

THE PAY OFF

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Revision Three

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INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

PETER MURPHY (39), dressed in a suit with a loose tie sits on the bed, scrolling through his phone when he hears someone key into his hotel room.

A moment later, the door shuts, and the sound of a lock and deadbolt being engaged can be heard, followed by the sound of two shoes being kicked off feet.

Soon, OLIVIA BURTON (23) dressed in a pencil skirt and white blouse, walks barefoot over to Peter.

Peter puts his phone down and smiles up at Olivia, who straddles his legs.

OLIVIA
How was your day?

PETER
(smiling)
Better now.

They start kissing passionately, and Olivia starts undoing Peter's tie.

INT. CAR - AN HOUR LATER

EVELYN KEATING (49) sits in her car on the phone with another campaign aide.

EVELYN
No, tomorrow afternoon we have the
Steamfitters event that we've had to
reschedule twice. I'm not
rescheduling that again.
(a beat)
Is there any way we can arrive at the
Smithton lunch at 11 instead of
11:45?

Evelyn then looks out her window and sees someone she recognizes.

EVELYN (cont'd)
Let's do that then. Look, I've gotta
go, it's getting late, and I have to
get some sleep.
(a beat)
See you tomorrow.

Evelyn rings off just as her passenger car door opens, and JASON DOVER (32), dressed in dark clothing sits down inside, shutting the door after him.

He carries two envelopes, both of which he hands to Evelyn.

Evelyn looks very seriously at Jason and says...

EVELYN (cont'd)
Are they fucking?

Jason gestures at the envelopes with his hand.

JASON
See for yourself.

Evelyn opens the envelopes and pulls out a few eight by ten black and white images.

The images show Peter and Olivia in various compromised positions.

She shuts her eyes and leans her head back against the headrest.

EVELYN
Shit.
(a beat)
This could de-rail everything.

JASON
Digital copies are on the flash drive
in one of the envelopes, along with a
video--

EVELYN
You took a video?!

JASON
(yeah, so?)
Well, yeah. I figured video was
better than photos--

EVELYN
I didn't ask you to do that. Why
would you do that?

JASON
I...I didn't mean to piss you off, I
thought I was going above and beyond
the request--

EVELYN
Is this the only copy?

JASON

Yes--

EVELYN

You swear it?!

JASON

Yes, yes! It's the only one, Jesus,
you don't have to jump down my
throat.

Evelyn takes a beat, staring at Jason and assesses whether or not she believes him. She then reaches across to the glove box and pulls out a letter sized envelope, handing it to Jason.

EVELYN

It's all there. You can go now.

Jason opens the envelope, peers in, and once satisfied, his eyes shift to Evelyn.

EVELYN (cont'd)

(sharply)

I said you can go--

JASON

(with more resolve
now)

I heard you. I just have one
question.

EVELYN

(disgusted)

What?

JASON

Why would you hire me to spy on your
boss? Wouldn't it make more sense for
you to ask me to spy on one of your
boss's opponents?

EVELYN

I hired you because I'm the best in
the world at what I do.

Evelyn gestures to the photos.

EVELYN (cont'd)

These are landmines, and when you're
as good as I am, you recognize that,
and learn how to diffuse them...so
they don't blow up in your face.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NEXT MORNING

It is early, and Evelyn looks as though she hasn't slept. She sips coffee as she looks outside at the first light of dawn.

Moments later, Olivia comes rushing into the conference room, two coffees in hand. She knows she's running late.

OLIVIA
(lying)
Sorry, traffic was nuts.

Olivia notices Evelyn's coffee cup.

OLIVIA (cont'd)
Oh, I bought you some Starbucks, I figured you wouldn't want to drink the in-house stuff. Kinda puts hair on your chest.

EVELYN
(firmly)
My coffee is fine, thanks.

Olivia notices the seriousness of Evelyn's tone. She nods and places her bags on to one of the seats, and then sits down.

OLIVIA
Okay, well in terms of strategy, I was thinking after we're done here, we divide and conquer the Super Tuesday states--

EVELYN
Olivia, stop.

OLIVIA
What is it?

EVELYN
I know you've been having an affair with Peter.

OLIVIA
That's not true at all! I have a tremendous amount of respect for Peter, that's why I'm helping his campaign.

EVELYN
You're really going to do this?

OLIVIA

Do what? This is an outrageous accusation, and I think you're forgetting who you're talking to here.

Evelyn decides to let Olivia walk into her trap. She takes an envelope out of her bag, and slides it across the table to Olivia, who opens it.

Olivia's eyes go wide, as she looks at pictures of herself with Peter in bed.

EVELYN

I know exactly who I'm talking to, Olivia. You barely made a 3.0 GPA at a college with a second-rate political science program, but because your daddy is the chairman of the DNC, you're my problem.

(a beat)

Now I can handle you, that's not even a question, but when you start becoming a problem for this campaign, that's what I can't stand.

OLIVIA

(resolute)

You will destroy these photos, or my father will make sure you never work in politics ever again.

EVELYN

I don't think you're in a position to make those threats, Olivia.

OLIVIA

So you're calling my bluff? We live in a post "me too" era, and you're actually going to risk not believing my side of the story?

(a beat)

You're a woman, aren't you supposed to be on my side, here?

EVELYN

Claiming a "me too" defense implies that you're a victim.

OLIVIA

Can't you see that? Peter's an older man, and my boss.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (cont'd)
I could say he coerced me into having sex with him, and in a court of law, that's a very plausible explanation.

EVELYN
Did he coerce you?

Olivia's silence concedes the point.

EVELYN (cont'd)
I knew the video didn't lie.

OLIVIA
(resigned)
There's a video, too?

EVELYN
Absolutely, which I will destroy, along with the photos. But you should know that I called your father last night, and emailed him a copy of everything.

At this, Olivia's eyes go wide. She breaks eye contact with Evelyn, and frantically starts searching her purse for her phone.

Olivia pulls out her phone and starts scrolling through her missed calls.

EVELYN (cont'd)
Ah, yes, check your phone. You probably have a missed call from your dad.

Olivia is terrified now. She sees a voicemail from her father, and hits play.

She presses the phone to her ear.

EVELYN (cont'd)
Oh, put that on speaker, although I can probably guess what he said

Olivia's terror turns to disgust as she puts the voicemail on speaker and places the phone on the table.

The voice of Olivia's father, JAMES BURTON (58) comes through Olivia's speakerphone.

JAMES

(nervous)

Hey Olivia, it's dad. Listen, I'm sorry to call so late...well, early now I guess...but listen, when you get this, call me. It's about the campaign.

(a beat)

I can explain more when you call, but...you're going to have to resign. I will find you another opportunity, but just call me as soon as you can, please.

The voicemail ends.

Evelyn looks at her watch, and then looks up at Olivia.

EVELYN

I told your dad that we'd save you the embarrassment, and tell the staff you found another position.

(a beat)

But as of right now, you are no longer a member of this campaign.

OLIVIA

This is so unfair.

EVELYN

I'm sorry, Olivia but life's not fair, and what's unfair about this situation, is putting the careers of your colleagues at risk, just so you and your boss, who is a married man by the way, can have a little fling.

A beat. Confusion passes over Olivia's face.

OLIVIA

Why are you defending him so vigorously?

EVELYN

Because he's my meal ticket, Olivia! Do I have to spell it out for you?

(a beat)

I've worked my way up from coffee intern to one of the most sought-after political advisors in the country, but I've never been in the West Wing.

(MORE)

EVELYN (cont'd)
 I want to be the President's
 confidant, and unfortunately, that's
 a job you have to win. I'm undefeated
 in the primary, but winless in
 general elections. We have a real
 opportunity for Peter to take the
 White House, and your affair with the
 candidate is standing in the way.

Olivia is stunned at this. She looks up towards the ceiling,
 searching for a comeback that she can't find.

OLIVIA
 So all of this comes down to your own
 ambition?

EVELYN
 (ignoring her quip)
 Look, the staff's gonna start
 arriving in about 15 minutes.
 (a beat)
 If I were you, I'd clean out your
 desk and get out of here before they
 arrive.

Olivia reluctantly stands, and collects her things.

EVELYN (cont'd)
 Oh, and before you leave.

Evelyn takes an envelope out her purse.

EVELYN (cont'd)
 Your severance package.

Olivia looks in the envelope, and finds a stack of cash.

OLIVIA
 Hush money?

Evelyn pulls a face: "I'm not going to say it, you moron."

EVELYN
 I don't know what you're talking
 about

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - LATER THAT DAY

Evelyn is at a desk, using a landline phone.

EVELYN

Make the ask. I'd prefer a PAC check,
but if he wants to max out as an
individual, that's fine. It's early,
but Peter's a winner.

Suddenly a text chimes on Evelyn's cell phone. She picks it up.

INSERT - CELL PHONE

A text message from James Burton reads "Let's meet tonight,
Red's Pub on 21st Street."

BACK TO SCENE

OLIVIA

That works for me. Thanks Ed.

Olivia hangs up the phone, places her cell phone on the desk, shuts her eyes, and rubs her temples.

INT. BAR - THAT NIGHT

James sits alone in the bar, sipping on a glass of scotch when Evelyn walks in.

The sight of James, and no one else stops Evelyn in her tracks.

EVELYN

Did you buy out the bar?

JAMES

Yeah.

EVELYN

Listen, about Olivia...You had to know she was a liability--

JAMES

Have a seat.

Evelyn sits down, and James takes out the envelope that Evelyn gave to Olivia earlier in the day.

He places it on the table.

JAMES (cont'd)

Evie, I like you. You're a hard worker, and you and I go way back.

(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)

(a beat)

But my daughter has no interest in your thirty pieces of silver.

Evelyn gives a single, light chuckle.

EVELYN

Judas was paid to betray Jesus. This is hardly the same thing.

JAMES

In John, Chapter 14 Verse 6, Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

(a beat)

They paid Judas to betray Jesus, so they could kill the truth.

(a beat)

You want to kill the truth with this money, and that is something we cannot accept.

EVELYN

Funny, I didn't think of you as a bible-thumper. And what "truth" do you think I want to kill and bury?

(a beat)

It was an affair between two consenting adults. I'm just trying to make it go away before it ruins our only shot at the Oval Office.

JAMES

Whether you like it or not, Peter had an extramarital affair with a woman almost half his age.

(a beat)

The American public turned a blind eye to Kennedy's philandering, and thirty years later, the only reason people didn't care about Monica Lewinsky was because the Republicans tried too hard. Ended up making the scandal look like a witch hunt.

EVELYN

What's your point?

JAMES

My point is, we're more than 20 years on from the Clinton-Lewinsky affair.

(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)

The voters don't look too kindly on married politicians who fuck their interns anymore, whether it's consensual or not.

(a beat)

Tomorrow morning, Olivia's going to have a guest spot on CNN, and she'll divulge the details of her affair--

EVELYN

You can't do that--

JAMES

I'm sorry, Evelyn. Whether you fire my daughter or not, Peter Murphy now has an electability problem. If you thought you got rid of it but asking my daughter to leave and paying for her silence, you're dead wrong.

(a beat)

I'd rather bury him the primary and win the general with someone else, than cover it up and have everything come out after he takes the oath.

EVELYN

You really think we can win the general with Davis, Garcia, or Johnson at the top of the ticket?

JAMES

Absolutely--

EVELYN

You're out of your mind--

JAMES

And you think you're a lot smarter than you actually are.

James stands, takes the envelope, presses it into Evelyn's hand, and starts to walk out of the bar.

Before he reaches the door, Evelyn says...

EVELYN

What would have had me do? I was in an impossible situation.

James turns back and looks at Evelyn.

JAMES

You were, and I'm sorry my daughter put you in that position.

(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)

(a beat)

But if you think I'm going to take anyone's side over that of my family, you're dead wrong.

EVELYN

Fair, but what am I supposed to do now--

JAMES

Oh come on, Evie, don't pretend that you're going to be hurting for work. You'll be fine.

Evelyn scoffs and shakes her head.

EVELYN

You do know that this will put your party chairmanship in jeopardy, right?

JAMES

I've made my peace with that. Either the media will eviscerate me for raising a slut for a daughter, or they won't.

(a beat)

My money's on them caring more about Peter's infidelity.

EVELYN

This isn't fair, James.

James shakes his head, and turns to leave. Right before he reaches the door, with his back turned to Evelyn, he says...

JAMES

Who ever said anything about life being fair?

James leaves the bar, leaving Evelyn alone with her envelope of money.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END