I’d know about it.

JOCELYN
Please. You’re so far up Broadwater’s ass, you wouldn’t know weirdness unless it was written on toilet paper and printed in triplicate.

MIRIAM
Hey! Just because you lost your job, don’t take it out on Cass because she’s good at hers.

JOCELYN
Whatever. I’m over it. I’ve already got a new gig.

MIRIAM
But you’ve only been unemployed for, like, an hour?

Jocelyn smiles at Heinz, he grins back at her.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
Heinz wants me to manage this place. Book the bands and stuff.

Miriam and Cass share a knowing look.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
I know what you’re thinking and you’re both totally wrong.

CASS
Really? So this isn’t a ploy to get your old boyfriend back?

Cass stares at the picture of Nick on the wall, Jocelyn turns and acknowledges the old photo with a sly smile.
JOCELYN
Well, I am going to get Nick and his band to play here.

MIRIAM
Totally wrong, huh?

JOCELYN
But it was Heinz’ idea.

Miriam and Jocelyn give each other another loaded look.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
Heinz wants to update this place. Make it young and hip. He’s hosting some mayoral fund-raiser here, and guess who’s running the whole thing?

CASS
Not you, I hope.

JOCELYN
Yes me.

CASS
Who’s the candidate?

JOCELYN
I don’t know.

MIRIAM
Why would anyone have a fund raiser here? They want the drunk vote?

JOCELYN
See, that’s your problem, Miriam. You don’t think big. This is why you sit around talking about being some hotshot reporter one day but you never do anything about it.

Jocelyn takes a giant puff of her joint.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
We only go around once, girls.

Cass checks her watch, it has a Redskins’ logo.

CASS
Hey Heinz, turn up the TV, will ya?

Heinz aims the remote at the TV, sportscaster PUCK CAVANAUGH’S deep voice suddenly fills the bar.
On the TV:

A low-rent version of Howard Cosell, PUCK CAVANAUGH, 40’s, sits behind a news anchor’s desk while FOOTBALL GAME highlights play on a video screen behind him.

PUCK
It’s time for today’s drawing.
Winner gets an exclusive V-I-P.
lunch with Redskins wide-receiver
Larry Longford at the Palm Tree
restaurant in downtown D.C.

Behind Puck, a photo of a a blond man with a goofy grin
wearing a Redskins football jersey flashes on screen. This is
LARRY LONGFORD, 30’s.

Puck blows an AIRHORN, it signals a GIRL in a bikini to
emerge, she wheels out a bingo-cage filled with hundreds of
entry forms.

PUCK (CONT’D)
And the winner is...

LATER

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Cass, wearing a Redskins bomber jacket, slowly shuffles down
the street. Miriam walks beside her.

CASS
Three hundred ballots! I stayed up
all night filling them out.

MIRIAM
I’m sorry, Cass. Maybe next time.

On a brick wall behind them, they pass dozens of posters
featuring the smiling, slick image of politician LOUIS
PALMER, 40’s. The posters read: “VOTE FOR A CHANGE! PALMER
FOR MAYOR”.

CASS
Larry never does promotional stuff.
This was a fluke.

MIRIAM
Why do you want to meet him anyway?
Don’t you read what they write
about him? How many wives has he
had so far? Five? Six?
CASS
Three. And those women didn’t get him. Not like I do.

MIRIAM
You don’t even know him.

CASS
Immaterial.

MIRIAM
And how many DWI’s? Arrests?

CASS
I never said he was a saint. But the way he catches a ball, it’s a thing of beauty.

Cass looks off in the distance, lost in her own world.

Miriam stares in the window of an elegant restaurant called, “The Palms”.

Inside the eatery, Miriam ZEROS in on a couple in power suits: JEFF MCDANIELS, 30’s, sits across from CELIA MCDANIELS, a supermodel-esque, stunningly tall, thin blonde.

CASS (CONT’D)
Hey, isn’t that Jeff?

MIRIAM
(casual)
Oh, do you see Jeff? Oh, there he is.

CASS
He still at the National Archives?

MIRIAM
I guess.

CASS
You don’t see him anymore?

MIRIAM
We occasionally bump into each other.

CASS
Who’s the slut?

MIRIAM
His new wife.
Uh-oh. Cass tries to backtrack.

CASS
Did you see her eyebrows? Hello, it’s called a tweezer.

MIRIAM
Nice try. Let’s go.

The women pick up the pace, stopping only when a HOMELESS GUY handing out newspapers gives Miriam a paper called THE WASHINGTON INSIDER.

Miriam opens the paper, turns to the first page and focuses on a column marked “Editor’s Corner.” On the photo accompanying the story, the dark, probing, eyes of CALVIN MARTINEZ, 45, stare back at her.

CASS
I’ve never seen anyone so obsessed with free newspaper editorials.

MIRIAM
Just because it’s free doesn’t mean it’s not valid. Calvin Martinez is an agitator.

CASS
He’s a broke-ass fool. He can’t even get advertisers for his rag.

MIRIAM
That’s because he writes the truth, stuff corporate America won’t touch with a ten foot pole.

CASS
Right. That’s why you’re so interested in him. Cause he’s an agitator.

MIRIAM
I’m not like you, Cass. I know the difference between admiring someone for their work, and stalking them because they can throw a ball across a field.

They stop at a bank. Cass pulls a large envelope out of her bag.

CASS
Just be a minute. Have to do the queen’s bidding.
As Cass goes into a nearby bank, Miriam leans against the outside wall, reads the free paper. She focuses intently on Calvin’s photo.

INT. ELEVATOR - PEACE COUNCIL BUILDING - DAY

As soon as the doors slide shut, Miriam and Cass perform their daily after-lunch ritual: They douse themselves with perfume, spray breath freshener into their mouths, then, tease their hair with picks and hair spray.

MIRIAM
You think she’s right?

CASS
Who?

MIRIAM
Josh. About... you know.

Miriam looks up at the security camera in the elevator.

CASS
Broadwater may be a lot of things, but she’s not a thief.

MIRIAM
I wasn’t talking about that. (beat)
She said I have no ambition.

CASS
Don’t let her get to you.

MIRIAM
That’s not what I asked.

Cass shuffles uncomfortably, looks at the numbers on the panel.

CASS
I don’t know. I mean, everyone talks about what they’d like to do. It doesn’t make you a bad person.

MIRIAM
So you agree with her?

Cass shrugs.
CASS
As long as I know you, you’ve been talking about how you’re gonna write some amazing exposé someday and get a job as an investigative reporter at The Post. But, I’ve never seen you do anything about it.

MIRIAM
Like what?

CASS
I don’t know. Write stuff.

MIRIAM
I don’t have anything to write about.

CASS
I’m not telling you what to do. I’m just-

The doors slide open.

Broadwater is there, a carton full of files in her arms, a sour look on her face.

BROADWATER
You’re late.

She hands Cass her carton.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
You get to the bank?

Cass nods.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Chop-chop.

Miriam watches as Cass disappears with Broadwater.

INT. THE PEACE COUNCIL OFFICE - DAY

Miriam sits down at her desk, her phone rings.

MIRIAM
Peace Council, can I help you?

WHITTLE (O.S.)
This is Professor Pam Whittle. I’m calling about my grant application.
MIRIAM
Yes, we spoke earlier.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
And?

MIRIAM
And I’d like to help you, but I’m not the one who makes these decisions, it’s my boss.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
The one I spoke to earlier?

Miriam pauses.

MIRIAM
How about this. I’ll take down all your information, and I’ll speak with Broadwater, personally, about your application.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
Fine. My contact info is on the grant app. Thank you young lady, what did you say your name was?

CUT TO:

INT. MIRIAM’S BEDROOM – NIGHT

JEFF (O.S.)
MIRIAM!

It’s dark in here. Two people are on the bed, going at it.

JEFF (CONT’D)
Miriam!!! Agh..!

With a tiny primal Scream, Jeff gives one last thrust, then rolls over.

JEFF (CONT’D)
God, I needed that.

Miriam switches on the bedside light. Jeff sits up. Miriam’s staring up at the ceiling.

JEFF (CONT’D)
You okay?

She slips on a sweatshirt, nods.
MIRIAM
We can’t keep doing this.

EXT. FIFTEENTH STREET - DAY

Miriam walks past a towering building - a sign on the door reads: “WASHINGTON POST”.

She stops at the door, stares ruefully at it.

INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - MORNING

Standing at Broadwater’s door, Miriam musters her courage. KNOCKS.

BROADWATER (O.S.)
Come in.

INT. BROADWATER’S OFFICE - CONT.

Broadwater goes to a locked cabinet, takes out a key that she wears on a chain around her neck, and opens the file cabinet using the key.

MIRIAM
Um... there’s this applicant.

Broadwater sits down.

BROADWATER
Yes?

MIRIAM
She keeps calling.

BROADWATER
And...?

MIRIAM
She’s been rejected. She wants to know why.

Broadwater looks up, takes her bifocals off, tosses an icy stare in Miriam’s direction.

BROADWATER
Well, obviously she wasn’t up to par.
MIRIAM
I understand, but, what do I tell her? From the looks of her application, she-

BROADWATER
Miriam, refresh my memory. Who’s name is on the door?

MIRIAM
Yours.

BROADWATER
And who’s the secretary here?

MIRIAM
I am.

BROADWATER
Excellent. So listen carefully. Your job isn’t to worry about who gets chosen for our grants.

MIRIAM
Yes, ma’am.

BROADWATER
Your job, is to type the letters, file the files, and generally speaking, keep things organized. Are we clear?

Humiliated, Miriam drops her head.

MIRIAM
Crystal.

BROADWATER
If she calls again, transfer her to my office.

Miriam hurries out. Cass, seeing the distress on Miriam’s face, follows her friend into the...

INT. BATHROOM - PEACE COUNCIL - DAY

Miriam splashes water on her face as Cass enters.

CASS
You okay?

Miriam blows her nose.
CASS (CONT’D)
What happened in there?

MIRIAM
Nothing.

CASS
Come on. What’s wrong?

MIRIAM
I went to college, you know! I graduated with honors!

CASS
What?

MIRIAM
This wasn’t supposed to be a life sentence. I’m not supposed to be a goddamned secretary my whole life.

CASS
(insulted)
Well, sorry.

MIRIAM
I didn’t mean it like that. It’s just, I can’t stop thinking about what Jocelyn said. How I’m all talk and no action.

CASS
I don’t think she used those words. And besides, she was stoned out of her mind. She’s not like, Ghandi.

MIRIAM
Yeah. I got that.

CASS
Look, if it means anything. There’s a grade seven slot opening. It’s still administrative, but on a managerial track. Program Assistant to the Russian director.

MIRIAM
I love the cold war!

CASS
And there’s a good pay bump.

MIRIAM
Why are you telling me this?
CASS
Broadwater had me do a short-list of candidates. I put your name on it.

Miriam hugs her friend.

MIRIAM
What would I do without you?

CASS
Be sober more often? Speaking of, don’t forget about the game tonight.

MIRIAM
I won’t. Go ‘skins.

Cass smiles.

CASS
That’s the spirit. Wear red.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

Jocelyn wears a tight dress and heels, Miriam a black jacket, and Cass is draped in head to toe Redskins gear. Holding beers and popcorn, the three women find their seats in the nosebleed section.

JOCELYN
I think I’m going to throw up.

CASS
Calm down. These seats are boss! Look, we’ve got a perfect view of the 30 yard line.

Jocelyn sparks up a fat doobie. Cass gives her a look.

JOCELYN
What? My feet hurt.

CASS
Who wears heels to a football game? Put that out will you, there’s security everywhere.

Jocelyn kills her joint with her fingers.

JOCELYN
Stop spaszing. Look!

She points.
JOCELYN (CONT'D)
There’s your boyfriend.

Cass lifts her binoculars, zeros in on LARRY LONGFORD as he runs out on the field, and raises his fists towards the stadium. His presence elicits a mixed bag of BOOS and CHEERS.

Miriam, stares off in the distance. Jocelyn elbows her.

JOCELYN (CONT'D)
You’re a real chatterbox.
Wassamatter, Jeff keep you up all night?

CASS
Jeff?

Alarmed, Cass looks at Miriam.

CASS (CONT'D)
I thought you ended that?

MIRIAM
I did. But we started it up again.

Behind them, a group of drunken, LOUDMOUTH fans shout:

LOUDMOUTH FAN
Longford, you goddamn bum! Put us out of our misery and get the hell off the field!

CASS
Hey, watch your mouth, there’s kids here!

LOUDMOUTH FAN
What are you, his fan club president? They need to retire his ass and let Spencer take over.

CASS
So you’re blind and stupid! He had no protection. He had to rush the play!

LOUDMOUTH FAN
Rush the play! He was asleep at the wheel!

Cass stands, faces the men.

CASS
You guys need to shut up.
LOUDMOUTH
Yo, who the hell do you think you are?

Cass, infuriated, tosses her beer at the men.

CASS
As it turns out. I’m Longford’s number-one fan.

The Loudmouth is shocked. Cass looks down, sees SECURITY GUARDS headed up the stairs towards them.

MIRIAM
Great job, Cass.

PUCK (O.S.)
Hold on!

Puck Cavagaugh, who is sitting in the stands a few seats up, stands and rushes over before security can get there.

PUCK (CONT’D)
I like your style, what’s your name, kid?

Miriam and Jocelyn, surprised, turn to see he’s talking to Cass.

CASS
None of your damn business.

PUCK
Fiesty! Too bad you’re rooting for the wrong wide receiver.

CASS
What? Nine championship games, one Superbowl, and a cumulative game average of 390 completed plays, says you’re full of crap.

SECURITY has arrived.

LOUDMOUTH FAN
Look what this crazy bitch did to me!

PUCK
Look lady, I’m always looking for ways to jazz up The Cooler. How about you come on, do some color commentary for the show?
Cass stares at Puck, has no clue who he is.

MIRIAM
Oh my god! It’s him, the guy from that show you always make us watch.

He offers his hand to Cass.

PUCK
Puck Cavanaugh. So what do you say?

CASS
Sorry. I don’t do cable access.

JOCELYN
(wispers)
Cass, think of all the hot guys. You’ll meet.

PUCK
Wear something low cut.

He holds out his card, Cass turns away. Jocelyn snaps it up.

JOCELYN
We’ll be in touch.

EXT. STADIUM – NIGHT

The guards drag Cass, Miriam and Jocelyn out of the game.

JOCELYN
Where to now?

CASS
Let’s go get hammered. We can catch the last half at the bar.

JOCELYN
Cool.

CASS
You coming?

MIRIAM
Nah, I’m beat.

Miriam eyes a “WASHINGTON INSIDER” paper kiosk.

CASS
See you manana.
Cass and Jocelyn head off. Miriam takes the paper.

INT. MIRIAM’S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Miriam stares at the picture of Calvin. Eyeballs a caption. “EXPOSE’S WANTED”.

    MIRIAM
    (reads)
    Expose’s wanted...

There’s a KNOCK. She opens the door – it’s Jeff. He’s wearing a suit and tie, has a six-pack in his hand.

    JEFF
    You ready for some football?

    MIRIAM
    I told you I was busy tonight.

    JEFF
    I can see that.

He glances in the kitchen, notices a glass of wine and a half-eaten Lean Cuisine on the table.

    MIRIAM
    We got kicked out of the game.

    JEFF
    Again?

He reaches around, hands her a dozen red roses.

    JEFF (CONT’D)
    I saw these on the street, thought of you.

    MIRIAM
    Thorny?

    JEFF
    Beautiful. Can I...

She opens the door. Lets him in.

Without any hesitation, he takes a wine glass from the cabinet, pours himself a glass of wine, refills her glass.

    JEFF (CONT’D)
    You always did like the cheap stuff.
MIRIAM
What do you want, Jeff?

JEFF
I think Celia knows.

MIRIAM
Knows what?

He just stares at her, waits until it sticks.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Oh.

JEFF
I felt like I should tell you. She’s from the south and all.

MIRIAM
So?

JEFF
So, she’s been firing guns and hunting since she was old enough to walk.

MIRIAM
I’m not scared of her, Jeff. But, we have to end this. For real.

JEFF
Okay. You’re right.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRIAM’S BEDROOM – NIGHT

They’ve just finished making love. Naked, they lie in bed, the sheets pressed under their arms.

MIRIAM
Now. We’re really finished.

JEFF
Right.

He gets up, starts getting dressed.

MIRIAM
Jeff, what do you know about the Peace Council?
JEFF
What do you mean?

MIRIAM
What do people say about it? At the Archives?

He sits on the bed, slips on his socks.

JEFF
A while back. Years ago. I heard some rumors.

MIRIAM
What kind of rumors?

JEFF
Crazy stuff.

MIRIAM
Like?

JEFF
Like that the grantees were really CIA operatives being trained to infiltrate hostile governments under the guise of peace.

MIRIAM
You’re kidding, right?

JEFF
That’s why I never told you. It’s too crazy. But recently, there’s been more rumors.

MIRIAM
More?

JEFF
Pay to play.

MIRIAM
Like, bribery? Are you sure?

JEFF
All I know is that these grants are considered pretty plum gigs.

MIRIAM
So?
JEFF
So, it wouldn’t be the first time some mid-level bureaucrat pocketed a little chump change in exchange for doling out a juicy appointment.

MIRIAM
Why didn’t you ever tell me any of this before?

JEFF
One, because I don’t know if any of it is true. And two, because sometimes in Washington, things are the way they are.

MIRIAM
No, Jeff. That’s not right.

JEFF
Maybe not right. But that’s life.

He’s all dressed now.

JEFF (CONT’D)
I gotta fly.

She walks him to the door. Hands him back his roses.

MIRIAM
Make peace with your wife. Tell her it’s over. Cause it is.

He takes the flowers, kisses Miriam on the forehead.

JEFF
Monday night football won’t be the same without you.

EXT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES – MORNING

Miriam is about to enter when she spots PROFESSOR PAM WHITTLE, 50’s, outside the building. She has a crazy bee’s nest of curly red hair, and wears a large moo-moo.

MIRIAM
Professor Whittle?

WHITTLE
How did you....?
MIRIAM
I recognized you from the picture on your application.

She holds out her hand to Miriam.

WHITTLE
You must be Miriam.

She stares at Miriam.

WHITTLE (CONT’D)
Not quite as pretty as I’d pictured. Little older, too. I told you I’d come for answers.

Miriam looks down.

WHITTLE (CONT’D)
I’ve been rejected haven’t I?

Miriam hedges.

WHITTLE (CONT’D)
Come on, I can take it.

Miriam can’t look Whittle in the eyes.

MIRIAM
I’m sorry.

WHITTLE
So that’s it? The great Oz has spoken?

MIRIAM
You can always file a complaint through your congressman.

WHITTLE
That’s your best answer?

MIRIAM
There’s really nothing I can do. I’m just a secretary.

WHITTLE
There’s no such thing as ‘just a secretary,’ Miriam. There’s people who effect change in this world, and people who let life walk all over them.

Miriam goes to leave. Whittle grabs her arm.
WHITTLE (CONT'D)
You’d tell me, right Miriam? If you suspected things weren’t on the up and up.

Miriam yanks her hand free.

MIRIAM
I have to go.

WHITTLE
Here.

She offers Miriam a business card. Miriam snips it away, drops it into her bag.

INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - MORNING

Still rattled from their conversation, Miriam is in a daze as she exits the elevator, Cass nearly tackles her.

CASS
Great news!

MIRIAM
What!

CASS
Broadwater wants to meet with you!

MIRIAM
Really?

CASS
I bet it’s about the job!

MIRIAM
No way!

Miriam hugs her friend. Cass steps into the elevator.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Where you going?

CASS
Lunch date.

MIRIAM
It’s only ten o’clock?

CASS
I’ll tell you about it later.
Cass blows her friend a kiss as the doors slide shut.

INT. BROADWATER’S OFFICE – LATER

Miriam fiddles nervously in her chair as Broadwater ends a call.

    BROADWATER
    (into phone)
    Fine. I’ll have my secretary arrange the details.

She hangs up the phone. Adjust her glasses, opens a file.

    BROADWATER (CONT’D)
    Well then, Miriam.

Miriam smiles, folds her hands on her lap.

    BROADWATER (CONT’D)
    You’ve been here, what? Three, four years?

    MIRIAM
    Five, actually. I started right out of college. Originally, it was my intention to help put my husband through law school.

    BROADWATER
    Right. And how’d that work out?

    MIRIAM
    Well, he graduated. He’s over at the National Archives now.

    BROADWATER
    I see.

    MIRIAM
    We’re no longer together. But it was for the best.

Miriam smiles brightly – too brightly – refolds her hands neatly across her lap.

    BROADWATER
    Miriam, do you know why I’ve called you here today?

    MIRIAM
    I have an idea. Cass told me that there is a new job opening and-
BROADWATER
Let me stop you right there. This isn’t about a job opening, Miriam. It’s about your job, and how badly you want to keep it.

MIRIAM
What do you mean?

BROADWATER
I’ve been watching you, Miriam. And I have to say, I am not impressed.

Miriam sits back, shocked.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Your attitude is... at times apathetic, other times, surly. You rarely, if ever, go above and beyond. I can’t remember the last time I saw you here past the stroke of five.

MIRIAM
Well, yes, but...

BROADWATER
You seem to have difficulty completing the simplest of tasks, such as properly screening callers or keeping confidential council business on a need-to-know basis...

MIRIAM
Well, that’s not exactly true-

BROADWATER
But most troubling, Miriam, is your penchant for, how do you call them, liquid lunches. You can’t really think that dousing yourself in Lysol and Binaca can disguise the fact that you smell like a brewery when you return from your break.

Deflated, Miriam slumps in her chair.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
As I’m sure you know, these are not the kind of qualities we look for in our secretaries here at The Peace Council.
Broadwater takes off her glasses, peers deeply at Miriam with a dark grimace.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Consider yourself warned.

Miriam exits the room. Her eyes shine with tears as she holds her head high, and makes a b-line for the elevator.

INT. KRAMMERKELLER – DAY

Miriam’s at the bar, she has an untouched burger and chips in front of her. Heinz sets down a beer, she waves it away.

MIRIAM
I’m good with water.

She lifts her water glass.

HEINZ
That’s a first.

She sighs.

HEINZ (CONT’D)
Rough day?

MIRIAM
Something like that. Josh here?

He shakes his head.

HEINZ
She wasn’t feeling good. She went home a while ago.
(beat)
Miriam, you’re her friend, right?

MIRIAM
Yeah?

HEINZ
What am I doing wrong?

MIRIAM
I don’t know, Heinz. Maybe you should ask her yourself.

HEINZ
I have. She never gives me a straight answer.
MIRIAM
Heinz, you want love advice, write
to Dear Abby. I’m a total screw-up
in that department.

HEINZ
Whatever happened between you and
Jeff? Whenever you guys use to hang
here, you seemed happy.

MIRIAM
We were, I guess. It wasn’t like we
divorced because we hated each
other.

HEINZ
So why did you?

MIRIAM
We just bored each other.
She finishes her drink.

HEINZ
Some guys just don’t know how good
they got it till it’s gone.

He flashes his killer smile at her, it unnerves her.

MIRIAM
Hey, can I use your phone?

INT. HEINZ’S OFFICE - DAY
Heinz flips on a light.

HEINZ
Sorry about the mess.

She checks out the room: There’s a desk covered in papers, a
couch covered in beer cartons, and a drum set in the corner.

MIRIAM
Do you still play?

HEINZ
Not so much.

He clears the papers, unearths his phone. She stares at an
old photo of Nick’s band, but in this picture, Heinz is on
the drums. She points to the photo.
MIRIAM
How come you want him back here for the fund-raiser? I mean, from how I heard it - he kind of screwed you, didn’t he?

HEINZ
It’s because I need a big act to bring in the crowds for Palmer.

She gives him a look. That’s bullshit and he knows it.

MIRIAM
All I know is if someone kicked me off the band I helped found, then went on tour and became like a world-famous rock star, I’d be pissed.

Hurt, Heinz looks away.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Sorry. God, I’m a jerk sometimes.

HEINZ
It’s okay. That’s ancient history now.

MIRIAM
So why do you want him to play here?

HEINZ
Josh is still totally hung up on the guy. I’m just hoping that maybe, he’ll come back and she’ll realize what a total ass-hat he is.

He finds the phone, hands it to her.

HEINZ (CONT’D)
I’ll be outside if you need me.

He exits. She dials Whittle’s number from the card in her purse.

MIRIAM
Professor?

WHITTLE
Who is this?
MIRIAM
It’s Miriam. From The Peace Council. Look, I shouldn’t be calling you.

WHITTLE
And yet you are.

MIRIAM
Can you meet me tonight?

MINUTES LATER

Back at the bar, Miriam picks at her chips.

She steals a glimpse at Heinz as he wipes dishes behind the bar, a BLONDE BIMBO flirts unsuccessfully with him.

Miriam’s eyes are suddenly drawn to the TV above the bar. Puck’s show is on, but today there’s someone sitting next to him - IT’S CASS. Miriam leans in, flabbergasted.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Heinz! Check this out!

Heinz comes over, raises the volume.

On the TV:

PUCK
I’d like to introduce today’s hottie of the week, football groupie Cass Paley. So tell me, what are the best dressed gals in town wearing to football games this season?

Cass looks at Puck - ready to kill - them composes herself.

CASS
I couldn’t tell you. But I’ll tell you what the smartest gals who watch football are thinking. Let’s talk about last night’s game. I’m gonna go out on a limb and say it, Longford had nothing to work with.

Heinz stares at Miriam, who just shrugs, speechless.

PUCK
Nothing to work with! Jesus, lady. That guy’s had his bell rung so many times he don’t know which way is up!
CASS
Did you watch the same game I did?
Longford ate yardage like it was a
turkey dinner.

PUCK
You mean he dropped passes like
they were a bad habit!

Puck puts his hand to his ear.

PUCK (CONT’D)
We’ll be right back, folks.

The show cuts to a commercial.

HEINZ
What was that?

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - NIGHT

The place is packed. A painfully bad HAIR BAND plays in the
B.G. on the venue’s tiny stage. Miriam shares a table with
Jocelyn and Cass - watches the door.

Jocelyn takes a sip of her beer - makes a sour face.

JOCELYN
Ugh! It’s flat... Heinz, the beer
tastes like shit.

CASS
It always tastes like shit. That’s
why we drink it.

Miriam’s spots Whittle strolling through the door.

MIRIAM
I’ll be right back.

The professor waddles over to the bar.

WHITTLE
Bourbon on the rocks. With a twist.

Heinz gives her a drink as Miriam sits down.

MIRIAM
Thanks for coming.

WHITTLE
You’ve got five minutes.
MIRIAM
What?

WHITTLER I’ve got papers to grade.

Whittle opens her bag, takes out a medicine vial and pops a pill in her mouth.

WHITTLER (CONT’D)
You want one? It’s just a val. Keeps me calm.

Miriam shakes her head.

MIRIAM 
I think you’re right. There is something going on at The Peace Council.

WHITTLER 
Well, no shit, Sherlock. What other revelations have you unraveled? Washington is corrupt? Politician’s lie?

Whittle downs her drink. Gets up.

WHITTLER (CONT’D)
Jesus, this wasn’t even worth the cab fare.

MIRIAM 
You’re leaving?

WHITTLER
What? You want to play footsies under the table?

MIRIAM
But! I thought...

WHITTLER
Look, kid. The fact that the Peace Council is merely a front for some high-level money grab is the worst kept secret in town. But unless someone on the inside has the balls to do something about it – nothing’s going to change.

She picks up her purse, heads out the door. Miriam follows.
EXT. KRAMMERKELLER - CONTINUOUS

MIRIAM
I do want to do something. I just don’t know how.

WHITTLE
Start with your attitude. And your hair. That look is not working for you.

Whittle hails a cab. Miriam is momentarily stunned.

MIRIAM
(to herself)
But I just got a new perm.

Miriam runs her fingers through her hair, turns, a cab rushes by and COVERS HER IN MUD.

She cries out, turns and BUMPS into someone.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Sorry. I’ve gotten you full of mud.

She looks up. Can’t believe her eyes: It’s CALVIN MARTINEZ.

CALVIN
No problem. I enjoy a good mud bath every now and again.

He smiles at her and she’s taken aback.

MIRIAM
You’re... Calvin Martinez, right?

His dark eyes sparkle back at her.

CALVIN
Well this isn’t fair. You know my name, but I don’t know yours.

She sticks her hand out, smiles flirtatiously.

MIRIAM
Miriam Cooper.

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - LATER

It’s late. The band is long gone and the place is practically empty. Near the jukebox, Miriam and Calvin sit at a private table covered in glasses - a nearly empty bottle of Jack Daniels between them.
Heinz comes over – he shoots Calvin a not-so-friendly look – empties the last of the whiskey into their shot glasses.

Miriam giggles like a school girl, holds up her shot glass and tosses back the firewater.

MIRIAM
All my life, I’ve been dreaming of doing what you do. Righting wrongs, exposing corruption, and here I am, all this going on right under my nose and I’m too chicken shit to do anything about it.

CALVIN
What are you talking about?

She leans in, looks over her shoulder, tries to focus on Calvin’s blurry smile.

MIRIAM
The Peace Council. It’s a sham.

CALVIN
How so?

MIRIAM

CALVIN
You don’t say.

MIRIAM
I shouldn’t be telling you all this. But I’m pretty sure it goes all the way up to the top.

CALVIN
The top?

MIRIAM
Yes. The top.

Bingo! His eyes spark with interest.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
I’d like to do something about it. But, what? I mean, I’m just an ordinary secretary.

He puts his hand under her chin, looks deep into her eyes.
CALVIN
Miriam, you are anything but ordinary.

MIRIAM
You think so?

CALVIN
What they’re banking on, is that you’re just going to be one of their good little worker bees, totally incapable of any kind of analytical thought. But I have a feeling about you. You’re different.

She leans back, loses her balance, falls over. Heinz rushes over. He helps pick her up.

HEINZ
Miriam, you want me to get you a cab home?

Calvin stands.

CALVIN
I can give her a lift.

MIRIAM
No, I’m okay.

She stands, steadies herself on the table.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
I’m good. See?

She tries to walk, stumbles again into Calvin’s arms.

HEINZ
I think you should call it a night.

She straightens up.

MIRIAM
I’m a big girl. I’ll call it a night when I’m ready. (to Calvin)
I’m ready.

EXT. KRAMMERKELLER - NIGHT

Miriam stands against a cab, Calvin leans in towards her.
CALVIN
I’d like to discuss this some more.

She closes her eyes -- waits for the inevitable kiss. He bends in -- but instead of a kiss, he presses a card into her hand.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
Call me.

INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - MORNING

Miriam, in dark sunglasses, and barely able to function, winces in hangover-agony as her intercom BUZZES.

Her voice is gravely and hoarse at the same time.

MIRIAM
Hello?

BROADWATER (O.S.)
I’d like to see you in my office.

MIRIAM
(mutters)
Of course you would.

BROADWATER (O.S.)
What’s that?

MIRIAM
Be right there.

INT. BROADWATER’S OFFICE - DAY

As Miriam sits down, Broadwater snaps at her.

BROADWATER
Take those off.

Miriam obediently removes her shades, revealing bleary-eyed peepers.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Cass just called. She has a family emergency and has to fly home to Utah.

Miriam’s eyes open in surprise.

MIRIAM
Utah?
Broadwater gets up, takes her key, opens the locked cabinet.

    BROADWATER
    I have no idea how long she’ll be gone, so I’ll need you to put together a list of temporary replacements.

Miriam steals a peak at the WASHINGTON INSIDER she has hidden on her lap.

    MIRIAM
    I could do it.

    BROADWATER
    You?

    MIRIAM
    Why not? I’m good at dictation and great with a steno pad.

    BROADWATER
    This job requires a fair amount of writing.

    MIRIAM
    That’s perfect! In college, I was the editor-in-chief of the school paper. I have a shelf full of awards.

Broadwater thinks this over. She picks up a bin filled with files stamped CONFIDENTIAL, pushes them towards Miriam.

    BROADWATER
    I’ll need a dozen rejections typed before noon.

Broadwater pushes a second box of folders at her.

    BROADWATER (CONT’D)
    These need to copied and ready for my signature by end of day.

    MIRIAM
    Okay.

    BROADWATER
    I’ll also need you to set up a luncheon for the latest grant recipients. Can you handle that?

    MIRIAM
    No problem.
BROADWATER
This is only temporary, Miriam. One screw up, and it’s back to the main floor.

MIRIAM
I’ll take care of it.

Miriam goes to take the files, she accidentally knocks them over, along with Broadwater’s coffee cup.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Sorry.

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - DAY
Miriam, wearing her sunglasses, and Jocelyn are at the bar.

JOCELYN
Family emergency! What kind of bullshit is that?

MIRIAM
Where’d she get Utah? She’s from Jersey.

JOCELYN
Did you try calling?

MIRIAM
A thousand times. You?

JOCELYN
Same.

Heinz puts on the TV. Cass is back on the Puck Cavanaugh show. The two of them are going at it, again.

On the TV:

PUCK
Longford’s a punk! If I was running the shots over there, he’d of been benched five seasons ago...

CASS
If you were running the shots, they’d have the worst running game since the seventy-nine season.

PUCK
What are you talking about? That was a classic year.
CASS
Are you nuts?

Jocelyn and Miriam gaze at the screen as Cass and Puck continue throwing barbs at each other.

JOCELYN
Those two need to have sex and get it over with.

MIRIAM
I can’t believe she thinks she can get away with this.

JOCELYN
Why wouldn’t she? It’s not like Broadwater is ever gonna watch some backwater cable sports show.

Heinz comes over.

HEINZ
You guys want drinks?

Miriam groans.

MIRIAM
I’m never drinking again.

Heinz taps a copy of THE WASHINGTON INSIDER that’s on the bar.

HEINZ
What’s up with you and that leech?

MIRIAM
Calvin happens to be a great guy.

HEINZ
He’s total user. Always shows up with a different skank on his arm. Never leaves a decent tip.

MIRIAM
He’s a struggling journalist. He’s taken a vow of poverty to right the wrongs.

HEINZ
Well I don’t the trust the guy.

She shoots him a look.
MIRIAM
How’s it any of your business who I date, anyway?

A DELIVERY GUY walks in pushing a hand truck filled with beer cartons, Heinz excuses himself.

JOCELYN
So?

MIRIAM
So, what?

JOCELYN
I left at one and you and your Latin boy toy were still hot and heavy in the corner. Tell me all the sordid details.

MIRIAM
Nothing happened. He gave me his card, said to call him.

JOCELYN
Did you?

Miriam shakes her head.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
What are you waiting for? If Nick called me, I’d show up naked with a bag of chips.

MIRIAM
I was drunk. I have no idea what I even told him.

JOCELYN
No offense, Miriam, but sometimes you’re a lot more fun with a couple of stiff ones in you.

Miffed, Miriam looks off. Jocelyn bends in, whispers.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
I have a problem.

MIRIAM
What’s wrong? Your dealer go on vacation?

Jocelyn looks around, suddenly nervous.
JOCELYN
Not here.

BATHROOM - DAY

Jocelyn leans against the sink.

MIRIAM
Okay, what’s the big secret?

JOCELYN
One second.

Jocelyn rushes into the bathroom, shuts the stall - vomits. A moment later, Jocelyn emerges.

MIRIAM
Is it Heinz’?

JOCELYN
Probably.

MIRIAM
Have you told him?

Jocelyn shakes her head, digs in her cigarette package, lights up a splief. Miriam grabs it and tosses it down the sink before Jocelyn can get a hit off it.

JOCELYN
Hey!

MIRIAM
You can’t do that anymore.

JOCELYN
The moral majority has spoken.

MIRIAM
You didn’t answer me. Have you told him?

JOCELYN
No. And I’m not going to. I’ve got a meeting scheduled next week with Nick. If all goes according to plan - Heinz won’t ever have to know.

MIRIAM
What are you saying? You’re gonna pass off that baby as Nick’s?
JOCELYN
It should be Nick’s. So why shouldn’t I?

MIRIAM
That’s messed up. Even for you.

Miriam storms out of the ladies room.

Heinz turns back to the bathroom, sees Jocelyn exit.

HEINZ
Everything cool? It sounded like someone was getting sick in there.

JOCELYN
You know how it is.

She cocks her head towards Miriam as she heads for the exit.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
Some people simply can’t hold their alcohol.

INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - MORNING

Miriam, now sitting at Cass’ desk, picks up the RINGING PHONE.

MIRIAM
Director’s office.

CALVIN (O.S.)
Miriam?

INTERCUT WITH

INT. CALVIN’S BEDROOM - MORNING

Calvin, shirtless, lies in bed. Smokes a cigarette.

MIRIAM
Yes? Who’s this?

CALVIN
You never called.

MIRIAM
I didn’t know I was supposed to. How did you get this number?
CALVIN
You should know I don’t give up my sources that easily.

She smiles.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
Luckily, there are ways to make me talk.

MIRIAM
Really?

CALVIN
If you meet me for dinner tonight, you might get me to divulge my secrets.

She puts the phone down, lets out a silent scream of happiness.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
How’s eight o’clock sound?

INT. THE PALMS – DAY

Miriam enters the upscale restaurant, the snotty HOSTESS gives her a nasty look.

MIRIAM
I’m meeting a friend here.

HOSTESS
You sure you’re at the right place?

Miriam is about to answer when Cass walks over. Miriam examines her friend with shock – Cass has had a complete makeover. She’s wearing a sexy outfit, has had her hair and makeup professionally done.

MIRIAM
Sorry. I’m supposed to meet my friend Cass here.

Moments later, the two are seated at a table in the back.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
A family emergency? In Utah? Really? That was the best you could come up with?

CASS
Under the circumstances, yes.
A waitress places two large shrimp appetizers in front of them.

MIRIAM
Are you sure about this?

CASS
It’s my treat, dig in.

They start to eat their apps. A nearby DINER comes over.

DINER
Hi. I’m a big fan, would you mind...?

He hands her a napkin, Cass signs it.

MIRIAM
Does that happen a lot?

CASS
It’s starting to.

MIRIAM
So what’s going on with this show?

CASS
The first time I did it, it was sort of a fluke, but then, the numbers went up, and Puck and I sort of hit it off.

MIRIAM
Hit it off? On TV it looks like you want to kill each other.

CASS
We do. The man’s an idiot. Does Broadwater suspect anything?

MIRIAM
Not really. She’s asked me to take over for you. Until you come back. You are coming back, aren’t you?

Cass looks off.

CASS
Oh god.

MIRIAM
What?
Larry Longford has entered the restaurant with two beefy BODYGUARDS. All eyes turn as he struts by like he owns the place.

CASS
What’s he doing here?

MIRIAM
Remember that meet and greet you didn’t win. It was supposed to be here, today.

CASS
What?

MIRIAM
I was hoping we’d run into him. I know how much it’d mean to you.

She looks back at Cass – who’s already lost in a dreamlike fog, staring at Larry.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Well, go say something.

CASS
I couldn’t.

MIRIAM
So you’re just going to stare like some lovesick teenager?

CASS
Yes I am.

Miriam calls the snobby hostess over.

MIRIAM
Send a bottle of your best wine to Mr. Longford’s table. Tell him it’s courtesy of his biggest fan.

Cass opens her mouth to protest.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Don’t worry. It’s on me.

A moment later Larry walks over.

LARRY
I came to thank you for the...

He looks at Cass.
LARRY (CONT’D)
Hey. You’re the chick from Puck’s show.

He takes Cass’ hand, raises it to his lips.

LARRY (CONT’D)
I liked what you said about me the other day.

Cass, completely tongue-tied, can barely stammer out a reply.

MIRIAM
Her name’s Cass.

LARRY
Mind if we join you for lunch, Cass?

MIRIAM
Don’t you have to have lunch with the winner?

LARRY
He can wait.

Just then, the CONTEST WINNER, a nerdy-looking guy in suspenders and floodwater pants, rushes over and slams his menu down in front of Larry.

CONTEST WINNER
This contest was a gyp!

He marches out.

LARRY
Looks like I’m free for lunch.

Larry signals his two bodyguards to join him at the table.

MOMENTS LATER
Miriam is squashed between the bulky bodyguards while Cass and Larry bond over their mutual love... of Larry.

INT. MIRIAM’S BEDROOM - NIGHT
Miriam, dressed in a sexy black cocktail gown, is applying mascara when her doorbell rings.

She opens the door – it’s Jeff. His jaw drops to the ground as he takes in her hotness.
JEFF

Wowsa.

He enters her apartment.

JEFF (CONT’D)

Hot date tonight?

MIRIAM

None of your business. What are you doing here?

JEFF

Celia’s away at a conference. Thought I would stop by.

MIRIAM

Well, I have plans. Besides, I told you, Jeff, we’re done.

JEFF

I know. I know you said that. And we agreed. It’s just...

He sits down.

JEFF (CONT’D)

I miss you.

MIRIAM

Don’t do this. We don’t work as a couple. We never did.

He acknowledges this with a nod. Rises.

JEFF

I did some snooping.

MIRIAM

Snooping?

JEFF

About your boss.

MIRIAM

Really?

JEFF

She had lunch with him on Wednesday.

MIRIAM

With who?
JEFF
Who do you think? The big man.

MIRIAM
Why?

JEFF
There’s definitely something going on over there. Their budget is classified, like seriously, balls out, on a need-to-know basis.

MIRIAM
Thanks for telling me. I’m going to look into it.

JEFF
Just be careful, okay? The Peace Council has eyes and ears everywhere.

She turns, kisses him gently on the cheek.

He pulls her close.

JEFF (CONT’D)
You sure you won’t change your mind? I can run down and rent us a video?

She smiles, shakes her head.

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - NIGHT

Miriam is seated at a private table with Calvin. Over at the bar, Jocelyn, Cass and Heinz watch them like hawks.

CASS
Look at her, it’s like he’s put her in a trance.

JOCELYN
Maybe she’s stoned.

CASS
Miriam doesn’t smoke.

HEINZ
I don’t like him.

CASS
If I didn’t know you better, I’d say you sound jealous.
Jocelyn, annoyed, turns to Cass.

JOCELYN
Really, Cass. Now why would he be jealous?

Over at Miriam and Calvin’s table, Miriam listens – enraptured – as he rambles on.

CALVIN
... so after I left the Post, I knew there needed to be a way for me to make my way in the world. Uproot all the subversive elements in Washington.

MIRIAM
That’s amazing.

CALVIN
It took months before I could convince anyone to come work with me. But eventually, things took off.

MIRIAM
I think what you’re doing is courageous and brave. Fighting the power.

CALVIN
You’re embarrassing me, Miriam. I’m just following my heart, not trying to destabilize the entire U.S. Government.

He looks around, checks over his shoulder.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
Even if that’s what needs doing.

MIRIAM
Really?

CALVIN
It’s not like those thugs haven’t tried to stop me. The President himself has sicked his dogs, the FBI, the CIA, on me. My phone’s been tapped. Strange sedans follow me down the street.
MIRIAM
Is that why you wanted to meet here?

CALVIN
Exactly. They can’t bug all of Washington. And a grungy place like this...

Heinz comes over, he’s heard the last sentence, frowns.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
... it’s the last place on earth they’re worried about as a breeding ground for political descent.

Calvin dumps the rest of the wine bottle into their glasses.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
So, about the Peace Council.

MIRIAM
I shouldn’t have said anything the other night. Right now, all I have to go on is hunches and innuendo.

CALVIN
Where else would you start?

He smiles seductively at her.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
I can tell you have good instincts. You’re a muckraker at heart.

MIRIAM
Ever since I was a kid, I’ve wanted to be an investigative reporter. You know, like Barbara Walters or Diane Sawyer.

CALVIN
So what happened?

MIRIAM
Life sort of got in the way.

CALVIN
It’s not too late.

He takes her hand.
CALVIN (CONT’D)
If your heart is telling you something’s not right. You have to ride that wave – see where it takes you.

MIRIAM
I don’t know where to begin.

CALVIN
Find the smoking gun. Start with the grantees. Check out their political affiliations, contributions, connections, in other words, follow the money trail.

MIRIAM
The money trail?

CALVIN
One thing I’ve learned about bureaucrats, they always think they’re smarter then they actually are.

Heinz comes with the check. Calvin and Miriam reach for it at the same time.

MIRIAM
Here. Let me.

She hands Heinz her credit card.

EXT. KRAMMERKELLER - NIGHT

CALVIN
Your exposé is going to be front page stuff.

MIRIAM
Really?

CALVIN
Definitely.

He leans in, kisses her good night.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
You want to come back to my place – we could go over the details?

She debates this, shakes her head.
CALVIN (CONT’D)
Okay, then. Rain check.

MIRIAM
Rain check.

He hails a cab, drives off.

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - NIGHT
Miriam walks back in - she’s floating on air.

HEINZ
What a gentleman. He didn’t even take you home.

MIRIAM
It’s not like he didn’t offer.

JOCELYN
Good riddance. Now we can party.

She reaches into her bag, pulls out a joint. Miriam shoots her a loaded glare.

MIRIAM
Maybe you should call it a night. Get some rest?

JOCELYN
Party pooper.

MIRIAM
Well, I’m outta here. I need to go home and get to work.

JOCELYN
On what?

MIRIAM
My exposé.

CASS
See, I knew this was a bad idea. You with your crazy conspiracy theories and him - with his ridiculous scandal sheet. This is either gonna get you fired or arrested.

Miriam turns away, ignores her.
CASS (CONT’D)
Can’t you see what he’s doing? He’s strumming you along.

MIRIAM
This from a woman who’s sleeping with a guy because the way he throws a pigskin gets her hot.

CASS
Larry’s not perfect but at least he pays for dinner. And, he respects my opinion.

MIRIAM
So you’re saying what? Calvin doesn’t respect my opinion?

CASS
I didn’t say it, you did.

MIRIAM
So there’s no way he’d actually be interested in my writing? My ideas?

Cass doesn’t answer.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Any of you care to chime in?

Jocelyn and Heinz both look away.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Great. Nice friends I have.

She heads for the door.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
I’m out of here.

INT. MIRIAM’S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Miriam is at a desk in the corner of her room. She’s on her computer. She types:

“The Peace Council - Front for an elaborate money laundering scheme or CIA operative breeding ground?”

Just then, her phone rings. She picks it up.

MIRIAM
Hello?
Silence.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)

Hello?

More silence. Somewhat spooked, she hangs up the phone. Looks out her window, the driver of a parked sedan looks up at her - then drives off.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)

(to herself)

Don’t be crazy.

INSERT MONTAGE

INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - MORNING

- Miriam at her desk, snooping through files marked “classified” and making surreptitious notes. Broadwater walks over, she quickly closes the file - a close call, averted.

- Miriam having lunch with Calvin at the Krammerkeller.

- Miriam stays late at the office. The place is a total ghost town. She works studiously, makes notes of files.

- Miriam eats dinner with Calvin at The Palms.

- During the day, Miriam watches as Broadwater exits her office, then Miriam sneaks in and tries to jimmy open the locked cabinet using a letter opener. It won’t budge. She exits the office with seconds to spare as Broadwater returns.

- Miriam double dates with Calvin, and Cass and Larry. Cass and Larry make out like teenagers the whole time.

END MONTAGE

INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - MORNING

Miriam is pouring through one of Cass’s notepads when Broadwater walks up behind her.

BROADWATER

Miriam?

Miriam jumps.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)

Jittery Janie. Maybe tone down the coffee a bit, eh?
She notices Cass’ notebook open on Miriam’s desk.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
What are you doing looking through Cass’ transcription notebooks?

Miriam’s frozen.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
That’s confidential.

MIRIAM
I... uh... she has all these half transcribed notes. I was trying to finish them. I thought you might find them useful.

Broadwater raises a suspicious eyebrow.

BROADWATER
We need to talk.

INT. BROADWATER’S OFFICE - DAY

Miriam sits across from Broadwater.

BROADWATER
Everything set for the luncheon tomorrow?

Miriam reads from a clipboard, her voice is crisp, efficient and professional.

MIRIAM
The menu’s been finalized. The responses have been received, filed and noted. And the programs have been printed. I need to pick them up by noon.

She looks at her Timex.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
I have forty-three minutes.

BROADWATER
Excellent.

MIRIAM
Will that be all?

Miriam starts to rise.
BROADWATER
No. I suppose you’ve heard. Cass tendered her resignation this morning.

MIRIAM
What?

BROADWATER
Until I hire a replacement, I’ll need you to continue picking up the slack.

MIRIAM
She quit?

Broadwater stands up and dangles a key.

BROADWATER
This is the key to my personal file cabinet.

She pushes the key across the desk towards Miriam.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
It goes without saying, that key is not to leave your person.

MIRIAM
Of course.

BROADWATER
I’ll need you to clear out Cass’ personal items. I’ve arranged to ship her things to her home in Utah. You’ll need to get the address.

LATER
Back at her desk, Miriam grabs the phone’s receiver and punches a number into the keypad.

CASS (O.S.)
Hello?

MIRIAM
So what’s the address in Utah? Where I’m sending your stuff.

CASS (O.S.)
About that.

A long pause.
CASS (CONT'D)
I should have told you first. I just didn’t know how. They hired me to be a regular anchor and it seemed like the right move.

MIRIAM
You’ve really quit?

CASS (O.S.)
I did. All that stuff Jocelyn was saying, about living life to the fullest, I guess it got to me.

Long pause. Silence.

CASS (CONT'D)
Miriam? You there?

Miriam hangs up the phone, grabs an empty mail bin, and starts filling it with Cass’ personal items and tchotchkes -- mostly everything has a Redskins’ logo.

A photo on Cass’ corkboard catches her eye. Miriam stares the picture: It’s her, Jocelyn and Cass – all smiles in Santa hats. She drops it in the bin.

Miriam’s phone RINGS.

MIRIAM
Peace Council.

JOCELYN (O.S.)
It’s me.

MIRIAM
Are you calling about Cass?

JOCELYN (O.S.)
No. I need a favor.

MIRIAM
How much this time?

JOCELYN (O.S.)
No, it’s not money. Can you run down to the printer and get the flyers for the fund-raiser? I got hung up.

MIRIAM
Sure, which printer?
JOCELYN (O.S.)
The one downtown near the Mickie D’s.

MIRIAM
No problem, I have to go there for something anyway. This afternoon work?

JOCELYN (O.S.)
Perfect. What were you saying about Cass?

MIRIAM
She quit.

JOCELYN (O.S.)
No shit. So you’re the last woman standing?

MIRIAM
I guess.

In the B.G., Miriam hears a MAN’S voice beckoning.

MAN (O.S.)
Come on, baby. Say goodbye.

Miriam is confused.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY
A guitar leans against the bed. Jocelyn, half naked, hangs up the phone, turns and kisses her companion - NICK NICHOLS.

JOCELYN
I gotta motor.

Jocelyn hangs up.

INT. PRINTER - DAY
Miriam picks up both orders. They are in identical packages.

INT. THE PALMS - DAY
Miriam has lunch with Calvin. He hands her a tiny lock pick. She smiles deviously.
INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - NIGHT

Miriam waits for the office to clear out. Broadwater walks by Miriam.

BROADWATER
Remember to shut the lights. We don’t need to stick the taxpayers with unnecessary electrical bills.

MIRIAM
Will do.

Broadwater leaves. The place is completely deserted.

Miriam goes to Broadwater’s office, using the lock pick, she opens the door.

INT. BROADWATER’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Using her new key, Miriam goes to the locked file cabinet, snoops around. She opens the cabinet, shoves a handful of files into her bag.

Suddenly, behind her, a LIGHT in the hallway flips on. Miriam panics.

She hears the CLICKITY-CLACK of a woman’s heels on the floor outside the room.

She gingerly closes the file. The CLICKING HEELS sound louder. Miriam freaks. She can see Broadwater barreling down the hall like a stormtrooper, there’s no time to escape.

The door handle jingles. Broadwater, suspicious, turns the lock.

BROADWATER
That’s weird. Thought I locked this.

Broadwater sits down. She doesn’t notice that...

Miriam is crouched, hidden under the desk.

Broadwater turns on a light, goes to her file cabinet.

Miriam crawls on all fours towards the door.

Broadwater turns around...

Miriam rises... she’s got her hand on the door.
From Broadwater’s POV, it looks like Miriam has just arrived.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Just the woman I was looking for.
Have a minute?

MIRIAM
I was kind of in the middle of-

BROADWATER
Please. Sit.

Miriam drops the lock-pick down her pants.

MIRIAM
Okay.

Miriam sits down -- winces in pain -- the pick is stabbing her.

Off Miriam’s face...

BROADWATER
You okay?

MIRIAM
Just a cramp.

Broadwater turns, takes out a bottle of scotch, puts it on her desk next to two tumbler glasses, and pours drinks.

While Broadwater isn’t looking, Miriam reaches back, grabs the pick, and quickly drops it into another pocket.

Miriam raises the glass to her lips, hesitates.

BROADWATER
It’s okay. We’re off the clock.

Miriam takes a sip.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
I’ve been watching you, Miriam.

Miriam sinks down in her chair.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
And I don’t want you to think I haven’t been paying attention.

MIRIAM
I can explain!
BROADWATER
Let me finish.

Miriam settles back in her chair.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
I’ve decided that you are no longer going to fill in as my personal assistant.

MIRIAM
(defeated)
Okay.

BROADWATER
I want you to have the job.

MIRIAM
What!

BROADWATER
You’ve really come around, Miriam. Everything about you has changed over the last few weeks. Your attitude, your work ethic, even your professional attire.

MIRIAM
I don’t know what to say.

BROADWATER
There’s nothing to say. You realize there’s a three-grade pay bump that comes with being my personal secretary.

Miriam digests this.

MIRIAM
If you don’t mind, I prefer the term, assistant.

BROADWATER
Very well, assistant.

Broadwater clears her throat.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
There’s just one thing. I’ve received word that someone in this office is a subversive.

MIRIAM
A what?
BROADWATER
Someone here is trying to undermine what we do.

Miriam does a spit-take of her scotch.

MIRIAM
You mean, like a spy?

Broadwater nods.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
How do you know?

BROADWATER
Because that’s what I do, Miriam. I keep tabs.

MIRIAM
Oh.

BROADWATER
I’m going to need you to find out who.

MIRIAM
Me?

BROADWATER
I want you to be my roving eyes and ears.

Broadwater downs her scotch. Pours another.

MIRIAM
So you want me to, snoop around?

BROADWATER
Not officially, of course. But, off the record, consider yourself knighted.

Miriam smiles.

INSERT MONTAGE

Miriam’s stealth campaign kicks into high gear.

-- Alone in the office during the evening, she goes through the desks and files of her coworkers.

-- She copies files marked “confidential” on a Xerox machine.
-- During the day at her desk, Miriam lifts her phone and eavesdrops on the private calls of her coworkers.

    SHEILA (O.S.)
    ... besides the fact that my mother-in-law, the old witch, is in town for a week, don’t tell anyone, I think I maxed out my credit card again.

-- Miriam steps from the elevator, says goodbye to SHEILA, 30’s, a fellow SECRETARY.

    MIRIAM
    Bye, Sheila. Take it easy on the Diners Club this weekend.

Sheila, perplexed, stops in her tracks. How did she know that?

-- Miriam has a late night meeting with Calvin. Crunched over a table, they pour over her pilfered documents together.

INT. MIRIAM’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A digital clock reads “4 AM.” Miriam, wide awake, ferociously types away at her computer as she finishes her exposé.

She smiles, types, “The End,” and hits print.

She collapses on her bed, falls asleep instantly as her dot-matrix printer churns out page after page of her exposé.

EXT. THE PALMS - DAY

Miriam does a double-take as she sees Whittle at the door of the restaurant, about to enter. Miriam grabs her arm.

    MIRIAM
    Professor, what are you doing here?

    WHITTLLE
    Isn’t it obvious? Having lunch.

    MIRIAM
    But this is a private party honoring the grantees.

    WHITTLLE
    So I’m crashing it.
MIRIAM
You can’t!

WHITTLE
She got to you, didn’t she?

MIRIAM
Who?

WHITTLE
You know who. Attila the bun.

She motions inside the restaurant, Broadwater, her hair fastened into a tight bun, stands nearby.

MIRIAM
That’s not it at all! I don’t want to raise any flags. My story’s almost all done. If she catches wind of it -- everything will fall apart.

WHITTLE
Don’t get your panties twisted in a knot. I’m not going to do anything. I’m just curious to see the calibre of candidate who beat me out.

Whittle opens the door, walks in, looks over her shoulder.

WHITTLE (CONT’D)
Besides. I love an open bar.

INT. THE PALMS - DAY

Miriam hands the unopened programs, still in the printer’s packaging, to the snotty hostess.

MIRIAM
We’ll need these put on every table.

The hostess starts to protest, then, opens the bag, looks at them.

HOSTESS
Are you sure?

MIRIAM
I’m running this party, aren’t I?

HOSTESS
Okay.
Soon, the invited guests start to arrive. The bar quickly fills.

Miriam’s eyes open in shock as she sees Jeff march in with Celia.

MIRIAM
Jeff?

JEFF
Miriam?

Awkward. Celia stares down Miriam.

JEFF (CONT’D)
This is my wife, Celia.

Miriam’s confused.

CELIA
I go by my maiden name, Barnes.

MIRIAM
Oh, Celia Barnes, of course. You’re with the President’s liaison on terrorism. Nice to meet you, I’ve heard all about your agency.

Celia’s hard glare puts Miriam off-kilter.

JEFF
We should make our way in. Come, darling.

He gives Miriam a halting glance over his shoulder as he pilots his wife away.

Within minutes, the place is packed. Broadwater breezes through the crowd, she nods at Miriam, pleased.

Miriam goes to the bar, orders a drink. Allows herself a smile - takes a sip.

Then - spits it out - Whittle has cornered Broadwater.

Miriam’s face fills with panic as she watches Whittle gesture wildly to Broadwater.

Miriam drops her head. This is not good. She’s so screwed.

Suddenly, the CHEF runs out, he has a large BUTCHER’S KNIFE in his hand, and he’s waving it angrily at another MAN in cooking whites. All action stops, everyone watches the men argue in FRENCH.
Broadwater saddles over to Miriam. Barely moving her lips, she asks:

    BROADWATER
    What’s going on?

    MIRIAM
    It’s... uh... performance art. Part of the show. Excuse me.

Miriam rushes over to the hostess.

    MIRIAM (CONT’D)
    What’s going on?

    HOSTESS
    Chef Robard just quit. He’s very temperamental.

    MIRIAM
    He can’t quit! We’ve invited a hundred people for lunch! What am I going to do?

The hostess just shrugs — throws Miriam’s words back at her.

    HOSTESS
    You’re running this party, aren’t you?

LATER

The guests are all seated, enjoying their lunch. Polite conversation buzzes throughout the room.

Miriam goes to the...

KITCHEN

Heinz is there. He’s dressed in chef’s white. A team of busboys bustle around him.

    HEINZ
    How’s it going out there?

    MIRIAM
    Amazing. Everyone is loving those tiny burgers.

    HEINZ
    I call them sliders.
MIRIAM
Sliders? What kind of a name is that?

HEINZ
I’m hoping it catches on.

MIRIAM
Where did you learn to cook like this?

HEINZ
Culinary school.

MIRIAM
You’re a chef?

HEINZ
I trained to be one.

MIRIAM
You never fail to amaze me, Heinz. How can I ever repay you?

HEINZ
I’m just happy I could help.

She moves closer. He moves closer. They bend in towards each other.

BROADWATER (O.S.)
MIRIAM!

Broadwater’s shrill cackle shatters the mood. Miriam whips her head to see...

Broadwater, in the doorway, a sour look.

MIRIAM
What’s wrong?

BROADWATER
This is what’s wrong! They were put on all the tables!

She holds out the flyers - it’s not the luncheon program - it’s the invite to the Mayoral fund-raiser at the Krammerkeller next week.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
We’re a bipartisan agency! We can’t distribute politically motivated propaganda!
MIRIAM
I’m so sorry!

BROADWATER
Are you responsible for this!

Miriam stutters, she’s at a complete loss.

MIRIAM
I... I...

BROADWATER
Do you even realize what kind of a colossal fuck up this is!

JOCELYN (O.S.)
Don’t blame her, it was all my doing.

All eyes turn towards the back door – Jocelyn’s there. She saunters over.

BROADWATER
What are you doing here! This is a private event.

JOCELYN
Didn’t mean to rain on your parade. I’m running this event next week, and thought some of your grantees might be interested in attending.

BROADWATER
Well you thought wrong!

MIRIAM
It’s not her fault, really.

Broadwater inches closer to Jocelyn, narrows her eyes.

BROADWATER
Luckily for you, I caught this little prank before any of your pathetic little flyers were distributed among my guests.

Broadwater takes the flyers in her arms, tosses them in the trash.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Now if you’ll excuse me, I have a party to attend to.
Broadwater exits. Miriam exhales with relief, she turns towards Jocelyn.

MIRIAM
Oh my God, Josh thank you so-

She stops, caught off-guard by the anger and hurt raging on Jocelyn’s face. Jocelyn’s voice is hard as stone.

JOCELYN
I came to give you these.

She drops the box of luncheon flyers into Miriam’s hands.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
You must of mixed them up by mistake.

MIRIAM
How long were you standing there?

JOCELYN
Long enough.

Jocelyn looks at Heinz, her eyes fill with tears.

Jocelyn rushes out. Heinz follows her.

HEINZ
Josh!

Miriam goes to the garbage, takes out the flyers.

The image on them is an amateurishly cut and pasted composite of Nick Nichols and his band, standing next to Louis Palmer. The caption reads: “PALMER FOR MAYOR FUND-RAISER NEXT WEEK”.

INT. BATHROOM - THE PALMS - DAY

While seated in the stall, Miriam hears the CLICKITY-CLACK of Broadwater’s heels.

Peeking out through a crack in the door, she sees Whittle enter behind her.

WHITTLE
As discussed.

Whittle produces a check from her handbag. Broadwater snaps it up.

Miriam sits back - stunned.

MOMENTS LATER
Miriam storms through the party. Broadwater notices her bulldozing her way through the crowd.

BROADWATER
Miriam? Where are you going?

She ignores the questions, grabs her bag from behind the bar.

Jeff, perplexed, watches her storm away.

CELIA
What are you looking at?

INT/EXT. CAB - DAY

A cab stops in front of an elegant brownstone.

Miriam double checks the address handwritten on the back of Calvin’s business card. She leans towards the driver.

MIRIAM
You sure this is right?

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

She stands on the stoop, rings the doorbell.

Calvin opens up the door. As soon as he sees her, a smile lights up his face.

INT. CALVIN’S APARTMENT - DAY

Miriam’s eyes are wide with amazement as she follows Calvin through his oversized bachelor pad. The place is filled with expensive-looking art and stereo equipment.

A big-screen TV sits on a stand near a black leather couch.

MIRIAM
I thought you took a vow of poverty.

CALVIN
I did, but I’m not good at keeping vows. Why do you think I’ve been married twice.

Baffled, she takes in the place.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
You want a beer? Wine?
MIRIAM
No. I need to talk to you.

Moments later, they’re sitting on the couch.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
All this time I’ve been reading files, doing research, you know, looking for the smoking gun. And what do I come up with? Nothing. No hard proof. But to see it go down like that, right before my eyes.

CALVIN
Crazy, huh?

MIRIAM
It just sort of validated everything.

CALVIN
It’s a rush, isn’t it?

He inches closer to her.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
Seeing corruption at play.

He swings his arm around her.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
A real turn on.

Oblivious to his come on, she inches away, digs into her bag, hands him the exposé.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
What’s this?

MIRIAM
What do you think it is? My exposé! I’ll have to change the ending now, but, I think it’s good to go.

He takes it, flips casually through the pages, sets it down.

CALVIN
Looks good.

He moves closer. She moves away.

MIRIAM
Don’t you want to read it?
CALVIN
Read what?

MIRIAM
My story! The story I’ve spent every night for the past month working on!

CALVIN
Of course, I can’t wait.

He suddenly turns and falls on her, pinning her beneath him.

CALVIN (CONT’D)
But first, I want to do an in-depth investigation about what’s going on elsewhere...

She pushes him off.

MIRIAM
Are you kidding me!

CALVIN
What?!

MIRIAM
Oh my god. Heinz was right.

CALVIN
The bartender?

MIRIAM
You don’t even care about this story.

CALVIN
Of course I do. But Miriam, the story will wait. My passion won’t!

He lunges at her, she jumps up, slides out of his way.

He comes at her again, but this time she knees him in the groin. OWWW! He cries out in pain, goes down for the count.

MIRIAM
I can’t believe I trusted you!

CALVIN
Don’t be so naive, Miriam! You think you can bring down a giant government agency just because you see a check pass hands in the crapper! That’s not how it works.
She picks up her exposé, shoves it in her bag.

MIRIAM
Maybe not in your world, anyway.

She opens a door -- marches through it. It’s a closet.
Back ing out, she goes through another door, the exit.

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - NIGHT

Miriam and Heinz sit next to each other at the bar, each with a beer in front of them. A Redskins game plays on the TV.

MIRIAM
What a fool I’ve been.

THWAPP! THWAPP! She smacks her forehead into the bar.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Everyone tried to warn me. I didn’t want to hear it.

HEINZ
Don’t be so hard on yourself, it’s not your fault.

MIRIAM
I can’t believe he played me like that.

HEINZ
Can I ask you something?

MIRIAM
Sure.

HEINZ
Why are you so upset that he made a move on you? I mean, I thought you had the hots for the guy?

MIRIAM
I did, I guess. But that was before I knew him for what he really is.

She takes her exposé out, strikes a match on the bar, and sticks the flame under her paper.

HEINZ
Hey! Are you crazy!

He grabs the document, blows out the match.
MIRIAM
I never want to see this again!

HEINZ
You spent months writing this thing, it means something.

Suddenly, the loud ROAR of the crowd on the TV gets their attention.

HEINZ (CONT’D)
What the...

The TV ANNOUNCER’S voice blasts.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And there’s a flag down! Longford is arguing with the referee... He’s... OH MY GOD he’s attacking the referee!

Heinz and Miriam, shocked, watch as Larry pummels the ref.

Within seconds, a small army of TRAINERS, COACHES and REDSKINS FOOTBALL PLAYERS are trying to pull Larry off the ref. Larry swings wildly at everyone.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
He’s fighting his own teammates! Jesus! I’ve never seen anything like this!

Behind them, someone SHUTS off the TV.

They turn, Jocelyn’s there. With a nasty smirk, she tosses the remote at Heinz, picks up a carton overflowing with her personal things, and storms towards the exit.

She SLAMS the door behind her.

The force of it knocks the photo of Nick and Jocelyn off the wall.

Heinz picks it up, examines the now-cracked glass frame.

HEINZ
If it makes you feel any better, I knew she was sleeping with him.

He taps the broken photo of Nick.

MIRIAM
Why didn’t you say anything?
HEINZ
This is gonna sound lame.

MIRIAM
Go on, I can take it.

HEINZ
I knew if we broke up, sooner or later you'd stop coming around.

MIRIAM
What are you saying?

HEINZ
Miriam. I have feelings for you.
I have for some time.

She’s taken aback.

HEINZ (CONT’D)
I tried to ignore them. On my mother’s life, I swear it. I mean, I know I was dating your good friend and I didn’t want to cross that line. But....

MIRIAM
She’s pregnant.

HEINZ
What?

MIRIAM
She’s pregnant. It’s your baby.

HEINZ
Oh my God! Why didn’t she say anything?

As the news sinks in, his face comes alive with excitement.

HEINZ (CONT’D)
How far along is she? Does she know what she’s having? When is she due?

MIRIAM
You’re gonna have to ask her.

Miriam rises, moves towards the door.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Take care of yourself, Heinz.
INT. PEACE COUNCIL OFFICES - MORNING

Miriam sits at her desk - stares out vacantly at the thick pile of papers in front of her. Her phone RINGS and RINGS, finally, she answers it. Her voice is flat.

MIRIAM
Peace Council.

WHITTLE (O.S.)
Miriam? It’s Professor Whittle.

Silence. Miriam doesn’t say a word.

WHITTLE (CONT’D)
What happened to you yesterday? One minute you were there, the next, gone?

MIRIAM
What happened to me?!

Miriam’s eyes burn with rage.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
I thought you were on my side! I thought that under that gruff, sub-human exterior, there was a decent person in there!

WHITTLE (O.S.)
What are you talking about?

MIRIAM
I saw you! I saw you pay her off!

WHITTLE (O.S.)
What are talking about?

MIRIAM
You’re just like the rest of them. Only worse because you pretended to want to change the system. But all you really wanted was to find a way in.

Miriam’s intercom BUZZES.

BROADWATER (O.S.)
Miriam. Can you come in here?

MIRIAM
(into phone)
I have to go.
She slams down the phone.

INT. BROADWATER’S OFFICE – CONT.

Miriam sits down, slumps in her chair.

BROADWATER
Can you explain this?

She pushes the latest issue of THE WASHINGTON INSIDER towards Miriam. A headline screams: “PEACE COUNCIL BRIBERY SCANDAL”.

MIRIAM
Oh my god.

Miriam takes the paper, examines the story.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
I... I don’t know what to say.

BROADWATER
I told you there was a spy in our office! And now, look! Look what’s happened!

It slowly dawns on Miriam that she’s not taking a direct hit on this – just collateral damage.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
This is exactly the kind of subversive, right-wing nonsense that could destroy everything.

Broadwater drops the paper into a loud paper shredder.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
When I find out who did this. Let’s just say there’s going to be hell to pay.

Miriam, nervous, takes a deep breath.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
In light of this, the President has asked us to purge our office and move the agency under the aegis of the White House.

MIRIAM
I’m sorry?
BROADWATER
We’re being consolidated into a new program. I’ve been tapped to run it. Effective immediately.

MIRIAM
I suppose you’ll be wanting me to pack my bags.

BROADWATER
Yes. Effective immediately.

Miriam starts to get up.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Where are you going?

MIRIAM
You just terminated me.

BROADWATER
I told you to pack your bags. I want you to come with me. I’ve chosen you, Miriam. To be my sec... personal assistant.

Miriam is flabbergasted.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Close the door.

Miriam does as instructed.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
I was just like you when I started here. Ambitious. Smart. Eager to move ahead.

MIRIAM
You were a secretary?

BROADWATER
No one typed faster. Took better dictation. Had keener steno skills.

MIRIAM
I had no idea.

BROADWATER
But you have one advantage over me.

MIRIAM
What’s that?
BROADWATER
To get ahead, you won’t have to sleep your way to the top.

MIRIAM
What?

Broadwater comes over, sits on the edge of her desk.

BROADWATER
Don’t look so surprised. Back in the day, I had some game of my own.

Miriam doesn’t respond.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
The point is, I want us to be a team. You have my back, I have yours.

MIRIAM
A team?

BROADWATER
This agency is about world peace and promoting democratic ideals. Working together, we can effect massive change on a global level. What do you say?

MIRIAM
Can I have the weekend to think about it?

BROADWATER
(miffed)
And while you’re mulling it over, keep in mind this job offers a substantial pay grade bump.

Shell-shocked, Miriam rises.

MIRIAM
Will that be all?

Broadwater hands Miriam a small bottle of perfume.

BROADWATER
I met a woman at the luncheon, a friend of yours, Whittle something or other.

(MORE)
BROADWATER (CONT'D)
We got to talking, and she asked me
to pick up a bottle of perfume at a
little shop near my house. See that
it gets mailed to her residence.

MIRIAM
That’s what she paid you for?

BROADWATER
Excuse me?

MIRIAM
Right away.

Miriam, in a daze, goes to her desk. Her phone is RINGING.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Peace Council.

CASS (O.S.)
It’s Cass. I need your help. Can
you meet me at the bar?

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - DAY

The place is abuzz with activity. Political banners and miles
of red, white and blue tinsel have transformed the dark club
into a lively party room. Dozens of workers scurry about,
cleaning and prepping.

Cass sits hunched over at the bar, crying, while Miriam
listens intently.

CASS
Ever since he got suspended, he’s
become unbearable!

She downs her drink, refills it.

CASS (CONT’D)
He won’t stop drinking, he won’t
leave the house. All he does is
watch soap operas all day.

More sobs. Miriam puts her arm around her friend.

CASS (CONT’D)
I hate friggin soap operas!

Cass gives her a look.

MIRIAM
Why don’t you just leave?
CASS
Don’t you understand! I love him! I can’t desert him in his hour of need.

MIRIAM
I don’t know what to tell you, Cass. Sometimes you have to make the hard decisions about love.

Cass’ mood sours.

CASS
Like you did? Sleeping with your ex.

MIRIAM
We ended that.

CASS
Just in time for you to get down and dirty with your tabloid king!

MIRIAM
That’s over, too.

CASS
So now there’s nothing holding you and Heinz from consummating your relationship?

Miriam gasps.

MIRIAM
How do you know about that?

CASS
Jocelyn told me.

MIRIAM
Well she’s wrong. Nothing happened between us.

CASS
Sure.

MIRIAM
It’s true. I’ve tried calling Josh to explain, but she won’t answer my calls.

Cass downs one more shot, smiles at her friend.
CASS
Don’t worry about it. This is Josh we’re talking about. She’s always got a backup waiting in the wings.

Cass stands up.

CASS (CONT’D)
I gotta run. I told him I was going out for chips and beer and if I don’t get back soon, he might do something crazy.

The women hug.

INT./EXT CAB – DAY
Miriam arrives at a busy college campus. She walks amongst the kids, heads for a building marked “POLITICAL SCIENCE”.

INT. WHITTLE’S OFFICE – DAY
Holding the bottle of perfume Broadwater gave her, Miriam knocks on a door with a nameplate marked, “PROFESSOR PAM WHITTLE” on it.

A grungy FEMALE STUDENT with dreadlocks answers the door, she holds a box of packing tape in one hand.

MIRIAM
Is Professor Whittle here?

Miriam looks inside the office, it’s empty. Only a few moving boxes remain.

FEMALE STUDENT
You just missed her.

MIRIAM
Did she say where she was going?

FEMALE STUDENT
Yeah, man. I think she said the admin building.

EXT. COLLEGE – DAY
Miriam races towards a large ivy-covered building. She spots Whittle exiting.
MIRIAM
Professor! Professor wait!

Miriam jogs over. She leans over to catch her breath.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Here.

She hands the professor the bottle of perfume. Whittle examines it.

WHITTLE
So you got demoted to the mail room, huh?

MIRIAM
Look, I came to apologize. I shouldn’t have jumped down your throat like that.

WHITTLE
Hmmph.

MIRIAM
Look. Let me make it up to you. My friend is having a fund-raiser tonight for mayoral candidate Louis Palmer, I’d love it if you could come. Drinks on me.

Whittle, stone-faced, walks off. Miriam follows.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Don’t blow me off.

She gets in front of Whittle, holds out the folded up flyer.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Maybe you could bring some of your students. Let them see political graft in action.

WHITTLE
Can’t make it, sorry.

Whittle walks off. Miriam struggles to keep up with her.

MIRIAM
Why not? Why won’t you come?

Whittle stops.

WHITTLE
I’m too busy.
MIRIAM
Doing what?

WHITTLE
If you must know. I’ve quit my job, and I’m going on a trip. Leaving tonight.

Whittle heads towards the parking lot. She waves at the dreadlocked student who was in her office earlier.

Dreadlocks stands by Whittle’s beat-up Subaru. Six taped-up cartons are piled on street near the car.

MIRIAM
Where are you going?

WHITTLE
As it turns out, I’m going on a peace mission to Africa.

Miriam is shocked.

Whittle opens the trunk, starts loading boxes.

MIRIAM
A peace mission? With the Peace Council?

WHITTLE
Technically, no. It’s part of a new pilot program.

MIRIAM
The one being headed by Broadwater?

WHITTLE
I have no idea. After I spoke to her at the luncheon, she reconsidered my candidacy and recommended me for a slot in this new program.

MIRIAM
That’s... that’s great.

WHITTLE
Well. I owe a good part of it to you and your doggedness.

She shuts the trunk.

WHITTLE (CONT’D)
Take care of yourself, Miriam.
The Professor reaches over, hugs Miriam goodbye, whispers.

WHITTLE (CONT’D)
... and don’t let the bastards get you down.

EXT. KRAMMERKELLER - NIGHT

Miriam, now changed into a tiny black dress, walks to the club, she’s surprised to see HUNDREDS of clubgoers standing outside, waiting to get in.

Two large spotlights dance in the sky and a BOUNCER stands in front, holds a clipboard.

Miriam walks over to him.

MIRIAM
I’m Miriam Cooper. I’m a guest of Jocelyn’s.

He looks at his list. Shakes his head.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Are you sure?

BOUNCER
Ma’am, you’re gonna have to wait in line like everyone else.

Across the street, Miriam notices an over-sized “Nichols, Powers and Judd” TOUR BUS pull up and park.

A minute later, a small caravan of black limos pull up and stop in front of the club. A BODYGUARD in a dark suit and glasses opens the door for LOUIS PALMER. The slick politico emerges wearing a dark three-piece suit.

Palmer flashes his pearly white veneers at the crowd, then raises his hand and does a beauty-pageant wave at his CHEERING admirers.

The bodyguard opens the rope, lets Palmer and his thick entourage of BODYGUARDS and ADVISORS pass through.

Miriam taps the bouncer on his shoulder.

MIRIAM
Can you please look again?

BOUNCER
I already told you.
JOCELYN (O.S.)
It’s okay. She’s on the list.

Miriam looks over. Jocelyn’s there. She’s decked out in a sexy red dress and sky-high heels.

With a grunt, the bouncer unlocks the velvet rope, lets Miriam pass.

Miriam hugs her friend.

MIRIAM
Josh, I’m so sorry. Nothing happened between me and Heinz - you’ve got to believe me!

JOCELYN
I do. I do believe you.

Miriam looks over to the tour bus.

MIRIAM
I can’t believe you actually made this happen!

JOCELYN
You should have more faith in your friends. Look, I have to go, I told Nick I’d help him ‘get in the mood’ before his show.

MIRIAM
But what about Heinz?

JOCELYN
What about Heinz?

MIRIAM
How can you do this to him?

JOCELYN
Look, Miriam. I love you, but you have to face facts.

MIRIAM
What are you talking about?

JOCELYN
Heinz is a great kid. But the only reason I stayed with him for so long was because he’s loaded.

MIRIAM
He’s loaded?
JOCELYN
Well, duh. His parents own like half of Alexandria. This bar is just one of his dumb hobbies. Like cooking and playing drums. He can’t be serious about anything.

MIRIAM
He seemed pretty serious about you.

JOCELYN
Whatever. Nick’s way richer. And he’s famous. So me and Heinz, we’re history.

Jocelyn hikes up her skirt and flips her hair.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
How do I look?

MIRIAM
Like you always do.

Jocelyn takes this as a compliment and smiles at Miriam.

JOCELYN
Thanks.

She confidently strides across the street towards the bus.

She’s just about to knock on the door when it swings open. One by one, a dozen skanky GROUPIES exit the bus.

The last GROUPIE hands Jocelyn her bra.

GROUPIE
Be a peach and give this to Nick. Tell him it’s a souvenir from Candy.

Jocelyn screws up her face, enters the tour bus.

A moment later, Nick storms out of the bus holding a pair of drum sticks in one hand, a leather motorcycle jacket slung over his shoulder.

He barrels across the street, hands Miriam his drumsticks.

NICK
Here you go love, won’t be needing these.

He jumps in a cab, it heads off.
And good riddance!

She takes off her shoe - tosses it at the back of the cab as it drives away.

Still fuming, Jocelyn hobbles inside the club.

BOUNCER

Damn!

Miriam retrieves Jocelyn’s shoe from the street.

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - NIGHT

The place is packed. Red, white and blue decorations adorn every inch of space, a large net filled with hundreds of balloons hangs from the ceiling, paper placemats printed with the image from the flyer line the tables and the bar.

Miriam searches the crowded space for Jocelyn, but can’t see past the sea of people mobbing the place.

She bumps into a TALL WOMAN wearing DARK GLASSES and a large trenchcoat.

MIRIAM

Sorry.

The woman doesn’t move, Miriam’s tries to get past her.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)

Excuse me!

CHANTING begins.

CLUB GOERS

We want music! We want music!

Jocelyn rushes over to Miriam, grabs her by the shoulders.

JOCELYN

You’ve got to help me! Nick’s taken off and his idiot bandmates won’t go on without him.

MIRIAM

What do want me to do?

JOCELYN

I don’t know!

Suddenly, Councilman Palmer walks over.
PALMER
Are you Jocelyn?

JOCELYN
Yes.

PALMER
I only agreed to show up at this shithole because Nichols, Powers and Judd were on the bill. So where the hell are they?

Jocelyn, panicked, doesn’t answer.

PALMER (CONT’D)
If you don’t get that band up there in five minutes, by midnight, I’ll have this place condemned, boarded up, and ready for the wrecking ball.

Miriam jumps in.

MIRIAM
Don’t worry about it.

Palmer turns to Miriam.

PALMER
And who are you?

MIRIAM
I’m... I’m Jocelyn’s...I mean, Ms. Jones’ assistant. Don’t worry, we’ve got everything under control.

Jocelyn shoots her a look: We do?

PALMER
You better.

CROWD
We want N-P-J! We want N-P-J!

Miriam runs off. Palmer crosses his arms and stares at Jocelyn, who returns his gaze with a feeble smile.

Miriam searches the club. Whoever she’s searching for - she can’t find him.
INT. HEINZ’S OFFICE – NIGHT

Miriam walks in, Heinz is on his couch, staring at the ceiling, an empty bottle of Jack Daniels is in his hand. Beyond the door, VIBRATIONS of MUFFLED MUSIC reverberate.

He smiles drunkenly at her.

MIRIAM
What are you doing in here?

HEINZ
Hiding.

MIRIAM
From who?

HEINZ
Everyone.

She pulls him up, sits down next to him.

HEINZ (CONT’D)
Did you see what they did to my place? It looks like the Kennedy Center in there.

MIRIAM
That’s a bit of a stretch.

CROWD (O.S.)
We want N-P-J! We want N-P-J!

HEINZ
What’s going on out there?

MIRIAM
Everything’s falling apart.

HEINZ
Let me guess. Nick never showed.

MIRIAM
He showed. But they had a fight and he split.

HEINZ
Groupies?

She nods.

HEINZ (CONT’D)
It figures.
MIRIAM
Look. I know you and Josh aren’t on the best of terms. But you can’t let this night be a total disaster.

He turns away, stews.

HEINZ
Why can’t I?

MIRIAM
Because that’s not who you are.

HEINZ
What do you want me to do about it?

She looks over to his abandoned drum set.

CUT TO:

A GRUNGY ANNOUNCER stands on a darkened stage.

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and Gentlemen, Nichols, Powers and Judd!

The lights flash on, the heavily made-up lead singer, VINCE ‘MOTOR’ NYLES takes the stage. The rest of the stage is dark.

MOTOR
Let’s hear it for Councilman Palmer, our next mayor!

The room bursts into APPLAUSE as a spotlight finds Palmer. The politician gives the crowd the double-thumbs up. He winks at Jocelyn and Miriam.

Jocelyn smiles back, her confidence has returned - in spades. She puts her hands on her hips, gives the politico a come-hither look - he raises an eyebrow in her direction.

MOTOR (CONT’D)
We have a special treat for you folks tonight. Our founding member, the best damn drum smasher we’ve ever had, is here tonight. Man oh man, is he gonna blow you away...

A spotlight zooms down on Heinz -- he’s seated behind the drums.

MOTOR (CONT’D)
Heinz Krammerkeller!
The crowd goes WILD. Heinz locks eyes with Miriam, grins. He beats out a show-off riff on the skins -- more CHEERS follow.

More lights flash on. The band -- an old-school HAIR BAND -- starts SHREDDING IT. Palmer keeps a plastic-grin affixed to his face as the loud GUITAR RIFFS and HEAVY METAL MUSIC fill every square inch of the club.

LATER

The crowd is hushed as Palmer, now center stage, holds a microphone in his hand, wraps up his speech.

PALMER
... and in closing, I’d like to thank everyone at the Krammerkeller for putting this little shindig together and helping to support my campaign. Together, we will clean up this city!

WILD APPLAUSE breaks out as the ceiling net drops, hundreds of red, white and blue balloons tumble from the sky.

THE NIGHT WINDS ON

A DJ spins tunes on the stage, partiers DANCE. The place is still packed ass-to-elbow.

Miriam watches from the bar as Jocelyn and Palmer, looking cozy, are huddled at a private table in the back.

MIRIAM
You were amazing tonight.

HEINZ
I owe it all to you.

She smiles. Suddenly, she feels a tap on her shoulder.

She turns around.

MIRIAM
Jeff?

Jeff wobbles, smiles drunkenly at her.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
What are you doing here?

JEFF
I need to talk to you.
MIRIAM
I’m kind of busy.

JEFF
I’ve left her.

MIRIAM
What?

He lifts up his hand, there’s no wedding band on it.

JEFF
See? I’m a free man now.

MIRIAM
Are you drunk?

She leans in, takes a whiff.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
Whoa!

JEFF
I’m not in love with her. I’m in love with-

She puts her fingers to his lips.

MIRIAM
You need coffee.

She turns to Heinz, signaling him to get some java. Heinz heads towards the coffee pot.

Jeff sees Calvin.

JEFF
It’s because of him, isn’t it?

MIRIAM
Who?

Miriam turns, her eyes pop open as Calvin approaches.

Beyond disgusted, she swivels away.

CALVIN
Hear me out! I was wrong. I care about you, Miriam. I have feelings for you!
MIRIAM
Leave me alone, Calvin. Whatever we
had -- and I don’t even know what
that was -- it’s over.

CALVIN
Please! Don’t be like this!

MIRIAM
We’re done.

JEFF
You heard the lady. Now beat it.

Calvin blows Jeff off, moves towards Miriam.

CALVIN
Miriam!

JEFF
Look, pal, we’re in the middle of a
conversation here.

CALVIN
Who the hell are you?

JEFF
I’m her husband.

MIRIAM
Ex-husband.

JEFF
You heard her. Get lost.

CALVIN
Don’t tell me what to do,
Poindexter.

Calvin reaches forward and shoves Jeff.

JEFF
Back off bozo.

Jeff shoves Calvin back.

The two men get into a shoving match.

MIRIAM
Guys, cut it out.

Their beef turns physical, soon they’re throwing punches,
rolling on the floor, beating the crap out of each other.
Jocelyn grabs Miriam’s arm and whispers in her ear.

    JOCELYN
    You always did have a way with men, Miriam.

Jocelyn sparks up a joint.

    JOCELYN (CONT’D)
    This is gonna be fun.

BOOM! Suddenly, a GUN BLAST explodes!

The woman in the cape and glasses throws her sunglasses down and whips off her wig. Jeff gasps.

    CELIA
    You bitch!

Using both hands, Celia holds her weapon straight out - aims it dead on at Miriam.

    CELIA (CONT’D)
    You thought you could steal my husband!

Miriam stands her ground.

    MIRIAM
    I did NOT steal your husband!

    CELIA
    Right. You just borrowed him for Monday night football.

Miriam backs up to the bar.

    CELIA (CONT’D)
    I’ll be damned if I let some nobody of a secretary ruin my life.

Reaching behind her, Miriam’s fingers stretch towards an empty bar tray. She’s just inches from grabbing it.

    MIRIAM
    News flash, secretaries are what make this world go round!

SUCCESS! Miriam grabs the tray, flings it like a giant frisbee at Celia -- who goes down!

Her gun BLASTS again.

MAYHEM ERUPTS!
CALVIN
HELP! I’VE BEEN SHOT!

Calvin is on the ground, bleeding.
The crowd flees in a mad panic.
Within seconds, COPS storm the place.

JOCELYN
Here, hold this.

She gives Miriam her joint, runs off. Miriam, still dazed, absentmindedly takes the simmering joint.
The COP notices it in her hand.

COP
Hey you, what’s that?

Miriam looks at her hand. Uh-oh.
Jocelyn tries to run out the back door. Another COP grabs her.

COP NUMBER 2
What’s the rush...

He reaches in her pocket, pulls out a bag of weed.

JOCELYN
Shit.

EXT. KRAMMERKELLER - NIGHT

As the cops drag Jocelyn and Miriam, now handcuffed together, past the front door, an EMT CREW rushes out - they’ve got Calvin on a gurney.

He babbles on deliriously.

CALVIN
It’s a conspiracy! They’re out to get me!

As the cops usher them towards a waiting cherry-top, Miriam watches as Palmer’s bodyguards quickly escort him across the street towards his waiting limo.

But just then, an OUT OF CONTROL Mercedes careens down the street...

CRUNCH!
The car nails Palmer!

The runaway Mercedes swerves and hits a nearby brick wall. Inside the vehicle, two airbags deploy.

Cops rush towards the smoking car, pull the driver from the wreckage: It’s Larry. Next to him in the passenger seat, Cass.

SUPER: THE NEXT MORNING

INT. JAIL CELL – MORNING

Squashed together on the cell’s tiny bench, Cass, Miriam and Jocelyn are all fast asleep. A FEMALE COP comes over.

    FEMALE COP
    Wakey, wakey.

The three women rouse.

    FEMALE COP (CONT’D)
    You made bail.

EXT. POLICE STATION – MORNING

The three women squint at the bright light of the sun as they emerge from the station house. Jocelyn hobbles on one shoe.

A large limo is waiting for them on the street.

A door opens, and to their collective surprise, Heinz exits. Jocelyn angrily Marches up to him.

    JOCELYN
    This is all your fault!

She slaps him on the cheek, grabs Cass’ arm, turns.

    JOCELYN (CONT’D)
    (to Miriam)
    You coming?

Miriam shakes her head.

    JOCELYN (CONT’D)
    Fine! Let’s go, Cass.

Offering an apologetic shrug, Cass heads off.
CASS
(to Miriam)
I’ll call you.

Miriam and Heinz watch them go.

HEINZ
What’s with Josh?

MIRIAM
She’s in a bad mood. Got her period this morning.

He acknowledges this with a slight nod.

HEINZ
So I guess it’s okay if I do this, then.

MIRIAM
Do what?

Heinz takes Miriam in his arms and kisses her. She kisses him back, things get hot and heavy. The LIMO DRIVER clears his throat – they break away.

The driver opens the door to the limo. Miriam, looks at Heinz with surprise.

HEINZ
I figured you might want to leave in style.

MIRIAM
This is your car?

HEINZ
My family’s. They let me borrow it for special occasions. Weddings. Bar Mitzvahs. Jail bail-outs.

MIRIAM
You bailed us out?

HEINZ
You’re not gonna skip town are you?

She’s about to get in the car when something RINGS.

HEINZ (CONT’D)
Miriam, wait. Here.

He digs in his pocket, produces a brick-shaped device.
HEINZ (CONT’D)
Go on, take it.

She gingerly picks up the odd-looking appliance.

HEINZ (CONT’D)
It’s a phone, Miriam.

He presses a button, she slowly lifts the device to her ear.

MIRIAM
Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

GLORIA STARK, 60’s, who wears bifocals on the top of her head and is surrounded by a mountain of paperwork and WASHINGTON POST newspapers, barks into the phone.

GLORIA
Is this Miriam Cooper?

MIRIAM
It is. Who is this?

GLORIA
Gloria Stark, I’m managing editor here at the Post.

Miriam’s eyes widen in surprise. Gloria holds up a document.

GLORIA (CONT’D)
I received a copy of your investigative report on the Peace Council.

Alarm flashes in Miriam’s eyes.

MIRIAM
What?

GLORIA
I’ll give you this, it’s way better then the typical unsolicited shit I get around here.

MIRIAM
How did you get it, anyway?

GLORIA
Let’s just say a friend sent it in.
MIRIAM
A friend?

Miriam, confused, looks at Heinz, he smiles mysteriously at her. She looks at him quizzically.

MIRIAM (CONT’D)
It doesn’t matter because you can’t publish it. It’s not accurate.

GLORIA
Don’t worry. We’re not going to. Unsubstantiated claims against the government only means the whole staff gets audited, again. But, I like your style, kid.

MIRIAM
Really?

GLORIA
We could use someone with your talents here at the Post.

A grin explodes across Miriam’s face.

GLORIA (CONT’D)
Can you come in for an interview today?

MIRIAM
As a secretary?

ONE MONTH LATER

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Miriam is at her new desk, answering phones, taking notes.

A brass nameplate on the desk reads: “MIRIAM COOPER, INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER”. Besides the nameplate, there is a framed, smiling picture of her and Heinz.

A MAILROOM CLERK pushing a cart drops a copy of THE WASHINGTON INSIDER on her desk.

CLERK
For your birdcage.

She lifts the paper. Calvin is on the cover, a headline screams: “THE GOVERNMENT TRIED TO ASSASSINATE ME, BUT I SURVIVED!”
Miriam drops the paper in the trash.

EXT. DOWNTOWN AREA - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Miriam strides confidently down the street. There’s a newfound spring in her step, all eyes fall on her as she moseys along. No doubt about it, she owns this town.

INT. KRAMMERKELLER - DAY

The place has been renovated to resemble the sunny, corporate interior of an Applebee’s. It’s crowded with diners.

Miriam enters, kisses Heinz, who is behind the bar, then waves hello to Cass and Jocelyn, who are seated at a table with salads and wine glasses in front of them.

MIRIAM
I still can’t get used to how bright it is in here.

JOCELYN
I miss the old days. When you could have a smoke, a beer, and a quickie in the bathroom.

An OLD LADY dining nearby hears this, gives Jocelyn a dirty look.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
(to the old lady)
Like you never did.

CASS
Hope you don’t mind that we ordered.

MIRIAM
No, I’m starved.

Miriam sits down.

JOCELYN
Okay, about the bridesmaids’ dresses. First off, way too long. I don’t do below the knee. Secondly, lavender? Really?

CASS
Leave her alone, Josh. It’s her wedding.
JOCELYN
Whatever. Palmer says he’s going to try his hardest to fit both the ceremony and the reception into his schedule.

Miriam and Cass give each other a here-she-goes-again look, Jocelyn ignores them, rambles on.

JOCELYN (CONT’D)
Well he is a very busy man. Being Mayor and all. By the way, have you heard? We’re moving in together.

MIRIAM
Of course I’ve heard. You two can’t stay out of the tabloids for five minutes.

CASS
Well, I have some exciting news.

JOCELYN
Let me guess. You’ve bought a pair of heels and some mascara.

CASS
(ignoring her)
Puck’s show is going national! And I’ve been asked to go with them.

MIRIAM
No way! That’s awesome.

CASS
We’re gonna be on an actual network! One of the big four!

MIRIAM
That’s so great!

Heinz comes over.

HEINZ
How’s lunch?

MIRIAM
Wonderful as always.

He bends over and gives Miriam a kiss.

HEINZ
Don’t you have an appointment?
MIRIAM
Oh my goodness. The wedding planner at The Palms! I almost forgot!

EXT. THE PALMS - DAY

Miriam is about to enter the restaurant when a gaggle of SECRET SERVICE agents emerge. They momentarily commandeer the street, hold the door, clear the sidewalk.

A long black limo covered in tiny American flags drives up. An AGENT opens the door, holds it as, THE PRESIDENT, walking with Broadwater at his side, exit.

Broadwater, noticing Miriam, stops. She turns to the President.

BROADWATER
I’ll just be a second.

He gets in the car, shuts the door. It idles by the curb.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Miriam, what a pleasant surprise.

MIRIAM
Is he actually waiting for you?

Broadwater smiles mysteriously.

BROADWATER
He doesn’t mind. We’re old friends.

Miriam nods knowingly.

MIRIAM
Old friends.

BROADWATER
I hear you’re getting married.

MIRIAM
In June.

BROADWATER
Congratulations. I’ve also heard you’re doing a bang up job at the Post. One of their most promising young reporters, I’m told.

Miriam’s caught off guard.
MIRIAM
Who told you that?

BROADWATER
Gloria Stack and I are old friends. We were college roommates, actually.

MIRIAM
What?

BROADWATER
You didn’t really think you could do a hatchet job on the Peace Council, and it wouldn’t get back to me, did you?

MIRIAM
I...

BROADWATER
My dear girl. When I told you I saw much of myself in you, I wasn’t joking. You’re every bit as smart and ruthless as I am. I’ve always liked that about you.

Miriam sucks in air, she can’t respond.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Unfortunately, you’re also a bit too smart for your own good. If I hadn’t leaked that ridiculous story about rampant bribery at the council to Calvin, you might have single-handedly destroyed sixty years of covert operations with your nosing around.

MIRIAM
You’re the source? His spy?

BROADWATER
It’s called the distraction technique. It’s how we throw the dogs off the real scent.

MIRIAM
But Whittle paid you? I saw her.

BROADWATER
You honestly didn’t think I couldn’t see those K-mart shoes of yours hiding in the stall?
Miriam is shocked.

MIRIAM
You knew I was there?

BROADWATER
Of course. And, like I told you, she paid me for a bottle of perfume.

MIRIAM
But...

BROADWATER
But because of your meddling, I had to have her shipped off to go dig wells in some god-forsaken country.

Broadwater leans in, narrows her beady eyes.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
Quite frankly, she’s lucky to be alive.

MIRIAM
Why are you telling me all this?

BROADWATER
Because, despite what you may have thought, I’ve always liked you.

Broadwater drops her voice.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
I wanted to make sure you understood that I genuinely wish you a long and exciting career, and a happy life. But from this point on, the Peace Council is off limits. You see, it’s one of the President’s pet projects.

Broadwater moves in, hugs Miriam, whispers in her ear.

BROADWATER (CONT’D)
And trust me, you don’t want to get on his bad side.

Flashing a tepid smile, Broadwater breaks away. She smooths her skirt, gets into the President’s limo.

Stunned, Miriam stands frozen in the street. She watches as the limo pulls out, drives off, and eventually disappears.
FADE TO BLACK.