

DAVE

BY

GARY ROSS

FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - AERIAL SHOT - DAY

It sits like a jewel off in the distance -- all glittering and white. The deep blue of the Potomac stands out against the monuments as the sound of a HELICOPTER plays O.s..

SMASH CUT
TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE GROUNDS - DAY

The most famous helicopter in the world lumbers toward the most famous house. Scores of reporters are camped out on the lawn while the huge machine descends like a hurricane...

CLOSER - HELICOPTER

It touches down as the Marine Corps color guard snaps to attention. The hatch POPS open and a staircase emerges...

FULL SHOT - DOORWAY

After a moment, PRESIDENT WILLIAM HARRISON MITCHELL appears, accompanied by his wife ELLEN and loyal dog Cupcakes. They smile from the landing and wave to the world -- a postcard of themselves.

TRACKING SHOT - FIRST FAMILY

"HAIL TO THE CHIEF" RINGS OUT across the grounds. Formidably handsome Bill Mitchell is fit and in his early forties. His wife Ellen, still in her early thirties, is considered a classical beauty with a wide "friendly" smile that in certain photographs seems just on the edge of wistful. The dog frolics around them as they wave to the press and smile for the world. Ozzie and Harriet for the Nineties with a bow to FDR and some Camelot thrown in.

MOVING WITH them...

They stride arm in arm beneath the portico that leads to the West Wing. The band is still playing as they head under the archway, disappearing from public view. Then, instantly, as a handler rushes up and grabs the dog, the smiles vanish. Bill lets go of Ellen and Ellen lets go of Bill. He turns to his right and she turns to her left. Off they go in their separate directions.

CUT TO:

INT. WEST WING HALLWAY - DAY

The President strides down the long marble hallway flanked by his two senior advisors, BOB ALEXANDER, the White House Chief of Staff and ALAN REED, the White House Media Advisor.

MITCHELL

Is everybody in there?

BOB

They're waiting for you. And they're very nervous.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ROOSEVELT ROOM - DAY

It is the seat of power. There is a dark oak conference table with a crystal chandelier above it. Alan Reed is reading from a notebook full of polling data while the President glares at a group of congressional leaders. Bob glares at them, too, while they cower behind their water glasses.

REED

(reading from his notebook)

I wish I had better news... Our compassion index is off seven points from the last sample and that's down eighteen on the year. The 'Cares About People Like Me' numbers are really in the toilet. We're off twenty points from March and that was right after we raised interest rates...

MITCHELL

Dammit...

(beat)

I told them no mayo.

(looking up)

See - - I could veto this Simpson Garner thing, but I really don't want to do that...

A couple of the legislators flinch, still staring straight ahead.

MITCHELL

(circling)

Do you know why I don't want to do it?

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3.

They all look over at him for a moment. Mitchell leans out over the table like some great, predatory beast.

MITCHELL
(strangled whisper)
... Because it's got homeless
shelters... and Head Start centers ...
and... and...

BOB
(whispering)
Hot lunches.

The President looks back at him for an instant then turns
back toward the table.

MITCHELL
(building)
... And hot lunches for little
(thundering suddenly)
And if I kill it... I'll look like a
prick.

They all flinch slightly.

MITCHELL
And I don't want to look like a prick!
(beat)
I want YOU to look like pricks!!!

DIFFERENT ANGLE

SPEAKER
Sir, we tried to kill it twice...

MITCHELL
(whisper again)
I don't think so, Howard. If you had
killed it -- it would be dead.
(looking him in the eye)
When I kill something - - it always
dies. Doesn't it, flob?

BOB
(steely)
Always dead.

MAJ. LEADER
Mr. President, with all the work your
wife has done with the homeless...

The President turns and stares daggers at him. The man starts
to flumph as Mitchell cuts him off.

MITCHELL
Norman, I don't want you to do this
cause you're forced to...
(beat)
I want you to do this because you want
to. I want you to do it because you

think it's the right thing to do. I
want you to do it because you're acting
in the best interests of our country...

They stare back at him stupefied.

BOB
(upbeat)
Well -- I think that's it.

CUT TO:

INT. WEST WING HALLWAY - LATER

He moves down the corridor toward the Oval Office with Bob
and Reed at his side.

A long line of secretaries flanks the entrance.

BOB
... You've got that radio address to
go over and the American Bar Association
at the Monroe tomorrow night...

The President pauses at one of the desks and fixes a stare at
one of the secretaries, (RANDI). She looks up from behind a
pair of clear-pane glasses, and blushes at him effectively.

MITCHELL
(smiling at Randi)
The Monroe?

REED
Uh, yes, sir. The Monroe Hotel...

Randi smiles back at him.

MITCHELL
(whispering to Reed)
Did you get someone to double for me
there, out front?

REED
We're working on it.

MITCHELL
(still under his breath)
Try to find someone who looks like me
this time. That last guy was a joke.

REED
We're doing our best, sir.

He nods and winks at Randi again before heading inside the
Oval Office. The President starts humming "Hail to the Chief"
quietly to himself...

CUT TO:

EXT. DURENBURGER'S CHRYSLER PLYMOUTH - DAY

Red, white and blue flags fly above the used cars to announce Durenberger's grand opening. A SCRATCHY RENDITION of "HAIL TO THE CHIEF" PLAYS from a makeshift P.A. SYSTEM and a little stage has been erected in front of the cars. DURENBURGER himself stands alone at the mike.

DURENBURGER

This is a real special moment here at Durenburger's Chrysler Plymouth... Ladies an' gentlemen, I wantcha to give a real warm welcome to...

(pause)

The President of the United

WIDER

A dead-ringer for the President appears, perched on the back of a four hundred pound pig. He is DAVE KOVIC, our hero. Dave enters from "stage right" wearing an Uncle Sam hat and waving triumphantly to the crowd. A teenage *boy pulls the pig forward by a rope.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

He makes the victory sign with both hands and dismounts the PIG who lets out a SNORT. Dave bounds up to the small platform where he is greeted warmly by Durenburger. Dave hands him a small stack of 3x5 filing cards while "HAIL TO THE CHIEF" CONCLUDES its final strains. Dave salutes the crowd.

DAVE

(doing a decent Bill Mitchell)

Thank you, Don. Thank you for that warm introduction.

(pause)

You know it's wonderful to be here today amongst so many smiling faces.

REVERSE ANGLE - CROWD

Eight to ten people stand stonefaced amongst the Plymouth Horizons.

ON DAVE

DAVE

And, Don, let me assure you from one chief executive to another, that there fl no Chrysler Plymouth like Durenburger's Chrysler Plymouth.

A few employees applaud. Dave nudges Durenburger who takes out one of the cards.

DURENBURGER
(reading/monotone)
Thank you, Mr. President. It certainly is nice of you to be with us here today considering your busy schedule and all.

DAVE
Well, Don -- it's true that I have a busy schedule. But I've got a feeling that when folks find out about your five hundred dollar cash rebate on all '93 LeBaron and LeBaron convertibles you're gonna be even busier than I am.

Dave looks toward the crowd for another reaction but nothing comes back. An eight-year-old GIRL tugs at the bottom of her MOTHER's dress.

GIRL
Mommy, is that the President?

MOTHER
(shaking her head)
I sure hope not.

ANGLE - DAVE
He leans closer to Durenburger continuing with the routine.

DAVE
You know, Don, it's not easy being President. Why just the other day, I was riding on Air Force One...

The PIG lets out a HUGE SNORT causing everyone to jump with a start. A six-year-old KID starts to CRY while Dave glances down toward the front row.

ANGLE-DAVE
He stops the routine and squints out toward the crowd while the WAILING CONTINUES. His parents try to comfort the BOY but it doesn't do any good.

DAVE
Hey, hey... What's the matter...

DIFFERENT ANGLE - DAVE

He dismounts the stage and stumbles on one of the steps.

Dave puts on the glasses that he normally wears and squats

face to face with the six-year-old.

DAVE
(gently)
Hi...
(beat)
What's your name?

The child doesn't respond at first. Dave moves a little closer to the boy.

DAVE
Don't you have a name?

CHILD (KID)
(sniffling)
... Sam.

DAVE
(soothingly)
Hi, Sam... You want a riddle?

The Kid thinks for a second then nods. He wipes some stuff off his nose.

DAVE
Okay. What can run all day without
getting tired?

The Kid ponders it for a moment.

DAVE
(leaning closer)
Well come on, Sam. It's not your
jar...

Dave touches the Kid's ear as his eyes suddenly light up.

SAM (KID)
My nose?

DAVE
Right. !!!

Dave reaches up and "magically" produces a quarter from the side of the child's nose. He beams with delight as Dave hands him the coin.

CUT TO:

EXT. BALTIMORE STREET - DAY

Dave hurries down the busy sidewalk clutching a beat-un briefcase and his Uncle Sam hat. In civilian clothes, with his tousled hair, no one even notices that he looks like the President. Dave ducks into a small storefront office with a simple sign above it:

"KOVIC TEMPS"

"Like we've been there forever"

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE

The place is small and cluttered and very well lived in.

Dave's secretary and ex-wife, ALICE, is kissing her boyfriend JERRY goodbye.

JERRY
Six-thirty?

ALICE
Perfect.

JERRY
Great, I'll see you then.

He blows her another kiss and turns to the door just as Dave bounds into the room.

JERRY
Hi, Dave.

DAVE
(buoyant)
Hi,

He hangs up his coat and turns to Alice as Jerry leaves the room.

DAVE
(hanging up his coat)
It went great, Alice. I killed em down there.

ALICE
Yeah? Why don't you see what you *) can do in here.

DIFFERENT ANGLE
Dave turns around to see three women stacked up in his waiting area.

DAVE
(renewed energy)
No problem. What `ve we got?

ALICE
(rattling it off)
Mabel says it's too far on the bus. Jennifer's boss tried to hit on her again and Lola's been crying in your office for an hour.

Dave sticks his head inside his office where a Hispanic WOMAN of about fifty is crying into a tiny lace handkerchief.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE

DAVE
(entering)
Lola. What happened?

LOLA (WOMAN)
(turning)
Oh, Meester Kobic... Is no my fault...
I learn on de I.B.M okay? Then they
make me work on de Wang...
(crying again)
No puedo comprender esta machina...

DAVE
It's alright. We'll find you something
else.

ANGLE - OUTER OFFICE

He darts back out.

DAVE
I'll get her something right now.
(beat)
Alice... Have you seen my checkbook?

ALICE
Dave, I'm your ex-wife. As in Ex
E -- X...

He nods earnestly accepting it for what must be the hundredth time. Alice sighs and motions toward his desk.

ALICE
Bottom drawer next to your baseball
glove.

DAVE
(flashing a smile)
Thanks. You're the best.

CUT TO:

INT. ACCOUNTANCY OFFICE OF "MURRAY BLUM, CPA" - DAY

Dave's best friend MURRAY stands in front of Dave and Lola. In the b.g. sit four or five women without much to do in particular.

MURRAY
Dave, I can't hire anybody else.

He turns toward his desk. Dave follows him down the aisle.
DAVE

 ("CONFIDENTIALLY")
This woman's amazing, Murray. She
flies on an I.B.M...

 MURRAY
I don't have enough work for the people
you gave me already.

 DAVE
 (lowering his voice)
She's got three kids and the husband's
a diabetic...
 (turning to her)
Diabetic?

 LOLA
Si. Diabetico.

She starts to whimper all over again while Dave looks
plaintively at Murray.

 DAVE
Short-term thing. Straight temp job.

Murray looks at him and sighs.

 MURRAY
 (beat)
I'll see what I can do.

Dave flashes him a big smile and breathes a sigh of relief.

 DAVE
So you want to go swimming?

 MURRAY
 (incredulous)
Dave -- I'm working.

 DAVE
 (nodding quickly)
Oh yeah... Me, too.
 (beat)
You want to get dinner later?

 MURRAY
I was gonna do something with Joan.

 DAVE
Oh. Okay. I'll catch ya tomorrow then.

Murray nods as Dave turns humming into the hallway.

EXT. DAVE'S HOUSE - DAY

All It is dark and a little cluttered. A low GUTTURAL NOTE starts to build as it ECHOES up the stairwell.

DAVE (0.5.)
(singing)
'Oooooooooooooooooooooo...'

DIFFERENT ANGLE - LANDING

DAVE
'... klahoma, where the wind comes
sweeping down the plain...'

Dave bounds onto the landing and fishes around for his keys...

CUT TO:

INT. DAVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The door swings open as Dave enters the room, still singing.

DAVE
'Where the wavin' wheat, can sure smell
sweet...'

He sets down his keys, crosses to the kitchen. Dave yanks open the fridge, pulls out a beer, pops open the top, hits a twenty foot hook shot with the bottle cap, then crosses to the living room...

DAVE
'and the wind comes right behind the -
...'

He looks across the room and suddenly freezes.

DAVE'S POV

Three large men are seated on his living room couch.

The black one in the middle (DUANE STEVENSEN) speaks first.

DUANE
Mr. Kovic?

BACK TO SCENE

Dave freezes and shakes his head.

DUANE
I'm Duane Stavensen with the United
States Secret Service.

Dave's eyes go a little wider.

DUANE

We're with the federal government.

He reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a gleaming silver badge. Dave looks at it. Terrified.

DAVE

Oh my God... I thought it was a legitimate deduction, I swear to God. See... I need a piano for my work sometimes...

DUANE

Mr. Kovic. We're not here about your taxes.

DAVE

You're not?

DUANE

No.

Dave's stopped and just stares at him. Duane leans forward on the couch.

DUANE

Your government needs your help.

DAVE

(beat)
What?

DUANE

On occasion for security purposes, to double for the President at the Secret Service hires someone public functions and exposed situations.

CLOSEUP-DAVE

He looks at Duane for a moment when his eyes light up...

DAVE

Really?

DUANE

We'd like to hire you.

DAVE

Really?

CUT TO:

EXT. BALTIMORE HILTON - NIGHT

Police barricades ring the outside of the hotel. There are

the standard number of flashing red lights and sharp shooters stationed on all the balconies. An assortment of various demonstrators press up against the police line and a literal army of press are staked out by the entrance. It is the modern equivalent of Napoleon's camp.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Dave is sitting on the edge of the bed, getting his hair trimmed by JOHNNY, the Presidential makeup man and traveling barber. He removes the apron and stands back to admire his handiwork.

JOHNNY
(proudly; to himself)
Johnny, you did it again!

DAVE
You really cut his this short?

JOHNNY
It's a perfect match.

DAVE
Hunh. 'Cause I always thought it
came over the ears a little...

At that moment the door swings open and Bob Alexander, the Chief of Staff powers into the room. He crosses over toward the bed where Dave is sitting.

BOB
You understand what you'll be doing?

DAVE
(beat; intimidated)
Yeah... You just want me to wave, right?

BOB
(gruffly)
Wave from the door... go down the
stairs... get into the limo...

DAVE
(pause)
'Cause you know I can do other stuff.
I mean, if you wanted me to talk or...

BOB
(curtly)
Don't say a .

DAVE
(nodding)
Right.

Dave flashes him a smile to lighten the moment when Bob turns

and starts for the door...

DAVE
(calling after him)
Uh --Mr. Alexander?

BOB
(turning)
What?

DAVE
(beat)
Is this dangerous or anything?

BOB
No more than the usual.

DAVE
The usual...

He turns and shuts the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - NIGHT

It's the only time it has lived up to its name. The living room is huge and occupied by several Secret Servicemen. Alan Reed, the President's media advisor, stands just outside the bathroom door with a clipboard in his hand.

REED
(into the bathroom)
We're all set, sir.

MITCHELL (O.S.)
(from in the bathroom)
What about the intro?

REED
It'll be on the teleprompter with the rest of the speech.

MITCHELL (O.S.)
It better be. Last time you had me introduce a dead guy.

The sound of a TOILET FLUSHING comes from just beyond the door. The President emerges in a tuxedo, zipping up his fly.

MITCHELL
Who's this priest I'm thanking?

REED
Father McIntire. He blessed you at the inauguration.

MITCHELL

Oh yeah.

(beat; lowering his
voice)

Did you take care of later on?

REED

All set.

MITCHELL

(beaming)

Fabulous.

CUT TO:

INT. BALTIMORE HILTON - GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

Five hundred people have gathered at a thousand dollars a plate. Bill Mitchell stands at a dark blue podium with the seal of the President in front.

MITCHELL

You know as I was coming in here tonight
I ran into Jordan Blankfort who I hadn't
seen for years...

The President smiles down at Jordan while the CAMERA begins a
LONG, SLOW DOLLY AROUND the back of the podium.

MITCHELL

And I couldn't help remembering back to
the time when Jordan and I were in law
school together.

(beat)

... Now Jordan and I were pretty wild
back then and like most college
students, we liked to enjoy a few beers
on occasion...

The CAMERA CONTINUES its DOLLY REVEALING the clear glass panel
of the teleprompter. AS the President continues with his
"spontaneous reminiscence," the words "LIKED TO ENJOY A FEW
BEERS ON OCCASION..." are clearly printed in front of him.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Dave stands alone, trying to put on his tuxedo while he stares
at a television monitor. He squints at himself for a second,
then lifts the arm of the tuxedo in a "Presidential" wave.
He immediately lowers it and tries it with the other one,
duplicating the President's movements exactly. The door
opens behind him.

DUANE

Get ready.

Dave turns and nods emphatically. He glances back at the TV monitor where President Mitchell is receiving a standing ovation.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

God bless you... God bless America...

Duane holds open the door to:

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

Dave stares at the opulent room for a moment - - this is the big time...

CUT TO:

INT. BALLROOM

The audience has risen to its feet. Bill Mitchell stands at the podium waving out to the crowd like a conquering hero. He turns and salutes a crimson-robed cleric who is standing by his side. The priest salutes the President and lifts his arms like a prizefighter. The applause is still going strong as Mitchell leaves the stage.

INT. HALLWAY

MOVING WITH him. They head away from the ballroom. Bob stands on one side and Reed on the other as they move down the hallway in a phalanx of Secret Service.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

Dave is waiting nervously in the middle of the room. Duane stands poised by the side of the door.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR

The Presidential entourage steps out of the elevator and moves rapidly down the hall. It looks like a solid wall of business suits with three tuxedos in front. They reach the door of the suite together...

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

The door to the suite swings suddenly open. Three Secret Service enter the room, followed by the President a moment later. Dave snaps to attention with his arms at his sides when the President looks up and suddenly stops:

MITCHELL

(beat)

Jesus Christ.

PRESIDENT'S POV - REVERSE ANGLE

Dave stands in front of him with slicked back hair and a crisp new tuxedo. It is a mirror image of the President himself. Dave stands frozen for a moment then breaks into a nervous smile...

WIDER ANGLE

The President stares at him carefully.

MITCHELL

You are a very handsome man.

DAVE

(nervous)

Thank you, Mr. President.

MITCHELL

(to Dave)

Just get rid of that grin. You look like a schmuck.

Dave immediately wipes off the smile as the President moves past him and disappears into another room.

ANGLE - DAVE

He stares in wonder at the President's wake. The rest of the crowd moves out of the living room as Duane clears his throat and motions to the door. It's show time.

CUT TO:

EXT. BALTIMORE HILTON - NIGHT

A large crowd is anxious with anticipation. A palpable BUZZ fills the air as the photographers jockey near the front for the best possible angle.

INT. FOYER

The entourage has grown to a Presidential level as Dave emerges from the elevator and heads toward the door. He pauses for a moment to catch his breath while the Secret Service race ahead toward the entrance.

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE

A large cheer erupts from the crowd as Dave appears at the top of the steps. There is a virtual explosion of shutters and a bank of TV lights glares in his face. Dave freezes for a moment then remembers and lifts his arm in "The Presidential Wave." A louder cheer goes up from the crowd as Duane races ahead to the limo beyond.

CLOSER ON DAVE

He starts to smile and heads down the steps as the crowd presses up to the limit of the barricades.

ANGLE - LIMOUSINE

Duane stands at the open door when Dave stops again and waves once more. A LOUDER CHEER goes up this time. The FANS keep SCREAMING and Dave can no longer control himself. Suddenly and without warning, he hops up on the running board of the car.

DAVE
(waving to the crowd)
Hello America! God Bless you!

A huge CHEER goes up from the throng as he dismounts. Duane grabs him by the collar and pulls him into the limo...

DIFFERENT ANGLE
The car speeds away from the curb with the motorcade behind it.

INT. LIMO

He turns around to see Duane, sitting stone-faced across from him.

DAVE
(clearly thrilled)
Sorry, I couldn't help it. I just got carried away...
(finally letting it out)
... I was really good though, hunh?

Duane keeps staring at him. Dave shakes his head.

DAVE
(cluing Duane in)
So I guess there must be something pretty important going on for the President to go through all of this...

Duane just looks at him...

CUT TO:

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - NIGHT

A discarded tuxedo lies tossed across a chair along with a woman's bra and pantyhose.

The CAMERA PANS THROUGH DARKNESS SLOWLY TOWARD the bed while the sound of a MAN and WOMAN MAKING LOVE plays O.S.

MAN (O.S.)
Oh...

WOMAN (O.S.)

Ah!

MAN (O.S.)

Oh...

WOMAN (O.S.)

Ah!

Beat.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Ahhh!

Silence.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Ahhhhh!

Pause.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Bill?

The CAMERA ARRIVES AT the bed as the torso of Randi, the Oval Office secretary, pops INTO FRAME.

RANDI (WOMAN)

Mr. President?

Longer pause...

RANDI

(frightened)

Oh; shit...

CUT TO:

EXT. BALTIMORE HILTON - NIGHT

A red and white ambulance sits parked at the service entrance to the hotel with its red light flashing.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

The President is loaded onto a gurney bed with an array of tubes and catheters. The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Bob and Reed, Sitting in a corner, while the medical drama unfolds before them.

REED

(softly)

It doesn't look very good.

Bob looks up at him.

REED

(a little softer)

They say it hit both sides of his
brain... Even if he makes it he's gonna
be a vegetable.

BOB

I can't believe he'd do this.

REED

I know.

Bob stares straight ahead clutching onto his drink.

BOB

Where's the girl?

REED

She's a little hysterical right now.
We've got her upstairs in a laundry
room.

BOB

(shaking his head)

Nightmare...

REED

(leaning closer)

Look... at some point we're going to
have to call the Vice President...

BOB

(suddenly)

Don't call the Vice President!

REED

... What?

BOB

(grabbing his lapels)

Just don't call him, Alan!

REED

(treading softly)

The guy's in a coma, Bob.

BOB

I don't give a shit.

REED

Bob...

BOB

This is mine, Al -- all mine ...
I made him. I built him. And no
cocksucker is gonna come in here and
take it away from me just because he

to be Vice President of the United
States!

CLOSEUP - BOB

He looks at Reed for a moment...

CUT TO:

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Dave sits in the back seat with Duane. He has his small
canvas bag opened beside him on the seat. He finishes getting
dressed in his own clothes.

DAVE
(jacked)
You know if you guys want to do
something for his birthday, I could
come down to Washington. I have some
great birthday stuff...

Duane smiles at him tightly.

DAVE
I do this thing with the first lady --
my friends love it -- it's the two of
them going away to Club Med...

Duane just looks at him when the TELEPHONE RINGS beside him.
He reaches next to him, picking it up.

DUANE
Yeah...

(PAUSE)
What?... Are you sure? What?

DAVE
(innocently)
What?

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The famous building is lit up like a picture postcard while
Bob's voice plays O.S...

BOB (V.O.)
It's a temporary solution.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SUBTERRANEAN HALLWAY - NIGHT

A doctor and two nurses wheel a gurney in front of them while
Bob and Reed trail behind.

REED

Till what?

BOB

Till we figure something out.

REED

Bob, the guy had a stroke!

Reed looks at him like he's nuts as they turn a corner in the hallway.

BOB

Look, everything can be handled. We'll just find a way to handle it.

REED

(stopping)
Like how?

BOB

(big smile)
Well, start by going on television and saying that he's had a mild stroke...

REED

Mild stroke?

BOB

Yes - - and that he ought to be up and around sometime soon.

REED

Up and around? Soon?

BOB

Soon.

CUT TO:

RESUME - EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - AERIAL SHOT - NIGHT

A lone black limousine heads down Connecticut Avenue toward the mall.

DAVE (V.O.)

You know, I think I've been real cooperative up until now but...

It bears right on Pennsylvania Avenue, angling south.

DAVE

Just tell me where we're going.

The car turns right into the driveway of the White House.

DAVE

Holy shit.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Dave sits frozen in an armchair across from the President's desk. There are twenty-foot windows that lead out to the Rose Garden and two huge flags on either side of the desk. Alan Reed leans nonchalantly on one of the chairs. Bob stands nearby.

REED

(all schmooz)

Dave, my name is Alan Reed. I'm the White House Communications Director. This is Bob Alexander, our Chief of Staff.

(smiling)

We met you earlier tonight at the hotel, remember?

Dave nods, frozen in his chair.

REED

Can I get you something to drink?

He shakes his head.

REED

You sure? A Coke or a Perrier or something?

DAVE

(still frozen)

Oh yeah... I'm fine...

Reed flashes him a smile and glances over at Bob.

REED

(moving toward him)

Now, Dave, something has come up and I think we need to talk about it...

DAVE

(blurting it out)

Look, I'm sorry. I know you said not to talk, but when I saw the crowd I just got excited...

REED

We're not upset with you, Dave. We think you did a terrific job.

(to Bob)

Don't we?

BOB

(all tension)

Terrific.

Reed smiles at Dave, who musters a little smile in return.

REED

In fact, we think you did such a good job, we'd like to extend things a little bit.

DAVE

Extend things?

REED

(nodding)

Extend them.

(beat)

C'mere for a second.

He places a hand on Dave's shoulder and motions toward the desk. Dave hesitates, then follows him over.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Reed pulls out the President's chair and motions to it.

REED

Try it out.

Dave looks down at the chair in wonder.

REED

Go ahead.

Dave pauses for a moment then sinks down into the soft brown leather. He stares out in awe across the Oval Office.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Reed looks over at Bob, who nods at him. He takes a deep breath.

REED

Dave, something has happened to the President.

DAVE

(whirling)

Oh my God...

REED

(soothing him)

I know... I know...

(pause)

It's difficult for all of us. But sometimes we have to put our personal feelings aside and focus on the good of the country.

DAVE

(beat)

What happened?

REED

Well, it's... It's sort of an... an
'incident' really...

BOB

(nodding)

A condition...

REED

Exactly. A condition.

Dave nods but still doesn't understand. Reed hesitates when
Bob glares at him again.

REED

It's actually kind of serious, Dave.
I'm afraid the President's not in very
good shape.

DAVE

(actually shaken)

Oh my gosh...

He sits there, stunned for a moment.

DAVE

Will he be alright?

REED

Oh, yeah... probably...

BOB

We think so.

REED

Yes.

DAVE

(beat)

Oh.

Reed moves closer.

REED

Dave, we need our friends and even our
enemies to feel safe and secure... We
need them to feel like they can go to
bed at night knowing President Mitchell
is fully in control... We need them to
feel like he's sitting right here in
this chair...

Bob and Reed just stare at him. Dave nods, then suddenly

jumps out of the chair.

DAVE
Hey - - wait a second...

He stares at them for a beat...

DAVE
What about the Vice President?

RTED
(panicked)
Vice President?

BOB
Well... We didn't want to have to get
into this but...
(deadly serious)
... The Vice President is mentally
unbalanced.

Reed's eyes go wide. Bob stares straight ahead.

DAVE
(stunned)
No.

REED
(catching on)
I'm afraid so.

DAVE
Really? Crazy?

BOB
Certifiable.

Dave looks at them amazed. Bob moves closer to the desk.

BOB
How much do you usually get paid?

DAVE
(lost...)
Uh -- I don't know. Sometimes it's
just like a barter thing... Is this
legal?

Reed stops and looks at Bob for a moment. He turns back to
Dave.

REED
(evenly)
Dave - - have you ever driven through
a red light?

Dave stares at him.

REED

You know, on an empty road where you know it's safe and nobody's around...

DAVE

I'm not sure... I might have.

REED

Well, let's say your mother was in the car and you had to get her to a hospital. You'd do it then for sure wouldn't you?

DAVE

Well... I guess I would... Yeah.

REED

(beat)

Now, let's say the whole country. Was in that car. The entire United States of America.

DAVE

In the car?

REED

(nodding)

In the car.

DAVE

I see what you mean.

Reed smiles at him and rests a gentle hand on his shoulder.

REED

Dave, the country is sick. And we're gonna get it to a hospital.

CLOSEUP - DAVE

He stares at them for a moment then smiles slightly...

CUT TO:

INT. THIRD FLOOR RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A pair of gilt-edged doors swing open to reveal a massive bedroom beyond. It is fifty-feet long and twenty-feet wide. Brocaded draperies hang from the windows and a four-poster bed stretches to the ceiling.

BOB

These are the living quarters. The President's bedroom is on this side and the First Lady's is over there.

WIDER

Dave walks forward in awe.

DAVE

(concerned)

First Lady...

BOB

Don't worry. You won't even see her.

Dave looks at him, puzzled. Bob glances back.

BOB

(cluing him in)

They barely talk anymore.

DAVE

You're kidding?

BOB

It happens. This is where you'll be sleeping.

Bob flings open the door. Dave enters the room and looks around.

DAVE

(gawking)

Holy cow.

BOB

We'll be back for you first thing tomorrow and if you need me for anything, Duane will be right outside the door.

DAVE

(still stunned)

Oh... Okay.

CLOSEUP - DAVE

He breaks out into a "Presidential" grin...

CUT TO:

INT. "THE CBS MORNING NEWS" STUDIO - FULL SHOT - KATHLEEN SULLIVAN

She stares straight INTO the CAMERA with "The Morning Show" set behind her.

KATHLEEN SULLIVAN

... The White House now classifies the President's condition as a `slight circulatory problem of the head.'

CLOSEUP - TV SET

KATHLEEN SULLIVAN (V.0.)

Although technically a stroke, spokesmen
say the President's condition is far
from serious and he ought to be up and
around sometime soon.

The CAMERA WIDENS OUT to reveal that the TV is in:

INT. BOB'S OFFICE - DAWN

The first rays of sunrise are breaking through the window.
Reed Sits on the couch holding a large rubber ice bag while
Bob paces across the rug.

REED

Do you know how many different kinds
of laws we've broken?

BOB

(turning)

It's simple, Alan. We send the Vice-
President to Africa or something, dig
up some dirt on him, force him to resign
and get our 'President' to nominate a
new one. The whole thing takes a few
weeks tops.

DAVE - Rev. 7/22/92

31.

REED

(smiling)

You mean we get 'Dave' to nominate you
as Vice President.

BOB

I was a senator, you know.

REED

(innocently)

Oh, I know. And then when our poor
President gets another stroke - - of
course much more serious this time - -
the newly appointed V.P. becomes the
Pres...

BOB

(cutting him off)

What about containment, Alan?

Reed heaves a sigh and looks at his notes.

REED

I got the nurses for fifty grand
a piece and the doctors for a hundred.

The older one wanted head of the CDC.

BOB
(turning)
Is that everybody?

REED
Duane's guys, but he's got them under control.

BOB
What about her.

REED
Her?... Oh -- the First Lady...
(beat)
She was giving that commencement speech up in Bryn Mawr. I managed to catch her before she left the hotel.

BOB
And...

REED
(evenly)
I told her his blood pressure went up after a little incident at 'the hotel.'
She seems to hate him more than ever.

BOB
Fine.

REED
(tossing down his legal pad)
Everybody else is buying the minor stroke' story...

BOB
(nodding)
I just hope this yutz can pull it off.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE INFIRMARY - DAY

Dave sits up on the examining table with his shirt off. Bob, Reed and three other vascular specialists watch attentively while the President's personal physician puts a stethoscope to his chest.

DOCTOR
(lowering it)
Well, I must say, Mr. President, even for a man with a mild stroke you seem to have made a remarkable recovery.

DAVE
(happy as a clam)
Thanks. I'm feeling much better.

Reed smiles like a proud father.

DOCTOR
(glancing at his chart)
No signs of paralysis, no circulatory
changes. Your E.M.G. is completely
normal and your blood pressure has
even gone down.
(beat)
Have you been exercising recently?

DAVE
(shrugging)
Just the usual.. Watching the diet --
A little weight lifting...
Some power talking...

Bob shoots him a look.

DOCTOR
(nodding with the other
physicians)
Well, judging from these tests, I
don't see any reason why you couldn't
start back to work within a couple of
days.

Dave looks at them and smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESIDENT'S OUTER OFFICE - LITTLE LATER

Dave moves through the outer office flanked by Bob and Reed.
He wears a blue Presidential jogging suit with a little gold
seal embroidered on the chest. Dave approaches a line of
SECRETARIES standing behind their desks.

BOB
(under his breath)
Now, remember -- keep it simple.

DAVE
Don't worry.

He bangs into the side of a credenza. Bob and Reed freeze as
Dave gathers himself then keeps going.

DAVE
(walking up to the first
one)
Good morning, Clara...

CLARA (SECRETARY)
Good morning, Mr. President.

DAVE
(to second one...)
Good morning, Diane...

DIANE (SECRETARY)
Good morning, sir.

DAVE
Good morning, Randi...

DIFFERENT ANGLE
She leans forward, grasping his hand,
desperately.

RANDI
(welling with tears)
Oh, good morning, Mr. President.
I'm so relieved that you're alright.
You really had me scared.

Dave smiles and nods as she continues to clutch onto his hand.
Bob and Reed take him by the shoulders and move him inside...

INT. OVAL OFFICE

He is still staring at the doorway as they close the door to
the office.

DAVE
What's with her?

BOB
(still pulling him)
Don't worry about it.

Dave glances back toward the door.

REED
She's just a little emotional --
she feels kind of attached to the
President.

Dave nods as they deposit him in the President's chair. Reed
slides the phone in front of him.

BOB
Okay, let's go over it again. You met
a girl, you fell in love...

DAVE
And we're going away for a holiday.

BOB
(handing him the receiver)

For a month.

DAVE

A month.

BOB

Right and don't embellish.

DAVE

(shaking his head)

I promise. I won't.

Bob slides the phone closer as he begins to dial the number.

INT. KOVIC TEMPS - DAY

Alice is sitting at her desk staring at a large rock on her finger. She talks into the telephone, extending her hand in the manner of all newly-engaged women.

ALICE

I couldn't believe it. As soon as we sit down he pulls out this ring...

(beaming)

... Oh I know - -I just got so emotional. The waiter had to bring me another napkin.

42 CONTINUED: (AL)

RING. A light indicating the second line starts blinking.

ALICE

Hang on.

(switching lines)

Kovic Temps

(beat)

Dave! Where are you?

(pause)

You met who?..., You're going where?

(beat)

Cancun.

There is a longer pause.

ALICE

No, that's fine... No, I think it's great..., Sure, I understand I will... Okay... 'Bye.

She pauses for a moment then hits the first line all over again,

ALICE

He's in love Thank God!

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Sander Vanocur stands just outside the white House gates,
filing his nightly report.

SANDER VANOCUR

The President continued his
convalescence, resting in the white
House for the second straight day.
His personal physician pronounced him
in perfectly good health...

FULL SHOT - PRESIDENT'S PHYSICIAN - (SOUND BITE)

PRESIDENT' S PHYSICIAN

I've examined him thoroughly and I
must say, I don't think I've ever seen
the President in better shape.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BARBER

Dave's initial rinse is replaced with a professional dye job.

INT. DAVE'S ROOM

Newly coiffed, Dave tries on a series of hand-tailored suits
hanging on a rack in the middle of his room.

INT. BATHROOM

Reed watches while Dave struggles vainly in the mirror with
his first set of contact lenses

SANDER VANOCUR (V.O.)

The President was able to attend to
Some official business on Wednesday,
and continues to be briefed on all
areas of national concern...

INT. OVAL OFFICE

Reed stands in front of the desk Pointing to a large
organizational chart of government

YOU

THE CONGRESS-----THE JUDICIARY.

HOUSE-----SENATE

SUPREME COURT

JOINT CHIEFS-----THE CABINET-----N.S.C.

INT. CABINET ROOM

He sits at the President's spot in the middle of the cabinet
table. Propped up in all the other chairs, are Poster-sized

photographs of the various cabinet members. Bob points to one as Dave thinks for a moment, then guesses...

INT. STATE DINING ROOM

He stares in wonder at a full, formal place-setting. There are five forks, three knives and a countless number of spoons. Dave looks at it all, baffled for a moment, while Reed guides his hand toward the fish knife...

SANDER VANOCUR

So confident was the white House in the President's recovery, that they have just sent the Vice President on a twelve nation African goodwill tour... This is Sander Vanocur at the white House.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Dave enters from the back of the room, flanked by Bob and Reed on either side. They make their way down the aisle toward a large wooden podium with the "Seal of the President" on the front.

BOB

First thing we're gonna work on is the mannerisms. Alan has put together sort of a training program

DAVE

Great.

They lead him through the empty press chairs toward the front of the room. Reed climbs up the short Steps that lead to the podium.

REED

Now some of this may feel a bit Strange at first. You gotta remember that even a professional Politician has Some trouble getting used to...

DAVE

(stopping)
A teleprompter.

REED

What?

Dave wanders forward staring in wonder at the clear glass panels.

DAVE

The teleprompter. Is it hooked up?

REED

I don't think so.

DAVE
(disappointed)
Oh.

He folds his arms in front of him turning to Bob and Reed.

REED
(beat)
As I was saying, no one expects you to
be Bill Mitchell overnight.

The important thing to remember is his general presence.

DAVE
(nodding)
Presence.

REED
Right. Now whenever he stands at a
Podium, the President always puts one
hand in the pocket of his coat...

DAVE
(nodding)
At a press conference.

REED
What?

DAVE
That's at a press conference.
Otherwise he just puts `em right out
there.

They look at each other for a moment.

BOB
I'm not certain about...

DAVE
Oh, sure. Remember the convention
speech?

Dave puts his hands on either side of the podium.

DAVE
(in a perfect Bill
Mitchell)
'An America stronger than the one we
were given. An America prouder than
the one we found.'
(turning to them)
He has 'em right there on the side.

They stare at him in amazement.

REED
(first time he's heard
the voice)
You know that's very good.

... while Dave turns to them with a smile.

DAVE
Oh, I loved that speech.

Dave brings his hand to his forehead, scanning an imaginary horizon.

REED
Thanks, I wrote it.

DAVE
(drippingly dramatic)
... Somewhere there is a distant light,
guiding us through this rocky shoal...'

REED
Dave...

DAVE
(clutching his "breast")
'America isn't in what we say here
tonight -- it's in the faces and the
smiles of a Sunday afternoon...'
(aside)
Hand on the heart...

BOB
Dave...

DAVE
(swept up in it)
It's in the little leaguer who may
strike out but knows in his heart that
at least swung...
(aside)
Hands to the side...

REED
(louder)
Dave!

DAVE
(not hearing them)
'... It's in the gentle kindness of
the family kitchen as we gather together
when the sun goes down...'

He exhales deeply and lowers his head almost tearfully. Bob and Reed look at him stunned as he comes out of the reverie and turns to face them.

DAVE
(upbeat)
So when do we start?

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - CLOSEUP - ANDREA MITCHELL -

She continues with her report speaking directly INTO the
CAMERA:

ANDREA MITCHELL
Tom, virtually every reporter in
Washington is camped out here awaiting
the President's first appearance since
his Stroke...

WIDENING OUT:

Andrea Mitchell stands camped on the White House lawn amidst
a small army of minicams, trucks and reporters.

They all seemed focused on the Truman Balcony.

ANDREA MITCHELL
Even though some may find his recovery
amazing, White House officials claim
they never expected less from a man
who always expects so much from himself.

INT. YELLOW OVAL ROOM - DAY

Dave stands, in his new blue suit, peeking out the window at
the circus below.

DAVE
(turning back)
I thought you said I wasn't going to
see her.

REED
It's just five minutes. She comes in.
You wave to the press.
She leaves.

DAVE
Yeah, but the First Lady...
Couldn't we start with a cousin or
something?

REED
She hardly ever sees him and it'll be
so fast, she won't have a chance to
tell.

BOB

Be a professional. If you can
convince her - - you can convince
anybody.

DAVE
(reluctantly)
... Alright.

BOB
Now when she comes in, we'll move you
right out to the balcony. All you
have to say is `thanks for doing this,
Ellen.'

DAVE
`Thanks for doing this, Ellen.'

REED
Exactly.
(lowering his voice)
She doesn't always like this stuff and
it might soften her up.

Dave continues practicing "Thanks..."

BOB
(hitting the intercom)
We're ready.

Bob rises from the couch and crosses to the doorway at the
far corner of the room. Reed leads Dave to the large double
doors that open onto the balcony itself.

CLOSEUP - DAVE

He jiggles nervously for a moment. Dave takes a large wad
of gum from his mouth and sticks it quickly under the mantel
piece...

WOMAN (O.S.)
Why can't you die from a stroke like
everybody else?

DAVE'S POV - DOOR

He turns to see Ellen Mitchell, glaring at him from the
doorway. Everyone in the room freezes.

ANGLE - DAVE

He is stunned by her beauty. Dave just stares at her as she
crosses the room.

ELLEN
(to Dave)
What are you staring at?

DAVE
(too stunned to talk)
Uh...

REED
(jumping in)
We're Gonna do it right out here.

She Stops just before the window, then turns back to look
Dave in the eye.

ELLEN
Who was it, Bill? A Secretary?

He has nothing to say and just stares at her. Reed nudges
him a little.

DAVE
Thanks for doing this, Ellen.

ELLEN
Go tuck yourself, Bill.

BOB
Well, perhaps we can get started now.

She moves directly onto the balcony, leaving Dave behind. He
stands there dumbfounded, as Reed takes him by the arm, and
gently pushes him out after her.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - TRUMAN BALCONY - DAY

Dave stumbles out and finds Ellen, already poised at the rail
waving to the crowd.

CLOSER.

ELLEN
(in a whisper)
And you can tell those two pit vipers
this is the last one of these I'll be
doing for a while.

She takes his hand, displaying it publicly. Dave looks down
at his hand in hers. The heat of her skin goes right to his
brain.

REED (O.S.)
(loud whisper)
Smile!

Dave smiles.

REED (O.S.)
(louder whisper)
Wave!

Dave waves.

WIDER. INCLUDING reporters.

REPORTER #1
How do you feel, Mr. President?

YELLOW ROOM
Bob and Reed are huddled beside the window.

REED
(stage whisper)
Fine.

BALCONY

DAVE
Fine.

REPORTER #2
Ready to go back to work?

YELLOW ROOM

REED
(louder whisper)
You bet.

BALCONY

DAVE
You bet.

ELLEN
I'm outta here.

She drops his hand, turns and goes back through the door leaving Dave alone on the balcony. He stands there for a moment, then turns and follows her inside.

INT. YELLOW OVAL ROOM - DAY

She is halfway across the room when Ellen suddenly stops and does a one-eighty in the middle of the carpet.

ELLEN
Don't you have anything to say to me?

DAVE
(thinks)
Thanks for doing this, Ellen?

ELLEN
You don't change, do you, Bill?

She turns and moves through the door, slamming it behind her.

DAVE
(stunned)
She hates me.

BOB & REED
(throwing their arms
around each other)
Yes!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

All the reporters have gone home and the only remnants are scattered pieces of trash that blow across the lawn.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Duane sits poised in his chair, just outside Dave's door. He sleeps soundly, when the door opens a crack behind him.

DAVE
(softly)
Duane?

His eyes bolt open as he turns around slowly.

DAVE
... Can I get a bite? I'm kinda hungry.

INT. WHITE HOUSE KITCHEN - WALK-IN REFRIGERATOR - NIGHT

It is cavernous and huge -- the size of small garage. Dave moves delighted down the long row of food stuffs while Duane shivers slightly behind him.

DAVE
(grinning)
You gotta try this. It's my special sandwich.

Dave loads up with food and smiles at Duane.

DAVE
Everybody loves this sandwich.

INT. KITCHEN

counter and begins to go to work when Duane appears Dave emerges with a pile of food. He lays it on the behind him.

(BEAT) DUANE
What's in it?

DAVE
(turning)

Oh, that's a secret.

Duane nods and averts his eyes as Dave begins to apply the meat.

DAVE

So, how long have they been like that -- you know, him and the First Lady?

DUANE

I can't say.

DAVE

You mean you don't know or like -- you can't say.

DUANE

(same inflection)
I can't say.

DAVE

Oh.

Dave pauses, then starts adding the lettuce.

DAVE

So you just protect the President the whole time? That's your whole job?

DUANE

Yeah.

DAVE

(turning)
You got a gun?

DUANE

Of course.

Dave glances around the kitchen and lowers his voice.

DAVE

Can I See it?

DUANE

Well, it's really not policy to...

DAVE

(quickly)
I understand.

Dave turns back to the sandwich while Duane looks at him for a moment. Duane rolls his eyes and unbuttons the front of his coat revealing a fifteen round Beretta.

DAVE

(looking at the gun)

You ever use it?

DUANE

No.

DAVE

Huh.

(right back to the sandwich)

You know what I always wondered the way they say you guys'd take a bullet for the President.

DUANE

What about it?

DAVE

Well, is that really true? I mean, would you really get killed just to save his life.

DUANE

Certainly.

Dave cuts the sandwich in half turning back to Duane.

DAVE

So that means, now you'd get killed for me too?

Duane looks at him, stunned by the realization. Dave smiles and moves forward, extending the sandwich.

DAVE

Here. Try this.

DAVE - Rev. 8/7/92

46.

Duane stares at it for a moment, then lifts the sandwich in a daze.

EXT. DOWNTOWN WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

The CAMERA begins to PUSH IN ON a small elegant restaurant.

REED

Clean.

BOB

What do you mean, he's clean?

INT. DUKE1S RESTAURANT - DAY

It's a Washington mecca for the power lunch. Bob and Reed Sit in a corner booth with a manilla folder between them.

REED

(agitated)
I mean I've checked everything.
Women. Liquor... Finances. I went
all the way back to his high school
race for student body president.

BOB
No one gets to be Vice President by
being that clean.

REED
The guy's a Boy Scout, Bob. He declared
frequent flyer miles on his income tax
return.

Reed twists in his chair while Bob checks out the dossier.

BOB
What about the wife?

REED
Clean.

BOB
Check his kids.

REED
Clean.

BOB
Nobody's got clean kids.

REED
We've got nothing, Bob. This won't
work.

BOB
If we find nothing, we get creative.
Just make something up. Instead of a
couple weeks it'll be a couple of
months. The whole thing is under
control.

REED
(leaning forward; tense
whisper)
You think we can keep this thing going
for a couple of months!

At that moment, a DISTINGUISHED MAN moves up the table,
clapping a hand on Reed's shoulder.

DISTINGUISHED MAN
(strong Southern accent)
Bob... Alan... Your boy sure looks
great.
(leaning closer)

I think he sounds even better'n he did
before this stroke.

He lets out a rich, throaty laugh, full of booze and
cigarettes. Bob smiles at him.

BOB
Well, thanks very much, Judge. We'll
tell him you sent your best.

DISTINGUISHED MAN
You take care, now.

BOB
Yeah, you, too.

The Man moves on as they look at one another...

CUT TO:

AIR FORCE ONE (STOCK FOOTAGE)

The President's private 747 soars into the wild blue yonder.

EXT. GENERAL MOTORS ASSEMBLY PLANT (DEERBORNE MICHIGAN')

- DAY The huge "GM" sign stands prominently in the f.g. Below
it their motto reads: "Mark of Excellence."

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE - DAY

Dave is escorted through the plant by the GM PRESIDENT and a
large entourage. Bob and Reed hover a couple of steps behind
as Dave listens to the tour.

GM PRESIDENT
Now this man is using a robotic
mechanism for picking up the engine.
The large arms that you
see duplicate all of his arm movements
exactly, so it's as if he's lifting
two thousand pounds.

They pause in front of a large assembly area.' One of the
workers stands at a machine with his arms stuck in two long
rubber sleeves. Above him, a pair of mechanical arms hoists
an engine high into the air.

DAVE
(beat)
Can I try it?

GM PRESIDENT
Huh? Uh, well...

BOB
Mr. President...

DAVE

I mean, if it's a problem...

GM PRESIDENT

No, no. It's really quite simple.
Just come on over here.

The GM Executive leads Dave toward the huge machine. He smiles as an army of cameras press in closer.

GM PRESIDENT

Now, you slip your hands into these
sleeves here...

Dave nods and does as he is told. All at once the two 12-foot arms shoot straight up into the air. He smiles with delight as the massive robot comes alive in his hands. Dave lifts his arms over his head and the huge claws point straight toward the ceiling. He sticks them out to the side and the robot does the same.

DAVE

I once caught a fish this big.

Dave sticks his arms out to his sides and the huge claws indicate a 40-foot fish. A roar goes up from the crowd as a slight smile starts to spread across Reed's face...

REED

(almost in awe)
He's a soundbite machine...

Bob glances over at him...

CUT TO:

OMITTED

GERGEN AND SHIELDS (MACNEIL LEHRER NEWSHOUR) - FULL SHOT

Two of the most famous pundits in America sit side by side on the PBS set.

GERGEN

I don't know about you, Mark, but
I don't think I've ever seen the
President as relaxed or comfortable
with himself as he is right now.

SHIELDS

Oh, I agree, David. I don't know who
gave him happy pills but this is a
pretty unbelievable transformation.

GERGEN

Well, I think it's a kind of 'rebirth'

really. This is a man who's stared death in the face and it's obviously had a profound effect on him.

SHIELDS

Look, if that's what a stroke'll do for ya, I'll take a couple of dozen.

CUT TO:

CLOSEUP-REED

He stares OUT OF FRAME expectantly with the grin of an excited child... The CAMERA WIDENS OUT to reveal:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE LAWN - DAY

Dave romps on all fours with the cocker spaniel (Cupcakes) that used to serve as the President's prop. He holds one end of a towel in his mouth while the dog tugs feverishly at the other.

WIDER

A hundred SHUTTERS CLICK at once while the White House press corps strains on their barricade...

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - UPWARD ANGLE

Ellen watches the spectacle from a second floor window.

ELLEN

What a jerk.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE LAWN - DAY

Dave stands, in the Presidential jogging suit, next to Arnold Schwarzenegger. They are surrounded by twenty or thirty fourth graders, all there to demonstrate their physical fitness. Arnold hits the deck in a flurry of push-ups -- urging the President to follow suit. Dave hits the deck as well, matching the superstar rep for rep. The cameras explode in a LOUD VOLLEY OF SHUTTER FIRE. Reed grins all over again...

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH LAWN - DAY

Dave stands face to face with the Japanese Prime Minister in a full diplomatic ceremony. He listens to his interpreter for a moment, then bows stiffly from the waist.

The Prime Minister bows in return.

Dave bows again.

The Prime Minister bows again.

Dave bows again. The Prime Minister bows again.

CLOSER

LOSER

Dave head-fakes but the Prime Minister bows anyway. Dave lets out an ear to ear grin as the SHUTTERS FIRE once more...

CUT TO:

JAY LENO (THE TONIGHT SHOW) - FULL SHOT

He stands in front of those famous curtains doing his nightly monologue.

LENO

How 'bout the President these days
huh? One minute he has a stroke the
next he's doing push-ups. Must make
it a lot easier on the Secret Service
when all they have to worry about is
Kryptonite.

The audience claps in approval...

CUT TO:

INT. EAST WING - DAY

Dave moves through the East Wing with an entourage of Presidential aides.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Dave glances to his right and hesitates for a moment. There, in her own suite of offices, is Ellen Mitchell with her back to Dave, talking on the phone.

ANGLE - DAVE

He's drawn momentarily to her presence, but is forced to continue down the hallway with his entourage...

CUT TO:

INT. CABINET ROOM - DAY

He sits at the center of the long cabinet table, surrounded by the 14 members. Dave clutches a stack of 3x5 cards, as he glances around the room.

DAVE - Rev. 7/27/92

51A.

DAVE
(reading from the first
card)
Okay -- first we're gonna hear from
Ted on the land management
legislation...

CLOSEUP - DAVE

He glances back toward Bob and Reed with a proud look on his
face...

CUT TO:

OMITTED

INT. DAVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

He stands by the President's bureau, looking through the
drawers. Dave pulls out some socks and an old used hair net.
He discards it quickly and moves onto the next. Dave opens
the bottom drawer and glances down at the contents. He pauses
for a moment, drawn by what he sees.

CLOSER

Dave reaches down and pulls a framed picture from the
President's bottom drawer.

INSERT - PICTURE FRAME

A young, happy Bill Mitchell stands next to his bride. He
wears a morning-coat and top hat with the biggest smile in
the world. Of course, a young Bill Mitchell could just as
easily be a young Dave Kovic...

ANGLE - DAVE
He stares at the photograph of "him"
and Ellen, reliving a history that he
never experienced.

CUT TO:

OMITTED

INT. FIRST LADY'S OFFICE - DAY

It is more functional than ornamental. The Chippendale
furniture is covered up with papers and boxes and large stacks
of newsclippings. Several aides move in and out of the room
while a MUTED TV set plays in the b.g.

ELLEN
(into phone)
You're misinterpreting it, Nathan --

that's not what the study said. It
said if the mother got less than 1100
calories the child would risk
a low birthrate...

As an aide comes up to her with a small stack of papers, Ellen
notices the TV.

ELLEN
Nathan?... Hang on a second.
(to the aide)
Will you turn that thing up?

CLOSEUP - TELEVISION SET (THE McLAUGHLIN GROUP)

McLAUGHLIN GROUP - DAY

Part wrestling match, part news analysis, part Roman circus:
the most famous political talk show in America is well
underway:

MCLAUGHLIN
Issue One: 'The New Bill Mitchell.'
Two weeks after his brush with death
the President is suddenly bounding
around the country with the energy of
a high school track star. Is this
merely overcompensation or the
indefatigable greatness of a truly
great man.
(turning to Kondracke)
Mor-ton...

MORT KONDRACKE
Well, he looks pretty great to me. I
think the President is showing the
same strength of character he did when
he first got elected.

ELEANOR CLIFT
You know, Mort, every time this guy has
a blip in the polls you start
genuflecting...

MORT KONDRACKE
(defensive)
Hey -- I think he looks great.

CHRIS MATHEWS
(cutting in)
Yeah, he looks great 'cause they're
makin' him look great. This puppet
show at the auto plant was the most
manipulative piece of political theater
I've ever seen.

FRED BARNES

Oh, come on, Chris. You're just steamed
'cause he's doing well.

CHRIS MATHEWS

I am not...

FRED BARNES

Is he doing well?

CHRIS MATHEWS

Well... Yeah... He's doing well...

MCLAUGHLIN

(the final word)

Answer: He's doing very well. We'll
get to predictions right after this.

The THEME MUSIC COMES UP as they go to commercial.

INT. FIRST LADY'S OFFICE - CLOSEUP - ELLEN - DAY

She stares at the set, skeptically...

CUT TO:

EXT. BALTIMORE MEMORIAL STADIUM - NIGHT

Dave stands at the edge of the grass in an Oriole's jacket
with "PREZ" on the back. The manager of the team hands him a
baseball while forty thousand fans stand cheering at their
seats.

PUBLIC ADDRESS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, throwing out the
ceremonial first pitch...

(pause)

The President of the United States.

Dave hops over the little railing that separates his box from
the field. The catcher stands a few feet away giving him a
target with the glove, but Dave shakes his head and waves him
over to the mound.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

The catcher looks a little baffled as Dave strides across the
foul line with a grin on his face. The forty thousand fans
start to go wild as he climbs up on the mound, tucking the
ball behind his back.

REVERSE ANGLE - CATCHER

He stands at the plate sticking out his glove to give Dave a
bigger target. The President looks at him for a second,
then motions him into a crouch.

ANGLE - DAVE

He spits on the mound and spreads his fingers in a fork- ball grip. The catcher sinks into a crouch as Dave goes into a wind-up and busts off a perfect curve-ball. The catcher looks at it astonished as it "breaks" into his mitt. The crowd goes nuts...

CUT TO:

OMITTED

"LARRY KING LIVE" - DAY

A75

Larry sits at his desk with his famous stand-up mike in front of him.

LARRY KING

We're back with Oliver Stone, talking about what seems like a pretty far-fetched theory...

WIDER

Oliver Stone sits across the desk.

OLIVER STONE

There's something going on here, Larry, and no one is telling us the truth.

LARRY KING

Oliver, the guy had a little stroke. He's enjoying life a little...

OLIVER STONE

(leaning forward; half whisper)

If you look at a photograph of Bill Mitchell before the stroke, and another one right after...

LARRY KING

Aren't you being a little paranoid?

OLIVER STONE

Have you compared the photographs?

Larry King looks at him and shakes his head...

CUT TO:

INT. DAVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

He lies on his bed, with the remote control in his hand, doing a split-second tour of the channels. Dave looks toward the French doors that lead to the fourth floor balcony.

EXT. BALUSTRADE - NIGHT

Dave tosses open the door and steps outside. He stretches out his limbs, staring at the magnificent view of the city.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

He looks off toward the other side of the White House; Ellen's side. A single curtain billows out of an open window. Dave can't help himself. He starts across the terrace.

FOLLOWING DAVE

Dave reaches the open doorway and slides quickly against the wall. Slowly, carefully he bends his head and peeks into the room.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - DAVE'S POV

She sits on her bed, surrounded by some work papers. In the warm light of the room, through the billowing curtains, Ellen's skin seems to glow. She stops reading for a moment and brushes aside a loose strand of hair.

EXT. BALUSTRADE - WIDER

Dave stares at her, transfixed. Suddenly, a light comes on in a nearby room causing Dave to jump back with a start. He sneaks a final peek and hurries toward his room...

CUT TO:

INT. REED'S OFFICE - DAY

He sits at his white marble Italian desk, talking on the phone when Bob comes storming into the room.

REED

(checking his schedule)

Okay, let's see... you can have him on Tuesday the 25th...

BOB (O.S.)

Are you out of your mind?

WIDER

He bangs down a copy of the week's schedule, looking Reed in the eye.

REED

Uh, let me get back to you...

BOB

You scheduled a whole day with the First Lady?

REED

(hanging up)

It's a homeless shelter.

BOB

Oh. Excuse me.

REED

It's gonna be great. 'Caring about his wife.' 'Spending time on her favorite issue...'

BOB

I don't want him caring about his wife! What about the Vice President!

REED

Remember that First Liberty stuff we almost got nailed on?

BOB

Yeah...

REED

I just dumped it on him instead.

Bob looks at him stunned.

BOB

When does it break?

REED

(shrugging)
Couple of days.
(showing him a folder)
Anyhow, look at these tracking polls, they'll burn up in your hands: seventy-three percent with seniors, eighty-four with working mothers...

BOB

(a little uneasy)
Alan, we still have to control this guy...

REED

(ignoring him)
And look at this. Russell came around on the trade bill.

BOB

(stunned)
You're kidding.

REED

How long have you been waiting to pass that thing?

BOB

Three years.

REED

I'm telling you, Bob, it's a gift.
When you got a Ferrari you don't leave
it in the garage.

CUT TO:

PRESIDENTIAL MOTORCADE - AERIAL SHOT - DAY

80

The long line of black limousines and police motorcycles makes
its way through downtown Washington.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE

Dave sits next to the First Lady in the back seat of the limo.
Both of them stare straight ahead. Finally, after several
seconds of silence, Ellen turns to Dave.

ELLEN

Why are you doing this, Bill?

He looks over at her, startled.

DAVE

What?

ELLEN

(irritated)

Since when do you care about the
homeless?

Dave thinks for a moment.

DAVE

(beat)

I care about the homeless.

ELLEN

Yeah. I'm sure it's keeping you up
nights.

She turns away from him, twisting in the seat. The bottom of
Ellen's skirt hikes up her thigh, exposing the top part of
her leg. Dave looks down at it, drawn to the sight of naked
flesh. Sensing something, Ellen glances back and catches him
looking.

CLOSER

Their eyes lock for a moment. Dave
smiles quickly and glances out the
window. Ellen looks down at her own
leg a little puzzled.

EXT. HELPING HAND SHELTER - DAY

The sidewalk is teeming with press. The shelter itself is painted a bright shade of blue - - a cheery little island in a sea of graffiti. A small group of community leaders waits by the front door while the Presidential limousine pulls up to the curb.

CLOSER

The door pops open as Ellen and Dave step out. He turns and waves to the crowd while she stares straight ahead. Reed hurries up to them.

REED

(under his breath)

Okay, it's straight klick and smile
but there's a great visual in the
kitchen so make sure you stop at the
soup.

She shoots him a glare as they reach the top of the stairs. Dave nods and they move forward to greet the community leaders.

INT. SHELTER

He takes a couple of steps inside, then suddenly stops. The smile fades as his eyes go wide.

DAVE'S POV

It is more a nursery school than a homeless shelter. Twenty to thirty children, most of them black, stand formally assembled in front of the President.

ELLEN

(good at this)

One of the things they're trying to do
here at Helping Hand, is keep verbal
skills alive. The first thing that
goes with these kids is their ability
to communicate and they need to get to
them before this happens.

She glances over her shoulder. Dave has wandered forward to the edge of the large rubber mat. Everyone stares, stunned, as he looks at the kids for a moment, then sinks suddenly to his knees.

DAVE

(quietly)

Hi there.

ANGLE - PRESS CORPS

The cameras surge forward to the side of the play area. The SHUTTERS FIRE WILDLY as Dave glances up at the cardboard cut-

outs.

DAVE
(quietly)
You like cartoons?

The kids don't respond. They stare at the crush of reporters and glancing TV lights.

DAVE
(turning toward the
cameras)
Could you just stop that for a second.

Everyone freezes. The camera crews back up a step as Dave turns back toward the kids.

DAVE
(softer)
You like Tweety Bird?

A few of them nod.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

She stares in disbelief as her husband sits cross-legged in the middle of the mat. He leans forward, into the children, talking like a kindergarten teacher.

ANGLE - PLAY AREA

DAVE
So, which one do you like?

A FOUR-YEAR-OLD tugs gently at his sleeve. He wears donated overalls and a N.Y. Mets T-shirt.

KID (FOUR-YEAR-OLD)
(in a lisp)
Sylvester.

DAVE
(smiling)
Sylvester?

The boy nods.

DAVE
But he's a cat.

ANGLE - REED

He beams from ear to ear as the photo-op materializes in front of his eyes. Dave glances over at him, cupping his hand in a whisper.

DAVE

(side of his mouth)
Gimme a quarter.

REED
(confused)
What?

DAVE
Quick. Gimme a quarter.

WIDER

Reed fishes through his pockets and comes up with a coin. He moves to the mat, slipping it to Dave.

ANGLE - DAVE

DAVE
(leaning forward)
Okay - - what can run all day without getting tired.

The kid looks at him, baffled. Dave reaches out slowly and taps the side of his nose. DAVE

(GENTLY)
Well, it's not your ear.

KID
(lighting up)
My nose?

ANGLE - ELLEN

She watches in amazement as her husband reaches out and "magically" produces a quarter from the side of the child's nose. Dave looks up at her with a smile, and their eyes lock as a hundred shutters fire at once...

CUT TO:

INT. "NIGHTLINE" - FULL SHOT - TED KOPPEL - NIGHT

KOPPEL
What makes a man rise to a particular moment in history? What makes a man in the thicket of middle age, suddenly rediscover himself with the wonder of a child.

CLOSER (SWITCHING CAMERAS)

KOPPEL
Later on tonight, we'll talk with Dr. Henry Mueller who is an expert in the psychological effects of a mid-life health crisis... and to Gail Sheehy,

who has just co-authored a book on
male menopause.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The sound of a MAN HUMMING "Hail to the Chief" plays O.S.

DAVE - Rev. 7/22/92

63.

INT. PRESIDENT'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steam billows up in the shower while Dave scrubs shampoo into his hair. He massages it vigorously into his scalp while the humming continues.

DAVE

`Bum, bum da dum...'

He rinses it out and reaches for the soap. It's a small soap on a rope" designed to look like the Presidential seal...

WOMAN

I can't believe you'd do something
like that. Not even you.

WIDER

The door to the shower swings open as
Ellen materializes. No queen of England
ever looked more regal than Ellen
Mitchell in her cloud of steam.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

ELLEN

How could you?

Dave jumps with a start, then turns away from her quickly, bashfully facing the tile. He looks back at Ellen over his shoulder.

DAVE

... How could I what?

ELLEN

Oh, come on, Bill. Don't patronize
me. I'm not one of your little...
(beat)
Turn around. I'm talking to you!...
Turnaround!

Dave steels himself then turns slowly around to face her. He strikes a "stoic" pose.

ELLEN

(trembling slightly)

... You know, if you want to be the same old bastard, that's fine. I can handle it. But don't pull this 'man of the people' bullshit and then do something like this.

DAVE
(frozen; feeling - very exposed)
I don't understand.

ELLEN
(exasperated)
That's not just a works bill you vetoed -- that would have given these kids homes...
(losing it a little)
... When I think about that little spectacle you pulled with those muppets and that magic trick...

DAVE
What's wrong with a magic trick?

ELLEN
You made their funding disappear!

Dave recoils a little.

DAVE
Look. If there was some mistake...

ELLEN
(in a rage)
There's no mistake, Bill. If you veto their funding, it's not a mistake. If you hurt someone intentionally, it's not a mistake.

She turns and leaves through the steam disappearing as suddenly as she came. Dave hesitates for an instant, then starts right after her.

INT. HALLWAY

Duane is seated at his regular post when Ellen comes stalking out of Dave's suite. He looks up in amazement as Dave runs out a moment later. He's dripping wet and clutching a bath towel around his waist.

DAVE
(turning to Duane)
Call Bob and Reed. Tell them I need them immediately.

DUANE
But it's ten-thirty at night.

Dave turns and gives him a "Presidential" glare.

DUANE
(backing off)
Yeah, sure. You got it.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Dave is seated at his desk, hair still wet, dressed in the Presidential jogging suit. The door bursts open. It's Bob and Reed.

BOB
What the hell is this?

DAVE
What the hell is this ?

Bob and Reed cross over toward the desk as Dave slams down a copy of rolled up newspaper.

BOB
(looking at it)
The Washington Post.

DAVE
(pounding his finger on
the front page)
No...

Bob glances at the paper then hands it to Reed.

REED
(looking at it; shrugging)
President vetoes works bill?

DAVE
We vetoed that?

BOB
(a slow boil)
No!... WE didn't anything...

REED
(interceding)
Dave, these things get awfully
complicated sometimes...

DAVE
That shelter was in this bill.

BOB
(losing it)
Alan

DAVE

Lots of shelters were in this bill.

BOB
(moving toward him)
Listen, you little...

REED
(cutting in)
Dave, the budget's a very complicated thing. Even I don't understand it sometimes. Now occasionally we have to make some cuts and...

DAVE
But we went there. We saw those kids.

BOB
Yeah. And if you can find a way to cut THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS from the federal budget, then you can keep your lousy shelters, okay.

Dave just looks at him for a moment.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

A small Ford Escort with a Thrifty rent-a-car sticker pulls up to the East Gate of the White House. It stops just short of the guard station, then rolls forward a few feet and stops again.

ANGLE - MURRAY

He leans out of the window, squinting into the sun. Murray holds a mangled map of Washington in his hand.

MURRAY
(terrified)
I'm here to see... the President?

The guard looks at him without responding.

MURRAY
He asked me to come.

The guard reaches for the phone and dials a few numbers. Murray jiggles nervously in his seat.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

He sits in the exact same chair that Dave occupied on his arrival. Murray stares across the Oval Office with a terrified look on his face.

MURRAY
(urgent whisper)
I'm serious, Dave -- you could get in

a lot of trouble for something like this.

DAVE

It's fine.

MURRAY

They could put you in jail.

DAVE

Why would they do that. They hired me.

Murray just stares at him.

DAVE

It's kind of a national emergency thing.
I can't really talk about it...

(confidentially)

Paying me big money too. C'mere.

He leads Murray from the chair to the other side of the desk.
Dave reaches down opening the bottom drawer.

DAVE

See.

INSERT - DESK DRAWER

It is full of money. Neat little stacks of hundred dollar bills.

ANGLE - MURRAY

He looks at it wide-eyed, frozen by what he sees.

MURRAY

(whispering; indicating
the walls)
Are we being taped?

DAVE

I don't think so

MURRAY

This is undeclared income.

DAVE

And who's gonna find out?

MURRAY

The government

DAVE

I am the government.

Murray turns and looks at his best friend, speechless. He

stares at Dave for a couple of seconds when a strange look of wonder crosses his face.

DAVE
I know -- kind of wild, huh?
(beat)
Let's get to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

A light is burning in the second floor residence.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL DINING ROOM - LATER

It is a large oak-lined room in the private residence.

Dave and Murray sit on either side of a huge dining table with papers strewn all around them. In front of Murray sits a large, leather bound volume of the federal budget.

MURRAY
I gotta tell ya, Dave. I've been going over this a bunch of times and a lot of this stuff just doesn't add up.
(beat)
Who does these books?

DAVE
I'm not sure.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

A light is burning in the second floor residence.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL DINING ROOM - LATER

It is a large oak-lined room in the private residence. Dave and Murray sit on either side of a huge dining table with papers strewn all around them. In front of Murray sits a large, leather bound volume of the federal budget.

MURRAY
I gotta tell ya, Dave. I've been going over this a bunch of times and a lot of this stuff just doesn't add up.
(beat)
Who does these books?

DAVE
I'm not sure.

MURRAY

I just think they make this stuff a lot more complicated than it has to be.

DAVE

I'm not surprised.
(beat)
Can we save anywhere?

MURRAY

Well, yeah. But you gotta start making some choices.

DAVE

Choices?

MURRAY

You know -- priorities.
(thinking)
Remember when you couldn't get your car fixed 'cause you wanted to get that piano?

DAVE

(hopefully)
You could buy it on payments.

MURRAY

(thumping the budget)
Yeah. That's how you end up with a 400 billion dollar deficit.

DAVE

So what do we do?

MURRAY

Well, there's lots of places where I think you can save, but I'm not the one who's I mean, I'm not the one who's not the Pres...

DAVE

(cutting him off)
It's alright. I know what you mean.
Let's start at the top.

CUT TO:

INT. CABINET ROOM - DAY

It is jammed to capacity.

The CABINET SECRETARIES are seated around the table while the White House staff lines the walls. Three television crews are poised in the far corner of the room.

ANGLE - DOORWAY

Reed enters and crosses to Dave's regular spot at the cabinet table. He places a stack of 3 x 5 filing cards next to his water glass and retreats to his seat along the wall.

INT. HALLWAY

Bob moves down the corridor with a little spring in his step. He is actually whistling a cheery tune as he carries the morning edition of the Washington Post.

INT. CABINET ROOM

Bob enters with a great big grin and even says hello to C a couple of aides.

CLOSER ANGLE

Bob sits down next to Reed unfolding a copy of the paper.

BOB

(whispers)

Its a work of art. Look at this thing.

Reed glances down at the paper.

BOB

(reads softly)

`Vice President's office linked to
First Liberty scandal. Justice
Department may investigate.'

(beat)

Alan, you're a genius -- we're on our
way!

Bob looks up and glances around.

BOB

(pause)

What's with the cameras?

REED

Hundredth cabinet meeting. I thought
it was a nice touch.

BOB

(benignly)

Oh. Fine.

ANGLE - DOORWAY

Dave enters suddenly, moving quickly
into the room. He nods to the various
staff members, crossing to his seat.

DAVE

Good morning, everybody.

CABINET

Good morning, Mr. President.

Dave takes a stack of index cards from his own pocket and S places them next to Reed's. He leans forward, clearing his throat.

DAVE

(purposefully)

Before we get started today there are a few things I'd like to go over in the budget.

CLOSEUP - BOB

He glances up from his report and leans over to Reed.

BOB

(whispering)

Do we have anything on the budget today?

REED

(stunned)

I don't think so.

They look slowly toward the table...

ANGLE - DAVE

He clutches one of the 3 x 5 cards in his hand.

DAVE

Now I think I've found some ways to put back the homeless section of the Simpson Garner works bill.

ANGLE - CABINET TABLE

A slight murmur moves through the Cabinet.

BOB

(standing up)

Uh, Mr. President... I don't believe that's on your agenda today.

DAVE

(pleasantly)

Well it's a last minute change.

Bob goes completely white as Dave turns back to the Cabinet table.

SHOT - DAVE

DAVE

The way I see it we need three hundred

and fifty million dollars in order to keep the program. Now some of this can be achieved through some simple changes in cash management. For example...

He leans forward onto the table, reading from his card.

DAVE

According to the O.M.B. we have seventeen defense contractors who are delinquent in their contracts.

(scanning the table)

Is that true?

DIRECTOR OF O.M.B.

Uh... I believe so... Yes.

DAVE

So even though they're late, we keep paying them on time?

DIRECTOR OF O.M.B.

Well -- in a sense... yeah.

DAVE

Now instead of giving them money for something they haven't finished, we could hold back that cash, put it aside in some interest bearing...

CLOSEUP - BOB

BOB

(leaping suddenly to his feet)

Mr. President!

ANGLE - DAVE

He turns slowly around in his chair.

DAVE

(daring him)

Yes?

BOB'S POV

He looks at Dave, then out into the room. Twelve Cabinet Secretaries, the White House staff and three network TV crews are focused right at him.

WIDER ANGLE

He stands there, frozen in the glare of the TV lights. Bob looks at them for a moment then sinks slowly into his seat.

BOB
(tightly)
.. Nothing.

DAVE
(smiling quietly)
Great.

He turns back to the table clutching the card in his hand.

DAVE
Like I was saying, if we took that
cash and stuck it in even an ordinary
savings account, we'd be making twelve
million a month in interest.

A murmur goes around the table. The SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY
shifts a little in his chair.

SECRETARY OF TREASURY
Well, technically that's true...

He thinks about it for a moment...

SECRETARY OF TREASURY
Yes. Yes, I suppose that's true.

ANGLE - BOB

He has taken a handful of curtain and twisted it uncon-
sciously into a rope. Reed stares straight ahead, stunned.

ANGLE-DAVE

DAVE
But unfortunately, money management
only gets us halfway to our goal. To
find the rest of the money, we're going
to have to start making some choices - -
some pretty tough choices...

SHOT - BOB

He seizes Reed's tie, pulling him over.

BOB
(loud whisper)
Choices???

ANGLE - DAVE

DAVE
(hearing him)
Yes, Bob. Choices... Now the
Commerce Department...

SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

(sitting erect)
Yes, Mr. President?

DAVE
(from a card)
You're spending forty-three million
dollars on an ad campaign to...
(reading)
'Boost consumer confidence in the
American auto industry.'

SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
And it's proving quite effective...

DAVE
Does it make the cars any better?

SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
No, sir. It's more of a perceptual
issue.

DAVE
(beat)
Perceptual?

SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Yes, it's designed to bolster individual
confidence in a previous domestic
automotive purchase.

DAVE
(beat)
Why?

SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Well... to shore up product
identification and preserve market
share.

DAVE
So we're spending forty-seven million
dollars to make people feel better
about a car they've already bought?

SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Yes, but I wouldn't...

DAVE
(indignant)
Well I'm sure that's really important,
but I don't want to tell some eight-
year-old kid he has to sleep in the
street because we want people to feel
better about their cars.
(beat)
Do you want to tell him that?

He gestures toward the TV cameras in the room.

SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Me? Uh, no sir... I sure don't.

ANGLE - BOB AND REED

Bob fumes at this but a slight smile actually starts to creep up the side of Reed's face.

ANGLE - DAVE
He pulls out a pen and jots down a figure...

DAVE
Good. That gives us another forty-seven million. Now the Postal Service...

POSTMASTER GENERAL
(sitting up)
Yes, Mr. President!

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Dave's tie is loosened at his throat and there are notes spread out around him. The Cabinet leans forward in their seats.

DAVE
Okay, so that makes...
(whispering)
... Two, eighty-four, carry the three...
(pause)
... Three hundred and fifty-six million.
(looking up with a smile)
... And that means we can keep the program.

WIDE ANGLE - CABINET ROOM

The entire room bursts into applause. Bob fumes silently from his spot along the wall as the ovation continues around him.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY

The door to the cabinet room bursts open as the mob pours into the hall.

VARIOUS CABINET MEMBERS
Wonderful job, sir... Fantastic, Mr. President.

Dave moves down the corridor followed by the throng.

INT. CABINET ROOM

Bob stands very still in the center of the empty room. Reed blocks the door a few feet away.

REED
What are you gonna do?

BOB
(quietly)
I'm going to kill him.

REED
You can't kill a President.

Bob looks at him for a moment, then suddenly explodes.

BOB
He's not a President! He's an ordinary person. I can kill an ordinary person.

REED
Bob...

BOB
I can kill a HUNDRED ordinary people.

REED
He's only doing what you told him to.

BOB
(stunned)
What I told him to?

REED
I heard you. You said 'cut three hundred million dollars from the federal budget, and you can keep your homeless shelter.'

BOB
Well, I didn't mean it, Alan. Why the fuck would I want to save a homeless shelter?

REED
He was only doing his job.

Bob looks at him for a moment then erupts all over again.

BOB
His job? His job!!!

He lunges for the door while Reed grabs him around the waist.

BOB
It's not his job -- It's my job!

REED
Bob...

BOB
(thrashing around)
Was he a senator? Is he on the
Trilateral Commission? Was he in Who's
Who In Washington NINE YEARS Reed
wrestles him away from the door, as
Bob struggles to get free. I'll destroy
him, Alan. I'll shred the bastard!!!

REED
Don't do this.

BOB
I'll lock him away for good.

REED
Then we'll all go to jail together.

Bob stops struggling suddenly and backs up a step. His eyes
narrow to tiny slits.

BOB
What do you mean by that?

REED
(smoothing out his suit)
Just what you think I mean.

BOB
(stunned)
Are you threatening me?

REED
(thinking about it)
Sort of... Yeah.

Bob looks at him for a moment.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST LADY'S OFFICE - DAY

Ellen is in a meeting with a few people when a MALE AIDE flies
through the door handing her the afternoon paper.

AIDE
You won't believe this.

CLOSEUP - USA TODAY

The large banner headline stretches across the top of the page, which reads: "PRESIDENT SAVES HOMELESS PLAN. MITCHELL WORKS BUDGET MIRACLE."

ELLEN
(realizing)
'Saves homeless plan'?

SHOT - ELLEN

She stares at it stunned for a moment, then lowers the paper and looks off into space...

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Murray and Dave stand beside the Thrifty rent-a-car as the sun begins to dip behind the trees.

DAVE
Thanks. You did great. Maybe later
you could come back and we could go to
Camp David or something.

MURRAY
(climbing in)
That'd be great.

DAVE
(looking at his friend)
Well -- take care.

Murray FIRES UP the ENGINE as Dave steps back from the car.

MURRAY
(looking back)
Yeah. Don't get into trouble.

WIDER ANGLE
He throws the car into gear and starts
down the long, bending driveway toward
the gate. Dave watches from the edge
of the lawn with a fond look on his
face...

CUT TO:

INT. RED ROOM - NIGHT

Duane and Dave are seated across the card table from one another. Duane's shoulder holster is slung over the back of the chair. They are drinking beers.

DUANE
Gin.

He lays down his cards, fanning them out in front of Dave.

DAVE
(grimacing)
I was waiting for that jack.

DUANE
I had a feeling.

Duane Scoops UP the cards and begins to Shuffle.

Duane? DAVE Yeah? DUANE

(BEAT) DAVE
How come you went along with all of
this?

Duane Stops Shuffling and Stares at him for a moment.

DUANE
You mean with you and everything?

YEAH. DAVE

DUANE
(shrugs)
'Bleed for your king.'

DAVE
What's that?

DUANE
First thing they teach you at the
academy.
(remembering their motto)
'Don't give me gold and silver, or
other worldly things, just the pride
and glory of bleeding for my King.'

DAVE
You're kidding.

DUANE
No... They don't kid.

Dave nods solemnly as Duane stares straight ahead.

DAVE
But Bill was your king, not Bob.

DUANE
Yeah, but Bob found me when I was stuck
in Firearms and Tobacco...

DUANE

(thinks)

We're trained to be loyal. You gotta
be loyal to someone.

They sit for a moment in silence. Duane checks his watch.

DAVE

Didn't mean to bum you out.

DUANE

That's okay. You alright down here by
yourself?

DAVE

Oh, sure. Don't worry about it.

He nods and heads for the door as Dave picks up the cards.
He begins to deal out some solitaire, then senses something
and looks toward the door.

DAVE'S POV

Ellen stands silhouetted in the doorway wearing a floor- length
dressing gown.

ELLEN

(quietly)

Hello.

ANGLE - DAVE

Ellen walks forward into the light, tightening the belt at
her waist.

DAVE

... . Ellen.

ELLEN

I saw the light. I thought maybe you
were up.

DAVE

(startled)

Oh... Yeah.

ELLEN

Mind if I sit down?

DAVE

(beat)

No.

He scoops up the cards trying to tidy some of the bottles.
She studies his face for a couple of seconds then sits down
at the table.

ELLEN

That was quite a thing you did today.

DAVE

Anybody would have done it.

ELLEN

Oh, I don't think so.

(staring at him)

Still, you helped a lot of people.

She continues to stare as Dave looks away.

ELLEN

Kind of reminds me of that thing you
did back in the state legislature.

DAVE

Oh yeah?

(nervous)

Me, too.

ELLEN

You weren't in the state legislature.

Dave freezes with the deck in his hand. All at once, Ellen
smiles and extends her arm over the table.

ELLEN

I'm Ellen Mitchell.

His eyes go wide. Dave sits stunned trying his best to
swallow.

ELLEN

(softly)

What's your name?

Dave stares at her, but no words come out. She leans forward
looking right at him.

ELLEN

(evenly)

Look, I'll make this easy on you. I
never see him anymore. I barely know
him anymore. I'd just kinda like to.
know where he is.

Dave looks at her, nervously.

ELLEN

I mean, what is it? Another Secretary?
A jaunt to the Bahamas with Some
'campaign worker.' Where is he?

DAVE

(pause)

I don't know.

She looks at him, waiting for a moment.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Dave, Ellen and Duane stare straight ahead as they descend into the sub-basement.

DUANE

(beat)

I really shouldn't be doing this.

No one replies as the elevator doors slide open.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT - CORRIDOR

A lone Secret Service man is stationed outside a solid metal door as the three of them approach - - Duane hesitates and looks at Dave.

DAVE

(calmly)

Open it.

Duane looks back at the two of them.

ELLEN

Just open it, please.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

The door swings open as a middle-aged woman in a white uniform appears. Even in the dim light of the hallway it's clear she is a NURSE.

NURSE

I'm sorry, you're not allowed...

DUANE

(flashing an I.D.)

It's alright.

NURSE

Mr. Alexander left strict...

Before she can even finish Ellen steps quickly by her into the room. The Nurse recognizes her and just gapes as Duane and Dave enter as well.

INT. BASEMENT ROOM

It is dimly lit like the hallway, except for a group of machines in the corner. Next to them, a state-of-the-art hospital bed holds the President's lifeless body. Ellen moves

up to the side of the bed.

ELLEN
What happened?

DUANE
It's the stroke. It's pretty bad.

ELLEN
I don't understand. Is he, I mean...

There's a pause. The Nurse looks down. Ellen clutches the railings of the bed.

DUANE
I'm sorry.

All at once she starts to cry. Dave moves over to try to comfort her when she shakes him off violently.

ELLEN
Don't touch me, please.

Dave recoils. She turns to him with an enraged look in her eye. He moves back a step.

ELLEN
(furious)
When were you all planning to tell me? A year from now? After the election...
(whirling on him)
What's going on here?
Dave hesitates.

DAVE
They asked me to help.

ELLEN
I'm sure they did. 'State of Emergency.' 'National Security.' You ever hear of the Constitution?

He doesn't respond. Ellen glares at him for a moment, then glances around the room...

ELLEN
Could all of you just leave me alone for a minute.

NURSE
I'm really not supposed to...

ELLEN
Get out!

Dave motions toward Duane as the two of them guide the nurse

into the hallway. They shut the door behind them.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

She stares down at the lifeless body while the sound of the RESPIRATOR fills the room.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLEN'S ROOM - LATER

Suitcases are flung open and she kneels on the floor. Ellen throws piles of clothing into the large open valise when she senses something and glances up..

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Dave is standing in the doorway. She looks at him for a moment, but goes right back to packing. He stands in the doorway, staring while she crams some shoes in the bag.

DAVE
You're leaving?

ELLEN
(clipped)
I'm not the First Lady, anymore. I
shouldn't be here.

DAVE
Where are you going?

ELLEN
Home.

She grabs a blouse from the bed and flings it into the suitcase.

DAVE
Where's home?

ELLEN
(looking up)
Oh, they didn't brief you on that?
How sloppy of them.

She looks at Dave and stops. All at once Ellen stops packing and lowers a shoe to her side.

HER POV - REVERSE ANGLE

Dave stands in the doorway with a small valise in his hand. He looks like he did a month ago, with the tortoise shell glasses and his old blue windbreaker. The valise is a tiny overnight bag with small black handles. A seal of the President embossed into the leather.

DAVE

(shrugging)
Just souvenirs. Towels and stuff.

ELLEN
(beat)
You're leaving, too?

DAVE
(nodding)
I never wanted to hurt anybody.
(beat)
In fact... I even thought I was helping.

Ellen just looks at him for a moment. Her mouth opens slightly but no words come out.

DAVE
Hey... It's...

DIFFERENT ANGLE
Ellen is crying. She shakes her head and turns away from him.

DAVE
Here.

Dave unzips the valise and fishes out a hanky. The Presidential Seal is nicely embroidered in one corner. Ellen looks down at it and smiles slightly.

ELLEN
You know you make this little deal with yourself.

ELLEN
You can put up with the other women and you can do without a life because you believe in what you're doing - - and if you can just keep your mouth shut...

She can't finish.

DAVE
You thought you had a chance to help people...

Their eyes lock for an instant when she turns and goes back to packing.

DAVE
(softly)
How were you gonna get home?

ELLEN
I don't know. I hadn't thought it out that far.

CLOSEUP - DAVE

He looks at her for a moment...

CUT TO:

INT. SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

Dave carries Ellen's suitcase in one hand and his own valise in the other. They step over the puddles and leaky water pipes as they duck below the six-foot ceiling. Dave carries a flashlight.

ELLEN

You sure this goes somewhere?

DAVE

Truman used it all the time.

Dave pauses and shines the light up a leaky old set of stairs that head off to their right. Ellen hesitates for a moment, looking up the staircase.

ELLEN

You don't have to keep walking with me. I'm okay from here.

DAVE

I don't mind.

ELLEN

(looking at him)
Thanks.

Ellen hesitates for a second, then hikes up her skirt and moves through the portal.

EXT. OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

It is directly across the street from the White House. A lone street lamp illuminates the corner including a small, recessed alcove where a staircase leads up from below.

CLOSER SHOT

Dave and Ellen emerge stepping out onto the sidewalk.

ELLEN

Huh.

DAVE

Duane said he'd leave the car over here.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

He leads Ellen around a corner where a small brown Plymouth sits parked at the curb. Dave fishes through his pockets and pulls out the car keys.

DAVE
(handing them to her)
Here you go.

Ellen looks down at the car keys.

DAVE
He said he'll pick it up in a couple
of days.

ELLEN
Oh... Okay.

She glances at the Plymouth then back at Dave. She just stares at him for a moment.

DAVE
What?

ELLEN
(shaking her head)
It's just so strange...

Dave looks at her. Ellen takes a deep breath.

ELLEN
I look at you and I see Bill...
(turning to him)
I mean, he's almost dead, but he's
right here... I mean, you're right
here... alive and...

DAVE
I'm not Bill Mitchell.

She looks at him.

DAVE
In fact, I'm not anything like him
and... I guess I want you to know that.

ELLEN
(quietly)
He wasn't always like that, anyway.

Their eyes lock for a second.

DAVE
(suddenly)
Are you hungry?

ELLEN
(beat)

What?

DAVE
(smiling a little)
I'm starving. There's got to be
something open around here.

Ellen stares at him for a moment, then finally smiles...

CUT TO:

EXT. 7-11 - NIGHT

It is a twenty-four-hour convenience store. Even at two in the morning, several cars are parked in the lot.

Ellen sits on the passenger side of Plymouth with her door locked. Dave emerges carrying a brown paper bag.

He pops the driver's side door and hops inside.

INT. CAR

ELLEN
I really don't have much of an appetite.

DAVE
(looking over at her)
Just wait.

He FIRES UP the CAR.

CUT TO:

EXT. "THE MALL" - NIGHT

The monuments are illuminated a glittering white. The Lincoln Memorial and Capitol Dome stand out against the long field of grass.

ELLEN (O.S.)
(eating Dave's "special sandwich")
This is good. What's in it?

CLOSER SHOT

They sit side by side on a raised, grassy mound at the base of the Washington Monument. A large bath towel is spread out between them with the Presidential Seal at the center. Dave's bag is opened at their side.

DAVE
That's a secret.

ELLEN
(taking another bite)

You have a lot of secrets.

DAVE

I guess.

AFTER A BEAT:

DAVE

When did you know?... About me.

She pauses.

ELLEN

I think in the car.

ELLEN

The car?

ELLEN

On the way to the homeless shelter.

You looked at my leg.

(pause)

Bill lost interest a long time ago.

He turns and looks at her.

DAVE

That's good. I was worried it was the shower.

She smiles. They are perched on a small hill overlooking the White House.

ELLEN

So what do you do the rest of the time?

DAVE

(smiling)

You mean when I'm not running the country?

ELLEN

Yes.

DAVE

I run a temp agency.

She looks at him.

DAVE

You know, secretaries and stiff.

ELLEN

(smiles)

You find people jobs?

DAVE

Yeah. Is that funny?

ELLEN

It's just more than anybody else does around here.

DAVE

Well don't get carried away --
I'm not that good at it.

She turns and studies him for a moment.

ELLEN

(suddenly personal)
And your family? I assume you're married?

He turns back to her. A couple of seconds go by.

DAVE

I was... once.
(pause)
It didn't take.

Ellen laughs and looks out over the mall. Dave takes another swig of his soda.

ELLEN

(quietly)
You know, Dave -- it is Dave, isn't it? I can't keep all of this a secret.

DAVE

I know.

ELLEN

But you could go to jail for it.

He turns and looks at her. There doesn't seem to be any fear.

DAVE

Yeah, I know.

Ellen turns and studies him.

DAVE

I liked doing it, though. Not the fancy stuff with the helicopter or the TV cameras but...

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Ellen keeps staring at him. Dave glances back.

DAVE

I liked saving that shelter. I liked
helping people I hadn't even met before.

It's quiet for a moment. He stares back at the White House.

DAVE

(pause)

And right then I felt like I wasn't
pretending anymore.

CLOSER

Several seconds go by. Dave stares off at the White House
across the mall while Ellen studies his face.

ELLEN

I don't think you were pretending.

Dave turns to her as their eyes lock.

DAVE

I liked being married to you.

Ellen turns all the way around on the blanket staring at him
from less than a foot away.

ELLEN

What would you do if you were still in
there? If you had one more chance to
be President, what would you do then?

CLOSEUP - DAVE

He stares at her for a moment.

DAVE

(quietly)

Lots of things.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE GATE - NIGHT

The small brown Plymouth rolls up to the guard ate as the
uniformed officer leans out of his booth.

GUARD

I'm sorry, sir. There's no visitors...

Dave rolls down his window, showing his Presidential face to
the Guard,

GUARD

(snapping to)

Mr. President! I'm sorry I...

DAVE

Just getting some air.

GUARD

Certainly, sir... How did...

Ellen leans across him toward the window.

ELLEN

(confidentially)

The President wanted some ice cream.

The Guard snaps off a crisp salute as Dave casually returns it. The gate raises in front of them as he steps on the gas.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Dave and Ellen stand at the top of the long staircase that leads to the living quarters. Ellen looks up at him for a moment, then smiles.

ELLEN

(softly)

... You make a nice President, Dave
Kovic... go for it.

Ellen looks him in the eye for a moment, then turns and heads off toward her suite. Dave stands there watching her recede down the hall...

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

A lone gardener rides his lawn mower across the lawn...

WHITE HOUSE BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

It is jammed full of the White House Press Corps. A hundred or so REPORTERS mill about while they wait for the start of a press conference.

REPORTER #1

Bet it's that Fidelity thing.

REPORTER #2

Think they're gonna ditch the Veep?

The first guy nods.

REPORTER #1

(confident)

He's finished.

REPORTER #3

Toast.

They all nod together.

INT. HALLWAY

Bob moves down the corridor with his briefcase in his C hand.
He glances up and notices action from the briefing room.

BOB
(to himself)
What the hell...

INT. EAST ROOM

The sound of a man desperately containing a SCREAM ECHOES
THROUGH the public rooms on the first floor. Bob comes
sprinting into the large open receiving room, taking out one
of the little rope stanchions that guide the visiting tourists
through. He keeps on running...

INT. REED'S OFFICE

Reed glances up from his desk as Bob charges into the room.

REED
(quickly)
I didn't call it. He called it
himself... I swear to God.

Bob just looks at him, then turns and bolts into the hallway.

INT. GREAT HALL

A small group of tourists stands in the large marble entry.
They stare up at the staircase while their TOUR GUIDE describes
some of the artwork.

GUIDE
... Jackson is the figure that you see
represented in the lower left hand...
(beat; awed)
Why there's Bob Alexander our White
House Chief of Staff...

ANGLE - BOB
He comes careening into the foyer,
skittering across the polished marble.

GUIDE
... My, he seems to be in quite a
hurry...

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE

Dave sits on the couch, jotting some notes on a legal pad.
The door swings open behind him.

BOB

What do you think you're doing?!

DAVE
(innocently)
You mean the press conference?
(beat)
I have a couple of ideas I wanted to
share with the country.

BOB
Share...

WIDER
Dave rises from the couch as Bob moves
over to him with his eyes blazing.

BOB
You don't call a press conference. I
call a press conference!

Dave just stares.

BOB
You're nothing. Do you understand me!
You're NOBODY...

DAVE
(slowly)
I'm... not... nobody...

BOB
You're lint! You're a flea! You're a
blip!

DAVE
Well, maybe I am. But you're fired.

Bob backs up a step and stares at him.

BOB
... what?

DAVE
I said you're fired. Go on --
get outta here.

Bob just looks at him, stunned.

BOB
Oh... I'm fired?

DAVE
Yeah.

He stops and stares at Dave.

BOB

You're fired.

DAVE

(fine)

Fine...

He stares at him again.

BOB

(beat)

Fine?

DAVE

Fine.

He crosses to the door of the Oval Office and flings it open wide.

DAVE

You got the whole Press Corps out there.
Why don't you just go tell 'em.

Bob's eyes narrow a little.

DAVE

Go on. Be my guest.

CLOSER

They stare at each other for a long moment. Neither man moves as they stand toe to toe in the center of the carpet. For a second, it isn't clear who's going to win, until...

WOMAN (O.S.)

Darling...

Ellen comes over and takes his arm.

ELLEN

(Audrey Hepburn)

Darling, they're all waiting for you in the Press Room - - you've really got to get going...

(as if seeing him for the first time)

Oh, Bob...

(back to Dave)

I'm sorry, darling. I thought you were alone - -

Ellen turns toward Bob with a sudden grin. His expression falls visibly as the weight of their alliance becomes clear.

DAVE

I'd like your resignation on my desk by the time I get back.

CLOSEUP - BOB

He looks at them stunned and defeated...

CUT TO:

INT. PRESS ROOM - LATER

It is packed to capacity. Dave stands alone at the podium while the press corps crowds every inch of the Briefing Room. He stares squarely into the cameras.

DAVE

Thanks for coming on such short notice.

WIDER

Reed stands off to the side with an almost mesmerized look on his face.

DAVE

First, I'd like to announce something that might come as a surprise to many of you.

(beat)

I've asked Bob Alexander to resign as White House Chief of Staff.

A murmur goes through the Press Room. Dave looks straight ahead.

DAVE

Sometimes, two people just change and it's better for everybody if they go their Own way.

(beat)

Over the last few months! Bob and I have come to believe in different things. He thinks this country is fine and we should go about doing business as usual.

(beat)

I just don't feel that way. Not anymore.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

DAVE

Because things aren't fine. And you know that and I know that. And we can keep lying to ourselves, but it's a little late for that.

(getting angry)

We've got water we can't drink and air we can't breathe. We've got bars on our windows and graffiti on our doors. If you get sick you can't afford to go

to the doctor and if you get laid off
you can't find a new job. We're
trillions of dollar in debt. Our roads
are cracking, our bridges are crumbling
and everything we used to build is
made in Japan. We've got people
sleeping in cardboard boxes, and ten-
year-old kids who are doing drugs.
We've been living together for four
hundred years, and we're still trying
to kill each other... But that isn't
even the worst part. The worst part
is we feel like we can't do anything
about it.

CLOSER

He looks out over the room and pauses.

DAVE

So I've decided that while I'm
President, I should actually try to
do things... even if they seem
impossible.

Dave glances toward the wings for a moment and turns back.

DAVE

First off I'm initiating a program to
try to find a decent job for every
American who wants one.

A murmur moves through the press room.

DAVE

(hearing them)
Why start here?
(pause)
Because if you've ever seen the look
on someone's face the day they get a
job -- I've had some personal experience
with this - - they look like they could
fly. And unless we start tapping into
that kind of spirit again, there's no
way we're gonna fix anything in this
country.

He looks out at them and pauses.

DAVE

So... Let's get to work.

WIDE ANGLE - BRIEFING

The press corps just sits stunned for a moment as Dave strides
off the stage. As he leaves, the stunned reporters explode
to their feet.

REPORTERS
(overlapping)
Mr. President... Mr. President...

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - CORRIDOR

Dave enters the corridor and sees Ellen, who is waiting for him with a huge look of admiration on her face.

DAVE
It was okay?

ELLEN
(beaming)
It was inspirational.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE LAWN - NINA TOTENBERG ("NBC NIGHTLY NEWS")

NINA TOTENBERG
In the boldest initiative yet of the
'New Bill Mitchell' presidency, the
President has proposed a comprehensive
full employment program, unparalleled
since the days of F.D.R.

QUICK CUT
TO:

ROBERT NOVACK (EVANS AND NOVACK)

NOVACK (V.0.)
... It's naive, it's dangerous, it's
irresponsible...

CHRIS MATHEWS ("GOOD MORNING AMERICA")

MATHEWS (V.0.)
... It's courageous, it's challenging,
it's visionary...

FRED BARNES (MacGLAUGHLIN GROUP)

BARNES (V.0.)
It's insane.

MARK SHIELDS (CNN)

MARK SHIELDS (V.0.)
It's brilliant.

JOHN McLAUGHLIN ("CROSSFIRE")

JOHN McLAUGHLIN (V.0.)
If the President wants to run around

proposing lame-brained schemes like
this one...

MICHAEL KINSELY (ALSO "CROSSFIRE")

MICHAEL KINSELY (V.O.)
Well he's certainly got my vote.

The TELEVISION SUDDENLY SWITCHES OFF as the CAMERA WIDENS OUT
to reveal:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Dave, slumping back from the TV into an armchair.

DAVE
Thank God for that.

WIDER

Dave, Ellen, Reed, Ellen's Aide, and two other advisors are
camped in front of the television set. There are documents
and newspapers scattered over the room. A take-out pizza
sits incongruously on the coffee table.

DAVE
Let's call it a night. I can't take
any more.

REED
Right. We can pick up on the rest
tomorrow.

Everyone starts to get up, gathering their papers.

ELLEN'S AIDE
(moving toward
the door)
I'll have those employment figures to
you by eight-thirty...

REED
And we've got that labor briefing at
nine.

DAVE
(bleary eyed)
Terrific.

Everyone starts to move through the door, leaving Dave and
Ellen suddenly alone. They are standing face to face.

DAVE
Well I guess...

ELLEN
Yeah... Bedtime.

Their faces are very close. Their eyes express great need. He moves slowly toward her in a kiss. Their lips meet for an instant.

DAVE
(pulling back)
What?

ELLEN
I can't.

DAVE
(quickly)
I know. I'm sorry...

ELLEN
I mean, I want to... I just, I feel
strange...

DAVE
(even quicker)
That's okay.

They stand there facing one another like two kids on a front porch.

INT. DAVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

He lies under the covers staring at the ceiling. Dave suddenly turns and punches the pillow.

INT. ELLEN'S ROOM

She lies on her bed in exactly the same position. After a moment, Ellen turns and buries her face in the pillow.

ELLEN
(muffled)
This is crazy...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - WEST WING - DAY

Dave and Duane move down the corridor that leads to the Oval Office. Duane is flipping through a handful of newspapers.

DUANE
The U.S. News hammered us. But they're
always tough on that kind of thing.
Rosenthal loved us in the Times

RANDI
Mr. President, Mr. Nance is waiting
inside for you.

DAVE
Who?

DUANE
(freezing)
The Vice-President...

DAVE
Oh... right...
(to Randi, nervous
smile)
You know, ever since the stroke...

Dave points to his temple and gives the "wobbly" sign with his hand. He glances at Duane for a second, then turns and heads inside...

INT. OVAL OFFICE

Seated, with his back to the door, is the silhouette of a man holding an eight-foot spear. Beside him on the floor is a large ceremonial headdress. Dave moves forward cautiously.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

The Vice President turns and slowly rises to face him. He's a strong-looking man in a plain gray suit with an honest looking face.

NANCE
Mr. President.

The two men shake hands. Nance continues to stare at him while Dave moves toward his chair. After a moment, Nance extends the headdress.

NANCE
(curtly)
This is from the people of Burundi...

DAVE
(taking it)
Oh... Thanks.

NANCE
And these are a gift from the King
of To go.

Nance hands him what appears to be a group of large necklaces.

DAVE
(beat)
What are they?

NANCE
(deadpan)
Fertility beads.

DAVE

Ah.

He sets them quickly on the desk while Nance just stares at him.

NANCE

Mr. President, may I speak frankly with you?

DAVE

Certainly.

CLOSEUP - NANCE

He hesitates for a moment. Nance gathers his thoughts, then proceeds.

NANCE

(with dignity)

I know we haven't always gotten along. I know we've disagreed politically and I suppose I know what you think of me personally...

WIDER

Nance takes a deep breath.

NANCE

... But I've always tried to respect the role you wanted me to play. When I've disagreed with this administration I've kept it to myself. When you wanted my support you always had it.

Dave nods, frozen in his chair. Nance looks at him a moment then suddenly lets it out.

NANCE

Dammit, Bill -- how could you do something like this to me?

Dave just looks at him speechless. Neither man moves.

DAVE

(beat)

Something like what...

NANCE

Oh, come on, we're not children. I didn't have anything to do with this Fidelity nonsense and you know it.

DAVE
(nodding)
The Fidelity nonsense...

NANCE
(showing him a newspaper)
All I've got is my integrity. That's
all I have. Now I don't know why you
turned your attack dogs on me.

DAVE
(interrupting)
They re not my attack dogs.

NANCE
(taken aback)
What do you mean?

DAVE
I just fired Bob Alexander.

Nance looks at him, stunned.

DAVE
Don't worry. I'll take care of it.

CUT TO:

INT. REED'S OFFICE - DAY

He sits behind his sleek Italian desk with a slightly sheepish
look on his face. Dave stands across from him, leaning on his
feet.

DAVE
What do you mean you made it all up?

REED
We had to, Dave. The guy's a choir
boy.

DAVE
This is wrong, Alan!

REED
(like a novel, new
concept)
Wrong...

DAVE
Alan...

REED
Oh, I know, I know... It looks
awfully bad. It's really embarrassing.
(beat)
But it was Bob's idea.

Dave looks at him horrified.

DAVE
We've got to fix this.

REED
Absolutely. Well, that might be kind
of tough. Once the press starts smelling
blood...

The door blows open behind them.

ELLEN (O.S.)
Dave...

WIDER
She flies into the room with a worried
look on her face. Dave and Reed watch
while she heads toward the "media
center" in the corner.

REED
(shocked)
'Dave'?

DAVE
She knows.

ELLEN
Look at this.

Ellen flicks ON the SET to catch a NEWS REPORT in mid-segment.

TV SCREEN

NINA TOTENBERG (V.O.)
(over TV)
... The hastily called news conference
at the National Press Club was Bob
Alexander's first public comment
since resigning as White House Chief
of Staff. It turned out to be nothing
short of a full-fledged salvo fired
directly at Pennsylvania Avenue.

Bob appears in a film clip, speaking before the National
Press Club. Even beneath the professional cool, he seems
to relish the lethal sound bite.

BOB (V.O.)
(over TV)
When I first began to look into the
allegations concerning Fidelity
Savings and Loan, I thought the
wrongdoing was restricted to the
Vice President's office...

INT. REED'S OFFICE - DAY

They glance at each other then back at the set...

REED

Uh-oh...

BOB

(over TV)

... But as I began to investigate, I realized that this pattern of corruption extended much higher...

REED

Jesus...

TV SCREEN

Bob pauses for an effect, then looks straight into the camera:

BOB

(over TV; dramatic)

... I was saddened to discover at least fifteen separate acts of intervention by this administration, most with the full knowledge of the President and all of them illegal. Federal regulators were influenced, records were destroyed, and pressure was brought to bear, in some cases by President Mitchell himself.

DAVE

(stunned)

Now he's making stuff up about me.

REED

He's not.

They turn and look at him.

DAVE

(sighing)

He's not making it up.

Dave stares at him stunned. Ellen gets it immediately.

ELLEN

(softly)

Bob never left Bill's side. He knows where all the old bones are buried...

Dave glances back and forth between them but neither one of them speaks...

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

A long line of black sedans with congressional plates pulls up to the South Portico. In the distance, beyond the fence, a crowd of protesters shout at the White House.

INT. PRESIDENT'S PRIVATE DINING ROOM

A small delegation of congressional leaders has requested a lunch with the President. Reed and Ellen are also present. The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE leans forward over his plate.

SPEAKER

(a Southerner)

Mr. President, I don't know another way to put it, but 'This dawg just won't hunt.'

Dave just stares at him without responding.

MAJ. LEADER

We may be able to hold off this First Liberty thing for a little while but if you go running around the country with this new jobs idea...

SPEAKER

They're gonna put us on a spit an' bring in the sauce.

FEMALE SENATOR

If you just waited for a little while...

DAVE

I don't want to wait for a little while.

SPEAKER

Mr. President, I understand that. But sometimes ya fight an' sometimes ya run.

ELLEN

(suddenly)

That's not what you said during your ethics investigation.

WIDER

Every eye in the room turns toward her. The Speaker stares daggers across the table.

SPEAKER

I beg your pardon?

ELLEN

When you needed the President's help,

you got it.

SPEAKER

(controlled)

Ma'am, no one appreciates your husband's help more'n me. I'm just saying that this jobs thing is a little unwieldy...'

NANCE

(chiming in)

It is not.

Every eye shifts to the Vice President.

Ill.

NANCE

There's lots of ways to make it work. You could have targeted tax credits for on-site training... You could have a public private partnership like - J.T.P.A...

SPEAKER

Excuse me for interruptin' but this ain't some city council silliness that's gonna blow over. We're talking about obstructing federal regulators and violating election up on the Hill who are talkin' impeachment. We got a real problem on our hands.

CLOSEUP - DAVE

He just stares straight ahead...

CUT TO:

CLOSEUP - BOB ALEXANDER

It is a video clip from his lethal press conference. Bob faces the camera directly.

BOB (V.O.)

... At least fifteen separate acts of intervention by this administration, most with full knowledge of the President..

NANCE (O.S.)

Guess they're coming at you now, too.

FREEZE FRAME.

INT. OVAL OFFICE

Dave sits in front of his bookcase with a remote control in his hand. He turns to see the Vice President, standing by the edge of the carpet.

DAVE

Oh... Hi.

NANCE

(glancing at the screen)

Dirty business we're in sometimes.

DAVE

(quietly)

Yeah.

NANCE

He's not gonna win -- not in the end... They never do.

Dave looks back at him.

DAVE

... Sometimes they do.

NANCE

(nodding)

Yeah... Sometimes they do.

Nance shifts a little by the bookcase.

NANCE

Mr. President, whatever happens I just wanted you to know that I think that your jobs program is a wonderful idea...

DAVE,

Not that anyone's gonna pay much attention now... But thanks.

Neither one says anything. Dave motions to a chair.

DAVE

Want to sit down?

He takes a seat across from the desk. Nance glances over at the TV as both men look at the freeze frame of Bob.

DAVE

You ever think back to how you started.

NANCE

(turning)

What?

DAVE

You know. Your first campaign.
You ever think back to how you did it all...

NANCE

Yeah...
(thinks about it for a
moment...)
.. I was a shoe salesman.
(beat)
and not very happy about it.

They smile together for a moment.

NANCE

One day my wife says to me 'Why don't
you try running for office. You talk
about it all the time, why don't you
just do it?'
(beat)
So I tell my boss I have a dentist
appointment and I go down to the
registrar of voters on my lunch break.
(shakes his head)
Next thing I know, I'm a councilman.

DAVE

Really?

NANCE

(nodding)
My wife was my campaign manager. We
had a two thousand dollar budget.

Dave smiles.

NANCE

With advertising.

Dave just looks at him for a long moment.

NANCE

How'd you get started?

DAVE

(quietly)
Oh... Kinda the same way.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST WING - DUSK

Dave walks alone down the long pergola that flanks the Rose

Garden. He moves slowly, lost in thought, when he glances up and suddenly, stops.

WIDER

All the roses are shimmering in the late afternoon light. Dave looks at them for a second...

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING QUARTERS - MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

The CAMERA MOVES WITH Dave as he heads down the long corridor toward Ellen's side of the living quarters. He holds a large yellow rose in his hand. Dave pauses in front of her door, knocks and waits for a moment.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Dave steps inside the room.

DAVE

Hello?

HIS POV

It's a lively room, especially for the White House. Across the room one of the French doors is open wide. The curtains billow out to the terrace beyond.

EXT. TERRACE

Dave steps outside, and looks around. It's a beautiful, warm night. The Washington Monument soars in the distance with the Jefferson Memorial just a speck beyond. Dave hears SOMETHING in the distance.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

He rounds the corner to find Ellen standing all alone by the edge of the balustrade. He moves quietly up toward the railing as she turns and looks at him. He extends the rose, holding it out.

DAVE

I brought you something.

ELLEN

(reserved)

... Thanks.

CLOSER ANGLE

It's only half a smile. He moves closer and pauses.

DAVE
(softly)
What's wrong?

ELLEN
(after a pause)
Looks like we're not going to get a
chance to get much done.

Dave thinks about it and nods.

ELLEN
(softer)
They're crucifying you out there.

DAVE
Yeah, but we got a little bit done.
And if you do a little and I do a
little... then maybe the next
guy'll do a little...

ELLEN
You really believe that?

DAVE
Yeah.
(pauses, quieter)
And it's better than not believing it
Their faces are inches apart.

ELLEN
(softly)
I sure fall for some weird guys.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, they come together in a kiss.
It's soft and tender at first -- then builds in passion and
need.

A lone CHURCH BELL from the National Cathedral starts CHIMING
at midnight.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Dave and Ellen part, drawn by the sound. After a moment,
Dave looks slowly back at her.

DAVE
(beat)
Nance is a good man, isn't he?

She just looks at him. It's a strange expression -- part
sadness, part fear, part intrigue...

ELLEN
(swallowing)
Yeah. He's a good man.

DAVE
(off her look)
What?

She shakes her head. He touches the side of her face.

ELLEN
I'm just getting to know you -- I don't
want to lose you.

They come together and kiss again. Even with everything left
unsaid, there's a sadness in the air.

WIDENING OUT...

Two small figures cling onto each other by the third floor
balustrade of the White House...

SLOWLY
DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAPITOL DOME - DAY

It gleams in the sunshine.

FULL SHOT - SANDER VANOCUR 142

She stands in front of the Great Rotunda, doing a live intro
for "NBC News"...

SANDER VANOCUR
The President has requested this rare
joint session of Congress so that he
could personally answer the allegations
raised by Bob Alexander, his former
Chief of Staff...

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER

It is packed to capacity with the House members on one side
and the Senate on the other. There is great tension on both
sides of the aisle.

EXT. BROWNSTONE (GEORGETOWN) - DAY

Several long black limos deposit occupants in front of Bob
Alexander's townhouse.

INT. LIVING ROOM (GEORGETOWN) - DAY

Bob stands in a cardigan sweater holding a tumbler full of
bourbon while his cocktail party is going full swing. Several
inside the beltway fat cats mill about the living room while
Vanocur continues on the TV:

SANDER VANOCUR (V.O.)
Speculation on the President's response

has run the gamut from a full-fledged
denial right up to the possibility
that he might resign.

There are hoots and hollers in the room. One of the GUESTS
raises a glass in salute.

GUEST #1
(to Bob)
Here's to you, Mr. President.

Another guest holds up a bumper sticker with "ALEXANDER FOR
PRESIDENT" printed in large block letters.

GUEST #2
(displaying it)
What do you think?

BOB
Let's wait for the speech first.
(false humility)
Don't want to get ahead of ourselves.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM

she sits tensely in front of her television...

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER

The tension in the room builds as everyone awaits the arrival
of the President.

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - CLOAK ROOM

THROUGH a crack in the doorway, most of the House Chamber is
visible. The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal: Dave and Reed,
standing alone in the small ante-room. There is a plain,
black briefcase sitting between them.

DAVE
Is everything clear with Duane?

Reed nods and hands him the briefcase.

DAVE
And this is all of it?

He nods again.

DAVE
Well -- here we go.

Dave tries to take briefcase but Reed keeps holding onto it
out of reflex and self-preservation. Dave smiles at him and
gently starts to unpry Reed's fingers.

DAVE

Relax, Alan... Enjoy the moment.

Reed looks at him and tries to nod...

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER

Everyone stands at their seats when the SERGEANT AT ARMS walks down the aisle, pounding a six-foot staff three times on the House floor.

SERGEANT AT ARMS

Mr. Speaker... The President of the United States.

WIDER ANGLE

The response is more of a murmur than the usual applause. Dave appears at the back of the Chamber carrying the black briefcase. He makes his way up the aisle and mounts the five steps that lead to the podium.

SHOT - DAVE

He reaches the lectern and glances behind him. Dave locks eyes with Vice President Nance for a moment, flashing him a smile.

INT. BOB'S TOWN HOUSE

It looks like a Superbowl party. All of Bob's cronies have gathered around the TV set to watch "Bill Mitchell's" political demise. A huge grin spreads across Bob's face when Dave's image appears on the screen.

BOB

Shhh shh... Here it comes.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER

Dave swallows once and grips the lectern.

DAVE

Thank you.

(pause)

I wish I could be here today under different circumstances...

CLOSER SHOT

He hesitates for a moment.

DAVE

There's certainly a lot of things about this country that we should be discussing, but I realize that's not possible now.

(beat)
As all of you know, my former Chief of
Staff has implicated me in a scandal
involving Fidelity Savings and Loan.

REVERSE ANGLE - HOUSE

Every member sits motionless at their seat.

DAVE
... And once people start talking about
scandal it's hard for them to talk
about anything else.

He scans the room.

DAVE
So fine. Let's talk about it.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM

She watches riveted from the edge of her bed.

DAVE
(over TV)
Bob Alexander has accused me of...
(pulls some notes out
of his pocket)
Let me read this to make sure I get it
right...

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER

He stares at his notes.

DAVE
.... Illegally influencing government
regulators on behalf of major campaign
contributors -- interfering with an
ongoing Justice Department investigation - -
and violating Federal election laws in
the area of campaign finance.

There isn't a sound in the Chamber.

DAVE
Okay -- let's get right to the guts of
it... Each one of these charges is
absolutely true.

A quiet but shocked murmur rolls through the room.

INT. BOB'S HOUSE

A "war hoop" goes up from the guests. Bob almost seems to
levitate off the couch.

BOB
Die, you pond scum!

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER - FULL SHOT - DAVE

DAVE
I'm the President and as they say 'The buck stops here.' So I take full responsibility for every one of my illegal acts.

He hoists the black briefcase up onto the podium.

DAVE
But you see that's not the whole story, and I think each one of you is entitled to the truth.

Dave opens the black briefcase to reveal a large stack of documents.

DAVE
I have written proof here in the form of...
(reading)
Notes, memoranda and personal directives' proving that Bob Alexander was involved in each one of these incidents and in most cases planned them as well...

INT. BOB'S HOUSE - CLOSEUP - BOB

There is silence in the room. All the color drains from his face as Bob stares frozen at the television set. The others in the room watch with the morbid fascination of someone witnessing a car wreck.

BOB
(almost a gasp)
Alan...

One of the guests furtively slides his Presidential bumper sticker behind the onion dip.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER - FULL SHOT - REED

He stares out at the House Chamber feeling downright "moral." He looks like someone who has just saved a puppy.

CLOSEUP - DAVE

DAVE
Now - - allegations of wrong-doing have also been made against Vice

President Nance...
(pause)
I'm afraid that's just a lie.

FULL SHOT - VICE PRESIDENT

He sits motionless in the chair feeling the weight of every eye in the room.

DAVE
... As this evidence will show... At no time and in no way was Vice President Nance involved in any of this affair. Bob made all of that up.

Dave turns and smiles at Nance for a moment.

FULL SHOT - PODIUM

Dave turns back toward the House.

DAVE
Vice president Nance is a good and decent public servant and I'd like to apologize for any pain this may have caused him or his family.
(pause)
And while we're setting the record straight, I'd also like to apologize to the American people...

CLOSER ON DAVE

Right INTO CAMERA.

DAVE
... I forgot that I was hired to do a job for you and that it was just a temp job at that. I forgot that I had two hundred and fifty million people who were paying me to make their lives a little better and I didn't live up to my part of the bargain.

WIDER - HOUSE CHAMBER

DAVE
See, there are certain things you should expect from a President. I ought to care more about you than I do about me... I ought to care more about what's right than I do about what's popular...

REVERSE ANGLE - HOUSE CHAMBER

They sit motionless in their seats.

DAVE
I ought to be willing to give this
whole thing up for something I believe
in...

INT. ELLEN'S ROOM

A sad but proud smile starts around the corners of her mouth.

DAVE (V.O.)
(on her TV)
Because if I'm not...

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER

Dave clutches the sides of the podium.

DAVE
If I'm not...

Dave stops in mid-sentence. He raises his hand to his forehead and seems to rock a moment. A concerned murmur runs through the floor of the House.

FULL SHOT - DAVE

He clutches the lectern now with a "woozy" look on his face. He "fights to stand up."

DAVE
If I'm not... Then I don't belong here
in the first place...

All at once, Dave falls to the floor. Duane and Reed and several Senate pages suddenly rush out to his side.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER - PODIUM

It is complete pandemonium. Several members crowd around the podium. The NOISE LEVEL literally turns into a ROAR. Reed yanks at Dave's shirt and loosens his tie.

CLOSER ANGLE

REED
A doctor! We need a doctor... He's
had a stroke!

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM

She gets up from the bed, grabs her overcoat and heads for the door...

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER

A huge crowd of Congressmen crowd around the platform. There is complete confusion...

EXT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - PARKING LOT - DAY

The standard issue ambulance that follows the President I everywhere is parked just outside the House doors. The doors of the vehicle fly open as a doctor and nurse emerge. They're the same two people who cared for Bill Mitchell at the outset of the film.

CLOSER ANGLE

It takes a split second for them to whisk out the gurney bed and slam the doors behind them. They bolt toward the House chamber while the Secret Service stands guard.

INT. CHAMBER

Duane and other Secret Servicemen move the onlookers back as the medical team loads Dave onto the gurney bed and hurry him toward the doors.

EXT. HOUSE PARKING LOT

They emerge a moment or two later with Duane leading the way. Dave has been securely fastened to the rolling stretcher while the doctor and nurse hover close...

DIFFERENT ANGLE

They pop the door of the ambulance. A crowd of onlookers watches in horror as the body of the President is whisked into the ambulance.

WIDE ANGLE - MOTORCADE

It tears away from the Capitol with dozens of SIRENS BLARING. The ambulance is surrounded front and back by twenty police motorcycles and the entire entourage takes off...

CUT TO:

EXT. BETHESDA NAVAL HOSPITAL - DAY

It is pandemonium here as well. A huge stat team waits for the AMBULANCE as it comes SCREAMING up to the emergency entrance at the back of the hospital. They fling the doors of the ambulance open as they remove the near S lifeless body of the President...

CLOSEUP - GURNEY

MOVING WITH it. The Secret Service pushes back the mob of photographers as the doctors whisk the stretcher toward the hospital.

INT. AMBULANCE

Duane sits quietly behind the wheel, while the commotion continues behind the vehicle...

THE CAMERA PANS SLOWLY OVER to the passenger's side, REVEALING:

DAVE

He sits in a white paramedics outfit complete with hat and name plate. Dave is wearing his glasses once again and looking decidedly unpresidential. He glances over at Duane.

DAVE

Well...

DUANE

Well...

After a beat.

DUANE

You sure you don't want a lift back home?

DAVE

No thanks. It's not that far.

The two men shake hands and Dave reaches for the door. He holds the same souvenir bag he had on his evening out with Ellen.

DUANE

Dave...

He pauses and looks back.

DUANE

(moved)

I would have taken a bullet for I you, Dave.

DAVE

(quietly)

Thanks, Duane.

Dave smiles at his friend, then climbs out of the ambulance, and heads down the street...

EXT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ENTRANCE - DIFFERENT ANGLE

A LIMOUSINE comes SCREECHING up to the curb. The door flies open and Ellen gets out. She sees the huge crowd of people at the back of the hospital then looks around the parking lot. Finally she sees:

HER POV

There, in the distance, the figure of a lone man in a

paramedics uniform walking slowly away. He carries a small black valise in his hand.

ANGLE - ELLEN

A strange composure envelopes her as she makes a silent decision. She takes one last look at Dave's receding figure, then turns and runs quickly inside the hospital...

WIDER ANGLE

The CAMERA BEGINS TO PULL SLOWLY BACK REVEALING the ambulance, the hospital and the huge crush of vehicles surrounding the back door.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

... The stroke hit at 8:42 p.m. just as the President was concluding his remarks to a joint session of Congress. Spokesmen at Bethesda Naval Hospital confirm that it was a 'massive edema' and unlike his previous stroke, it has rendered the President totally incapacitated...

(beat)

... Vice President Nance has already been conferred with full executive authority and has assumed the Presidency in accordance with the 24th Amendment. This is the first time since...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BALTIMORE SKYLINE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

It is still autumn. The sound of the ANNOUNCER'S VOICE dissolves into the Vice President's as he continues in V.O.

NANCE (V.O.)

... I plan to continue Bill Mitchell's call to arms. This isn't my Presidency -- this is his Presidency and I can't think of a better legacy for him to leave than...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE - DAY (WINTER)

The autumn leaves are all gone now and the SNOW has started to fall. Christmas decorations hang from lampposts and a Salvation Army Santa is ringing his bell.

ANNOUNCER #3 (V.O.)

... Bob Alexander and eight other members of the Mitchell Administration were indicted on thirty-four counts of

election law violations and obstruction of justice. Ironically, the indictments came just forty-eight hours after final passage of the Bill Mitchell Jobs Bill, a comprehensive employment program, designed to...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KOVIC TEMPS - DAY

Snow is falling gently in the street. The CAMERA BEGINS TO PUSH IN SLOWLY ON the first floor window. Jerry (Alice's boyfriend) is hanging a large sign in the window that reads:

"KOVIC FOR ALDERMAN"

INT. KOVIC TEMPS

The place is just as busy as before. Alice frantically works the phones while three or four women cram the waiting area. Murray supervises a couple of campaign workers including Lola from the start of the film. They stuff envelopes and wear large "KOVIC" hats on their heads.

MURRAY

(to one of the workers)

No. Fold them the long way. It looks neater.

ANGLE - DAVE'S INNER OFFICE

He works the phone, hunched over his desk.

DAVE

(into the receiver)

What do you mean, Harry, this woman's fabulous...

(beat)

Oh no, that was a different one...

(longer beat)

Well she's changed a lot...

(pause)

Come on, Harry, it's Christmas, the woman needs a job.

(beat)

Well, sure... she can wrap presents... Yeah you bet... Oh, great.

He pauses for a beat.

DAVE

Harry, did you get that fund-raising thing I sent you?

ANGLE - DOORWAY/RECEPTION AREA

It jars open as a woman steps inside. Alice barely looks up as the woman, wearing dark glasses and a scarf, moves into the waiting area.

CLOSER SHOT

Despite the blue jeans and T-shirt, she looks quite familiar. It's Ellen.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Dave moves into the reception area with a huge smile on his face.

DAVE

Yes! We're on a roll now...

All the women smile up at him.

DAVE

It's Christmas time...

DAVE I MURRAY

(a catch phrase)

.... and everybody works at
Christmas time...'

All of a sudden they stop. Dave looks across the reception area and sees Ellen by the door.

REVERSE ANGLE

She takes off her dark glasses and stares at him. Neither one of them says a word as Dave moves slowly forward with a stunned look on his face. She smiles at him.

ELLEN

Hi.

DAVE

Hi.

ELLEN

(indicating her wardrobe))

Thought I needed a little change. You
like it?

DAVE

(nodding)

It's nice.

He moves a little closer. They stand face to face.

DAVE

I saw you on T.V... at his funeral.

ELLEN

(past it now)
Yeah, well... It's finally over.

They are inches apart. Dave notices Murray and the six other women staring at them in the waiting area.

DAVE
(quickly)
C'mere.

INT. DAVE'S PRIVATE OFFICE

Murray stares as he pulls her into his private office and shuts the door. Ellen throws her arms around his neck as their lips meet in a passionate kiss...

DAVE
(kissing)
I never thought I'd...

ELLEN
(kissing back)
I know.

DAVE
(kissing again)
I missed...

ELLEN
(kiss)
... Me, too.

She pulls back and looks at him.

ELLEN
(beat)
So this is it?

DAVE
... Not exactly the Oval Office.

ELLEN
Oh... I lived with a President. It isn't any fun.

Dave gazes into her eyes.

DAVE
(softer)
It could be fun.

ELLEN
(smiling)
Yeah... It could be fun.

They come together in another kiss. Ellen drops her handbag

to the floor, as the CAMERA WIDENS OUT ON the bustle of the busy office... Outside on the busy Baltimore street... As we SLOWLY...

FADE OUT.

THE END